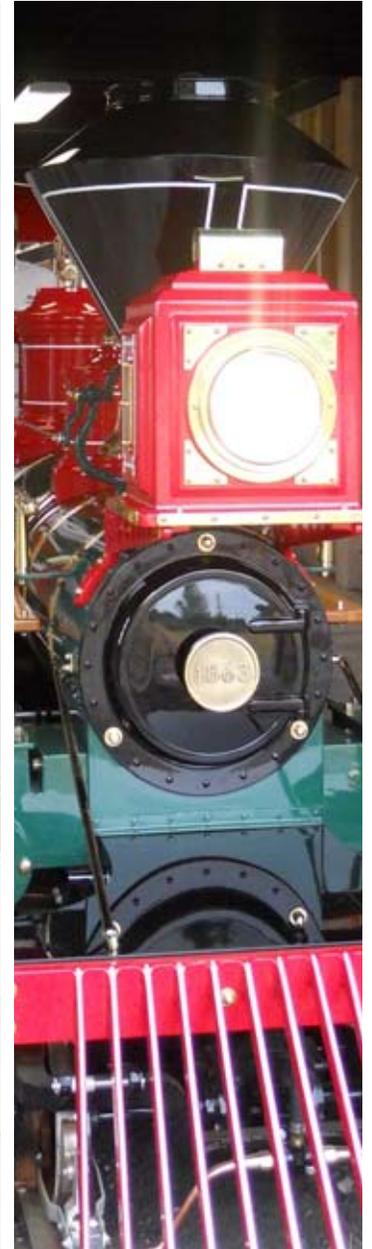


PORTSMOUTH, VA

Parks, Recreation, and Leisure Services
MASTER PLAN 2012



Our vision for the City is that it become the healthiest place to live in Hampton Roads. We will achieve this vision by providing parks and open spaces that foster community pride and enjoyment; well-balanced recreation opportunities that encourage an active and wholesome lifestyle; and community-focused programs that contribute to the positive development of youth, adults and families through involvement, partnership and collaboration with citizens and community organizations.

PORTSMOUTH, VA

Parks, Recreation, and Leisure Services

MASTER PLAN 2012



prepared for

CITY OF PORTSMOUTH, VIRGINIA



prepared by

COMMONWEALTH ARCHITECTS
www.comarchs.com



CITE DESIGN
www.cite-design.com

date of study

2011-2012

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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- Economic Value
- Environmental and Health Benefits
- Social Importance

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PORTSMOUTH, VA

Parks, Recreation, and Leisure Services

MASTER PLAN 2012

Mayor

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City Council

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William E. Moody, Jr.

Marlene W. Randall

Stephen E. Heretick

Paige D. Cherry

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Planning Commission

Davy Smith III, Chairman

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Parks & Recreation Commission

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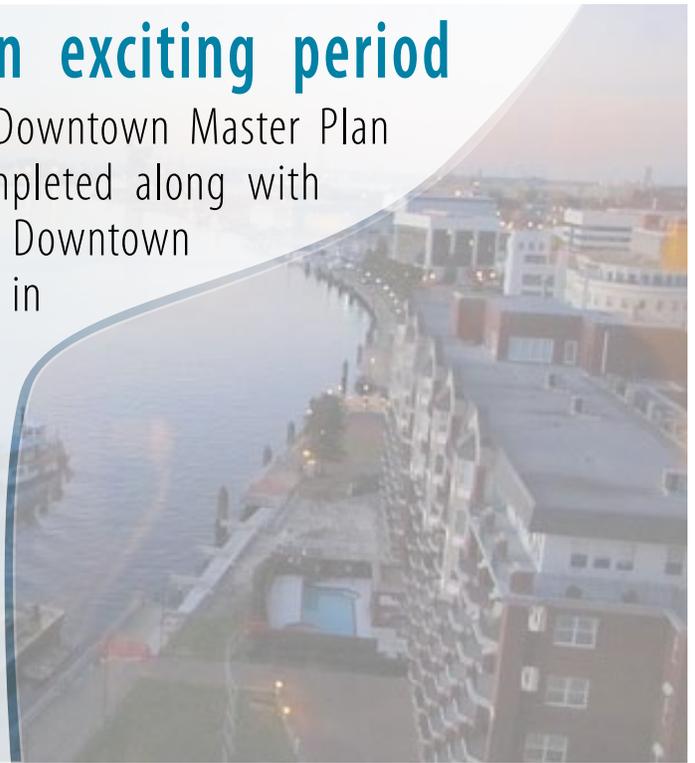
Consulting Design Team

Commonwealth Architects, Richmond, VA

Cite Design, Richmond, VA

Portsmouth is entering an exciting period of time in its history.

The Downtown Master Plan and Waterfront Strategy have been completed along with the Master Transportation Plan and the Downtown Design Guidelines. For the first time in its history, with the adoption of this document Portsmouth will have a Parks and Recreation Master Plan, a road map to help with a comprehensive planning approach that will result in the enhancement and expansion of parks and open space, programs, and recreation centers.



The intent of the Master Plan is to assess the overall park system in a way that meets the needs of the residents of the City. While all parks were generally analyzed, the purpose of this master plan is not to inventory and assess the current condition of each individual park and/or community center, nor is the purpose to assess the organization of the City of Portsmouth's Department of Parks, Recreation, and Leisure Services. Instead, the intent of the Master Plan is to assess the overall park system, demographics, and provide a plan for Portsmouth's future. This roadmap prioritizes the actions that are needed, but is not a financial plan for their implementation. There are many items in the Action List that can be implemented by Staff that will have little to no cost.

MISSION STATEMENT

Our vision for the City is that it become the healthiest place to live in Hampton Roads. We will achieve this vision by providing parks and open spaces that foster community pride and enjoyment, well-balanced recreation opportunities that encourage an active and wholesome lifestyle, and community-focused programs that contribute to the positive development of youth, adults and families through involvement, partnership and collaboration with citizens and community organizations.

HISTORY

(see page 15 for more information)

Like other colonial cities, planning and implementation for parks, open space, and recreation began making huge strides in the 1940's with the Parks Movement. Since then, the number of parks in Portsmouth has grown from zero to forty-six. It is the goal of this plan to define the needs, both current and future, and include criteria for the justification of the various needs and how they may be satisfied.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

(see pages 69 - 83 for more information)

This plan would not have been possible, nor successful, without the participation of Portsmouth's citizens throughout the development process. Well over 600 people answered the questionnaire, the Parks and Recreation Master Plan Website was visited over 3000 times, and in addition to the public open houses, at least 300 people have contacted the Planning Department and/or the Department of Parks, Recreation and Leisure Services about the plan. This level of public participation has been consistent with past Destination Portsmouth endeavors.

KEY FINDINGS OF THE CURRENT SYSTEM

As an introduction, listed below are some of the key findings from our research and information obtained from the public on which the Master Plan is based. These findings are merely statements that form the basis for the Master Plan and the recommendations. While it is important to accentuate the positive and expand on the aspects that make the parks system successful, it is equally important to address the items that will make the park system better and more efficient, while addressing the needs of current and future residents.

Areas that the Department Needs to Emphasize

- The park system has a good variety of park types, park sizes and park experiences.
- A unique variety of special facilities exists, such as City Park, Hoffer Creek Wildlife Preserve, and Bide-A-Wee.
- The park system has significant natural resources, especially for an urban city.
- Parks have significant opportunity for economic development if upgraded and made to be positive image pieces for the residents, neighborhoods, and the City.
- Opportunities exist to create parks based on themes with a sense of place, uniqueness, excitement, and program focus.
- Volunteers are a part of the success of current parks and should be recognized. Their involvement plays a crucial part in the continued success of current and future parks.
- The Parks Department is cooperative, respectful, and willing to respond to the public's needs.
- There is a high percentage of participation in the various programs offered by the City (higher than the national average).
- The community strongly believes in the importance the Department has in offering services for youth, particularly those who have economic hardships.
- With an aging population the Department should continue to develop programs for seniors.
- Program offerings are almost all uniformly provided at individual centers.

Areas that the Department Needs to Improve

- Parks have been created where land is available rather than where population centers exist.
- Parks are not distributed equally throughout the City.
- Except for signature parks such as City Park, the general public has the impression that the overall park maintenance meets their needs but can be improved.
- The general public has the perception that many parks are unsafe.
- Many neighborhood and community parks are lacking in character and appeal and infrastructure is outdated and needs to be replaced.
- The available waterfront is under-utilized for recreation and tourism.
- Many parks are single use and only attract a select group of people.
- Most deficiencies in programming are due to unavailable spaces.
- Facilities need better maintenance and upkeep.
- Web information has not been kept up-to-date consistently and a lack of an online registration system inhibits customers from signing up for programs in a convenient manner.
- Programs with the greatest unmet needs and the greatest public desire include nature programs.
- There are numerous programs within the Department, but the public is generally unaware of them.
- Some programs have good exposure on the web, while other programs do not.
- Budget cuts to parks and recreation are an inevitable reality in the allocation of scarce resources, and the Department of Parks, Recreation, and Leisure Services must be prepared to respond and adapt to them while meeting increasing demands for services.

VALUES

(see page 86 for more information)

The following values were derived from the voice of the citizens and the extensive research by Staff and design team. The Master Plan is based on the following values:

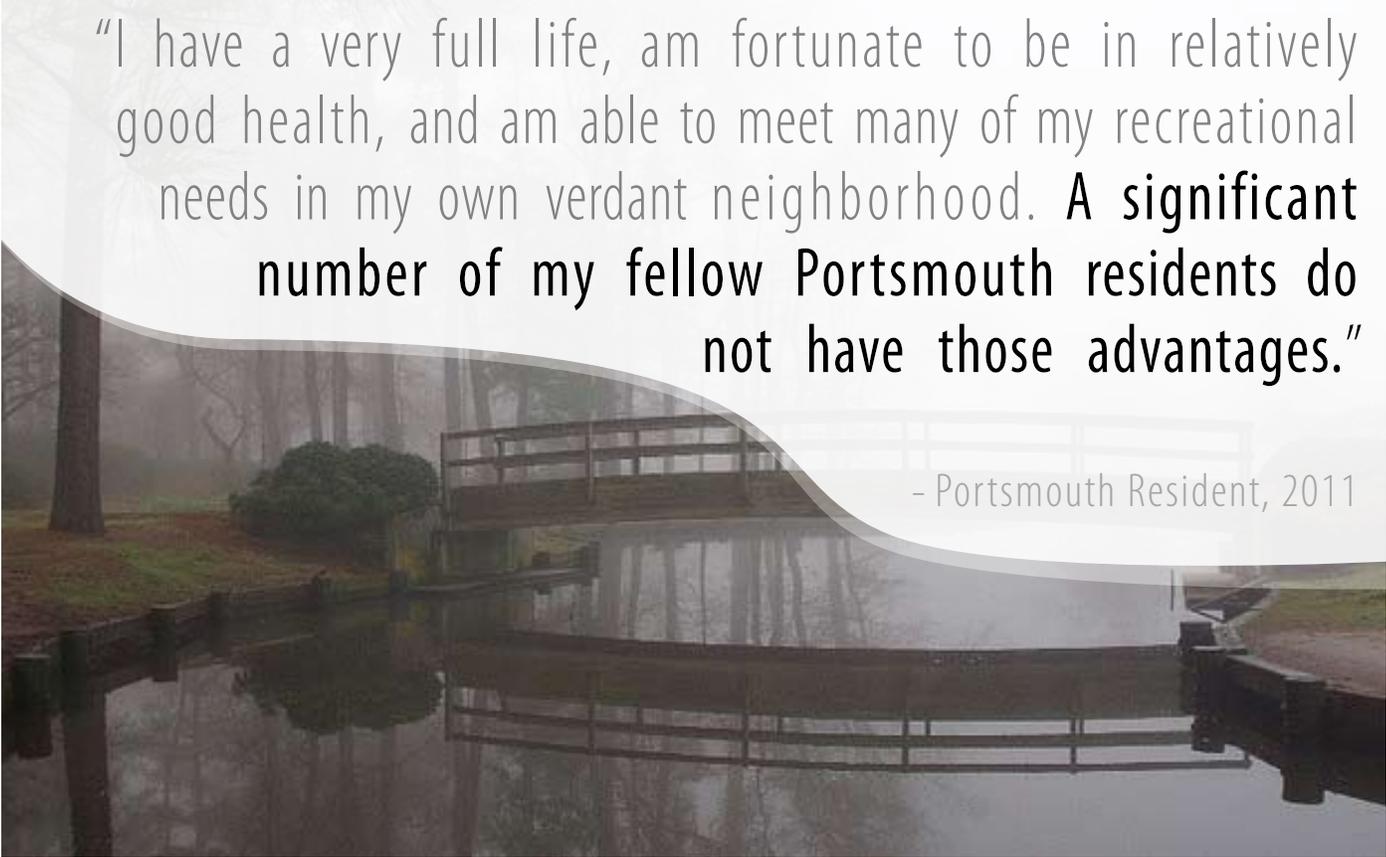
- Building better communities through quality parks, recreation, and leisure services.
- Enhancing the quality of life by distributing park locations and activities throughout the City.
- Each park requires thoughtful, sustainable design and a variety of program opportunities specific to each neighborhood within the City.
- Modifying and designing parks, open space, facilities, and services to deter crime and reduce the risk for injuries.
- Garnering a collaborative working relationship between the Parks & Recreation Department and the community to collectively improve and maintain existing parks, design and implement new facilities and/or programs, and cooperative usage throughout the park system.
- Garnering a collaborative and working relationship between the Parks & Recreation Department and Portsmouth Public Schools to jointly and mutually share facilities, both indoor and outdoor.

RECOMMENDATIONS

(see pages 87 - 105 for more information)

The vision of the Department of Parks, Recreation and Leisure Services and the values of the community work hand in hand to form the following five broad based recommendation areas:

- 1. Communication** - Actively market the assets and programs that are currently provided. Let citizens know what's happening in Parks, Recreation, and Leisure Services. Inform them of how they can shape and impact offerings of the Department. Increasing awareness will directly increase enrollment in programs.
- 2. Maintenance** - Improve maintenance practices of parks and community facilities to exceed the citizens' expectations. Care for the assets of the City in a way that creates inviting atmospheres that engenders pride in citizens.
- 3. Recreation Programs** - Provide recreation programs that support the community recreation needs and services for all levels of users, age groups, and user types. Allow them to enjoy family and friends and learn lifetime skills that create memorable experiences.
- 4. Community Facilities** - Update both indoor and outdoor community facilities to maximize their use and appreciation by the community for people of all ages and to enhance the value of sports, fitness, life skills programs, arts as well as creating social places for the community to gather and celebrate living in Portsmouth.
- 5. Additional Land** - Develop a process for evaluating, maintaining and acquiring land to expand the existing park system. It is important to implement a process that assesses the need for more park land and evaluates needs in location, function, and space.



“I have a very full life, am fortunate to be in relatively good health, and am able to meet many of my recreational needs in my own verdant neighborhood. **A significant number of my fellow Portsmouth residents do not have those advantages.**”

- Portsmouth Resident, 2011

INTRODUCTION

The Importance of Parks and Recreation

- Economic Value
- Environmental and Health Benefits
- Social Importance

The Purpose and Goals of the Portsmouth Parks, Recreation and Leisure Services Master Plan

The Master Plan Process

Quality of life is increasingly becoming an important factor for the nearly 100,000 residents who call Portsmouth home. Quality of life encompasses many areas, including the ability to get good jobs, the ability to get around the City easily, the feeling that the City is a safe place to live in, and the availability of quality homes and neighborhoods in which to live. In all of these areas Portsmouth is making great strides.

Just as water, sewer, and public safety are considered essential public services, parks and recreational services are vitally important to establishing and maintaining the quality of life in a community. Parks and recreation influence every aspect of our lives. They allow us to experience new activities and encourage us to lead healthy lifestyles. Attractive parks and natural areas are often the first place visitors view in our communities. Parks provide a very visible reminder of the beauty of the land that we choose to live in. Parks are also one of the most visible elements of a city government at work, and can instill a strong sense of pride in the residents of a community. A good park system lets both citizens and visitors know that the leadership of the City is interested in the well-being of its citizens.

Communities that pride themselves on their quality of life and promote themselves as a desirable location for businesses to relocate, show that they are environmental stewards of their natural resources and have an active system of parks and recreation programs. Parks and recreation have three values that make them essential services to communities:

- 1. Economic Value**
- 2. Health and Environmental Benefits**
- 3. Social Importance**

ECONOMIC VALUE

- Parks improve the local tax base and increase property values. It is a confirmed fact of real estate that private property values increase the closer such land is to a park. This increase in private property value due to the proximity to parks increases property tax revenues and improves local economies.
- A Texas A&M review of 25 studies investigated whether parks and open space contributed positively to the property values of surrounding properties. 20 of the 25 studies found that property values were higher. “The real estate market consistently demonstrates that many people are willing to pay a larger amount for property located close to parks and open space areas than for a home that does not offer this amenity.”
- In a number of studies, quality parks, recreation and programs/facilities are one of the top three reasons that businesses cite in giving a reason for relocating.
- Parks and recreation programs generate revenue directly from fees and charges, but more importantly, provide significant indirect revenues to local and regional economies from sports tournaments and special events, including arts, music, and holiday festivals. Economic activity from hospitality expenditures, tourism, fuel, recreational equipment sales, and many other private sector businesses is of true and sustained value to local and regional economies.
- American Forests, a national conservation organization that promotes forestry, estimates that trees in cities save \$400 billion in stormwater retention facility costs.

HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

- Parks are the places that people go to get healthy and stay fit.
- Parks and recreation programs and services contribute to the health of children, youth, adults, and seniors.
- According to studies by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, creating, improving, and promoting places to be physically active can improve individual and community health and result in a 25 percent increase of residents who exercise at least three times per week.
- A study by Penn State University showed significant correlations to reductions in stress, lowered blood pressure, and perceived physical health to the length of stay in visits to parks.
- If properly located, planned and developed, parks and protected public lands can improve water quality, protect groundwater, prevent flooding, improve the quality of the air we breathe, provide vegetative buffers to development, produce habitat for wildlife, and provide a place for children and families to connect with nature and recreate outdoors together.

SOCIAL IMPORTANCE

- Parks are a tangible reflection of the quality of life in a community. They provide identity for citizens and are a major factor in the perception of quality of life in a given community. Parks and recreation services are often given as one of the most important factors in surveys of how livable communities are.
- Parks provide gathering places for families and social groups as well as for individuals of all ages, economic status, and physical abilities regardless of their capacity to pay for access.
- An ongoing study by the Trust for Public Land shows that over the past decade, voter approval rates for bond measures to acquire parks and conserve open space exceeds 75%. Clearly, the majority of the public views parks as an essential priority for government spending.
- Parks and recreation programs provide places for health and well-being that are accessible by persons of all ages and abilities.
- In a 2007 survey of Fairfax County, VA, residents of 8 of 10 households rated a quality park system either very important or extremely important to their quality of life.
- Access to parks and recreation opportunities has been strongly linked to reductions in crime and to reduced juvenile delinquency.
- Parks have a value to communities that transcend the amount of dollars invested or the revenues gained from fees. Parks provide a sense of public pride and cohesion to every community.

The Purpose and Goals of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan:

- **To develop a comprehensive planning approach** that will result in the enhancement and potential expansion of parks, recreation, and the cultural arts for the community.
- **To provide direction** to the decision-makers, stakeholders and the general public for redevelopment, enhancement, and growth of its recreation and park system.
- **To determine values, community needs and goals** to develop support for future actions related to park and recreation program and facility development.
- **To define the needs, both current and future**, including criteria for the justification of the various needs and how they may be satisfied.
- **To align the entire organization around shared values and common goals**, ensuring that resources allocated follows agreed upon priorities.

Through the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, the following goal has been embraced by the citizens and embodies how the City of Portsmouth will deliver parks and recreation services to its residents: “Our vision for the City is that it is the healthiest place to live in Hampton Roads. We will achieve this vision by providing parks and open spaces that foster community pride and enjoyment; well-balanced recreation opportunities that encourage an active lifestyle; and community-focused programs that contribute to the positive development of youth, adults and families through involvement, partnership and collaboration with citizens and community organizations.”

The Mission Statement, Values Statement, and the Recommendations contained within the Parks and Recreation Master Plan have been developed to align with eight focus areas identified in the 2005 Comprehensive Plan. These focus areas are listed as the following:

- **Education** – A quality educational system that establishes Portsmouth as a “Center of Knowledge.”
- **Land Use** – A pattern of land use that supports the City of Portsmouth’s quality of life and economic vitality.
- **Economic Development** – A healthy, diversified economy with a strong tax base and employment opportunities for all Portsmouth residents.
- **Housing and Neighborhoods** – Quality, livable neighborhoods that retain long-time residents and attract new residents.
- **Community Facilities, Services, and Infrastructure** – Community facilities, services and infrastructure that meet citizens’ needs and contribute to quality of life in a cost effective manner.
- **Transportation** – A multi-modal transportation network with enhanced features that support the City’s quality of life and economic vitality.
- **Parks, Open Space, and Environment** – A quality system of parks, open space, greenways and protected natural resources.
- **Community Appearance** – An attractive, clean community that instills pride in residents, contributes to the appeal of the City for visitors and earns the reputation of being the cleanest municipality in the Hampton Roads region.

The Comprehensive Plan provides more details, but states, “a comprehensive parks and recreation plan is needed to fully inventory existing recreational facilities and programs available to city residents, define current and projected needs based upon the inventory and a demographic analysis of Portsmouth’s population, and develop strategies and actions to meet those needs.”

The City's Comprehensive Plan

identified the need to develop a comprehensive parks and recreation plan that defines the needs of Portsmouth's citizens for parks and recreational facilities and identify strategies to meet these needs. As the Comprehensive Plan identified, significant portions of the City are underserved by neighborhood and community parks using standard service area radii.

To assist in the planning effort, the City retained a consulting team consisting of Commonwealth Architects and Cite Design (formerly Design Forum), both of Richmond, Virginia.

The general process (see diagram below) began with a project kickoff, followed by the development of a list of challenges. Solutions followed the challenges which culminated in the master plan. The first phase of the study began by gathering information. It included three categories of information gathering:

Data

- Existing inventory
- Demographics
- Other studies relating to Portsmouth's parks/open space

People

- Residents
- Key stakeholders
- Dept of Parks, Recreation and Leisure Services

Trends

- Key trends in recreation
- National standards

Based on the research as noted, especially the public input and key stakeholder interviews, the design team was able to create a set of values for the residents of Portsmouth that are unique to Portsmouth. Ultimately, the Master Plan will reflect the Values where residents place the most importance.

The Values, along with all of the background research, were presented in two public Open Houses in Portsmouth (in addition to being online) to ensure everyone agreed with the Values and were "on-board" before proceeding to the next phase.

The next phase included the development of Recommendations in order to achieve these Values. Within the Recommendations are Areas of Action. As with the Values Phase, the Recommendations were presented in two public Open Houses, as well as posting online. Citizen input was recorded and when suggestions and ideas were in-concert with the overall values, they were incorporated into the final Master Plan.

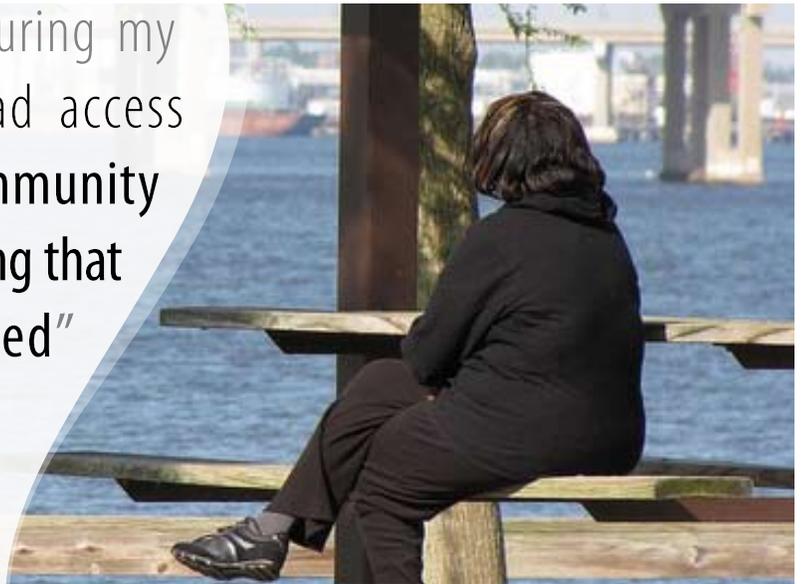
The Master Plan is a tool that can be used by City leaders and the Department of Parks, Recreation and Leisure Services as it is intended to provide guidance to the Department's process of planning, growth, and resource allocation to create a cohesive and dynamic park and recreation system.

More details and information on each of the items discussed above follows in this Master Plan.



“I wanted to live in a city during my retirement years where I had access to many **free and open community programs and activities** knowing that **my income would be limited**”

- Portsmouth Resident, 2011



PART 1

The Park Movement in Portsmouth

Portsmouth's Department of Parks, Recreation, & Leisure Services

Mission Statement and Inventory of Parks & Recreation Centers

Overall Parks Map

Pocket Parks - Map and General Characteristics

Neighborhood Parks - Map and General Characteristics

Community Parks - Map and General Characteristics

Regional Parks - Map and General Characteristics

Specialty Parks - Map and General Characteristics

Recreation Centers - Map and General Characteristics

Schools - Map and General Characteristics

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Other Studies

Waterfront Access Study

Transportation Plan

Downtown Master Plan and Waterfront Strategy

Case Studies

“Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design”

“Joint Use of Public Schools - A Framework for a Social Contract”

“Promoting Physical Activity through the Shared Use of School and Community Recreational Resources”

“What Makes a Good Urban Park?”

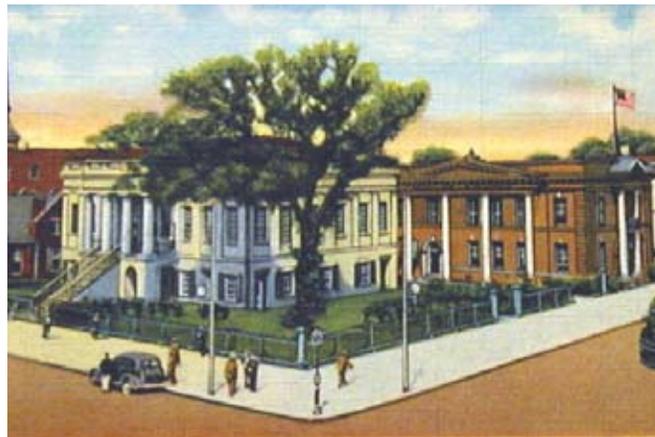
The original layout of Portsmouth is based upon early town planning that was established by the Royal government in Virginia. Early statutes of 1691 and 1709 dictated the size, road-orientation, and plan for Portsmouth and all Virginian towns. The statutes for Portsmouth decreed that towns contain 15 blocks, primary north-south and east-west roads, and be comprised of 1/2 acre lots. The 65 acres in Colonel William Crawford’s plan of Portsmouth in 1752 was based upon the last statute passed in 1709. Some colonial cities, like Savannah, incorporated parks into the town plan but most, like Portsmouth, saw no need for parks and open space.

Portsmouth continued to grow in both land size and population. From 1840 to 1910 the population increased from 6,477 to 54,387. Still, parks or open space were not viewed as a necessity and none were allocated as the city grew. Coinciding with the Industrial Revolution, Portsmouth’s focus on the waterfront was not for recreational activities, but industry as Portsmouth’s waterfront became a working waterfront.

The City Beautiful Movement was a reform philosophy concerning North American architecture and urban planning that flourished during the 1890s and 1900s. The overall intent was beautification and monumental grandeur in cities. The philosophy promoted beauty not for its own sake, but rather to create moral and civic

virtue among urban populations. Advocates of the philosophy believed that such beautification could promote a harmonious social order, thus increasing the quality of life.

The combination of the Industrial Revolution and the City Beautiful Movement caused many cities to develop parks. Urban parks became a place that provided opportunities to partake of “invigorating air” and to participate in the “interchange of social affections.” Portsmouth, however, still did not engage in developing parks for its citizens.



The awareness and needs for parks and open space was growing in Portsmouth after WWII. Not only did the population boom after World War II, but

Portsmouth grew in area as well. Like so many colonial cities, finding park space within the existing city was a challenge but since the City was also expanding in land mass, it also brought the possibility of creating parks. Maplewood Park and Point Pleasant Park were developed in the 1940’s, but the 1960’s brought the largest development of parks and open space with the openings of City Park and the City Park Golf Course, as well as several ‘ball field parks’ such as Douglass Park, Cradock Middle Ballfield, and South Street Ballfield. From the first designated park in 1946, Portsmouth has seen the development of 48 parks and recreation centers totaling over 500 acres located throughout the city. Of the current parks, many have been planned and incorporated into neighborhoods while others have taken advantage of an opportunity such as vacant lot.

Portsmouth will most likely continue to grow in population, but its land mass cannot increase. Growth by annexation is no longer an option. According to the Portsmouth Comprehensive Plan, Portsmouth, even with zero population growth, is already deficient in regards to

The City’s undertaking of a Parks and Recreation Master Plan is a huge step for the City. For most of Portsmouth’s history, parks and open space have not been a priority. With the new Master Plan, the City will have a road map that reflects the needs and desires of the citizens of today and tomorrow.

The Mission Statement

“ Our vision for the City is that we become the healthiest place to live in Hampton Roads. We will achieve this vision by providing parks and open spaces that foster community pride and enjoyment; well-balanced recreation opportunities that encourage an active and wholesome lifestyle; and community-focused programs that contribute to the positive development of youth, adults and families through involvement, partnership and collaboration with citizens and community organizations. ”

The **Mission Statement** is the overarching goal and vision that the Department of Parks, Recreation and Leisure Services strives to achieve. The Mission Statement, as derived by the public in during the master plan process, is a tool that citizens can use to measure to the expectations and the performance of the Department.

INVENTORY OF PARKS AND RECREATION CENTERS

The parks and recreation centers in Portsmouth include (in alphabetical order) the following:

Recreation Centers

- Cavalier Manor Recreation Center
- Cradock Recreation Center
- JE Parker Center
- JFK Center
- Neighborhood Facility
- Port Norfolk Recreation Center
- Senior Station

Parks

- Bide-A-Wee Golf Course
- Bishops Green Open Space
- Bon Secours Green Space
- Cavalier Manor Athletic Area
- Charles Peete Little League
- Churchland Little League
- Churchland Park
- City Park
- City Park Golf Course
- Cottage Place Park

- Cradock Middle Ballfield
- Douglass Park Ballfield
- Ebony Heights Park
- Eighth and Jefferson Park
- Elm Avenue Neighborhood Facility
- Fort Nelson Park
- Fountain Park
- Hattonsville Park
- Highland and Lansing Park
- Highland Biltmore Ballfield
- Hodges Manor Soccer
- Hoffler Creek Wildlife Preserve
- Hunt Mapp (Wilson Little League)
- George Washington Park
- Gosport Park
- John Tyler Soccer
- Lafayette Arch Park
- Lake Shores Green Space 'A'
- Lake Shores Green Space 'B'
- Maplewood Park
- Middle Street Park
- Mount Hermon Park
- North Street Park
- Owens Creek Park
- Paradise Creek Park
- Point Pleasant Park
- Reflection Walk Park
- Scotts Creek Park
- Simonsdale Athletic Complex
- South Street Ballfield
- Stone Mill / Hidden Cove Green Space
- Washington Street Park
- Waverly Park
- Westmoreland Recreation Area

BIDE-A-WEE GOLF COURSE

1 Bide-A-Wee Lane
Built in 1992

129.00 ACRES

100 OFF-STREET PARKING

0 ON-STREET PARKING

18-HOLE GOLF COURSE

BISHOPS GREEN SPACE

5900-Block Knightsbridge Way
Built in 1998

1.30 ACRES

0 OFF-STREET PARKING

5 ON-STREET PARKING

BON SECOURS GREEN SPACE

High Street West at Bon Secours Way
Built in 2000

1.10 ACRES

0 OFF-STREET PARKING

0 ON-STREET PARKING

CAVALIER MANOR ATHLETIC AREA

900 Freedom Avenue
Built in 1973

15.62 ACRES

50 OFF-STREET PARKING

50 ON-STREET PARKING

1 FOOTBALL FIELD

3 BASEBALL FIELDS (YOUTH)

1 SOFTBALL FIELD (YOUTH)

6 TENNIS COURTS

CAVALIER MANOR RECREATION AREA

404 Viking Street
Built in 1973

7.75 ACRES

40 OFF-STREET PARKING

0 ON-STREET PARKING

1 BASKETBALL COURT (OUTDOOR)

1 BASKETBALL COURT (INDOOR)

1 PLAYGROUND

1 POOL (OUTDOOR)

1-mile EXERCISE TRAIL

CHARLES PEETE LITTLE LEAGUE

2400 Elliot Avenue
Built in 1980

4.49 ACRES

50 OFF-STREET PARKING

0 ON-STREET PARKING

2 BASEBALL FIELDS (YOUTH)

CHURCHLAND LITTLE LEAGUE

5601 Michael Lane
Built in 1981

4.00 ACRES

40 OFF-STREET PARKING

0 ON-STREET PARKING

1 FOOTBALL FIELD

3 BASEBALL FIELDS (YOUTH)

CHURCHLAND PARK

4200 Cedar Lane
Built in 1977

37.90 ACRES

75 OFF-STREET PARKING

0 ON-STREET PARKING

11 SOCCER FIELDS

1 SOFTBALL FIELD (YOUTH)

3 SOFTBALL FIELDS (ADULT)

6 TENNIS COURT

1 PLAYGROUND

CITY PARK

100 CPL JM Williams Avenue
Built in 1965, Renovated in 1988

30.00 ACRES

348 OFF-STREET PARKING

0 ON-STREET PARKING

4 TENNIS COURTS

2 VOLLEYBALL COURTS

2 PLAYGROUNDS

1 AMPHITHEATRE

12 PICNIC SHELTERS

2 POWER BOAT RAMPS

1 SMALL WATERCRAFT LAUNCH

1 POKEY SMOKEY TRAIN

1 FRIENDSHIP GARDEN

CITY PARK GOLF COURSE

100 CPL JM Williams Avenue
Built in 1965, Renovated in 1988

25.00 ACRES

PARKING SHARED WITH City Park

9-Hole GOLF COURSE

CRADOCK MIDDLE BALLFIELD

21 Aldren Avenue
Built in 1967

18.00 ACRES

30 OFF-STREET PARKING
40 ON-STREET PARKING

1 SOFTBALL FIELD (ADULT)

PROPOSED IN 2012/1213

1 SOCCER FIELD
1 FOOTBALL FIELD
1 MULTI-PURPOSE BUILDING

CRADOCK RECREATION CENTER

4300 George Washington Highway
Built in 1992 (SEE NOTE BELOW)

5.00 ACRES

72 OFF-STREET PARKING
0 ON-STREET PARKING

1 FOOTBALL FIELD
1 BASEBALL FIELD (YOUTH)
1 INDOOR BASKETBALL COURT
1 PLAYGROUND

The Cradock Recreation Center, athletic fields, and recreation open space are proposed to close at its current location in 2012 in conjunction with the first phase of a residential development. The developer and the City have proposed to construct of a new recreation building and athletic fields on the Cradock Middle School campus. However, the shared use of the gymnasium, athletic fields, and open space on the Portsmouth Public Schools properties with programmed school activities will necessarily mean a reduction of recreation services and flexibility of use.

DOUGLASS PARK BALLFIELD

Manteo Street at Calvin Street
Built in 1964

2.00 ACRES

0 OFF-STREET PARKING
50 ON-STREET PARKING

1 SOFTBALL FIELD (ADULT)

EBONY HEIGHTS PARK

Tyre Neck Road
Built in 1976

2.28 ACRES

20 OFF-STREET PARKING
0 ON-STREET PARKING

2 BASKETBALL (OUTDOOR)
1 PICNIC SHELTER

EIGHTH and JEFFERSON

Eighth Street at Jefferson Street
Built in 1976

2.06 ACRES

0 OFF-STREET PARKING
20 ON-STREET PARKING
1 PLAYGROUND

ELM AVENUE NEIGHBORHOOD FACILITY

900 Elm Avenue
Built in 1970

1.87 ACRES

20 OFF-STREET PARKING
0 ON-STREET PARKING

1 BASKETBALL COURT (INDOOR)
1 PLAYGROUND
1 SPLASH PARK

FORT NELSON PARK

700 Crawford Parkway
Built in 2003

4.00 ACRES

0 OFF-STREET PARKING
0 ON-STREET PARKING

FOUNTAIN PARK

601 Broad Street

2.32 ACRES

0 OFF-STREET PARKING
20 ON-STREET PARKING

2 PLAYGROUNDS
2 PICNIC SHELTERS

GEORGE WASHINGTON PARK

4117 George Washington Highway

1.16 ACRES

0 OFF-STREET PARKING
50 ON-STREET PARKING

1 SKATEBOARD PARK

GOSPORT PARK

Lincoln Street at First Street
Built in 2002

2.00 ACRES

0 OFF-STREET PARKING
2 ON-STREET PARKING

HATTONSVILLE PARK

1919 Laigh Road
Built in 1992

0.37 ACRES

0 OFF-STREET PARKING
3 ON-STREET PARKING

HIGHLAND and LANSING PARK

1535 Highland Avenue

0.62 ACRES

0 OFF-STREET PARKING
10 ON-STREET PARKING
1 BASKETBALL COURT (OUTDOOR)
1 PLAYGROUND (SWINGS ONLY)

HIGHLAND BILTMORE BALLFIELD

2700 Elliott Avenue

3.00 ACRES

60 OFF-STREET PARKING
0 ON-STREET PARKING
1 SOFTBALL FIELD (ADULT)
1 PLAYGROUND

HODGES MANOR SOCCER

1201 Cherokee Road
Built in 1956

7.00 ACRES

60 OFF-STREET PARKING
0 ON-STREET PARKING
6 SOCCER FIELDS

HOFFLER CREEK WILDLIFE REFUGE

4510 Twin Pines Road
Built in 1997

142.00 ACRES

30 OFF-STREET PARKING
0 ON-STREET PARKING
1 NATURE TRAIL
1 CANOE / KAYAK LAUNCH

HUNT MAPP (WILSON LITTLE LEAGUE)

3701 Willett Drive
Built in 1997

10.00 ACRES

80 OFF-STREET PARKING
0 ON-STREET PARKING
3 BASEBALL FIELDS (YOUTH)
3 SOFTBALL FIELDS (YOUTH)

JE PARKER CENTER

2430 Turnpike Road
Built in 1981

3.49 ACRES

28 OFF-STREET PARKING
10 ON-STREET PARKING
1 BASEBALL FIELD (YOUTH)
1 BASKETBALL COURT (INDOOR)
1 PLAYGROUND

JFK CENTER

12 Grand Street
Built in 1964

5.00 ACRES

10 OFF-STREET PARKING
0 ON-STREET PARKING
1 BASKETBALL COURT (OUTDOOR)

JOHN TYLER SOCCER

3649 Hartford Street
Built in 1997

6.00 ACRES

300+ OFF-STREET PARKING
0 ON-STREET PARKING
4 SOCCER FIELDS

LAFAYETTE ARCH PARK

407 Crawford Street
Built in 1974

0.18 ACRES

0 OFF-STREET PARKING
0 ON-STREET PARKING

LAKE SHORES GREEN SPACE 'A'

400 Block of Lake Shores Drive
Built in 2000

0.38 ACRES

0 OFF-STREET PARKING
3 ON-STREET PARKING

LAKE SHORES GREEN SPACE 'B'

500 Block of Potomac Avenue
Built in 2000

1.0 ACRES

0 OFF-STREET PARKING
30 ON-STREET PARKING

MAPLEWOOD PARK

3235 Portsmouth Boulevard
Built in 1948

1.82 ACRES

20 OFF-STREET PARKING
20 ON-STREET PARKING

1 BASKETBALL COURT (OUTDOOR)

MIDDLE and GLASGOW PARK

402 Middle Street
Built in 1974

0.18 ACRES

0 OFF-STREET PARKING
4 ON-STREET PARKING

MIDDLE and GLASGOW PLAYGROUND

411 Middle Street
Built in 1975

0.13 ACRES

0 OFF-STREET PARKING
6 ON-STREET PARKING

1 PLAYGROUND

MOUNT HERMON PARK

901 Florida Avenue

1.66 ACRES

0 OFF-STREET PARKING
30 ON-STREET PARKING

1 BASKETBALL COURT (OUTDOOR)
1 PLAYGROUND

NORTH and DINWIDDIE PARK

509 North Street
Built in 1984

0.85 ACRES

0 OFF-STREET PARKING
8 ON-STREET PARKING

OWENS CREEK PARK

1500 Block McDaniel Street
Built in 2004

1.00 ACRES

0 OFF-STREET PARKING
20 ON-STREET PARKING

PARADISE CREEK PARK

1009 Victory Boulevard

40 ACRES

25 OFF-STREET PARKING
0 ON-STREET PARKING

2-miles NATURE TRAILS

PROPOSED IN 2015

BOAT LAUNCH/RAMP (KAYAK)
PICNIC SHELTERS
ADDITIONAL PARKING
EDUCATIONAL PAVILION
CHILDREN'S PLAY AREA

POINT PLEASANT PARK

4815 High Street West
Built in 1946

2.82 ACRES

0 OFF-STREET PARKING
10 ON-STREET PARKING

PORT NORFOLK RECREATION CENTER

432 Broad Street

0.39 ACRES

0 OFF-STREET PARKING
8 ON-STREET PARKING

REFLECTION WALK PARK

Bayview Boulevard at Florida Avenue
Built in 2004

5.70 ACRES

0 OFF-STREET PARKING
10 ON-STREET PARKING

SCOTTS CREEK PARK

London Boulevard at Constitution Ave
Built in 2006

4.00 ACRES

0 OFF-STREET PARKING
30 ON-STREET PARKING

SENIOR STATION

3500 Clifford Street
Built in 2002

0.45 ACRES

26 OFF-STREET PARKING
10 ON-STREET PARKING

SIMONSDALE ATHLETIC COMPLEX

Clifford Street at City Park Avenue
Built in 2012

10.00 ACRES

PARKING AVAILABILITY UNKNOWN

5 BASEBALL FIELDS (YOUTH)

1 SOFTBALL FIELD (YOUTH)

SOUTH STREET BALLFIELD

4100 South Street
Built in 1964

2.00 ACRES

40 OFF-STREET PARKING

0 ON-STREET PARKING

1 SOFTBALL FIELD (ADULT)

ST. JULIENS CREEK/CRADOCK LITTLE LEAGUE

1700 Block of Victory Boulevard

4.20 ACRES

100+ OFF-STREET PARKING

0 ON-STREET PARKING

6 BASEBALL FIELDS (YOUTH)

STONE MILL/HIDDEN COVE GREEN SPACE

4200 Block of Sedgewyck Circle
Built in 2001

4.20 ACRES

0 OFF-STREET PARKING

8 ON-STREET PARKING

WESTMORELAND RECREATION AREA

3423 Wheatfield Drive
Built in 1976

0.56 ACRES

0 OFF-STREET PARKING

6 ON-STREET PARKING

INVENTORY OF EXISTING AMENITIES

(DOES NOT INCLUDE CRADOCK RECREATION CENTER BUT DOES INCLUDE CRADOCK MIDDLE BALLFIELDS)

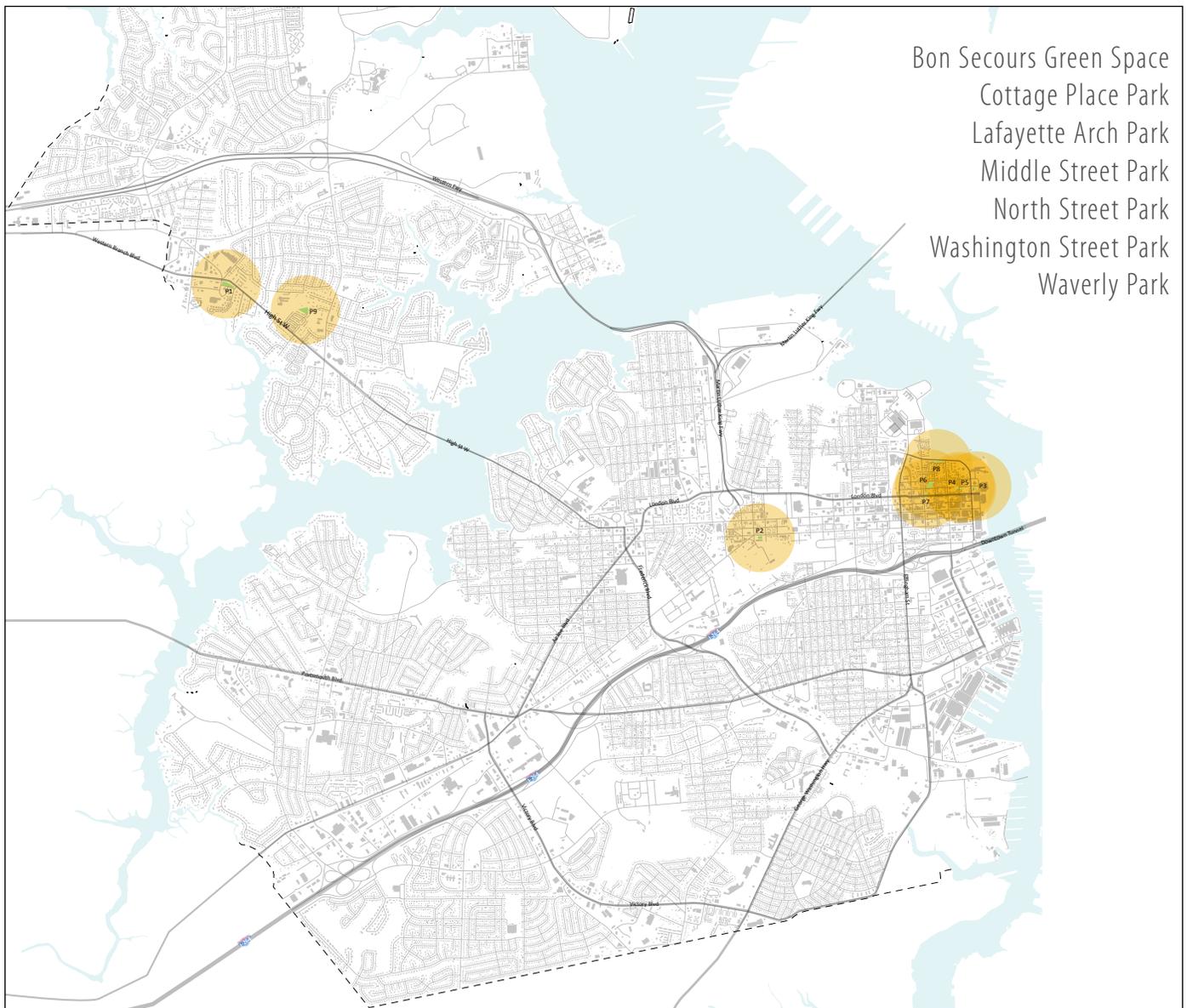
FIELDS	SOCCER	22
	FOOTBALL	3
	BASEBALL (YOUTH)	23
	BASEBALL (ADULT)	0
	SOFTBALL (YOUTH)	5
	SOFTBALL (ADULT)	7

OUTDOOR	TRACK	0
	EXERCISE TRAIL	1-mile
	EXERCISE STATIONS	0
	BIKE TRAIL	0
	EQUESTRIAN TRAIL	0
	NATURE TRAIL	3-miles

OTHER	PLAYGROUNDS	13
	GOLF	27-holes
	DISC GOLF	0
	AMPHITHEATRE	1
	ARCHERY	0
	SKATEBOARD	1
PICNIC SHELTERS	15	

COURTS	TENNIS	16
	BASKETBALL (OUTDOOR) ..	7
	BASKETBALL (INDOOR) ..	3
	HANDBALL	0
	SHUFFLEBOARD	0
	HORSESHOE	0
	VOLLEYBALL	2
	BADMINTON	0

WATER	SPLASH PARKS	1
	POOL (OUTDOOR)	1
	POOL (INDOOR)	0
	BEACH	0
	BOAT LAUNCH / RAMP	4
	DOCK	0
	MARINA	0



The smallest park classification, **pocket parks** includes urban plazas, tot-lots, or landscaped public areas. Mini-parks generally have a localized service area.

Function: In an urban, neighborhood setting, pocket parks may provide a formal space for those with limited yards. In many cases a pocket park may provide outdoor play experiences for youth under parental supervision. Pocket parks generate neighborhood communication and provide diversion from work and domestic chores while promoting neighborhood solidarity.

Size: Generally one acre or less

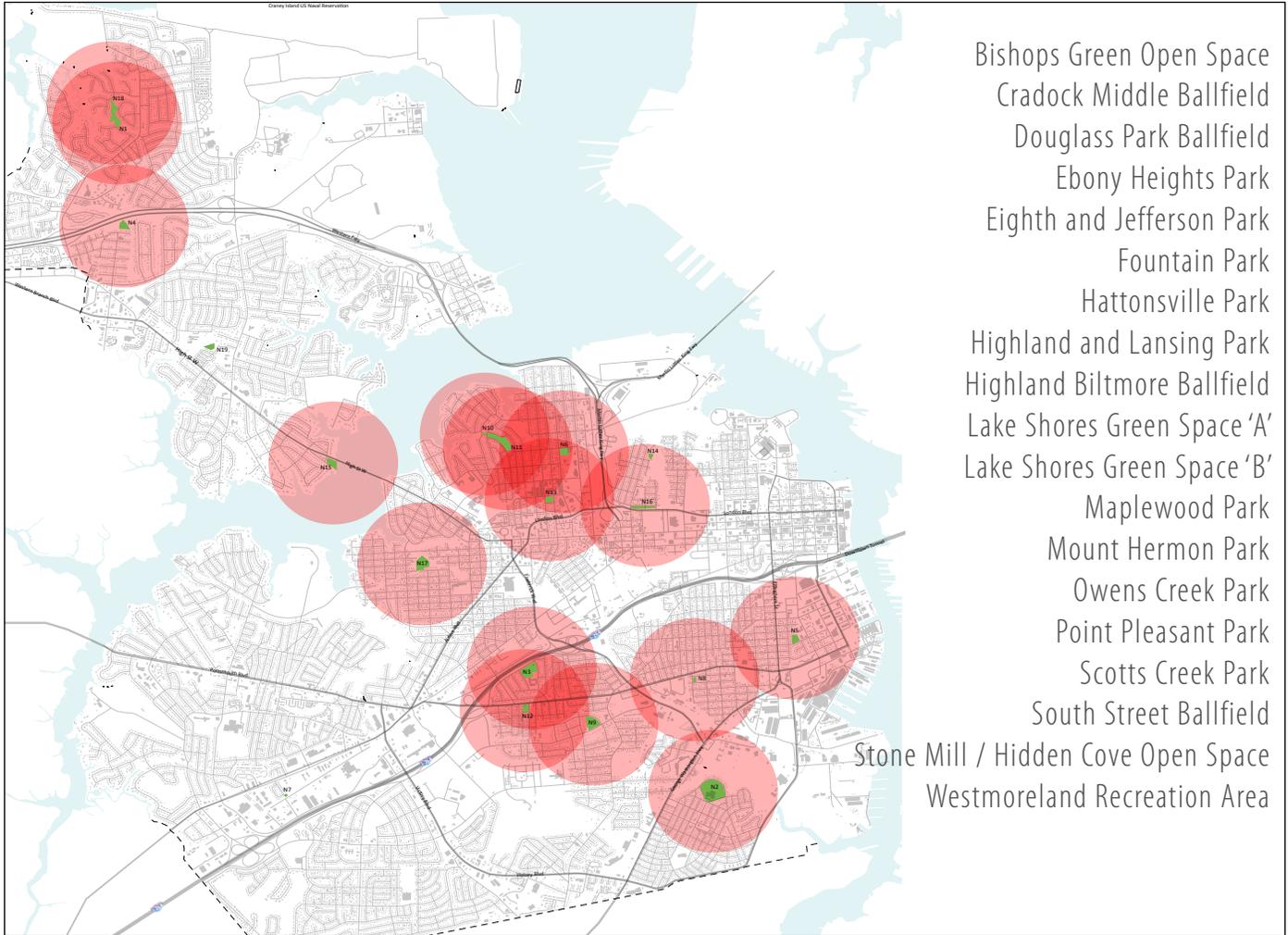
Service Area: .25 mile radius

Length of Stay: One hour experience or less

Parking: None

Basic Facilities and Activities:

- Playground equipment and structures for pre-school and elementary school age children
- Conversation and sitting areas arranged to permit easy surveillance by parents
- Landscaped areas that provide buffering and shade
- Lighting for security at night (direct cut-off)



- Bishops Green Open Space
- Cradock Middle Ballfield
- Douglass Park Ballfield
- Ebony Heights Park
- Eighth and Jefferson Park
- Fountain Park
- Hattonsville Park
- Highland and Lansing Park
- Highland Biltmore Ballfield
- Lake Shores Green Space 'A'
- Lake Shores Green Space 'B'
- Maplewood Park
- Mount Hermon Park
- Owens Creek Park
- Point Pleasant Park
- Scotts Creek Park
- South Street Ballfield
- Stone Mill / Hidden Cove Open Space
- Westmoreland Recreation Area

A **neighborhood park** by size, program, and location provides space and recreation activities for the immediate neighborhood in which it is located. It is considered an extension of neighborhood residents 'out-of-yard' and outdoor use area.

Function: Neighborhood parks provide a combination of active recreation and passive activities, both outdoor and indoor facilities and special features as required or needed.

Size: Generally 1 to 5 acres

Service Area: Generally a half-mile radius, but actually defined by collector street patterns which form the limits of a neighborhood or recreation service area and the size of the park

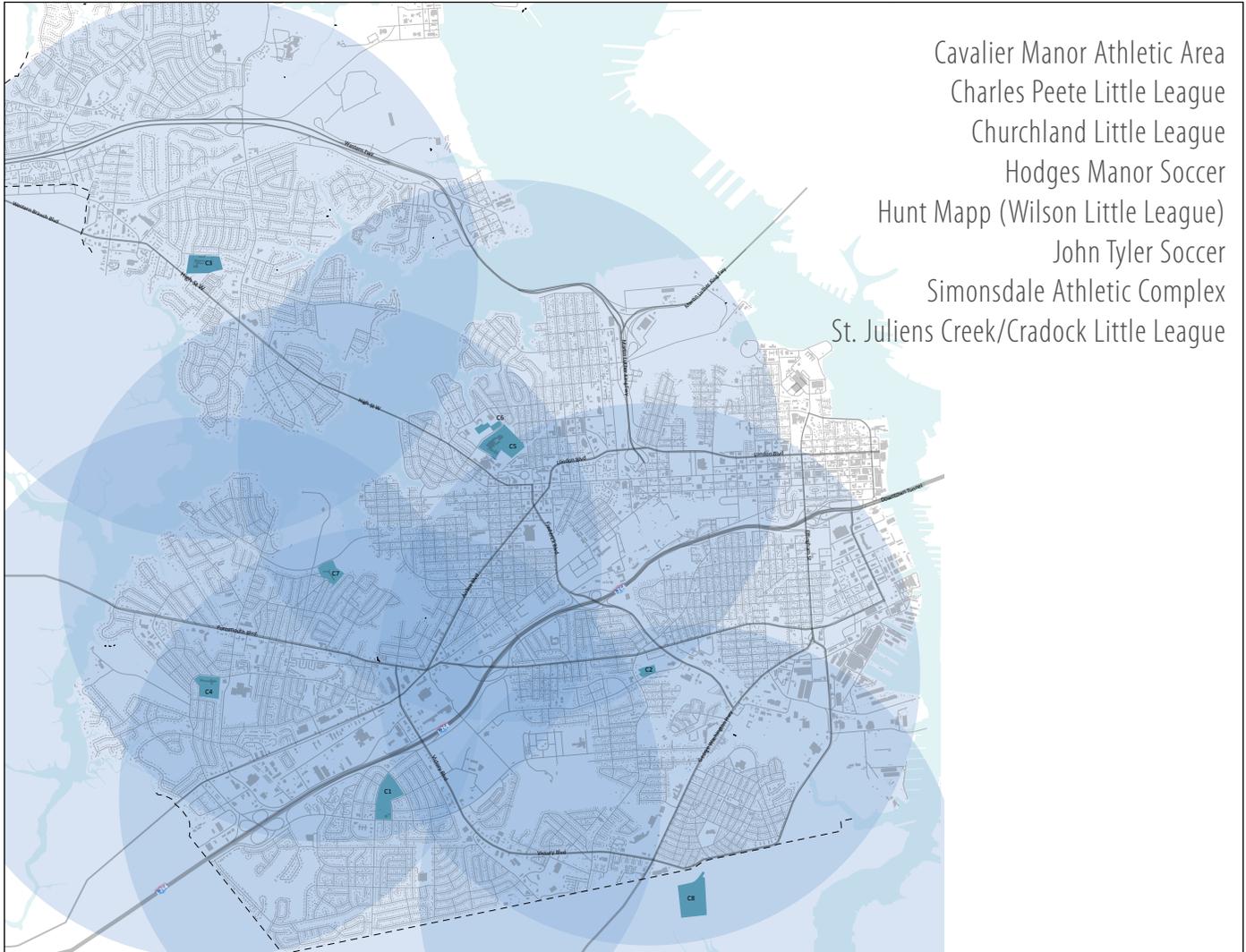
Length of Stay: One hour experience or less

Parking: 10 to 20 vehicles with bike racks where park users can safely bike to the park

Basic Facilities & Activities: Compatible with the neighborhood setting and park site constraints

Neighborhood parks may include the following facilities:

- Active recreational facilities such as playfields, tennis courts, basketball courts, and playgrounds
- Passive recreational facilities such as picnic/sitting areas and nature areas
- Service buildings for shelter, storage, and restrooms
- Lighting for security at night (direct cut-off)
- Not intended to be used for activities that result in overuse, noise, and increased traffic with the exception of limited use by youth teams



- Cavalier Manor Athletic Area
- Charles Peete Little League
- Churchland Little League
- Hodges Manor Soccer
- Hunt Mapp (Wilson Little League)
- John Tyler Soccer
- Simonsdale Athletic Complex
- St. Juliens Creek/Cradock Little League

Community parks are larger than neighborhood parks and generally serve multiple neighborhoods.

Function: Community parks may include areas for intense recreation activities such as sports fields for games and tournaments and have quality facilities to meet these needs, swimming pools, tennis courts, volleyball courts, playgrounds, etc. Opportunities may exist for passive recreation such as trails for walking and biking, fishing, viewsheds, sitting and picnicking.

Size: Generally 10 - 50 acres

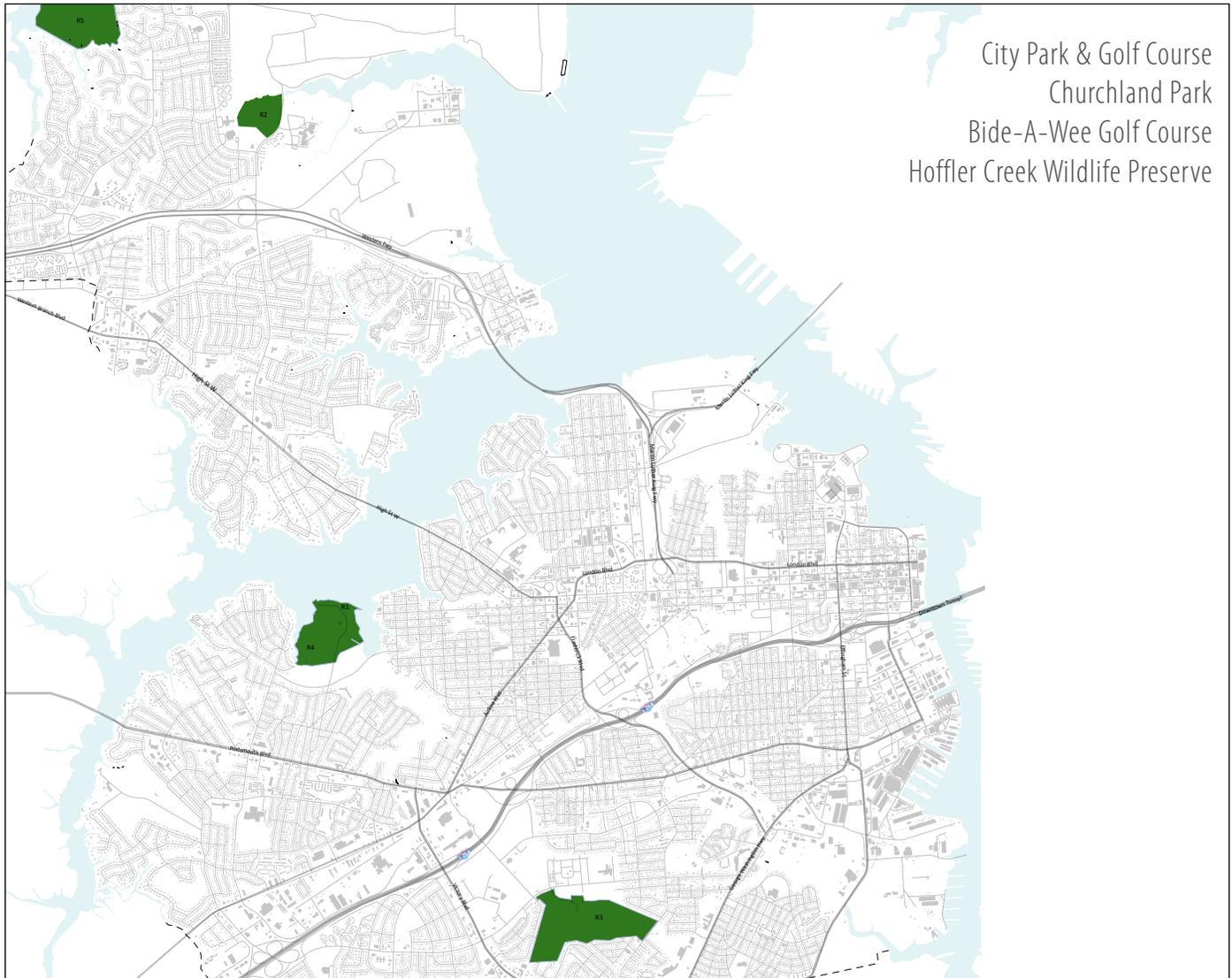
Service Area: Generally a 2 mile radius

Length of Stay: 2 - 3 hour experience

Parking: Off-street parking is typically provided with the addition of limited on-street parking. Community parks often include bike racks where biking is safe for park users. Public transportation is encouraged.

Basic Facilities & Activities:

- Active recreational facilities such as areas for swimming and boating, biking/walking trails, playfields, playgrounds, tennis courts, and basketball courts
- Passive recreational facilities such as walking trails, picnic/sitting areas, and nature study areas
- Service buildings for shelter, storage, and restrooms
- Facilities for cultural activities, such as plays and concerts in the park
- Community Center building with multi-use rooms for crafts, theater, restrooms, social activities, and senior adult use
- Lighting for fields and security at night (direct cut-off)



Regional parks typically provide more diverse recreational opportunities than community or neighborhood parks and serve the entire city.

Function: A regional park focuses on activities and natural features not included in most parks and are often based on a specific scenic or recreational opportunity. Facilities could include those found in a community park but also have specialized features such as an amphitheater, boating facility, golf course, historic site, or natural areas with trails. Regional parks usually include an indoor recreation building.

Size: Generally 50+ acres

Service Area: Potentially an entire city

Length of Stay: Typically an all day experience

Parking: Off-street parking is typically provided with the addition of limited on-street parking. Regional parks often include bike racks where biking is safe for park users. Public transportation is encouraged.

Basic Facilities & Activities:

- Active recreational facilities that may be the sole location within the city, such as golf, indoor sports complexes, natatorium, etc.
- Passive recreational facilities such as walking trails, picnic/sitting areas, and nature study areas
- Service buildings for shelter, storage, and restrooms
- Facilities for cultural activities, such as plays and concerts in the park
- Community Center building with multi-use rooms for crafts, theater, restrooms, social activities, and senior adult use



Fort Nelson Park
George Washington Park
Gosport Park
Reflection Walk Park

Specialty parks are enterprises created to satisfy demand for a particular sport, recreational activity, or special event. A special use park may also be a sports park combined with enterprise activities and administered as a community recreation resource.

Function: Special events, fairs, festivals, expositions, symposiums, sports, community gatherings, ethnic/cultural celebrations, plays and numerous other recreational programs and activities, skate parks, splash parks, nature trails.

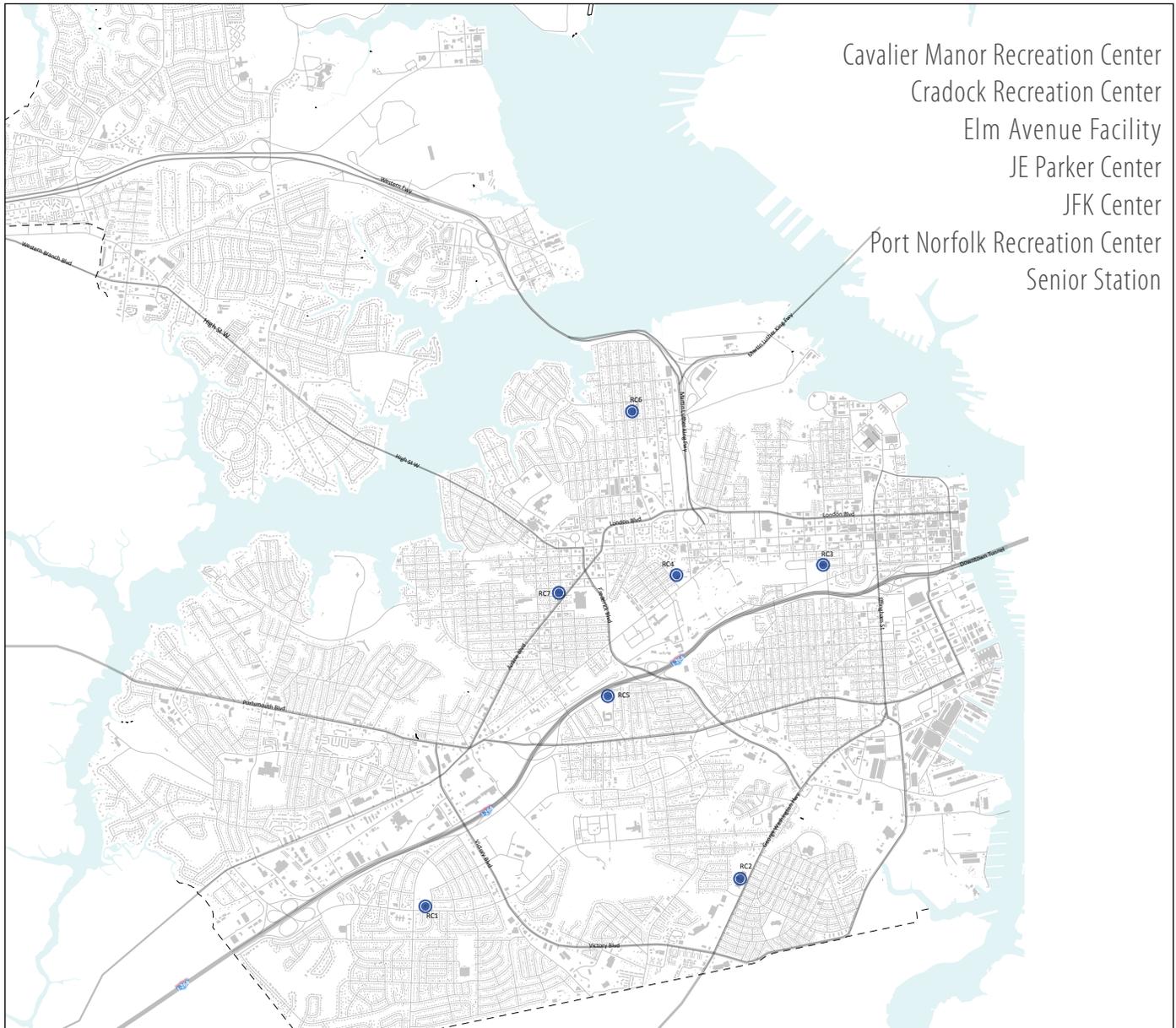
Size: The actual size of a special use park is determined by land availability and facility/market demand for special uses or recreation programs

Service Area: Community or area-wide and determined by the type of recreation program, special events or use activities

Length of Stay: Varies depending on programmed activities

Parking: Off-street parking is typically provided with the addition of limited on-street parking

Basic Facilities and Activities: Varies depending on programmed activities



Recreation centers are facilities which provide indoor space for classes, meetings and other activities. Athletic and exercise equipment may or may not be a component.

Function: Special events, programmed activities and classes, community meeting space and fitness.

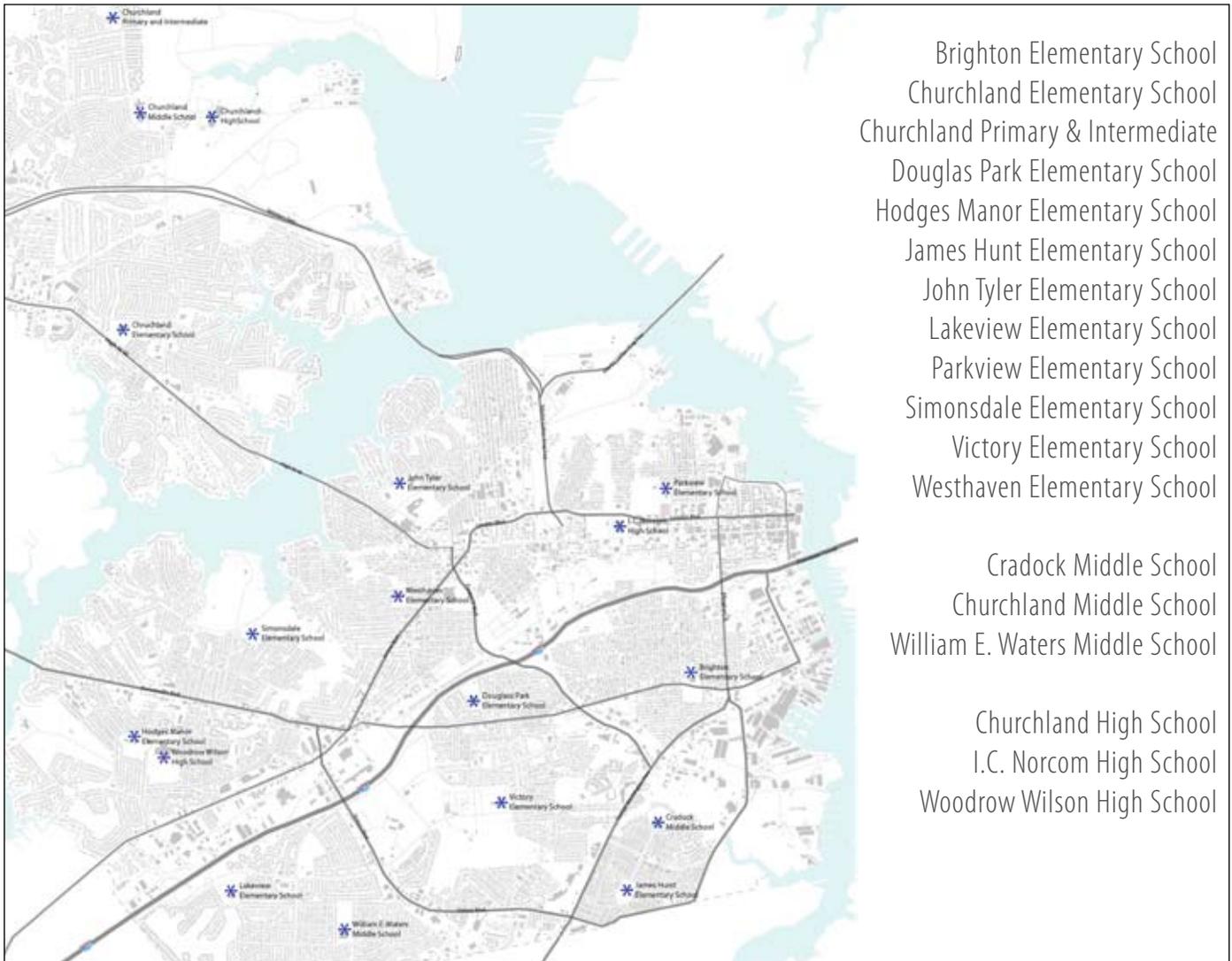
Size: Can vary from a small single-purpose structure to multi-storied full service facility.

Service Area: Community or area-wide and determined by the size of the facility and services offered.

Length of Stay: Varies depending on activities.

Parking: Can be on or off-street parking. Off-street is preferred, especially for larger facilities.

Basic Facilities and Activities: Varies depending on activities, but at a minimum includes indoor flexible classroom/meeting space and restroom facilities. Activities can range from arts and crafts to yoga to lectures and meetings. If a gymnasium, indoor pool or exercise equipment room can be included.



Brighton Elementary School
Churchland Elementary School
Churchland Primary & Intermediate
Douglas Park Elementary School
Hodges Manor Elementary School
James Hunt Elementary School
John Tyler Elementary School
Lakeview Elementary School
Parkview Elementary School
Simonsdale Elementary School
Victory Elementary School
Westhaven Elementary School

Cradock Middle School
Churchland Middle School
William E. Waters Middle School

Churchland High School
I.C. Norcom High School
Woodrow Wilson High School

Currently, **school parks or buildings** in Portsmouth are not automatically available for public use. By combining the resources of two public agencies, the school park classification allows for expanding the recreational, social, and educational opportunities available to the community in an efficient and cost-effective manner.

Depending on the circumstances, school park sites often complement other community recreation or open lands. As an example, an elementary/middle school site could also serve as a neighborhood park. Likewise, middle or high school sports facilities could do double duty as a community park or as youth athletic fields. Given the inherent variability of type, size and location, determining how a school park site is integrated into a larger park system will depend on case-by-case circumstances.

Subsequently, the important outcome in the joint-use relationship is that both the school district and park system benefit from shared use of facilities and land area.

Size: The optimum size of a school park site depends on its intended use. The size criteria established for neighborhood park and community park classifications may apply.

Parking: Parking for the school and park can be shared.

Basic Facilities & Activities:

- Active recreational facilities such as playfields, tennis courts, basketball courts, and playgrounds
- Passive recreational facilities such as picnic/sitting areas and nature study areas
- Service buildings for shelter, storage, and restrooms
- Lighting for security at night

The use of national recreation trends to anticipate programming or facility needs must be carefully weighed in relation to several factors.

Present day trends and forecasts about future change need to be tempered by an understanding of the priorities and policies of the City and the Department of Parks, Recreation and Leisure Services. This section focuses attention on key indicators that alert decision-makers to changes in recreational participation and demand. Understanding these indicators allows the City to consider the impacts these trends will have on the diverse elements of the parks and open space system, from recreational programming to park facilities to natural resource and on operating culture.

Discussed on the following pages are national trends that may or may not necessarily reflect local conditions at the present time.

GENERAL NATIONAL TRENDS IN LIFESTYLE

High levels of physical inactivity and obesity are being observed across the country, largely due to a lack of time and an increased rate of participation in sedentary forms of leisure (i.e. watching television, computer/online activities, etc.). The combination of physical inactivity and poor nutrition is the second most common cause of death in the United States. Some experts predict that for the first time in our history, life expectancy among today's children will be less than that of their parents.

The potential for social isolation is growing with increased amounts of watching television and computer/online activities, with a focus on smaller social circles (self, family, and close friends). There is broadening personal identification with not only our work, but also with our leisure time pursuits. Common leisure interest may serve as important "social glue" for connecting people. Overall recreation participation, especially in sporting (skill and team) is declining.

A depressed economy and rising energy costs are negatively affecting people's ability to vacation and travel; therefore, many are pursuing recreation that is inexpensive and closer to home, including weekend trips and day long outings. An overwhelming majority of those planning to retire soon expect to do at least some work after retirement. They want to continue to learn, try new things, travel, and pursue new hobbies or interests.

Adults and older adults are embracing the "active living" or "wellness" philosophy, thus municipalities are orienting their programming to respond to these demands.

Spectator sports (broadcasted sporting events) are on the rise and participative sports are on the decline, which can affect traditional investments in facilities and programming. Effectively, this has meant that new technology increases and diversifies recreational activities. From this increased opportunity comes a concurrent need for quality service in all recreational programming and facilities in order to maintain competitiveness with other non-traditional activities.

There is growing awareness and concern by the public for environmental quality, environmental issues, and the environmental movement. People seek an active role for themselves in environmental protection and conservation, which manifests itself as a community-wide interest in environmental preservation and open space. Consequently, trends indicate that the participation rate for outdoor passive recreation in a natural environment continues to grow.

GENERAL NATIONAL TRENDS IN THE LEISURE SYSTEM

The five favorite leisure activities for all Americans are: watching television, reading, spending time with family, fishing, and gardening.

Demand for unorganized and drop-in activities are on the rise, at the expense of most organized and structured programs, which are inflexible to people with limited free time.

Municipalities are often entering into partnerships with community and private-sector organizations to maximize efficiencies associated with capital and operational costs, so long as the municipality and the community benefit as a whole.

Volunteerism is in decline across the country; therefore, supporting local volunteers is critical to ensuring that these dedicated individuals continue to participate in civic life and that new volunteers can be recruited.

KEY NATIONAL TRENDS IN SPORTS & RECREATION

Financial feasibility of maintaining existing and building new facilities as well as program development will come with rising energy costs, greater scarcity and high cost of land, rising operating costs and revenue limits, and increasing anti-taxation sentiment. Recreation is becoming more of a consumer market, meaning that activities are subject to more competition between private, public, and non-profit competition. A broad definition of what constitutes public access to city sponsored facilities and programs may challenge the financial feasibility of building new and maintaining existing facilities. Subsidized programs and minimal use fees have become more difficult to maintain in light of these conditions.

Fewer children and youth are participating in most organized sports in favor of casual activities that fit into their own schedule.

The “multi-use” facility and park concept is being increasingly viewed as the preferred development model since it consolidates a number of leisure activities at a single location, thereby providing a “one-stop shopping” venue for time-pressed individuals, offering cross-programming opportunities for a wide range of ages, and reducing municipal operational costs.

The “multi-use” facility and park concept is being increasingly viewed as the preferred development model.

Trails (both nature and paved) continue to be one of the most demanded “facilities” as walking, cycling, in line skating, etc. are all popular forms of leisure and active transportation activities.

Sport and nature-based tourism represents a growing market, thus necessitating a focus on family recreation and “destination” facilities, as well as passive outdoor sports and activities such as golf, hiking, bird watching, marine and waterfront activities, among others.

“High-tech” recreation is growing through the use of special technology tools and advances in equipment.

Extreme sports and risk/adventure pursuits continue to grow in popularity.

The fastest growing outdoor activities call for access to trails/nature areas, and include passive pastimes such as: viewing wildlife, backpacking, day hiking, bicycling, horseback riding, and canoeing.

KEY NATIONAL TRENDS IN THE PARK SYSTEMS

People want to live near parks and open spaces as they are associated with a higher quality of life.

Parks are increasingly viewed as an opportunity for non-programmed recreation and cultural activities, and can accommodate facilities targeted for all ages.

Demands have been observed for gathering areas such as public picnicking areas, outdoor barbecues, etc., particularly in communities with diverse ethnic populations.

As people become increasingly aware of the benefits related to environmental protection, the integration of environmental features into active parks is becoming more apparent.

Education and public awareness of environmental and park-specific issues are forming components of resource management strategies.

In order to help facilitate healthy lifestyles, all levels of government are examining ways to increase physical activity and participation levels through the introduction of programs, funding and other initiatives.

Global warming is impacting outdoor recreation. Warm weather activities will last longer; cold weather activities will be shorter.

The 2005 Portsmouth Comprehensive Plan devoted an entire chapter to “Existing Parks and Open Space Lands.” In that chapter, the Comprehensive Plan uses ‘national standards’ to evaluate the parks and open space in Portsmouth.

For decades, the agreed upon ‘national standards’ for park and recreation facilities have been those recommended by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA). The NRPA recognized the importance of establishing and using park and recreation standards, particularly to provide a community with a recommended minimum number of facilities and land requirements for parks based upon population. Park types, facilities standards, and location criteria helped many cities with park planning, land acquisition, and capital improvement planning. For simplicity and ease of use across the country, the standards were population based and presented in terms of facilities needed for a defined population, i.e. 10-acres of parkland for every 1,000 people or 1 soccer field for every 10,000 people.

The NRPA presented these standards with strong caution that they should be viewed as a guide and address minimum - not maximum - goals to be achieved, and should be tailored to fit each community’s specifications. Recognizing the fact that one size doesn’t fit all’ and the problems of a national standard, the NRPA stopped using the standards in 1996. Despite its cautious disclaimer and discontinued use by the NRPA, many communities, like Portsmouth (as per the Comprehensive plan) still use these 50 year old standards verbatim regardless of size, climate, or location.

The Portsmouth Comprehensive Plan used these standards when it claimed one of Portsmouth’s ‘deficiencies’ was the fact that based on NRPA guidelines, Portsmouth’s amount of parkland (350 acres) is below the standard of 10 acres per 1000 residents. It should be pointed out that the Comprehensive Plan indicates there are approximately 350 acres of parks and open space, but the parks identified in this Parks and Recreation Master Plan total slightly more than 500 acres. Nevertheless, based on NRPA standards and Portsmouth’s 2010 population of approximately 100,000 persons, Portsmouth should have a total of 1000 acres of parkland...twice the amount of existing parks. To achieve this goal, the City of Portsmouth would need nine more parks the size of City Park and City Park Golf Course. Based on staff and public input, there was never an indication that the City needed to double its park acreage, which is due to the City’s lack of available land.

The other standard that the NRPA no longer uses but is still widely circulated is the number of facilities a city ‘should’ have. For instance, the City of Portsmouth has 16 tennis courts but based on a population of 100,000 and the NRPA standard, there should be 50 tennis courts (1 for every 2000 people). Does Portsmouth really have a deficit of 34 tennis courts? Based on research and public input the answer is no. Likewise, according to the national standards, the City should have 10 soccer fields (1 for every 10,000 persons). Since the City has 22 fields, does that mean the City has a surplus of soccer fields? According to the NRPA standards the answer is yes, but according to research and public input the answer is no.

Part of the reason the NRPA discontinued the use of national standards is because the country is not made up of homogeneous communities - there is no “anytown” USA. Communities are unique, different, dynamic, and changing. They have different climates, different sizes, different geographies, different fiscal capacities, and most importantly different demographics and different people. Roanoke, for example has a similar population to Portsmouth, but in land mass Portsmouth is only 70% the size of Roanoke (42.9 sq miles vs 30 sq miles). Because both cities have similar populations and vary in spatial size, Portsmouth has over 1000 persons more per square mile than Roanoke.

The demographics (see more detail on pages 34 - 35) are also revealing when comparing a city like Roanoke to Portsmouth. Portsmouth has a significantly smaller percentage of residents over the age of 65 (13.8% vs 17.3%) and a larger percentage of those who are 18 years old and younger (25.7% vs 21.1%) than Roanoke.

When recognizing just these two comparisons, it is easy to understand why utilizing 'national standards' is poor practice and reliance on these calculations is recognized as deficient.

Current methodology suggests each community, like Portsmouth, should determine its own standards or Level of Service (LOS) through detailed research including surveying of park usage and resident interests combined with an introspective insight into its own defining blend of natural, social and economic characteristics. The results of these defined exercises 'should' result in Level of Service Standards tailored for the appropriate range, quantity and quality of recreational facilities within its constraints - fiscally and capacity.

For the Portsmouth Parks and Recreation Master Plan, the best solution lies in a hybrid of the two approaches - using the established and well-entrenched NRPA standards as a starting point to be tweaked and customized to better fit local conditions and community objectives. For instance, the standards as previously discussed indicate there is a shortage of tennis courts, but based on the public surveys, staff input, and public workshops resources should instead be allocated to uses other than tennis courts. The point is that it is important that the appropriate research and analysis truly identifies the current and future needs of Portsmouth and an understanding of current and projected demographics is obtained along with local, regional and national trends.

The NRPA guidelines have provided a baseline to work with as Portsmouth plans for future parks and recreation demand. It is not the goal of this Master Plan to view the NRPA standards as an exact measurement for success, but to ensure they fit the needs, participant demands, financial constraints, and especially the community desires.

One of the prime indicators of current and future recreational demand and interest is the recent pattern and future forecasts for demographic change.

In Portsmouth, for example, while the entire city population decreased more than 9% in the past 20 years, the Hispanic population has more than doubled. 'Baby Boomers' are still having an impact in Portsmouth, as the only age group that saw an increase in population in the past 20 years is the 45 - 64 age group. Some age groups, such as the 17 and under, have actually decreased more than 23% in the past 20 years.



AGING POPULATION

The aging baby boom generation is one of the most significant trends to impact recreation and leisure services in Portsmouth. Born between 1948 and 1966, baby boomers reached their peak numbers in the birth year between 1955 and 1959, totaling 21 million people born during this time frame. Because of improved health and fitness, as well as lifestyle changes from their parents' generation, the baby boom generation is participating in recreation activities in their older ages. Based on the U.S. Census, we can expect to see increases in the 65+ age group for the next 20 years.

People are also retiring at younger ages with relatively higher disposable incomes than generations before. We have yet to see the full effects of the recession and current economy, but generally there is an increased demand for more passive outdoor recreation pursuits and facilities (golf, walking, gardening, etc.). As the number of retirees increases, there will be more fit recreation users and more demand for mid-day recreation programs. Generally speaking, future behavior is influenced by past behavior. However, the 50 year-old of the future will not possess the same personal characteristics as the 50 year-old of today because of changes in the community and society in general, improved health and fitness, social perspectives on aging, and earlier retirement age. Likewise, cities are changing as well, especially when one compares the two parks of Portsmouth 50 years ago with the 47 parks of today.

HOUSEHOLD STRUCTURE

According to the 1997 Gallup Leisure Track Survey, many Americans consider time to be their scarcest resource due to the increase in dual-income households and demanding work schedules. Due to increased demands on limited spare time and the fact that households are generally busier with work and home life responsibilities, trends point to more discretionary activities, which do not require scheduling.

More families are postponing having their first child, which creates non-traditional/new leisure patterns. More people now who are in their 20s have time to spend on recreational activities that fit their personal goals rather than their children's activities as was done in the past.

More participants in recreational sites are single and in their 30s and 40s, but as single parent families are increasing, so are their participation rates.

For all of these groups, use of free time is perceived as an opportunity to spend time with their family and friends. Because of this trend, these groups want to participate in activities that allow for group participation. People are looking for diverse experiences and experiential trips in their leisure time rather than spending their time relaxing.

ECONOMICS

An increasing split is occurring between those who have access to certain types of recreation and those who do not. In 2009, the poverty rate for Portsmouth was 16.7% compared to 10.6% for the average in Virginia. For affluent households with more discretionary income, these resources are often used for leisure activities, including travel and entertainment as well as memberships to private recreation facilities. Some cities work with private facilities (such as the YMCA) rather than duplicating services while others compete for household recreation dollars and for people's recreation time.

Economics also play a role in leisure services and programs offered by cities. In 2000, over 12% of the households in Portsmouth were single mothers with children younger than 18. Working parents create an increased demand for recreational and program opportunities, such as after school and summer programs.

YOUTH SPORTS PARTICIPATION

While the overall population for Portsmouth has decreased by 9% over the past 20 years, the 18 and under age group has decreased over 23% (5,191 people) since 1990. Although the past 20 years of City-sponsored sport participation data doesn't exist, it stands to reason the levels of participation shift accordingly with population shifts. In this case, youth sports participation has decreased; however, with the popularity of soccer and the increased number of soccer fields built in Portsmouth, its numbers have probably remained more constant than basketball or football.

RISE IN NUMBER OF WOMEN PARTICIPATING IN OUTDOOR RECREATION

More women are recreating in activities traditionally dominated by men. Leisure opportunities for women are becoming more diverse and often times less tied to family. Adventure activities, including camping, hiking, whitewater rafting, biking, and rock climbing have seen significant increases in the level of participation by women. The rise in participation appears to be partially attributed to a shift in attitude and societal norms, as well as expanded product lines that better cater to women participants.

INCREASED URBANIZATION

Because Portsmouth is an urban city surrounded by other urban areas, residents are more likely to participate in activities utilizing specialized facilities, such as the skatepark at George Washington Park, the facilities at City Park and/or the recreational facilities at one of the community parks. Typically, rural residents are more likely to participate in activities associated with wilderness areas; however, based on the public opinion poll, 42% of the respondents participate in a nature related activity on a daily or weekly basis.

Like most cities in America, Portsmouth has seen its population decrease. In the past few years that trend on a national level is changing and as the urbanization of our society grows, the need for specialized facilities will increase. Based on national trends, Portsmouth should begin to show a population increase in the next census.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Outdoor recreation is a component of physical fitness, a major focus of preventative care. Outdoor recreation leads to a better quality of life physically, mentally, and socially. A snapshot of the outdoor recreation industry today reveals increasing sales, new activities, and growth in participation at both ends of the spectrum: activities that are closer to home and require little gear, such as walking, and those that usually require a great time commitment, a more adventurous attitude, and more highly technical gear, such as climbing, kayaking, and backpacking. The role public lands, recreational facilities, and outdoor activities have in the future of health and wellness care is encouraging. The view that recreation can be a means of maintaining wellness will be a constant feature of programming and investment in parks' facilities over time.

The following abbreviated overview addresses the Parks, Open Space, and Environment portion of the 2025 Comprehensive Plan.

While this section also includes water quality, air quality, natural resources, and solid waste management, this overview is primarily concerned with parks, open space and greenways.

As stated in the 2025 Comprehensive Plan, the ultimate goal of this section is: “A quality system of parks, open space, greenways, and protected natural resources.”

Based on the Comprehensive Plan, past analyses of City parks and recreation facilities have revealed deficiencies in the following areas:

1. The total amount of city-owned parkland (approximately 350 acres) is below the national standard of 10 acres per 1,000 residents that is widely used as a target for municipal parks and recreation systems. Note: This method of determining standards for parkland is antiquated and no longer used by most cities and jurisdictions. For more detailed information, please see the section on National Standards.
2. Significant portions of the City are underserved by neighborhood and community parks using standard service area radii of one-half mile and two miles, respectively, for these facilities. (Churchland is particularly underserved by neighborhood parks and the Downtown and southern portion of the City fall outside of the service radius for City Park.)

According to the Comprehensive Plan, there is also a continuing need to accommodate new demands for recreational facilities and programs that emerge over time (i.e., the current popularity of youth soccer).

During the planning process for the Destination 2025 Comprehensive Plan ideas emerged on specific programming elements needed (or desired) for the City of Portsmouth. These include:

- Developing a central recreational complex to serve residents from the entire City and beyond.
- Developing a network of multi-use trails throughout Portsmouth.
- Increasing the amount of public access to the water.

In addition to defining needs, program elements and strategies, two main policies were established that are intended to bring about a quality parks, open space, and greenways system for the City of Portsmouth:

Policy #1: Parks and Recreation

Develop a comprehensive parks and recreation plan that defines the needs of Portsmouth’s citizens for parks and recreational facilities and identifies strategies to meet these needs.

Policy #2: Open Space and Greenways

Develop a citywide open space and greenway network comprised of parks, environmental corridors (waterways, wetlands, etc.), utility right-of-ways, and landscaped roadways.

These two policies listed above are the stimulus for this Parks, Recreation and Leisure Services Master Plan.

The Capital Improvement Projects (CIP) Budget provides for replacement of the City's aging outdoor athletic and recreation facilities. Examples of projects include:

- replacement of athletic field fencing,
- renovation of tennis courts,
- demolition of old athletic lighting,
- drainage improvements around fields,
- parking lot improvements,
- athletic field renovations, and
- upgraded lighting systems to athletic fields.

In addition in future years, the budget allows funding for other ballfield fencing and athletic facility renovations as determined by on-going priorities.

The guiding principles for the CIP Budget call for repairs and renovations to be done to existing facilities before new items are added.

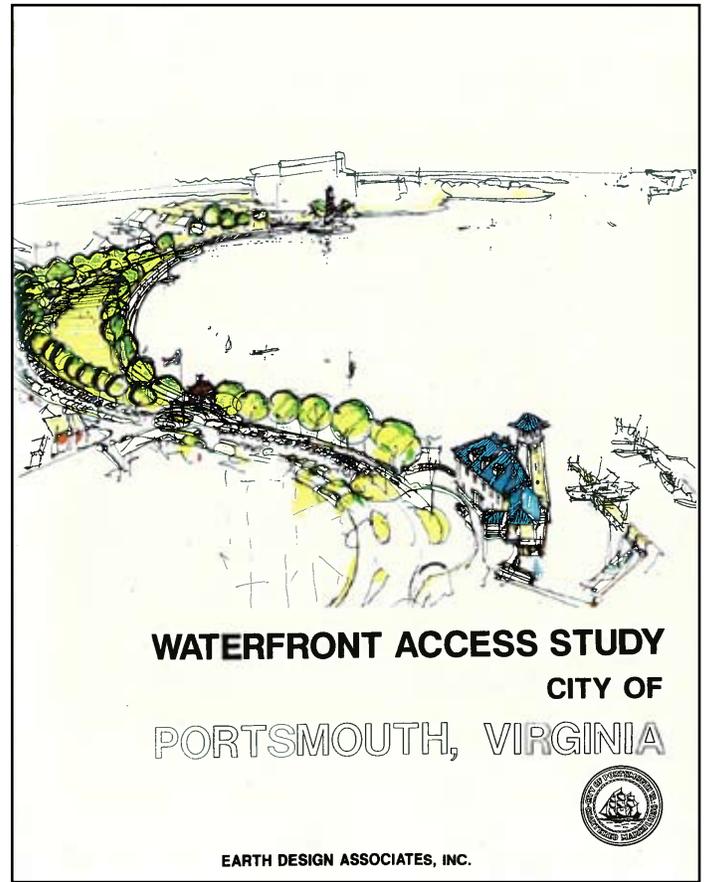
In 1995, the City of Portsmouth hired Earth Design Associates to prepare a Waterfront Access Study. The study's purpose was to establish ways in which the residents could reconnect with the waterfront.

The study listed the opportunities as:

- 1. Abundance of water frontage** - 85 miles of waterfront lands (most of which is in private hands).
- 2. Variety of shoreline conditions** - 'Beach' environments, natural areas and wetlands, man-made bulkheads, marinas, urban greenways/parks.
- 3. Relatively large amount of publicly owned lands** - Military bases, street 'ends', parks, cemeteries, schools, housing authority, bridge crossings, and utilities.
- 4. Multiple points of contact** - Street 'ends', road and bridge crossings, parks and school sites, marinas, downtown sea-wall.
- 5. Proximity to people** - For many, a 10 to 20 minute walk, for everyone, no more than 20 minute drive.
- 6. Public interest and momentum**

The study also listed limitations as:

- 1. Water pollution** - Nowhere within the project area could be truly recommended for safe, full-water-contact recreation or the taking of fin and/or shellfish consumption.
- 2. Past neglect** - In modern times the waterfront has not been given the attention it needs, often resulting in unappealing areas.
- 3. Access obstacles** - Lack of stopping and parking places in potential water-view areas, major roads and utilities between neighborhoods and waterfront, guard rails that prevent viewing at bridges and overpasses, signs, fences, and visual barriers at street-ends.
- 4. Shallow water depth** - Shallow water depth can be a limiting factor for certain kinds of water access; conversely, it can be viewed as an advantage.
- 5. Individual/community attitudes** - Don't build it so they won't come.



Since the Waterfront Access Study was completed in 1995, there have been several measures already taken. For instance, the Port Norfolk Civic League, VDOT and the City of Portsmouth have completed the Reflection Walk Park (2004) on Bayview Boulevard at Florida Avenue. This 5.7 acre park is a cancer survivors memorial site located on the Elizabeth River. Listed below are specific recommendations from the plan. *Italics are used to indicate any updates to the recommendations.*

The recommendations from the Waterfront Access Study are categorized in the following four categories:

1. GENERAL OVERALL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WATERFRONT ACCESS (see pages 40 – 43 of the Waterfront Access Study for more detail)

- a. Become Extraverted (focus on water) *This concept was incorporated into the Downtown Master Plan and Waterfront Development Strategy*
- b. Waterfront Clean-Up
- c. Enhancing Visual Resources

- d. Vision 2005 Plan
- e. Public Participation
- f. Create Water Access Opportunities for all Citizens in the City. The Crab Shack Property was acquired.
- g. Accessibility of the Disabled
- h. Improve Water Quality
- i. Assure Environmental Compatibility

2. GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SPECIFIC SITES IDENTIFIED AS HAVING EXISTING OR KNOWN POTENTIAL FOR ACCESS (see pages 44 – 56 of the Waterfront Access Study for more detail)

a. **Hoffler Creek** Potential Opportunities:

- Small boat hand launching (*completed*)
- Bank/small pier fishing
- Sight seeing (*completed*)
- Nature studies / hiking (*completed*)
- Picnicking (*completed*)

b. **Craney Island** Potential Opportunities: (*currently still under Federal control*)

- Small boat hand launching
- Medium boat ramp
- Marina
- Bank/small fishing pier
- Medium pier
- Large pier
- Sight-seeing
- Nature study
- Nature trail / hiking
- Scenic drive
- Beach/bathing
- Picnicking
- Water skiing
- Scuba diving
- River cruise

c. **Churchland Park** Potential Opportunities:

- Small boat hand launching
- Sight seeing (*completed*)
- Nature study (*completed*)
- Picnicking (*completed*)

d. **Lee's Yachting Center** Potential Opportunities:

- Marina

e. **The Virginia Boat and Yacht Service** Potential Opportunities:

- Medium Boat Ramp
- Marina

f. **Cox Property** Potential Opportunities: (*this site became APM Terminal*)

- Small boat hand launching
- Medium boat ramp
- Marina
- Bank/small fishing pier
- Medium pier
- Large pier
- Sight seeing
- Nature study
- Nature trails/hiking
- Picnicking
- Water skiing
- Sailing / Wind Surfing
- Scuba diving
- River cruise

g. **West Norfolk** Potential Opportunities:

- Small boat hand launching
- Medium boat ramp
- Bank/small pier fishing
- Medium pier
- Beach/bathing
- Nature trail/hiking
- Picnicking
- Sailing / wind surfing

h. **West Norfolk Bridge** Potential Opportunities:

- Marina
- Medium Boat Ramp
- Sight-seeing
- Picnicking

i. **Cypress Cove Subdivision** Potential Opportunities:

- Small Boat Hand Launching
- Medium Boat Ramp
- Bank/small pier fishing
- Sight-seeing
- Picnicking
- Hiking

j. **Churchland Bridge** Potential Opportunities:

- Sight-seeing
- Hiking
- Historic Interpretation
- Picnicking
- Public Garden

k. **City Park** Potential Opportunities:

- Small Boat Hand Launching (*completed*)
- Medium Boat Ramp (*completed*)
- Marina (small)
- Bank/pier fishing
- Medium pier
- Large pier
- Sight-seeing (*completed*)
- Nature study (*completed*)
- Nature trail / hiking (*completed*)
- Scenic drive (*completed*)
- Picnicking (*completed*)
- River cruise (*completed*)

l. **Clifford Street & Rail Road Bridge** Potential Opportunities:

- Small boat hand launching
- Bank/small fishing pier
- Medium pier
- Nature study
- Picnicking

m. **Westhaven** Potential Opportunities:

- Small boat hand launching
- Bank/small pier fishing
- Nature study
- Picnicking

n. **Merrimac Point** Potential Opportunities:

- Small boat hand launching
- Bank/small fishing pier
- Medium pier
- Sight-seeing
- Nature study
- Nature trail
- Hiking
- Historic preservation
- Picnicking

o. **Bay View Beach** Potential Opportunities:

- Small boat hand launching (*completed*)
- Bank/small fishing pier (*completed*)
- Sight-seeing (*completed*)
- Nature study (*completed*)
- Scenic drive (*completed*)
- Beach bathing (*completed*)
- Picnicking (*completed*)
- Sailing/wind surfing (*completed*)

p. **Scotts Creek** Potential Opportunities:

- Small boat hand launching
- Medium boat launch
- Marina
- Bank/small fishing pier
- Medium pier
- Large pier
- Sight-seeing (*completed*)
- Nature study (*completed*)
- Nature trail/hiking (*completed*)
- Historic interpretation
- Picnicking (*completed*)
- Sailing/wind surfing

q. **Scotts Creek Marina** Potential Opportunities:

- Small boat hand launching
- Marina
- River cruise (as possible origin)

r. **The Portsmouth Yacht Club** Potential Opportunities:

- Marina

s. **The Pritchard Railroad Marina** Potential Opportunities:

- Marina

t. **The Leckie Street Bridge** Potential Opportunities:

- Small boat hand launching
- Bank/small fishing pier
- Medium pier
- Sight-seeing
- Picnicking

u. **The Portsmouth Boating Center** Potential Opportunities:

- Marina

v. **Crab House / End of Elm Avenue**

Potential Opportunities:

- Small boat hand launch
- Medium boat ramp
- Marina
- Bank/small fishing pier
- Sight-seeing
- Historic interpretation
- Picnicking
- Waterfront restaurant

w. **Crawford Bay** Potential Opportunities:

- Small boat hand launching
- Marina
- Bank/small fishing pier
- Sight-seeing (*completed*)
- Scenic drive (*completed*)
- Historic interpretation (*completed*)
- Picnicking (*completed*)
- Sailing/wind surfing

x. **The Tidewater Yachting Agency**

Potential Opportunities:

- Marina

y. **Downtown Seawall / Riverfront** Potential

Opportunities:

- (see Downtown Master Plan and Waterfront Development Strategy)

z. **Paradise Creek** Potential Opportunities:

- Small boat hand launching (*Scheduled for completion in 2015*)
- Bank/small fishing pier
- Marsh bridge (*Scheduled for completion in 2015*)
- Sight-seeing (*Scheduled for completion in 2012*)
- Nature study (*Scheduled for completion in 2012*)
- Picnicking (*Scheduled for completion in 2015*)

3. RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE FORM OF GENERIC CONCEPTUAL DESIGNS FOR UNDEFINED AREAS ON AN “OPPORTUNITY BASIS” (see pages 57-64 of the Waterfront Access Study for more detail)

- a. Neighborhood street-end mini park, water access steps
- b. Neighborhood street-end mini park, small boat/canoe skid
- c. Neighborhood street-end mini park, floating dock / fishing pier
- d. Neighborhood street-end mini park, small boat ramp
- e. Stream Crossing at Existing Roads
- f. Medium fishing pier/boat ramp
- g. Waterfront commercial / small boat marina
- h. Small bridge attachment
- i. Areas between existing roadways and waterfronts
- j. Natural area wayside

4. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONCEPTUAL PLAN FOR THREE SPECIFIC AREA REPRESENTING CITY-WIDE, DISTRICT AND NEIGHBORHOOD ACCESS (see pages 65-72 of the Waterfront Access Study for more detail)

- a. Former Leckie Street Bridge
- b. The Clifford Street and Railroad Bridges
- c. Crawford Bay Waterfront Park

In 2010, the City of Portsmouth commissioned a Transportation Plan

that focused on various modes of transportation that included walking and biking. It should be noted that while the Parks, Recreation, and Leisure Services Master Plan view walking and biking as a recreational activity, the Transportation Plan sees both walking and biking as modes of transportation. However, the two can go hand in hand as the City meshes parks and recreation and transportation needs.

Like the Parks, Recreation and Leisure Services Master Plan, the city staff also conducted public workshops in the Transportation Plan and found that Portsmouth residents enjoy walking and want to do more. Many of Portsmouth's neighborhoods have good sidewalks and are very walkable: however, streets in Portsmouth are largely unfriendly to pedestrians. As one person said: "I live three minutes from my work, but I can't walk there!"

Likewise, the desire to finding places to walk for leisure or recreation in Portsmouth was evident in the Parks, Recreation and Leisure Services Master Plan public workshops and public opinion poll. As one respondent noted, "I am sick of driving to other cities to walk/hike!" Another said, "Most of my family's rec time is spent walking in our neighborhood with its overgrown, cracked, and often non-existent sidewalk!"

While much of the urban planning and infrastructure development that has taken place in the United States since World War II has neglected to address the needs of the pedestrians, it is possible to remedy many of the past failures to accommodate pedestrians through 'complete street' improvements such as sidewalks and crosswalks. Pedestrian opportunities as identified in the Transportation Plan include:

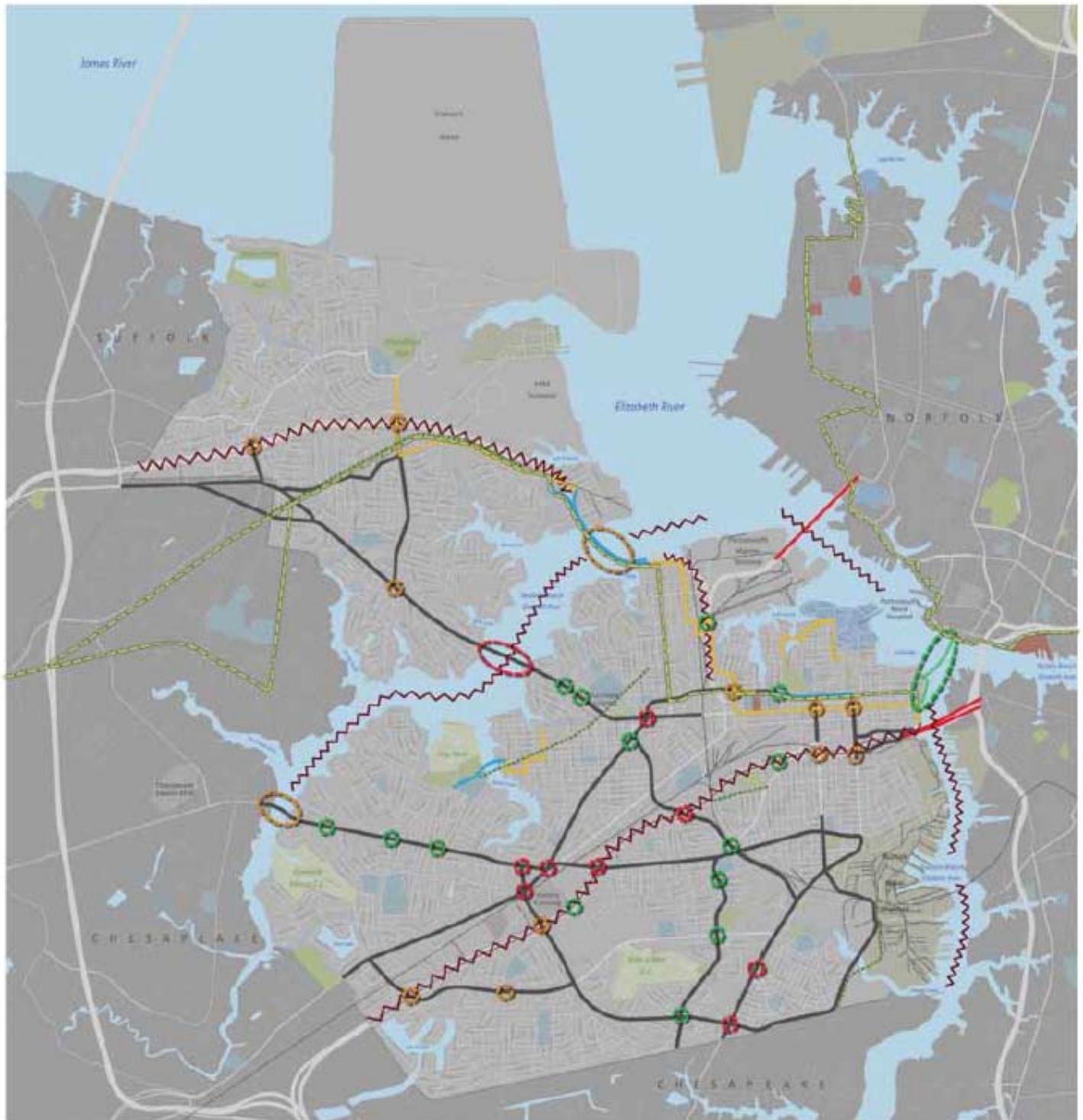
- Reinforcing the City's sidewalk improvement program to address critical gaps and barriers.
- Taking advantage of VDOT funding available for pedestrian enhancement projects, including Safe Routes to School and Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety program money.

- Creating greenway trails on the abandoned railroad rights-of-way that crisscross Portsmouth. Constructing a network of greenway trails could encourage more recreational walking, thus benefiting public health and quality of life.
- Expanding the use of traffic calming devices to create safer, more livable communities.
- Adopting a "complete streets" policy and design guidelines for roadway re-striping and reconstruction projects.
- Designing the new High Street Bridge and similar critical transportation links to comfortably and safely accommodate pedestrians.

As pedestrian needs have largely been ignored since WWII, so has biking, especially as a mode of transportation. While conditions are generally favorable for biking in Portsmouth - flat, mild temperatures, dense neighborhoods, compact city - the percentage of residents who commute to work on a bicycle is less than half of the national average. As noted in the Transportation Plan, the mindset of transportation planning in Portsmouth and Hampton Roads has been that bicycling is purely a recreational activity, not a mode of transportation.

The Transportation Plan notes specific opportunities for improving conditions for bicycling in Portsmouth including:

- The reconstruction of the High Street Bridge over the Western Branch of the Elizabeth River and the re-striping of Mt. Vernon Avenue to provide bike lanes.
- Installing five-foot wide bike lanes on many of Portsmouth's wide streets as part of the City's ongoing paving program.
- Creating Bicycle Boulevards along Portsmouth's quiet residential streets to encourage more cycling. Bicycle Boulevards are low traffic streets with traffic calming elements and intersections improvements that allow cyclists to travel at an unhurried pace.
- Creating greenways with multi-use pedestrian and bicycle paths. Portsmouth has a number of rail corridors that could be converted to greenways.
- Installing bicycle racks at city buildings, schools, commercial centers and other cycling destinations.



Bicycle-Friendly Routes

- Bike Lane
- Preferred Bicycle Route
- Bicycle Accommodation - Ferry/Bridge
- Good Bicycle Access Across Barriers
- Adequate Bicycle Access Across Barriers
- Proposed Suffolk-Portsmouth-Norfolk Greenway
- - - - - Abandoned Rail Corridor

Barriers to Bicycling

- - - - - Physical Barriers
- Roads Unsafe for Cyclists to Travel Upon or Cross
- Bicycles Prohibited or Not Accommodated
- Intersections and Bridges that are Barriers to Cycling

In 2009, the City of Portsmouth commissioned a Downtown Master Plan and Waterfront Strategy.

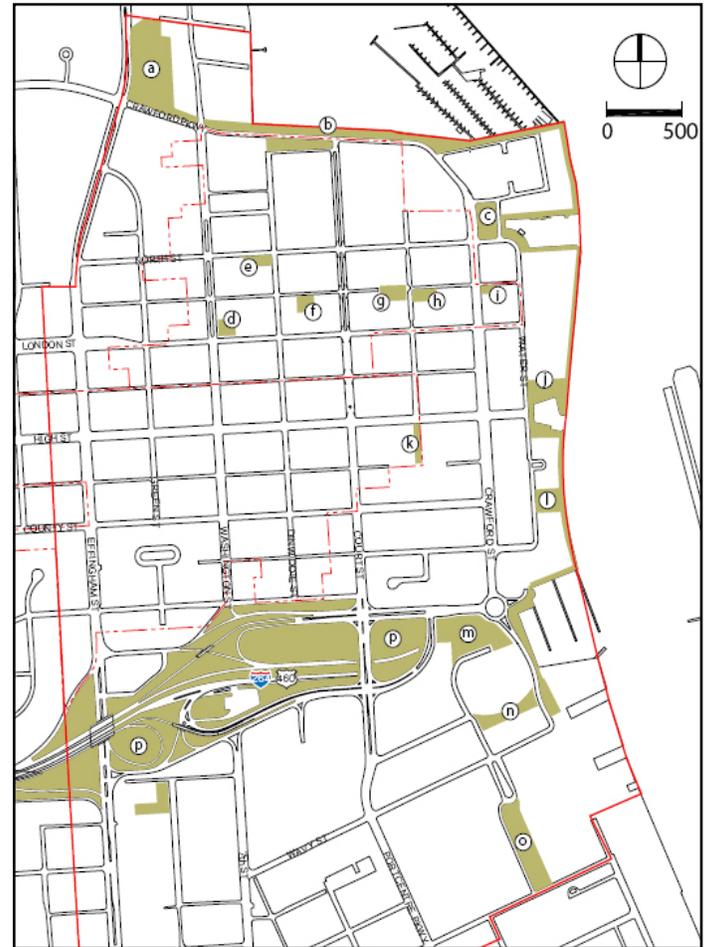
The study's purpose was to sustain the city-wide renaissance of investment and revitalization and to focus on implementation and integration of the policies and actions included in Destination 2025 Plan. While the study focused on several different framework plans, the Open Space Framework directly affects the Parks, Recreation, and Leisure Services Master Plan.

As noted in the Open Space Framework, Portsmouth's open spaces are a key asset that must be protected. While the proportion, as compared to other cities, of open space may not be high, the quality of spaces is high.

Since very few parcels are available in the Downtown area to create new open spaces, existing spaces offer the best chance to accommodate demand for access to open space. The Master Plan and the Community support the protection of existing open spaces - especially the waterfront - and the addition of new open spaces.

As in most downtown areas, there are numerous 'private' open spaces, which are key to the success of a thriving downtown. The Downtown Master Plan pointed out several urban plazas and their importance to Portsmouth. The Parks, Recreation and Leisure Services Master Plan also recognizes the importance of privately open space, but only public land in which the City can control its uses and programming will be considered in the Master Plan.

The Downtown Master Plan and Waterfront Strategy pointed out improvements to the existing parks and the possible addition of park land in several locations in the downtown area. More information can be found on pages 32-37 of the Downtown Master Plan and Waterfront Strategy, but generally these include:



- The Waterfront Promenade**
 The Master Plan recommends the addition and coordination of specific elements to create a cohesive experience along the entire length of the waterfront promenade - from Ft. Nelson Park to the nTelos Pavilion.
- Urban Green**
 The creation of this future open space (located approximately in the parking lot between the existing jail the waterfront) is intended to provide an informal recreation area at the edge of the waterfront as part of the future development.
- Neighborhood Park / Playground**
 Located on the corner of Effingham Street and Lincoln Street is the recommendation of a neighborhood park with a playground.

CASE STUDIES

The following studies are identified as

“Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design”

(see pages 46 - 48)

“Use of Schools as Meeting Places and School Grounds as Parks”

(see pages 49 - 57)

“Promoting Physical Activity through the Shared Use of School and Community Recreational Resources”

(see pages 58 - 63)

“What Makes a Good Urban Park?”

(see pages 64 - 65)

“Healthy Portsmouth”

(see pages 66 - 67)

Santa Paula Parks and Recreation Master Plan

The City of Roseburg Parks and Recreation Master Plan

City of Wilmington Parks and Recreation Master Plan

City of Richmond Parks, Recreation and Community Facilities Master Plan

Kingston Parks and Recreation Master Plan

City of Sacramento Parks and Recreation Master Plan

Glendale Parks and Recreation Master Plan

El Paso Parks and Recreation Master Plan

CRIME PREVENTION THROUGH ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN

Jane Jacobs' book, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961) argued that urban diversity and vitality were being destroyed by urban planners and their urban renewal strategies. She was challenging the basic tenets of urban planning of the time: that neighborhoods should be isolated from each other; that an empty street is safer than a crowded one; and that the car represents progress over the pedestrian. An editor for *Architectural Forum* magazine (1952–1964), she had no formal training in urban planning, but her work emerged as a founding text for a new way of seeing cities. She felt that the way cities were being designed and built meant that the general public would be unable to develop the social framework needed for effective self-policing. She pointed out that the new forms of urban design broke down many of the traditional controls on criminal behavior, for example, the ability of residents to watch the street and the presence of people using the street both night and day. She suggested that the lack of “natural guardianship” in the environment promoted crime. Jacobs developed the concept that crime flourishes when people do not meaningfully interact with their neighbors. In *Death and Life*, Jacobs listed the three attributes needed to make a city street safe: a clear demarcation of private and public space; diversity of use; and a high level of pedestrian use of the sidewalks.

Strategies For The Built Environment

CPTED strategies rely upon the ability to influence offender decisions that precede criminal acts. Research into criminal behavior shows that the decision to offend or not to offend is more influenced by cues to the perceived risk of being caught than by cues to reward or ease of entry. Consistent with this research, CPTED based strategies emphasize enhancing the perceived risk of detection and apprehension.

Consistent with the widespread implementation of defensible space guidelines in the 1970s, most implementations of CPTED as of 2004 are based solely upon the theory that the proper design and effective use of the built environment can reduce crime,

Crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) is a multi-disciplinary approach to deterring criminal behavior through environmental design. CPTED strategies rely upon the ability to influence offender decisions that precede criminal acts. As of 2004, most implementations of CPTED occur solely within the built environment.

reduce the fear of crime, and improve the quality of life. Built environment implementations of CPTED seek to dissuade offenders from committing crimes by manipulating the built environment in which those crimes proceed from or occur. The three most common built environment strategies are natural surveillance, natural access control and natural territorial reinforcement.

Natural surveillance and access control strategies limit the opportunity for crime. Territorial reinforcement promotes social control through a variety of measures.

Natural surveillance

Natural surveillance increases the threat of apprehension by taking steps to increase the perception that people can be seen. Natural surveillance occurs by designing the placement of physical features, activities and people in such a way as to maximize visibility and foster positive social interaction among legitimate users of private and public space. Potential offenders feel increased scrutiny and limitations on their escape routes.

- Design streets to increase pedestrian and bicycle traffic
- Place windows overlooking sidewalks and parking lots.
- Leave window shades open.
- Use passing vehicular traffic as a surveillance asset.
- Create landscape designs that provide surveillance, especially in proximity to designated points of entry and opportunistic points of entry.

- Use the shortest, least sight-limiting fence appropriate for the situation.
- Use transparent weather vestibules at building entrances.
- When creating lighting design, avoid poorly placed lights that create blind-spots for potential observers and miss critical areas. Ensure potential problem areas are well lit: pathways, stairs, entrances/exits, parking areas, ATMs, phone kiosks, mailboxes, bus stops, children's play areas, recreation areas, pools, laundry rooms, storage areas, dumpster and recycling areas, etc.
- Avoid too-bright security lighting that creates blinding glare and/or deep shadows, hindering the view for potential observers. Eyes adapt to night lighting and have trouble adjusting to severe lighting disparities. Using lower intensity lights often requires more fixtures.
- Use shielded or cut-off luminaries to control glare.
- Place lighting along pathways and other pedestrian-use areas at proper heights for lighting the faces of the people in the space (and to identify the faces of potential attackers).

Natural surveillance measures can be complemented by mechanical and organizational measures. For example, closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras can be added in areas where window surveillance is unavailable.

Natural access control

Natural access control limits the opportunity for crime by taking steps to clearly differentiate between public space and private space. By selectively placing entrances and exits, fencing, lighting and landscape to limit access or control flow, natural access control occurs.

- Use a single, clearly identifiable, point of entry.
- Use structures to divert persons to reception areas.
- Incorporate maze entrances in public restrooms. This avoids the isolation that is produced by an anteroom or double door entry system.
- Use low, thorny bushes beneath ground level windows. Use rambling or climbing thorny plants next to fences to discourage intrusion.
- Eliminate design features that provide access to roofs or upper levels.

- In the front yard, use waist-level, picket-type fencing along residential property lines to control access, encourage surveillance.
- Use a locking gate between front and backyards.
- Use shoulder-level, open-type fencing along lateral residential property lines between side yards and extending to between back yards. They should be sufficiently unencumbered with landscaping to promote social interaction between neighbors.
- Use substantial, high, closed fencing (for example, masonry) between a backyard and a public alley.

Natural access control is used to complement mechanical and operational access control measures, such as target hardening.

Natural territorial reinforcement

Territorial reinforcement promotes social control through increased definition of space and improved proprietary concern. An environment designed to clearly delineate private space does two things. First, it creates a sense of ownership. Owners have a vested interest and are more likely to challenge intruders or report them to the police. Second, the sense of owned space creates an environment where “strangers” or “intruders” stand out and are more easily identified. By using buildings, fences, pavement, signs, lighting and landscape to express ownership and define public, semi-public and private space, natural territorial reinforcement occurs. Additionally, these objectives can be achieved by assignment of space to designated users in previously unassigned locations.

- Maintained premises and landscaping such that it communicates an alert and active presence occupying the space.
- Provide trees in residential areas. Research results indicate that, contrary to traditional views within the law enforcement community, outdoor residential spaces with more trees are seen as significantly more attractive, more safe, and more likely to be used than similar spaces without trees.
- Restrict private activities to defined private areas.
- Display security system signage at access points.
- Avoid cyclone fencing and razor-wire fence topping, as it communicates the absence of a physical presence and a reduced risk of being detected.

- Placing amenities such as seating or refreshments in common areas in a commercial or institutional setting helps to attract larger numbers of desired users.
- Scheduling activities in common areas increases proper use, attracts more people and increases the perception that these areas are controlled.
- Territorial reinforcement measures make the normal user feel safe and make the potential offender aware of a substantial risk of apprehension or scrutiny.

Other CPTED Elements

Maintenance and activity support aspects of CPTED were touched upon in the preceding, but are often treated separately because they are not physical design elements within the built environment.

Maintenance

Maintenance is an expression of ownership of property. Deterioration indicates less control by the intended users of a site and indicate a greater tolerance of disorder. The Broken Windows Theory is a valuable tool in understanding the importance of maintenance in deterring crime. Broken Windows theory proponents support a zero tolerance approach to property maintenance, observing that the presence of a broken window will entice vandals to break more windows in the vicinity. The sooner broken windows are fixed, the less likely it is that such vandalism will occur in the future.

Activity Support

Activity support increases the use of a built environment for safe activities with the intent of increasing the risk of detection of criminal and undesirable activities. Natural surveillance by the intended users is casual and there is no specific plan for people to watch out for criminal activity.

THE USE OF SCHOOLS AS MEETING PLACES AND SCHOOL GROUNDS AS PARKS

Like other cities in the US, there is growing conversation and demand in Portsmouth for joint use of schools and school properties as a way to provide overall cost efficient services to children and families in convenient locations. **The simple question repeatedly asked by stakeholders and the public in Portsmouth was, “Why aren’t we using the schools more?”**

Engaging in joint use, particularly intensive sharing of space or use by multiple parties, is possible and has worked in other cities. However, there must be a willingness to see change and overcome challenges by school and community leaders.

School properties—athletic fields, courts and tracks— are centrally located and among the most highly-visible spaces in the City. Because they are so visible and within such easy reach of citizens seeking physical activity, the irony that they are locked or inaccessible to all except students during the school day is very frustrating to citizens.

Early in the design process, the Consultants met with numerous school leaders. Portsmouth’s system is somewhat unique in the fact that the principal of each school (not the School Board or Superintendent) has authority over the school’s use after school hours. As stated during the meeting, “it is a ‘privilege’ (not a right) to have a principal let you use its facilities.” Individual principals vary. Some may not want “their building” used by the Department of Parks and Recreation or open to the public. Others may embrace the idea because they feel when a neighborhood uses a school, it builds a sense of community pride and ownership. Some schools and/or properties may currently be open under the existing principal, but could easily close overnight if a different principal is hired.

On paper and in plan view, schools and school properties have the potential to help fulfill voids in Portsmouth’s parks, recreation, and programmed activities. Some neighborhoods do not have a pocket park, neighborhood park, or community park, yet a school and its grounds sit empty after school hours. Many communities do not have a place to meet and again, schools sit empty after hours.

Given the current climate and the inconsistency of an overall school shared use policy, the Master Plan cannot consider schools as potential new meeting places or school grounds as potential parks/playgrounds. While some schools and/or school grounds may currently be “open,” that policy may change tomorrow if there is a new principal with a different set of values. In some cases, such as the western portion of the City, the plan will recommend the school(s) be used as a top priority but an alternative solution will be given if a school site is not feasible. While the alternative solution may not be the fiscally responsible method of spending taxpayers dollars, there may be no other choice if the values of the City are to be fulfilled.

The following information is an abbreviated version of a 2010 study titled Joint Use for Public School prepared by 21st Century School Fund and the Center for Cities and Schools. The reason for including it in this Master Plan is to help illustrate that joint uses of school and school properties can be a positive aspect and can benefit everyone.

JOINT USE OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS: A Framework for a New Social Contract

by 21st Century School Fund and the Center for Cities and Schools

A NEW SOCIAL CONTRACT

In addition to the primary responsibility of school districts to provide high quality teaching and learning, schools are increasingly being called on to help create and sustain active, healthy communities and vibrant neighborhoods. These new demands suggest a need to examine the relationship between public schools and their community and the need for new policies to guide the school-community relationship. With new policies and practices, public school facilities can become more vibrant public spaces where public education is the primary—but not only—user.

Across the country, school districts are increasing the utilization of their buildings and grounds by extending access to non-school users, particularly during non-school hours. Consequently, both public and private parties are increasingly exploring the possibility of joint development of school buildings and grounds.

However, entities seeking to use school buildings and grounds or partner in their development often find that school districts are difficult partners. Too often, school districts are not governed, managed, or funded to navigate the complexities and opportunities inherent in school joint use and joint development. To help facilitate joint use arrangements, school districts need a greater understanding of the benefits to an expanded use of our public schools. School districts and the non-school parties interested in access to school buildings and grounds need a common language to address the barriers to and benefits of joint use.

DEFINING JOINT USE

With regard to their facilities, a school district's first responsibility is to provide an adequate environment for compulsory elementary and secondary education programs and the administrative functions that support them. Districts must also balance the space and schedule needs of school-sponsored extra-curricular and athletic activities with the demands of the normal school day and calendar. These primary uses for public school buildings and grounds will be referred to as "public education use."

The use of school district controlled, owned, or utilized facilities by a non-district entity is joint use. There are five types of entities that constitute the joint users:

- **Individuals:** Persons, generally residents of a community, who have access to exterior spaces, such as play equipment, athletic fields or courts, and open space for personal use.
- **Civic Groups:** Individuals, groups, or organizations, who seek occasional use of school buildings and grounds for activities or events such as polling stations, community meetings, and special events.
- **Other Public Agencies:** A public agency that is not part of the school district that may offer programs, need to lease space and offer no program connection to the school, and/or may seek joint development with ongoing joint programming.
- **Private Non-Profit Organizations:** The use of school buildings and/or grounds by a non-profit organization such as after-school programs, health clinics, or adult education classes.
- **Private For-Profit Corporations:** The use of school building and/or grounds by a private for-profit corporation, either for education-related work like a private testing service or unrelated work like private offices.

Spaces inside a school dedicated for joint use could either be spaces used part-time by the school and part-time by other users or be dedicated exclusively for use by an outside entity. Joint use is “shared” when the space is used by the school during school hours, a classroom, for example used in an after school program, or “dedicated” when a school space is exclusively available to the outside entity, for example, an after-school office or storage area.

REASONS FOR JOINT USE

Non-school district entities seek joint use of public schools for a myriad of reasons. As public entities, most school districts currently have obligations, in law or in practice, to allow some levels of general public use of grounds for recreation and to support civic uses of public schools, such as voting, community meetings, and special events. The occasional joint use of school buildings and grounds by individuals, groups, or organizations, for individual or community activities or events will be referred to as “civic use.”

Public and private entities seek joint use in schools because of the need for the specialized spaces found in school buildings and grounds, as well as the desire of program providers for convenient access to the child, youth, and family populations they serve. School facility use may explicitly connect to the school mission, such as when other agencies or non-profits offer social services specifically for the families of the schools’ students which enable families to provide better home environments to support their children. The joint users providing school-support have intended to advance student achievement, primarily by addressing social, emotional, economic, and health barriers to school success for children. This is joint use for youth development. In joint use for community wellbeing, while the families of students may be welcome, the joint user has the overall community or neighborhood as its focus; for example, a primary care health clinic located in a school. Joint use with a public charter school would be a community-related joint use even if it has an educational mission because, by definition, it is not linked to the school in which it may be co-located, and because it would be open to students from the entire community.

Finally, there is joint use, either shared or dedicated where the user seeks no relationship with the school or its families but desires access to the location and space in the school. This is real estate joint use. For example, some churches regularly use school auditoria for services and government agencies sometimes locate offices in under-utilized schools.

Related to each of these types of joint use is an interest in joint development. Joint development of new or existing public school facilities enables the site, building plan and design to better support the joint use of the building and land. Successful joint development requires the public education, civic, school, community and real estate users to collaboratively articulate a vision, develop a plan for design, agree on a schedule, and agree on how building and site costs will be paid for and maintained. Ongoing joint use agreements are necessarily a part of joint development agreements. Other public agencies, as well as private developers, may be interested in joint development—particularly of school property in desirable locations given their size, scale, amenities and/or proximity. Public agencies may be interested in locating affordable housing, recreation centers, libraries or elder service centers on school sites. Private developers may be seeking to take advantage of existing public infrastructure to address pent-up demand for housing, commercial, or retail space not already available. Similar to joint use, joint development may be school, community, or real estate driven.

Few states or school districts have adequate policies, guidelines, budgets, plans, expertise, or governance systems to take full advantage of the complex landscape of joint use and joint development possibilities. Current policies and guidelines often leave school district staff unprepared to navigate the competing pressures or requirements for extensive joint use of their facilities, or to evaluate and engage in joint development. In the absence of adequate policy infrastructure, getting access to public school buildings or grounds for non-school use can be difficult or even impossible — especially for non-district organized programs and services. Not harnessing joint use and development strategies to achieve mutually-beneficial development or programming is a missed opportunity for schools and communities.

FACTORS DRIVING DEMAND

Demographic patterns, housing, community character and wealth, and school district capital infrastructure combine to drive the demand for joint use and joint development of public school buildings and grounds.

Demographic Patterns

Demographic patterns affect the enrollment in schools and thereby the needs that the school district has to meet. Our country's public schools are one of the most utilized public assets in our communities. On most weekdays, there are nearly 55 million students and staff in public schools; about one-sixth of the total U.S. population. Nearly 90 percent of all school-age children are enrolled in public schools. This concentration of school children and facilities in communities throughout the country creates an opportunity to expand both the reach of direct service provision and the utilization of centralized recreational and educational spaces to a larger group of users.

Not just the number of students a school district serves, but the economic condition of their families and the neighborhoods they come from affect the demand for joint use and the ability of school districts to respond to these demands.

First, fewer families today have children, and those that do tend to not have as many as in the past. In 1960, 47 percent of all households had children under 18 years old. By contrast, in 2008, only 31 percent of all households had children.

These trends relate to school facilities by lessening school space demands during school hours and potentially weakening public support for educational issues. Fewer school-age children in communities result in steady or declining enrollments, thereby reducing demand for school space by students. Consequently, in communities with fewer school-age children there is often space within schools that is under-utilized and so could be available for joint use. However, when fewer families in a community have children, voters may be less likely to support taxes to fund education, particularly costly expenses such as capital programs.

Second, because of the country's overall population growth, U.S. public school enrollment has increased in recent years and continues to do so, even though the share of households with children has declined since the 1960s and the number of children in each household is down. In the decade between 1995 and 2004,

public school enrollment increased more than it did between the 30 years previous from 1965 to 1995. Public school enrollment is projected to increase by 2 million students by 2015 (from 2009 projected enrollment).

Where enrollments are rising, crowding is often a problem. In crowded schools, the building and grounds are so intensely used by the school and students that it is difficult for non-school users to get access to the fully utilized space, even after school hours, as extra curricular and athletic activities fill up the school after hours and on weekends. Additionally, joint development is difficult, if not impossible, because school sizes tend to be large to support high enrollments and so added use on the site cannot be accommodated.

In 1960, 47 percent of all households had children under 18 years old. By contrast, in 2008, only 31 percent of all households had children.

Finally, demographic changes have led to entrenched patterns of poverty concentration in some schools, but not others. Schools differ greatly in the types of students they serve, creating different demands and challenges to ensuring educational quality. The effects of the last half-century of metropolitan expansion and demographic change have increased racial and economic segregation, with poverty often concentrated in older neighborhoods and their schools. In many urban centers, the proportion of school-age children is low and the children in the public schools are from low-income families living in distressed neighborhoods. Schools in low-income communities are under enormous pressure to not only educate children but also to battle conditions of poverty such as the lack of health care, poor nutrition, and little homework or other educational support or enrichment from families.

To assist their students, some schools provide services to address these challenges, often partnering with community-based organizations and other public agencies to run programs inside schools. These "out-of-school interventions" can be seen in "Full-Service Schools," the "Community School" model, and the Beacon Initiative, altering the space use demands inside schools. In schools serving children from low-income families, the demand by non-profit service providers is high, in part driven by foundation funding to provide academic supports. For example, San Francisco Unified School District, which has approximately 70 percent of its more than 55,000 students eligible for free or reduced priced lunch, has more than 400 non-profit organizations operating programs in one or more of the city's 134 public schools.

Housing & Community Development

The density of housing and the character of the neighborhood and community affect the need and demand for joint use. Nationally, in the 2007–2008 school year, elementary and secondary public school students were enrolled in about 97,196 public schools in 17,899 school districts, including 4,561 public charter schools. Public schools, particularly those built before the 1970s, tend to be located in residential neighborhoods, close to the children, youth and families they serve.

Schools located in the center of dense neighborhoods with suitable housing for families will likely face the most demands for joint use, both school-support and community-related joint use. However, even where schools are more distant from population centers, they will be in demand for joint use, primarily school-support joint use as they provide a desirable concentration of children to serve for after school and other enrichment programs.

With significant amounts of the high density public housing that dominated cities for the past half-century being abandoned, demolished, or redeveloped under the banner of urban redevelopment, public schools in many urban areas that were once extremely overcrowded have experienced significant enrollment declines. For example, a public elementary school in Washington, DC that packed in nearly 1,000 students in 1968, currently enrolls a comfortable 350 students. In the past decade, many deteriorated housing units were torn down and not rebuilt, or redevelopment programs such as federally-supported HOPE VI and other local initiatives led to the construction of mixed-income housing that was less affordable or appealing to families. These changes in housing composition have directly impacted local public school enrollment shifts. A 2006 study by the Urban Institute looking at housing patterns and public school enrollment in Washington, DC, found that housing density and type of housing has a major effect on composition of the household. Existing single-family homes in the District of Columbia had 46 public school children per hundred homes; multi-unit rental housing had 27 children per 100 units; and condos had 7 children per 100 units. Housing and neighborhood redevelopment decisions on affordability and type of housing will affect school enrollments.

In urban and suburban communities where households once included more families with children and more children in each family, the utilization of schools necessarily declines. This has been offset somewhat by the expansion of early childhood education.

Half-day kindergarten, while still a fixture in some communities, is essentially gone in most urban school districts, replaced not only by full-day kindergarten, but also all-day pre-kindergarten and even the expansion of public pre-school for three-year-olds. This has been possible, in part, because of the presence of unused space in school buildings where the number of school age children has declined. These underutilized school spaces also serve as potential sites for the expansion of school-support joint use, as well as community-related joint use, especially for the location of services such as adult education, job training, or sports leagues that can enhance opportunities and outcomes for under-privileged communities.

On the flip side, in new growth communities, developers are typically required to set aside land for public schools and other public infrastructure. The location of the school within the development will have a significant effect on how much demand there will be for joint use. The National Association of Realtors has been a proponent of joint development and joint use as a way to limit the acreage requirement for how much land must be provided by the developer for public schools or other public amenities. Minimizing acreage for new schools enables developers to generate more income from the private development

Low-density development, particularly with the declining number of children per household, means students typically must be bussed to school to fully enroll a school to capacity. Once bussing has been incorporated into its operations, longer bus rides for students are of marginal concern to school districts. To support schools with larger enrollments, which generate some economies of scale in staffing and operations, districts will extend travel time for students.

These longer travel times have negative educational and health outcomes for students, with the increased transit time to and from school reducing the time available to students for academic and recreational activities. When students and families live far from school, long travel distances make it less likely that the school will serve as an appealing site for joint use activities, as it is not conveniently located as a school located in a densely-populated community.

School District Capital Investments

There are more public school buildings than any other public facility in the United States; the buildings contain an estimated 6.6 billion square feet of space on more than 1 million acres of land. Schools have highly desirable spaces for joint use, such as meeting rooms, auditoria, gymnasias, swimming pools, playgrounds, and sports fields, and in the decade between 1994 and 2005 about \$500

billion was spent by school districts on new school construction and building improvements. About half of this was spent on new construction and additions, but the other \$250 billion was spent on improvements to existing facilities.

The condition and design of public school buildings and grounds affect the demand for their use by individuals, civic, other agency, non-profit and for profit users. Various sources have documented the widespread prevalence of poor quality public school facilities. When a school has no air conditioning, poor ventilation and temperature control, or limited natural light, the demand for this space is minimal. School-support users may seek it, because the students they are serving are in these spaces during the day, but demand by civic, community or real estate users is minimal. However, as public school districts and their communities have improved the conditions of their schools, the buildings and grounds have become more desirable.

With recent capital investment, new schools have been built with modern amenities to meet current codes, such as the Americans with Disabilities Act, air quality, and security standards. The capital spending was also used to make improvements to existing schools. Bond referenda are often promoted based on the possibility that there will be civic and community joint use opportunities with the new or improved facility. The prospect of community use helps secure support for the tax increases required to repay the school construction bonds. Thus, in more and more communities, there is an expectation that these newly improved spaces will be available for community use.

Taken together, these complex and intertwined demographic, housing, and financial conditions pose enormous challenges for public school districts, but they must be addressed for schools to meet their basic responsibilities. Extensive state and local laws exist related to enrollment, school utilization, site selection, and school planning, design and construction. However, the existing state and local laws generally address public education use only. There are few state or local policy roadmaps for other types of joint use or development. The result is that joint use and joint development are being applied on an ad-hoc basis, with strategies differing from district to district, from school to school and from time to time. However, the demands to increase programs, services, and amenities within our schools through joint use strategies will only grow, and the need for fiscal efficiencies in asset and land management will also persist.

BENEFITS OF JOINT USE

Demographic shifts, changing housing patterns, and new school capital investments present an unprecedented opportunity to reshape the ways local government and schools work together to provide for the people who depend on them and the resources they manage. This is especially important for low-income, low-resource urban communities who disproportionately struggle to meet community needs.

The macro changes described above create a variety of needs in different local communities. Recently, policy leaders, educators, and advocates have increasingly turned to the joint use of public schools to assist in remedying numerous local concerns. Coming from a variety of perspectives, each brings a unique rationale for joint use of school facilities. Interest in joint development or joint use is from the public, private for-profit and non-profit sectors.

The demands to increase programs, services, and amenities within our schools through joint use strategies will only grow, as will the fiscal efficiencies in asset and land management.

Better Schools

Joint use strategies can directly enhance a school's curriculum-related activities. For example, schools and local partners have developed museums and libraries connected to schools that students use in their coursework. The joint use partnership brings a resource to the school that would otherwise be unavailable. Joint use strategies can also bring in partners involved in the trades to run hands-on Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs for students. Joint use of schools should be seen as an opportunity to enhance school quality.

Helping to ensure that all children are ready to learn is another way that joint use can improve educational quality. Evidence shows that children need basic physical, emotional and psychological needs met to succeed in school. Numerous education-driven initiatives work to increase the resources and services available to address the needs of the whole child. Schools typically bring in outside community-based organizations or city or county agencies to provide health, educational enrichment and other services inside schools. Joint use of public school facilities is at the heart of the full-service community school model.

Under community school strategies, public schools serve as community "hubs," bringing together many partners to offer a range

of support services and opportunities to children, youth, families and communities. These include medical, social, and other services. While these full-service schools tend to be found in disadvantaged communities that serve predominately low-income students, in many schools throughout the nation there are after-school programs that help families from all income levels.

In school districts with a high proportion of children from low-income families, the increased needs of many school-aged children and youth mean there is growing demand for public spaces for non-school, district-related activities — to provide services to a high need population of children and families. As previously mentioned, there are more than 400 outside agency and non-profit entities with some sort of program partnership with San Francisco Unified School District. The vast majority of these organizations and agencies provide their programs on school grounds.

Child and Community Health

Childhood and adolescent obesity has risen to alarming rates across the country, more than doubling in the last 20 years from 6.5 percent to 17 percent of children by 2003. While many factors contribute to the increasing childhood obesity rates, declines in physical activity appear to be a large part of the equation. Physical activity is one of the best predictors for chronic disease and obesity, and establishing a regular physically active lifestyle at a young age is a preventative strategy for combating the onset of illness, disease, and especially obesity. Increasing rates of sedentary leisure activities and vehicle use does not encourage physically active lifestyles, especially for children. Additionally, many neighborhoods lack pedestrian infrastructure and/or do not have public open spaces such as parks or social common areas that incorporate physical activity into everyday life. In other cases, existing outdoor spaces may be deemed or perceived as unsafe or unfit for use. Also, many parents do not permit unsupervised play in crime-ridden communities and are often unable to provide this supervision themselves. As a result, children not attending after school programs stay inside watching TV and playing video games.

Research has documented the importance of the school as a primary factor in obesity prevention, arguing that obesity, poor nutrition, and physical inactivity directly increase risk for poor academic achievement but also that “schools are unique in their ability to promote physical activity and increase energy expenditure.”

Childhood and adolescent obesity has risen to alarming rates across the country, more than doubling in the last 20 years from 6.5 percent to 17 percent of children by 2003.

While many communities lack spaces for physical activity, there is a growing interest in joint use of public school buildings and grounds to fill this void. Spaces such as fields, gyms, or playgrounds, represent “modifiable factors in the physical environment;” opening them can directly increase access to recreation space, especially

outdoor green spaces, translating into increased opportunities to participate in physical activities. In searching for ways to increase healthy physical and social

habits of both children and adults, public health advocates have identified these public infrastructure assets—public school buildings and grounds—as places that can and should play an important role in increasing physical activity not only among children and adolescents but also contributing to healthier communities. In some communities neighborhood schools may be one of few places where children can be involved in active play.

There is also new demand for underutilized or closed school buildings and grounds, particularly in urban areas that have lost families, but increased population by attracting singles into more dense, city households. This demand — from both the private and non-profit sectors — for access to school buildings and grounds for development of private housing, commercial or retail development, or where there are substantial numbers of charter schools, for non-district school use has increased in land-limited cities like Washington, DC, Pittsburgh, San Francisco, and Seattle.

Smart growth advocates are fostering a new conversation around the idea of creating “complete communities.” Complete communities provide a variety of homes, jobs, shops, services and amenities close to rail stations, ferry terminals, or bus stops. People then have the option to walk, bicycle, or take transit rather than drive a car to run errands, visit friends, exercise, or get to work. Among the benefits are that complete communities:

- **Provide Choices:** a range of housing options available for people with different needs;
- **Encourage Accessibility:** people can walk, bike, or take transit for short trips and for commuting;
- **Offer Connections:** people are linked to jobs, health care, parks, services, and stores.

- **Promote Health:** encourage physical activity and enhance the quality of life for individuals, families, communities, and the environment;
- **Improve Social and Economic Equity:** meeting the needs of current and future residents; and
- **Improve Educational Options and Experiences:** through innovations in school planning and design.

The joint use of school facilities becomes one of many strategies in creating complete communities. Because schools (especially elementary schools) are frequently located within residential neighborhoods, sharing their facilities means more activities at single locations, with more people having easy access, thereby reducing the need to drive from place to place for different activities. Jointly using schools promotes reduced transportation demand and increased physical activity for children, families, and communities.

Environmental Benefits

The prevalence of schools and the number of students, teachers, and staff traveling to and from them everyday (about one-sixth of the country's population), as well as their often community-central locations, means that they should be integrated into strategies aimed at reducing carbon emissions and conserving land. In urban areas for example, schools contribute to much-needed green space and can amplify efforts to support healthy environments if planned and designed to do so. Using school grounds as public parks and recreation areas can help preserve other natural habitats. Joint planning and design with conservation as a priority can show the value of reuse and adaptation of schools within existing communities. Maintaining underutilized schools in central locations and bringing in non-school users can preserve centrally-located community assets, reduce driving distances to other activities, and concentrate the use of energy for utilities in a single site that is fully utilized.

Fiscal Efficiency

Government is always challenged to do more with limited public resources. Responsible public agencies look for innovative ways to efficiently use the resources they do have. Local governments and school districts serve the same families and communities; using the public school as the location for community health centers, swimming pools, libraries, or other public amenities or services, can thereby reduce overall public land assets, capital funds, and total operating costs required. However, this increased use may appear to burden school districts, which are under constant budget pressure for school operations and for facility improvements. More often than not, they defer maintenance and repairs and life-cycle system replacements until they are emergencies and so are reluctant to intensify use of public school buildings and grounds, unless explicitly required to do so. However, as more service and program providers seek to locate in or secure dedicated access to school facilities for their programs, school districts have the opportunity to raise revenue from these users to offset costs for utilities, security, maintenance and repair, and even capital and administrative costs associated with facilities. When school buildings are under-utilized, a paying joint use arrangement, with either a public or private partner, can make continued operation of the school building fiscally possible where it might not otherwise have been so.

The wide array of benefits associated with joint use, coupled with the demographic and housing changes described above, lead to the idea of increasing and expanding the use of our public school infrastructure for a wider variety of users to meet a broad range of community and educational needs. However, there are significant challenges to its widespread implementation. These include:

- Under funding for utilities, maintenance, repair, custodial and security costs that increase with higher facility utilization;
- Lack of staff support to local schools to manage the requirements of collaboration, space sharing, and communication between multiple users;
- Spaces poorly designed to accommodate different users;
- Poor risk management support for student safety and building security
- Inadequate decision-making processes for allocating access to buildings and grounds.

These challenges are significant, but there are many cases where school districts and communities overcome these obstacles and jointly utilize their facilities. However, for the full benefits of joint use to be realized, communities need to develop a new social contract with public school districts on the use of public school infrastructure. Central to this idea is that school districts need not have exclusive rights to public school buildings and grounds, and that joint use and joint development should be common practice in communities.

On the school district side of the contract, this means explicit buy-in by school districts to maximize joint use and to enable joint development where appropriate and then to define criteria, decision-making processes, and cost for the allocation of joint use and development opportunities. On the community side of the contract, it means understanding and paying for the real operating and capital cost of using public school buildings and grounds. However, if this change in vision and practice is to occur, then the governance, policy, budgeting, management, planning, and design of our public school facilities will need to change to support this shift in public school facility use. Without this, we will face a “tragedy of the commons” with our public schools, where the burden of so many community use demands will degrade the asset such that its value is seriously reduced to all. To secure the potential shared benefits of joint use and joint development, a policy and operational framework is needed. Our public school facilities and grounds should be governed, planned, designed, managed, and funded to support their intensive use and joint development where appropriate. Until these explicit governmental systems and support are in place, school districts will likely remain limited and/or hesitant partners in joint use and joint development.

It will take a system of supports and regulation for the health, community development, education, and other community benefits to be maximized. However, once the new social contract and its policy and practice underpinnings are in place, the potential of joint use and joint development to improve the lives of children, youth, families and residents—particularly in low wealth communities—will be unleashed.

For more information:

**[http://www.21csf.org/csf-home/publications/
ConceptPaperJointUseofPublicSchools.pdf](http://www.21csf.org/csf-home/publications/ConceptPaperJointUseofPublicSchools.pdf)**

Active Living Research

Building Evidence to Prevent Childhood Obesity
and Support Active Communities

www.activelivingresearch.org

Promoting Physical Activity through the Shared Use of School and Community Recreational Resources

Leading public health authorities, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the American Academy of Pediatrics, recommend sharing existing school and community recreational facilities to promote opportunities for physical activity.⁴⁻⁸ For example, Healthy People 2020 objectives recommend that school recreational facilities be open to the community before, during and after school hours, as well as on weekends, holidays and over the summer.⁴

Schools are often centrally located within a community and have gymnasiums, playgrounds, sports fields, courts, tracks or other facilities that could provide opportunities for residents to be active if they were available outside of normal school hours.⁹

The shared use (or joint use) of existing school and community sport and recreational facilities can be a cost-effective way to promote physical activity among residents of all ages. For example, a school may allow community members to use a track, playground, or basketball court for free when school is not in session. Additionally, legal contracts, commonly referred to as joint use agreements, can set the terms for sharing sport and recreational facilities or programs to create opportunities for community members to be physically active.¹⁰ Joint use agreements, for example, can provide opportunities for a local youth league to use school fields in the afternoons or on weekends, or promote reciprocal use of school facilities with a local park.

This brief summarizes research on community access to school sport and recreation facilities outside of school hours, as well as studies that examine the shared use of school facilities and programs with other community groups or agencies. It also describes challenges commonly associated with the shared use of recreational facilities and opportunities for policy-makers at the state and local level.

KEY RESEARCH RESULTS

1. Many communities, especially those with populations at high risk for obesity, lack recreational facilities.

- Lower-income communities and communities with high proportions of Black, Latino, or other racial and ethnic populations are at a high risk for obesity and are less likely to have access to parks or other community recreational facilities than higher-income or predominately White communities.¹¹⁻¹³
- One study found that minority and lower-income neighborhoods were half as likely as White, higher-income neighborhoods to have at least one physical activity facility in their community.¹⁴

2. Children who have access to existing and renovated school recreational facilities outside of regular school hours are more likely to be active.

- A survey of 12 to 18 year-old adolescents in three cities (Boston, Cincinnati, and San Diego) found that these youths were significantly more likely to be physically active when they had access to fields and play areas after school.¹⁵
- A study in two lower-income New Orleans communities found that the number of children who were physically active outdoors (i.e., those who were walking or very active in their neighborhood and/or a schoolyard) was 84 percent higher in a community that opened a schoolyard for public play compared to a community that had closed schoolyards. Survey results also showed that children living in the community with the open schoolyard spent less time watching television, movies, and playing video games on weekdays.¹⁶
- A study of six public schools with renovated schoolyards and three control schools found a significant increase in the number of children who were physically active at the renovated schoolyards outside of regular school hours. The study also found a significant increase in children's overall activity levels at schools with renovated schoolyards.¹⁷ All of the schools in the study were in lower-income, inner-city neighborhoods in Denver.
- An evaluation of a shared use program in Hawaii between the Honolulu Department of Parks and Recreation and a large local high school found that the program provided participants with new opportunities for physical activity (e.g., senior fitness classes, adult fitness and recreation programs, teen strength training). The program had more than 1,000 participants, including students, teachers, school staff and community members (see Figure 1).¹⁸

3. Progress toward opening school facilities for recreational use outside of school hours is slow and some evidence suggests that lower-income communities are less likely than higher-income communities to offer shared use of school facilities.

- An analysis of School Health Policies and Programs Study (SHPPS) data from a national survey of public and private elementary, middle, and high schools found that 67 percent of schools allowed the public to use outdoor school physical activity facilities without being in a supervised program. This percentage did not change between 2000 and 2006.¹⁹ The study also found that about two-thirds of all schools surveyed allowed community sponsored youth sport teams to use their physical activity facilities outside of regular school hours, but only about one-third of schools allowed community sponsored youth activity classes or lessons, or supervised open gym or free-play.¹⁹ Only 29 percent of schools surveyed offered all of the aforementioned types of shared use to both children and adults during one or more of the following times: before school, after school, evenings, weekends, or during school vacations (see Figure 2).²⁰
- A 2009 national survey of public schools in lower-income and primarily Black and Latino communities found that 69 percent of schools reported their recreational facilities were open to the public outside of regular school hours for either informal or supervised use.²¹
- A California study found income-related disparities in community access to school facilities outside of school hours. Sixty-eight percent of respondents from higher-income districts or county offices of education indicated that some or all of their schools were open for public recreational use outside of regular school hours, compared with only 44 percent of respondents from lower-income districts.²²

A 2006 national survey found that only 29 percent of schools allowed all of the following outside of school hours: use by youth sport teams, use for youth activity lessons, supervised open gym or free-play, and use of outdoor facilities for those who were not in a supervised program.

4. Surveys of school administrators in lower-income communities or communities of color cite issues such as liability, staffing, maintenance, and cost as barriers to opening schools for recreational use outside of school hours.

- A national survey of school principals from lower-income communities and communities with higher proportions of Black and Latino populations examined perceived barriers to providing community access to school facilities outside of school hours. Among schools that did not allow public use of their recreational facilities, the following reasons were identified as extremely important for restricting access: liability concerns (61%); insurance (61%); cost of running activities and programs (60%); staffing for maintenance and security (57%); safety concerns (57%); and maintenance costs and responsibilities (55%).²³
- A state survey of California school administrators from lower-income school districts found the most frequently cited reasons for not opening schools to the public outside of school hours were lack of staffing (45%); liability concerns (44%); safety concerns (44%); insufficient funding (39%); and risk of vandalism (38%).²²
- A study conducted in four communities in the United States, with variability across sites in terms of education, race, and socioeconomic status found that safety, insurance, and liability concerns were key perceived barriers to making indoor and outdoor recreational facilities available for public use. Other concerns included overuse of facilities, vandalism, and the need for supervision.²⁴
- A national survey of school principals in lower-income and minority communities found that 83 percent of all respondents were “somewhat to very concerned” about liability if someone was injured while participating in recreational activities on school property outside of regular school hours. Among the 31 percent of respondents who reported that their facilities were not open for community use, 91 percent were “somewhat to very concerned” about liability.²¹

CONCLUSIONS

Providing children and families with access to safe, affordable and convenient places to be physically active is an important strategy for promoting health and reducing risk for obesity, especially in lower-income communities and communities of color. Schools, often located in the heart of a community, can serve that purpose.²⁵ Many schools, however, either do not share their recreational facilities or limit the types of shared use and facilities that are available to the public during non-school hours. In some states, schools in communities with greater concentrations of residents at high risk for obesity are even less likely to share their facilities.²²

School administrators commonly cite concerns about liability, insurance, safety, cost, staffing, and maintenance as reasons for not opening their facilities to the community outside of school hours. Joint use agreements can help address these concerns, particularly in communities that lack public or private recreation facilities. States also may choose to address barriers to community recreational use of school property through legislative action.²⁵

Considerations for Local Policy-Makers and Decision-Makers

The Institute of Medicine recommends that local governments “collaborate with school districts and other organizations to establish joint use of facilities agreements allowing playing fields, playgrounds, and recreation centers to be used by community residents when schools are closed; and if necessary, adopt regulatory and legislative policies to address liability issues that might block implementation.”²⁶ Schools, community groups, and local governments can enter into joint use agreements to address the perceived barriers to sharing recreational facilities and programs. Local policy-makers and decision-makers should consider the following issues to address barriers to shared use:

- **Liability:** School decision-makers should become familiar with liability protections that apply specifically to the community use of their recreation and sport facilities outside of regular school hours. A 2009 survey of liability laws nationwide found that public schools may be protected by some form of governmental immunity in all states to varying degrees.²⁷ Where liability protections are inadequate, school officials may consider supporting advocacy efforts that address limited liability protections for the shared use of school recreational facilities. In addition, local schools, agencies, and community groups can use joint use agreements to

reduce their liability risk and associated costs through sharing responsibility for potential liability and liability insurance costs.²⁸

- Maintenance:** Decision-makers can address maintenance costs and responsibilities through joint use agreements as well. Joint use agreements can help schools and their partner(s) establish mutually agreed responsibility for facility maintenance and repair.²⁸ Responsibilities include determining 1) the amount of maintenance that will be required if facilities are shared outside of regular school hours; 2) if school staff or staff from the partnering organization will be responsible for maintenance; and 3) how maintenance costs will be shared. The sharing of maintenance costs may be partly based on the amount of time that a facility is used by each party. Written procedures can be employed to help address maintenance concerns and to discourage the misuse of facilities.²⁹
- Vandalism, Crime, and Other Safety Issues:** Decision-makers should consider traditional proactive safety and crime prevention measures such as security cameras, warnings, emergency telephones, and security personnel as necessary to deter criminal behavior. Further, partnerships with community organizations may instill a sense of ownership among members of the community resulting in a greater responsibility for the care and protection of a shared resource. Joint use agreements can be used to address, where necessary, maintenance and repair issues for potential vandalism or other misuse.
- Scheduling:** Shared use should consider priority of use, hours of availability and conditions of use. Joint use agreements can help schools and their partner(s) establish the priorities for each party in the use of shared facilities.²⁸ Decision-makers may wish to develop a master plan that provides direction for priority of use. For example, when school recreational facilities are shared, the school might have first priority, followed by the partner organization, and then informal community use. In addition, hours of availability and conditions of use should be clearly stated.² For example, certain facilities, such as tennis courts, might be open only to a school tennis team during spring games and practices, but open at night for members of a community tennis league when the cost of lighting is shared.
- Costs and Operations:** Decision-makers should carefully consider issues relevant to costs and operations when sharing facilities for the purpose of recreation and physical

activity. Costs of equipment and supplies, water, electricity, maintenance, and staffing can all be shared. Joint use agreements often include a cost assessment that helps both partners better understand and address the costs associated with sharing facilities.²⁸ In addition to costs, partner groups can share staff and resources, such as custodial and maintenance staff.²⁹ A joint use agreement can address compensation for overtime work, such as securing and inspecting the facilities. Additionally, union contracts and terms of employment for union employees, where relevant, should be addressed by the agreement.

Considerations for State Policy-Makers

Studies indicate that for many school officials, liability is perceived as a primary barrier to allowing community use of school recreational facilities during non-school hours. Although liability can be addressed by a joint use agreement at the local level, state policy-makers also can consider adopting regulations and/or legislation to address liability issues where necessary. The American Heart Association and the Public Health Law Center have drafted policy guidance on important considerations regarding school liability legislation in an effort to promote community use of school property. The policy guidance includes elements of a sound policy and the decision and trade-offs involved in policy change efforts. It includes sample language for various policy sections, including findings, a purpose statement, definitions, and exceptions to protect users from extreme malfeasance by schools. It also addresses critical implementation components, including statewide coordination of best practices and education about joint use and liability exposure, as well as sample policy and contract language for use by the school districts. Advocates have used this policy guidance to implement statewide change.

Additional Resources and References

American Heart Association
Eliminating Barriers for Community Recreational Use of School Property: Policy Guidance on Liability and Shared Use
www.publichealthlawcenter.org/topics/active-living/school-policies

California Pan-Ethnic Health Network
Unlocking the Playground: Achieving Equity in Physical Activity Spaces
www.cpehn.org/pdfs/Joint%20Use%20Brief.pdf

Joint Use Primer
www.cpehn.org/pdfs/Joint%20Use%20Primer%20-%20CPEHN%204-09.pdf

National Policy and Legal Analysis Network to Prevent Childhood Obesity (NPLAN)

Opening School Grounds to the Community After-Hours: Joint Use Toolkit
www.phlpnet.org/healthy-planning/products/joint_use_toolkit

Liability Risks for After-Hours Use of Public School Property: A 50 State Survey
www.nplanonline.org/nplan/products/liabilitysurvey

Prevention Institute
 Interactive Website Developed for California's Joint Use Statewide Task Force
www.jointuse.org

21st Century School Fund and University of California,
 Berkeley Center for Cities and Schools
 Joint Use of Public Schools: A Framework for a New Social Contract
<http://citiesandschools.berkeley.edu/reports/Joint-Use-Concept-Paper.pdf>

Joint Use Calculator
www.21csf.org/csf-home/publications.asp

This brief was prepared by John O. Spengler, JD, PhD, University of Florida, with support from the Active Living Research staff. Peer review was provided by Michael Kanters, PhD, North Carolina State University and Manel Kappagoda, JD, MPH, National Policy & Legal Analysis Network to Prevent Childhood Obesity. For updates and a Web-based version of this brief, visit www.activelivingresearch.org.

Active Living Research, a national program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, stimulates and supports research to identify environmental factors and policies that influence physical activity for children and families to inform effective childhood obesity prevention strategies, particularly in low-income and racial/ethnic communities at highest risk. Active Living Research wants solid research to be part of the public debate about active living.

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Endnotes

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Everyone has a favorite park, or should. Mine is Washington Square, in the heart of San Francisco, bordering Chinatown and the laid back book stores and coffee houses of North Beach. First platted around 1850, the park is mostly open with a simple looping walkway. The subtle ripples and rolls of its naturalistic topography give me a sense of how the city's hills and valleys must have once looked. In and around the park, neighborhood life flourishes. Regulars claim its sunny benches to read and chat. Elderly residents practice Tai-Chi. School children play frisbee. Commuters disembark from buses along the park's edge on Columbus Avenue. Lunchtime picnics are daily events on the sprawling green lawn.

WHAT MAKES A GOOD URBAN PARK?

Peter Katz, New Urban Network

Unfortunately most small urban parks, particularly those in downtowns, fail to deliver the sort of civic experience that can be enjoyed in Washington Square every day. Such parks are the victims of strapped city budgets, the latest theories of crime prevention and the nervous tinkering of overzealous designers. Ultimately, these assaults can be traced back to a larger cause—the disinvestment in cities which occurred as a result of America's postwar flight to the suburbs.

Though the money needed to build and maintain urban parks left town, the people who needed them most remained. By the seventies and eighties, when downtown land values soared along with the gleaming new highrises, it became ever-harder to realize the idea of a true public realm at the heart of our cities. Many once-proud parks like New York's Bryant Park and Los Angeles' Pershing Square fell on hard times. Lack of funds led to lower standards of maintenance and security, which in turn led to crime, drug dealing, and the use of parks as havens for the homeless.

Windswept Plazas and Sterile Atria

But people's need for parks didn't go away. A new form of quasi-public space was invented by the private sector to meet the needs of downtown workers. Generous plazas such as those facing New York's Park Avenue and Avenue of the Americas were provided by property owners, often in trade for increased building height. Though such spaces provided a dramatic setting for the modernist boxes of Corporate America, the experience at ground level was

sometimes less than appealing. The combined forces of wind, weather, and the airfoil effect of many of the heroic towers rendered the wide-open spaces below virtually uninhabitable for much of the year.

Enter the atrium, to tame the extremes of climate. In cities such as Montréal, Minneapolis, Atlanta, and Houston, an elaborate system of climate-controlled interior atria, lobby/gardens, and passageways enable workers to park, walk to their offices, go to lunch, run errands, and work out at the health club without ever having to set foot on a city street. These private, "public" spaces offer two essential elements that many city parks fail to provide: safety and a clean, well maintained environment.

But all is not well in the new downtowns and edge cities that we created over the past forty years. Like the proverbial sidewalks that in some places "roll up at five o'clock," these private corporate domains shut down not long after the close of business each day, forcing after-hours city-dwellers out into the now second-class public realm of the street. That once-vital street now resembles a ghost town; its restaurants and merchants have moved indoors to capture the more lucrative daytime trade.

The Park as Public Forum

More troubling than the lack of downtown street life is the erosion of the intimate and longstanding connection between democracy and the public realm. Many popular movements have been played out in the town square—Czechoslovakia’s Velvet Revolution in Wenceslas Square and the student demonstrations in Beijing’s Tiananmen Square.

Free speech and soapboxes wouldn’t stand much of a chance in the corporate plazas and shopping malls of today. Uniformed security patrols would whisk an offending citizen away long before a sympathetic crowd could ever form. Legal questions about private ownership versus public use have been debated in the highest courts. Special booths for pamphleteers in many airports attest to the awkward compromises resulting from such court decisions.

Even more important than such legal issues are the issues of public versus private “character.” Just as many of the corporate plazas of the sixties and seventies assumed the function of public parks, albeit poorly, the newest generation of city parks are too closely patterned after their corporate predecessors.

What Makes a City Park Work?

What, then, defines a “good” park, a true urban public place? My own criteria for a successful urban park can be counted on one hand:

1. A park should be “nearby” for everyone. Public open space, such as a square or “commons” should be at the center of a neighborhood; no more than five minutes’ walk from most residents. Public buildings, shops (a corner store at minimum) and a transit stop should be near the center too. Smaller parks should be scattered throughout the neighborhood so that no one is more than three minutes’ walk from a park.

2. A public park should look and feel truly public.

Being bounded by streets or sidewalks on all sides is one sure way to communicate “publicness.” The presence of civic buildings and monuments also reinforces this public character.

Conversely, spatial relationships get confusing when private houses or buildings back up to a park, without a clear public zone in between. This ambiguous edge fosters conflict between those who live next to the park, and others who come from the surrounding area. A better approach would be for houses to front the park, so that porches, front yards, and streets buffer the edge between public use and private enjoyment.

3. Parks should be simple and not overdesigned. Trees, grass, some walkways and a bench: these are the basics of my ideal park. Unfortunately, many new parks are so “designed” that it’s hard just to find a patch of grass where one can sit in the sun, or a clear meadow to set up a volleyball net. A park can have a strong identity and implied use—for example, active versus passive recreation—but it should also have enough of the “basics” to satisfy the needs of a broad range of users.

4. A park should retain or enhance the natural contours of the land. In densely settled areas, it’s hard to get a sense of how the terrain looked before it was built over. I’m particularly aware of this in my own hilly city of San Francisco. I feel that too many new parks, both here and in other cities, are terraced and bermed beyond recognition. The legendary Olmsted moved a lot of earth too, but they did it a way that always looked more natural than what they started with.

5. A good park should allow you to both see and walk through it. Part of this relates to obvious issues of safety, but this principle also relates to the earlier point about “overdesign.” In many new parks, I feel like a victim of planning, forced to navigate an obstacle course just to get through.

By contrast, many older parks offer a simple network of walkways, providing a variety of routes for those who are just passing through. Such fleeting moments in an otherwise hectic day may be the only time that some city dwellers get to experience the pleasures of a park.

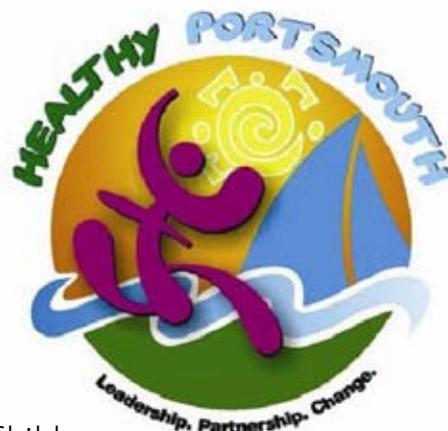
After years of neglect and misdirection, there may at last be some rays of hope for the future of urban parks. New York’s renovated Bryant Park and Boston’s Post Office Square have been runaway successes among a new generation of parks, largely because their designs respect the basics outlined here. They’re effective models which can and should be emulated in other cities. By contrast, Los Angeles’ redesigned Pershing Square and San Francisco’s new Yerba Buena Gardens, while welcome contributions to the public realm of their respective cities, seem overdesigned and cluttered to the point of dysfunction.

As planners, designers, citizens and local governments take a renewed interest in public spaces, I offer them all a bit of advice before they get back to their drawing boards: Get out and take a walk in a “good” park. Look at the elements that cause it to work so well. Talk to the people who use it and find out what features they value most. And while you’re there, don’t forget to smell the flowers.

HEALTHY PORTSMOUTH

Health And Wellness Initiative

Healthy Portsmouth is a city-wide health and wellness initiative begun in 2010 and led by community leaders committed to changing the policies, systems, and environments that affect neighborhoods, schools, and workplaces to improve the health of Portsmouth citizens. Its leadership includes chief executives and policy-makers from the City of Portsmouth, Consortium for Infant and Child Health (CINCH), Portsmouth General Hospital Foundation, Portsmouth Health Department, Portsmouth Department of Parks, Recreation & Leisure Services, Portsmouth Public Schools, Portsmouth Redevelopment and Housing Authority, Portsmouth YMCA, WHRO Center for Regional Citizenship, Bon Secours–Maryview Hospital, and Eastern Virginia Medical School.



Healthy Portsmouth started as a leadership team for ACHIEVE (Action Communities for Health, Innovation, and EnVironmental change) when the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) selected Portsmouth as one of the 40 cities nationwide to be in the ACHIEVE class of 2010. ACHIEVE supports shared partnerships between city health officials, city governments, parks and recreation departments, local YMCAs, local health-related companies, and other representatives from the school, business, health, and community sectors to carry out improvements. The leadership team for Portsmouth decided that it wanted to create a lasting presence to promote and implement healthy change in Portsmouth beyond the 3-year ACHIEVE commitment and it adopted the name Healthy Portsmouth in 2011.

The Healthy Portsmouth mission is to make healthy choices easy choices where we live, learn, play, work and worship. Using the CDC's health needs assessment tool and conducting community stakeholder meetings in 2010 and 2011, Healthy Portsmouth developed a three-year action plan to address five broad areas: increasing physical activity, enhancing school wellness, decreasing tobacco exposure, improving nutrition, and inspiring healthy activities and messages, such as community gardens, stairwell use, and healthy meeting guidelines.

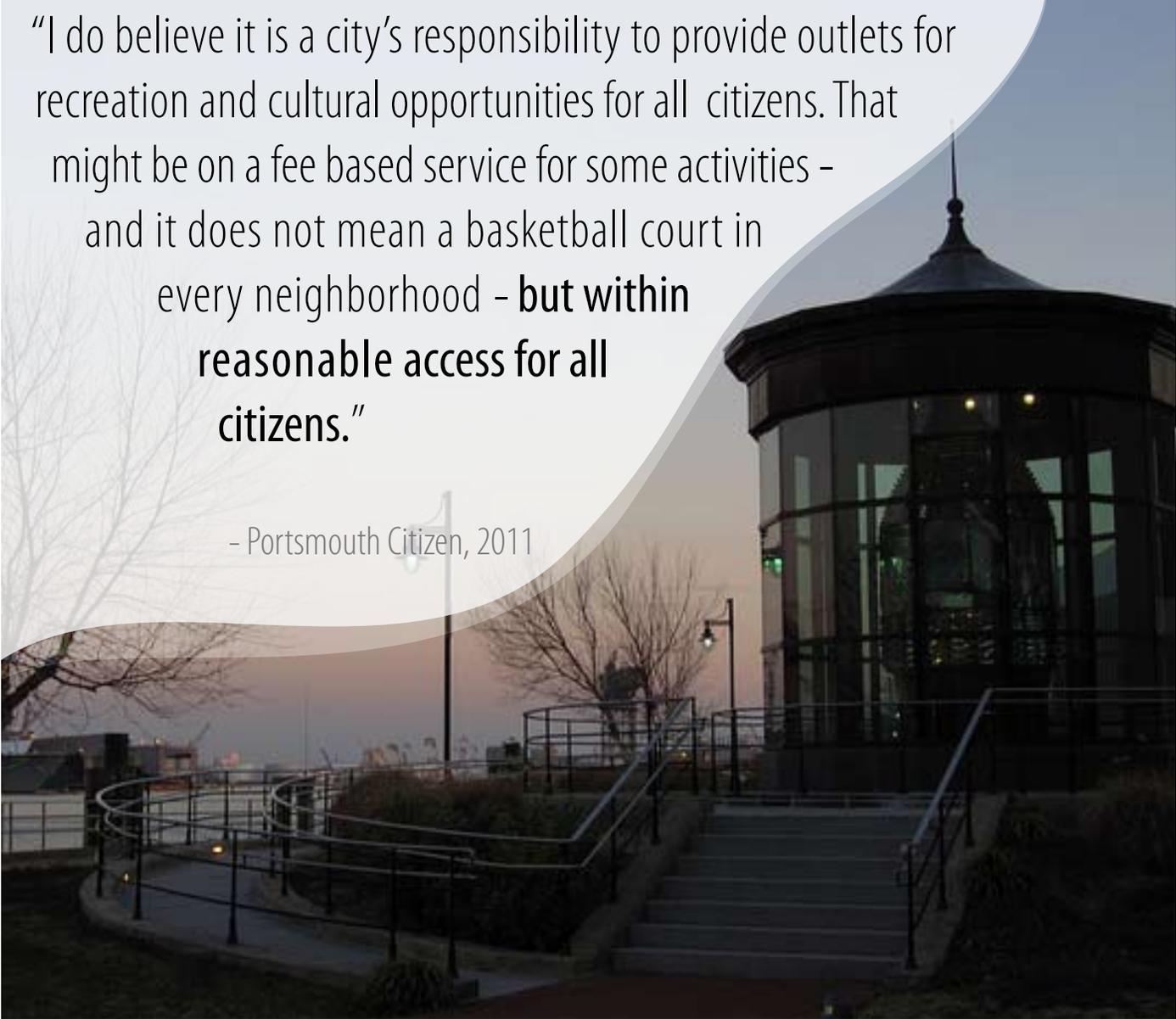


The Healthy Portsmouth mission is to make healthy choices easy choices where we live, learn, play work and worship, and plans to replicate the walking route in other City neighborhoods in future action plan years.

The first broad area – increasing physical activity – is consistent with many of the goals of the Department of Parks, Recreation and Leisure Services as well as the City’s Master Transportation Plan (January 2010) in its focus on improving pedestrian and bike facilities. The objectives to increase walkability in neighborhoods and downtown areas along with use of stairs are specifically designed to increase physical activity and reduce the health risks associated with obesity. One example of an environmental change affected by Healthy Portsmouth is the Portsmouth Walks pilot program in the Port Norfolk neighborhood. Together with the Port Norfolk Civic League and other neighborhood stakeholders, Healthy Portsmouth developed a neighborhood walking route linking parks, open spaces, shopping, and churches via sidewalks and marked the route with signs and mile markers. Using grant funds and scheduled improvements to Mt. Vernon Avenue, the pilot project added new curb ramps and crosswalk markings to intersections along the route.

Healthy Portsmouth plans to replicate the walking route in other City neighborhoods in future action plan years. It is currently partnering with the Department of Parks, Recreation and Leisure Services and the Portsmouth YMCA to incorporate basic swim lessons as an option in the Summer Galaxy program for 2012 and 2013.

Healthy Portsmouth will continue to be a partner with Department of Parks, Recreation and Leisure Services in supporting programming and facility improvements toward a shared mission of making the City a healthier place to live.



“I do believe it is a city’s responsibility to provide outlets for recreation and cultural opportunities for all citizens. That might be on a fee based service for some activities – and it does not mean a basketball court in every neighborhood – **but within reasonable access for all citizens.**”

– Portsmouth Citizen, 2011

PART 2

Key Stakeholder Meetings

Public Survey Results

Public Open Houses

SUMMARY OF STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Over the course of several days in early June (2011), the design team and representatives from the City met with several key stakeholders. These included:

- Civic League Presidents
- The Planning Commission
- Athletic League Presidents
- The Portsmouth Public Schools
- The Parks & Recreation Commission

The information obtained from the various groups was used to help evaluate the current park system in Portsmouth and determine the values. Because each group had different perspectives (sometimes with opposite views), it was understandable there was no clear unanimous consensus from stakeholders. But getting a unified consensus was not the goal of interviewing stakeholders. Instead, the goal was to get each unique perspective. For instance, when people are in need of a neighborhood park or community center and they see an empty school or ballfield in the late afternoon, Civic League Presidents ask why some school principals have shut neighbors out. When representatives from the schools are asked why school grounds and building sit empty after school hours, their opinion varies by claiming “schools are given money and the responsibility to spend it well and take care of their property. If their property is open to everyone, then less conscientious people will inevitably cause damage . . .”.

What was unanimous in the meetings with the key stakeholders was the fact that everyone cared about Portsmouth and they all want what’s best for the citizens of Portsmouth. While each brought a unique perspective with specialized knowledge, each group also saw the bigger picture and how they could help achieve the goals of the Master Plan.

Listed below are some general notes from the stakeholders, although as noted above, they may not reflect the opinions of all groups:

- Common goals/shared values – every neighborhood is different, but we’re all Portsmouth.
- Let citizens do it and “own” it.
- People need something in a 5-10 minute walk.

- Small parks are desired, too. Not just recreation centers or big things.
- People want spaces to meet as a community. Even self-organized. They need a place they can go.
- Engaging in community is key.
- Spaces could have multi-purpose uses. Various types of leagues for different ages and activities.
- Major streets act as barriers.
- Neighborhoods can plan their own smaller events but appreciate the City’s assistance with some items such as street closures, portable toilets, etc.
- Kids are playing in the streets now.
- Make themed playgrounds based upon each neighborhood’s unique history. Parks can seem like carbon copies. Nothing unique. Give them something different and unique to each one. This will draw people to different parks. Nature trail vs. play equipment vs. splash park vs. tennis. More variety and novelty. Different amenities and different “themes” (i.e. neighborhood history).
- Some programs are needed inside: not just a “senior center”, but a “neighborhood center”.
- Need to show some creative new things that kids would not otherwise be exposed to.
- “Parks and Recreation should be the experts. Keep politics out of it.”
- If the City is doing “their part”, then citizen groups will be willing, too.
- Ball fields don’t really feel like parks or neighborhood green spaces
- There are enough parks in the city, but they are not being used well
- School principals each have control of schedules. Concern is “control” of people using facility.
- If neighborhood uses school, they build a sense of community pride and ownership.

SUMMARY OF CITIZEN RESPONSES

Survey questionnaires concerning issues of parks, recreation, and programs in the community were distributed to community groups, representatives of various organizations and other interested community volunteers and leaders. Questionnaires were also posted on-line and paper copies were distributed to all recreation centers, athletic facilities and the City's Department of Parks and Department of Planning. Well over 600 people answered the questionnaire, the Parks and Recreation Master Plan Website was visited over 3000 times, and in addition to the public open houses, at least 300 people have contacted the Planning Department and/or the Department of Parks, Recreation and Leisure Services about the plan. This level of public participation has been consistent with past Destination Portsmouth endeavors.

The respondents were asked a variety of questions about recreation issues including strengths and weaknesses of the programs, facilities and maintenance as well as concerns facing the community. The survey responses provided some useful insights as to the unique viewpoints of the residents as well as the needs of the community. The results of the survey was one of the premier factors in determining the values of the community.

Below are results of the survey and a sampling of written responses. Likewise, conclusions to each question are included with the question.

Question 1: Name

While most respondents were happy to include their name, this information is not included in this document.

Question 2: Sex

Female 70.2%
Male 29.8%

Conclusion:

The percentages don't reflect the true demographics of Portsmouth where there are slightly more than 50% female. Had it been more equal, the results might have reflected a higher percentage in the active sports categories as a higher percentage of men are typically engaged in active recreation when compared to women.

Question 3: Please indicate the number of persons living in your household including yourself.

Based on the results, all age groups had fair and almost representation.

Question 4: Are you a resident of Portsmouth?

Yes 93.9%
No 6.1%

Question 5: What is your neighborhood or zip code?

Results showed that all neighborhoods were well represented.

Question 6: How long have you lived in Portsmouth?

Results showed that every possible answer was given... from 'just moved here' to 'over 76 years.' The range indicated good representation. There were lots of proud 'All My Life' responses.

Question 7: Were any of the parks, waterways, or recreation programs/activities in Portsmouth a factor in your decision as to where you decided to live?

More than 1/3 of the respondents said YES.

Some written responses include:

- I prefer to live in Norfolk because there are more green spaces.
- We chose to live near the Churchland Little League field to have a green space near by.
- I wanted to live in a city during my retirement years where I had access to many free and open community programs and activities knowing that my income would be limited.
- No. Though, they seem to be pretty nonexistent.
- I like being next to City Park because my family can do fun activities and have family functions.
- In fact, we almost decided AGAINST Portsmouth because of the lack of recreation.
- Before buying my house, I had previously visited the Hoffler Creek Wildlife Preserve, and this helped to contribute to my positive overall perception of Portsmouth as well.
- No, but I should of done my due diligence. Compared to other surrounding cities, it appears that they have a better parks and recreation department that is better developed.

Conclusion:

In Portsmouth, parks and open spaces ARE a factor in where people decide to live. Over 1/3 of the respondents said yes. Based on the comments, those who said they didn't specifically locate because of a park or facility still indicated that it was still a part of their selection process.

Question 8: In Portsmouth, what recreation activities do you most enjoy?

68.70%	Eating Out
68.40%	Walking or Jogging
66.10%	Relaxing at Home
58.50%	Enjoying Downtown Portsmouth (waterfront, "path of history", etc.)
50.60%	Enjoying Nature (birdwatching, nature trail, etc.)
49.70%	Outdoor Family Event (such as a picnic)
45.30%	Water related activities (boating, fishing, swimming, etc)
44.40%	Going to the Movies
40.60%	Biking
40.10%	Shopping
32.20%	People Watching (non-structured activity such as sitting on a bench)
28.70%	Group Sport Activity (such as softball or soccer)
26.90%	Indoor Family Event (such as bowling)

Write In Responses: concerts, gardening, work, crafts, golf, festivals, neighborhood events.

Since Question 8 and Question 9 go together, see Question 9 for general conclusions.

Question 9: Of the items you selected in Question 8, how often do you enjoy these activities?

	Daily/Weekly	Monthly	Rarely	Never
Eating Out	58.80%	37.30%	3.60%	0.40%
Walking or Jogging	75.10%	13.80%	8.60%	2.40%
Relaxing at Home	91.10%	6.40%	1.50%	1.10%
Enjoying Downtown Portsmouth	35.10%	28.80%	30.00%	6.20%
Enjoying Nature	41.60%	23.40%	26.40%	8.70%
Outdoor Family Event	21.50%	34.30%	39.50%	4.80%
Water related activities	25.50%	28.20%	34.20%	12.00%
Going to the Movies	18.60%	41.90%	34.40%	5.10%
Biking	37.30%	21.10%	24.00%	17.50%
Shopping	52.20%	31.00%	15.10%	1.60%
People Watching	42.70%	15.80%	29.40%	12.00%
Group Sport Activity	26.90%	13.90%	27.80%	31.40%
Indoor Family Event	14.70%	27.60%	44.30%	13.40%

Conclusion (for Questions 8 & 9):

- 1) People enjoy walking/jogging and 75% of the respondents do it daily or weekly (a high percentage since Portsmouth has no designated walking trails).
- 2) People enjoy walking as much as they do eating out and even more than relaxing at home.
- 3) 58% of the respondents enjoy Downtown and even more visit at least monthly.
- 4) Over 1/2 of the respondents enjoy nature activities (a large percentage for an urban city) and 42% do so weekly.
- 5) Almost 1/2 of the population enjoys outdoor family events such as picnics.
- 6) Group sports and indoor events are enjoyed by just over 26% of the population.
- 7) Based on this question alone, we can conclude Portsmouth has a great and highly used park or parks that have a focus on nature and the natural environment. More people (almost twice as many) recreate in nature and downtown rather than sports or active parks. Is it a preference or is it availability of parks/programs? In other words, if there were more swimming pools would people prefer to spend less time downtown or in a nature park and swimming instead. Another factor to consider. . . nature parks and downtown can be enjoyed year round, where active/sport parks are more seasonal.

Question 10: How important are the following purposes / benefits of parks and recreation to you in Portsmouth?

	Very or Somewhat Important	Neutral	Little or No Importance
Enhance community image and sense of place	92.1%	5.1%	2.8%
Provide opportunities to enjoy nature/outdoors	90.6%	7.9%	1.5%
Protect the natural environment and preserve wildlife habitat	90.6%	7.6%	1.8%
Connect people, building stronger families and neighborhoods	89.6%	6.7%	3.7%
Promote healthy habits and exercise	88.5%	7.8%	3.7%
Improve Health and Wellness	86.1%	9.5%	4.4%
Ensure there is public green space near every home	81.9%	15.0%	3.1%
Provide opportunities for lifelong learning	81.7%	12.5%	5.8%
Build character and sportsmanship	79.5%	14.2%	6.3%
Help older adults and people with disabilities remain active	78.7%	13.1%	8.2%
Provide more access to waterfront activities	78.6%	17.3%	4.1%
Promote Youth/Teen Physical/Social Development	75.3%	13.0%	11.7%
Provide cultural opportunities	74.4%	17.3%	8.3%
Adult sports opportunities	60.8%	25.3%	13.9%
Provide Before/After School Care	44.6%	18.1%	37.3%

Some typical written responses:

- It would be nice to have a place where you can interact with people.
- Growing up in Portsmouth, the Parks and Recreation was the greatest. In the summer (mostly high school students or grads) were employed to run a program at each school or ball park. There was arts and crafts and all kinds of sports. Softball tournaments with all playgrounds. Why can't the city do something like that for our kids today?
- Need to provide activities, education, socialization, reinforcing family and morals. Regaining sense of pride. Prejudice is not only a racial thing. It includes age, physical appearance and social standing. We need to help all walks of life to enjoy this city.
- We need safe places to go take walks outdoors.
- I do believe it is a city's responsibility to provide outlets for recreation and cultural opportunities for all citizens. That might be on a fee based service for some activities - and it does not mean a basketball court in every neighborhood - but within reasonable access for all citizens.
- Connecting people and building families and neighborhoods is one of the visions, but the vision is somewhat distorted.
- I am leery of having a park close to my home since they are nothing more than a gathering place for drug dealers.
- More for the elderly to do.
- Our pets are residents here too, and they need a place to run and play safely.
- All these ideas are great, but I would rather have more parks and greenspace than more programs. I believe that when people have access to nature, they become better and healthier people.
- I do not find that Portsmouth has many all encompassing fun and exciting cultural events and activities to enjoy outside of seawall fest....
- A lot of young families have said that as soon as the real estate market changes they are moving so their kids will have more things offered for them.
- I really think the one thing Portsmouth and all of Hampton Roads communities are missing is community pools.
- Provide plenty of smaller playgrounds for children within individual neighborhoods.
- Provide alternatives to video games and television for people of all ages and to gang/criminal activity for youngsters

Conclusion:

Interesting that the number one response was enhancing the community and creating a sense of place for a neighborhood followed by nature, building strong families and neighborhoods and then health and fitness. That being said, ALL of the reasons were rated very high, statistically speaking. The only response with significant rating of ‘little importance’ is Before and After School Programs.

Question 11: What are the main reasons you use parks and recreation programs in Portsmouth?

Enjoy outdoors and nature	73.30%
For exercise	52.30%
Picnic and general leisure activities	47.70%
Attend special events/concerts	46.20%
Participate in family activities	46.20%
Access to water	37.70%
Meet friends	33.10%
Use a specific facility at a park	28.30%
Play sports	25.80%
Continuing Education / Hobbies	18.80%
I don't use parks	6.50%

Conclusion:

- 1) When most people think of parks and rec they think of sports (soccer, baseball, etc.). In Portsmouth (based on the survey), the percentage of people who play sports is 25% while the number of people who simply enjoy the outdoors or nature is almost three times as high...73%. And twice as many people enjoy the parks for exercise rather than organized sports.
- 2) Picnics are highly popular in Portsmouth.
- 3) Since 6.5% of the respondents don't use parks, that means 93.5% do (approximately 93, 000 people).
- 4) Would more people play sports if more facilities were available?

Question 12: How often do you engage in outdoor activities and recreation?

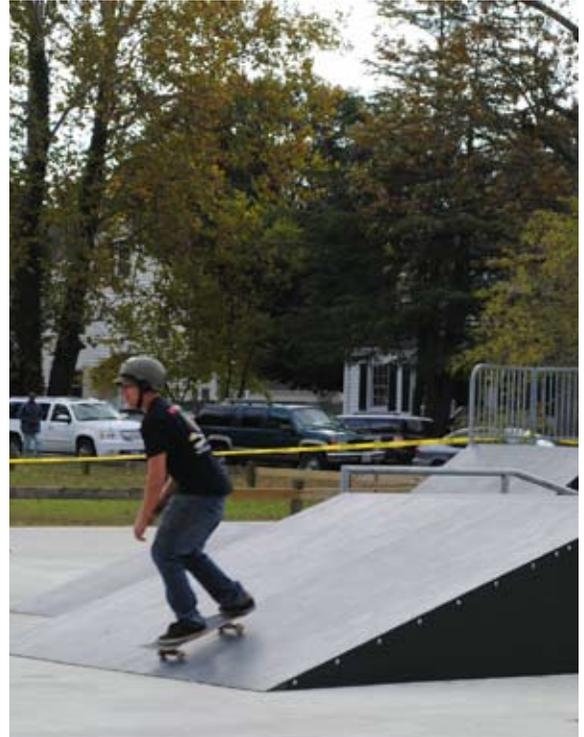
Never	1.50%
1-2 times per year	4.60%
3-4 times per year	7.70%
2 times a month	21.30%
3-4 times a month	21.30%
5 or more per month	44.80%

Conclusion:

Seems like an active community and one that places a high emphasis on parks & recreation.

Question 13: Check the outdoor activities you or your family most frequently participated in last year.

Walking, running, strolling, roller blading/skating	70.90%
Special Event (concert, festival)	45.40%
Sitting or relaxing on a park bench	43.60%
Bicycling (road)	36.50%
Playgrounds	33.10%
Boating / Fishing / Kayak / Canoe	32.80%
Picnicking	31.00%
Bird / Animal watching	30.40%
Watching outdoor sports activities in person	29.10%
Field Sports (soccer, baseball, football, etc)	26.70%
Swimming	26.10%
Nature Photography	19.60%
Golf	14.40%
Court Sports (basketball, volleyball, etc.)	10.70%
Tennis	10.10%
Bicycling (mountain bike)	9.80%
Skateboard	6.40%
Chess	2.50%
Disc Golf / Ultimate Frisbee	2.50%



Conclusion:

- 1) These are the types of questions / answers that must be carefully reviewed as the information can be misleading. For instance, mountain biking (trail biking) was not rated very high but is it because people in Portsmouth aren't interested or because they have no where to ride? It's very popular in Richmond because of the great facilities there. The same is true of Disc Golf.
- 3) High level of walking, especially since Portsmouth has no walking trails.
- 4) High level of picnicking.
- 5) High level of nature enthusiasts.
- 6) People really responded to the special events (concerts, festivals) in this question as well as written comments elsewhere in the survey.

Question 14: How often do you use the parks & community facilities when they are in season?

Conclusion:

The results were fairly predictable . . . the pocket parks get the least use (as they should) and the regional parks such as City Park gets the most use (as they should). According to the survey, approximately 88% of the respondents visit City Park at least five times a year. Interestingly almost 43% of the respondents visit Hoffer Creek Wildlife Refuge at least five times a year. 5.3% visit it at least one a week: based on a population of 100,000, that's over 5000 people a week. Perhaps the reason there was a huge request in the survey for restrooms at this park.

Question 15: Do the existing programs and facilities meet your needs?

Yes: 43.2%

No: 56.8%

Written Responses:

- If you don't have a boat or play golf or tennis, what is there for an adult to do?
- I am sick of driving to other cities to walk/hike.
- Most facilities are not local to my neighborhood and in areas of town that I do not wish to go to.
- Do not feel safe going to parks anymore.
- So many of these "parks" you listed are just empty fields.
- Most of my family's "rec" time is spent walking in our neighborhood with its overgrown, cracked, and often non-existent sidewalks.
- Waste of money.. If people want to use them, then let them and not the taxpayer support the programs.
- Waste of Tax payer Money to keep these open.
- The parks and rec programs are a joke in this city and everyone in City Hall who has anything to do with them should be embarrassed by the condition of the ballfields.
- Antiquated & Subpar.
- I do not think our resources are sufficient.
- I was really surprised to see all of the places listed. I really didn't know that all of these were available. Although many of these may not be of interest to me because of my age, etc., I do think that it would be helpful to make all of these places better publicized. It's also interesting to see this long list after hearing occasionally, "There's nothing for my kids to do in Portsmouth."
- Don't know anything about the programs because they are not advertised.
- I didn't know all of these places existed.
- Really not sure because I am unaware of what the facilities offer.
- The aren't a lot of facilities near me. In fact, I've never even heard of over half of the parks you listed.
- I know little about them. They could probably benefit me, if I would only look into them to see what's happening.
- I don't know enough about most of these programs and facilities.
- Could we have kayak rental at City Park? I would like more trails to hike. More lectures and learning opportunities.
- Hoffler Creek needs bathrooms.
- It would be benefit if City of Portsmouth had a track that was OPEN TO THE PUBLIC because it's not fair that we paid taxes on tracks & baseball fields that we CAN'T USE AT ALL.
- The waterfront is a valuable resource narrowly accessible to the average citizen.
- I love the skateboard park in Cradock, but another one would be great, especially at City Park. I would gladly volunteer time and labor to make this happen.
- I would like for my kids to participate in sports year round if possible but I feel that what p&r offers isn't enough or isn't advertised well enough.
- I wish there were more activities to keep people busy/active besides sitting around.
- Most programs are geared toward children/family not for singles.
- Just would like to see a lot more offered.
- Would like more small parks within the neighborhood with things to do.
- We live in Churchland and the facilities in Churchland are mainly aimed at group sports (i.e. baseball, soccer, football). We need a general use facility that has more to offer.
- Although I'm a lot older and not engaged in as many athletic activities, i know that the kids in my neighborhood have no place to play. This forces them to hang on corners and may lead to opportunities for mischief.

Conclusion:

In all other questions, we got both positive and negative feedback but based on the question asked here, we expected constructive criticism.

Overall issues that are important based on the feedback are:

- 1) Safety (more on that in question 19).
- 2) Many people don't know what parks and programs exist.
- 3) Maintenance is perceived problem.
- 4) Bathrooms at Hoffer was a main theme, other program items weren't consistently mentioned.

Question 16: When accessing Dept. of Parks, Recreation, and Leisure Programs and Services, how far do you have to travel for the majority of your outdoor recreational needs and programs/activities?

Less than 1/4 mile	9.40%
Less than 1/2 mile	8.10%
Less than 1 mile	17.20%
Less than 5 miles	45.30%
More than 5 miles	20.10%

Question 17: Is this travel distance...

Just Right	78.50%
Too Far	21.50%

Conclusion:

Based on the maps and the 'service area' of the neighborhood and community parks (see pages 24 - 25) we would have expected to see results that indicated parks were too far away. However, our society has become accustomed to driving more and walking less (although people in Portsmouth apparently love to walk). Based on key stakeholders and this questionnaire, it appears many residents travel to other places (cities) for many of their recreation needs. So when comparing travel distance to Virginia Beach, a 5 mile drive in Portsmouth may seem 'just right.'

Based on survey results, approximately 2/3 of the respondents are not within walking distance to a park.

Question 18: How would you rate your overall satisfaction with the level of park, open space, and facility maintenance in Portsmouth?

5 (very satisfied)	8.00%
4	21.40%
3 (neutral)	33.50%
2	13.70%
1 (unsatisfied)	17.30%
Don't know	6.10%

Question 19: What are the main reasons you DO NOT use parks and recreation facilities in Portsmouth more often?

Don't know what's available	44.10%
Feel unsafe	35.30%
Lack of facilities	34.60%
Do not know where they are located	33.60%
Poorly maintained	24.80%
Too far away, not conveniently located	23.80%
Not interested / No time	17.80%
Too crowded	9.10%
Limited transportation	4.50%

Written Responses

- I have a very full life, am fortunate to be in relatively good health, and am able to meet many of my recreational needs in my own verdant neighborhood. A significant number of my fellow Portsmouth residents do not have those advantages.
- Not open late enough.
- Portsmouth does not offer the activities my family and I enjoy - hiking trails (serious trails) and canoeing (no rentals).
- There is just nothing there.
- I'm just busy.
- Parks need repairs.
- Too limited. Only have City Park for picnics, grilling out, etc..
- We have nothing in our neighborhood except a playground that is located in the sun. There is nowhere for adults and families to walk to and relax, perhaps picnic under a tree.
- Loud abusive and crude (music)? that I am deeply offended by having to hear!!!!
- Poorly behaved patrons.
- Too many kids.
- People do not monitor their children or follow safety rules that are in place.
- The only facility for seniors is a "clicker" where not everyone is welcome.
- Yea right - do you know where most of these neighborhood parks and rec centers are - safety?

Conclusions:

- 1) The number one reason residents don't use parks and recreation facilities is that residents don't know where parks are and/or what's available in the park, with park amenities and/or park programs.
- 2) Safety is the number two reason more people don't use the parks. Is it a perception or reality?
- 3) 9.1% of the respondents felt like the parks are overcrowded when 33% don't even know where they're located. Most likely, they are referring to City Park and not the park system in general.

Question 20: How do you feel dogs should be accommodated in public spaces?

Designate off-leash areas and enforce leash laws	31.30%
Enforce current laws requiring dogs to be leashed in parks	35.80%
Create special off-leash areas in several parks	32.90%

Written Responses:

- A model dog park to me would be the one at the PETA building in Norfolk.
- Will not visit parks w/ dogs without leashes.
- 1 or 2 parks in the city designated for dogs. Children and dogs often don't mix.
- Tried for years to open a real dog park. Every dog owner (of which I am not) wants one - but no neighborhood wants to host!
- Really, I'd love dogs to be off leash but I think there are too many irresponsible owners and wouldn't trust most of them to take care of their dogs off leash!
- I believe animals have the right to be in parks also as long as people clean up after them and they don't attack anyone. As for leashes let them run free.
- That should be on certain day.
- Need dog parks but each park should have designated area that each owner scoops the poop.
- Happy as is.
- Dogs should be prohibited in parks with athletic fields and at the wildlife preserve. In other public spaces, dogs should be leashed.
- My child was chased by a pocketbook dog.
- We need a dog park or TWO.

Conclusions:

- 1) Based on the survey, there isn't a clear consensus to have dog parks or not. But based on comments it appears most people would like a dog park. Dog owners want it for the freedom of having their dog run loose and non-dog owners like them for the safety and cleanliness of the non-dog areas.
- 2) Location, location, location... everyone wants a dog park but 'not in my backyard.'

Question 21: How familiar are you with the services provided by the Dept. of Parks, Recreation, and Leisure Programs and Services?

Not Familiar	36.20%
Somewhat Familiar	54.10%
Very Familiar	9.80%

Approximately 2/3 of the respondents claim that they are at least somewhat familiar with the services provided.

Question 22: Check the Top 4 indoor activities you or your family participated in or watched last year.

Cardio Training / Workout	44.90%
Exercise Classes	42.90%
Watching games in person	31.10%
Swimming / Diving	31.10%
Basketball	28.70%
Arts & Crafts Classes	27.20%
Yoga / Aerobics	24.80%
Dancing	19.30%
Weightlifting	15.40%
Volleyball	10.60%
Indoor soccer	6.70%
Gymnastics	3.50%
Hockey	2.80%
Racquetball	2.00%

Question 23: How often do you participate in programs provided by the Dept. of Parks, Recreation, and Leisure Programs and Services?

Never	50.20%
1 - 2 times per year	25.70%
3 - 4 times per year	14.30%
1 - 2 times per month	1.60%
3 - 4 times per month	2.90%
5 or more times per month	5.20%

Conclusions:

50% of the respondents DO participate in a City program at least once a year compared to an average of 35% nationally. While the question did not ask how many times and/or programs each respondent participated in, according Parks, Recreation and Leisure Services, over 200,000 registered for an activity in 2010.

Question 24. Do you participate in activities or use facilities that are NOT provided by the Dept. of Parks, Recreation, and Leisure Programs and Services? If so, why?

I prefer private facilities (i.e. YMCA, Fitness Center, etc.)	37.60%
The requested activity/activities are not available at City sponsored facilities	35.00%
Safety is a concern at City sponsored facilities	33.60%
Location of City sponsored facilities isn't convenient	29.60%
Condition of City sponsored facilities	23.00%
I prefer public facilities in other cities	16.40%
I use military facilities	13.30%
I prefer to participate in non-City sponsored activities	4.00%
I only participate in City sponsored programs and facilities	2.70%

Written Responses:

- Activities at the Beazley Center and Y fit my schedule and provide physical activity that I enjoy. but that is not to say that I would attend city activities if I know they are provided.
- Hampton, Newport News, Norfolk because they are larger, safer, and nicely kept.
- Public facilities often aren't open to meet my schedule.
- Norfolk seems to welcome you and you know about their programs.
- Virginia Beach has a GREAT parks and rec program.
- I don't know what is available.
- I would use city facilities if they offered what the Y and fitness centers offer. Thanks.
- No facility near my neighborhood (Churchland).
- We need rec centers like Virginia Beach has, Big, clean, multi-use for all ages, not little special use places scattered about the city
- I am unsure what your facilities have to offer!
- I have talked to people that have went to these places and took their children and were not happy with how they were treated.
- City sponsored facilities raise my personal property tax rate to un acceptable levels. The community facilities do not provide enough common benefit to Portsmouth to warrant the expense.
- The real answer is the City Council does not support the Department and provide the funding needed to have quality facilities and programs!

Conclusions:

Only 4% of the respondents said they 'prefer' non-City programs so it appears they are open to participating in City programs if we can work on programs, safety, quality of facility and location. I think educating the public is the first step in awareness.

Question 25: How do you get most of your information on recreational activities?

Respondents noted every possible source for obtaining their information including word of mouth, newspaper, and websites.

On-line is probably the preferred method for the younger respondents but newspapers and word of mouth are still effective for those who are older. Over time this trend will probably change but for now, it can't be assumed people will get their information from the City webpage.

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

Walking/jogging is a preferred activity and enjoyed by a significant majority of those who live in Portsmouth.

The public would like to see restrooms added to Hoffer Creek Wildlife Preserve. *In its September, 1998 resolution authorizing the no-rent lease with Hoffer Creek Wildlife Foundation (HCWF), City Council states that HCWF would accept total responsibility for the cost of development to the Preserve, and that the City assumes no financial obligations. It was therefore conceived that HCWF would raise funds for capital improvements, such as bathrooms.*

As a way of making Portsmouth more desirable for its current residents, to keep people living there, and to attract new people, parks should be developed in areas where there are voids.

92.1 % of the people who responded to the survey said that parks enhance the community image and sense of place. New parks should reflect this and existing ones should be brought up to standard if they are not achieving the goal.

National trends indicate that recreation users in cities are more likely to recreate in city parks and recreation centers than wilderness or nature preserves. The trend in Portsmouth seems to be the opposite and additional nature areas should be a focus for the City. . . .especially as it sets itself apart from other Tidewater cities.

People in Portsmouth see parks as a way to connect people and build stronger families and neighborhoods.

A popular suggestion was more neighborhood events such as festivals, concerts, and neighborhood/block parties.

People in Portsmouth enjoy picnicking although there seems to be a deficit of places to go. In existing and proposed parks, picnic shelters should be a programmed item.

An overwhelming majority of the people in Portsmouth are not aware of the existing parks, park facilities, and leisure activities. A better system of educating the residents on current facilities is needed.

Safety and/or the perceived safety of the parks is a concern. If the concern is legitimate, it needs to be addressed. If perceived, educating the public is crucial.

While indoor activities are conducive to year round conditions, it appears the people of Portsmouth prefer to be outside. Outside activities should be expanded where possible. Before inside activities are expanded, the public needs to be more aware of what's offered.

Many people see City Park as overcrowded. Based on the survey, 21% of the respondents go to City Park at least once a week (that's 21,000 people per week). To maintain the character of the park by not overcrowding, a second "City Park" should be established.

A dog park(s) is needed where unleashed dogs can run and play freely. Elsewhere, dogs should be leashed.

People like the YMCA facilities and programs. Indoor swimming is a need that could be provided by the City.

PUBLIC OPEN HOUSES

Throughout the design process, the Consultants and City Staff (including representatives from the Planning Department and Parks, Recreation, and Leisure Services) conducted numerous open house workshops. These day-long open houses allowed interested citizens the freedom to come when they wanted and stay as long as they wanted. They were able to provide comments directly on the presentation boards or on the comment cards that were provided.

For those citizens who could not attend the open houses, the same information was included on the City's webpage.





“Although I’m a lot older and not engaged in as many athletic activities, I know that the kids in my neighborhood have no place to play. **This forces them to hang on corners and may lead to opportunities for mischief.**”

- Portsmouth Citizen, 2011

PART 3

Community Values and Design Principles

Recommendations and Action Plans

1. Communication
2. Maintenance
3. Recreation Programs
4. Community Facilities
5. Additional Land

“I love the skateboard park in Cradock – but another one would be great, especially at City Park. **I would gladly volunteer time and labor to make this happen.**”

– Portsmouth Citizen, 2011



1. Building better communities through quality parks, recreation, and leisure services.

- Use parks to connect people while building stronger families and neighborhoods.
- Encourage participation for all; recreation and leisure should be inclusive to all income levels.
- Enhance community image and sense of place by improving parks.
- Encourage a sense of ownership of neighborhood parks.

2. Enhancing the quality of life by distributing park locations and activities throughout the City.

- Equally distribute park and recreation amenities that enhance the quality of life in every neighborhood each day.
- Provide desirable facilities in the city for recreation, events, and leisure. Eliminate the need to go to other cities for activities.

3. Each park requires thoughtful, sustainable design and a variety of program opportunities specific to each neighborhood within the city.

- Develop unique parks.
- Promote individuality of each neighborhood park to create successful neighborhoods.
- Conserve natural resources and apply principles of sustainability to new parks and open spaces.
- Encourage a lifetime of learning and well being for people of all ages and abilities.
- Recognize that parks of all sizes are important to community (small pocket parks as well as large regional parks).
- Recognize the importance of recreational components such as soccer or baseball and the overwhelming desire to create or expand passive components (such as walking, enjoying nature, or fishing).

4. Modifying and designing parks, open space, facilities, and services to deter crime and injuries.

- Safety is essential in creating inviting, attractive public spaces and facilities.

5. Garnering a collaborative, working relationship between the Parks and Recreation Department and the community to collectively improve and maintain existing parks, design and implement new facilities and/or programs and cooperative usage throughout the park system.

- Implement high standards for maintenance and improvements to existing parks.
- Collaborate to advise and provide assistance with the neighborhoods that want to improve their neighborhood parks.

- Offer opportunities for residents to participate in the design, planning, and implementation of existing and new parks and facilities.

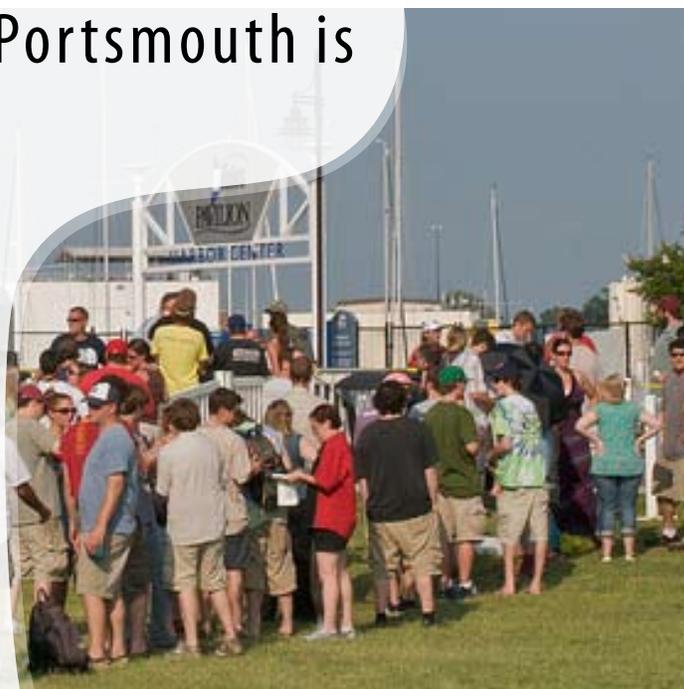
- Encourage cooperation between the Parks and Recreation Department and other public agencies and private entities as it relates to development, maintenance, and shared use of recreational facilities and services.

6. Garnering a collaborative and working relationship between the Parks and Recreation Department and Portsmouth Public Schools to jointly and mutually share facilities, both indoor and outdoor.

- Maximize the City’s assets by cooperating with the usage of shared facilities with schools and school properties.
- Minimize the City’s expenditures by cooperating with the usage of shared facilities with schools and school properties.

The mission statement for Portsmouth is to be “the healthiest place to live in Hampton Roads.”

We will achieve this vision by providing parks and open spaces that foster community pride and enjoyment, well-balanced recreation opportunities that encourage an active lifestyle, and community-focused programs that contribute to the positive development of youth, adults, and families through involvement, partnership, and collaboration with citizens and community organizations.



The vision of the Department of Parks, Recreation, and Leisure Services and the values of the community (as shown in the previous section) work hand-in-hand to form the following five recommendation areas: Communication, Maintenance, Recreation Programs, Community Facilities, and Additional Land.

These areas are propagated to work together and individually to achieve the values of the community. Each area is not exclusive of the other, but itemized in sequence of priority. For starters, the assets and programs need to be communicated to the citizens. Simply inform people what is happening so they can participate. Next, stay on top of current assets by focusing on maintaining clean, safe, and well-managed facilities, programs, and events. Then, assess participation and needs to inform consideration for additional programs and/or expansion of facilities. Once these areas have been addressed, that is when it is time to determine and plan for the needs of the future.

1. COMMUNICATION Actively market the assets and programs that are currently provided. Let citizens know what is going on in Parks, Recreation, and Leisure Services. Inform them of how they can shape and impact offerings of the Department. Increased awareness will directly increase enrollment in programs.

2. MAINTENANCE Improve maintenance practices of park and community facilities to match the citizens' expectations. Care for the assets of the City in a way that creates inviting atmospheres that engenders pride in citizens.

3. RECREATION PROGRAMS Provide recreation programs that support the community recreation needs and services for all levels of users, age groups, and user types. Allow them to enjoy family and friends and to learn lifetime skills that create memorable experiences.

4. COMMUNITY FACILITIES Update both indoor and outdoor community facilities to maximize their use and appreciation by the community for people of all ages to enhance the value of sports, fitness, quality of life skill programs, arts as well as social places for the community to gather and celebrate living in Portsmouth.

5. ADDITIONAL LAND Develop a process for evaluating and acquiring land to expand the existing park system. It is important to implement a process that evaluates the need for more parkland and evaluates needs in location, function, and space.

1. COMMUNICATION

Communication efforts will create a strong community awareness and appreciation for the value of parks, recreation programs, and community facilities that will in turn create a higher level of use and return on the City's investment. Create a Marketing Plan to be complete by 2013 and fully implemented in 2014 with an increase in community awareness.



Action

1.1 Develop a marketing campaign of parks and programs available to citizens.

When asked, "what are the main reasons you do not use parks and recreation facilities in Portsmouth more often," the answer with the greatest response (44.1%) was that residents "don't know what's available." 33.6% said they didn't even know where the parks are located. When given the opportunity to provide written responses to the questions, one person said it best when he/she said "I was really surprised to see all the places (parks) listed. I really didn't know that all of these (parks) were available. Although many of these may not be of interest to me because of my age, etc., I do think that it would be helpful to make all of these places (parks) better publicized. It's also interesting to see this long list of parks after hearing occasionally, 'there's nothing for my kids to do in Portsmouth.'"

Likewise, when asked about programs offered by the Department of Parks, Recreation and Leisure Services, 36.2% of the respondents said they were not familiar with the services provided.

The Department of Parks, Recreation and Leisure Services need to create a marketing campaign that clearly communicates the existing assets and programs.

The "Recreation for Generations" newsletter produced electronically and in print by the Department of Parks, Recreation and Leisure Services is a good example of effective marketing.

1.2 Proactively market the benefits and advantages of participating in recreation and/or cultural programs.

In 2010 there were 288,422 participants who benefitted from programs provided by the Department of Parks, Recreation and Leisure Services. At least 50% of the questionnaire respondents indicated they participated in a program at least once a year (over 5% participated five or more times a month).

Based clearly on the participation rates vs. the population of Portsmouth, programs in Portsmouth are a success. The national average rate of participation is 35%.

There are many benefits to participating in recreation programs offered by the Department of Parks, Recreation and Leisure Services including building teamwork, social skills and of course physical and mental well being. As noted in the Key Trends Section, high levels of physical inactivity and obesity are being observed across the country (Portsmouth being no different) largely due to a lack of time and increased rate of participation in sedentary forms of leisure (i.e. watching television, computer/online activities, etc.). The combination of physical inactivity and poor nutrition is the second most common cause of death in the U.S. Some experts predict, for the first time in our history, life expectancy among today's children will be less than that of their parents. Proactively marketing and selling the benefits and advantages of participating in recreation programs not only benefits the individual person, but society as a whole.

Likewise, marketing the cultural programs offered by the Department of Parks, Recreation and Leisure Services is important since programs are offered to all age groups. 'Seniors,' especially in Portsmouth, are the fastest growing age group in America. An overwhelming majority of those not yet retired but planning to retire soon, expect to do at least some work after retirement. They want to continue to learn, try new things, travel, and pursue new hobbies or interests.

Adults and older adults are embracing the "active living" or "wellness" philosophy, thus municipalities are now orienting their programming to respond to these demands. Marketing is a key for achieving success.

1.3 The Department of Parks, Recreation and Leisure Services needs to update the website on a regular basis to accurately reflect important dates locations, and other important information.

Make sure that the Parks, Recreation and Leisure Services website is up to date and inclusive. Consider using social media, such as Facebook, to distribute information, stay as current as possible and engage the public.

1.4 Create a brand identity for Portsmouth's Parks and Recreation programs.

Creating a unique brand identity for Portsmouth's Parks and Recreation programs is important for many reasons. First, while most people in Portsmouth are not aware of all of the parks in the City, they are aware of the regional parks like City Park, Hoffler Creek Wildlife Preserve and Bide-a-Wee. When asked were any parks a factor in their decision as to where to live, more than 33% of the respondents said yes. Clearly the residents have positive images of the parks and a unique brand can spread the image to those elsewhere while promoting civic pride.

Likewise, in a number of studies, quality Parks and Recreation are one of the top three reasons that business cite in giving a reason for relocating. Branding Parks and Recreation also serves as economic development for the entire city.

1.5 Enhance volunteer efforts in the parks and recreation system to build advocacy and help support operational costs.

As noted in the previous section, there seems to be higher rate of volunteerism in Portsmouth than other cities. Recognizing and supporting local volunteers for maintenance as well as advocacy is critical to ensuring that these dedicated individuals continue to participate in civic life and that new volunteers can be recruited.



2. MAINTENANCE

The maintenance of parks and community facilities will be valued by the community as an important element of living in Portsmouth while creating pride and appreciation of public parks, community spaces, neighborhoods, and the overall City. The goal is to improve the overall maintenance of parks and community facilities to match the expectations of the citizens (such as City Park). Greater levels of maintenance and care as it applies to community and neighborhood parks and facilities will encourage greater positive use by residents in the City.



Action

2.1 Establish a benchmark for maintaining facilities.

While only 17.3% of questionnaire respondents indicated they were unsatisfied with the level of park maintenance, 25% of the questionnaire respondents indicated that the lack of proper maintenance is the main reason they do not use the parks and park facilities in Portsmouth more often (the main reason was that they didn't know what's available). 23% of the respondents said they use other facilities (such as the YMCA) because of the condition of the City sponsored facilities.

Establishing a benchmark for maintenance is critical. Budgeting concerns are a factor and City Council needs to be made aware of this problem.

The Department of Parks, Recreation and Leisure Services should improve the maintenance in all parks to a level established by the National Recreation and Parks Association. Each park in Portsmouth shall be identified and its level of maintenance shall conform to the levels as described below. By identifying each park with a specific level of maintenance, there should be a clearer understanding and benchmark for the Department as well as the general public. More information on specific maintenance for each mode can be obtained from the National Recreation and Parks Association.

Mode I: State of the art maintenance applied to a high quality diverse landscape. Usually associated with high traffic urban areas such as public squares, malls, governmental grounds or high visitation parks.

Mode II: High level maintenance – associated with well developed park areas with reasonably high visitation.

Mode III: Moderate level maintenance – associated with locations with moderate to low levels of development, moderate to low levels of visitation or with agencies that because of budget restrictions can't afford a higher intensity of maintenance.

Mode IV: Moderately low level – usually associated with low level of development, low visitation, undeveloped areas or remote parks.

Mode V: High visitation natural areas – usually associated with large urban or regional parks. Size and user frequency may dictate resident maintenance staff. Road, pathway or trail systems relatively well developed. Other facilities at strategic locations such as entries, trail heads, building complexes and parking lots.

Mode VI: Minimum maintenance level – low visitation natural area or large urban parks that are undeveloped.

2.2 Develop a process to measure customer satisfaction for facility maintenance.

Once maintenance modes for each park have been created and implemented (see #1 Communication) the Department of Parks, Recreation and Leisure Services should develop a process to measure customer satisfaction for the maintenance of Portsmouth's parks and recreation facilities. Questionnaires or simple comment cards can be used to solicit input to help the Parks and Recreation Department determine if citizens are satisfied with maintenance and upkeep of each park or facility.

2.3 Ensure the appropriate support items are available to the public to support the Department's maintenance staff.

One of the easiest ways to improve everyday maintenance is to add related items like trash receptacles and site furnishings. While not necessarily considered maintenance, the appearance of a park is always improved with the addition of benches, lighting (pedestrian and parking), water fountains, restrooms, etc.

2.4 Ensure the Department has the appropriate equipment and resources available to help support the maintenance of parks and programs.

Without the appropriate equipment and resources, maintenance staff spend more time and effort, sometimes without the desired results, to maintain parks and facilities. The City needs to ensure The Department of Parks, Recreation and Leisure Services has the appropriate equipment and resources available to support the maintenance of parks and programs.



2.5 Develop a volunteer maintenance group for the park and recreation system to assist in the maintenance and appearance of the City's parks.

In the Key Trends section of this Master Plan it was noted that volunteerism is generally in decline across the country, therefore, supporting local volunteers is critical to ensuring that these dedicated individuals continue to participate in civic life and that new volunteers can be recruited. While volunteerism may be on the decline nationally, the perspective that the design team received from the Civic League Representatives was that civic groups are actively engaged in the maintenance and in many cases the construction of neighborhood parks. The City should recognize their efforts and assist when needed and when possible. It should be noted that some neighborhoods have more resources than others. The efforts and knowledge of successful projects by civic groups or volunteers should be shared with other groups or neighborhoods.

While volunteerism is welcomed, it should be noted that no neighborhood, civic group or other entity has the authority to perform tasks on their own without City knowledge and approval. There should be no exceptions.

3. COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Community facilities should be developed, maintained, and operated to support recreation programs and needs of residents to provide various levels of services to a wide level of age groups and user types to maximize the value they provide to the community.

Community facilities, both indoor and outdoor, should be updated to maximize their use and appreciation by the community for people of all ages to enhance the value of sports, fitness, 'quality of life' skill programs, arts as well as social places for the community to gather and celebrate living in Portsmouth.



Action

3.1 Upgrade existing park uses (see #4 RECREATION FACILITIES for indoor facilities) to attract more park users

Two factors that stand out in the public survey are: 1) 56.8% of the respondents feel as though their needs are not met with the current park system and 2) 34.6% of the respondents do not use the parks because they lack the facilities they desire.

To develop a list of uses for Portsmouth's Park System that meets the needs of the residents, the design team used national standards, public surveys and open house workshops, key stakeholder interviews, key national trends, and recommendations from the Department of Parks, Recreation and Leisure Services. This program list, as follows has the highest priorities for Portsmouth. Included with the program list are options for suitable locations of each item.

Bike Trails

Paradise Creek Park
Commonwealth Railway Area

Waking Trails

Paradise Creek Park
Commonwealth Railway Area

Boat Launch

Paradise Creek Park
Park View (Webster Ave)
Reflection Walk

Dog Park

Churchland Park
George Washington Park

Disc Golf

Paradise Creek Park
Churchland Park

Conservation / Preservation

Park View (Webster Ave)
West Norfolk (former BASF site)
Paradise Creek Park

Nature Center

Paradise Creek Park

Picnic Spaces

Paradise Creek Park
Small tables at most Community Parks
Small tables at most Regional Parks

Playgrounds

Reviewed on a case by case basis

Recreation Center

Regional Facility - Mid City (near Willett Hall)

Pool (indoor)

New Recreation Center in Mid City

Restrooms

Hoffler Creek
Paradise Creek Park

Ropes Course

Paradise Creek Park

Skate Park

Churchland Park
Neighborhood Facility

Splash Park

Neighborhood Facility
Churchland Park

Art Work

Visible areas of any park

Waterfront Access

See Waterfront Access Summary on pages 38 - 41 or the Waterfront Access Study for more detailed information

3.2 All new parks should be multi-purpose and, where possible (such as George Washington Park), existing 'single-use parks' should be upgraded to include several park uses.

Residents in Portsmouth, similar to the national trend, have the desire to have multi-purpose parks rather than single use parks (baseball parks or a soccer complex for example). Multi-purpose parks allow greater use for different ages as well as interests within the community/city. Multi-purpose parks tend to be more family oriented allowing different members of a family to enjoy different activities. The previous page illustrates a few examples of adding different uses to existing parks. For instance, Churchland Park has a portion of 'unused' land and the list of possible uses that may fit in that space include a skate park. There are some uses that may not be identified or specified in the program list on the list on the previous page so when the time comes to expand a park's uses, it is encouraged to have each neighborhood review the list and see what fits their needs the best. For instance, one neighborhood may want a volleyball court while another may want bocci.

3.3 Upgrade existing parks to create a strong image of public spaces in the City (see Maintenance for maintaining existing facilities).

When asked how important are parks and open spaces in enhancing the community image and sense of place, 92.1% of the survey respondents said it was important or very important.

While individual homes reflect the home owner, parks reflect the neighborhood and entire city. Park facilities that are out-dated, weathered and worn, vandalized, damaged and/or unused immediately creates a perception of that neighborhood. While it may not reflect the values of individual residents or the community, the community, nonetheless, is 'labeled.'

Community perception is important. In Portsmouth, parks and open spaces are a factor in where people decide to live. Over 1/3 of the respondents to the public survey said that parks, recreation and waterways were a factor in where they decided to live. And based on the written comments, those who said they didn't specifically locate because of a park or facility still indicated that it was still a part of their selection process.

The Department of Parks, Recreation and Leisure Services needs to critically look at each individual park and remove every item that is out-dated, weathered and worn, vandalized, damaged and/or unused. This not only includes equipment but also sidewalks, fencing, landscaping, etc. In some cases, such as broken sidewalks, replacement is essential while in other cases, such as non-used horseshoe pits for example, replacement may not necessary.

3.4 Upgrade existing recreation facilities

Although constructing a new centrally located state-of-the-art recreation center may be an ideal goal, maintenance of existing facilities should be a first priority. A second priority should be to fill in gaps in areas of coverage, such as Churchland or Cradock when the Cradock Recreation Center closes. Continued collaboration with schools and private enterprises, such as an indoor pool facility, is also an important way of providing services without requiring new construction.

The following overview of the existing facilities includes recommendations specific to each. Refer to map of Recreation Centers on Page 28 for locations.

CITY PARK MULTI-PURPOSE BUILDING

7 CPL. J.L. Williams Avenue

Next to the Simonsdale Neighborhood

Description

The indoor meeting facility at City Park is in a one-story tall, hexagonal frame building near the golf course pro shop, snack bar, restrooms and park office. It is ADA accessible. There is off-street parking. It was originally constructed in 1988. It is approximately 3,450 s.f.

Condition

It is in good condition overall.

Notes

It is presently underutilized as a meeting space. It is not a candidate for expansion. The location lends itself for use by the surrounding communities, who could walk or bike to it, but it can serve a wider area and is conducive to driving. It is a rental facility. It is the least visited facility of the eight.

Recommendations

Maintain existing structure and continue to publicize its availability to the community. Portsmouth Parks and Recreation could use it for small classes.

PORT NORFOLK RECREATION CENTER

432 Broad Street

Port Norfolk Neighborhood

Description

The Port Norfolk Recreation Center is a two-story tall, six bay wide brick building which was formerly a fire station. The first floor is ADA accessible and there is elevator access to the second floor. There is no off-street parking. It was originally constructed in 1924 and converted into a recreation center in the 1970s. It is approximately 20,000 s.f.

Condition

The exterior is in good condition and has been recently painted. Windows are newer replacement windows. The interior needs to be renovated.

Notes

It is presently used to capacity. It has a very limited area in the rear which could be used for expansion. It is in a walkable neighborhood. There is a large multi-purpose room, but no gymnasium. It has many meeting rooms, but they are small. The facility is used by outside agencies for programs including the Navy Wives, Civic League, GED and Girl Scouts. Portsmouth runs after school and evening programs weekdays, including C-3 Kids Meals, Homework Assistance, Arts and Crafts, Board and Table Games, Youth Fitness Program (Stretch and Grow), Bingo Day, special events for holidays and occasional field trips on early release days. They also use the facility for Spring Break and a 9 week Summer Program. It is the sixth most visited facility of the eight.

Recommendations

A larger room would be beneficial and an interior wall could be removed in order to create a larger room out of two smaller rooms. If this is done, a space should be added onto the rear of the building to make a new play area/small gym to replace the lost space.

NEIGHBORHOOD FACILITY

900 Elm Avenue
Westbury Neighborhood

Description

Neighborhood Recreation Center is a two-story tall, three bay wide stuccoed masonry building which was formerly a National Guard Armory. It was originally constructed in 1934 and was converted into a recreation center in 1980. It is approximately 28,440 s.f. The first floor is ADA accessible, but there is no elevator access to the second floor. There is off-street parking. A new splash park is being constructed next to the facility.

Condition

It is in fair condition overall.

Notes

It is presently used to capacity. It is not a candidate for expansion, as the site is fully used. Most people drive to it, but it is also within walking distance. It mainly has a neighborhood draw, not a regional draw. There is a gymnasium. The facility is used by outside agencies for programs including the Churchland Basketball Association, the Bismarck Myrick Meeting, and Spirit Enhancers Meeting. Portsmouth runs after school and evening programs weekdays, including Guiding Young Minds, C-3 Kids Meals, Homework Assistance, Arts and Crafts, Board and Table Games, Group Games and exercising including dodge ball, kickball, basketball, relays, volleyball and a mid-day workout, martial arts, yoga and open recreation, seniors exercise and special events for holidays, and occasional field trips on early release days. They also use the facility for Spring Break and a 9-week Summer Program. It is the fifth most visited facility of the eight.

Recommendations

Some interior renovation is necessary, including new flooring, lighting, bleachers, paint and upgrades to the kitchen.

SENIOR STATION

3500 Clifford Street
Westhaven Neighborhood

Description

Senior Station is a one-story tall, three bay wide masonry commercial building. It is ADA accessible. There is off-street parking. It was originally constructed in 1957. It is approximately 6,380 s.f.

Condition

Overall, it is in good condition.

Notes

It is presently used to capacity and is considered overcrowded. It is not a candidate for expansion, but could be used as a model for additional locations throughout the City. Most people drive or are taken there by a van service, but it is walkable to the immediate neighborhood. It does have a wide draw; more than a neighborhood draw. Programs include billiards, cards and table games, spelling bees, Seniorcise, crafts, sewing, bingo, Bible study, book club, survival club, movies, gospel sings, red hatters, health screenings, birthday parties, special events, and classes run seasonally including a Senior Swap Meet, Fall Festival, Thanksgiving Luncheon and Fashion Show, Holiday Bake Off and field trips. It is the second most visited facility of the eight.

Recommendations

Add automatic door opener to the front doors. Add more seating for patrons waiting for the bus pick-up and consider extending an awning overhead. Consider adding another location in an used building elsewhere in the City based upon the success of this model. Interior renovations, such as new carpet, paint and new furniture are also needed.

CAVALIER MANOR RECREATION CENTER

404 Viking Street
Cavalier Manor Neighborhood

Description

The Cavalier Manor Recreation Center is in a one-story tall, brick building which was formerly the Norfolk County High School from 1949-1954. It is ADA accessible. There is off-street parking. The gymnasium was constructed in 1976. It is approximately 5,548 s.f. The gymnasium is 10,404 s.f.

Condition

It is in fair condition.

Notes

It is presently used to capacity and is one of the more heavily used facilities. A larger facility is needed. It is walkable to the immediate neighborhood. It has several outdoor amenities, as well, so is a draw to a wider area. These amenities include tennis courts, an outdoor pool, bath house, ball field, basketball courts, concession stand and press box. The facility is used by outside agencies for programs including GED classes, Tranquility Manor, Heart Home School Program, Cavalier Manor Senior Citizens, Portsmouth Garden Club, Portsmouth Retired Teachers, Portsmouth Community Relations, Home School Group, the Civic League and the Cavalier Manor Baseball and Football teams (seasonally). Portsmouth runs after school and evening programs weekdays, including C3 Kids Meal, Homework Assistance, Game Room activities, Arts and Crafts, Recording Studio, Job Readiness, Dream Girls, Boys 2 Men, Ladies Only Book Club, Beauty Secrets for Young Girls, Basic Photography, Various Contests (like jump roping, ping pong, billiards, foosball, relays), Basketball, Group Games (kickball, dodge ball, volleyball), Special Events for Holidays, and occasional field trips on early release days. They also use the facility for Spring Break and a 9 week Summer Program. It is the fourth most visited facility of the eight.

Recommendations

The gymnasium needs a new floor, new lighting and new doors. The recreation center could be demolished and a new larger facility constructed which attaches to the gymnasium directly.

CRADOCK RECREATION CENTER

4300 George Washington Hwy
Cradock Neighborhood

Description

The Cradock Recreation Center is in a one-story tall brick addition on the end of a former school building, which has been closed. It is ADA accessible. There is off-street parking. It was constructed in the 1940s and turned into a recreation center in 2001. It is approximately 40,000 s.f.

Condition

It is in fair to good condition.

Notes

It is presently used to capacity and is the most heavily used facility. It is walkable to the immediate neighborhood, but is located on a very busy major street (the George Washington Highway) and the Cradock residents must cross this road to reach the facility. It contains a gymnasium and meeting/activity rooms, as well as several outdoor amenities, such as ball fields, a playground and a popular skate board park. It is draw to a wider area than just the immediate surrounding neighborhoods. The facility is used by outside agencies for programs including the Virginia Association for the Blind, Tranquility Manor, Fancy Feet, Taking Off Pounds Sensibly, and the Cradock Civic League. Portsmouth runs after school and evening programs weekdays, including C-3 Kids Meal, Homework Assistance, Arts and Crafts, Board and Table Games, Group Games (dodgeball, kickball, basketball, relays, volleyball), Kids in the Kitchen, Virtual Reality Monday, Tournament Tuesday, Wild Out Wednesday, Special Events for Holidays and occasional field trips on early release days. They also use the facility for Spring Break and a 9 week Summer Program. It is the most visited facility of the eight, but this facility is scheduled to be closed.

Recommendations

As this facility is slated to be closed in June 2012, accommodations must be made nearby to replace and improve upon the services that will be halted. In particular, the loss of the gymnasium and large meeting space should be replaced.

J. E. PARKER CENTER

2430 Turnpike Road
Mount Herman Neighborhood

Description

The J. E. Parker Recreation Center is a two-story frame building. The first floor is ADA accessible. There is no elevator access to the second floor. There is off-street parking. It was constructed in the 1970s. It is approximately 14,600 s.f.

Condition

It is in fair condition. Active roof leaks have been reported.

Notes

It is presently used to capacity. It is not an expansion candidate. It is walkable to the immediate neighborhood and many residents bike to this facility. It contains a gymnasium and meeting/activity rooms inside, as well as a large playground outside. The facility is used by outside agencies for programs including the Temple Aires Rehearsal, Senior Aerobics Class, VCE/Youth Gardening Program and Arts and Craft for Visual Impaired. Portsmouth runs after school and evening programs weekdays, including C-3 Kids Meal, Character Counts, Homework Assistance, Arts and Crafts, Board and Table Games, Contests (jumping rope, ping pong, air hockey, billiards, foosball, flag football), Group Games (dodge ball, kickball, basketball, volleyball, relays, 4 corners), Noon Day Fitness, Open Gym, Basketball and Special Events for Holidays and Occasional Road Trips on Early Release Days. They also use the facility for Spring Break and a 9 week Summer Program. It is the third most visited facility of the eight.

Recommendations

New housing is coming nearby and use of this facility will likely increase. It is a candidate for an overall renovation; interior and exterior.

J. F. K. RECREATION CENTER

12 Grand Street
Douglas Park Neighborhood

Description

The John F. Kennedy Recreation Center is a one-story one room masonry building. It is ADA accessible. There is off-street parking. It was constructed in 1981. It is approximately 4,000 s.f.

Condition

It is in poor condition. Active roof leaks have been reported.

Notes

It is presently under-utilized. It is a candidate for expansion or reconstruction entirely. It is walkable to the immediate neighborhood, but safety has been brought up as a concern in that area. The indoor meeting room has a very limited and specific use for Portsmouth's Therapeutic Recreation program. It is also used by the Wilson Ward Civic League and the Charles Peete Little League for meetings. It is the seventh most visited facility of the eight.

Recommendations

Ideally, this facility would be replaced with a larger building in this location.

4. RECREATION PROGRAMS

Recreation Programs should support the community recreational needs and services for all levels of users, age groups and user types so that they may enjoy family, friends and learn lifetime skills that create memorable experiences.

The goal of this section and the overall Master Plan is not to review individual programs or the overall system, but rather to ensure the success of any program by providing the support that is needed.



Action

4.1 Develop more awareness of programs for pre-teens, teens, adults, seniors, families.

36.2% of the questionnaire respondents are not familiar with the services provided by the Department of Parks, Recreation and Leisure Services and an additional 54.5% are only somewhat familiar. The strategy to develop more awareness needs to occur in conjunction with the Marketing Vision (see Vision 5).

4.2 Provide a balance of program offerings across the City.

Over 50% of the questionnaire respondents indicated that they never participate in the programs offered by the City. Based on the conclusion that 50% of the residents actually do participate in programs, the participation rate of Portsmouth is significantly larger than the national average which is approximately 35%.

In 2010 there were 288,422 program users in Portsmouth. The fact that this number is more than twice the population of Portsmouth is because some residents participate in more than one program and some programs attract those from outside the City.

It appears Portsmouth is successful in offering programs to the residents of Portsmouth. Without a detailed review of the specific programs to ensure a balance, it appears specific segments may be left out. When the questionnaire asked why a person does not participate, 35% of the respondents indicated that they requested activity/activities that are not available at City sponsored facilities. It is unclear whether the services are not available or the population is unaware of them (see #1 Communication) but the recommendation is to begin with an awareness campaign and then re-survey the residents to see exactly what they seem to be missing.

4.3 Improve security (or perception of security) in facilities to improve the use by residents.

Over 1/3 of the respondents said that safety was a concern and a reason for not using City sponsored facilities. In fact there is a concern for safety at any City facility, the Portsmouth Police Department needs to make safety at City facilities a primary concern. If safety is a perceived problem, the awareness campaign (see Action Item #1) and marketing campaign need to make this a priority issue.

Recognizing the police force cannot be everywhere all the time, there are measures that can help increase safety in its parks and facilities. The entire CPTED (Crime Prevention through Environmental Design) study is included in this Master Plan (see pages 46 - 48), but summarized; CPTED strategies rely upon the ability to influence offender decisions that precede criminal acts. Research into criminal behavior shows that the decision to offend or not to offend is more influenced by cues to the perceived risk of being caught than by cues to reward or ease of entry.

4.4 Evaluate service performance at recreation facilities to support program needs and facility management requirements.

As an on-going strategy, the Portsmouth Department of Parks, Recreation and Leisure Services needs to evaluate citizen satisfaction with Department staff. It is recommended for this strategy to develop a survey that can be used by each facility offering programs. If city-wide issues arise, the Department can be reviewed as a whole, but if specific problems are noted with a facility or person, it can be dealt with as an isolated case. If the survey indicates there are no issues, the information should be used as a part of the marketing campaign and staff should be recognized for the work and community efforts.

4.5 Provide continuing educational opportunities for parks and recreation staff to support existing and proposed program needs and facility management requirements.

As noted in the Key Trends Section, our culture is changing at a faster rate than ever before. With parks and recreation this has major impacts and staff must understand the changes and embrace them. For instance, overall recreation participation, especially in sporting (skill and team) activities has been in decline while extreme sports and risk/adventure pursuits continue to grow in popularity. Adults and older adults are

embracing the “active living” or “wellness” philosophy, which means Portsmouth must orient or change programming to respond to these demands.

Changes are occurring with our local, state and federal governments as well. Fiscal pressures on recreational facilities and program development will come with rising energy costs, greater scarcity and high cost of land, rising operating costs and revenue limits, and increasing anti-taxation sentiment. Recreation is becoming more of a consumer market, meaning that activities are subject to more competition between private, public and non-profit competition. A broad definition of what constitutes public access to city sponsored facilities and programs may challenge the financial feasibility of building new and maintaining existing facilities. Subsidized programs and minimal use fees have become more difficult to maintain in light of these conditions.

Change is inevitable which means park and recreation departments everywhere must change as well. Being proactive to change and adapting to it requires the Department of Parks, Recreation and Leisure Services must be informed. Continuing education is a benefit to Staff, the Department and the City as a whole.

4.6 Provide more programs that focus on nature.

While most urban cities do not have programs that focus on nature, Portsmouth has a unique opportunity to set itself apart from other cities because: 1) residents have a strong desire for more nature programs and 2) Portsmouth has one-of-a-kind natural resources.

Over 50% of the respondents to the questionnaire indicated that they enjoy nature activities such as birdwatching, walking nature trails, etc. Over 41% of the respondents indicated they do this on a daily or weekly basis. 16.7% of the respondents indicated that they visit Hoffer Creek Wildlife Preserve at least once or twice a month (4.6% said they visit weekly). If these numbers hold true to the entire city, it means almost 17,000 visit Hoffer Creek Wildlife Preserve once or twice a month.

When asked how important it is to protect the natural environment and preserve natural habitat, over 90% of the respondents said it was either very or somewhat important.

When asked the reasons for using the parks and recreation facilities, over 73% of the respondents said it was because they enjoy nature and being outdoors. 52% of the respondents said they use the parks and recreation facilities for exercise and 26% said it was to play sports.

Based on the public survey and public input there is a desire for more programs that focus on nature. Given the fact that Portsmouth already has a wildlife preserve (an envy of most urban cities), Portsmouth has the ideal situation to provide new nature programs to citizens of all ages.

4.7 Provide more programs that focus on active adult/ senior fitness.

As illustrated in the Demographics section, Portsmouth's population is aging. Based on the US Census report, we would expect to see increases in the 65+ age group for the next 20 years.

Not only is our population aging, but characteristics of the senior population is changing. Generally speaking, future behavior is influenced by past behavior; however, the 50 year-old of the future will not possess the same personal characteristics as the 50 year-old of today because of changes in the community and society in general, improved health and fitness, social perspectives on aging and earlier retirement age.

Because of improved health and fitness, as well as lifestyle changes from their parents' generation, the baby boom generation is participating in recreation activities to older ages. People are also retiring at younger ages with relatively higher disposable incomes than generations before.

While there is an increased demand for more passive outdoor recreation pursuits and facilities (golf, walking, gardening, etc.), there is also a higher demand for mid-day recreation programs.

78.7% of the respondents to the public survey believe that helping older adults and people with disabilities remain active is very or somewhat important. With the current system there were virtually no complaints about the quality or quantity of programs provided by the Department of Parks, recreation and Leisure Services. This strategy of providing more programs that focus on active adult fitness is not to fix a problem but an awareness of changing demographics with the goal of Portsmouth being proactive for current and future needs.

4.8 Develop programs that focus on youth development to improve the social issues youth face in today's society.

79.5% of the questionnaire respondents indicated that building character and sportsmanship was either somewhat or very important. When asked specifically about youth and teens, 75.3% said that promoting physical and social development was either somewhat or very important.

In order to achieve this strategy, three components must come into play: 1) programming, 2) facilities for hosting the programs, and 3) accessibility of facilities.

Although the Department of Parks, Recreation and Leisure Services already has in place numerous programs for youth and teens, the current offerings should be reviewed and updated at least once every three years.

Without facilities in which to operate programs, programs cannot exist. As discussed extensively in all Vision Statements, Portsmouth needs to upgrade and/or build new community centers for many reasons; one of which is to offer more programming. (See Action Item #3.4 for more information and strategies).

Accessibility of community centers is crucial for youth programming. Unlike adult programs where participants are typically able to drive, those who participate in youth programming either rely on others for transportation or walk/bike to the facility. When facilities are not convenient or easily accessible, those who are most at-risk are typically left out.

Although not listed above as one of the three critical elements, continuing education for staff is important as the dynamics of youth culture are continuing the change.



4.9 Expand and enhance historic and environmental related education programs to gain appreciation for living in Portsmouth.

58.8% of the questionnaire respondents indicated that they enjoy downtown features such as Olde Towne, the waterfront, and the ‘path of history.’ When asked often they visit downtown, 35.1% said they do so either daily or at least weekly.

Likewise, over 50% of the respondents indicated they rate the enjoyment of nature as a recreational activity enjoyed the most. 41.6% of the respondents said they take the opportunity to enjoy nature on a daily or weekly basis and over 90% said the City should provide more opportunities to enjoy nature and the natural environment.

With a plethora of unique historic and environmental assets, the Department of Parks, Recreation and Leisure Services can expand programming to residents, especially the youth, to gain a better understanding of their natural and man-made environments.

Having parks like City Park and Hoffer Creek Wildlife Preserve are important for Portsmouth and sets it apart from most other cities. While a plan is needed to analyze each park and determine upgrades (such as restrooms at Hoffer) careful thought must be considered to ensure the impact of additional human intrusion isn’t detrimental to the wildlife.

4.10 Create a greater number of diverse Special Events from small neighborhood events to city-wide and regional festivals to help create a sense of pride while bringing the community together.

89.6% of the questionnaire respondents indicated that connecting people and building stronger families and neighborhoods was either somewhat or very important. Likewise, when the design team met with Civic League Representatives, they indicated the block party or neighborhood festival was important to their community.

While neighborhood or block parties certainly are not the The Department of Parks, Recreation and Leisure Services’ responsibility, the City can assist neighborhoods with smaller venues. For instance, the City can refer neighborhood coordinators to options for port-a-potty rentals and guide them through the process of obtaining street closer permit, traffic control, law enforcement assistance, etc.. While most of the

City’s assistance falls outside the limits of the Parks Department, the Department’s experience in larger festivals can assist neighborhoods by implementing a “Procedures Plan” that helps community leaders with the logistics of a successful block party or festival. Included in the plan may be the procedures and applications. As the plan is developed, a determination as to how much funding the City will provide can be investigated.

On a much larger scale than a block, neighborhood, or community event, city-wide festivals are a great way to establish city-wide civic pride while encouraging those from other cities to visit Portsmouth. 46.2% of the respondents indicated that they attend special events and/or concerts and only walking was rated higher when asked which activity families participated in most frequently last year.

As with neighborhood festivals, larger city-wide events are not the sole responsibility of the Department of Parks, Recreation and Leisure Services, but cooperation and a unified effort is required.

As noted in the Key Trends section, sport and nature-based tourism represents a growing market. Parks and Recreation programs generate revenue directly from fees and charges, but more importantly, provide significant indirect revenues to local and regional economies from sports tournaments and special events such as arts, music, and holiday festivals. Economic activity from hospitality expenditures, tourism, fuel, recreational equipment sales, and many other private sector businesses is of true and sustained value to local and regional economies. If this is a market Portsmouth wants to explore, it means there will be a need to focus on family recreation and “destination” facilities. In order to compete with other jurisdictions, facilities need to be state of the art.

4.11 Promote coordination of programs between the Department of Parks, Recreation and Leisure Services and the Portsmouth School’s Continuing Education Program.

Almost 82% of the questionnaire respondents indicated that providing opportunities for lifelong learning is very important. Efforts should be made to coordinate the current system of programs offered by the School System Continuing Education Programs and the Department of Parks, Recreation and Leisure Services programs.

5. ADDITIONAL PARK LAND

Additional land for neighborhood and community parks should be acquired and developed into parks that meet the active and passive recreational needs of all residents in the City.

The City should seek land for additional parks to support equity of access by users while creating a positive sense of place for all residents in the City. Over 81% of the questionnaire respondents believe that a public green space near every home is either somewhat or very important.



Action

5.1 Neighborhood park land acquisition is needed in under served areas of the City and existing neighborhood and community parks must be improved to meet the needs of residents for the future.

As indicated in the Comprehensive Plan and validated by public opinion, portions of the City are under served by neighborhood and community parks using standard service area radii of one-half mile and two miles, respectively, for these facilities. See map on Page 24 for areas of the City that are underserved with Neighborhood Parks and Page 25 for areas of the City underserved with Community Parks.

Option 1: The preferred option to serve these neighborhoods is to use existing schools as community meeting places and outdoor recreational needs. In doing so, immediate needs are met and costs to taxpayers are minimized.

If the following school facilities are able to be shared with the Department of Parks, Recreation and Leisure Services, the entire city is adequately served with parks and recreation. Please note that it is recommended that all schools and school facilities are

shared but for this specific section, only the schools that fulfill the under served areas are highlighted.

The area that has the highest need for community meeting spaces and recreational needs is the entire western portion of the City (see Neighborhood Park Map on page 24 and Community Park Map on page 25 for detailed deficiencies). These needs can easily be fulfilled by using Simonsdale Elementary School, Hodges Manor Elementary School, Lakeview Elementary School, William E. Waters Middle School and Woodrow Wilson High School.

Although the areas in the northern portion of the City, such as Churchland, have more parks than the western portions, their needs are still unfulfilled. Using Churchland Elementary School can help fulfill community meeting spaces as well as recreational needs for the northern neighborhoods in the City.

The eastern portions of the City have the highest concentration of pocket parks but the least access to active recreation parks. Using I.C. Norcom High School helps fulfill their needs for active recreation.

Option 2: If a shared-use arrangement cannot be achieved with the Public Schools, the less preferred alternative of acquiring land must be considered. While this option will take significantly longer and be more costly to taxpayers, significant portions of the City are underserved without it.

While this Master Plan doesn't recommend specific parcels of land, general locations are evident when viewing the Neighborhood and Community Park Maps. In addition to retaining existing City land for potential future development, the City should seek land for additional parks.

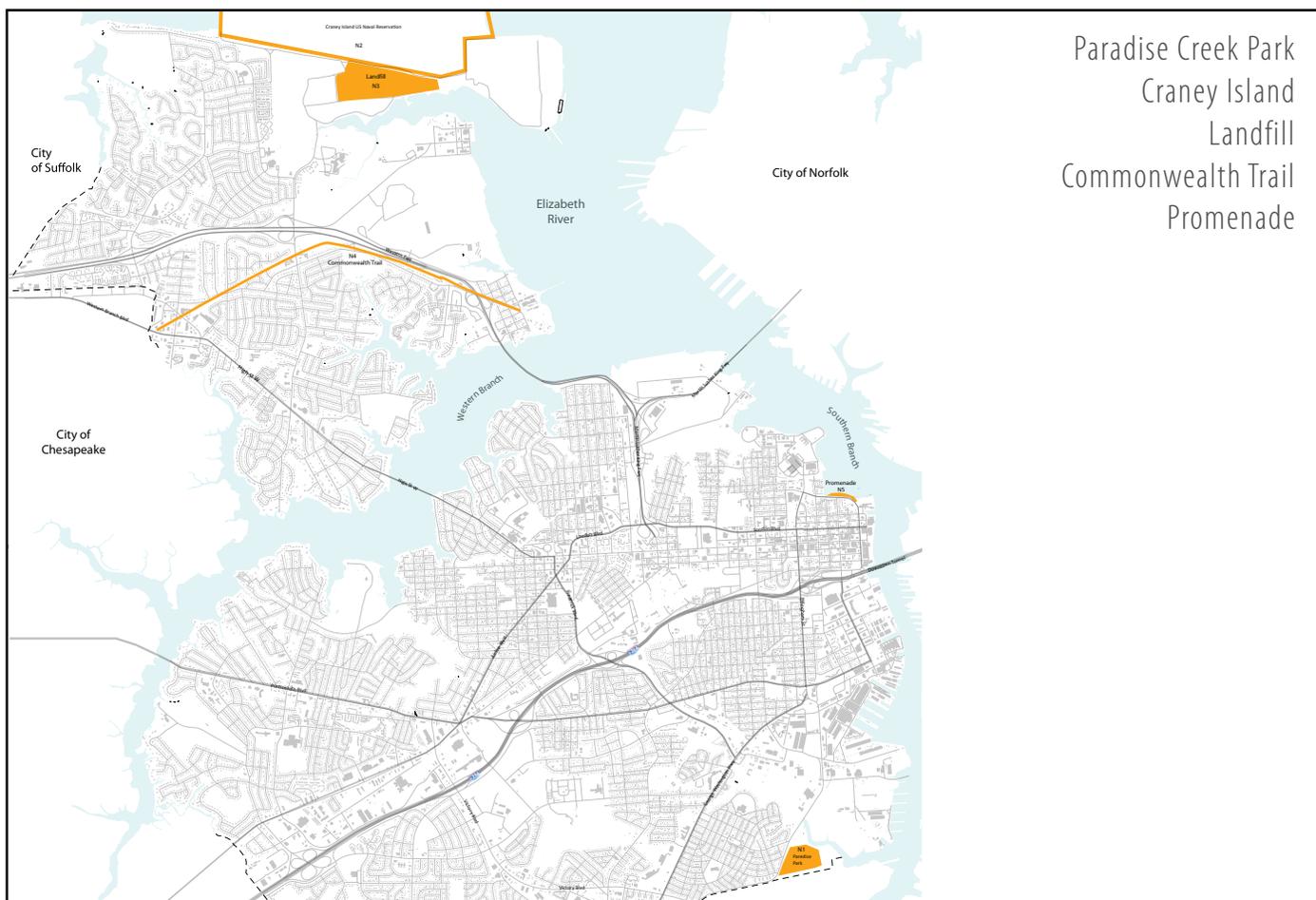
Option 3: As new projects and developments are planned, it is essential that parks and open spaces be incorporated into the plan. In many cases buildings in the downtown area can provide urban plazas and parks, either as a privately owned park or one donated to the City. In the 'suburban' areas, all projects should incorporate open space into the plan. Open space is not defined as 'left over land', but quality land where residents benefit from the creation of parkland. If there is not sufficient land in either scenario above, monetary allocations should be made to create a park or improve existing parks in the most needed area.

5.2 Focus on developing a balance of Open Spaces and Park Types.

While Action 1 focuses primarily on neighborhood and community parks it must be recognized that a balanced park system needs to reflect the needs of the neighborhood as well as the City (see Park Type definitions of park types in Part 2 of this Master Plan).

It was clear in the responses to the questionnaire that residents of Portsmouth value all types of parks from pocket parks to athletic centers to passive open space areas. While each serve different purposes, the City needs to maintain a balance so that all needs are reflected and represented. Additionally, there is a strong desire to add a new signature sports complex/park in the City – one that could potentially be developed to league standards to attract traveling sports clubs.

See map below for examples of potential park space (such as the Commonwealth Trail). These additional areas could be used for future parks, but areas like Craney Island, the Landfill, and the Commonwealth Trail would be important additions for Passive Open Space as well.



5.3 Development of park trails and greenways is needed throughout the City to allow people to use them for transportation, fitness and recreation purposes.

In this study as well as the Transportation Plan (2010) there was a strong desire for greenways and multi-use trails for transportation as well as recreation.

In most urban and historic cities this task is almost impossible as land is typically already developed, unsuitable, or unavailable; however, Portsmouth has a number of rail corridors that could be converted to greenways.

When land is available, such as the Commonwealth Railway area, greenways are typically one of the easiest and least expensive endeavors to undertake. In addition to providing transportation and recreation opportunities, greenways serve as a way of connecting neighborhoods and expanding existing recreational opportunities to a larger market.

As Portsmouth continues to evolve, all opportunities to build and eventually expand the greenway system must be considered. When additional rail lines are abandoned or new projects are being developed Portsmouth must be ready to seize every opportunity that is available, even if it is not specifically mentioned in this document. There are factors that will occur that no one can predict and no opportunity, large or small, should be ignored.

5.4 Reconnect residents with the waterfront.

The City of Portsmouth has 85 miles of waterfront land (most of which is in private hands). Interestingly, there is a variety of shoreline conditions including 'beach' environments, natural areas and wetlands, man-made bulkheads, marinas, and urban greenways / parks.

As summarized on pages 38 - 41 of this study, in 1995 the City of Portsmouth hired Earth Design Associates to prepare a Waterfront Access Study. The study was all encompassing and highly detailed with specific recommendations to add waterfront access throughout the City. This Master Plan endorses the concepts and recommendations of the study and recognizes the importance of implementing the recommendations such as creating multiple points of contact - street 'ends', road and bridge crossings, parks and school sites, marinas, and the downtown seawall. As the plan unfolds, most residents in Portsmouth will be within a 10 to 20 minute walk to waterfront access.

Copies of the Waterfront Access Study can be obtained from the Portsmouth Planning Department.

In addition to the Waterfront Access Study, which covered the entire City, in 2009 the City of Portsmouth hired HOK to prepare the Downtown Master Plan and Waterfront Strategy. The Downtown Master Plan and Waterfront Strategy pointed out improvements to the existing parks and the possible addition of park land and waterfront access in several locations in the downtown area. More information can be found on pages 38-41 of the Downtown Master Plan and Waterfront Strategy, but the plan specifically calls for implementation of The Waterfront Promenade from Fort Nelson Park to the nTelos Pavilion. Copies of the Downtown Master Plan and Waterfront Strategy can be obtained from the Portsmouth Planning Department.

5.5 Implementation of a system wide park signage program to inform and guide residents to where the parks are located.

This strategy should coincide with the Communication recommendation to achieve the maximum benefit. Creating a signage program can help awareness in the City since based on the public survey, 44.1% of the respondents do not know what the Department of Parks, Recreation and Leisure Services has to offer and over 1/3 of the respondents do not know where the parks are located.

This strategy does not actually create more parks, but it informs residents of the existing inventory. As with all cities, there are barriers (which can be overcome), such a road or waterbody, that can create a boundary where people are reluctant to cross. Many times there is not a reason to cross a boundary and as time passes, residents become less and less aware of opportunities within a short distance. For instance, Interstate 264 separates the neighborhood of Westhaven Park from the Douglass Park Ball Field. While there may be a mental barrier, the park is actually less than one mile from most of the neighborhood.

Making residents aware of existing parks and facilities as well as an inventory of programmed uses is the least expensive approach in fulfilling many of the residents' requests. A system wide signage package, especially in conjunction with a marketing campaign, will inform all residents of all parks and uses within the current system.

5.6 As new projects or developments are being planned, an allocation of space or money for public parks and open space should be an essential component of the plan.

The development standards Portsmouth currently has in place require open space 'set-asides' for new developments. For residential and mixed-use developments with 20 or more residential units, the minimum open space set-aside is 15% of the total development area (for a 10 acre project the open space requirement would be 1.5 acres). For mixed use developments with less than 20 units the open space set aside is 10%. For more information and greater detail see the Portsmouth Zoning Ordinance.

While further study of this ordinance should be conducted by the Planning Staff and Planning Commission some aspects to consider include:

- In order to achieve the goals of this Master Plan, at least a portion of the open space set-aside should be for all citizens of Portsmouth and not just those within the proposed development (as it currently is). Likewise, the portion of open space for the public should be usable and programmable (active and/or passive) open space.
- Based on the public opinion survey, the citizens have a strong desire for enjoying natural areas. In new developments natural features such as waterways or wetlands are required to be preserved based on federal regulation, but these should not be considered in the calculations of open space for recreational purposes unless public trails, water access, etc. is provided.
- For the purposes and goals of this study, required landscaped areas and stormwater management devices do not add to the recreational benefit of the City and should not be counted as the portion of open space provided to the overall public.



“connecting people and building families and neighborhoods”

- Portsmouth Citizen, 2011

CONCLUSION

CONCLUSION

Portsmouth is entering an exciting time in its history. Along with the Downtown Master Plan and Waterfront Strategy, the Master Transportation Plan, the Downtown Design Guidelines, the City, for the first time, has a Parks, Recreation, and Leisure Services Master Plan. This plan is a road map to help with a comprehensive planning approach that will result in the enhancement and expansion of parks and open spaces, programs, and recreation centers.

There are many aspects in which Portsmouth can be proud.....some are tangible such as City Park, Hoffer Creek Wildlife Preserve, or the high rate of program participation compared to national levels. Others, like Portsmouth's citizen volunteerism is unique when compared to other cities.

This document was developed through a year long process of research, analysis, and interactions with the general public and key stakeholders, as well as City Staff from different departments. The public and private sector of Portsmouth have shown a commitment to providing a healthy and vibrant community in which to live and the joint values which evolved out of this process form the basis of the future direction and efforts of the Department of Parks, Recreation and Leisure Services.

These values include the acknowledgement that quality parks, recreation, and leisure services contribute to building better communities; that quality of life is enhanced with parks and activities throughout the City; that each park should be designed with the surrounding community's identity and needs in mind; that parks should be safe for all citizens to enjoy; and that collaboration between the City, Schools, and Citizens is important.

In order to support these collective values, recommendations include focusing on Communication, Maintenance, Recreation Programs, Community Facilities, and Additional Land to help guide the way. As with all master plans, this plan is a work-in-progress and will evolve. This plan is being developed during a period of extreme fiscal constraint. Implementation of many of the action items in the future will be dependent on the substantial improvement and increases in resource allocation. Nevertheless, the current fiscal environment is the ideal time to prioritize and plan for such future growth and opportunity.

The vision of the Department of Parks, Recreation and Leisure Services for the City is that "it become the healthiest place to live in Hampton Roads. We will achieve this vision by providing parks and open spaces that foster community pride and enjoyment, well-balanced recreation opportunities that encourage an active and wholesome lifestyle, and community-focused programs that contribute to the positive development of youth, adults and families through involvement, partnership and collaboration with citizens and community organizations."

For more information on this Plan, the Department's Vision, the Department of Parks, Recreation and Leisure Services, or any of the facilities in the City, please contact:

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PORTSMOUTH, VA

Parks, Recreation, and Leisure Services

MASTER PLAN 2012



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