



TOWN OF GROTON

C O N N E C T I C U T

Parks and Recreation Master Plan

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Prepared by



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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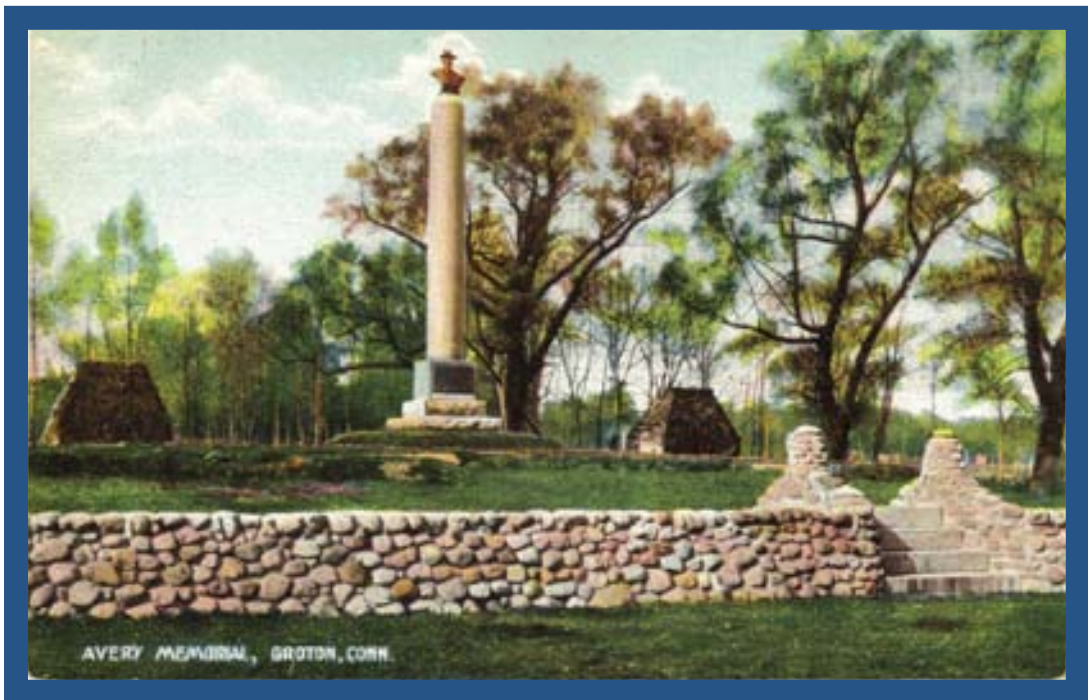


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I. INTRODUCTION



INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE AND VISION

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

PROJECT SUCCESS INDICATORS

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

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

TOWN AND DEPARTMENT BACKGROUND

Town of Groton

The Town of Groton is a unique community with a rich history as a European settlement extending back to the 17th Century. Groton is now known as the "Submarine Capital of the World" for housing the U.S. Navy Submarine Base as well as the design, engineering and production of submarines by the Electric Boat Corporation. The Town's geographic location situated on Long Island Sound and with relatively easy access to Boston and New York City is a big attraction for its residents.

It is Groton's location on Long Island Sound which has shaped both the history and the present status of this Town. The waters were first charted by European explorers in 1614, when the area was part of the Pequot Indian territory. After defeating the Native Americans in the Pequot War of 1637, Groton's settlement by Europeans began in 1646. In 1705, that the Town of Groton was incorporated.

Fort Griswold Battlefield State Park in Groton Heights was the site of a British attack led by Benedict Arnold during the American Revolution. It was after the Revolutionary War when the ship building industry really took off in Groton as a result of many people seeking trade and carrying whaling expeditions around the world. Ships were then built for the Civil War, followed by the establishment of the Navy Yard and during World War I the Town became home to an official submarine base.

Electric Boat Corporation acquired the Groton shipyard in 1911 and this, along with its suppliers and the presence of the U.S. Naval Submarine Base is what makes Groton the "Submarine Capital of the World." In 2004, the Naval Base and Electric Boat combined to provide 19,300 jobs in New London County. This however, is significantly fewer employees than in prior years. Filling this decrease in ship-building and related employment have been casino jobs – 21,000 were provided by the top two casinos in 2004. The increase in gaming in the area has brought with it increased tourism, a trend that brings opportunities for the Parks and Recreation Department, particularly for facilities such as the golf course and in special event programming.

In 1957 the Town adopted a Town Council-Town Manager-Representative Town Meeting (RTM) governance structure. The Mayor is appointed by the Town Council from their membership and serves a ceremonial function in addition to chairing the Town Council meetings. The Town Council is responsible for determining policy and appointing the Town

Manager to execute policy and administer the day-to-day affairs of the Town. Some important dates in the history of Recreation planning in the Town include: development of the Shennecossett Golf Course in 1898, establishment of the Parks and Recreation Department in 1965, dedication of the Spicer House as the Department's office in 1968, and construction of the Senior Center in 1979.

The governance of the Town of Groton is complicated with many other jurisdictions located within the "town" that provide services. These include the City of Groton, nine fire districts, and the Naval Base. Specific to parks and recreation planning, the Town of Groton provides services to the following geographic areas: Poquonock Bridge, Center Groton, Mystic, Old Mystic, West Pleasant Valley, Noank, Groton Long Point, City of Groton and the Naval Base. Additionally, the Department serves a high number of non-residents, who are allowed to participate in most activities at an increased fee. This overlap of providers and cross-over of users presents both challenges and opportunities that are discussed further in this report.

Groton's founding and history play a profound role in the shaping of the Town today. While employment in Groton is shifting away from the ship building industry, the impact that it has had on Groton's history and economic development remains important and significant. The sense of history and steady employment opportunities have brought many residents to Groton. Once there, residents enjoy the area's natural beauty, access to the water, regional location, good school system, and recreational activities available in the area. As described by citizen input, Groton residents are very proud of their Shennecossett Golf Course and Poquonnock Plains Park; are delighted to be able to enjoy the water and go hiking; and greatly appreciate the Town staff that make these opportunities and places accessible.

Department Overview

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

The Administration function is served by the Parks and Recreation Director and associated staff targeted towards the management and administration of the Department. An

executive staff of Division Heads provides direct support to the Director and support operations throughout the agency. The Director manages all personnel activities, budgeting, and overall planning within the Department.

The responsibilities of the Recreation Division include providing cultural events, instructional programs, sports leagues, trips, fitness activities, inclusive programming, special events, and safety programs for residents of all ages and capabilities. These programs are marketed quarterly in the Discover brochure. The Division performs fundraising and utilizes many volunteers.

The Parks and Forestry Division maintains over 68 locations, which includes parks, playgrounds, town grounds, athletic fields, memorials, waterfronts, docks and beaches, trails, cemeteries and open spaces. Some of the wide variety of tasks provided includes turf management, hardscape, landscape, tree and shrub care, installation of play structures, carpentry and construction, along with logistical work for special events. The Division also provides support work for the other Recreation Divisions, schools, volunteer groups, and works in cooperation with other Town Departments. The Town's forestry program is managed by the Town's Tree Warden.

The responsibilities of the Senior Center Division include providing nutrition, health and recreational classes, special events and trips, transportation, information and referral services for Groton residents 55 years and older. The Senior Center supports a club actively engaged in fundraising and community service projects including flu clinics, food baskets for the needy, children's programs and recreation projects, entertainment groups that perform for other senior centers, schools, civic groups and more. Programs in health, finance, fitness, art and living wills are offered on a monthly basis throughout the year. A variety of classes are offered quarterly which include aerobics, yoga, chorus, dance, arts & crafts and ceramics. A cafeteria style kitchen provides residents a light breakfast and lunch at the Senior Center (Federal Elderly Nutrition program), as well as a Meals on Wheels program which provides lunch for the homebound. The current Senior Center is undergoing an expansion which should be completed in approximately May of 2010.

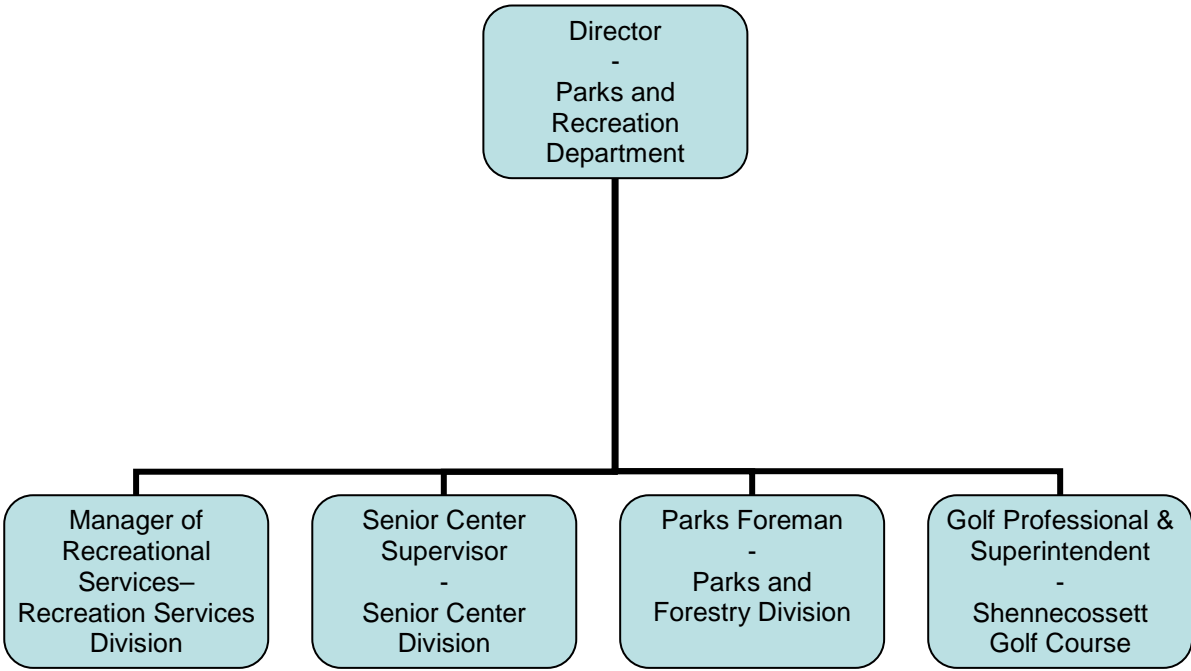
The Shennecossett Golf Course Division's responsibilities include maintaining approximately 135 acres of highly manicured fairways, tees and greens. The 18-hole public course, which is open year round, also offers a full service restaurant that is open to the public and full pro shop services. The management of the course involves coordinating the grounds maintenance, golf professional staff and restaurant services. Fee structures for the course are reviewed annually, as the

course is run as an enterprise fund. Tee times can be made online by using Shennygolf.com. Shennecossett offers opportunities for league and tournament play and provides a solo rider golf cart to make the course accessible to physically disabled players. In 2005, the Department worked with the National Golf Foundation (NGF) to develop strategic actions to improve play and conditions at the golf course.

Department Organization

The Town of Groton Parks and Recreation Department has a total of 30.75 full-time employees across 5 primary work areas: Administration, Recreation Services Division, Parks & Forestry Division (Parks Maintenance), the Senior Center Division and Shennecossett Golf Course. Some staff members within the Divisions, outside of Division Directors, are represented by unions. Figure I.I provides a general representation of the Department structure.

Figure I.I: Town of Groton Parks and Recreation Department Structure



Town of Groton Parks and Recreation Facilities

The Town of Groton Parks and Recreation Department has a wide variety of programs and facilities that address many of the demands of residents and guests of the area. From rowing classes to senior programs, to a golf course that possesses majestic views of the area, the Town is fortunate to have a good mix of activities and facilities. Table I.I provides an overview of the types and classifications of the Town’s parks and recreation facilities as evaluated in this Master Plan.

Table 1.1: Town of Groton Parks and Recreation Facilities

Classification	Name of Facility	Acres
Mini Park	Ring Drive Recreation Area	8.72
Neighborhood Park	Bel Aire Park	3.43
	Central Park	3.53
	Deerfield Extension	1.99
	Deerfield Park	76.46
	Depot Road Playground	2.91
	Field Crest	6.62
	Mystic Academy	1.47
	Mystic Highlands	9.22
	Noank Park	0.61
	Raheem Ali Carter Memorial Park	3.22
	Ramble Brook Park	14.30
	Stanton Farms	4.92
	Tanglewood Park	3.59
	Wolfbrook Playground	1.12
	Woodcrest Park	13.00
Community Park	Farquhar Field	7.97
	Library Recreation Field	10.75
	Poquonnock Plains Park	15.87
	Sutton Park	17.84
Community Park / Natural Resource Area	Copp Property	227.02
Natural Resource Area	Beebe Pond Park	100.58
	Pequot Woods	232.89
	River Road Park	39.84
	Wright Property	80.69
Special Use Facility	Burrows Field	3.64
	Esker Point Beach	11.89
	Jabez Smith Homestead	2.49
	Noank Town Dock	0.99
	Spicer Park	6.52
Golf Course	Shennecossett Golf Course	135.00
Grounds	Noank ES	6.19
Historic Marker	Indian Memorial	0.11
	Nautilus Overlook	0.79
Trail	Poquonnock River Walk	2.20
School Park	Catherine Kolnaski ES	124.55
	Charles Barnum ES	16.13
	Claude Chester ES	11.57
	Cutler MS	40.52
	Fitch HS	74.49
	Fitch MS	11.34

(Continued) Table I.1: Town of Groton Parks and Recreation Facilities

Classification	Name of Facility	Acres
	Mary Morrison ES	36.70
	Mystic Education Center	99.52
	Northeast Academy ES	21.19
	Pleasant Valley ES	16.74
	SB Butler ES	9.43
	West Side MS	40.56
	William Seely ES	14.05
Indoor Facilities	Mystic Education Center	see above
	Groton Senior Center	n/a
	William Seely ES	see above
	TOTAL ACRES	1575.17

RELATED PLANNING EFFORTS AND INTEGRATION

As a mature community with a parks and recreation system that began developing in the late 1800's, many of the Town's parks and facilities have become increasingly difficult to program and maintain. The services and structure of the Groton Parks and Recreation Department has changed dramatically since many of the facilities and parks were originally planned and developed. Consequently, current challenges lie in making needed improvements and additions to the Town's parks, athletic fields and indoor facilities to meet the demands of constituents.

Groton Parks and Recreation Department is a progressive Department that incorporates strategic planning and evaluation into the staff's ongoing responsibilities. However, over the past two decades a system-wide Master Plan has been a missing link in providing the Department a road map or guiding document. Taking into account the current economic challenges facing the Country, the focus must now embrace sound planning and positioning for the sustainable operations of existing facilities as well as positioning the Department for the development of new facilities as funding becomes available through traditional and alternative sources.

Given the importance that residents place on the quality of life provided by parks and recreation programs and facilities, as well as the economic (business attraction, increased property values and tourism), health and environmental benefits, the development and implementation of this comprehensive Master Plan is important for the Town's continued prosperity. An important part of this process is to analyze and integrate with previous and current planning projects; enabling the Town and its partners to streamline planning efforts and to maximize the use of resources.

Two key projects that will be integrated into this planning effort include the ***Bicycle, Pedestrian & Trails Master Plan (BP&T Master Plan)*** and the ***Sutton Park Master Plan***. The 17.8 acre Sutton Park is in a central geographic location and experiences a high amount of use from the youth and young families of the community. In addition to providing a creative and thoughtful park design, understanding the Town's park and recreation system as whole, community need for programs and facilities and gaps in service will be of critical importance to the success of all projects. The two Master Plan projects and this report will utilize key findings and milestones throughout the projects in order to guide both recommendations for the system-wide Master Plan as well as the conceptual design of Sutton Park. The findings and recommendations of this Master Plan report should also be utilized by staff and integrated into the ***2010 Plan of Conservation and Development***.

2. DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS & COMMUNITY PROFILE



DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS AND COMMUNITY PROFILE

COMMUNITY OVERVIEW

An important component of this Master Plan is to understand how current and future local demographics affect the Parks and Recreation program and facility needs, as well as understanding how these are either similar or different from state and national trends.



The Town of Groton is located in southeastern Connecticut. The Town's location on Long Island Sound has influenced the community makeup, being home to the U.S. Naval Submarine Base, Pfizer and shipping industry companies. The presence of the Naval Base has made Groton a younger community than most in the country. However, it is still growing older, which is in step with the nationwide trend of the aging Baby Boomer generation. The Town of Groton is rich in employment opportunities. However, in the past when primary employers such as the Naval Base and Electric Boat Corporation have cut back on staffing, those cutbacks have impacted local population numbers and the economy. Such was the case between 1990 and 2000, which was the primary cause of the population decrease at this time, as shown in Figure 2.1.

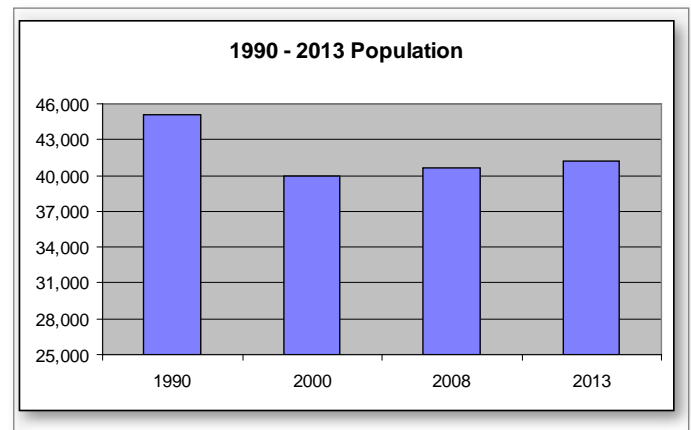
Note: Unless otherwise noted, the raw data used for the analysis that follows was provided by ESRI Business Solutions.

Population Projections

The population of the Town of Groton is a mature community that is projected to experience slight growth over the next five years, 0.24% for the period 2000-2013. This pace is slower than both the rate of growth for the State of Connecticut (0.41%) and the United States (1.23%). By 2013, Groton's population is projected to be 41,197, approximately 4,000 less than the high of 1990.

For Parks and Recreation planning and programming, a slow rate of population growth generally provides steadiness and predictability in park, facility, and program user rates and demands, with fluctuations due to changes in the makeup of users, rather than the absolute number of users. Therefore, it is important for the Town to understand the detailed demographics of its residents, as well as trends in parks and recreation that may cause programs and facilities to become more or less popular among users. Another important factor in Groton is the location of the growth. The majority of the growth is compacted in the Mystic/Highway 184 area – so while the rate for the entire area may be low, the impact is more significant for that geographic area.

Figure 2.1: Town of Groton Population Growth (1990 – 2013)



Age Breakdowns

For the purpose of Parks and Recreation Planning, there are seven age groups which are useful in which to classify the population. These age groups generally define how a group prefers to use parks and recreation facilities, their physical abilities, types of programs they may be interested in, and the amount of time available to spend participating in recreational activities. These groups are Under 5 – those with limited physical abilities and who need constant supervision; 5-14 – children's needs and programming, this is also a significant time to create habits of being active; 15-24 – young adults who use facilities and programs independent of their family, primarily with friends and as part of their social time; 25-34 – those whose needs primarily center on relationships and starting families; 35-54 – people whose needs generally revolve around their family, which likely contains children ranging from toddlers to young adults; 55-64 – empty nesters, those focused on new grandchildren and those preparing for retirement; and 65+ – a group that is currently more active than at any point in history,



has more leisure time, and whose abilities may be physically constrained.

Figure 2.2: Town of Groton – Population by Age Group (2000-2013)

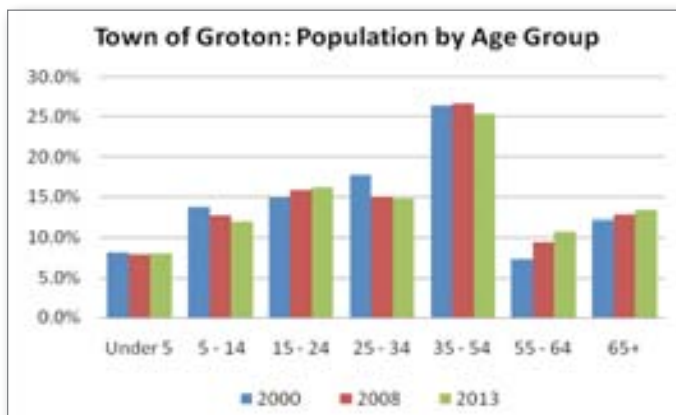
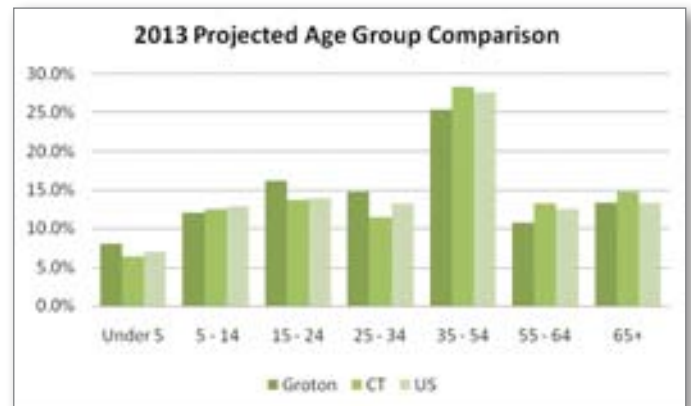


Figure 2.2 illustrates the projected change in Groton's population by age group. Of the four age groups projected to grow, two are the oldest age groups categorized: 55-64, increasing from 7.3% of the population in 2000 to 10.7% in 2013; and 65+, increasing from 12.1% of the population in 2000 to 13.3% in 2013. The young adult population (15-24) is also expected to increase 1.3% for the same time period.

When compared to the State of Connecticut and the United States in Figure 2.3, Groton's population is still projected to be younger than both. In 2013, the Town of Groton is projected to have a lower percentage in every age group over 35 years than both the state and country, and more in those age groups under the age of 34, with the exception of age 5-14. The projected median age in 2013 is as follows: Town of Groton – 34.4 years;

State of Connecticut – 40.5 years; United States – 37.7 years. The 2002 Groton Plan of Conservation and Development cites the presence of the Naval Base as a primary reason for Groton's younger median age. This information means that the Town of Groton Parks and Recreation Department needs to position its programming and facilities to accommodate an aging population, but cannot do so at the expense of meeting the needs of its younger than average population. However, it is also important to consider that the employees of the Naval Base are also provided recreation programming and facilities by the base, so as not to duplicate efforts.

Figure 2.3: Comparative Age Group Projections – Groton, CT and US (2013)



Some focus groups findings relevant to age groups are as follows:

- Potentially a high percentage of children in the Groton area are part of Naval families and live in Naval housing, investigating existing recreation programs and potential gaps in services can help serve the greatest needs of the Town's youth.
- Groton youth expressed a desire for a BMX track and community recreation center.
- The Tercentennial Legacy Playground and the Skate Park get high use among and the Town's youth. However, there are conflicts with both bikers and skaters trying to use the skatepark at the same time, which may reflect the need for separate facilities.
- The age group 55 – 64, as seen throughout the country, are still active in the adult parks and recreation programming and generally do not use the senior center and its services.
- There is an abundance of team recreation opportunities available to Groton residents.
- Residents 65 and older, and especially the older members of this group, are very active users of the Groton Senior

Center and its programs and services, including a high rate of volunteerism at the center.

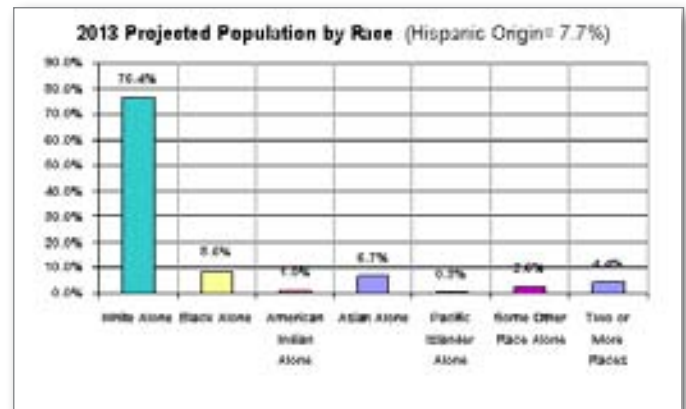
- Biking and walking are desirable activities across age groups, but adequate and safe trails are very limited. This is concerning for all age groups, because it limits opportunities for physical activity. This is especially concerning for age groups either too young or too old to drive, as it will also prevent them from using recreation facilities and attending programs.

Race / Ethnicity

Race and ethnicity play a role in the population's parks and recreation needs and desires. Trends can be found in the ways that different races/ethnic groups use parks and recreation facilities and the types of programming they seek. As Figure 2.4 illustrates, the Town of Groton's projected race/ethnicity makeup is predominately "White Alone." The Town of Groton is less racially diverse than both Connecticut and country as a whole. For example, in 2013 the percentage of state residents projected to be of Hispanic origin is 13.2%, and the percentage of US residents of Hispanic origin will be 17.2% - a significant difference of 7.7%. Additionally, the percentage of the population that is White Alone will be slightly lower in both Connecticut (76.2%) and the country (70.7%) than in the Town of Groton (76.4%).

In contrast, a 2008 Carey Institute report, "The Changing Faces of New England: Increasing Spatial and Racial Diversity," found that race/ethnic diversity is on the rise in New England as a whole, stating that "Racial diversity increased in New England, due to a gain of 407,000 in its minority population. The white population declined by 60,000" between 2001 – 2005. Although this varies from the Town's trends it is important to consider the impacts that this could have on those current and potential future programs and facilities that serve as regional providers.

Figure 2.4: Groton Projected Population by Race (2013)

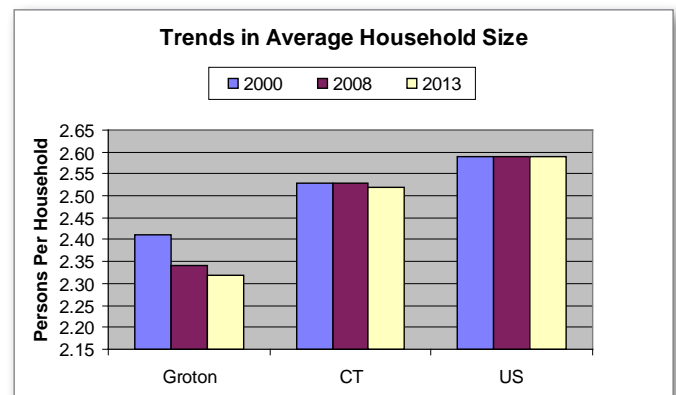


In its parks and recreation programming, the Town of Groton should consider any special needs or desires of the various races/ethnicities within the Town. However, the Department should also be aware that programming specifically geared towards minorities may have low participation numbers as a result of the low percentage of the population that minorities make up. Therefore, increased marketing to minorities for existing programming may be a more effective use of resources.

Household Makeup

The Town of Groton has a notably smaller average household size than both Connecticut and the United States, as illustrated in Figure 2.5. Projections for 2013 are as follows: Town of Groton – 2.32; State of Connecticut - 2.52; and United States - 2.59.

Figure 2.5: Trends in Average Household Size (2000-2013)



An interesting attribute that is unique to the Town of Groton is the percentage of the population that is living in military quarters – 12% according to the 2002 Groton Plan of Conservation and Development. The statewide average is less than 1%. Community input suggested that a high percentage of this population is children of Naval families. The Naval Submarine Base New London does boast a fair number of recreational facilities for use by its members, families and visitors of families. These include a bowling alley, golf course, library, marina and boating facilities, an outdoor adventure center for paintball, hiking, and fishing, and a fitness facility that has an indoor pool, fitness classes, and fitness machines.

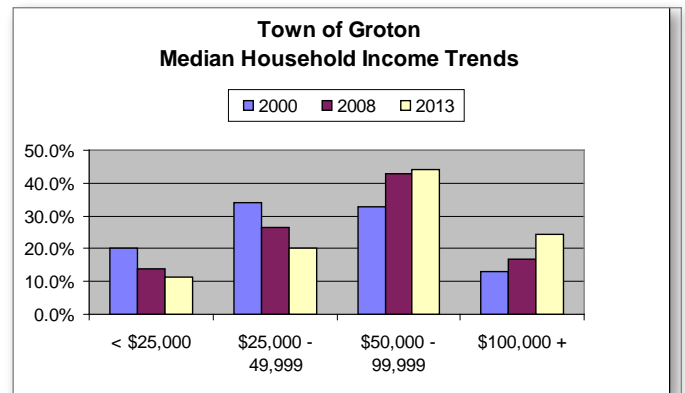
The Department's strategic planning and services should take into consideration the impacts of the alternative recreation services being provided to this institutionalized population, as well as by those being provided by the City of Groton. What facilities and/or programs could be in higher or lower demand due to these alternative providers? How might this be impacting the use and participation of the Town of Groton's recreational facilities and programs? Athletic fields are provided for the use of the Naval Base and City of Groton; however the focus groups cited repeatedly a need for more fields throughout the Town of Groton. Are the existing facilities of all recreation providers being used to maximum capacity? Are there potential partnership opportunities with the Naval Base and City that would help alleviate scheduling challenges on Town fields?

Household Income

Data shows that income and physical activity are positively correlated: when one rises, the other rises. A national parks and recreation trends report cites that lower income individuals are significantly less likely to engage in regular physical activity. The Town of Groton has an economically diverse population – ranging from the very wealthy to low-income workers, some of which are living below the poverty line and are in need of public assistance. According to the 2008 CERC Town Profile, the poverty rate for Groton in 1999 was 6.1%, which is lower than the US at 6.4% and the state at 7.9%. While it is concerning that a person's physical activity level tends to decrease if their income decreases, this data is not as impactful for the Town of Groton as it is for many other American communities.

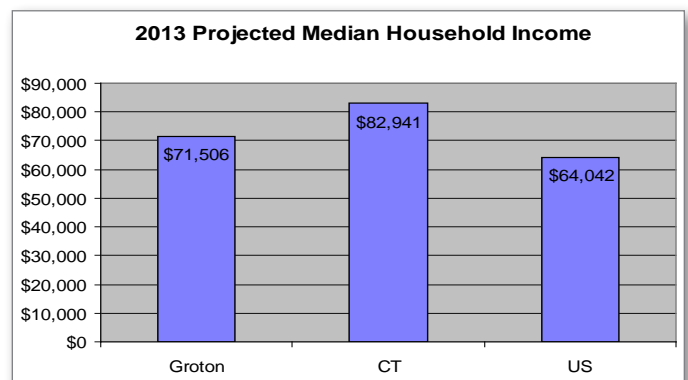
Groton's median household income has been and is projected to continue to increase. By 2013, households making less than \$25,000 will fall to 11.4% of households (down from 20.2% in 2000) and households making more than \$100,000 will increase to nearly one-quarter of all households at 24.3% (up from 12.9% in 2000). See Figure 2.6.

Figure 2.6: Groton Median Household Income Trends



Relative to the state and the country, the Town of Groton falls between the two in regard to median household income. Currently, the Town of Groton's median household income is \$71,506 (2008). Figure 2.7 illustrates that the state of Connecticut is projected to have a significantly higher median income, estimated to be \$82,941 in 2013, compared to that of the country, which will be \$64,042 for the same time period. For parks and recreation programming, it should be noted that while parts of the community are more affluent, which may influence the programming, facilities, and fee structures in those areas, there are still residents within the community that may not have the ability to pay, but are often most in need of Town services. Focus groups found that the current fee structure for facilities and programs is generally considered appropriate.

Figure 2.7: Comparative Projected Median Household Income (2013)



Health & Related Factors:

Research shows that a person's physical activity level, which by extension is a large determinant of their overall health, is influenced by many factors, including education, income, number of household members, and gender. Some revealing facts found by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and reported in *Physical Activity and Good Nutrition: Essential Elements to Prevent Chronic Diseases and Obesity, At a Glance 2008* include:

- More than 50% of U.S. adults do not get enough physical activity to provide health benefits;
- 25% of U.S. adults are not active at all in their leisure time;
- Sufficient activity is less common among women than men;
- Those with lower incomes and less education are less active; and
- About two-thirds of young people in grades 9–12 are not engaged in recommended levels of physical activity.

Connecticut has the third lowest adult obesity rate in the nation. While this is very positive news, still more than 1/5 of the adult population is obese (20.8%). The rate of childhood obesity is 12.3% in Connecticut, placing it 37th out of 51, (with 1 being the highest rate of obesity).

According to a report by the US Department of Health and Human Services entitled *Overweight and Physical Activity Among Children: A Portrait of States and the Nation 2005*, Connecticut ranked lower on a percentage-basis than the national average in each of the categories measured (See Figures 2.8, 2.9 and 2.10). This is positive and should be used to continue the encouragement of youth in physical activities, so as to maintain and improve upon this existing benchmark.

Figure 2.8: Percent of Overweight Children

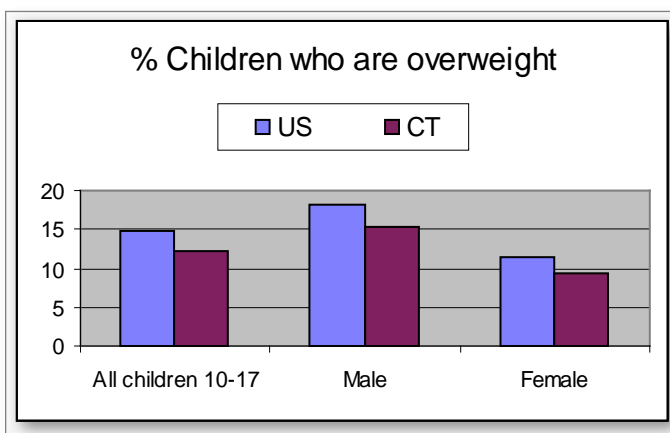


Figure 2.9: Percent of Children Obtaining Recommended Levels of Physical Activity

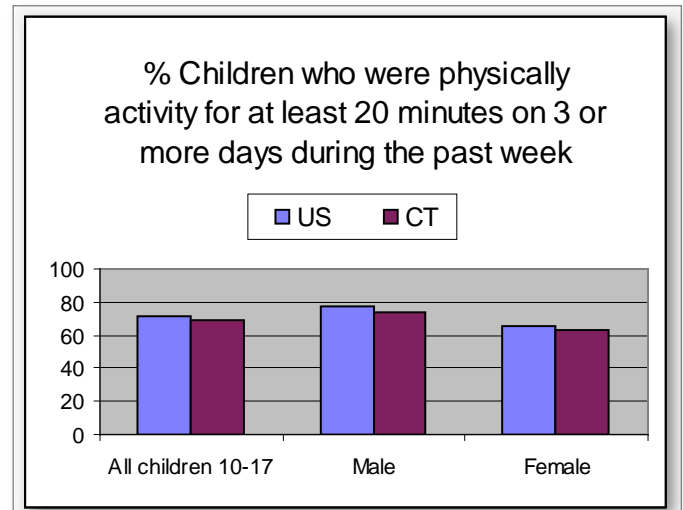
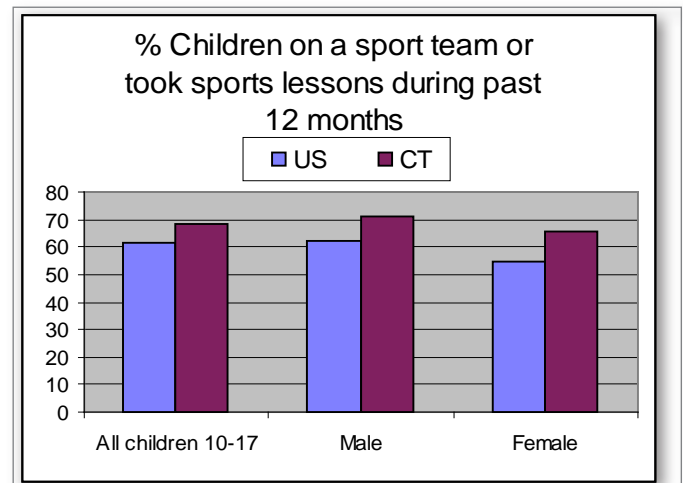


Figure 2.10: Percent of Children Participating in Sports Team or Lessons



Research has shown that the availability of opportunities to engage in physical activity is positively correlated with the amount of physical activity in which people engage. Therefore the availability of parks and recreation services are vital to increasing physical activity across all demographic sectors and play a key role in reducing obesity rates. When evaluating the availability of opportunities for physical activity, one must consider their accessibility and proximity to residents, in addition to their mere existence. Physical barriers, safety concerns and distance to parks and facilities often prevent residents from using recreation facilities and programs.

Throughout the focus groups conducted, numerous Groton residents cited the desire to walk and bike, both as a means of physical activity itself and as a means to get to recreation facilities. Yet, many residents lack the ability to do so because of the need for adequate bike lanes, sidewalks, and trails. The development of the Town of Groton occurred prior to auto-oriented, grid-based development found in more recently developed parts of the country. While there are many benefits to pre-auto centric development, one challenge has been the lack of pedestrian and bicycling pathways in order to try to fit the car into the circulation system. This is an issue many mature communities face and needs to be addressed with increased importance placed on providing infrastructure for pedestrians and bicyclists during transportation policy planning at all levels – federal, state and local. This provides an opportunity to the Town of Groton to accomplish multiple goals through the same mechanism. By improving bicycle and pedestrian safety and access, the Town should see an increase in both the physical activity level of its residents (leading to improved health and well-being) as well as increased accessibility to its parks and facilities.

3. GROTON COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER INPUT



GROTON COMMUNITY & STAKEHOLDER INPUT

INTRODUCTION

Close interaction with the public, Town staff, and key stakeholders was critical throughout the project process and resulted in the identification of residents' concerns, perceived needs, and priorities regarding the provision of parks and recreation facilities, programs, and services. The project team worked to include a wide representation of interests, user groups, and geographic areas, so as to represent the diverse needs of the community's residents and stakeholders. These efforts included a wide variety of forums and opportunities for residents and stakeholders to participate in and to provide input, as to guide the identification of important issues and appropriate solutions.

During the week of November 3, 2008, Groton staff, elected officials, and residents were provided a number of opportunities in which to provide input on this planning effort. These forums included four focus groups, a public meeting, interviews with Town Parks and Recreation, Planning, and Purchasing staff, the Golf Advisory Board, the Parks and Recreation Commission, elected officials, partners and alternative providers.

GROTON – TOWN STAFF INPUT

The consultant team met and talked to the staff members of the Parks and Recreation Department, the Planning Department, and Purchasing Department in regard to their perceptions about the strengths, challenges, opportunities, and threats of the Department. These facilitated discussions were intended to identify what the Department is currently doing well, in addition to both the internal and external challenges that may be negatively impacting the Department's programs and services.

The Parks and Recreation Department has an immense number of strengths. Town staff feels that they have some of the strongest recreation programs in the state and this has been illustrated through requests to educate other agencies and the agency's involvement in Connecticut Recreation and Parks Association (CRPA). The quality and variety are extremely high and draw participants from throughout the region. A sample list of programs includes Groton Annual Fall Festival, Preschool Swim & Gym, Pilates, Adult Coed Soccer, Special Olympics and Meals on Wheels, to name just a few. A few program areas that are regionally and nationally known include the Inclusive Recreation and the Senior Center programs. Additionally, Groton is known for Shennecossett Golf Course, a historical Donald Ross course that hosts premier Connecticut golf events, such as the Connecticut PGA Senior Open. Staff is also excited about the additional programming

opportunities that will be provided through the 16,000 square foot addition and renovation of the Groton Senior Center (to be completed in May 2010). See the Programs and Services Section of the report for additional information.

Equally impressive is the level of maintenance provided by the Parks and Forestry Division for all parks and outdoor facilities. The Town of Groton has a turf maintenance program that is one of the best that the consultant team has seen nation-wide. The level of maintenance is illustrated through beautiful facilities such as Poquonnock Plains Parks, which attracts users from throughout the region for use of the new all inclusive playground, a loop walk and three highly manicured multi-purpose fields. Communication and cooperation between the Recreation and Parks Maintenance Divisions are consistent and provide for streamlined efforts and high quality services. See the Parks and Forestry Section of the report for additional information.

Always striving to increase the level of service provided to the community, staff largely focused on the challenges they face and what resources would enable them to do their jobs better. These resources include specific recreation program software, so as to better track and market to participants, as well as continuing opportunities to attend state and national conferences and training sessions. Staff recognizes that programming can only be provided and expanded if these activities are sustainable and/or have adequate funding from both traditional and alternative funding sources. Over the past few decades, a lack of funding has restricted the Department's abilities to develop additional Town-owned athletic fields and indoor recreation facilities. The Town is highly dependent on the Groton Public School District for the use of their facilities. The current capacity of existing fields and facilities also greatly



impacts scheduling for recreation programs, athletic leagues, swim teams, as well as impacts residents' ability to use facilities for informal play.

With the growing demand for the Town's parks and recreation facilities, programs, and services there are a number of opportunities to increase programming and revenue generation. However, these opportunities are restricted by the Town's limited facilities. Staff's interactions with the community indicate that some of the most demanded facilities include athletic fields, an aquatics center, indoor community center, increased water access, boating facilities and trails connecting recreation facilities throughout the Town. There are a number of Town-owned properties that could hold some or all of these facilities (Copp, Merritt and Wright properties). Staff recognizes though that there are limited resources for the development of these facilities and that collaboration and support from Town Council, the Representative Town Meeting (RTM), community organizations, local businesses, as well as neighboring and overlapping jurisdictions will be imperative.

It was also recognized by staff that although there are a number of great opportunities, there are a lot of factors that need to come together in order to overcome some of the external threats that could impede the Department's growth and progress. Some of these threats include the significant decline in the nation and region's economy, impacting the amount of traditional and alternative funding that is available. Economic circumstances will also likely influence residents' willingness to support a bond referendum for facility development. Additionally, Groton has historically placed a high community value on the preservation of open space. Although this value has helped preserve the natural setting and character of the community, it has also impeded the development of recreation facilities and infrastructure, which has resulted in a decentralized parks and recreation system.

GOLF ADVISORY BOARD AND PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION

The consultant team met with both the Golf Advisory Board and members of the Parks and Recreation Commission. Members of these committees are both golf and recreation enthusiasts and regular users of the Department's programs and facilities. Most members are long-time Town residents and are working to continually make Groton a better place to live and play.

Some of the strengths that committee members identified about the community and the Department include the area's natural beauty, a good standard of living, strong school system, employment opportunities, historical values and of course,

the many recreation opportunities available. Some of the recreation opportunities mentioned include the wide variety of programs such as aquatics, soccer, golf leagues, summer playground programs and Inclusive Recreation. In addition, many of the Town's facilities were listed as strong points, including Shennecossett Golf Course - the best in a 40 mile radius; Poquonnock Plains Park - playground, fields and walking track; Esker Point Park - water access; and Spicer Park for its boating facilities.

It was widely recognized that the quality of programs and level of maintenance would not occur without such a dedicated staff. The Advisory Committees recognized the efforts and leadership of the Department management and staff members. The Department has worked well with the Committees to increase strategic planning and facility improvement, such as through the outcomes of the National Golf Foundation Study and this Master Planning effort.

Some of the challenges that these Committees believe the Department faces are largely due to the need for additional facilities and capital improvement funds. Some of the facility needs mentioned include a community center, regional trail connections, additional athletic fields, and an aquatics facility. Capital improvement needs include improved parking at Poquonnock Plains Park, cart paths, golf cart storage, and renovations to the golf course Clubhouse (i.e. - windows replacement, maintenance building, porch reconfiguration and increased capacity of the restaurant).

The Committees feel that there are a number of opportunities to increase services and recreation programs, as well as revenue to the Department. These opportunities consist of renovations to the Shennecossett Clubhouse in order to host more special events, weddings and tournaments. Additional revenue-producing actions that were suggested include golf and athletic tournaments, expanding boating and aquatics programs, increasing the capacity to provide for athletic leagues and development of the Copp Property to provide a regional multi-purpose recreation complex.

In addition to increasing programs and services, the Committees recognize that the Department currently provides a wide variety of quality programs and unique facilities; with increased marketing efforts, participation and revenue generation could increase significantly. Furthermore, the Department has made considerable efforts to obtain traditional and alternative funding. Yet, this effort could be increased and more highly supported by the advocacy and volunteer efforts of the Golf and Parks and Recreation Advisory Committees. Committee members suggested providing naming rights to specific facilities and amenities, selling name plates to be hung at the

Clubhouse, assisting the Department with grant writing and increasing advocacy to relay the Department's needs to the RTM and Town Council.

Some of the threats identified by the Committees include limited funding and resources available from the Town and State for facility and program expansion. A significant threat is the Town's high dependency on the Groton Public School District for the use of facilities. The Department's uses of these facilities come second to District uses. Another highly resource-intensive challenge is the Town's extremely lengthy and burdensome budgeting process. This process starts in August in the Town Departments, is passed through the Town Council and in April of the following year must be passed by the RTM. The complex and extensive process makes the support for and allocation of long-term capital funding difficult to gain. Lastly, the Committee members felt that the disparate views of developed recreation opportunities vs. preservation of open space have acted as a barrier to developing needed recreation facilities.

GROTON TOWN MANAGEMENT AND ELECTED OFFICIALS

Groton's senior management and elected officials, including the Mayor, Town Manager, Assistant to the Town Manager and Town Council Members provided highly valuable input into the master planning process. These meetings followed a slightly different format, so as to inform the consultant team on the Town and partnering organization's previous strategic planning efforts, goals and strategies of the Town in providing parks and recreation services.

In addition to providing this historical data, these individuals primarily focused on the needs of the Department in order to improve and expand facilities, programs and services. These needs include additional athletic fields, adequate aquatic facilities, a multi-generational community center and the development of a regional trails network. Elected officials also felt that there should be increased communications and marketing of existing programs and facilities, especially to the residents in the area of the Naval Base. It was also recognized that there are trends within parks and recreation, such as BMX and paintball that might be beneficial in engaging youth and disenfranchised segments of the population in positive activities.

The Parks and Recreation Department was given many accolades for the quality of programs, services and maintenance that they provide, as well as the sustainable operations of the recreation programs and Golf Course in recovering their costs. The Town and Department are progressive in their efforts to increase sustainable policies and practices.

Yet, Groton's officials are highly concerned by the Town's dependency on the School District for the use of facilities, especially in regard to the William Seely School, for which renovations and upgrades are greatly needed. Yet, the Town's capability to develop its own facilities is limited by the uncertain support of voters to pass a bond referendum. However, it is believed that if the Department gained the strong support of the Town Council that grassroots efforts could engage the community to progress this cause.

FOCUS GROUPS AND PUBLIC INPUT

Four focus group meetings were held with participants consisting of various stakeholders, user-group representatives, individual users, community leaders and others, in addition to one meeting open to the public at large. Focus group participants like living in Groton for both what it offers externally and internally. Externally its location provides easy access to many desired regional cities and amenities and internally there are many positive attributes such as good schools, cultural diversity and historical significance, a wide variety of activities and facilities, a sense of community and access to the water.

The groups agreed upon several strengths, such as the broad diversity of users, ranging substantially in age, ability levels, race, and interests, and the dedication of staff necessary to program activities for such a wide variety of users. All agreed that the programs are affordable, the golf course is a point of pride for the Town, the departmental staff is doing a great job and that Poquonnock Plains Park is a great resource for the Town and excellently maintained. The groups felt that the rowing program was a unique asset to the area and is a way to take advantage of Groton's access to the water. Several special events were noted as strong points: Summer concerts on the beach, Fall Festival, Holiday Lights Parade and the 4th of July Parade. The quality and amount of open space in the area was repeatedly cited as an asset, as well as activities occurring within open space areas, such as hiking, bird-watching, horseback riding and biking. Finally, the Town's playgrounds and related summer programs were recognized as strengths by these focus groups and the public.

Participants were then asked to share the weaknesses or challenges that the Town of Groton faces in terms of parks and recreation. The majority of weaknesses identified were regarding facilities or other physical factors, rather than programming. Lack of lighted ball fields was consistently mentioned. Lack of transportation options for those who cannot or chose not to drive was identified numerous times as a weakness; this includes a lack of public transportation and safe bicycle and pedestrian routes to facilities. A specific example of this was cited as the lack of safe pedestrian connectivity between

the Poquonnock Plains Park, the Senior Center and Library. Other challenges mentioned multiple times regarding facilities include: more swimming facilities and ball fields are needed as demand exceeds current capacity; additional boating access is necessary as well as improvements to existing facilities at Spicer Park; a centralized, multi-use indoor/outdoor recreation facility is desired by many, however obtaining funding may be a challenge as it has been in the past.

Some suggestions for getting and keeping youth physically active included providing a BMX track, replacing old playgrounds that have been taken down, and developing a multi-use recreation center. Another challenge identified is the use of programs and facilities by non-Town residents – which if managed properly can be an opportunity to reach critical mass for certain activities that would not otherwise be feasible. The challenge of what should be done with the Copp Property was also noted consistently.

Many opportunities are just the flip side of challenges. For example, the focus groups identified Copp property as a prime opportunity to fill some of the gaps in facility needs, with a suggestion of using this as the location for a multi-use recreation center, including programming for performing arts/theatre groups. In determining locations for new facilities to relieve the burden on existing ones, there is an opportunity to locate them to take advantage of public transportation, in underserved parts of town, or in areas with safer bike/pedestrian access. Other opportunities identified include the potential of an interconnected trail system to provide bicycle access and to link various facilities; programming for youth that is less structured and less sports focused (such as nature based, theater, music, etc); and maximizing currently underutilized properties.

Respondents also discussed the potential opportunity to derive positive economic impacts from facilities once they are built or improved. An example would be providing an appropriate pool facility for USA Swimming clinics. Not only would residents have the use of the facility when not in use for clinics, but revenue from clinic fees and added tourism dollars from hosting tournaments could help offset the costs of the facility.

Partnerships and increased awareness can lead to additional opportunities. Partnerships with local organizations were discussed as a way to increase awareness of programs and facilities and to open up additional communication and marketing channels as a possible source of funding or sponsorship. Some of the organizations identified as partners / potential partners include: Greater Mystic Chamber of Commerce; Groton Business Association; Groton Parks Foundation; Fitch High

School Alumni Association; Spanish Classic Inc; Connecticut Aquatics Club; USA Swimming; and the Board of Education. Other methods of increasing awareness and communications would be through increased marketing on Channels 19 and 12, in local publications and at special events.

The focus groups and public meeting made it clear that the stakeholders, users, and general public are all extremely appreciative of the programs and facilities that are offered in the area, and recognize that the Parks and Recreation Department is doing a great job. The Department is very fortunate to have this support as a basis, and should work to address any identified threats in a timely manner, so as not to destroy the years of trust and respect that have been built up. Some items identified in the focus groups and public meeting that could be a threat include a perceived imbalance of where funding goes geographically, including concerns that the Mystic area receives more than their fair share of funding to the detriment of other areas. Threats such as this can likely be addressed through additional communication regarding how funding is distributed, a history of funding allocations, etc. Other threats identified included a perceived lack of public initiative to support funding of programs or facilities; the need to increase physical activity among youth (which threatens participations rates both now and as they age); as well as Department budget decreases, due to the current economic condition and potentially because of the staff's historical ability to do more with less.

The matrixes in Tables 3.1 through 3.4 provide an overview of the strengths, challenges, opportunities and threats from all of the groups interviewed, and serves as a tool to quickly understand what items were identified by multiple groups.

Table 3.1: Groton Community Input – Strengths

STRENGTHS		Advisory Committees	Elected Officials	Focus Groups & Public	Town of Groton Staff
Park or Facility Related	Bluff Point has good mountain biking and has only Coastal Reserve in state				
	Dog park is an asset				
	Equitable distribution of parks				
	Golf course - best in area, always well maintained, year round play, 30 tournaments per year, self-sustaining program; good registration system				
	Great turf management				
	Many excellent parks– a wide variety and are maintained well - Poquonnock Plains Park, Esker Point Park, and Washington Park, plus Senior Center				
	Open space - tremendous amount, Haley Farm is great asset, birdwatching				
	Skate park usage is high				
	Trail system is good for bicyclists; biking is a popular activity				
Program Related	Boating/Rowing - Great program, national recognition, handicapped accessible program				
	High quality and diversity of programs - swimming, soccer, and summer playground programs				
	Inclusion Program (Mullen Award, National recognition) is a strong asset & Special Olympics training is very good				
	Programs are accessible and affordable for a broad spectrum of the population - age, ability, language, ethnicity				
	Programs respond to need/ market, have high participation, and contribute to sense of community. Program delivery is very good in spite of shortcomings of facilities				
	Senior Programs: Seniors Helping Seniors is an asset; full range of classes and fitness programs with high participation				
	Special events are fun (Fall Festival, Holiday Lights, 4th of July, Summer Concerts on Beach)				
General Comment	Able to consolidate some leagues and collaborate with other recreational providers				
	Communication Tools: Senior Beat and Discover Magazine are good				
	Community involvement to raise awareness, support, and money - worked for skate park, playground, senior center, school referendum				
	Groton has a good commercial tax base from large employers				
	Improved parks and recreation strategic planning is working				
	Personnel: Strong leadership in department, proactive commission, good staff training, service oriented and innovative, excellent volunteer program				

Table 3.2: Groton Community Input – Weaknesses (Challenges)

CHALLENGES		Advisory Committees	Elected Officials	Focus Groups & Public	Town of Groton Staff
Park or Facility Related	Adequate aquatic facilities (quality, quantity, and type) are lacking				
	Conflicts arise from relying on school facilities - school uses trump all others, relationship with Board of Education needs improved, some facilities are not suited for older kids to play				
	Golf Course operational costs: Utilities are high. high expense of upgrades to make more useable for concessionaires, maintenance issues caused by high use				
	Need centralized community center with comprehensive programming, current facilities are scattered everywhere				
	Need more athletic fields & court time; need lighted facilities for night use (fields & parks)				
	Need more golf cart storage and cart paths; no driving range creates limitations				
	Need more public transportation and safe bike trails to get people (and kids) safely to facilities and programs - need ability to cross major roads near facilities on bike/pedestrians.				
	Some facilities are sub-par - drainage problems, East Lyme & Stonington High School Fields, better parking at Poquonnock Plains Park; restrictions on Merritt Property				
	Spicer Park – home of rowing community, need more facilities there, to house nicer and newer equipment. Good dock but launches can be water-logged.				
Program Related	Programs and leagues should be more fairly distributed geographically				
	Recreation programming funding: should it be self-sufficient? Should revenue generating programs subsidize others?				
	There are conflicts between organized and informal use - need more unprogrammed fields for practice and pick-up games, informal areas for nature experience, issues at soccer field				
	Water and fishing programs need more access to water; access for more people; Project Oceanology good but expensive				
	Youth programs and facilities - need more youth participation through teen center, programs that excite the kids, interactive games, BMX track, resolve skate park programming conflict				
General Comment	Alternative Funding and Revenue Generation - especially needed for Rowing and Golf Course due to high utilities, need for upgrades, and lack of state grants				
	Different areas of town have different identities to be accounted for and reached out to - Town is segmented - Naval sub base, affluent, etc are disenfranchised				

CHALLENGES		Advisory Committees	Elected Officials	Focus Groups & Public	Town of Groton Staff
	Need community advocacy for referendums, raise funds for Copp Property - hard to find time				
	Performance & Service measures – need program evaluation, cost recovery analysis, ability to track participants, and online ways to register and market				
	Too much duplication of services among various jurisdictions; Some users do not know what facilities to use because of confusing jurisdictions				
	Town needs a vision/strategic plan; Esker Point Park & Copp Property need master plans				
	Volunteer staff needs more guidance and resources from Staff				

Table 3.3: Groton Community Input - Opportunities

OPPORTUNITIES		Advisory Committees	Elected Officials	Focus Groups & Public	Town of Groton Staff
Park or Facility Related	Available Property: Copp (idle, good central location, Town owned); Merritt Property (fewer restrictions than Copp); there is other Town owned land; Wright Property (for possible trail)				
	Complete gaps and add to bike trails; interconnect the trail system and link to reservoir				
	Golf Course: Potential benefits to renovating golf clubhouse - increase capacity, revenue, etc; complete budgeted cart path work; restaurant is already draw; sell naming rights to rooms				
	Is there potential to do a joint-use facility between Town and Board of Ed?				
	Seely school has a high potential for redevelopment, not functional for programming needs				
	Some grant money available from USA Swimming to help build or refurbish a pool. Can host tournaments for revenue generation - lots of tournaments do not have a home				
	Use state funds for facilities that meet curriculum needs – use other funds to increase capacity				
	Use Sutton Field more often to solve some field issues and spread out new fields for better access				
Program Related	2000 meter rowing opportunity –celebrate history of rowing on Mystic River				
	Consolidate overlapping services / programs and collaborate with providers				
	Increase awareness of programs: marketing, use technology; recreation sampler				
	Soccer interest is prevalent - have data that supports US Soccer Foundation grant funding.				
	Use history as a marketing tool – get national registry to deem golf course historical, get grants				
General Comment	Advocacy: Difficult to get people on board, but once they are, they are very effective; If Council got behind a proposal, it would likely be successful				
	Commission could be more of an advocacy group than they currently are – challenge department on practices, be better activists, listen better to constituents				
	Golf Board could pursue alternative funding/grants; consider restructuring of operations?				
	Measure use and value of recreation to gain funding; assess regional impact of facilities to possibly gain support/funding from other communities				
	Potential partnerships/funding from businesses / organizations / non-profits / foundations				

Table 3.4: Groton Community Input - Threats

THREATS	Advisory Committees	Elected Officials	Focus Groups & Public	Town of Groton Staff
Anti-development attitude impacts development of recreation facilities				
Complexity of the budget process harms the Department				
Copp Property - conflicting opinions between the Board and Council				
Department revenue does not really speak to Council				
Education of the RTM needs to occur throughout the year				
Funding for any project over \$775,000 has to go to referendum in Groton				
Groton Public Schools – lack of IGA and equitable relationship with the Town				
Most affluent are opposing any kind of tax increase				
Parks and Recreation not seen as an essential service by all officials				
Town is not receiving sufficient funding from the Naval Base				
Users have rarely come forward in support of funding				



4. GROTON COMMUNITY SURVEY



GROTON COMMUNITY SURVEY SURVEY METHODOLOGY

In December 2008 a total of 2,500 surveys were mailed to randomly selected citizens within the Town of Groton. The questions in the survey were based on information gathered and key issues identified during the community input process – focus groups, interviews with elected officials, key stakeholders, public meetings and discussions with the parks and recreation staff and management. Approximately 358 of the surveys were returned and tabulated. Survey research shows that a statistical accuracy of 95% with a $\pm 5\%$ sampling error can be achieved with a response of 245 completed surveys in a community the size of the Town of Groton. Thus, the unusually large response from this survey reflects strong commitment by the Town residents to participate in shaping of the future of parks and recreation facilities and programs, as well as their interest in the quality of life within their community.

Survey results both complement and broaden other public input. Whereas interviews, open houses and workshops address many of the same issues, the survey asks very specific questions that provides input from both users and non-users. The survey contained 21 questions assessing the programs most preferred by current park users, as well as an indication of desired programs not currently being offered. Questions also assessed the priority for future facility development and renovations that should be undertaken by the parks and recreation department, marketing of the department, registration preferences and the demographic profile of respondents.

It is important to note that the survey was administered at a time of severe economic crisis in the country. This economic climate may have had some impact on respondents' confidence in their financial future and may have influenced some of the answers. The following tables and figures provide a graphic representation of survey results. Also included are selected comments respondents wrote on their survey forms.

“Good idea taking a survey and finding out what people want.”

PROGRAM AND ACTIVITY PARTICIPATION

After tallying the survey responses, a review of the results reveal that special events and passive park experiences have the highest participation. Leading the events are the Thames River fireworks and Summer SoundWaves concerts. Equally as popular are going to the beach, walking on trails, and visiting playgrounds. The least attended programs are adult sports, outdoor classes, and drop-in programs; however, golf for

adults and senior citizen programs are quite popular.

Interestingly, when asked about the programs, activities, or events their family would like to participate in, similar ratings are reported with walking on trails, special events and going to the beach the dominant activities selected. Additionally, golf scored much higher on the 'like to' list, along with guided hikes, which was only listed by 12 survey respondents as current participants but by 68 as would-be participants. Additionally, all classes reported higher 'like to' levels than current participation, particularly yoga, computer classes, day trips, and arts and crafts classes. In the active recreation category, there was not much variance in the 'have participated in' and 'would like to participate in' categories, indicating that the active needs are being fairly well met. The exceptions are youth ice skating and swim teams.

In reviewing these two response categories, the participation levels are much higher in general than the potential participation. For those activities for which participation levels are higher than those that would like to participate, responses may be an indication of strong marketing by the Department and providing the appropriate programs. In contrast, for those activities for which desire to participate is higher than past participation, it could reflect that programs are running at capacity, are not provided at convenient times or may be too costly for comprehensive participation. The fact that many of the respondents have participated in neither adult nor youth programs but took the time and effort to send back the survey form indicated an interest in having a voice about the future of the Town of Groton's recreational offerings, even though they are currently non-users of the parks.

“So glad you are being proactive about this and that you are considering some major new facilities that are desperately needed.”

SATISFACTION WITH PROGRAMS, STAFF AND FACILITIES

Survey respondents were asked to rate how satisfied they are with their parks and recreation experiences in six different categories: program variety, program fees, quality of instructors, location of facilities, quality of facilities and facility availability. Over 60% of all returns indicated satisfaction with the current department delivery with program variety and location of facilities receiving the highest marks. Interestingly, the overall facility quality rated quite high, which was in opposition to comments from users during the community input process

who identified needed additions, renovations and repairs. This could be a reflection of most those who responded to the survey having experienced outdoor events and activities instead of indoor ones, or it could be that the other forms of public input came from more active users of athletic fields. Overall the instructors and staff were also highly complimented.

“Groton Parks and Recreation has always had high marks from me.”

“Department is well run. Many varied programs, equitably administered.”

“A wonderfully hands-on, involved department!”

ACCESS TO FACILITIES AND PARKS

In similar participation questions, respondents were asked about their mode of travel to and from the parks. Currently, 57% travel by car, 30% walk to the parks and 12% cycle. In order to provide a national perspective, many communities historically report over 90% access to their parks by car. Groton’s percentages speak to the community’s desire to walk and bike to parks and facilities and to the public’s buy-in to a “green” lifestyle. When asked how they would prefer to access their parks, the car transportation drops to 37% with a substantial increase in walking (37%) and cycling (19%). This communicates the need for additional greenways and trails linking the parks to residential areas and to each other. As to the adequacy of nearby parks, 80% of respondents replied positively.

The survey also asked respondents to rate the Groton Parks and Recreation facility they used most often. Overwhelmingly, the most used facilities are Esker Point Beach (which has limited seasonal use) and Poquonnock Plains Park. None had experience with Woodcrest Park, which is in a newly developed subdivision. Of the 358 returned surveys, ten facilities had been visited by less than 10 people:

- Bel Aire Park (6)
- Raheem Ali Carter Memorial Park (6)
- Central Ave. Park (2)
- Deerfield Park (5)
- Field Crest (3)
- Jabez Smith Homestead (3)
- Ramble Brook Park (2)
- Ring Drive Recreation Area (4)
- Tanglewood Park (7)
- Wright Property (8)

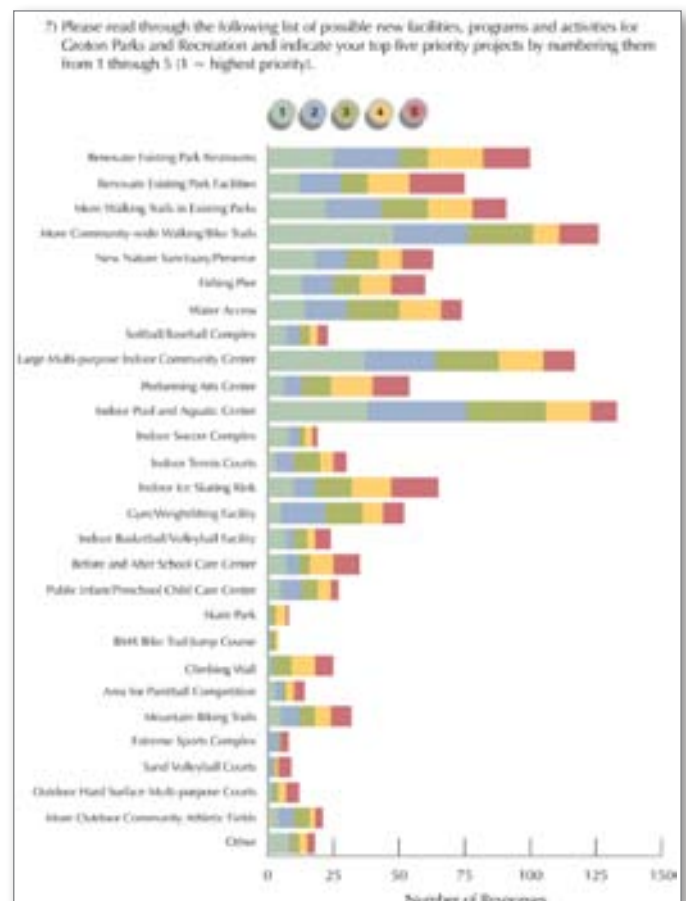
These statistics might warrant a review of the programming of these parks and the need to activate the space or the potential to repurpose for other uses.

“When people pull into town, they should be smacked in the face with the beauty of our parks!”

PREFERENCES FOR NEW FACILITIES

The survey contained a list of 28 potential new facilities, programs, and activities for Groton Parks and Recreation, and respondents were asked to rank their top five preferences. Figure 4.1 depicts a clear indication of the top four choices.

Figure 4.1: Ranking of New Facilities, Programs and Activities



The first preference is for an Indoor Pool and Aquatic Center, indicating a need for recreation that reaches across all age ranges and provides year-round activities. A close second is the desire for more Community-wide Walking and Bike Trails, which correlates with the preference for walking and cycling to parks, feedback from focus groups that residents want to get outside and to promote healthy lifestyles, as well as national trends in demand for trail development. Similarly, the fifth ranked preference is for more Walking Trails in Existing Parks, which is closely related to the need for more greenways. The third most popular choice is a large Multi-purpose Indoor Community Center. Were this to be combined with a new aquatic center, which is common in modern recreation centers, the overall number one preference would extend off the chart. Fourth on the list is the need for Renovating Existing Park Restrooms, a project that can be implemented fairly quickly and with less capital outlay than the other preferences.

“I would be willing to pay a substantial amount (more than \$15.00 a month) for access to an indoor pool in Groton that is on par with the Aquatic Center in East Lyme.”

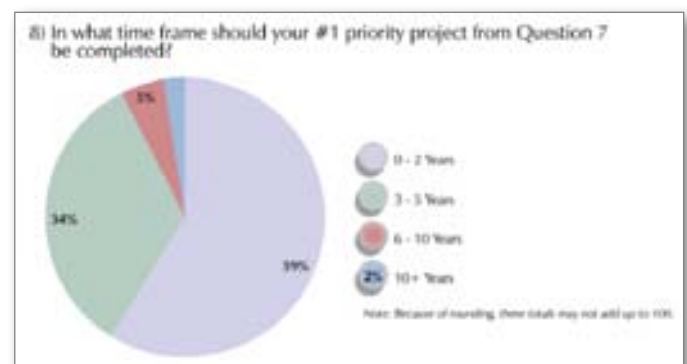
“I strongly feel Groton should develop a network of bicycle trails to allow transportation on a bike between various Park and Recreation sites. This would offer a tremendous benefit to the town, I feel.”

“Would like to have indoor pool access year-round.”

Ranking low on the responses for facility needs are BMX, skate parks, extreme sports complex and more outdoor athletic fields. This can reflect more traditional values in the community, as well as satisfaction with the current department athletic offerings. However, it is also important to note that this may reflect the make-up of the survey respondents who fell into older age groups than the youth and young adults who typically use these types of facilities. Furthermore, these facilities are used by individuals with very specific interests, while the facilities that ranked higher have a broader community appeal. The low response to these facilities does not necessarily mean they would be unsuccessful if built. In contrast, these could act as regional facilities for specific user groups within and from outside the community, who may not have received the randomly distributed survey.

Question 8 (Figure 4.2) asked about the preferred timeframe to complete the new facilities. Almost 60% indicated a desire to have new facilities completed in two years or under. Whereas this might be possible for new and renovated restrooms, the preferred aquatic facility, community center, and pedestrian/bicycle trails require planning, design, budgeting and construction time, which would generally fall within the 3-to-5 year category preferred by 34% of respondents. Even though many respondents are concerned about the economic downturn and increase in taxes, this expedited time of five years or less indicates an urgent need for these facilities and a true commitment by the community. It is also a reflection of a community that highly values a healthy lifestyle.

Figure 4.2: Timeframe for Priority Facilities



Question 9 posed the question regarding respondents' preference on a location for a new recreation facility. There was no real frontrunner in this chart. Seemingly, the property on Route 117 at 31% was the most preferred, but the Wright Property, Merritt Property and Copp Property all received approximately equal votes. The 22% who selected “A facility of this type is not needed in Groton” represented, while in the minority, almost a quarter of the respondents. This response is representative of the benefit of a random survey and may serve as an indication of the Town's ultimate need to educate the general public about the benefits of recreation or the particular facility and the potential location for this facility if a bond referendum is pursued.

“I like the way you ask for my opinion.”

COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND NEEDS

The results of the survey provide an excellent snapshot of the current views about the Parks and Recreation Department services and reputation in Groton. The collective results illustrate that the residents are highly satisfied with and supportive of Groton's Parks and Recreation Department's image, exist-

ing programs, fee levels and facilities. This level of satisfaction was also noted in the written comments received on many of the survey returns complimenting the instructors, staff and facility maintenance.

Supporting the overall public approval of the parks are several outstanding percentages, specifically: 86% believe a good parks and recreation system is important for their family and for Groton; 81% support funding for parks and recreation programs and facilities as a good investment for the community, and 79% feel the department has a good image in the community. Also, 74% feel that high quality parks and recreation facilities are essential to attracting new business. The operations of the Department also garnered high marks.

“Keep up the good work. An investment in our youth is the greatest investment we will ever make.”

“We moved to Mystic from Ledyard. The Parks and Recreation was a huge attraction for us (4 children). We love the staff, programs have been great and administration at the Spicer House is excellent. We love the parks here!!”

In response to the public getting needed information about the department offerings, an astonishing 85% claim to get all the information they need, which is substantially higher than most community responses throughout the country. Other significant results are that residents prefer to register for programs online and that the programs and activities are reasonably priced. Yet, there is still room for growth and improvement within the Department, with over 50% of respondents desiring an indoor aquatics or community center. There is also strong support for trail connectivity within the Town through an expanded network of pedestrian and bicycle trails. Overall, the Town of Groton has a solid base of parks delivery upon which to build its future recreation needs.

MARKETING

The survey questions in regard to marketing asked how residents currently get information about events and programs, as well as how they would prefer to get information. Results of the tabulations indicate that the Parks and Recreation Department is doing an excellent job of disseminating information to the public. The only categories that showed marked differences are technology-based. Almost half the respondents (43% current, 41% prefer) get information through the Discover Guide, with another 15% current and 11% preferred

through The Day newspaper. Currently 12% access the Groton Parks and Recreation website for information. However, 20% would prefer to do so, which would eliminate much of the word-of-mouth currently used. Clearly, use of the website will increase through marketing and availability of registration online. Emailing also received high interest, indicating that the Department would benefit from a concentrated effort to collect email addresses from all program participants as well as through a “Contact Us” button on the website.



PAYMENT AND FEES

Payment questions addressed preferred methods of payment and willingness to pay a service charge for registering online. Paying by check was the overwhelming preference at 61%; however, the respondents may not have calculated the requirement to pay by credit card to register online, which was the overall preference. Mail-in registration was preferred by 32% with 16% selecting to pay in person at the Spicer House. Ten percent chose to register at the Senior Center, the obvious preference for seniors. The overwhelming majority, at 79%, felt they would not want to pay a convenience fee to register online. However, respondents may not have understood that online registration through the current provider would not be possible without this fee. Additionally, it may not have been considered that the convenience fee would probably be equal to the fuel consumed driving to register in person.

The pie chart for Question 20 (Figure 5.3) shows that an overwhelming number of residents would be willing to support the Parks and Recreation Department with a monthly expenditure. The largest percentage reflects the willingness to pay between \$9 and \$12 per month (21%), which is, once again, above the norm and reflective of the community's dedication to its parks and programs.

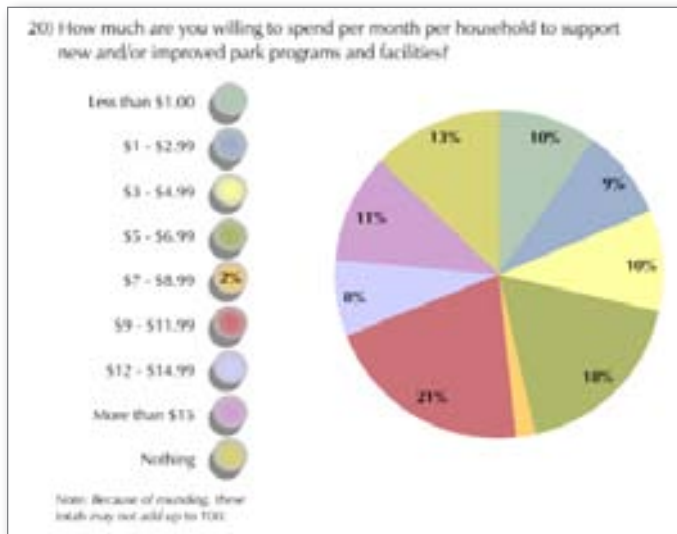


Figure 4.3:
SUTTON PARK IMPROVEMENTS

Question 21 addressed recommended improvements for additions to Sutton Park. Many who responded to this question responded “none” or “don’t know” or are not familiar with the park. Others mentioned maintenance, safety and graffiti issues, need for restrooms, new playground equipment and renovation of fields.

“Different playground surface. The sand is too gritty.”

“Better drainage so the field doesn’t flood every time it rains/snows.”

“Better visibility from the road. Never know what’s going on back there.”

“Perhaps another pavilion. It’s a popular and great place for families.”

COMMUNITY SURVEY – KEY FINDINGS

In summary, the Town of Groton is a stable and affluent community that puts a high value on the quality and availability of parks and recreation facilities and programs. The respondents to this survey are adamantly in support of the Parks and Recreation Department and are willing to offer construc-

tive suggestions along with effusive praise for the Department staff and programs. The respondents would support a large aquatics center that would offer recreational opportunities year-round, as well as a community center that would offer programming space for classes and fitness programs. They envision an expanded network of trails connecting the park facilities, which would provide an opportunity to increase pedestrian and bicycle access to the parks. Significant to the Town’s capabilities of providing for these identified needs, the community is willing to support the Department financially.



5. PROGRAMS AND SERVICES



PROGRAMS AND SERVICES



The Groton Parks and Recreation Department is committed to providing quality leisure opportunities in a safe and healthy atmosphere and to enhance the quality of life through the responsible management of fiscal and natural resources. The Department offers a wide variety of programs, developed recreation facilities, natural areas and open space, as well as parks maintenance and urban forestry services to the community. These programs and services make available activities for a wide variety of interests and for all ages and abilities.

This analysis will further explore those services currently being offered, the demand and potential for the provision of new services, and identification of administrative and organizational processes that can help facilitate implementation of recommendations.

CORE SERVICES

Structured programs include a wide selection of activities such as aquatics, enrichment, fitness, golf, inclusive recreation, outdoor programs and trips, senior programs, special events, sports for youth and adults, and youth programs. Unstructured activities and services provided to the Groton community through the open use of the Town's park system, Town and regional trails, the Groton Skate Park, picnic shelters, and the approximately 600 acres of Town-owned open space and natural areas. The maintenance of the Town's parks, recreation facilities, trails, and urban forest are provided for by the Parks and Forestry Division, which is discussed in further detail in the Parks and Forestry Section of the report.

Aquatics

Groton Parks and Recreation utilizes the Mystic Education

Center Pool, a state-owned facility, thirty hours a week to provide an assortment of aquatic programming for all ages and interests. These programs range from water fitness such as aerobics, to swim lessons for parents and toddlers, adults and advanced swimmers, lifeguard training, and open swim. These programs are in high demand and are very well attended. In 2008 the Town of Groton offered 149 aquatics programs and lessons, which attracted 1,057 enrollments.

Boating

Groton's unique location on Long Island Sound between the Thames and Mystic Rivers provides access to some of the best boating opportunities in the region and the country. In addition to the natural amenities provided by the area, Groton has wonderful boating facilities at Spicer Park in Beebe Cove to support rowing activities. The Town owns and manages the facilities at Spicer Park and works in partnership with an advisory board of citizen experts to offer programs to the public. Boating programs include a variety of activities for all ages and capabilities, including rowing (sweep and scull), adaptive kayaking, sailing lessons, as well as family and youth boating. In 2008 the Town of Groton offered 46 boating programs and activities, which attracted 289 enrollments. Groton Parks and Recreation is working with the group of citizens to formalize the group into what is expected to become the Boating Advisory Board that will advocate for resources in order to improve opportunities for the community.

Enrichment

Groton residents value strong education for their children and themselves, which has led to high demand for education and enrichment-based programs and activities. These activities encompass a wide variety of interests including continuing education programs for adults such as Improv Theatre, American Sign Language, cooking lessons, as well as Spanish, French and Italian lessons. Additionally, residents of all ages are provided the opportunity to participate in a variety of dance classes – Latin Salsa, Country-Western, Ballet, and Hip Hop, to name a few. This wide variety of offerings is illustrated by the fact that participants could sign up for any one of 73 different programs, which drew 846 enrollments.

Fitness

Groton Parks and Recreation is cognizant of trends in parks and recreation programming and understands the role that they can play in the health and well-being of the community. Groton residents, aligned with national participation levels, have a high demand for fitness programs. The Town has responded to these demands by providing a broad selection and high number of fitness programs for all levels and

ages. These programs include tai chi, kickboxing, self defense, strength and conditioning, various types of yoga, aerobics, as well as a number and variety of Pilates classes. As one of the primary providers, the Town offered 144 fitness classes to the community in 2008 that attracted 1,265 enrollments.

Golf

Groton's historic Shennecossett Golf Course is home to an array of programs, lessons, leagues and tournaments. The course, which is a Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary, offers golfers of all playing abilities a scenic and challenging place to play golf and due to the mild climate is generally open year-round. Shennecossett provides residents and visitors a reasonable rate for open play, both ladies and men's clubs, and hosts approximately 30 tournaments a year including premier Connecticut golf events, such as the Connecticut PGA Senior Open.



Shennecossett is recognized as one of the leading public courses in the state of Connecticut. For example, the course was awarded the Walter Lowell Public Golf Course Distinguished Service Award in 2008, was featured in Golf Magazine as one of the "Thrifty Fifty," best public access courses that one can play for under \$50. It was also recognized by the Best of Northeast Golf 2007 Reader's Choices as one of the best overall courses. This regional and national recognition has been beneficial for participation numbers, which is illustrated by the fact that in 2008, the course hosted 31,796 rounds (20,476 general rounds/11,320 season pass rounds).

Inclusive and Special Needs Programs

Groton Parks and Recreation recognizes the value of including people with varying levels of ability as a means of strengthening its community. The Department is committed to making all programs, services and activities equally available to chil-

dren and adults with disabilities. This program is recognized as one of the leading Inclusive Recreation programs in the state, region and nation.

Individuals with disabilities come to participate in Groton's Inclusive Recreation programs and activities from around the region. These include peer mentors for specific programs, a number of adaptive swimming classes, gymnastics, theater, arts, social clubs, wheelchair sports and adaptive yoga. The Town also partners with Connecticut Special Olympics to provide developmentally disabled athletes the opportunity to participate in a variety of individual and team athletic competitions. Those with disabilities are also served by the Town's new Tercentennial Legacy Playground, a completely inclusive playground which was installed in 2008 at Poquonnock Plains Park.



The number of participants in these programs illustrates the need for such services. The Regional Director of the Special Olympics of Connecticut stated that over the past four years the number of athletes participating in the Connecticut Special Olympics has doubled, from 500 to 1000. In regard to the Town-sponsored activities, program participation in 2008 for both inclusive and special needs programs included 389 enrollments.

Outdoor Programs and Trips

The Department makes significant efforts to provide for the wide variety of interests of the Groton community, offering programs and facilities for adults and youth, such as skateboarding lessons and competitions, mountain biking, road cycling and environmental education programs. Also, taking advantage of Groton's great location and accessibility to a New York City and Boston, the Town provides a wide variety of day and extended trips. These include a "create your own

itinerary” trip to Boston, a day in New York for shopping, dining and a performance at Radio City Music Hall. 2008 included nine trips with 241 enrollments.

Also in 2008, the Department offered 44 Outdoor programs to the community, which resulted in 171 enrollments. Day and extended trip offerings totaled 9, with 241 participants. It is important to note the high participation in Trip offerings, which correlates with the national trend and increased demand for more individualized, one-time activities.



Senior Programs

The Groton Parks and Recreation Department strives to keep the community’s seniors active and healthy through recreational and social activities. The Groton Senior Center is largely seen as regional facility that acts as an umbrella for providing a variety of recreation, health, fitness, educational and social activities for those over the age of 55. Some of the more highly attended and core activities include bridge, pinochle, Wii bowling, food services and fitness programs. The exten-



sive selection of programs and services provided is illustrated by the follow sample list of activities – computer classes, tai chi, yoga, tap dance, day and extended trips, arts and crafts, TRIAD, Scrabble and movies.

Participation in these activities is very high, illustrating the consistency and frequency that older adults within the community are participating in programs and using these services. Following are the 2008 participation rates for Groton Senior Center:

- Transportation - 5,856 seniors transported
- Trips - 71 trips with 1,393 participants
- Kitchen - 18,572 meals served
- Music programs - 9 classes with 195 participants
- Fitness programs - 90 classes with 1,205 participants
- Arts & Crafts programs - 27 classes with 190 participants
- Games programs - 22 classes with 353 participants

Special Events

The Town of Groton provides an array of special events for the community throughout the year. These events are very popular and highly attended by Groton residents as well as those from surrounding areas. These events include the Arts Café - Mystic, a year-round series featuring emerging local writers, regionally prominent musicians and culminating with a reading by a nationally-renowned writer, as well as the Summer Concert Wave Series, which run once a week from the middle of June through the end of July. Additionally, there are larger community-wide events including the extremely popular Groton Fall Festival, the Annual Holiday Lights Parade and the 4th of July Parade. The Department also provides special activities for youth such as the GEMS Cross Country Meet and an annual Skateboard Contest.

As typical of parks and recreation departments throughout the country, program attendance at special events is often difficult to accurately track, given that participants do not have to register. However, it is strongly illustrated by the community survey that a majority of Groton residents have participated in a number of the Department’s community-wide events, such as Groton Fall Festival (23.5%), Holiday Lights Parade (30.7%), 4th of July Parade (34.1%), Thames River Fireworks (59.2%) and Arts Festivals (27.1%).

Sports

The Town of Groton itself offers a fair number of sports and athletic leagues, however, a number of these types of team activities are also provided by community athletic associations and nonprofit organizations, for which the Town has made conscious efforts to avoid duplication of services. However, the Department collaborates with many of these organizations

to provide registration through the Town's online service and offices. Some of the sports programs and activities made available by the Town include tennis lessons, street hockey, open racquetball, youth and adult recreational soccer, volleyball and basketball leagues.

In 2008, the Town of Groton and its partners offered 108 sports programs, activities and leagues for youth and adults. Program participation in the activities that the Department administered registration for equates to 1,317 enrollments. It is important to note that in regard to the participation in sports activities that many of these are team-based activities that have much higher maximum capacity than is desired for competition.



Youth Programs

Preschool & Gymnastics- As a result of strong interest from the community and a skilled instructor, the residents of Groton are fortunate to have the opportunity for a wide variety of preschool and gymnastics classes. These include developmental programs for toddlers and youth to encourage motor and social skills. Programs include gym playtime, tumbling, rhythm and music and basic through intermediate gymnastics. In 2008, the Town received 718 enrollments for these gymnastics classes

Summer Camps- The Town also provides an array of summer camps for the youth of the community, ranging from one day activities to multiple week session to summer-long programs. These programs also provide for elementary through high school ages. These camps support the positive development of the community's children and act as affordable childcare for working parents. Participation in these summer programs is quite high with a total of 708 enrollments in 2008.

PARTNERSHIPS

The Parks and Recreation Department currently has no formal (legal) partnership agreements with community organizations and agencies. However, the Department works very closely and very well with a number of community organizations to maximize the programs and services provided to the community. For those organizations that there is shared use of facilities, interaction is typically controlled through the use of basic, contractual facility-use agreements for use of Town facilities. The organizations that the Town works with in collaboration to provide recreation services and or share the use of facilities include groups such as:

- Boys and Girls Club of Southeastern Connecticut
- Connecticut Special Olympics
- Copp Board of Overseers
- Finch High School Athletic Programs
- Groton Boating Club
- Groton Little League
- Groton Public Schools
- Groton Regional Theater
- Groton Youth Football
- Mystic Chamber of Commerce (Groton Business Association)
- Mystic Education Center (State of Connecticut)
- Mystic Little League
- Pequot Woods Board of Directors
- SEALS Lacrosse
- Groton Soccer Club
- The Groton Parks Foundation, Inc.
- Grasso Technical High School

One of the Town's primary partnerships is with the Groton Public School District for ongoing use of the William Seely School, temporary use of the Noank School property while the Senior Center undergoes renovations, as well as specific outdoor athletic fields, such as those at Charles Barnum, Claude Chester, and SB Butler Elementary Schools, Cutler and Fitch Middle Schools and Fitch High School. It is important to note that there is no formal, legal agreement for the use of these facilities. The Department also partners with the State of Connecticut for leased use of the indoor facilities associated with the Mystic Education Center. This facility is where the Department facilitates all of its aquatics and gymnastics programs, as well as a few other activities.

ALTERNATIVE PROVIDERS

There are a number of alternative recreation providers in the general Groton area including private and nonprofit organizations. These providers include youth athletic organizations, youth non-profits, neighboring municipal recreation

agencies and the local school district (some listed previously under Partners). These include, but are not limited to the following:

- Connecticut State Parks and Forests – trails, open space, natural areas and water access (Groton)
 - Bluff Point State Park
 - Fort Griswold State Park
 - Haley Farm State Park
- Dolcom - youth recreation programs (Groton)
- Fred Astaire Dance Studio - ballroom dancing (Mystic)
- Gabrieleles – karate classes (Groton)
- Girl Scouts – recreational, development and leadership programs for girls (CT)
- HOME Wellness Center- yoga and Pilates classes (Groton)
- Mystic Aquarium/Institute For Exploration – events, tours and exhibits for all ages (Mystic)
- Mystic Arts Center - art classes, exhibits and education programs (Groton)
- Mystic Seaport – museum and education programs (Groton)
- Mystic YMCA - variety of recreation and fitness programs (Stonington)
- Mystic Yoga Shala- Yoga classes (Mystic)
- Neighboring Communities Parks and Recreation Departments
 - City of Groton Parks and Recreation
 - Ledyard Parks and Recreation
 - New London Parks and Recreation
 - North Stonington Parks and Recreation
 - Stonington Como Center
 - Waterford Parks and Recreation
- NEMAA Karate and Kickboxing - karate, kickboxing and fitness classes (Groton)
- Planet Fitness- fitness center (Groton)
- Programs for people with disabilities
 - DDS Department of Developmental services - recreation programs (CT)
 - Light House Vocational Center - teen programs (Niantic)
- Project Oceanology – marine ecology programs for grades 5-12 (Groton)
- Subase MWR - variety of programs (Groton)
- WOW - fitness center (Groton)

It is important that the Town understands the services provided by these companies, organizations and agencies in order to work to communicate and collaborate and to avoid duplication of services. This will benefit the community by streamlining information to residents about existing programs, to better allocate funding for the expansion of existing programs that are not meeting demands, as well as for the development of new programs that align with existing trends.



PROGRAMS AND SERVICES ANALYSIS

Programming Overview

The Recreation Department provides a very high number and variety of recreation services and activities in comparison to other agencies of its size through the country. During the public input period of the project, existing and potential recreation partners, program participants, and facility users expressed their high satisfaction with the current offering of programs and services.

Yet, there were also requests for additional programming for specific demographic groups, such as programs for youth. It was stated that there is a need for additional non-traditional programming to accommodate for the wide variety of interests of the Groton youth, such as extreme sports, fitness, environmental education, and cultural and arts programs. Stakeholders and residents felt that one-time day trips or “sample” activities might better serve to introduce youth to new activities, educational experiences and a healthy lifestyle.

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

Aquatics

The Department is providing high quality aquatics programs and lessons to the community throughout the year. These programs are made possible through the use of the Mystic Education Center Pool, a state facility that is leased annually by the Town. However, the Department is limited in its ability to provide an even greater variety and capacity of programming to youth, families, adults and seniors because of the limitations of the Center's existing facilities and the Department's inability to control the use of the facility.

Given the Town's location on Long Island Sound between the Thames and Mystic Rivers, the need for aquatics programs, in order to ensure that residents are able to swim, is a matter of safety for the community. The demand for these types of programs and facilities was strongly heard throughout the community input process. This demand is also illustrated by the programs' high participation numbers. For example, the Community Survey demonstrated that 23.2% of the community have at one time participated in the Town of Groton's swimming lessons, which was #10 of out all of the Department's offerings. Additionally, 3.1% have participated in swim team and 7.3% in aquatic fitness classes. An additional 7.8% expressed interest in participating in aquatics programs, which provides an opportunity for the Town to increase marketing of these activities.

The Mystic Education Center also does not function well for all types of aquatics programs, especially for competitive swim teams; due to the fact that pool they are currently using is 89 degrees. The desired temperature for a competitive aquatic facility is 77-82 degrees. The lack of functionality of the existing facility is widely recognized. During the community input process and through the community survey results it was strongly stated that there is an immediate need (within the next two years) for an aquatic center. The highest priority need for new facilities, programs and activities was an indoor pool and aquatic center.

Boating

Because of the natural resources of the area, the boating opportunities provided by the Groton Parks and Recreation Department are a significant asset to the community, contributing to its history and culture. It was continually expressed throughout the community input process that these activities are highly valued by the residents. It was also strongly stated that it is rare to have these types of activities open to the public and that participation recruitment should be expanded, so as to introduce the youth and those that are economically disadvantaged to these activities.

Enrichment

Through the Community Survey it was also illustrated that residents have a high desire to participate in Educational and Enrichment programs. Only comparable to general park activities and special events, the types and percentages of those who would like to participate in these programs are as follows – outdoor/environmental (14.2%), painting (16.2%), pottery (18.2%), photography (18.7%) and cooking classes (23.2%).

The Department should consider expanding the types of programs offered to include those represented with strong support in the Community Survey. Yet, it is also recognized that the Town's current facility limitations may not allow for some of these types of activities, for which partnerships and facility agreements should be sought. Additionally, the Department should work to increase enrollment by expanding the marketing efforts to promote those activities it currently provides (i.e. - dance), deliver them at more convenient locations and/or evaluate the compatibility of the times offered and target markets' leisure time.

Fitness

In the Groton Community Survey, 7.3% of survey respondents indicated that they have participated in at least one of the Town's fitness programs. However, an additional 20.9% stated that they would like to participate in these programs. This may correlate with the possibility that the community may have limited knowledge of the wide variety of fitness activities currently provided; need to increase the ease of registration or increasing the convenience of the times programs are offered.

It was also stated during the public input process that many residents would like to see more recreational/fitness activities provided to youth, in order to introduce them to a healthy and well-balanced lifestyle and to fight the obesity epidemic facing the country. The prevalence of obesity, espe-



cially childhood obesity, has nearly tripled over the past 25 years, so that more than 1 in 6 children between the ages of 6 and 19 are obese today. The availability of neighborhood facilities for physical activity may be particularly relevant for youth, who are unable to drive and whose activity is often limited to the immediate distance they are able to walk or bicycle. Parks and recreation agencies can play a huge role in combating this epidemic. See the Park and Recreation Trends Section of the report for additional information.



Golf

The Town's golf course has weathered recent economic pressures well, with a slight decline in rounds in 2008. Golf administration has been able to bring forward rate increases and receive approval, in part, due to the implementation of the National Golf Foundation (NGF) study. Whether the course will continue to maintain play at an average of 33,500 rounds annually is uncertain. It is important to consider that recent staffing reductions of large, regional employers could affect play at Shennecossett. Therefore, the Town should work to increase marketing regionally and throughout Connecticut in order to attract players from around the state. It may be beneficial that the golf administration work directly with the chamber of commerce, local lodging establishments and restaurants to create weekend "Stay and Play Packages."

Inclusive and Special Needs Programs

Groton Parks and Recreation's Inclusive Recreation program is a state and nationally renowned program. Current levels of participation (586 enrollments) are very high and exemplify the regional population that is being served. To illustrate the level of participation, relative to the community makeup, it is important to recognize that compared to the Department's other program areas, participation is higher than Boating, Gymnastics, Outdoors, Preschool and Trips. Therefore, this is truly a regional program attracting participants from well beyond the Groton community. Efforts to expand these ser-

vices should be made through continued collaborations with existing partners as well as additional regional, state and national organizations that provide Inclusive and Therapeutic Recreation services.

Outdoor Programs and Trips

It was stated throughout the community input process that Groton youth need more outdoor recreational activities to promote positive development and health. However, with the high number of programs provided by the Town, it may be assumed that those who most need these types of programs are not finding out about them or may not have the financial or transportation means to participate. Therefore, the Department should increase efforts to expand partnerships with youth organizations, such as the Boys and Girls Club, to engage these organization's existing participants in Town activities through events, such as group field trips.

Given the high interest and participation in Day and Extended Trips, the Department should consider expanding these services to the community. Additionally, given the community's strong desire for these types of activities, an evaluation of a nominal fee increase may be considered in order to increase revenue and subsidize other program areas and activities that serve those with limited means and that provide the highest amount of community benefit.

Special Events

The Community Survey indicated that an additional 15-20% would like to participate in special events, which may warrant consideration for providing additional community events throughout the year (i.e. – Haunted Cemeteries, Historic Tours, Easter Egg Hunt, etc.). Although difficult to track, the Town should collaborate with the City of Groton and the Mystic Chamber of Commerce to work to identify the levels of attendance, both of residents and visitors, as well as the economic impact of existing special events. This data could be used to promote additional community events, as well as the development of regional recreational and athletic facilities that would support and boost the local economy.

Sports

It is impressive that the Department is progressive enough to realize that they do not have to be everything to everyone, a philosophy which has resulted in many agencies duplicating efforts with other recreation service providers. The Department should continue collaborative efforts and coordinated use of facilities with existing and future athletic leagues and sports providers. Furthermore, the agency should analyze areas that there may currently be gaps in service or a lack of capacity, such as soccer, racquetball and beach volleyball,

softball and volleyball leagues; all which were activities that survey respondents had a high interest in (5.6%-12.6%), but low participation (0.8%-7.5%).

A consistent topic of conversation throughout the public input process, by staff, stakeholders and elected officials is the Town's need for additional athletic facilities and fields. It is a prominent concern of the community that there are not enough, as well as the right types of facilities to meet the needs of the community. For example, play is highly limited by the lack of lighted ball fields in the community, which restricts play to daylight hours. Additionally, as a result of historical development and open space preservation practices, the Town's park and recreation system is quite decentralized, with athletic fields scattered throughout the system. A centralized sports complex or facility would enable the Town to host revenue-producing events such as regional sports tournaments.

Youth Programs

The opportunity to provide a wider variety and greater number of non-traditional sports and activities for youth is immense. Based on community input, stakeholder interviews, the community survey, and a trends analysis, it is apparent that there is extremely high regional and national demand for new extreme sports programs, such as BMX, Moto X, a ropes course, as well as day trips for mountain biking, skiing, kayaking, archery, caving, geocaching, hiking, ultimate Frisbee and similar high activity endeavors.

One of the immediate benefits of recreational activities is that they fill unsupervised after-school hours. Recreation programs allow youth to connect with other adults and children in the community. Such positive friendships may assist children in later years. Youth programs are designed to fit the personalities and skills of different children and may include sports, dancing, music, rock climbing, drama, karate, bowling, art, and other activities. However, before programs can make a real difference, safe and accessible bike and pedestrian routes to parks and facilities must be a priority for the Town.



Administrative and Organizational

Groton Parks and Recreation Department is a very well run agency, with strong leadership and management. These strong management practices have resulted in an impressive number of and diversity of programs provided to the public. One of the practices that the Department is doing particularly well is the development of program offerings based on the desires of users and the interest of instructors. The structure of contractor agreements provides strong incentives for instructors to provide quality services, to market their own programs and to recruit as many participants as possible. Additionally, the Department consistently gathers feedback from participants to evaluate satisfaction and customer service. Also, given the limited capabilities of the Department's existing program software, staff uses this data to its maximum capacity in order to track participants' demographics.

Some of the challenges that the Department is facing is that they do not have online registration directly from the Town's website. Currently, the Town uses www.active.com as its host site for recreation program registration. Although this does provide participants with the ease of online registration, there is an additional "convenience fee" associated with this service. Given the tight economic times and the fact that 79% of survey respondents are opposed to paying this fee, it may be a significant deterrent to those with limited expendable income from participating in Town programs.

An additional resource need of the Department is to continue to provide opportunities to attend state and national conferences and training sessions. These types of education forums are invaluable to park and recreation professionals, introducing them to new trends and innovations in programming, methods for decreasing costs and increasing cost recovery, as well as additional funding sources that may be available to improve or expand offerings.

Partnerships

The purpose of developing cooperative service agreements, partnerships, volunteers, and collaborations is to promote community involvement in Department activities, increase services offered to the public, reduce the expense of providing services, increase the visibility of the Department, develop a sense of community, create leadership, and encourage new resources in the community.

It is an issue of concern that the Town and the School District do not have a formal agreement for the use of District facilities. The Town is highly dependent on the use of these facilities for the administration of a majority of their indoor recreation activities and athletic programs, as well as many outdoor facilities. Given current circumstances, Town uses always come

secondary to use by the School District. Although the Town's relationships and communications with the District are quite strong, the lack of a strong documented agreement leaves the Town subject to the whims of the District. It also fails to establish identified expectations, roles and responsibilities, which could lead to misunderstanding and strains on these relationships in the future.

Although the Town leases the Mystic Education Center on an annual basis for a reasonable rate (approximately \$30,000-\$40,000), the facility has major limitations. Renegotiation of the lease rate and facility availability is under the complete control of the State. These limitations leave the Town vulnerable to uncontrollable circumstances which could greatly impact the provision of a number of their core services and the revenue associated with these programs. This vulnerability was illustrated during the master planning process by the fact that issues with the pool's drainage system forced the cancellation of all of the Department's Winter 2009 aquatics programs, which caused a major loss of revenue and administrative staff time. It has also been illustrated over the last several years where the gymnasium has been unusable for court activities due to the dangerous tripping hazards that exist in the "rippled" rubberized flooring that occurred as a result of water damage.

Cooperative and collaborative efforts are something that the Groton Parks and Recreation Department does extremely well. However, these efforts need to continue and increase to maximize resources and funds so as to expand programs and services in order to meet growing demands. To provide for the increasing and changing demands of the community, seeking out and utilizing formal partnerships, as well as increased volunteer efforts may help to provide for the community's desires for increased recreational programming. Furthermore, many of these activities will need the development of new facilities to support the programs. The Town should continue to work with the School District, athletic leagues, community and nonprofit organizations in order to make the development of these facilities a reality.



6. PARK AND RECREATION TRENDS



PARK AND RECREATION TRENDS

It is estimated that Americans have approximately 35 hours of leisure time per week. Of the top ten activities we spend our leisure time on, only two require physical activity: swimming and walking. The 2008 CDC guidelines for physical activity establish the following activity levels (all are measured from the baseline, which is a person's normal activity level for daily living, and all are in reference to moderate-intensity physical activity):

- Inactive: No activity beyond baseline of daily living
- Low Activity: Above baseline but less than 150 minutes per week
- Medium Activity: 150 – 300 minutes per week
- High Activity: Greater than 300 minutes per week

For adults to realize health benefits from physical activity, a minimum of 150 minutes per week of aerobic activity, (Medium Activity level), is necessary. For children and adolescents, the guideline is 60 minutes per day of moderate to vigorous aerobic activity.

This portion of the report will explore recreation trends from data collected both across the country and in the Northeast. This data will provide insights into which activities residents may be most interested in, and therefore will help facilitate gearing the Department's programs towards activities to get more of Groton's residents the recommended level of physical activity or higher.

PROGRAMMING TRENDS

General Population Trends

In a 2007 report, the Outdoor Industry Foundation (OIF) found the population in the Northeast United States (New England + Mid-Atlantic states) to be the least likely to participate in outdoor activities compared to the other regions of the United States. (Table 6.1)

Table 6.1: Outdoor Activity Participation Rate, Age 6+

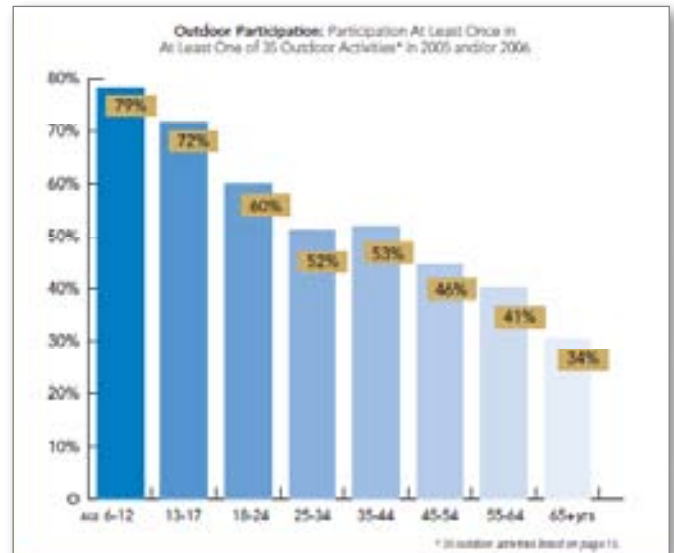
Northeast	69%
North Central	72%
South Central	70%
West	78%

Youth Trend:

The OIF also found a significant difference in outdoor recreation participation between youth and adults. It appears that many people are introduced to outdoor activities in their youth, but participation rates drop off as they move into adult-

hood. (See Figure 6.2, from OIF *Next Generation of Outdoor Participation*, 2007). The participation levels of the current generation of youth offer parks and recreation agencies an opportunity to try to change this trend as they age.

Table 6.2: Outdoor Activity Participation Levels (2005-2006)



Participation rates in outdoor activities for 18-24 year olds in the Northeast are 86%, which is relatively the same as national averages. This was a slight decline from previous years. Given the numerous health and social benefits that outdoor physical activities can impart in youth, it is concerning that this number is declining, even slightly. In the same OIF study, 31% of 18-24 year old males indicated that playing video games was one of their favorite activities. Physical activity must compete for interest among many other activities, and often is not included in children's leisure activities.

Nationwide, the following physical and outdoor activities were the most actively participated in by youth:

- 1) Bicycling (any type)
- 2) Running/Jogging/Trail Running
- 3) Skateboarding
- 4) Fishing
- 5) Wildlife Viewing

Other nationwide trends to note regarding youth participation in outdoor physical activities:

- Cross-country skiing participation has increased from 2004 - 2005

- Trail running participation grew between 2003 - 2005
- Snowshoeing and Telemark skiing participation grew between 1998 - 2005
- Bicycling (both mountain and paved road) rates decreased between 1998 - 2005

One way that youth trends differ from adults is that they prefer team sports over individualized activity. When it comes to team sports, OIF found that youth participated most frequently in basketball. Baseball / softball / wiffle ball were second, volleyball third, and soccer fourth. Organized, after-school activities such as these and other programs can fill the fitness void that is growing wider in schools. Additionally, after school programs have been proven to decrease juvenile crime and violence, reduce drug use, cut smoking and alcohol abuse, and decrease teen pregnancy.

Adult Trends

Thirty percent of adults in the United States are completely sedentary, and only 3% are considered to be living healthy lifestyles. In contrast, almost 90% of Generation X (those born between 1961 and 1981) feel the need to make sure their health will be good when they get older. There appears to be a gap between what Americans know we should do and what we actually do. To bridge this gap, trends show that adults are seeking recreational activities with the following characteristics:

- individualized
- do not require a large amount of structured time
- provide a whole experience
- easy to access – easy to learn

In Warnick's *New England's Travel and Recreation Markets: Trends*, 2005, he compares the participation of adults in four recreation/sport activities over a 10 year period of 1995 - 2005: Bicycling, Golf, Tennis, and Skiing. The results showed that in New England, biking had the strongest growth, skiing and tennis were stable and golf had declined. In regard to outdoor activities, the report found that the activity rates in the region were the same as those found nationally: wildlife interest activities declined, and camping/hiking and fishing both grew. Fitness and cultural/historic activity participation rates were also measured. Fitness walking in New England was found to be in decline, while fitness/exercise program participation as well as cultural activity interest were both stable with slight growth. In the Hartford/New Haven market area specifically, interest in history/heritage activities showed strong growth between 1995-2005. Fitness/exercise program lifestyles had the highest participation of all categories measured at 40.7% of the New England population, and 40.9% in the Hartford/New Haven market area population.

Older Adult Trends

The northeastern portion of the country is the fastest aging area of the country due to migration. While the Town of Groton remains younger than the country's average age, it is still aging and the area surrounding it even more so.

It is important to consider that the most significant change that older adults want in the next five years is to improve their physical health. Baby boomers specifically feel that retirement should occur in mid-life and they do not consider themselves "seniors." These perceptions will play a significant role in the activities this age group chooses to participate in to achieve their goal of improving their physical health. In 2004, the top three sports activities for those 65+ were 1) exercise walking 2) exercise with equipment and 3) swimming. Older Americans' leisure time is increasingly being spent doing physical activities, in educational classes, adventure traveling and attending sporting events.

Other Trends

Gender Based:

Seventy-six (76) percent of boys try outdoor activities versus 69% of girls. Girls' participation rates drop sharply when moving from the 6-12 year age group to the 13- 17 year age group. For boys, a drop occurs when advancing to the 18-24 year age group, but overall participation rates are still higher among boys than girls. These trends as indicated by the OIF Next Generation Report illustrate the need to encourage youth to participate in programs, for both boys and girls at the times when their participation rates drop the sharpest. In regard to adults, women appear to show a preference to participate in fitness activities over outdoor activities, and this preference continues to increase as they age.

Team ball sports also decline with each year of age, but more drastically in females. This was iterated in the focus groups for Groton, where concerns were expressed regarding the low participation rate of girls in basketball.

Special Populations:

In regard to outdoor activities, a few pronounced differences were found in participation rates of specific ethnicities in the Northeast when compared to the rest of the country. Whites in the Northeast participated the least in outdoor activities (70%), but only by a slight margin when compared to Whites across the rest of the country. Most interesting is the fact that Hispanics in the Northeast participated significantly less than Hispanics elsewhere and blacks had the second highest rate of participation in outdoor activities in the Northeast, which were significantly higher than the north central and south central regions. Details are illustrated in Tables 6.3 and 6.4.

Table 6.3: Hispanic Participation Rate in Outdoor Activities

Northeast	61%
North Central	77%
South Central	71%
West	75%

Table 6.4: Black Participation Rate in Outdoor Activities

Northeast	65%
North Central	53%
South Central	58%
West	68%

Extreme Sports & Activities:

The demand for “extreme” sports and activities has been on the rise. Non-traditional recreation amenities such as climbing walls, BMX tracks and indoor soccer are increasing. Sports such as skateboarding and snowboarding are popular because one can be pursued during the off season of the other, creating year-round activity. The OIF Next Generation Report (2007) found that snowboarding is a very popular trend by virtue of the fact that it had a 197% increase in participation between 1995-2005. Compared to other parts of the country, the Town of Groton is geographically located to be able to take some advantage of this trend through organized extended and day trips for snowboarding outings or similar activities.

PARK AND FACILITY TRENDS**Facilities**

Large, multi-purpose regional centers, with a wide variety of amenities to serve all ages are a current national trend in park and recreation facilities. Through the community input focus groups and interview process, residents strongly expressed a desire for this type of facility, specifically with both indoor (i.e. – aquatics, meeting rooms, and theater) and outdoor components (i.e. – athletic fields, etc.). A multi-use facility helps a department increase cost recovery, promote retention and encourages cross-use.

In facility design, studies have shown that “green” designed facilities are also increasing in popularity. This increase is due to a number of factors including the environmental benefits, as well as the positive benefits to the occupants/users of such facilities. Universal accessibility is another key component to successful facility design, in both indoor and outdoor components. A philosophy embraced by Groton Parks and

Recreation and that is illustrated through the Poquonnock Plains Legacy Playground. Additionally, accessibility should be added to existing facilities during updates and renovations to make them more user-friendly for individuals of all ability levels.

Specific facility and park types that are becoming more common include:

- BMX tracks
- Skate parks
- Climbing walls – to meet “extreme” sport demands
- Cultural Arts Facilities - Cultural Arts activity participation rates were found to be notably higher in the Hartford/New Haven market area than in other parts of New England and the country as a whole. The Town of Groton may find such a facility to attract high participation rates.
- Dog parks – also serves as a great place for social interaction of dog owners
- Indoor soccer - has fairly significant female participation rates at about 35%
- Indoor walking tracks - walking is the number one fitness activity, and has very high participation rates for females
- Interactive game rooms – can help engage youth in bridging technology with physical activity, and also help older adults experience activities they would not otherwise be physically able to (i.e. Wii Bowling).
- Leisure and therapeutic aquatic facilities
- Nature centers and nature areas
- Playgrounds for all ages of youth
- Weight and cardiovascular equipment

Parks and Open Space

Parks, recreation facilities, trails and open spaces offer numerous benefits to residents. The Trust for Public Land has documented the following benefits: physical activity increases the nearer a person lives to a park; an increase in both commercial and residential property values; and the positive environmental effects in regards to cooling the air, improving air quality, storm water control, and erosion prevention of natural areas and trees. These are just some of the many benefits.

In recent times, a shift has occurred in urban planning, from designing around the automobile to designing public spaces that engage human beings. One of the most significant amenities that a municipality can offer its residents is a quality public realm where people become engaged with nature, with one another, and have positive civic experiences.

KEY FINDINGS

In order to assist Americans in choosing healthy, active lifestyles, park and recreation agencies must provide a variety of active options and methods in which participants can become engaged, and they must stay on top of activity trends in order to prevent loss of interest or relevancy. To make the issue more complex, the trends and desires of Americans changes dramatically across different age groups and between sexes. Notably, varied preferences and trends can also be found between different races, ethnicities, education levels, geographic locations, income levels, etc. It is a tall order, but given today's obesity epidemic, park and recreation agencies have the opportunity to help combat this crisis. Connecticut is doing much better than the rest of the nation, as measured by its 3rd lowest obesity rate. However, given the state of the nation, improvement is still needed.



The Northeast has the lowest outdoor activity participation rate of any region in the country. Yet, compared to the rest of the nation its varied geography within a relatively small geographic span offers its residents a variety of outdoor activity within a day's drive. Residents in this part of the country also have a high level of interest in historical, heritage-related, cultural, and artistic activities. Incorporating these interests into programs and physical activities (i.e. historical/heritage walking or kayaking tours) could have very positive results.

Getting youth engaged and keeping them engaged, which is especially more difficult with girls, is a critical component to recreation programming across the nation. Bringing in new "extreme" sport activities and activities that bridge the computer virtual world with an active real world experience, as well as a willingness to work through the growing pains of providing new activities and the conflicts that may arise, will demonstrate to youth the community's commitment to their health and well-being. Providing after school, team-based

activities not only fosters good physical activity habits, but good social habits as well. It is important to recognize that extra effort to reach out to girls to encourage their participation in team sports will likely be necessary.

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



7. BUDGET, FUNDING AND BENCHMARKING



BUDGET AND FUNDING ANALYSIS

FUNDING OVERVIEW

Budgeting Process

The Town of Groton operates on July 1- June 30 fiscal year (FY). The Town's budget preparation and approval is an eight month process that begins in the fall of the previous year and is approved by the Representative Town Meeting (RTM) in spring of the following year. This complex process begins when the Town departments are required to submit requests for appropriation to the Town Manager no later than 167 days before the end of the fiscal year. The Board of Education and the political subdivisions within the Town are required to submit requests for appropriation no later than 122 days before the end of the fiscal year. The Town Manager uses these requests as the starting point for developing a proposed budget. The Town Manager presents this proposed budget to the Town Council for review no later than 107 days before the end of the fiscal year. Then Council is required to hold at least one public hearing on the proposed budget and to adopt a final budget no later than 21 days before the end of the fiscal year. The appropriated budget is prepared by fund and function (e.g., parks and recreation).

The Council approves a budget that it sends to the RTM for consideration and final approval. The RTM must approve the budget before the Council sets the final tax rate. In other matters, the RTM has the power to institute legislation or force reconsideration of an ordinance already adopted by the Town Council. The forty-one (41) RTM members are elected by eight (8)-voting districts for two-year terms.

Project-length budgets are prepared for several special revenue funds and for the capital project fund. Department Directors are evaluated on budget management abilities and are expected to follow strict guidelines for expenditure control within the approved function appropriation. The Town Manager reserves the right to set "administrative spending authority" limits when justified to maintain the fiscal integrity of the budget. The Finance Department also monitors expenditures to budget through the general ledger/accounting system.

The Town maintains an "encumbrance" accounting system as another method of maintaining budgetary control. All purchases, except certain services as outlined in the Town's Purchasing Manual, require a purchase requisition and a purchase order. In addition, purchases over \$500 require evidence that estimates were received and that the lowest quote, consistent with quality, was selected. Town Charter requires formal competitive bids for expenditures over \$5,000. Budgetary control in the Capital Projects Funds is achieved by the con-

straints imposed by the project's authorization or grant awards related to these funds.

Town Funding Sources

The Town of Groton uses a variety of revenue sources to fund its services and expenditures. These include general property taxes, state grants in aid-education, state grants in aid-general government, fees associated with licenses and permits, interest on investments, charges for current services, user fees and fund balance/other revenue. Following is the breakdown of the percentages of these sources for the Town's FY 2009 budget.

- Property Taxes – 60.4%
- State Grants in Aid-Education – 23.2%
- State Grants in Aid-Other - 6.5%
- Federal Grants in Aid-Education - 4.6%
- Licenses and Permits – 0.3%
- Interest on Investments – 0.6%
- Charges for Current Services – 1.5%
- User Fees – 0.3%
- Fund Balance/Other Revenue – 2.5%

Despite these economic challenges, the Town has enjoyed fairly steady economic circumstances, due the area's large regional employers (Pfizer, Electric Boat and the Naval Submarine Base) and a 2006 general real estate reevaluation. The total value of all taxable property rose 1.2% and net real estate rose 17.6%, which resulted in an increase of net taxable personal property of 8.9%. Total revenues to be generated by local property taxes, motor vehicle fees, interest and liens, and prior year taxes equate to \$71,298, 008, a 4.8% increase.

The Town's adopted budget for FY 2009 is \$118, 024,114. These funds are distributed to six major areas of service including: Town Operations, Education Services, Capital/Debt Services, Outside Agencies, Subdivisions and Contingency. The FY 2009 budget represents a 3.0% increase (\$3,486,160) over the FY 2008 Adopted/Adjusted budget. The allocation of these additional funds will be for Education Services (43%), Capital/Debt Services - associated with Phase I of the school project (31%), Town Operations (18%), and the remaining 8% distributed to Outside Agencies and Subdivisions.

The Town Operations portion of the budget incorporates Town Departments, including the Community Services which acts as the umbrella over the Parks and Recreation Department and Groton Public Library. The FY 2009 budget allocates a total of \$32,408,312, a 2.0% increase (\$624,365) over the FY 2008 Operations budget. The allocation of these funds will be utilized to cover the expenses associated with increasing utility and construction costs, the addition of two

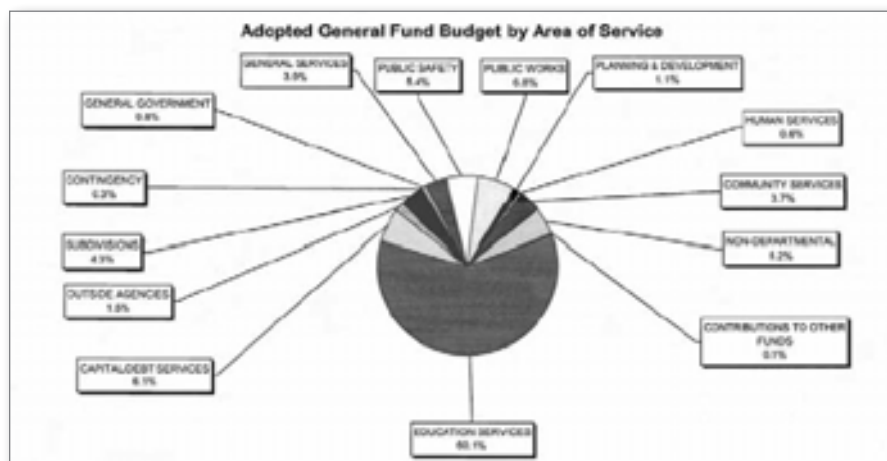
patrol officers, computer replacement and a variety of other needs and rising costs. The Town Operations Budget has increased by 11.9% over the past six years, which is illustrated in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1: Town of Groton Operations Budget (FYE 2003-2009)

Town Operations Adjusted/Proposed Budgets Six Year Comparison		
FYE	Budget	% change from Previous Year
Adjusted 2003	\$ 28,963,762	-
Adjusted 2004	\$ 27,854,320	-3.8%
Adjusted 2005	\$ 27,883,530	0.1%
Adjusted 2006	\$ 28,918,787	3.7%
Adjusted 2007	\$ 30,652,950	6.0%
Adjusted 2008	\$ 31,783,947	3.7%
Adopted 2009	\$ 32,408,312	2.0%
Increase over six years: 2003 to 2009		11.9%
Average Six Year Increase		2.0%

In FY 2009, Community Services was allocated 3.7% of the Town's General Fund budget and 13.5% of the Town's Operating Budget. The allocation of funds to Community Services, which includes Parks and Recreation, falls well below that of Education Services (60.1%), Public Works (6.8%), and Public Safety (5.4%), which illustrates the community's value of and priority to fund education, streets and public safety. The allocation of Town funds is illustrated in Figure 7.1.

Figure 7.1: Town of Groton – Adopted General Fund Budget by Area of Service



As the community continues to grow, diversify, and age, it will be increasingly important to focus on and fund quality of life amenities that provide for the health, well-being, and contribute to the economic development of the community.

PARKS AND RECREATION FUNDING

Groton Parks and Recreation Department's FY 2009 budget is \$2,452,551, which is a 3.2% decrease (\$78,482) from FY 2008.

The decline of these funds is largely associated with the elimination of a vacant supervisory position in the Parks Maintenance Division.

Funding for Parks and Recreation has also fluctuated significantly over the past four years. The Department's budget increased by 11.7% in 2007 and then slightly increased 1.35% in 2008. However, despite steady increases to the Town's Operating budget, which is to be allocated to the departments, the Department's budget decreased by 3.2% in 2009.

Table 7.2: Comparison of Parks and Recreation Budgets (2006 - 2009)

	FYE 2006 Actual	FYE 2007 Actual	FYE 2008 Estimated	FYE 2009 RTM
Leadership/General Support	\$263,630	\$331,956	\$300,796	\$269,020
Summer Playground Program	\$274,939	\$303,504	\$298,497	\$288,203
Programs & Events	\$485,110	\$498,756	\$494,785	\$517,111
Senior Transportation	\$157,129	\$188,690	\$201,351	\$192,335
Senior Programs and Services	\$415,964	\$456,778	\$491,519	\$495,981
School Grounds and Athletic Fields	\$69,414	\$88,441	\$107,771	\$94,719
Parks and Recreation Facilities	\$534,969	\$592,331	\$595,521	\$541,151
Forestry and Trails	\$5,780	\$5,945	\$11,349	\$20,163
Community Events	\$29,595	\$31,892	\$30,519	\$32,868
Total	\$2,236,530	\$2,498,293	\$2,532,108	\$2,451,551
Percent Change	N/A	11.70%	1.35%	-3.2%

Parks and Recreation Revolving Fund

The Parks and Recreation Revolving Fund, commonly referred to as the Special Revenue Fund (SRF), was created

- 1) to provide a mechanism to offer programs that generated sufficient revenue to cover direct costs in a way that did not impact on the Town's General Fund Budget and
- 2) to consolidate the many donation and escrow accounts the Parks and Recreation Department had. Expenses associated with overhead support, such as staff salaries, insurance, etc., are paid for by the General Fund, but direct program expenses for programs in the SRF would be paid out of registration fees and donations received.

In FY 2008, the SRF included 583 separate activities in nine categories with 5,766 enrollments, compared to 641 activities and 6,431 enrollments in 2007. That equals a 9% decrease in program offerings and 10% decrease in enrollments. The SRF cost centers contained approximately 86% of the total programs offered by the Recreational Services Division (583 / 680), 79% of the enrollments (5,766 / 7,285), and 80% of the total revenue (\$371,122 / \$463,753). As of June 30, 2008, the SRF had an accumulated Fund Balance of \$118,936.87. In FYE09 a transfer of \$69,262 was made to purchase an upgraded bus which will provide better transportation for programs. This will leave a projected fund balance of about \$51,000 at the end of FYE09. Details of these cost centers, revenues and expenses from FYE 2005-2009 are located in Table 7.3.

Table 7.3: Parks and Recreation Revolving Fund (Special Revenue Fund)(2005 - 2009)

	FYE05			FYE06			FYE07			FYE08			FYE09		
	Total Budget	Excess Revenue	Fund Balance	Total Budget	Excess Revenue	Fund Balance	Actual Total Budget	Actual Excess Revenue	Actual Fund Balance	Actual Total Budget	Actual Excess Revenue	Actual Fund Balance	Actual Total Budget	Actual Excess Revenue	Actual Fund Balance
Recreation Programs	\$315,152	\$32,680	\$93,303	\$321,013	\$22,201	\$115,504	\$336,110	\$3,175	\$118,679	\$362,790	\$258	\$118,937	\$387,420	\$2,000	\$33,000
Senior Center Trips	\$81,381	-\$12,201	\$7,083	\$64,680	-\$1,046	\$6,037	\$52,300	\$14,803	\$20,839	\$56,541	-\$11,473	\$9,366	\$42,883	\$10,634	\$20,000
Recreation															
Discretionary		-\$352	\$545		-\$540	\$5		\$168	\$173			\$344			\$173
Special Needs		\$335	\$6,629		\$1,594	\$8,223		-\$283	\$7,939			\$9,265			\$7,939
Sport Sponsors		\$210	\$1,185		\$500	\$1,685		\$0	\$1,685			\$1,685			\$1,685
Community Boating		-\$3,441	\$10,738		\$3,997	\$14,735		-\$3,629	\$11,106			\$10,765			\$3,000
Senior Center															
Discretionary		-\$6,310	\$7,384		-\$5,172	\$2,212		-\$1,481	\$732			\$1,714			\$732
Computer Learning Center		\$747	\$4,777		\$210	\$4,987		-\$1,818	\$3,169			\$1,344			\$3,169
Park Facilities															
Skate park		\$96	\$767		\$509	\$1,276		\$3,915	\$5,191			\$10,211			\$5,191
The Arena		\$502	\$1,207		\$1,215	\$2,422		\$200	\$2,622			\$2,622			\$2,622
Facilities		\$5,015	\$5,076		\$354	\$5,430		\$5	\$5,435			\$5,435			\$5,435
Concerts and Events															
Esker Point Beach (includes concerts)		\$4,688	\$26,802		\$12,853	\$39,656		-\$10,214	\$29,442			\$34,277			\$29,442
Events		\$1,711	\$1,950		-\$983	\$967		-\$140	\$827			\$352			\$827
Senior Center Food Concession										\$149,267	\$11,582	\$75,600	\$150,000	\$5,000	\$80,600
TOTAL	\$396,533	\$23,681	\$167,446	\$385,693	\$35,692	\$203,138	\$388,410	\$17,977	\$207,839	\$568,599	\$367	\$281,916	\$580,303	\$17,634	\$193,815

Shennecossett Golf Course

Shennecossett Golf Course operates as an enterprise special revenue fund that works to recoup 100% of its expenses, as illustrated in Table 7.4. The golf courses revenues are used to cover all golf course employee salaries and benefits, facility insurance and operating expenses. The course's fees are also used to reimburse the Town for services provided by Town Departments, as determined by the cost allocation study. Golf rates for season passes and daily greens fees for the 2008 season were increased 4% in most categories.

Table 7.4: Shennecossett Cost Recovery Levels (2006 - 2009)

	FYE 2006 Actual	FYE 2007 Actual	FYE 2008 Estimated	FYE 2009 RTM
Expenses	\$1,077,134	\$1,102,632	\$1,129,573	\$1,181,622
Revenue				
Season Memberships	\$347,107	\$283,580	\$297,616	\$319,630
Greens Fees	\$548,947	\$591,409	\$636,282	\$640,356
Cart Rentals	\$206,913	\$182,680	\$199,390	\$202,337
Lease Fees	\$0	\$24,300	\$26,290	\$31,200
Payments from Other Funds	\$0	\$45,743	\$50,458	\$0
Miscellaneous - Unclassified	\$25,269	\$0	\$0	\$0
TOTAL REVENUE	\$1,128,236	\$1,127,712	\$1,210,036	\$1,193,523
Cost Recovery	105%	102%	107%	101%

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT FUNDING

A majority of the Department's capital funds for 2006-2009 are primarily from State and Federal grants and the Town's Capital Reserve Fund. Capital improvements funds are intended for "a major physical improvement or betterment of a non-recurring nature to the physical plant of the municipality as differentiated from ordinary repairs or maintenance of a recurring nature" (CT State Statutes, Sec. 8-160). Capital Reserve funds are to be used for "capital assets, projects or acquisitions or a non-recurring nature, with a cost of over \$25,000, and with a useful life expectancy of over five years" (CT Code of Ordinances).

These funds have fluctuated significantly over the past five years from \$200,000 (FYE 2006), peaking at \$550,000 (FYE 2007), decreasing to \$170,000 (FYE 2008) and again declining to \$155,000 (FYE 2009). Capital funds are also often developed through General Obligation Bonds. However, given the current tight economic times, there would likely be little support for a bond referendum in the near future. The Town does have land dedication requirements for developers, at no less than 10% of the gross area of the subdivision as well as definitions and standards for the suitability of that land. Additionally, the Town also allows for payment of fees in lieu of parks, playgrounds, and public area reservation and land dedication. However, the Town does not have impact fees to supplement the Department's resources as the development occurs and the population grows.

It is a recent trend in federal grants that most awards are for the development of trails, with less funding allocated for building new facilities or renovating existing ones, both of which Groton is highly in need of. However, it is possible that the economic downturn could end up being beneficial to the Town, if potential Federal economic stimulus packages result in additional grants and infrastructure money.

Table 7.5 Groton - Capital Improvement Funds (FYE 2006 - 2009)

	FYE 2006 Actual	FYE 2007 Actual	FYE 2008 Estimated	FYE 2009 RTM
Trail Improvement Program	\$65,000			\$65,000
Park Improvement Plan - Poquonnock Plains				\$15,000
Golf Course Improvement Plan			\$60,000	\$50,000
Coastal Public Access Acquisition/Development				\$25,000
Park Improvement Plan - Playground Equipment	\$25,000		\$60,000	
Open Space Acquisition and Development	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000	
William Seely School - Entrance Repairs			\$25,000	
Copp Property Improvement Project		\$150,000		
Sutton Park Improvement Project		\$35,000		
Park Improvement Plan - Tercentennial Playground		\$340,000		
Noank Town Dock Area Improvements	\$85,000			
TOTAL CIP FUNDS	\$200,000	\$550,000	\$170,000	\$155,000

COST RECOVERY

Currently, the entire Department has an average cost recovery level of 25%, based on user fees, recreation programming and rental revenues (this does not include donations and escrow funds). This cost recovery has been fairly consistent, falling within a five point range (21.75 – 27.52 %) over the past five years. The Department has achieved a steady increase in revenue, which illustrates the success of the Department. However, cost recovery has not increased due to equally growing expenses associated with maintenance materials and utility costs. Examples across the country show a wide range of subsidy levels or tax investment, from 15% to 80% and higher, depending upon the mission of the organization, construction funding payback, operation funding availability, the community's philosophy regarding subsidy levels and user fees, and the structure of agency budgets.

Table 7.6: Parks and Recreation Cost Recovery Levels (2007 - 2009)

	FYE 2006 Actual	FYE 2007 Actual	FYE 2008 Estimated	FYE 2009 RTM
Expenses (Direct and Indirect)	\$2,236,530	\$2,498,293	\$2,532,108	\$2,451,551
Expenses (P & R Revolving Fund)	\$385,693	\$388,410	\$568,599	\$580,303
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$2,622,223	\$2,886,703	\$3,100,707	\$3,031,854
Revenues - General Fund				
Playground Aids - BOE	\$12,073	\$22,612	\$16,281	\$26,000
BOE- FHS/Grounds Mowing	\$36,850	\$39,488	\$40,092	\$40,786
Senior Center Fees	\$49,510	\$51,485	\$49,744	\$50,000
Park Concessions & Rentals	\$3,000	\$1,000	\$1,800	\$1,800
Program Events and Revenue	\$35,173	\$38,131	\$37,970	\$35,703
Summer Playground Revenue	\$77,971	\$63,247	\$75,900	\$80,240
Park Rentals	\$2,485	\$2,622	\$4,850	\$2,000
Misc - Unclassified	\$5,258	\$2,877	\$0	\$0
Revenues - P&R Revolving Fund	\$421,385	\$406,387	\$568,966	\$597,937
TOTAL REVENUE	\$643,705	\$627,849	\$795,603	\$834,466
Cost Recovery	24.55%	21.75%	25.66%	27.52%

Dr. John Crompton from Texas A & M, a leading educator and researcher on the benefits and economic impact of leisure services indicates that the national cost recovery average is around 34%. Based on this information, the Department's cost recovery is slightly below the national average. Possible reasons may include the fact that there has been a stagnant allocation of operating funds and that the agency's core services and areas of focus include Senior and Youth programs which are typically programs that are more heavily subsidized.

The Department adopted a Fee Policy in 2007 that guides program pricing and cost recovery goals. The Charging Policy outlines what fees will be charged for what programs, policies on charging residents vs. nonresidents, provides for a scholarship program and establishes a refund policy. The Department strives to recover 100% of direct costs for programs funded out of the SRF, a set portion of costs associated with youth sports, special needs programs, summer playground programs and special events funded through the General Fund. The Senior Center works to recover 30% of direct costs and all trips are to recover 100% of all direct costs including the trip leader. It is important to recognize that the Department has placed an emphasis on providing for those that cannot provide for themselves, such as youth and seniors. Therefore, pricing has been set to not exclude any income levels from being able to participate.

Table 7.7: Direct Cost Recovery by Program Area (2008)

Program Area	Revenue	Expenses	Cost Recovery
Aquatics	\$44,708	\$55,320	81%
Boating	\$10,529	\$17,697	59%
Donations	\$12,250	\$0	100%
Enrichment	\$54,693	\$49,610	110%
Fitness	\$96,987	\$81,383	119%
Gymnastics	\$8,791	\$14,030	63%
Outdoors	\$10,628	\$11,471	93%
Preschool	\$6,855	\$9,040	76%
Sailing	\$5,175	\$11,950	43%
Special Events	\$55,025	\$55,867	5%
Special Needs	\$4,765	\$54,000	9%
Sports	\$71,148	\$38,580	184%
Sports-Youth League	\$19,319	\$18,427	105%
Summer Playground	\$63,276	\$239,523	26%
Trips	\$19,168	\$18,955	101%
TOTAL	\$483,317	\$675,853	72%

BUDGET AND FUNDING ANALYSIS

It is important to recognize the many benefits that Groton's Parks and Recreation Department provides the community, including economic (business attraction and tourism), health, environmental and quality of life advantages. The value that the community places on parks and recreation is strongly illustrated by the satisfaction levels indicated on the Community Survey. However, considering these values, the Town's large number of parks and facilities, increasing costs for utilities and maintenance, as well as the growing demand for programs and services, it would be expected that there would be a steadily growing budget to support these services and increasing costs. However, as was illustrated in Table 7.2, the Department has about the same amount of funding in 2009 as they did in 2005 (\$2,500,000).

It is important to recognize the Department's goals for FYE 2009, such as providing safe trails, sustaining the level of maintenance to athletic fields, replacing aging equipment, supporting new and current community events, offering professional development opportunities for staff, staying abreast of current trends and many other goals that will increase the services of to the community and revenues to the Department. However, without additional funding and support from the Town, these goals will be challenging to meet.

The Department's dependency on stagnant funding allocations elicits discussions about the need for a dedicated funding source for the Department. Given the amount of infrastructure that the Department maintains, as well as the many needs for capital development for new recreation facilities and amenities, it is going to be increasingly important to work to establish a steady stream of funding. It is becoming increasingly clear that to keep the Town on pace with other progressive cities and districts in the region they cannot make improvements that may be needed with the current levels of allocated funding. Potential long-term funding sources include a dedicated property tax or the creation of a special taxing district specifically dedicated for parks and recreation.

It is also important to consider that the stability of Town revenues is somewhat uncertain given the dramatically tightening economy which has had recent impacts on some of the large regional employers in the area, which could have impacts on future tax revenue. Additionally, the economy could also potentially cause decreasing property values, tightening credit capacity, rising energy and operations costs, and declining consumer spending. In order to sustain the Department's quality services, programs and facilities, as well as continue to develop needed new facilities, the Town should be proactive in identifying, seeking out and

supporting matching funds for grants and alternative funding.

Given stagnant historical allocations and the uncertainty of future tax funding, there are a few steps that the Department should consider in order to increase revenue through user fees and charges. Currently, the Department does not charge user groups and athletic leagues for use of Town-owned athletic fields. Given the high usage rates of these facilities, the Department should consider introducing a nominal fee and incrementally raising that fee to a market level over the next few years.

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

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

BENCHMARKING

Benchmarking is a tool often used by agencies to measure where they fall in comparison to other agencies. It is a tool for agency managers and decision-makers to evaluate their Department's delivery of services compared to other agencies in the region. A benchmark analysis can be conducted in a variety of ways, a few of which are to compare multiple Departments, to focus on specific areas of responsibility, or to compare the same function over time. The data compared in this analysis represents an overview of the Town and the Parks and Recreation Department as a snapshot in time. This analysis measures items such as park acreage, budgets, staffing numbers and revenue recovery.

This analysis was conducted for the Town of Groton using leading and comparable agencies in the State of Connecticut. These included East Hartford, West Hartford, Rocky Hill, Newington and New Britain. All communities are either a similar size and/or serve similar communities. The complete set of benchmarking data compared in this analysis is listed in Table 7.8. To realize the full value of this exercise, this infor-

mation should be used as a catalyst for the Town to compare specific operational areas / programs /facilities against other providers and as a temporal comparison against the performance of the Department itself over time.

Comparative Analysis and Data

The Town of Groton was compared to five other communities in Connecticut. It is important to note that some of the variables compared may not be equivalent; for example, Parks Maintenance Divisions in some jurisdictions may maintain streets and cemeteries, while others are dedicated to parks only. This may affect acreage maintained ratios as well as operating budget totals. Other anomalies may include agencies that provide internal youth athletics, while another department may have franchise leagues to provide this service. Further, some agencies may not detail dollars spent maintaining sports fields versus natural areas versus neighborhood parks. For this reason, it is important that the information obtained from this benchmarking analysis be used as an initial step for the Town of Groton to continue to research best practices. Please note that the level of detail that is delivered from benchmarked agencies may not reflect what is reported by the host agency.

The communities were chosen primarily due to the perceived similarities to the Town of Groton. Some of the key benchmarking data sought included:

- Population
- Parks and recreation acres
- Other acres maintained by the agency
- Staffing and operations
- Full and part-time employees (FTE)
- Total operating and capital budget
- Breakdown of the sources and allocation of the budget
- Types and numbers of specific parks and recreation facilities

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) provides baseline "guidelines" that assist in providing agencies the ability to compare amenities, usually against a "per thousand" population calculation. This data can be found in the Level of Service Analysis section of the report.

Table 7.8: Town of Groton Parks, Recreation and Open Space – Benchmarking Analysis

Community/Agency Overview (2007)	Town of Groton	East Hartford	New Britain	Newington	Rocky Hill	West Hartford
Population of Service Area	40,686	50,000	76,000	33,000	7,000	85,000
Total Park & Recreation Acres Managed by Agency (not including cemeteries, etc.)	1,578	680	1,200	1,005	554	1,180
Total Park Acreage (excluding school parks owned by others)	1,055	680	1,200	503	250	1,180
Park Acres Per 1,000 Residents	38.6	13.60	15.79	30.45	79.14	13.88
Forestry Program (within agency)	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	N/A	No
Agency Resources (2007)						
Full-time Employees	30.75	25	70	20	13	20
Part-time/Seasonal Staff	177	11	400	100	55	300+
Total Operating Budget	\$2,498,293	\$2,706,730	\$10,000,000	\$1,786,164	\$1,340,534	\$5,387,477
Total Special Revenue Fund Budget	\$388,410	\$324,676	\$3,000,000	\$75,000	N/A	N/A
Total Enterprise Fund Budget	\$1,127,712	N/A	N/A	N/A	\$300,000	\$2,878,425
Average Capital Budget (past 5 yrs.)	\$268,750	\$500,000	\$2,000,000	\$50,000	\$60,000	\$450,000
Maintenance Budget (land & buildings)	\$733,774	\$1,729,511	\$2,800,000	\$1,279,439	N/A	N/A
Maintenance Budget per Acre	\$396	\$2,543	\$2,333	\$1,273	N/A	N/A
Revenue from Taxes (inc. capital budget)	\$2,091,906	\$2,706,730	\$7,000,000	\$1,357,485	N/A	\$997,176
Revenue from Fees and Charges	\$228,287	\$324,676	\$250,000	\$1,037,355	\$16,000	\$4,140,301
Revenue from Fund-raising (grants, sponsorships, etc.)	\$375,000	\$25,000	\$150,000	\$500,000		\$250,000
Number of Volunteer Hours (annual est.)	9,000	N/A	4,000	1,800	100	62,000
Cost Recovery (2007)						
Total Department Revenue	\$643,705	\$3,056,406	\$4,500,000	\$1,037,355	\$25,000	\$4,390,301
Total Department Expenses	\$2,622,223	N/A	\$7,000,000	\$1,786,164	\$1,340,534	\$5,384,477
Total Department Cost Recovery	24.55%	N/A	64%	58%	2%	82%
Parks and Facilities (owned and/or maintained by your agency) (2008)						
Total Number of Parks	35	21	7	17	8	16
Total Acreage of Dedicated Open Space	682	670	1,200	450	255	1,180
Number of Athletic Fields (diamond & turf)	8	35	25	41	19	99
Total Miles of Trails (hard & soft surface)	20	10	20	4	0	0
Number of Community Recreation Centers	0	1	0	1	1	4
Number of Gymnasiums	0	14	13	8	1	17
Number of Playgrounds	18	15	14	7	7	17
Number of Swimming Pools (indoor and outdoor)	0	7	5	3	2	5

BENCHMARKING ANALYSIS

The Town of Groton is serving a population that is slightly less than the average of the comparison communities (Average benchmarked agencies=50,200 vs. Groton=40,686). These communities range in population from 7,000 (Rocky Hill) to 85,000 (West Hartford). Newington (33,000) noted that 3,000 of the listed user population are from outside the Town. West Hartford, as well, listed a range from 61,000 to 85,000 for their population of service area. Other municipalities may have an outside user population for this benchmark, but did not differentiate it in the analysis. Groton's population does not take into account the population outside of the Town that participates in its programs. However, non-residents make up a significant portion of the Department's program participants.

Relative to parks and recreation acreage, Groton manages a significant amount of parks acreage, as do the other benchmark municipalities. The Town maintains 1,578 parks acres (including school parks), calculating to 38.6 acres per thousand residents. This figure is well above NRPA guidelines that recommend a ratio of 6.25 to 10.5 acres per thousand. However, it is important to note that the Town falls slightly below the averages of other benchmarked agencies (30.6 acres/1,000). In comparison to the other benchmarked agencies, Rocky Hill indicated the largest acreage per thousand (79.14) while East Hartford indicated the lowest acreage per thousand population (13.6). It should be recognized that for all agencies to average above the NRPA guidelines would be a significant accomplishment for the region. The NRPA guideline should be adjusted locally based upon demographic factors, available land, and other impacts that may skew numbers higher or lower.

Groton's full-time Department employee numbers equate to one employee per 1,376 residents. Groton's ratio is higher than the average of all benchmarked agencies (1,905). Rocky Hill (the agency with the least population) had the most favorable ratio (538) while West Hartford, the agency with the most population, had the least favorable ratio (4,250). Striking these two anomalies from the average would still place Groton's ratio above the new average (1 full-time personnel per 1,579 residents).

The maintenance budget for Groton (\$733,734 not including golf operations), when gauged against a per population ratio, is well below the three agencies that reported an annual maintenance budget (East Hartford, New Britain and Newington) when gauged against a per population ratio. Groton's maintenance spending per capita (\$18.04) is dramatically less than East Hartford (\$34.59), New Britain (\$36.84) and Newington (\$38.77). When looking at spending per maintained park

acre, Groton (\$396) is again below the comparative Town's: East Hartford (\$2,543), New Britain (\$2,333) and Newington (\$1,273). Municipalities polled indicated that two of the five (New Britain and East Hartford) have forestry responsibilities within their jurisdiction.

All jurisdictions polled had a generous inventory of open space. Calculating acreage per capita, Groton (59.7 acres) falls right below the average of all jurisdictions (62.13). East Hartford had the highest per capita (74.6 acres), while Rocky Hill had the lowest (27.5).

Average capital budgets over the past five years spanned a wide range, from New Britain (\$2,000,000) to Newington (\$50,000). Conversations with Newington's director indicated that averages prior to 2008 were approximately \$100,000 but recent cuts related to the national economic climate have affected capital spending. Groton's average capital budget over the past five years was \$268,750. By comparison, the median of the average capital budget, which removes the pull of outliers that you get with an average, was \$475,000.

Cost recovery figures (revenues compared to indirect and direct expenses) for Groton (25%) are below the majority of the polled agencies (New Britain, 64%, Newington 58% and West Hartford 82%). Only Rocky Hill (2%) indicated a cost recovery ratio less than Groton. These figures indicate that the Town subsidizes programs and services well above the national averages and a majority of benchmarked agencies in Connecticut.

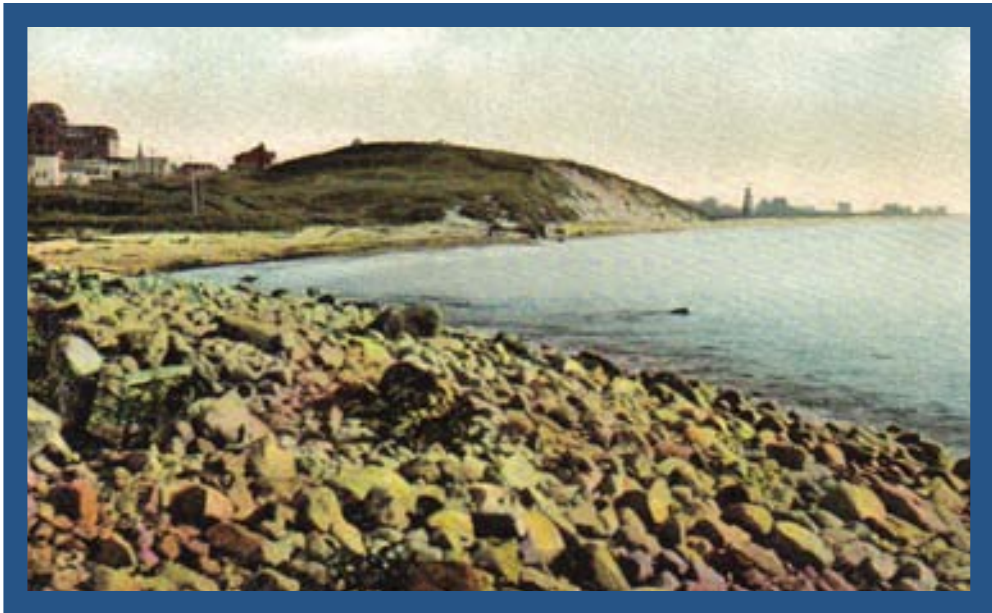
In regard to parks and facilities, Groton has the highest number of parks of polled agencies. However, when looking at active spaces (sports fields), the Town athletic field calculation (8) is well below all agencies benchmarked. It should be noted that the Town inventory does not take into account any School District owned properties or City of Groton park facilities, one of which is a larger athletic complex (Washington Park).

Regarding indoor facilities, Groton and New Britain are the only agencies that do not have a dedicated community center. Although owned by the school district, New Britain has 13 gymnasiums in its inventory. Rocky Hill, with a population of 7,000, has one gymnasium, which translates to a ratio of one indoor gymnasium per 7,000 residents. The average ratio of the five agencies is one indoor gymnasium per 5,108 residents. The Town of Groton does not have any gymnasiums that are within its ownership, those they use are owned by the School District, although, the Department does have a great deal of control over the small gymnasium at William Seely School.

Groton has one indoor pool available for use at the Mystic Education Center, which results in a ratio of 1: 40,686. This ratio ranks poorly when compared to the average of the five agencies benchmarked (1: 10,769). There is also a significant gap between Groton's low ratio and the second lowest ratio, West Hartford at one pool per 17,000 population. Rocky Hill reported the highest rate at one pool per 3,500 people.



8. ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT



ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

The Town of Groton Parks and Recreation Department provides a good variety of programs and facilities that address many of the demands of residents and guests of the area. From rowing classes to senior programs, to a golf course that possesses tremendous views of the Thames River and surrounding area, the Town is fortunate to have access to a good selection of activities and facilities.

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

Following is an analysis and assessment of the Department's existing organizational structure and its ability to handle current work output. The consultant team has completed an analysis of the service delivery challenges within administration, parks maintenance, golf, and recreation and has provided recommended actions to meet service and operational demands in the Recommendations and Action Plan section of this report.

Department Organizational and Management Overview

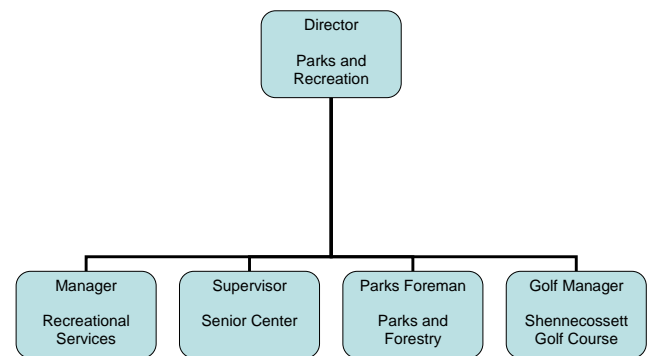
The Town of Groton Parks and Recreation Department has a total of 30.75 full-time employees across five primary work areas: Administration, Recreation, Parks Maintenance, Senior Center, and Shennecossett Golf Course. Some staff members within the divisions, except for division directors, are represented by unions. The current distribution of the personnel by work area is shown below:

Table 8.1: Department Breakdown by Employee Type

Employee Type	Number Full-Time	Number Part-Time	Contractual
Administration	2.75	0	0
Recreational Services	7.25	150+	75
Parks & Forestry	7.75	7	0
Senior Services	6	17	0
Shennecossett Golf Course	7	9	0

Department data indicates that the agency employs part time/seasonal employees in different areas of operations, as well as contractual workers that perform various functions. The Town's largest user of part-time/seasonal and contractual employees is Recreation Services with over 150 part-time staff. Included in this number are lifeguards, summer camp staff, class instructors, and others. Figure 8.1 provides a general representation of the Department structure.

Figure 8.1: Town of Groton Parks and Recreation – Organizational Structure



The Town of Groton Parks and Recreation Department is comprised of four divisions: Recreation Services, Parks & Forestry (parks maintenance), Senior Center and Shennecossett Golf Course. In addition, Administration spans all four divisions.

Administration

Administrative Services is comprised of the Parks and Recreation Director and associated staff, targeted towards the management and administration of the Department. The Director of the Department manages all personnel activities, budgeting, and overall planning within the Department. The responsibilities of the Parks and Recreation Director include planning and directing the operations of the Department; coordination to ensure that operations align with the Town's goals and objectives; and collaboration with Town management, the Parks and Recreation Commission, and the Golf Advisory Board. Duties associated with these responsibilities include formulating and directing operating procedures, supervising budget preparation and controls, and serving as the liaison with other Town agencies, partner organizations (i.e. Mystic Little League, School District, etc.) and other jurisdictions that provide recreation programs, maintenance and senior services.

The Manager of Recreation Services oversees all recreation programming, as well as provides direct support to the Director and operations throughout the agency. Other executive staff (Senior Center Supervisor, Parks Foreman, Golf Professional and Golf Superintendent) also provide support to the Director.

Recreation Services

The Recreation Services Division oversees programming, facilities and the coordination of user groups. The Division offers a variety of programming including youth and adult sports, inclusion services, arts and crafts, tennis and special events. This Division is responsible for coordinating user groups and programming of spaces at Sutton Park, Poquonnock Plains Park, and other programmed park spaces, the William Seely School, Mystic Education Center, and other indoor facilities and ball fields.

The Division provides activities for a variety of interests and users. Stakeholder interviews and community meeting participants indicated that programs both facilitated and provided by the recreation services division are well received. Challenges to expanding programs include the lack of appropriate indoor facilities and the limitations of fields for outdoor sports with a growing demand (soccer, football, etc).

Parks and Forestry

The Parks and Forestry Division handles all physical parks duties including maintenance, repair, and minor construction projects within parks. They are responsible for all athletic fields, Town school grounds, open space areas, municipal properties, playgrounds, 13 cemeteries, as well as the trails in Copp Property and Pequot Woods. The Division also maintains the tree canopy throughout the Town which, for the 13th consecutive year, was named a Tree City USA.

According to GIS data analysis, the Town has approximately 1,578 acres of parks and open space. This also includes some school park facilities (523 acres), some of which are maintained by the Department (approximately 269 acres (254 are not maintained by the department)). The 1,578 acres also includes natural resource areas of over 682 acres and the Shennecossett Golf Course acreage (135.0 acres). Deducting these areas, which are mainly passively used, low-maintenance and/or maintained by another division (i.e. golf or other), the total developed parkland acreage is approximately 507 acres. Using a staff per developed acreage ratio, this accounts to one full-time staff person per 65 acres of developed parkland.

The Parks and Forestry staff is responsible for maintaining a wide variety of parks, facilities and specialized amenities.

For example, in 2008, the Town dedicated the Tercentennial Legacy Playground at Poquonnock Plains Park - a facility that features a crusher-fine path as well as multi-purpose fields that host Town football, soccer and lacrosse programs. The Town also provides beach areas and boat ramps for public use and a skate park at Sutton Park, which also features sports fields, picnic pavilions and outdoor basketball. Throughout the Town, park areas have been enhanced. The Copp Property, located in the northwest part of the Town, currently includes a fenced dog park, parking area and passive trail network. Additionally, renovation efforts have begun at the existing Senior Center to expand programming and opportunities offered there.

Senior Center

The Groton Senior Center provides a space for well-rounded programming for those 55 and older. The center is typically open from 8:30 to 4:30 daily, but sometimes stays open until 6:30 in the evening, depending upon the program. The current facility includes a number of meeting rooms. Staff provides a variety of programs, from numerous fitness programs, board games, and both international and local day trips. The current senior center is undergoing a 16,000 square foot expansion and is expected to be complete in May of 2010.

Staff identified its core programs as:

- Bridge, Wii Bowling, Pinochle
- Serving meals
- Trips
- Transportation
- Fitness
- Computer training
- Special Olympics

Staff indicated that the Senior Center is “the place to be.” Many allied groups use the facility, like the Visiting Nurses Association (VNA), to provide social and health services. Some challenges that staff faces include keeping the patrons upbeat during the holiday times by providing programs and meals that keep the seniors engaged, and trying to keep costs of certain services affordable for seniors on fixed incomes. Staff also indicated, in general terms, that an aquatic facility would be beneficial to the Town and particularly seniors. A therapeutic recreation pool had been planned for the new senior center but was cut from the design, due to a lack of understanding of the size and scope of the pool.

Shennecossett Golf Course

This award-winning golf course offers dramatic views of the Thames River and Long Island Sound. Among the many accolades, Audubon International has recognized the course as a “Certified Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary”. In 2008, the course won the Walter Lowell Public Golf Course Distinguished

Service Award, which recognizes Shennecossett, also known locally as “Shenny,” as the “model public golf course serving golf in Connecticut and Western Massachusetts.”

In 2004 and 2005, the Department worked with the National Golf Foundation (NGF) to develop strategic actions to improve play and conditions at the golf course. Action items included installing a new point-of-sale system, golf path improvements, and working with area lodging to offer golf packages. According to staff and the Golf Advisory Board, officials have addressed all recommended actions and implemented appropriate measures that were conducive for improvements and operations.

Current operations at the course include a pro shop, privatized restaurant/snack bar, and staff-maintained grounds. Equipment at the course is a combination of leased golf carts and maintenance equipment, which is mostly Town-owned. The course is maintained by a course superintendent and union workers. The pro-shop and snack bar areas are located adjacent to one another. This historic building also includes an outdoor “Tiki-Bar” that is used seasonally and is ADA accessible in most areas. The building has been maintained by Public Works for the past three years and staff indicates crews have been responsive when repairs are needed on the aging facility. Parking is limited on the grounds and patrons must use on-street parking in some cases.

The course offers a variety of fee options for both residents and non-residents. Season passes for adults, youth and families are available and the course offers daily fee play for both 9 and 18 holes. Shenny also provides reduced rate play during winter, as well as special rates after 12pm and at twilight. Table 8.2 shows a two-year trend of rounds played at the course.

Table 8.2: Shennecossett Rounds Played (2007-2008)

Type of Rounds	2007	2008
Daily Green Fee	21,803	21,566
Season Pass	11,936	11,806
Total Rounds Played	33,739	33,372

Source: Town of Groton Shennecossett Golf Course

Staff indicated that while rounds have decreased slightly, increased rates have kept revenues favorable. Increasing rates are more comparable to the market and will allow the course to maintain revenue projections. In 2008, course play remained steady with only a slight decline; in part due to the national economy. Course staff is projecting that FY 2009 daily fee rounds played will be down by around 500, but will be up

for seasonal play. In 2009, course officials indicated they will have to discount rounds, due to the economy, and increase marketing efforts through their point-of-sale system, as well as through highlighting their website, www.Shennygolf.com.

ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT ANALYSIS

Administration

The Department’s general structure of established Division heads for Parks and Forestry, Recreation, Golf and Senior Center is in-line with similar agencies throughout the country. An area of concern may be that there are currently two vacant managing positions in the Parks Division as well as the fact that the Manager of Recreation Services organizes and provides inter-division coordination versus having an Assistant Director do so. Administrative support personnel provide an array of services, from information technology to financial/budget tracking. One issue of concern is the lack of cross-training amongst support staff. This could cause problems if a staff member were sick or unavailable, especially in areas such as computer support and/or purchasing, where negative situations may impact overall agency customer service. As is found in other agencies nationally, there is a lack of consistent policies and procedures throughout the Department. There is a wealth of information that is known throughout the agency but has never been documented. Documentation is needed in case an individual were to leave the Department, so that others know the necessary processes to complete critical tasks.

In regard to the resource needs of the Department, the headquarters of the Administration, the Spicer House, has limited space for housing staff and for more storage. There needs to be a concerted effort to identify sufficient space to have staff work effectively and provide an office that centrally serves the Town populous. Additionally, it would be desirable for the Department to have the ability to use current technologies to make program registration or rentals more customer-friendly. While the Golf Division has the capability to use credit/debit cards, the rest of the Department is unable to process bank cards. Furthermore, while the agency has the ability for web registration/reservations, the processing company charges 5-10% to provide this service.

The Department’s current web page is part of the Town website (www.town.groton.ct.us). While a government website is good for general information, many parks and recreation agencies nationally have “ramped up” department links that include not only registration information, but a unique website that is separate from the general government site, the ability to process credit cards, show video of various activities, stream videos of board meetings or show current weather at

various facilities.

Relative to community interaction, the Department makes great efforts to maintain and build effective partnerships with external affiliated leagues and groups. A challenge appears to be how the Town coordinates with the City of Groton and other areas within the Town (Mystic, Noank, etc.). There is a growing need for the Department to enhance collaborative efforts with these agencies. Public meetings indicated that some residents and affiliated leagues would favor a more unified approach to providing facilities and programs for public use.

Funding accounts for the Department are divided between general fund programs (those that may not recover costs) and the special revenue funds account (programs that are self-sufficient). According to Town management, 80% of programs are operated out of the special revenue accounts.

The need to enhance funding is an issue for parks and recreation agencies throughout the country. The declining economy may have impacts on the Town's future ability to levy and collect tax revenues that fund operations and capital. There is an increasing need to seek alternative funding mechanisms that could enhance Department funding levels, such as grants, foundations, or partnerships.

Special sales tax collections are handled through the State of Connecticut; regardless of whether the fee is imposed at the local level. According to Town management, state finance offices collect revenues then distribute approximately 25% back to the Town of Groton. An analysis of how special taxing structures (lodging, rentals, sin, etc.) could be structured so that more of these dollars are distributed back to the Town would help the Department determine how it could generate more revenues for agency use.

Recreation

The Recreation Division is directed by the Manager of Recreational Services. Some of the major duties of the supervisor include:

- Management of sports and affiliated athletic programming
- Coordination of community center programs
- Manage Town special events
- Management of volunteers
- Coordination of youth programming
- Coordinating use of aquatic facilities owned by others
- Manage current cultural affairs initiatives in the Town

The Division's mix of staff experience provides a good balance of historical perspective as well as an infusion newer person-

nel. As in the administrative support areas, it was mentioned during meetings that there should be more cross-training in order to provide backup if one person is out for an extended period of time.

The public and stakeholders commented that the agency provides a great selection of youth and sports programming. While this may be the case, community input also revealed that there is a strong desire for additional facilities that can accommodate more indoor program space. Further, other feedback favored the addition of multi-purpose fields. An issue that was mentioned is the competing uses at many facilities and/or lack of access. For example, the Town has two Little League franchises that use various parks. Also, due to multi-purpose field demand, Poquonnock Plains Park users, or organizations who would like to use the facility, are denied use during certain times of the season as the result of drainage issues, maintenance, etc.

Another means to expanding services is through the increased use of volunteers. Some areas within the agency appear to use some volunteers (ex: Senior Center), but there could be more opportunities for others to become involved to contribute in-kind services to the Department. A dedicated volunteer coordinator could create volunteer networks and create new opportunities for permanent staff to perform other duties. For example, some parks appear to have some vandalism that deters from the positive image conveyed by the park system. A volunteer coordinator could recruit "park ambassadors" that would visit parks throughout the system and check on conditions, provide visitor information, and be a conduit for patrons to comment to parks and recreation staff.

Volunteers can assist in many areas including reception areas, special events, answering telephones, serving as park ambassador, registration, etc. The "hiring" of three part-time 25-hour volunteers to do miscellaneous duties for the department would create a cost-benefit of around \$30,000 if based upon an hourly rate of \$8 an hour and a 50-week year. These positions could be filled by retired citizens within the community or a stay-at-home parent that is looking for extracurricular activities. This would pay for a majority of the position and allow existing personnel doing these duties to explore new programming opportunities, creating new activities and revenue.

Parks and Forestry

The Parks and Forestry Division is managed by a Parks Foreman. This person has the following major responsibilities:

- Management of all park operations
- Manage and maintain the Town tree canopy
- Management of capital projects and in-house construc-

tion projects

- Manage and maintain all facilities, playgrounds, cemeteries, play-court areas and municipal buildings
- Manage the unit that repairs and maintains all equipment in the agency

Staffing numbers in Parks and Forestry appear adequate with the amount of acres maintained. Park data shows 507 acres of developed parkland and select school areas are maintained by 7.75 full-time maintenance staff. Another 682 acres of natural areas are located in the Town, but this type of area requires less maintenance and some areas are left in a natural state. Seasonal support assists at key times during the year and provides help where needed. Using full-time numbers, the staffing to acres ratio is 65:1. This number significantly higher than other park agencies nationally that strive for a targeted ratio of 20:1.

Analysis of fields and parks reveal that areas are well-maintained although many turf areas are used quite heavily. Facilities like Poquonnock Plains Park and Sutton Park are in good condition, but turf does get used heavily and areas of wear (ex: in front of soccer goals, midfield areas of football fields, etc.) show over time. Many agencies nationally set aside an extended period of time for turf systems to recover, as the Town provides. Staff indicates that recovery of damaged turf areas occurs when needed and at the end of the fall season. This can allow for turf to regenerate in time for the next season's use.

Other types of park and recreation amenities appear to be in good condition, but some may be in need of updating. Older facilities that are maintained by the agency, particularly the school facilities, are in need of new paint and some need accessible areas for the disabled. Lighting and fencing in many parks appears to be in need of upgrade as well. Staff indicated that there may be some issues with regard to vandalism. Some safety concerns were indicated during public meetings but, during park inspection, only limited graffiti and other safety issues were noted.

Another issue is the inability to track maintenance tasks. For example, crews travel to a certain park to mow, weed, repair irrigation, etc. At this time, the Division does not have a time tracking system that allows for park managers or agency leadership to determine a standard for typical types of parks maintenance. Also see the Parks and Forestry section of this report for more information.

Senior Center

Senior programs and facilities are very popular in the Town and the region. Staff indicated that many programs fill with older seniors, rather than Baby Boomer patrons. This "Bommer"

age group tends to participate more in Recreation Division classes.

The new Senior Center will be a welcome addition to the facility inventory. Adding approximately 16,000 square feet of program, storage and office space will alleviate the "cluttered" feel of the current facility. The renovations are to provide more ADA access throughout the center, not only for physically disabled participants but for people with intellectual challenges. However, staff indicated there may be some challenges when construction is occurring. For example, Noank School will be used as a transitional space and some seniors may not adapt to traveling the three miles to the school. In addition, moving the operations to Noank has nearby residents concerned. Many fought the move due to the increased traffic and noise that people thought could occur. Staff indicated that traffic and noise would be limited due to the space restrictions at the facility (maximum 80).

When the new center is completed, Staff would favor extending facility hours and providing more technology classes for patrons. Although with the additional costs of a new center, fees will be a challenge as costs increase in the Town and nationally. Many patrons are on fixed incomes and increased fees for meals, like the annual Thanksgiving Dinner, and some Trips have caused impacts on participation.

Shennecossett Golf Course

Founded in 1898, Shennecossett ("Shenny") has a reputation as one of Connecticut's better golf courses. Once the site of the historic Griswold Hotel, the course has hosted the Connecticut Senior Open for 11 years and hosts many regional and local tournaments. The course is also attempting to create a playable venue for those with physical disabilities. Working with the Connecticut PGA, the course purchased a solo rider golf cart. This cart allows people with physical challenges to play the course.

One issue for course management has been past encroachments. The original 1916 Donald Ross design has been altered due to changes in previous ownership and nearby corporate expansion needs. One of the unique characteristics is the alignment of holes 1 and 10 that require teeing off over Plant Street. The course was purchased by the Town in 1968 and some holes (15, 16, and 17) were realigned in 1998 to accommodate growth for Pfizer, the Town's largest property owner. The Town should protect the land that it currently has at Shenny in order to continue to provide a playable and safe course.

Staff indicates that it uses a variety of mechanisms to secure equipment for both public and staff use. Player golf carts are

leased and new fleets are secured at negotiated times per the lease agreements. Maintenance equipment is mainly purchased and used by the full-time and seasonal workers. An exception to this arrangement is the leasing of a fairway aerator in the short-term with an eventual purchase price of \$1. Town golf staff and purchasing officials may want to continue exploring further alternative purchasing methods that allow flexibility in ownership and provide lease-back/purchase credit opportunities when newer equipment is released on the market.

In regard to the physical infrastructure of the course and its associated facilities, the windows in the pro shop are worn and cause problems for staff. Storage and office space is very cramped and expansion would help with organization of rental clubs, inventory, and office desk areas. The snack bar area has similar issues with regard to storage and the constant need of repairs. The roof, paint, and windows continually need attention. Public Works is responsive but the historic facility is in need of help. The possibility of finding historic building funds to assist in improving the facility may be a way to restore the facility. Parking is difficult at peak times of use. The facility's restaurant and snack bar is used for evening events and, when golfers are still on the course and patrons seek to use the restaurant, parking along Plant Street and other neighborhood streets may cause safety concerns.

Another infrastructure issue is the lack of adequate maintenance storage facilities at the course. Staff, equipment areas, and cart storage are cramped and expansion is needed. There is the potential to add facilities in the space adjacent to the existing pro shop/restaurant facility. This would provide a central facility that would allow access to the front and back nine and provide for convenient cart drop-off and storage.



9. PARKS AND FORESTRY

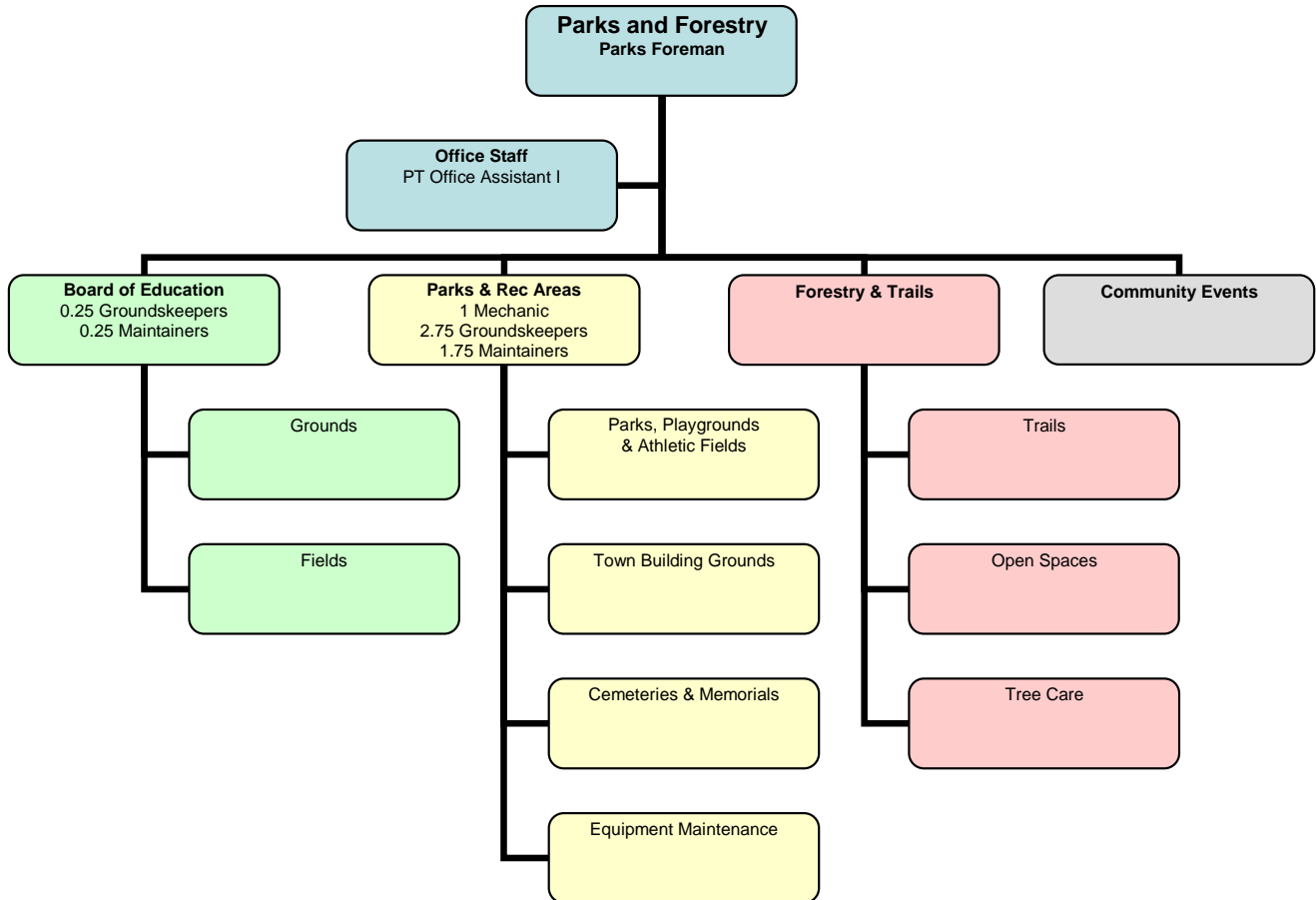


PARKS AND FORESTRY

DIVISION ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Groton Parks and Forestry Maintenance Division is charged with maintaining all parks, common areas, trails, and natural areas throughout the Town. Budget reports document that the Division maintains 68 Town-owned properties. According to Town staff, the Division is made up of 7.75 full-time personnel and 7 part-time employees. The organization structure of the Division is illustrated in Figure 9.1.

Figure 9.1: Parks and Forestry Organizational Structure



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

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

Parks, open space, and natural areas that are owned or managed by the Town total over 1,578 acres; this figure is substantial relative to the Town's population and the number of personnel within the Division who are charged to oversee and maintain these

vast areas.

Of the 1,578 acres, some 254 acres of parks and open space are not maintained by the Division and are maintained by other Departments and agencies (i.e. – Public Works, Groton Public Schools, etc.). Further, many natural areas and park areas have substantial tree canopy; thus reducing some of the demands to maintain parks daily or routinely. Natural area acreage totals approximately 682 acres. Another area not maintained by Parks and Forestry Division is Shennecossett Golf Course, which totals approximately 135 acres.

Division Maintenance

Currently, the Division operates out of a central facility and has roving crews that maintain parks, grounds and specific Town schools. The roving crews are supplemented by part-time/seasonal staff that support the Division during peak season, roughly from April through October.

In 2007, budget documents revealed that the Town spent approximately 21,740 hours maintaining parks, school grounds and other properties. This included maintaining 98 structures in the Town. Table 9.1 illustrates a breakdown of where hours were spent for maintenance tasks in 2007, as well as projections for 2008.

Table 9.1: Maintenance Hours by Amenity

	2007	2008*
Maintenance of Town Properties	17,256	16,776
School Grounds	3,796	3,316
Forestry, Trails and Open Space	688	688

Source: Town of Groton Finance Department * 2008 Estimates

The data indicates that maintenance hours will decrease for the two areas that consume the largest amount of hours. Town property management makes up nearly 80% of hours spent in 2007 with school properties accounting for 17.4%. Forestry, Trails and Open Space hours are estimated to remain the same.

Shennecossett Golf Course Maintenance

While not a part of the Parks and Forestry Division, Shennecossett Golf Course staff maintains and operates the 135-acre facility. Town staff indicates that the course is managed by seven full-time staff and nine part-time workers. Current operations include a pro shop, a privatized restaurant/snack bar, and staff-maintained grounds. The course is

open year-round but has a peak season of play from May to September.

The National Golf Foundation conducted a strategic assessment of golf operations and maintenance at Shennecossett. In regard to maintenance, all strategic recommendations have been addressed and implementation of feasible actions has been implemented or is ongoing.

PARKS AND FORESTRY FUNDING

The annual budget for the Parks and Forestry Division is \$733,774 (2007 estimate). This accounts for 41% of the Department's budget (\$1,774,574). The Division amount includes cost centers that fund the maintenance of school grounds, parks and recreation areas and forestry/open space. Of this amount, approximately 70% funds personnel and related benefits. Table 9.2 represents the budget trends of the Division for the past two years.

Table 9.2: Parks and Forestry Division Budget

	2007	2008*
Personnel Costs	\$1,774,574	\$1,857,255
Operations and Maintenance	\$777,942	\$674,853
Personnel Costs % of Budget	70%	73%

Source: Town of Groton Finance Department *2008 Estimates

As illustrated in the data, the actual operations and maintenance expenses was expected to decrease by 3% between 2007 and 2008; over \$100,000 less than 2007. Personnel costs are slightly above the norm (62-68%) of other agencies studied.

Staffing Ratios and Spending per Acre

Based on the 2008 budget and a current maintained inventory of approximately 642 acres (including the golf course), the Town spends nearly \$1,143 per acre of Town-owned land for maintenance. This does not include acreage included in open space or school parks not being maintained by the Town. The Town Parks and Forestry Division currently has a ratio of approximately 65 acres of maintained park land per full-time maintenance employee for 2008 (based on active maintenance of 504 acres).

Maintenance Standards

The Division currently prescribes to having maintenance staff adhere to "accepted maintenance standards," which are unde-

fined in the 2008 Budget Report. The Town does have written maintenance standards but these are not consistently utilized and/or distributed to staff. These standards should be incorporated into regular communications and staff trainings in order to make the organization more pro-active instead of reactionary, with regard to how the system is managed and maintained.

In his book, *Municipal Benchmarks: Assessing Local Performance and Establishing Community Standards*, David N. Ammons reports that “although every municipality may wish to design its own standards to reflect local preferences and conditions, it need not start from scratch.” Ammons also indicated that a report prepared by a management analysis team in Pasadena, California, concluded that a ratio of one park maintenance employee for every 7-10 acres should produce “A-Level” service—in other words, “a high-frequency maintenance service.” However, he was quick to point out that “standards of the maintenance-employee-per-park-acreage variety and corresponding statistics reported by individual cities, are complicated by the question of developed versus undeveloped park acreage...and therefore should be interpreted cautiously.”

In order to program for maintenance, it is important to understand the time requirements for maintenance operations. One method to gain a better understanding of time requirements is to use established labor ratios. A chart of maintenance labor ratios developed by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) is provided in Table 9.3.

Table 9.3: Labor Ratios for Selected Parks and Recreation Maintenance Activities

Task	Labor Hours
Mowing 1 acre, Flat Medium Terrain at Medium Speed	
20" walking	2.8 per acre
24" walking	2.2 per acre
30" riding	2.0 per acre
72" (6-foot) riding	.35 per acre
Bush Hog	.25 per acre
Trim	
Gas Powered (weed eater)	1.0 per 1,000 linear ft.
Planting Grass	
Cut and Plant Sod by Hand (1.5' strips)	1.0 per 1,000 sq. ft.
Cut and Plant Sprigs by Hand (not watered)	10.9 per 1,000 linear ft.
Seed, by hand	.5 per 1,000 sq. ft.
Overseeding, reconditioning	.8 per acre
Fertilize Turf	
24" sifter/spreader	.16 per 1,000 sq.. ft.
Hand-push spreader 36"	2.96 per acre
Tractor-towed Spreader, 12"	.43 per acre
Weed Control	
Spraying herbicide w/fence line truck, tank sprayer, 2 ft.. wide, 1" within fence	.45 per 1,000 sq.. ft.
Leaf Removal	
Hand-rake leaves	.424 per 1,000 sq.. ft.
Vacuum 30"	.08 per 1,000 sq.. ft.

Task	Labor Hours
Planting Trees	
Plant Tree, 5-6 ft.. height	.44 per tree
Plan tree, 2-3.5" diameter	1 per tree
Tree Removal	
Street Tree Removal	13 per tree
Street Tree Stump Removal	3.5 per tree
Park Tree Removal	5 per tree
Park Tree Stump Removal	2 per tree

Source: NRPA

PARKS AND FORESTRY ANALYSIS

The Division maintains its park facilities to a very high level in comparison to other agencies throughout the country. The Town does not irrigate all of its sports fields, which is unique considering the amount of play they receive. However, given the Division's impressive maintenance efforts and the region's climate, these facilities are generally in great condition.

The maintenance Division is stretched thin with the amount of grounds it must manage or maintain. School facility maintenance accounts for 17% of Division's operational dollars. Although the maintenance of these facilities is contracted out and managed by the Town, this task requires management and monitoring that takes resources away from maintaining Town-owned recreation spaces.

Prioritizing maintenance areas is something the Division should consider. Utilizing the data provided in the Inventory and Mapping Analysis Section of the report, the Division could use the assigned maintenance scores to classify and "grade" the parks based upon the amount of resources necessary to maintain the facilities. For example, due to the great levels of play at Poquonnock Plains Park, this park may be a "Level 1" park with regard to higher levels of maintenance versus Bel Aire Park, which may be a "Level 3" with regards to maintenance frequency. The Level does not reflect the importance of a property, merely the level of play, visitors, and programs that occur within it.

The Division's acre to staff ratio (65:1) is very high when compared to industry norms (20:1) and best practice agencies (12:1). This is in part due to the Division's charge to maintain all Town-owned grounds. This takes the focus away from maintaining recreation and park lands that need attention and specialized care. As facilities and trails are developed, and parks and open space areas are added, an increased burden of care will be placed upon the Parks and Forestry Division to adequately maintain these areas.

Staff Training

As additional maintenance staff is hired, it will be important that personnel are cross-trained, in more than one facet of the job. For example, it would be beneficial for a Parks and Forestry maintenance worker who may not currently be certified as a spray technician to gain these credentials in case another employee is not available to do such a task. Likewise, an employee who primarily mows should be able to prepare a ball field as well.

It is also important to consider staff's training to maintain parks and facilities that may be developed and added to Groton's park and recreation system in the future. For example, survey results and public input determined the public desires for more trails. With the potential need to provide enhanced connectivity through paved and greenway areas, it will be important to have staff trained to maintain these unique resources as well as the necessary equipment and supplies.

Division budget numbers have decreased substantially in the areas of operations and maintenance in comparison to personnel costs. Personnel increases are normally attributed to cost of living adjustments (COLA's) and are in line with norms. Department supplies and equipment budgets decreased by over \$100,000 in 2008; impacting the Division's capabilities to continue to provide the high level of maintenance the community has come to expect and possibly affecting long-term conditions in parks and recreation areas.

Maintenance Standards

Recreation management indicates that the Department has written maintenance standards. Standards provide the agency with directives on how to mow specific types of turf, when to clean restrooms, and how to check and maintain playground areas for example. This document helps the agency manage and budget for annual maintenance and staff for those activities.

Standards need to be updated as conditions and facilities are added to the inventory. For example, if different paved trail sections are developed throughout the Town, maintenance standards should address how often these areas are cleaned and checked and formulate a basis for maintenance cost per linear foot or mile.

Shennecossett Golf Course Maintenance

The NGF study conducted in 2005 has produced many favorable outcomes as they relate to the playability of Shennecossett as well as creating methods to change some operational tendencies. Both Town management and the Golf Advisory Board (GAB) indicate that implementing the proposed NGF study strategies has led to favorable opinions of Shenny amongst course users and Town residents.

Course conditions appear to be good. In 1998 a major route change occurred on the back nine that added holes 15, 16 and 17, and reconfigured several other holes on the course. The change, a land swap related to Pfizer's expansion, created the signature hole for the course (16). Since this time, irrigation was added to completely water the entire course. This has led to better play according to the public and GAB.

Staffing at the course is year-round, with a majority of part-time hours spent during the peak season (May through September). Golf administrative staff indicates that during peak season part-time maintenance hours average around 25 per week. Staff indicates there are no part-time hours during off-season months. Structural maintenance and other repairs are handled during down times. No seasonal employees work in the off season.

10. INVENTORY AND CONDITIONAL ASSESSMENTS

Groton Town Beach



INVENTORY AND CONDITIONAL ANALYSIS

INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

Groton residents also benefit from facilities and open space owned and maintained by State, Federal and private entities. Two interconnected state parks provide more 1,000 acres of coastal open space, and approximately 30 coastal access points are state designated. The Naval Submarine Base operates recreation facilities and programs for Naval personnel who mostly reside in the Town and two local land trusts own properties with trails open to the public.

The Town's indoor programs are conducted at a vacated elementary school, the Groton Senior Center and the state-owned Mystic Education Center facility.

INVENTORY PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY

The Inventory of the Groton Parks and Recreation system was completed and compiled in three steps:

- Preliminary mapping and identification of assets, based on aerial photography.
- Site visits and evaluation of the condition of both indoor and outdoor recreation facilities (completed in November 2008).
- Processing and evaluating the results of site visit evaluations, as well as an assessment of the maintenance resources required (provided by staff).

The first step of the inventory process included the assembly of a map series of all of the Town of Groton's park and recreation facilities, including both indoor and outdoor spaces, using Groton's GIS base data. These maps were used to identify the visible primary assets within each outdoor park facility, such as playgrounds, multi-purpose fields, open turf areas and other major amenities.

The second step of the process was to visit and evaluate all of the facilities, which was completed in November 2008. This visit included a comprehensive inventory which verified the accuracy of the mapping, noting the removal of any assets or additional primary asset facilities the aerial image did not show. Each park evaluation included evaluation and ranking of the primary assets (those amenities for which residents would specifically come to park or facility to use), such as playgrounds, ball fields, picnic pavilions, loop trails, etc. as well as secondary assets.

The secondary assets, including items such as seating, bike racks, restroom facilities, etc. are considered assets which enhance a user's experience but are not features of the park or indoor facility which are typically the primary reason for use of the facility. A standard list of typical secondary assets was created prior to the site visit, and while on-site each element on the list was evaluated, based on the following criteria:

- Does a facility with the existing primary assets and of this size, need this secondary asset? If it is not present, should it be?
- Is there a sufficient number of each secondary asset present for a facility of this size and capacity?
- Is this secondary asset located appropriately within the facility for convenient use by the public?
- Is this secondary asset operational and functional, or should it be repaired or replaced?

In addition to tangible features in the list of secondary assets, categories which were more of an evaluation of the broad "sense of place" or overall function of the facility's design were also included. These broad categories were evaluated by assessing the overall facility, access, as well as the site's setting. Both the primary and secondary assets were evaluated on a scale of 1 to 5. Also see Appendix B for additional information.

- 5 = A primary asset which meets the needs of the community in a manner significantly above the average of park amenities in Hanford and is of excellent quality and

condition.

A secondary asset which more than adequately serves the needs of the users of the facility, based on condition and/or quantity. No additions or enhancements are necessary in either asset level; however, continued maintenance to maintain this elevated level of service is required.

- 4 = A primary asset which provides above-average service to the community and is of great quality and condition.
A secondary asset which serves the needs of the users of the facility in an above-average manner, based on the condition and/or quantity.
- 3 = A primary asset which adequately meets the needs of the community and is of average quality and condition.
A secondary asset which adequately serves the needs of the users of the facility, condition and quantity are at an acceptable level. Enhancements or additional quantities may be appropriate for either asset level, but are not necessary.
- 2 = a primary asset which is nearly inadequate at meeting the needs of the community and is of below-average quality and condition.
- 1 = A primary asset which is significantly below average in meeting the needs of the community, and is significantly below average in quality and condition.
A secondary asset which does not adequately serve the needs of the users of the facility. In both categories, the amenity may be unusable or already removed but not replaced with this ranking. For secondary assets, In most cases, additional quantities or improvements is recommended.
- 0 = Either a primary asset which is significantly below average in meeting the needs of the community, because of it is dangerous in quality and condition or a secondary asset that needs to be added to the facility in order to adequately serve it's users. If the primary amenity has this score, it is a hazard and needs to be removed or replaced.
- X = Some secondary assets show an X instead of a ranking in the evaluation matrices. This indicates that the asset is not present and is not necessary for the facility, and therefore not evaluated.

As a follow-up to the consultant team's evaluation, the Norris Design team reviewed and finalized the data with Town staff, including any necessary corrections and input of missing data into the GIS Database.

The following descriptions are organized according to the three principal categories of park types found in the Town of Groton. Natural Resource parcels are described in the first section, community parks and facilities with specialized or unique programming (including indoor uses) in the second section, and neighborhood parks and school grounds in the

third.

NATURAL RESOURCE AREAS – PROTECTED OPEN SPACE

Inventory

The Town of Groton owns several parcels of open space that were acquired with the express purpose of environmental preservation and recreational use. The five largest parcels (more than 40 acres) were evaluated for this report. One parcel, the Johl property, was not evaluated since it is largely a wetland area and inaccessible. The following parcels were evaluated through GIS and on-the-ground investigation:

- Copp Property – 227.02 acres (classified as a community park / natural resource area)
- Beebe Pond Park – 100.58 acres (classified as a natural resource area)
- Pequot Woods – 232.89 acres (classified as a natural resource area)
- River Road Park – 39.84 acres (classified as a natural resource area)
- Wright Property – 80.69 acres (classified as a natural resource area)

Of the five Town-owned Natural Resource Area parcels, the Copp Property is the only one with a formalized parking area and a developed amenity – Central Bark, a dog park. Copp Property is also unique because its former use as a farm is still evident with areas of open fields, stone walls and farm roads that serve as the park's trail network. As relics of its former use, the existing trails do not form an optimum and legible network. Approximately one half of the property is composed of woodlands without recognizable trails. The dog park is well utilized, especially on summer weekends, and the improved parking area with signage, trash receptacles and port-a-let has attracted more hikers to the trails.

Beebe Pond Park's 100.58 acres is enhanced by adjacent open space owned by a land trust and a middle school resulting in a contiguous open space that connects a number of surrounding streets. The only designated parking area on Noank Road is unimproved and can accommodate only 4 – 6 cars. Within the park is a shallow former ice pond that is popular for ice skating when weather permits. A rugged loop trail around the pond intersects trails that connect to the Moore Property owned by the Avalonia Land Trust, Capstan Avenue, Judson Avenue and to Cutler Middle School property. In addition to the pond, the park's environmental attributes include a mature hardwood forest, old stone walls and glacial deposits of large boulders. A remaining stone wall (ruins of an ice house) below the pond's breached dam indicates the land's former use.



Copp Property

Pequot Woods has a well designed trail network and is accessible from a small unimproved parking area/trailhead on Sandy Hollow Road at the north edge of the park and from a trailhead on Route One at the south edge. There is no parking at the south trail head but visitors can park at a cemetery approximately 700 feet west on Route One. Trails within the park are well signed, a former homestead is identified and neighborhoods to the east and west are connected to the primary trail with spur trails. These adjacent neighborhoods have also contributed open space to the park through required subdivision set-asides. Erosion has severely damaged a sloped section of the main loop trail. The park's environmental attributes include a mature hardwood forest covering the entire property, a beaver pond and brook crossed by original stone and new wooden bridges. The stone bridges (large flat slabs laid across a narrow channel), stone walls and the homestead site indicate the land's former use.

The 80.69-acre Wright Property with two narrow strips of frontage on Groton Long Point Road has no parking areas, identifiable access points, or identifying signage. Trails are unplanned and fragmentary. A citizen initiative to establish a loop trail on the Wright property is ongoing and will connect trails to the abutting 75 acre Merritt Forest recently purchased by the Groton Open Space Association. Both tracts are fully wooded with mature hardwoods and create an unbroken corridor of open space from Haley Farm State Park south of Wright property to the Beebe Pond Park north of the Merritt Forest. Trail use in Merritt Forest has been restricted to hikers only. The Wright property and Beebe Pond allow pedestrians, equestrians and bike riders.

The 39.84-acre River Road tract is fully wooded with mature

hardwoods and has frontage on River Road and a narrow strip of coastal wetland on the Mystic River. Similar to Wright Property, there is no parking area, identifiable access points, or identifying signage. Trails are also unplanned and fragmentary. The property abuts the State-owned Mystic Education Center.

In addition to these properties, the state of Connecticut owns two connected coastal open space parks, Haley Farm State Park (241 acres) and Bluff Point State Park and Coastal Reserve (790 acres) (both of which were not evaluated as part of this master plan). Both parks allow passive recreation and have extensive trail networks. Bluff Point is the largest coastal reserve in Connecticut and one of the largest protected natural resource areas on the eastern seaboard. Bluff Point and Haley Farm attract visitors from the across the region for hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding, picnicking, bird watching and cross country skiing. Bluff Point also attracts fishermen, clamming, kayaking and includes a half mile long beach approximately one mile from the parking area.

Analysis

The Groton area's open space inventory is greatly enhanced by the Haley Farm and Bluff Point. These two connected State parks contain miles of multi-use trails and undeveloped shoreline. The vast majority of Groton residents seeking passive recreation experiences utilize one or both State Parks instead of Town of Groton lands. The State has historically underfunded the maintenance of its state parks and both Haley Farm and Bluff Point show signs of trail erosion, and high use. Better utilization of the Town of Groton's natural resource areas could relieve some of these pressures on the State parks. The Town's Bicycle, Pedestrian & Trails Master Plan (BP&T Master Plan) also indicates a network of trails through the Town's dedicated open space properties, other Town-owned lands,



Bluff Point State Park

and undeveloped private land that may be worth considering for acquisition or access easements. The principal objective of the BP&T Master Plan is the creation of an interconnected recreation and transportation network for pedestrians, bicyclists and other trail users that would expand and enhance recreational and quality of life benefits for town residents.

Mountain biking is a growing activity that occurs in the area almost exclusively at Haley Farm and Bluff Point. Many communities have worked with organizations like the New England Mountain Bike Association (NEMBA) to build dedicated mountain bike trail systems that are environmentally sustainable and challenging to users. The Town of Groton has sufficient land that could support such trails and reduce some of the pressure on the State park trails.

Due to its large area of level upland, Copp Property has high suitability for more intensive recreational development. The balance of hilly woodland also has a high suitability for trails. With exception of the dog park, the park is currently an underutilized resource. Its size, physical attributes, and central location on a major cross-town highway make it an attractive candidate for a combination of programmed athletic facilities and resource-based passive recreation.

Other properties like River Road Park and the Wright Property are virtually unused for recreational purposes. Basic amenities like designated access points, small parking areas, park and directional signage and designated trails would improve the availability of natural resource-based passive recreation for town residents.

One group underserved by the Town's open space areas are physically handicapped users. With exception of the Bluff Point State Park's main trail and a short section in Haley Farm, there

are no handicap accessible trails into natural resource areas throughout the Town. The Poquonnock River Boardwalk can accommodate wheelchair users, but was not designed with wheelchairs in mind and thus there are no unimpeded views or areas to pause or turn around.

Other natural resource properties occur in Groton that are not included in this analysis. Some are subdivision set-asides required by the Town's subdivision ordinance. They range from small, inaccessible wetlands to much larger parcels like the 76 acre Deerfield Park. Historically, most subdivision set-asides in Groton are largely unbuildable areas with high environmental value like wetlands and steep slopes. Some of these include small active areas in an upland area that may typically include open turf and play equipment.

Additional open land occurs on school grounds (Cutler Middle School contains 24 acres of woodland), and in a variety of places around the Town. Aside from environmental and zoning constraints, these lands do not carry open space protection. Some privately held open space is accessible to the public. For example, the Avalonia Land Trust owns the 25 acre Moore Woodland adjacent to the Town's Beebe Pond Park and Groton Open Space Association owns the 75 acre Merritt Family Forest adjacent to the Town's Wright property (private open space parcels were not evaluated as part of this master plan).

COMMUNITY PARKS

Inventory

Community Parks in the Town of Groton include a variety of facilities including ball fields, playgrounds, picnic areas and specialized facilities. Poquonnock Plains Park and neighboring Sutton Park constitute the core of outdoor athletic and recreational facilities in Groton with facilities like the Tercentennial Playground and Skate Park that attract regional visitors. Farquhar Field and the Library Recreation Field are smaller parks with facilities that attract users from the entire area.

The 15.87-acre **Poquonnock Plains Park** site is located just east of Groton's commercial district on US Route One on a level coastal plain. The park is bordered by a neighborhood, Claude Chester Elementary School and Route One. The park has good access with the primary vehicular entrance on Route One controlled by a traffic signal, and a secondary vehicular access point at the elementary school. Pedestrian access is available from the Route One sidewalk, a paved walkway to the north edge of the elementary school grounds and into the abutting neighborhood. The park contains three full size sports fields surrounded by a popular half-mile long stone dust path. The easternmost field is used for youth football and



River Road Park



Poquonnock Plains Park

includes permanent goal posts and a press box/storage building.

A popular new facility is the Tercentennial Playground that opened in the fall of 2008. Other amenities include a concession/restroom/storage building, benches spaced along the walking path and a water fountain. The sports fields are used for youth and adult soccer, lacrosse, football, and when fields are uncommitted, informal uses are allowed. The western edge of the park is notable for the immense granite ledge that runs the length of the boundary and includes a mature stand of hardwood trees. This feature screens the school and has been mentioned by Town staff as a potential picnic area for park users. The Parking lot is gravel and overflow parking is on the grass. A popular event held at the park is the Annual Groton Fall Festival.

Sutton Park consists of two principal areas: the north area containing the skatepark, picnic shelters, and basketball court; the south area containing a softball field and little league field. A narrow strip just wide enough for the access road connects the two areas. Fort Hill Brook borders the park on the west and the Midway neighborhood borders the park on the east.



Sutton Park

To the south of the park is the Grasso Tech High School track and athletic fields. A gate allows vehicular access between the two properties. Mature hardwoods shade much of the north area. The park's entrance driveway combines with the High School's driveway and is controlled by a traffic signal at Route One. A paved walkway enters the site from Route One and a pedestrian gate allows access from the adjacent neighborhood.

The skate park in the north area of Sutton Park was implemented through a grassroots campaign by local youths and private benefactors, but is maintained by the Town of Groton. It is a regionally popular facility. Two picnic shelters, tables and grills are located adjacent to the skate park. The smaller shelter is quite old and in disrepair. A playground adjacent to the newer, larger shelter is well used. Horseshoe pits compliment the picnic setting. At the time of the inventory a restroom building located on the east edge of the park and behind the skate park was closed due to repeated vandalism; replacement port-a-lets have been located on the corner of the parking area. The basketball court is in very good condition and has lighting. The north area of the park includes parking lot lighting, plus the same fixtures around the edges of the skate park. The southern area of Sutton Park contains two ball fields with excellent turf and serviceable support facilities. The separate concession and restroom buildings are very old and in need of replacement. The ball fields are not lighted, which limits play to daylight hours. The paved parking is inadequate, but a sufficient grass area accommodates additional parking for all events.



Skate Park at Sutton Park

Farquhar Field includes a baseball field, basketball court, playground and two tennis courts. The tennis court surfaces have structural damage, but are occasionally used. The only other Town-owned tennis courts are at Fitch High School and have limited availability for public use.

The **Library Recreation Field** includes the open area between the Library and the Groton Senior Center. A roller blade hockey court and a small practice field for youth soccer occupy this area. The hockey court attracts skaters from throughout the region and was recently shifted to make way for the Senior Center expansion.

Analysis

Poquonnock Plains Park is well maintained and heavily used. The walking path is very popular for both specific trail users and for those who attend the park for their children's activities. The field turf is maintained in excellent condition, especially considering the high level of use. The site is so flat that heavy rains cause drainage problems on the southeast corner of the site, saturating an area of playing field and impeding the walking path. The gravel parking area often exceeds capacity and an adjacent grass area has been striped with turf paint to indicate parking spaces.

Sutton Park accommodates a number of divergent uses in a small area. This has resulted in a well used park with both problems and opportunities. Some facilities such as the restrooms and concession/press boxes are outdated and are subject to chronic vandalism. The proximity of the skatepark to the picnic area can be a source of conflict among users. Pedestrian circulation could be improved to include connections to Poquonnock Plains Park across Route One and the planned multi-use trail connection to Lily Lane and Haley Farm State Park. Additionally, parking could be situated to better serve as overflow parking for Poquonnock Plains Park during times of high use.

Groton's community parks contain assets that are well used by residents and attract visitors from the surrounding region. The majority of park elements are well maintained, but certain facilities have deteriorated beyond repair or have become obsolete. Poquonnock Plains, Sutton Park and Farquhar Field offer potential for new or reorganized amenities.

SPECIAL USE FACILITIES

Inventory

A park that attracts users from throughout the community to a particular amenity or activity is described in this master plan as a Special Use Facility. In the Town of Groton, these include the baseball complex at Burrows Field, Esker Point Beach, the Jabez Smith Homestead, Noank Town Dock and the boating facilities at Spicer Park. Groton also owns and maintains a wide variety of sites that are indicative of the unique culture and geography of the area, including colonial period cemeteries, war memorials, a municipal golf course on the former grounds of a grand hotel, a riverside boardwalk and an overlook park

for viewing the first nuclear submarine. Some of these sites such as the cemeteries and some of the memorials are not included in this master plan.

Burrows Field Park includes a heavily-used Little League field and a boat ramp access point for the Poquonnock River. The field and its support assets are in good condition. Yet, use is limited to daylight hours since there is no field lighting.

Esker Point Beach and Waterfront Park takes its name from the glacial deposit of gravel known as an "esker" that runs along the west side of the park and shelters the beach from the rougher waters of Fisher's Island Sound. The park occupies both sides of Groton Long Point Road just east of the causeway leading to the community of Groton Long Point (GLP). The north side contains a 2.5 acre parking area, two basketball goals on the north edge of the lot, and a narrow water front park on the eastern shore of Palmer Cove. The waterfront park was developed in 2005 to provide kayak/canoe access and includes benches, picnic tables, a stone dust path, signage and a port-a-let. A cross walk over GLP Road, provides pedestrian access from the parking lot to the beach area.

The beach includes approximately 2 acres of sand with 400 lineal feet of beach frontage. The sand is well maintained and transitions to submerged silt on a gradual descent into the calm water of Smith Cove. The Town does not provide life guards and a concession/restroom building with an exterior deck is operated by a seasonal vendor. A grove of hardwood trees adjacent to the beach shelters a picnic area containing tables and grills. In the open sand north of the beach-front are eight volleyball nets used by an adult summer league and the public. During the summer, the popular Groton Summer SoundWaves Concert Series occurs on Thursday evenings,



Esker Point Beach

filling the beach and picnic area with concert-goers.

The **Jabez Smith Homestead** is a Town-owned facility operated by the Groton Historical Society. The 2.49-acre site includes the original house and interior furnishings. The property is one of the original land grants from the King of England and its title remained within the Nehemiah Smith family until conveyance to the Town. A professional curator resides in the house and conducts tours and programs.

The **Noank Town Dock** offers residents and visitors access to the bank of the Mystic River at the foot of Main Street. A recently renovated dock allows tie-up for skiffs and a tiny sand beach is used mostly by local families. The site was fully renovated in 2007 with curbing, lighting, benches and signage.

The Spicer House grounds (**Spicer Park**) serves as a park for the surrounding Noank neighborhoods and as a boating facility for all Town of Groton residents. The protected water of Beebe Cove offers a setting for sculling and rowing. The Fitch High School Rowing Club uses the facility as a practice site and the boat house provides storage for shells.



Spicer Park

The **Shennecossett Golf Course** is 135 acre, 18-hole golf course that is a primary amenity and regional draw for the Town of Groton.

The 2000 foot long **Poquonnock River Boardwalk** provides for a scenic stroll and a convenient route for bike commuters. It is an important link in a planned east-west bike route.

Analysis

Esker Point Beach occupies an exceptional site on the edge of Fisher's Island Sound providing residents and visitors with

swimming, sunbathing, kayaking, picnicking and other recreational opportunities. Views of West Cove and its mooring field, Palmer Cove, and surrounding shorelines provide a compelling destination for the public. The park displays a mix of new and old facilities. The concession building seems to serve its seasonal purpose adequately, but suffers from an antiquated appearance of whitewashed concrete block walls. Since the backside of the building faces the street, its appearance could be improved by landscaping. Additionally, the parking lot could be greatly improved by infilling with landscape islands that better delineate internal circulation and absorb storm water. Since the parking lot is only filled to capacity during summer concerts, reduction of the paved area in favor of other uses may be worth consideration. Other areas are worthy of improvement include the crossing at GLP Road, which needs better legibility and improved approaches on both sides; additional amenities such as a playground may be desirable; the geology of the site and ecology of the surrounding estuaries could be interpreted through signage or other means.

Groton's other special use facilities play an important role in the park system. The Jabez Smith Homestead, Noank Town Dock, and Spicer Park are unique assets that reflect the Town's history while providing important contemporary value.

INDOOR FACILITIES

Inventory

William Seely Elementary School – Groton Parks and Recreation uses the William Seely School, a Groton Public School District facility, as its primary recreation facility and community center. The facility is located on the east side of town and includes five programmed classrooms (used primarily for fitness and dance), a gymnasium, gymnastics facilities, as well as support amenities including a customer service desk and restrooms.

As discussed in the Programs and Services section of the report, this facility serves as a location for an immense variety of programs, from karate, to gymnastics and public meetings. However, this vacated school is quite dated and is being used for activities it was not designed or intended for. The functional limitations of this facility have restricted the types of programs that the Town is able to offer.

Mystic Education Center - Groton Parks and Recreation utilizes the Mystic Education Center Pool, a state-owned facility, for thirty hours a week to provide an assortment of aquatic programming for the community. The facility is located on the northwest side of town and includes a 6-lane, 25 yard pool, gymnasium, a multi-purpose game room, handball/racquetball court, an auditorium, customer service desk, lounge and

locker rooms. This facility is quite dated, most amenities are in moderate to poor condition and it has significant programming limitations.

Groton Senior Center is a 15,000 square foot facility located in the south central area of town. Its location provides easy access to all Groton residents over the age of 55. A bond referendum was recently passed with strong support for a 16,000 square foot addition and renovation of the Groton Senior Center that is currently underway and will be completed in May of 2010. The newly renovated center will include a nurse's room, a hair salon, hobby shop, physical therapy room, conference room, music room, ceramics studio, arts and crafts room, game room, fitness/dance space, kitchen, lounge, multi-purpose



Senior Center

room, as well as support amenities such as offices, restrooms, locker rooms and a customer service desk.

Analysis

In addition to the indoor facilities, the principal amenity on the grounds of the William Seely Elementary School that is used by the public is a playground near the front of the building. An older playground on the side of the building is rarely used. A ball field on the east side of the building appears little used, has sub-standard turf and a moderate slope.

The Mystic Education Center does not function well for all types of aquatics programs, especially for competitive swim teams (due to the fact that the pool is 89 degrees, while the desired temperature for a competitive aquatic facility is 77-82 degrees.) The lack of functionality of the existing facility is widely recognized. Furthermore, the demand for aquatics programs exceeds the hours of use that the Town has available.

On the grounds of the Mystic Education Center, turf fields are

not well graded but are sufficient to serve as sports practice fields. The grounds are surrounded by mature hardwoods and abut the River Road Open Space. There is great potential for recreation facility enhancement but the future status of the State-owned property is uncertain.

Currently, most amenities within the Groton Senior Center are in moderate condition. However, upon completion of the renovation and addition, this will become a modern facility that can truly support the regional draw and high demand for programs and services that the Division has consistently and historically experienced.

NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS

Inventory

The Town of Groton system possesses 15 sites classified as neighborhood parks, which provide service to those within a ½ mile radius of the park. These are typically associated with neighborhoods developed under the Town's subdivision regulations since 1960. The Bel Aire Park is one of the best examples. It contains a playground, basketball court, benches and open turf area. Some of the neighborhood parks have few amenities other than open turf. The average amenities of a neighborhood park are a turf area large enough for a pick-up soccer game, a playground or some play equipment, and a stone dust path connecting the closest street to the play area. Most of the neighborhood parks include some wooded natural areas. Other parks meet the criteria of a neighborhood park, as well as attracting users from across the town. All parks classified as "neighborhood" are within or adjacent to a residential area and are easily accessible on foot or bike and most do not include vehicular parking.

Analysis

Groton's neighborhood parks are primarily the result of subdivision development since the 1960's. Given the age of the community, some neighborhoods that predate this period do not have access to a dedicated neighborhood park. Many of the Groton school grounds however, also function as neighborhood parks and provide a neighborhood park for the surrounding neighborhood. S.B. Butler Elementary School is a good example of this. All of the Town's elementary schools contain high quality playgrounds, ball fields and basketball courts that are available for public use under informal guidelines after hours, on weekends and during the summer. The middle schools contain ball fields and basketball courts (Cutler Middle School contains two tennis courts). Certain school grounds with higher quality ball fields are also used by youth sports organizations for practices and games.

II. GIS MAPPING AND SPATIAL ANALYSIS

Main Street, looking East. Mason's Island in the distance, Nantux, Conn.



MAPPING AND SPATIAL ANALYSIS

GIS-BASED INVENTORY AND LEVEL OF SERVICE (LOS) ANALYSIS METHODOLOGY

A project of this nature lends itself well to a digital, Geographic Information System (GIS)-based property and primary asset inventory. GIS permits the rapid assembly of mapped materials and spatial analysis related to the properties, primary asset inventory, demographics, and other attributes.

GIS Data Gathering Process

The Norris Design project team received the GIS base data for the Town of Groton, Connecticut, directly through the Town's GIS department. The Town was able to supply the team with the following GIS-based data layers:

- Assessors Parcels
- Corporate Limits (Groton, Noank, Long Point)
- Lands Owned by Town of Groton (secondary query requested from the consultant)
- Land Use
- Public School Locations
- Road Centerlines
- Surface Water Features
- Town Limits (Groton, surrounding)
- Trails and Bikeways (Exiting and Envisioned/Planned)
- Zoning

The Town data layers were supplemented with a color, geo-referenced aerial image (2004 flight). The high quality imagery had a ground resolution of 6 inches. This imagery generally provided high resolution detail of all primary assets within the Town's system.

Additional base data was created and/or brought in by the consultant team to enhance the data provided by the Town GIS. The additional layers included:

- Radius-based road network enhancement for cartographic products
- Barrier analysis data used within the analysis
- Indoor recreation facilities
- Enhanced, polygon-based park and school attribution

The additional layers created by the Norris Design team comply with the spatial data standards employed in the Town GIS system. At the completion of the Master Plan process, this data will be supplied to the Town staff for acceptance and long-term use within their GIS network in ArcMap ready format. A detailed database of this data gathering effort will be

delivered in MS Office Excel workbook format. The workbook contains the formulas required for future score and asset updates related to each location.

The Norris Design team created a park and recreation facility atlas, detailing the known primary assets and boundary of each outdoor recreation location. Limitations related to the aerial image ground resolution were overcome through the field visit process conducted by the team. All primary assets were reviewed in the field for location accuracy, assessed in regard to condition and maintenance and then were catalogued into the GIS database. Once the inventory was deemed complete by the Norris Design team – it was submitted to Town staff for review and approval. The asset inventory is current as of January 2009. Also see Appendix B for these inventory sheets.

The Norris Design team assembled the data layers and aerial photograph within ESRI's ArcMap™ 9.2 software. ArcMap was employed for all data creation, the inventory MapBook, and spatial analysis. Additionally, Photoshop and InDesign were used for standard document cartography. The use of this software is widely accepted and is standard for all GIS-based projects.

GIS Analysis

Following the primary data gathering process, the data was used to generate a series of additional GIS-based analytical layers and maps used to determine radius-based Level of Service (LOS) coverage for indoor and outdoor recreation facilities for each location. The LOS analysis included the cumulative relationship of each facility's location, service area, and conditional assessment scores - resulting in a variety of maps detailing the Town's cumulative and average LOS.

Each park classification was assigned a radius service area, which were largely guided by NRPA standards, with customizations made based on the land area of the Town of Groton.

- Mini Parks – Quarter Mile
- Neighborhood Parks – Half Mile
- Community Parks – 3 Miles
- Special Use Facilities – 3 Miles
- School Parks – Half Mile
- Indoor Facilities – 3 Miles
- Golf Course – 3 Miles
- Grounds – Half Mile
- Historic Marker – Eighth mile
- Trail – Half Mile

TOWN OF GROTON MAPPING AND SPATIAL ANALYSIS

Overview - Cumulative Level of Service Maps

Maps B, C, D, and E, were created by graphically illustrating the cumulative scores for each park and indoor facility in the conditional assessment and inventory performed by the Norris Design team. Public schools are also included in the mapping of services at a reduced conditional assessment of 30% (which is half of the adequate score of 60%), since the public's access to their amenities is limited (with no use during school hours). The cumulative scores for each component were used to create a percent evaluation of each park or facilities' total maximum score (i.e. - 60.0% out of 100% = adequate).

These maps illustrate the cumulative Level of Service (LOS) provided to the different geographic areas of the Town, based on the overall conditional assessment of parks and recreational facilities and the overlay of these facilities' service areas (see GIS Analysis Section of the report). Areas with higher LOS (green) have a greater quantity and quality of parks and recreational facilities. Areas with lower LOS (red) have less access to adequate parks and recreational facilities, based on their geographic location.

One item to note is that while a geographic area may have many facilities within proximity to it, if the cumulative quality (conditional assessment) of the multiple facilities is low then the overall area will have a lower level of service. The same also applies if an area has a higher density of adequate or above adequate parks, then the overall LOS in the area in proximity to those parks will be high.

Overview - Average Level of Service Insets

The insets within Maps B, C, D and E illustrate the average Level of Service across the various geographic areas of the Town, based on the highest possible cumulative conditional assessment score in comparison with the actual cumulative conditional assessment of all indoor and outdoor facilities for each area. The analysis provides a simplified view of the general (average) level of service, regardless of concentrations from multiple, neighboring recreation locations.

Areas where the average falls below the desired LOS should be targeted for potential improvements to existing parks and recreation facilities and/or creation of additional recreation locations. However, it is important to note that deficient areas may also fall within locations where improved or additional services are not required or justified – such as industrial or agricultural areas.

Table II.1 illustrates the overall assessment scores for each park and facility within the Town's park and recreation system.

Table II.1: Groton Conditional Assessments by Facility and Classification

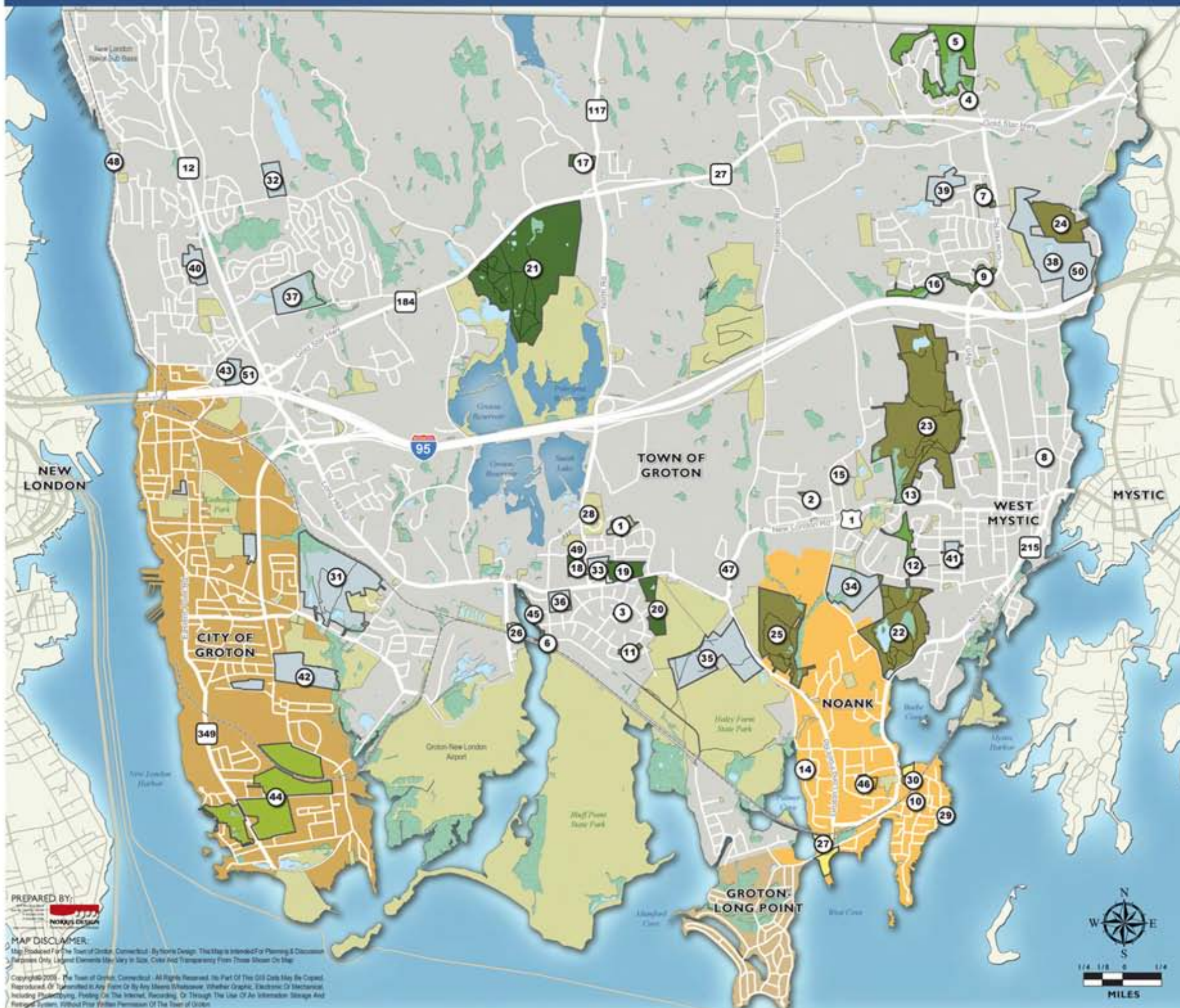
Classification	Name of Facility	Acres	Primary Asset Score	Support Asset Score	Overall Score
Mini Park	Ring Drive Recreation Area	8.72	70.00%	60.00%	67.50%
	Bel Aire Park	3.43	80.00%	83.33%	80.83%
	Central Park	3.53	75.00%	63.33%	72.08%
	Deerfield Extension	1.99	40.00%	66.67%	46.67%
	Deerfield Park	76.46	58.00%	66.67%	60.17%
	Depot Road Playground	2.91	66.67%	81.48%	70.37%
	Field Crest	6.62	75.00%	47.62%	68.15%
	Mystic Academy	1.47	70.00%	53.85%	65.90%
	Mystic Highlands	9.22	73.33%	63.33%	70.83%
	Noank Park	0.61	65.00%	69.23%	66.06%
	Raheem Ali Carter Memorial Park	3.22	70.00%	85.19%	73.80%
	Ramble Brook Park	14.30	70.00%	53.33%	65.83%
	Stanton Farms	4.92	60.00%	66.67%	61.67%
	Tanglewood Park	3.59	45.00%	55.56%	47.64%
	Wolfbrook Playground	1.12	70.00%	44.44%	63.61%
	Woodcrest Park	13.00	53.33%	51.85%	52.96%
Community Parks	Farquhar Field	7.97	35.00%	54.76%	39.94%
	Library Recreation Field	10.75	60.00%	66.67%	61.67%
	Poquonnock Plains Park	15.87	80.00%	84.31%	81.08%
	Sutton Park	17.84	65.00%	57.41%	63.10%
	Copp Property	227.02	80.00%	70.00%	77.50%
Natural Resource Areas	Beebe Pond Park	100.58	80.00%	55.56%	73.89%
	Pequot Woods	232.89	80.00%	85.71%	81.43%
	River Road Park	39.84	100.00%	52.38%	88.10%
	Wright Property	80.69	80.00%	57.14%	74.29%
Special Use Parks	Burrows Field	3.64	60.00%	61.11%	60.28%
	Esker Point Beach	11.89	75.38%	68.63%	73.70%
	Jabez Smith Homestead	2.49	53.33%	66.67%	56.67%
	Noank Town Dock	0.99	40.00%	33.33%	38.33%
	Spicer Park	6.52	68.57%	71.79%	69.38%
School Parks	Catherine Kolnaski ES	124.55	N/A	N/A	33.30%
	Charles Barnum ES	16.13	70.00%	69.70%	33.30%
	Claude Chester ES	11.57	73.33%	70.00%	33.30%

Classification	Name of Facility	Acres	Primary Asset Score	Support Asset Score	Overall Score
	Cutler MS	40.52	62.86%	57.58%	33.30%
	Fitch HS	74.49	72.31%	61.11%	33.30%
	Fitch MS	11.34	55.00%	71.43%	33.30%
	Mary Morrison ES	36.70	80.00%	81.48%	33.30%
	Mystic Education Center	99.52	44.00%	44.44%	33.30%
	Northeast Academy ES	21.19	85.00%	69.70%	33.30%
	Pleasant Valley ES	16.74	60.00%	69.70%	33.30%
	SB Butler ES	9.43	51.43%	60.00%	33.30%
	West Side MS	40.56	66.67%	58.33%	33.30%
	William Seely ES	14.05	44.00%	46.67%	33.30%
Trail	Poquonnock River Walk	2.20	60.00%	81.48%	65.37%
Historic Marker	Indian Memorial	0.11	60.00%	66.67%	61.67%
	Nautilus Overlook	0.79	40.00%	76.67%	49.17%
Golf Course	Shennecossett Golf Course	135.00	70.00%	66.67%	69.17%
Grounds	Noank ES	6.19	46.67%	53.33%	33.30%
Indoor Facilities	Groton Senior Center	N/A	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
	Mystic Education Center	N/A	45.00%	60.00%	48.75%
	William Seely ES	N/A	38.00%	66.67%	45.17%

APPENDIX A

MAP A : Groton Public Recreation Facilities

Map A serves as a quick reference regarding the locations, types and names of the park and recreation facilities within the Town of Groton's municipal boundaries. This map includes all of the facilities under the management of the Parks and Recreation Department, as well as the Groton Public School District school sites and land owned by the Town of Groton or other agencies which are not part of the system. This map also serves as a visual tool in displaying the classifications assigned to each facility, as well as a comprehensive view of the size and geographic locations of the facilities. In looking at both Town parks and facilities and those recreational facilities provided by Groton schools, the Town has facilities distributed throughout the municipal area, with concentrations in the south and east sides of town. It is important to consider that the majority of the Town's parks are neighborhood parks, which have significant limitations in accommodating the growing recreation needs of the community.



PUBLIC RECREATION FACILITIES

- | | |
|---|---|
| MINI PARK | SPECIAL USE PARK |
| 1 Ring Drive Recreation Area | 26 Barrows Field |
| NEIGHBORHOOD PARK | 27 Esker Point Beach |
| 2 Bell Ave Park | 28 Jabez Smith Homestead |
| 3 Central Park | 29 Noank Town Dock |
| 4 Deerfield Extension | 30 Spicer Park |
| 5 Deerfield Park | SCHOOL PARK |
| 6 Depot Road Playground | 31 Catherine Kolbaski Elementary School |
| 7 Field Crest | 32 Charles Barron Elementary School |
| 8 Mystic Academy | 33 Claude Chester Elementary School |
| 9 Mystic Highlands | 34 Cutler Middle School |
| 10 Noank Park | 35 Finch High School |
| 11 Rahmon Ali Carter Memorial Park | 36 Finch Middle School |
| 12 Randle Brook Park | 37 Mary Morrison Elementary School |
| 13 Stinson Farms | 38 Mystic Education Center |
| 14 Tanglewood Park | 39 Northeast Academy Elementary School |
| 15 Wolfbrook Playground | 40 Pleasant Valley Elementary School |
| 16 Woodcrest Park | 41 SB Butler Elementary School |
| COMMUNITY PARK | 42 West Side Middle School |
| 17 Farquhar Field | 43 William Seely Elementary School |
| 18 Library Recreation Field | GOLF COURSE |
| 19 Popponess Plains Park | 44 Shennecossett Golf Course |
| 20 Sutton Park | LINEAR PARK/TRAIL |
| 21 Copp Property | 45 Popponess River Walk |
| NATURAL RESOURCE AREA | HISTORIC MARKERS/ GROUND |
| 22 Beebe Pond Park | 46 Former Noank Elementary School |
| 23 Poppon Woods | 47 Indian Memorial |
| 24 River Road Park | 48 Nautilus Overlook |
| 25 Wright Property | INDOOR FACILITIES |
| PROPERTY NOT MAINTAINED BY PARKS AND REC DEPT. | 49 Groton Senior Center |
| | 50 Mystic Education Center |
| | 51 William Seely Elementary School |

PREPARED BY:

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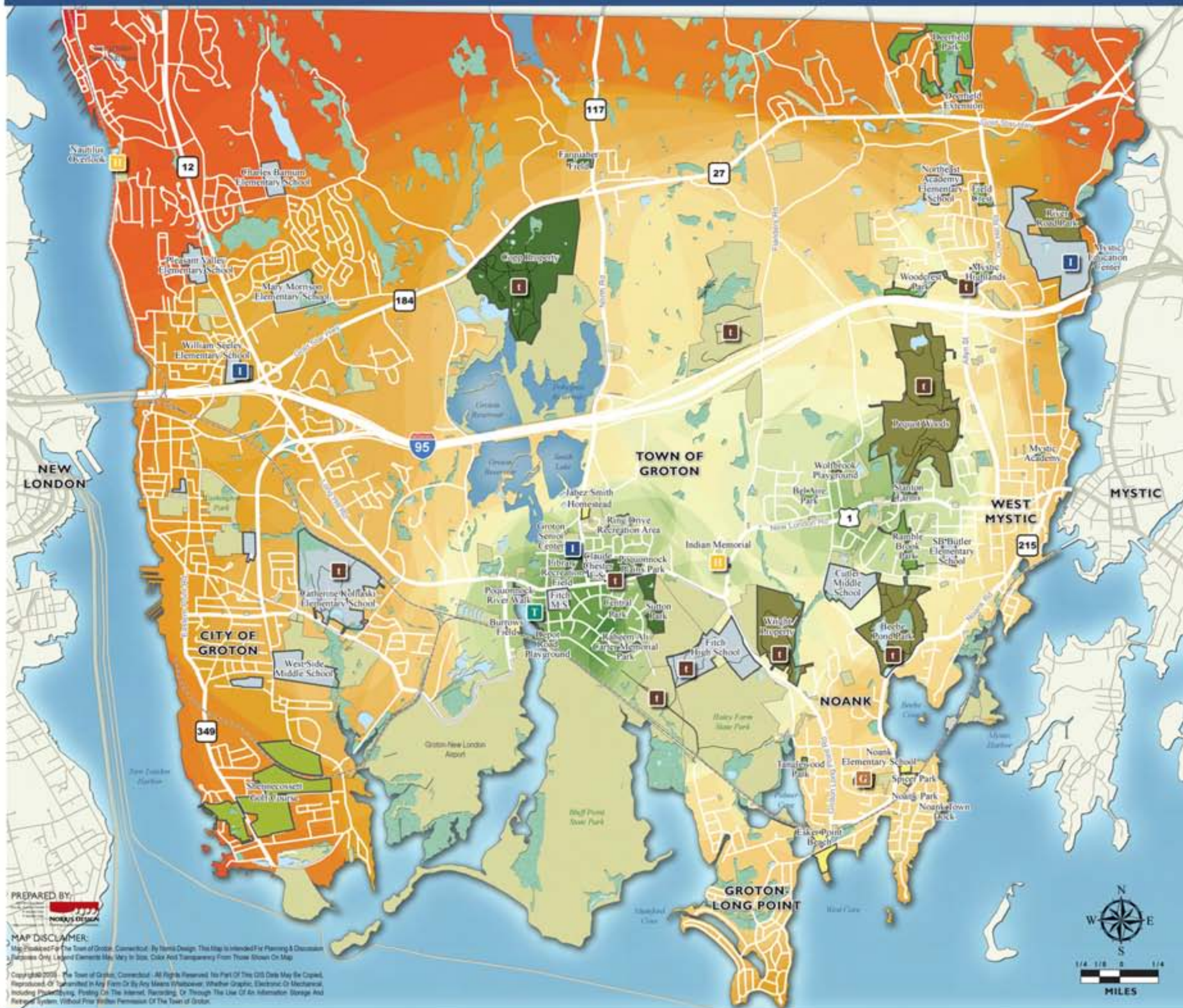
MAP

MAP B: Indoor, Outdoor and Trail Facilities

This map provides a comprehensive analysis of the entire Groton Parks and Recreation system, including both indoor and outdoor facilities. The highest LOS is located in the south central and eastern central portions of Groton due to the quality and density of facilities. These geographic areas have a high LOS based on the conditional assessment of the ten facilities in the south central area and seven recreation facilities in the east central area.

The map also provides a clear indication of those areas within the Town where adequate facilities are lacking, specifically on the northeast, northwest, and southwest corners of the Town. The northwest area of Town is the largest geographic area that is underserved, with only four elementary schools and a historic marker. The far northeast area of the Town and far southwest tip (near the golf course) is also displaying a lower cumulative LOS. It is important to recognize that the west side of Town is served by the facilities of alternative providers, such as the City of Groton (Washington Park) and the Naval Base recreation facilities, which were not included in this analysis.

The inset on this map illustrates that the average Level of Service for both indoor and outdoor facilities across the various geographic areas of the Town. 100% of the Town is being served by at least one park or recreation facility. The average LOS across the Town is 62.8%, with 84.0% of the Town obtaining an average score at or above 60.0% (the threshold for an adequate LOS). Therefore, the Town should work to maintain the average LOS above 60.0% and improve the areas lacking in amenities.



INDOOR, OUTDOOR & TRAIL FACILITIES

CUMULATIVE LEVEL OF SERVICE

PUBLIC RECREATION FACILITIES

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| MINI PARK | SCHOOL PARK |
| NEIGHBORHOOD PARK | GOLF COURSE |
| COMMUNITY PARK | LINEAR PARK/TRAIL |
| NATURAL RESOURCE AREA | HISTORIC MARKERS/GROUNDS |
| SPECIAL USE PARK | INDOOR FACILITIES |
| PROPERTY NOT MAINTAINED BY PARKS AND REC DEPT. | PUBLIC TRAIL FACILITIES |

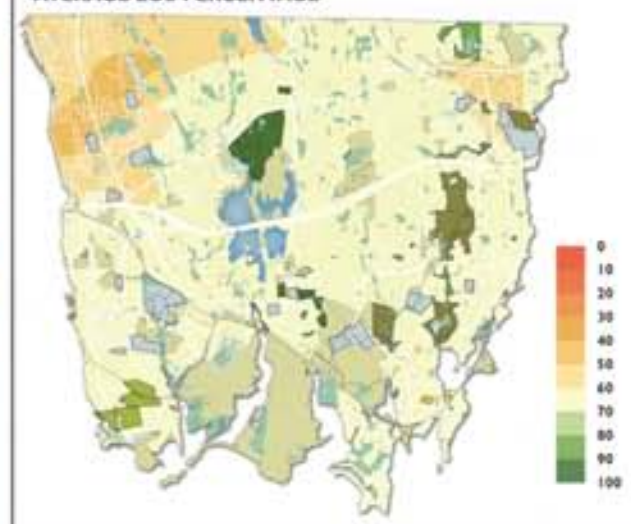
CONDITIONAL ASSESSMENT CUMULATIVE LOS



PRIMARY MAP DESCRIPTION

This map illustrates the cumulative Level of Service (LOS) provided to the different geographic areas of the Town, based on the overall conditional assessment of indoor, outdoor and trail facilities and the overlay of these facilities' service areas. Areas with higher LOS (green) have a greater quantity and quality of parks and recreational facilities. Areas with lower LOS (red) have less access to adequate parks and recreational facilities, based on their geographic location.

MAP INSET AVERAGE LOS PERCENTAGE



PREPARED BY:
NORRIS DESIGN

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TOWN OF GROTON CONNECTICUT



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MAP EXHIBIT

B

CONCEPT

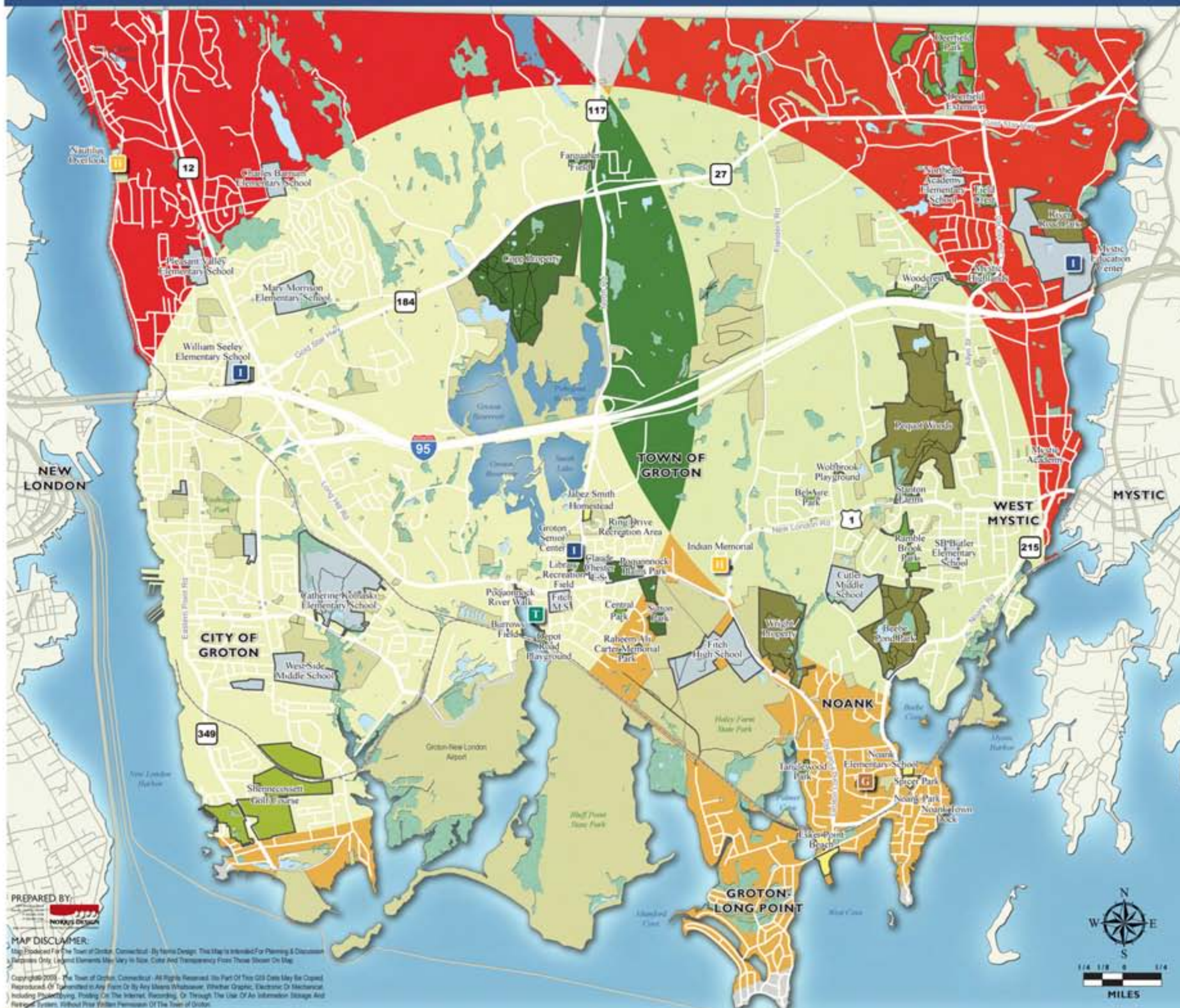
MAP C: Indoor Facilities

This map illustrates the cumulative Level of Service (LOS) provided to the different geographic areas of the Town, based on the overall conditional assessment of each indoor facility and the overlay of these facilities' service areas. There are three indoor facilities, each with a three-mile service area, that provide recreation services to the community of Groton.

- **Mystic Education Center** - Groton Parks and Recreation utilizes the Mystic Education Center Pool, a state-owned facility, thirty hours a week to provide an assortment of aquatic programming for the community. The facility is located on the northwest side of town and includes a 6-lane, 25 yard pool, gymnasium, a multi-purpose game room, handball/racquetball court, an auditorium, customer service desk, lounge and locker rooms.
- **Groton Senior Center** - The Center is a 15,000 square foot facility located in the south central area of town. Its location provides easy access to all Groton residents over the age of 55. A bond referendum was recently passed for a 16,000 square foot addition and renovation of the Groton Senior Center that will be completed in May of 2010. The newly renovated center will include a nurse's room, a hair salon, hobby shop, physical therapy room, conference room, music room, ceramics studio, arts and crafts room, game room, fitness/dance space, kitchen, lounge, multi-purpose room, as well as support amenities such as offices, restrooms, locker rooms and a customer service desk.
- **William Seely School** – Groton Parks and Recreation uses the William Seely School, a Groton Public School facility, as its primary recreation facility and community center. The facility is located on the east side of town and includes five programmed classrooms (used primarily for fitness and dance), a gymnasium, gymnastics facilities, as well as support amenities including a customer service desk and restrooms.

The inset on this map illustrates the average Level of Service across the various geographic areas of the Town, based on the highest possible cumulative conditional assessment score in comparison with the actual cumulative conditional assessment of all indoor recreation facilities for each area. 99.2% of the Town is being served by at least one indoor recreation facility. The average LOS for indoor recreation facilities across the Town is 69.6%. This analysis illustrates that 76.5% of the Town obtained an average score at or above 60.0% (the threshold for an adequate LOS). Therefore, the Town should work to increase the LOS to the remaining 23.5% of the Town by expanding existing facilities adding new indoor facilities to the system that have a central and accessible location.

Given the distribution of these facilities- one in the west, one in the south central, and one in the northwest side of Town, the geographic locations of these facilities provide an equitable distribution of access to indoor facilities across the community. However, it is important to consider that the Senior Center, which has the most central location only serves a portion of the community (those over the age of 55 and typically is patroned by the older portion of this age group). So while it is centrally located and has a higher score, it may not be adequately serving all portions of the population, despite the depiction on the map.



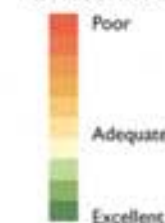
INDOOR FACILITIES

CUMULATIVE LEVEL OF SERVICE

PUBLIC RECREATION FACILITIES

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| MINI PARK | SCHOOL PARK |
| NEIGHBORHOOD PARK | GOLF COURSE |
| COMMUNITY PARK | LINEAR PARK/TRAIL |
| NATURAL RESOURCE AREA | HISTORIC MARKERS/GROUNDS |
| SPECIAL USE PARK | INDOOR FACILITIES |
| PROPERTY NOT MAINTAINED BY PARKS AND REC DEPT. | |

CONDITIONAL ASSESSMENT CUMULATIVE LOS



PRIMARY MAP DESCRIPTION

This map illustrates the cumulative Level of Service (LOS) provided to the different geographic areas of the Town, based on the overall conditional assessment of indoor facilities and the overlay of these facilities' service areas. Areas with higher LOS (green) have a greater quantity and quality of parks and recreational facilities. Areas with lower LOS (red) have less access to adequate parks and recreational facilities, based on their geographic location.

MAP INSET AVERAGE LOS-PERCENTAGE



PREPARED BY:



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TOWN OF GROTON
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July 2009

MAP EXHIBIT

C

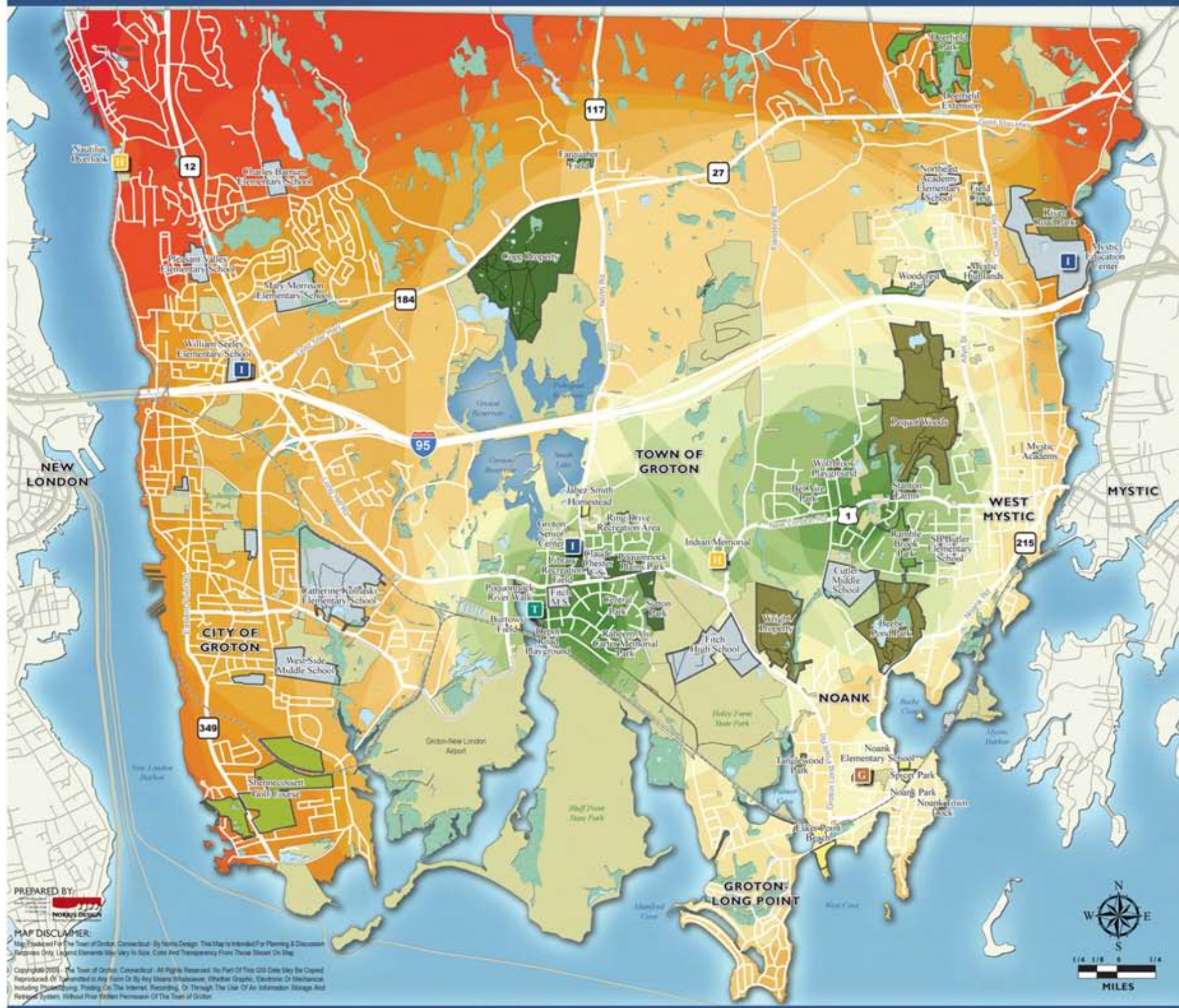
MAP

MAP D: Outdoor Facilities

Map D illustrates the cumulative Level of Service (LOS) provided to the different geographic areas of the Town, based on the overall conditional assessment of each outdoor facility and the overlay of their service areas.

Outdoor facilities (parks) make up the majority of the facilities in the Groton system. The geographic distribution of the facilities (not necessarily the acres or quality) is distributed throughout the Town with primary densities occurring in the east and south portions of the Town. The density of parks in the south central and east central areas increases the Town's LOS by providing multiple recreation opportunities within walking distance for residents. However, the quantity of parks in this area does not necessarily represent a higher level of quality assets within those parks or facilities. (Refer to the inset on this map for comparison)

The inset on this map illustrates the average Level of Service across the various geographic areas of the Town, based on the highest possible cumulative conditional assessment score in comparison with the actual cumulative conditional assessment of all outdoor facilities for each area. 99.9% of the Town is being served by at least one park or outdoor recreation facility. The average LOS for outdoor recreation facilities across the Town is 63.1%. This analysis illustrates that 78.2% of the Town obtained an average score at or above 60.0% (the threshold for an adequate LOS). Therefore, the Town should work to increase the LOS by making improvements to existing facilities or adding new parks and/or facilities to the system in locations where LOS is lower, which is primarily in the northwest area of town.



OUTDOOR FACILITIES

CUMULATIVE LEVEL OF SERVICE

PUBLIC RECREATION FACILITIES

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| MINI PARK | SCHOOL PARK |
| NEIGHBORHOOD PARK | GOLF COURSE |
| COMMUNITY PARK | LINEAR PARK/TRAIL |
| NATURAL RESOURCE AREA | HISTORIC MARKERS/GROUNDS |
| SPECIAL USE PARK | INDOOR FACILITIES |
| PROPERTY NOT MAINTAINED BY PARKS AND REC DEPT. | |

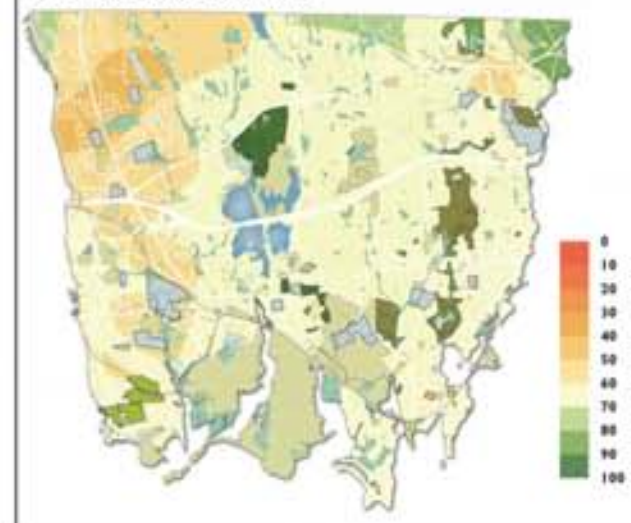
CONDITIONAL ASSESSMENT CUMULATIVE LOS



PRIMARY MAP DESCRIPTION

This map illustrates the cumulative Level of Service (LOS) provided to the different geographic areas of the Town, based on the overall conditional assessment of outdoor facilities and the overlay of these facilities' service areas. Areas with higher LOS (green) have a greater quantity and quality of parks and recreational facilities. Areas with lower LOS (red) have less access to adequate parks and recreational facilities, based on their geographic location.

MAP INSET AVERAGE LOS-PERCENTAGE



PREPARED BY:
HOKUS DESIGN

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TOWN OF GROTON
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MAP EXHIBIT

D

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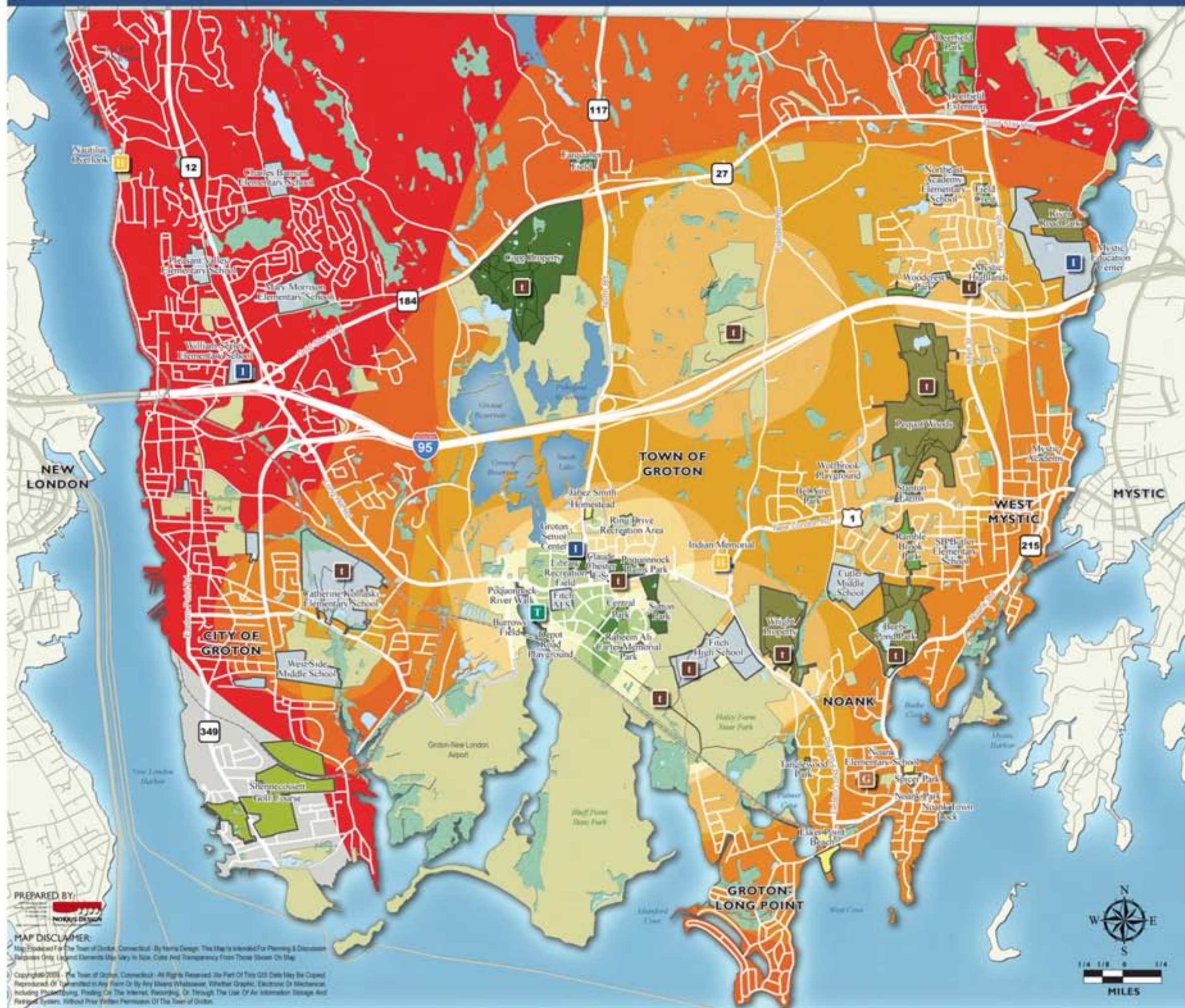
MAP E: Trail Facilities

Map E illustrates the cumulative Level of Service (LOS) provided to the different geographic areas of the Town by trails on Town-owned land, based on the overall conditional assessment of each area of town containing a system of trails and the overlay of their service areas.

Trails are a smaller part of the public facilities in the Groton system, many of them occurring within the outdoor facilities (parks) described in Map D or on other town-owned properties. Yet, it is important to recognize that there are a significant number of trails that are located on privately-owned lands that are not included in this analysis. The geographic distribution of trail facilities (not necessarily the lengths or quality) is distributed throughout the Town with primary densities occurring in the east and south portions of the Town. The Natural Resource areas and parks in the southeast area of town, including Pequot Woods and Beebe Pond Park provide a higher density of facilities with trail corridors, but not necessarily a higher quality of trails than the rest of the town.

The inset on this map illustrates the average Level of Service across the various geographic areas of the Town, based on the highest possible cumulative conditional assessment score in comparison with the actual cumulative conditional assessment of all trails facilities within the town area. 97.00% of the Town is being served by at least one trail. The average LOS for the trails across the Town is 60.0%. This analysis also illustrates that 100.0% of the Town obtained an average score at or above 60.0% (the threshold for an adequate LOS).

While the distribution of the trail networks provides an adequate level of service across the entire Town area, at this time, all of the Town's trails are soft surface, and in many cases, only single track trails. This limits access for walkers with strollers, skating activities (in-line skaters, skateboarders, etc), young bicyclists, and small groups. Additionally, most trails are within existing parks and do not provide connections between facilities. These connections between facilities are necessary to support a regional system of trails and opportunities for alternative modes of transportation (i.e. - bicycling and walking).



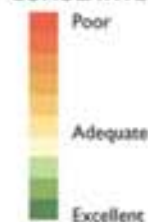
TRAIL FACILITIES

CUMULATIVE LEVEL OF SERVICE

PUBLIC RECREATION FACILITIES

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| MINI PARK | SCHOOL PARK |
| NEIGHBORHOOD PARK | GOLF COURSE |
| COMMUNITY PARK | LINEAR PARK/TRAIL |
| NATURAL RESOURCE AREA | HISTORIC MARKERS/GROUNDS |
| SPECIAL USE PARK | INDOOR FACILITIES |
| PROPERTY NOT MAINTAINED BY PARKS AND REC DEPT. | PUBLIC TRAIL FACILITIES |

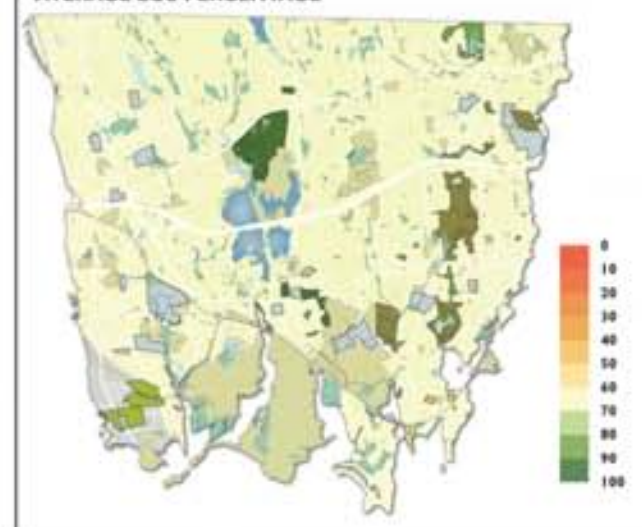
CONDITIONAL ASSESSMENT CUMULATIVE LOS



PRIMARY MAP DESCRIPTION

This map illustrates the cumulative Level of Service (LOS) provided to the different geographic areas of the Town, based on the overall conditional assessment of public trail facilities and the overlay of these facilities' service areas. Areas with higher LOS (green) have a greater quantity and quality of parks and recreational facilities. Areas with lower LOS (red) have less access to adequate parks and recreational facilities, based on their geographic location.

MAP INSET AVERAGE LOS-PERCENTAGE



PREPARED BY:



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TOWN OF GROTON
CONNECTICUT



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July 2009

MAP EXHIBIT

E

APPENDIX

MAP F: Pedestrian and Cyclists Barrier Impacts

Map F illustrates the cumulative Level of Service (LOS) to pedestrians and bicyclists for the different geographic areas of the Town. Therefore, the service area of each facility is clipped by a line representative of each barrier. Barriers may include major roadways, highways, railways and bodies of water. These are determined as barriers because of either their traffic levels or the impacts to the comfort and safety of pedestrians and bicyclists to cross them. The consultant team based this barrier evaluation on input from staff, as well as consideration of the community's children to safely cross these barriers in order to gain access to parks and facilities. For example, youth's primary mode of transportation to recreational amenities is by foot or bicycle and displaying this analysis allows for understanding of the primary barriers to youth access (and other pedestrians and bicyclists) to recreation opportunities.

Areas with higher LOS (green) have greater pedestrian and bicycle access to a greater quantity and quality of parks and recreational facilities. Areas with lower LOS (red) have less pedestrian and bicycle access to adequate parks and recreational facilities, based on their geographic location and adjacent barriers. It is also important to recognize that those areas that do not have any level of service when considering accessibility issues are illustrated in grey. Therefore, those areas that are red, although below adequate, have a higher LOS than those areas in grey.

Again, the density of parks in the south central and east central portions of town provide greater opportunities to access to recreation opportunities without having to cross a barrier. Some areas of the Town receive access to at least one amenity since the distribution of facilities tends to provide facilities in areas surrounded by one or more barriers. However, Interstate 95, Highway 184/27, Highway 117, Highway 1, and various other roadways around town are busy roadways and highways with minimal crossing opportunities. These roads restrict safe access to a number of the Town's larger facilities, such as the Copp Property, Pequot Woods, Beebe Pond Park, and each indoor facility, as well as a number of the community's schools.

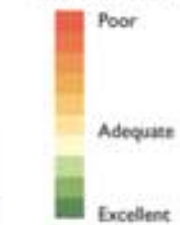
PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLIST BARRIER IMPACTS

CUMULATIVE LEVEL OF SERVICE

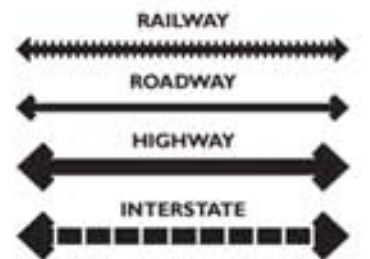
PUBLIC RECREATION FACILITIES

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| MINI PARK | SCHOOL PARK |
| NEIGHBORHOOD PARK | GOLF COURSE |
| COMMUNITY PARK | LINEAR PARK/TRAIL |
| NATURAL RESOURCE AREA | HISTORIC MARKERS/GROUNDS |
| SPECIAL USE PARK | INDOOR FACILITIES |
| PROPERTY NOT MAINTAINED BY PARKS AND REC DEPT. | |

CONDITIONAL ASSESSMENT CUMULATIVE LOS



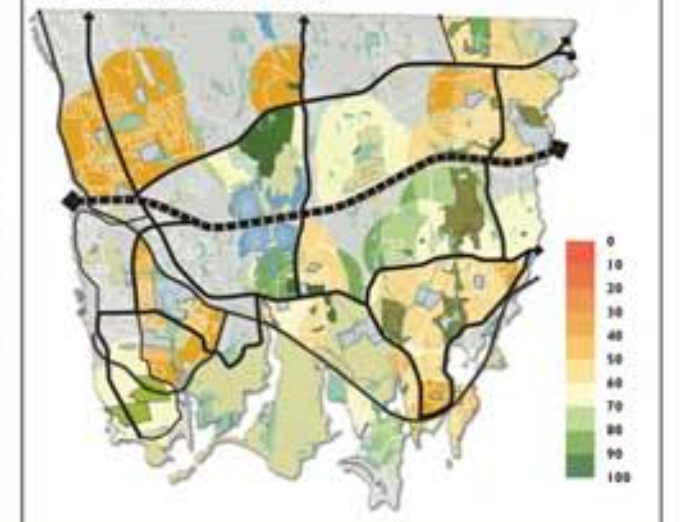
BARRIER CLASSIFICATIONS



PRIMARY MAP DESCRIPTION

This map illustrates the cumulative Level of Service (LOS) provided to the different geographic areas of the City (similar to map B). However, the purpose of this analysis is to evaluate the accessibility of the City's parks and recreation facilities by pedestrians and bicyclists. Therefore, the service area of each facility is clipped by a line representative of each barrier. Barriers may include major roadways, railroads and interstates.

MAP INSET AVERAGE LOS-PERCENTAGE



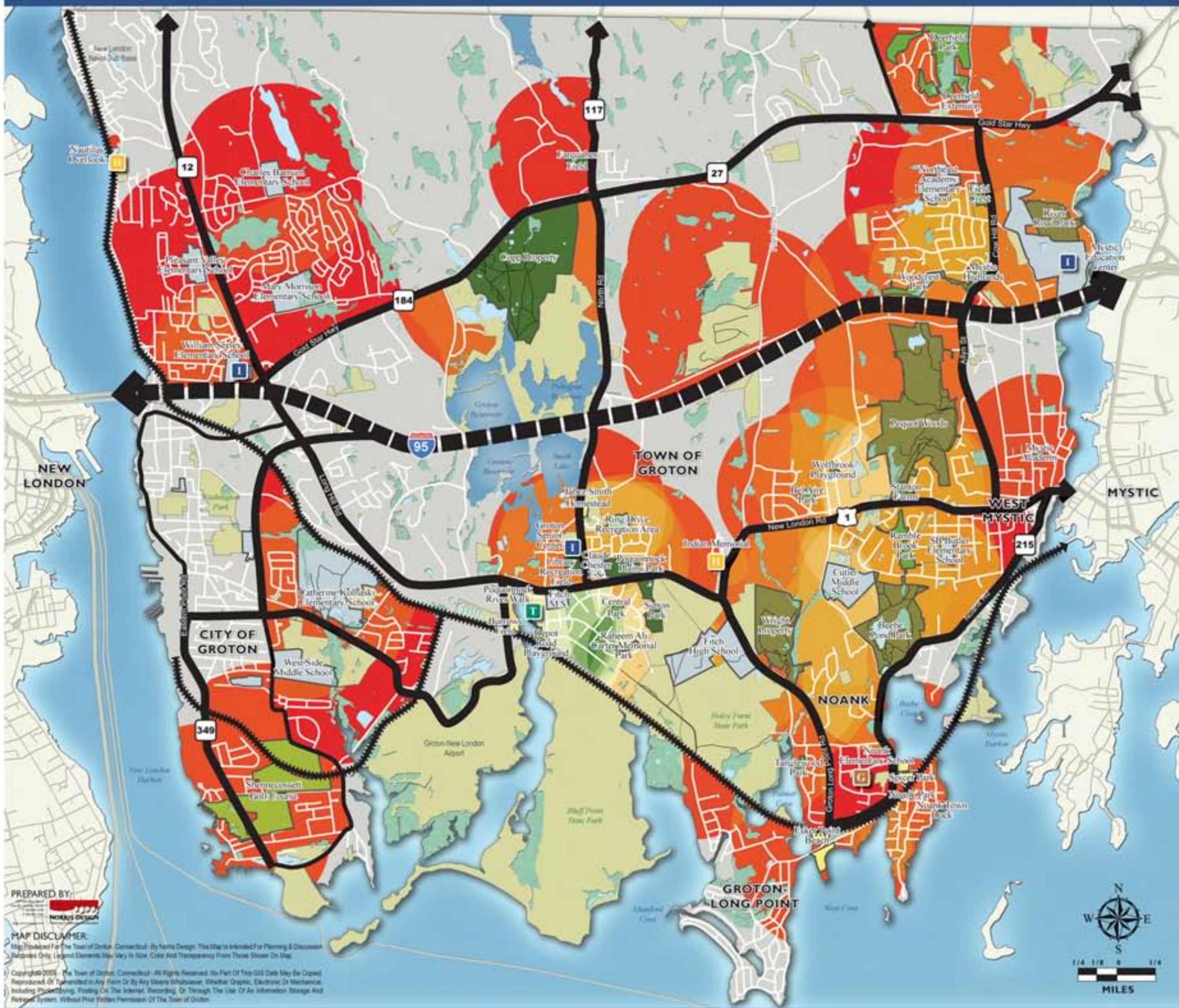
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MAP EXHIBIT

F



PREPARED BY:
HOKUS DESIGN

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G R A N

MAP G: Population Density And Households Served

Map G illustrates the distribution of the Town's population across its geographic areas and census tracts, based on Census data from 2007 estimates. It is important to note that census tracts are not necessarily restricted to straight or clear physical barriers, but may be more arbitrary in nature and therefore some areas reflect a higher or lower level of density than anticipated as a result of the overall tract. Therefore, this analysis incorporates all census tracts within the Town's service area, which at times extend past the Town's boundary. This results in a total of approximately 27,000 households in comparison to the Town's 16,000 households.

The LOS areas were further analyzed to identify the relationship between LOS and estimated numbers of households served by each individual park or facility and by park classification. GIS data from the US Census (2007) was used to conduct this analysis and the summarized quantities for each location-based and classification-based LOS area (See Table 11.2).

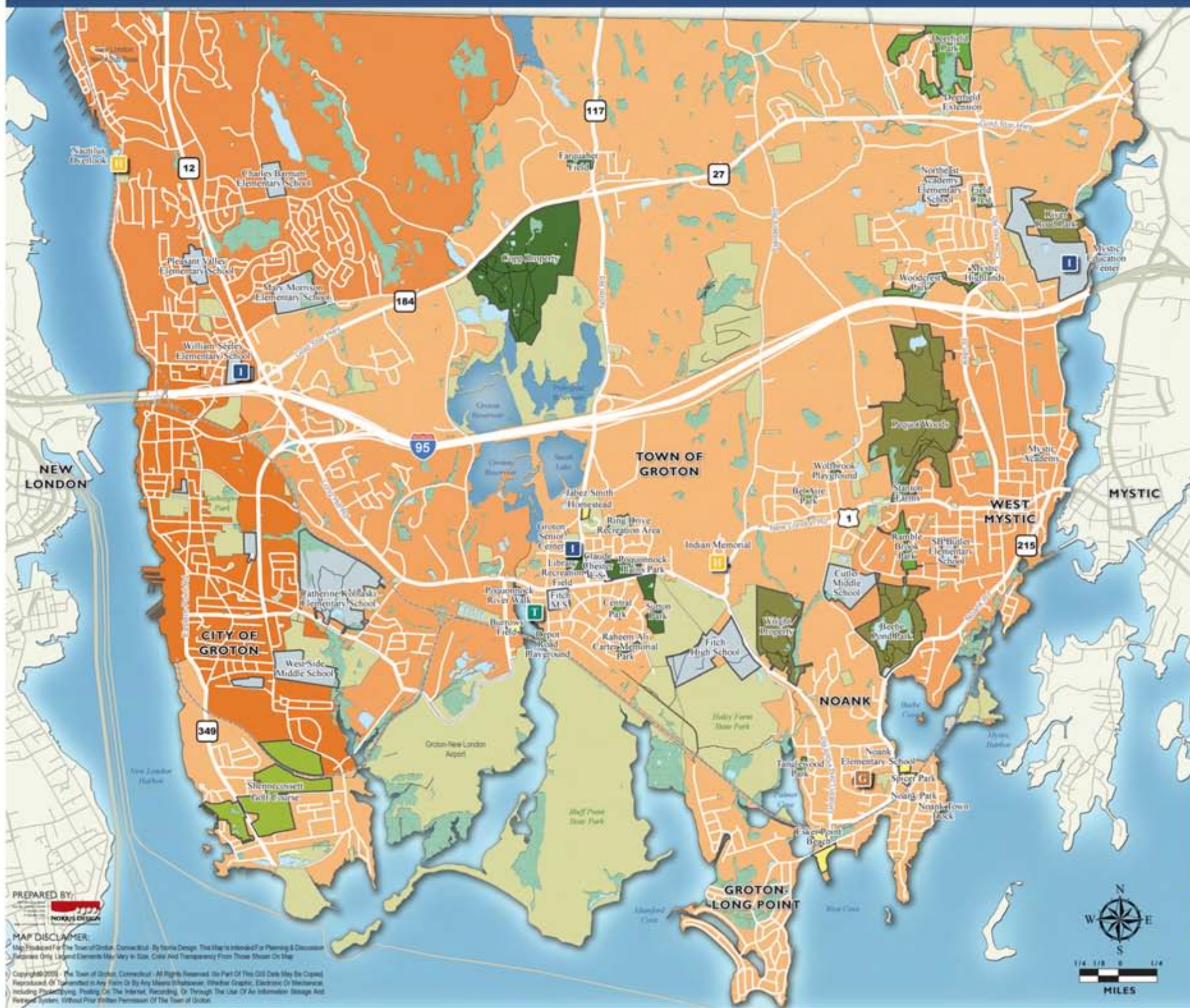
Table 11.2: Number of Households Served within the Extended Level of Service (Los) Area*

Classification	Service Radius	Location	Estimated Households Served**
Mini Park	1/4 mile	Ring Drive Recreation Area	126
Neighborhood Parks	1/2 mile	Bel Aire Park	322
		Central Park	675
		Deerfield Extension	212
		Deerfield Park	529
		Depot Road Playground	547
		Field Crest	381
		Mystic Academy	827
		Mystic Highlands	318
		Noank Park	457
		Raheem Ali Carter Memorial Park	516
		Ramble Brook Park	612
		Stanton Farms	596
		Tanglewood Park	344
		Wolfbrook Playground	399
		Woodcrest Park	293
		Total Households Served	4,143
Community Parks	3 miles	Farquhar Field	9,662
		Library Recreation Field	13,166
		Poquonnock Plains Park	13,536
		Sutton Park	11,813
		Copp Property	13,945
		Total Households Served	16,923
Natural Resource Areas	3 miles	Beebe Pond Park	8,026
		Pequot Woods	8,978
		River Road Park	6,278
		Wright Property	10,017
		Total Households Served	12,358
Special Use Parks	3 miles	Burrows Field	12,093
		Esker Point Beach	5,458
		Jabez Smith Homestead	13,397
		Noank Town Dock	5,533
		Spicer Park	5,612
		Total Households Served	1,684
School Parks	1/2 mile	Catherine Kolnaski ES	2,936
		Charles Barnum ES	1,370

Classification	Service Radius	Location	Estimated Households Served ^{**}
		Claude Chester ES	644
		Cutler MS	681
		Fitch HS	389
		Fitch MS	700
		Mary Morrison ES	1,635
		Mystic Education Center	592
		Northeast Academy ES	346
		Pleasant Valley ES	950
		SB Butler ES	706
		West Side MS	2,304
		William Seely ES	497
		Total Households Served	9,032
Trail	1/2 mile	Poquonnock River Walk	661
Historic Marker	1/8 mile	Indian Memorial	6
		Nautilus Overlook	0
		Total Households Served	6
Golf Course	3 miles	Shennecossett Golf Course	18,014
Grounds	1/4 mile	Noank ES	602
Indoor Facilities	3 miles	Groton Senior Center	12,947
		Mystic Education Center	6,081
		William Seely ES	19,937
		Total Households Served	27,332

*The Extended Service Area Is The Entire LOS Area For Each Location And Includes The LOS Area Beyond The Town Limits

**Source - Us Census/ESRI 2007

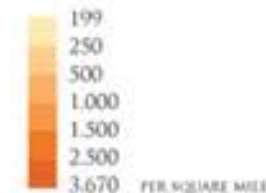


POPULATION DENSITY PER SQUARE MILE AND HOUSEHOLDS SERVED

PUBLIC RECREATION FACILITIES

- MINI PARK
- NEIGHBORHOOD PARK
- COMMUNITY PARK
- NATURAL RESOURCE AREA
- SPECIAL USE PARK
- PROPERTY NOT MAINTAINED BY PARKS AND REC DEPT.
- SCHOOL PARK
- GOLF COURSE
- LINEAR PARK/TRAIL
- HISTORIC MARKERS/GROUNDS
- INDOOR FACILITIES

POPULATION DENSITY



MAP DESCRIPTION

This map illustrates the distribution of the Town's population to various geographic areas and census tracts, based on Census data from 2007 estimates. It is important to note that census tracts are not necessarily restricted to straight or clear physical barriers, but may be more arbitrary in nature and therefore some areas reflect a higher or lower level of density than anticipated as a result of the overall tract.

PREPARED BY:



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TOWN OF GROTON
CONNECTICUT



Parks, Recreation, Open Space and
Recreational Facilities Master Plan
July 2009

MAP EXHIBIT

G

II P A R T

MAP H: Outdoor Facilities Maintenance Scores

Map H illustrates the Maintenance Evaluation Score for every park based on each relevant primary and secondary asset within the park or recreation facility. The scores were provided by the Town's staff in regard to the amount of time and resources expended by the Department in maintaining the facility. This scoring was based on a scale of 1 through 5 for each asset, 1=low, 3=moderate, and 5=high. All assets within the park and/or facility were then summed for an overall score. This was displayed to illustrate the level of resources and spatial relationships related to maintenance obligations between the Town's parks and recreation facilities.

This map illustrates that the Parks and Forestry Division expends more time and resources to maintain highly programmed facilities, such as Poquonnock Plains Park, Sutton Park and Esker Point Beach. Those facilities that require moderate maintenance levels include Deerfield Park and Farquhar Field. It is the Town's larger parks and facilities, such as Copp Property, Pequot Woods and Beebe Pond Park that are largely natural areas that require a minimal amount of maintenance. These scores can help the Division in understanding maintenance needs, create classifications for each of these facilities and assign maintenance crews and responsibilities to specific parks in order to increase efficiencies and decrease resources spent.

OUTDOOR FACILITIES MAINTENANCE SCORES

PUBLIC RECREATION FACILITIES

- MINI PARK
- NEIGHBORHOOD PARK
- COMMUNITY PARK
- NATURAL RESOURCE AREA
- SPECIAL USE PARK
- PROPERTY NOT MAINTAINED BY PARKS AND REC DEPT.
- SCHOOL PARK
- GOLF COURSE
- LINEAR PARK/TRAIL
- HISTORIC MARKERS/ GROUND
- INDOOR FACILITIES

RECREATION FACILITY AND MAINTENANCE SCORE

MAINTENANCE SCORE RANGE	(1-41)
Beebe Pond Park	6
Bel Aire Park	13
Burrows Field	19
Central Park	12
Charles Barnum Elementary School	3
Claude Chester Elementary School	3
Copp Property	14
Cutler Middle School	10
Deerfield Extension	4
Deerfield Park	24
Depot Road Playground	10
Essex Point Beach	41
Farquhar Field	26
Field Crest	11
Fitch High School	10
Fitch Middle School	7
Indian Memorial	6
Jabez Smith Homestead	3
Library Recreation Field	16
Mystic Academy	15
Mystic Education Center	3
Mystic Highlands	12
Nautilus Overlook	9
Noank Elementary School	7
Noank Town Dock	6
Pequot Woods	5
Poquonock Plains Park	37
Poquonock River Walk	6
Raheem Ahi Carter Memorial Park	14
Ramble Brook Park	4
Ring Drive Recreation Area	4
River Road Park	3
SB Butler Elementary School	1
Shennecossett Golf Course	9
Spicer Park	22
Stanton Farms	3
Sutton Park	35
Tanglewood Park	13
Wolbrook Playground	5
Woodcrest Park	9
Wright Property	3

MAP DESCRIPTION

This map illustrates the maintenance scores of each relevant primary and secondary asset within every individual park and recreation facility. The scores were provided by the Town's staff in regard to the amount of time and resources expended by the Department in maintaining the facility. This scoring was based on a scale of 1 through 5 for each asset, 1=low, 3=moderate, and 5=high. All assets within the park and/or facility were then summed for an overall score.

TOWN OF GROTON
CONNECTICUT



Parks, Recreation, Open Space and
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MAP EXHIBIT

H



12. LEVEL OF SERVICE ANALYSIS



LEVEL OF SERVICE (LOS) ANALYSIS

During the 1980's, the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) created Level of Service (LOS) guidelines to assist agencies in determining whether jurisdictions were meeting suggested "norms" with regard to types of parks, the amenities that should be in park, and how many acres of park land an agency should have. Although these guidelines are a starting point, these numbers do not take into account the unique qualities and needs of communities across the country.

Local trends and the popularity of some activities over others often dictate a greater need for particular facilities. The guidelines serve as a good baseline for determining a minimum standard for parks and primary amenities. These guidelines, coupled with input received from the community, analysis of participation numbers for various activities and comparisons to similar communities, provide the necessary additional information for determining the number of facilities that are appropriate.

METHODOLOGY

The consultant team used a "value-based" approach to assess the existing LOS. This model is not static; it evolves as the community changes. The consultant team incorporated all of the information gathered through the community input (focus groups, staff and stakeholder meetings and statistically-valid survey), inventory, conditional assessments and spatial analysis to measure the Level of Service currently being provided to the Groton community. In the recommendations phase of the project, population growth will be used to establish and prioritize improvements, potential repurposing and new facilities that are recommended to increase the Level of Service and best meet the current and future needs of the community.

A list of policy criteria for these standards includes, but is not limited to the following:

- Population served
- Accessibility (ADA, bicycle, pedestrian, transit, and automobile)
- Environmental and natural resources
- Land use requirements
- Park and recreation development and maintenance
- Parks, trails and open space system connectivity
- Service area

NRPA GUIDELINES

NRPA guidelines provide a template of typical park classifi-

cations, number of acres a system should have and recommended service levels based on population. Strictly intended as a guideline, these do not take into account the unique character of each individual community.

For a public park provider the guidelines suggest, "A park system, at a minimum, should be composed of a 'core' system of park lands, with a total of 6.25 to 10.5 acres of developed open space per 1,000 population." The types of parks that can be included to meet these standards can be a combination of the following classifications as determined by the NRPA:

- Mini Park
- Neighborhood Park
- Community Park
- Regional Park
- Special Use Park
- Natural Resource Area/Preserve
- Greenway
- School Park
- Private Park/Recreation Facility

Critical to the service delivery system of any department is the provision of the four basic park categories: mini, neighborhood, community and regional. Each is classified differently based upon the types of amenities, size, service area and access to the facility. The following gives a description of the different types of parks common to a system.

Mini Park

The smallest type of park, a mini park, is typically a site less than five acres. In recent years, another term, "pocket park," has been used in some instances to identify a mini park. The park is designed primarily to attract residents who live within 1/4 mile of the park. The park is generally a walk-to type park, meaning no parking facilities for automobiles are normally found. Mini parks' service levels are .25 to .5 acres per thousand residents.

Size normally prescribes these parks to be passive, limited-activity park facilities. Common elements include benches, playgrounds and tables in an attractively landscaped setting. The parks are sometimes themed to blend in with the surrounding neighborhood. Designs sometimes match the existing homes, fencing, sidewalk pavers, etc. A park of this size is not developed with fields for league play or community-wide events.

Mini Park Prototype

Average Size: .25 to 5 acres (target size, 3 acres)

General Concept: Playgrounds for children; benches, tables for adults

General Purpose: Passive use, serves immediate neighborhood, no parking

Programs: Informal activities

Proposed Play Facilities and Land Requirements

Children's Play Area: 1.75 acres

Apparatus Area: 1.75 acres

Shelter: Approximately 1,000 sq... ft..

Game/Tennis Area: 1-2 acres (if needed)

Walking Trails: Varies

Landscaping and Fencing: Varies

Utilities: Varies

Neighborhood Park

Neighborhood parks are found in most systems. The park normally has 5 to 20 acres and typically serves a population living within ½ mile of the park. Neighborhood parks conceptually concentrate intense recreation activities and facilities into a limited amount of space. Facilities typical to this park include:

- Playing Fields
- Playgrounds
- Shelters
- Walking Paths
- Restrooms/Concessions
- Swimming Pool
- Parking Facilities

Parking is necessary for this type of facility due to its scope of activities and size. The standard for parking is a minimum of seven spaces for the first ten acres and one additional space for each additional acre. This may vary based upon the activities and program appeal. If team sport facilities or a special feature such as a swimming pool are included, parking spaces in the range of 40 per field or greater, will be needed.

Although the park is classified as a neighborhood park, the scope of people served can vary based upon densities and the number of other parks available. Typically, one neighborhood park should serve between 10,000 to 20,000 residents, or one to two acres per thousand people, with a typical service area of ½ mile radius.

Neighborhood Park Prototype

Average Size: 5 to 20 acres

General Concept: Active and passive recreation amenities

General Purpose: Intense active recreation for daytime use within ½ mile radius

Programs: League practice and play; open space play; not recommended for festivals or large-scale events on a regular basis

Proposed Play Facilities and Land Requirements

- Soccer Fields: 2 acres per field
- Sports Fields: 2 to 5 acres per field
- Football Fields: 2 acres per field
- Running Track: 5 acres
- Swimming Pool: Varies
- Trail System: Varies
- Shelters: Approximately 2,000 sq... ft..
- Basketball Courts: 10,000 sq... ft..
- Skate Park Area: Varies
- Walking Paths: 1 mile

Community Parks

Community parks are needed within a system to ensure that all users' recreation needs and interests are addressed and included. This type of park expands beyond a local neighborhood and its amenities may sometimes appeal to several neighborhoods. The concept behind community parks is to include essentially a one-stop-shop for all recreation users. It should include a mix of active and passive activities and attract users of all ages. From sports fields to a community center, the park should provide as many recreation and support services as possible. A park of this size and scope commonly has from 20 to 75 acres; approximately 60 acres is considered a good size for such expansive activities.

The service area for such a facility can vary based upon the size and scope of activities offered. For the Town of Groton the service area was determined to be a 3 mile radius based on the size of the Town's landmass. However, a facility of this type may serve anywhere from 50,000 to 80,000 people, or 5 to 8 acres per 1,000 people. User analysis is often based upon a service radius where others in more urban areas may be based upon drive times.

Community parks have both day and night activities as a result of lighted amenities. Large facilities, such as a large indoor fitness/recreation center or multi-field sports complex, can be placed in such a park because of the amount of space available and ability to buffer from the surrounding community.

Community Park Prototype

Average Size: 20 to 75 acres (target 60 acres)

General Concept: Combine passive and active activities into one locale and retain passive areas for non-organized recreation

General Purpose: Provide a full range of recreational activities for the entire population

Programs: Active sports and multi-generational activities and passive areas with nature viewing, lake activities and walking

Proposed Play Facilities and Land Requirements

- Lighted Adult Softball Complex: 15 acres (depending on the number of fields)
- Lighted Youth Baseball Complex: 8 to 10 acres (depending on the number of fields)
- Football Field: 2 acres per field
- Community Center/ Multi-generational Area: 50,000-80,000 sq... ft..
- Picnic Shelters: Approximately 2,000 sq... ft..
- Outdoor Basketball Courts: 1 to 2 acres
- Volleyball: 2 to 4 acres
- Picnic Areas: 10 acres
- Lighted Tennis Complex: 2 acres
- Skate Park: Varies
- Lake: 1 to 4 acres
- Maintenance/Support Facility: 1 acre
- Walking Paths: 1 mile
- Parking: Varies

Regional Parks

The largest park typically found within a system is the regional park. These parks are normally found in large park systems. The size of a regional park varies from 50 to 250 acres, depending on the type of activities and the amount of use. The service radius for this type of facility is based upon drive time and is typically within an hour's drive of most users. Conceptually, the regional park will provide large natural areas that can be accessed through a variety of means, from roadways to hiking and biking. Also, based upon the locale, it can have unique recreation areas, such as a water park, sports complex or equestrian facility coupled with natural areas. Regional parks are unique to the general area. Prototypical or preferred amenities vary.

Special Use Parks

Special use parks are designed to meet the needs of a specific user group. An example of a special use park would be a golf course, zoo or a museum. A typical feature of these parks is that they are normally good revenue generators. If maintained

and properly staffed, these parks can provide a substantial cash flow for the designated entity. These facilities can vary in size according to the demand and type of layout. For example, a regulation size, par 72 golf course would need at least 140 acres while an executive style (par 60) layout may only require 100 to 120 acres, based upon amenities such as driving range and practice facilities.

Natural Resource Area/Preserve

According to the NRPA, natural resource areas are defined as "lands set aside for preservation of significant natural resources, remnant landscapes, open space, and visual aesthetics/buffering." These lands are often times also called dedicated open space and consist of:

- Individual sites exhibiting natural resources
- Lands unsuitable for development but offering natural resource potential (examples: parcels with steep slopes and natural vegetation, drainage ways and ravines, surface water management areas--man-made pond areas--and utility easements)
- Protected land, such as wetlands, lowlands and shorelines along waterways, lakes and ponds Acquisition of natural resource areas and preserves serve to enhance the quality of the community by maintaining a portion of its natural amenities.

Greenways

Greenways (a.k.a. – trails) have become one of the most popular family recreation areas across the country. The value of greenways in terms of recreation, education and resource protection is invaluable. Greenways serve as linkages between cities, parks, schools, commercial areas and neighborhoods. They provide a safe mode of transportation that preserves the environment. Typically, greenway trails can be anywhere from 10 to 12 feet wide and can be paved or natural surface. When developing a greenway system, corridors should be identified where people will access the area easily and connect elements within the community and incorporate all the characteristics of the natural resource areas. Greenway corridors should be no less than 50 feet in width except in neighborhoods, where 25 feet may be acceptable. Greenways can be located in a variety of settings and can be utilized for active and passive recreation activities. Ecologically speaking, they are typically located along linear natural environments such as rivers, valleys, ridgelines and coastal areas. These trails provide connections to nature, protect and maintain biodiversity, minimize development, and provide for wildlife migration across natural and man-made boundaries.

Recreational greenways commonly link elements that have diverse and significant landscapes. Many link rural areas to more

urban locales and range from local trails to larger network systems. Many are paved trails that accommodate pedestrians, skaters and bicycles. Others are soft surface trails that allow for pedestrians, mountain bikers and equestrian use. Another type of greenway is the cultural trail, which connects areas of significant historic value and culture. Economic benefits from these trails may be significant if linkages can be directed toward areas of commerce and/or provide an infrastructure for commuting.

School Parks

School park sites are an excellent way to combine resources and provide accessible recreation amenities to the community. Depending on the school type (i.e. elementary, middle, high school) the size of the park will be dictated by the land available adjacent to the school. Typically, middle and high schools are constructed with athletic fields to support team sports. These facilities provide the basis for developing a community park or, at the very least, athletic fields for recreation programs. The selection of school sites is determined by the school district and according to the distribution of students. The school site selection criteria may or may not meet the needs for parkland distribution. When development of school parks are possible, guidelines for neighborhood/community parks should be followed to meet the needs of residents. When joint developments occur, features common to other Town parks and facilities (i.e. – consistent signage) should be used to identify the property as a public facility.

TOWN OF GROTON PARKS AND FACILITIES

The Groton Parks and Recreation Department oversees 35 land-based properties (not including 13 school properties) and three indoor facilities (and associated grounds). Facilities are located throughout the Town, with the highest concentration occurring in the south central, and southeast areas of the Town, north of Bluff Point State Park, and between Pequot Woods and Beebe Pond Park. Town park facilities include a variety of amenities, including sports fields, tennis and basketball courts, playgrounds, historic markers and sites, natural resource areas and a skatepark. Assessments revealed that parks in the Town's system provide an average mix of active and passive opportunities. The majority of the Town's developed facilities offer sports and active recreation opportunities, with the undeveloped and natural resource areas of the properties providing single track trails and more passive recreation.

A total of 13 schools (as noted above) are located in the Town of Groton and are owned by the Groton Public School District. Six (6) of these properties are partially maintained by the Town of Groton Parks and Recreation Department.

These sites provide additional recreational facilities, for residents of Groton specifically multi-purpose and athletic fields, on a limited basis.

COMPARISON WITH NRPA GUIDELINES

While the NRPA guidelines are intended to only be a guide, they do serve as a benchmark in which to evaluate the service being provided in a geographic area, in this case, within the municipal boundaries of the Town of Groton. The NRPA recommends a service level between 6.25 and 10.5 acres per 1,000 residents. Table 12.1 shows NRPA recommended minimum and maximum standards, as well as the current level of service being provided by the Town of Groton by Mini, Neighborhood and Community Parks. Table 12.1 has also been included for additional analysis of Groton facilities. Table 12.1A includes the current service level of all Town of Groton-owned facilities (including natural resource areas and special use parks), and all school / school park sites. This allows for a comprehensive look at all publicly available recreation facilities, even if they are not included in the NRPA classifications of Mini, Neighborhood and Community Parks. These two tables will be used in the next phase of the project for development of recommendations for new facilities and renovation projects. Deficiencies in the current service patterns, facility distribution and community demand for improved service and specific amenity needs will result in facility recommendations for both existing facilities and future development.

LEVEL OF SERVICE (LOS) ANALYSIS

Tables 12.1 through 12.1A use the 2008 population and the projected population for 2013 (ESRI Business Solutions) to determine where the shortfalls and overages in the park system exist.

Table 12.1 compares only the three categories set forth by NRPA for comparison, Mini, Neighborhood and Community Park classifications. When Natural Resource Areas and Special Use Parks, such as the golf course or water front areas are excluded, the Town of Groton is providing 10.68 acres/1000 residents, which is above the recommended maximum NRPA level of service of 10.5 acres. In 2013, with the projected population increases, that number will decrease to 10.55 acres/1000 residents, still above the NRPA recommended maximum.

Table 12.1 also shows that in the Mini Park category, the Town of Groton is below the recommended minimum level of service with 0.21 acres/1000 in comparison to the recommended level of 0.25 acres/1000. However, Neighborhood Parks are well above the recommended maximum Level of Service (2.0 acres/1000) at 3.6 acres/1000. This discrepancy may be due to the classifications assigned in the inventory; with more parks

classified as Neighborhood Parks and only one park, Ring Drive Recreation Area, classified as a Mini Park. The one item to note is that the total level of service in the Town of Groton is slightly above average.

Table 12.1A shows a total of 1575.17 acres of park and facility land, including school sites. Many of these school facilities include assets used by the Parks and Recreation Department and the residents of Groton, making them important assets to the community. The school sites in the Groton area have minimal restrictions on access and the sites are open to the public during non-school hours. According to the NRPA, with this acreage, this puts the Town at a service level of 38.72 acres per 1,000 residents, which is significantly higher than the NRPA maximum of 10.5 acres/1,000. If the maximum NRPA guidelines were being met, Groton should have 427.2 acres of park land for 2008. The surplus of land in the system is significant at 1147.97 acres. However, it is important to recognize that significant portions of the park properties contain large areas of undeveloped, non-programmed “natural” areas, which increases the total land area in the system. The total land calculation in Table 12.1A does not take into account private recreation providers, including church properties, private schools, or those outside the boundaries of the Town of Groton. Without the school park sites, the Town would still have a level of service of 26.02 acres per 1000 residents. Therefore, even if the school properties were eliminated from the sites available to the public, the Town of Groton facilities are more than sufficient in the number of acreage to support the population both now and in 5 years.

Table 12.1: Town of Groton LOS Compared to Minimum and Maximum NRPA Guidelines

2008 Population - 40,686						
	Minimum NRPA guideline		Maximum NRPA guideline		Groton's Current Service Level	
	Min ac/1000 pop	Acres req	Max ac/1000 pop	Acres req	Current ac/1000 pop	Acres provided
Mini Parks	0.25		0.50		0.21	
2008 Total Ac Required		10.17		20.34		8.72
Neighborhood Parks	1.00		2.00		3.60	
2008 Total Ac Required		40.69		81.37		146.39
Community Parks	5.00		8.00		6.87	
2008 Total Ac Required		203.43		325.49		279.45
TOTAL	6.25	254.29	10.50	427.20	10.68	434.56
2013 projected Population - 41,179						
	Minimum NRPA guideline		Maximum NRPA guideline		Groton's Current Service Level	
	Min ac/1000 pop	Acres req	Max ac/1000 pop	Acres req	Current ac/1000 pop	Acres provided
Mini Parks	0.25		0.50		0.21	
2013 Total Ac Required		10.29		20.59		8.72
Neighborhood Parks	1.00		2.00		3.55	
2013 Total Ac Required		41.18		82.36		146.39
Community Parks	5.00		8.00		6.79	
2013 Total Ac Required		205.90		329.43		279.45
TOTAL	6.25	254.29	10.50	427.20	10.55	434.56

Table 12.1A: Town of Groton LOS Compared to Minimum and Maximum NRPA Guidelines, including all Town-owned properties.

2008 Population - 40,686								
	Minimum NRPA guideline			Maximum NRPA guideline			Groton's Current Service Level	
	Min ac/1000 pop	Acres req		Max ac/1000 pop	Acres req		Current ac/1000 pop	Acres provided
Mini Parks	0.25			0.50			0.21	
2008 Total Ac Required		10.17			20.34			8.72
Neighborhood Parks	1.00			2.00			3.60	
2008 Total Ac Required		40.69			81.37			146.39
Community Parks	5.00			8.00			6.87	
2008 Total Ac Required		203.43			325.49			279.45
Regional Parks	0.00			0.00			0.00	
		0.00			0.00			0.00
Natural Resource Areas	0.00			0.00			11.16	
		0.00			0.00			453.99*
Special Use Areas, etc. **	0.00			0.00			4.26	
		0.00			0.00			173.19
School Parks	0.00			0.00			12.70	
		0.00			0.00			516.77
	6.25	254.29		10.50	427.20		38.80	1578.51
2013 projected Population - 41,179								
	Minimum NRPA guideline			Maximum NRPA guideline			Groton's Current Service Level	
	Min ac/1000 pop	Acres req		Max ac/1000 pop	Acres req		Current ac/1000 pop	Acres provided
Mini Parks	0.25			0.50			0.21	
2008 Total Ac Required		10.29			20.59			8.72
Neighborhood Parks	1.00			2.00			3.55	
2008 Total Ac Required		41.18			82.36			146.39
Community Parks	5.00			8.00			6.79	
2008 Total Ac Required		205.90			329.43			279.45

Table 12.1A: (continued)

	Minimum NRPA guideline			Maximum NRPA guideline		Groton's Current Service Level	
Regional Parks	0.00			0.00		0.00	
		0.00			0.00		0.00
Natural Resource Areas	0.00			0.00		11.03	
		0.00			0.00		454.00
Special Use Areas, etc. **	0.00			0.00		4.12	
		0.00			0.00		169.82
School Parks	0.00			0.00		12.55	
		0.00			0.00		516.79
TOTAL	6.25	257.37		10.50	432.38	38.25	1575.17

* - The Copp property is calculated as part of the community parks number, and is not included in the natural resource areas number.

** - The Special Use Areas, etc. category includes areas classified as special use parks, golf course, the grounds of Noank ES, historic markers, and the Poquonnock River Walk.

PARK CLASSIFICATION AND DISTRIBUTION ANALYSIS

Utilizing the park categories as developed by NRPA, existing parks in the Town of Groton were classified as Mini, Neighborhood, Community, Natural Resource Area, Special Use, or School Park. Table 12.2 shows the classification and acreage of the properties within the Town of Groton.

The overall distribution pattern of the parks and facilities that make up the Groton system is scattered, with concentrations of facilities along the eastern and southern areas within the municipal boundaries, specifically south of I-95. Except for the Copp Property and Farquhar Field, the central area on both sides of the interstate is lacking park and recreation facilities.

Table 12.2: Groton Facilities

Classification	Name of Facility	Acres
Mini Park	Ring Drive Recreation Area	8.72
Neighborhood Park	Bel Aire Park	3.43
	Central Park	3.53
	Deerfield Extension	1.99
	Deerfield Park	76.46
	Depot Road Playground	2.91
	Field Crest	6.62
	Mystic Academy	1.47
	Mystic Highlands	9.22
	Noank Park	0.61
	Raheem Ali Carter Memorial Park	3.22
	Ramble Brook Park	14.30
	Stanton Farms	4.92

LEVEL OF SERVICE ANALYSIS

Classification	Name of Facility	Acres
	Tanglewood Park	3.59
	Wolfbrook Playground	1.12
	Woodcrest Park	13.00
Community Park	Farquhar Field	7.97
	Library Recreation Field	10.75
	Poquonnock Plains Park	15.87
	Sutton Park	17.84
Community Park / Natural Resource Area	Copp Property	227.02
Natural Resource Area	Beebe Pond Park	100.58
	Pequot Woods	232.89
	River Road Park	39.84
	Wright Property	80.69
Special Use Facility	Burrows Field	3.64
	Esker Point Beach	11.89
	Jabez Smith Homestead	2.49
	Noank Town Dock	0.99
	Spicer Park	6.52
Golf Course	Shennecossett Golf Course	135.00
Grounds	Noank ES	6.19
Historic Marker	Indian Memorial	0.11
	Nautilus Overlook	0.79
Trail	Poquonnock River Walk	2.20
School Park	Catherine Kolnaski ES	124.55
	Charles Barnum ES	16.13
	Claude Chester ES	11.57
	Cutler MS	40.52
	Fitch HS	74.49
	Fitch MS	11.34
	Mary Morrison ES	36.70
	Mystic Education Center	99.52
	Northeast Academy ES	21.19
	Pleasant Valley ES	16.74
	SB Butler ES	9.43
	West Side MS	40.56
	William Seely ES	14.05
Indoor Facilities	Mystic Education Center	see above
	Groton Senior Center	n/a
	William Seely ES	see above
	TOTAL ACRES	1575.17

Mini Parks

There is one park classified as Mini Park in the Town of Groton:

- Ring Drive Recreation Area

The single Mini Park in the system consists of 8.72 acres of the park system, which is currently 0.21 acres per 1,000 residents. This is slightly below the minimum NRPA requirement of 0.25 acres per 1,000 residents. This park is centrally located, however, mini parks are typically small tracts of land intended to serve residents within close proximity to the park and be within walking distance. Providing only one Mini park within the Town does not meet the intent and purpose of the mini park classification in providing small facilities in neighborhood locations.

Neighborhood Parks

The Town of Groton park system includes 15 parks classified as Neighborhood Parks. Coverage along the east side of town, as well the south central area is sufficient. However, areas to the north and west need additional neighborhood park facilities to serve the population in these areas. Nearly all of the parks in the northeast area (north of I-95 and east of Flanders) are classified as Neighborhood Parks, creating a high concentration of neighborhood parks. Neighborhood parks consist of 146.39 acres of the total Groton park facilities, which is currently 3.60 acres per 1,000 residents. This is above the maximum NRPA guideline of 2.00 acres per 1,000 residents.

Community Parks

Five Community Parks serve the Groton community. These parks include:

- Farquhar Field
- Library Recreation Field
- Poquonnock Plains Park
- Sutton Park
- Copp Property (also considered a Natural Resource Area)

The distribution of these parks and their assigned 3 mile service area radius covers the majority of the land within the municipal boundaries with more than one facility. Two exceptions include the far northwest and northeast corners, which are only covered by Farquhar Field in the north central area of Town. The Town's Community Parks consist of 279.45 acres (227.02 acres are associated with the Copp property), which is currently 6.87 acres per 1,000 residents. This is within the NRPA guideline of 5.0 to 8.0 acres per 1,000 residents.

Natural Resource Areas

Natural resource areas make up nearly 29% of the total acres (1575.17) of land within the Town of Groton's park system (43% if the 227.02 acres of the Copp property are included). These parcels are typically the largest tracts of land within the system and may include soft surface single track trails through woodlands and fields, and around areas of water or wetlands, but are otherwise undeveloped and not programmed (in some cases, public access is not provided).

Special Use Parks, Golf Course, Grounds, Historic Markers and Trail

Special Use Parks vary widely in their amenities, and include the following sites:

- Burrows Field
- Esker Point Beach
- Jabez Smith Homestead
- Noank Town Dock
- Spicer Park

These properties, because of their special and unique assets provide a regional draw for area residents, therefore each of the sites noted above have been assigned a three-mile service radius. The distribution of these special use parks provides adequate coverage in the majority of the Groton area, except for in the northeast and northwest corners of the municipality.

Additional unique properties within the Groton system have been evaluated, including Shennecossett Golf Course, the grounds of Noank Elementary School, two historic markers within Town boundaries and the River walk.

- Due to Shennecossett Golf Course's location at the south end of the peninsula on the west side of Groton, the 3 mile service radius only covers the southwest and south central areas of Town.
- Since Noank Elementary School closed, the site is no longer considered a school park, but is still being maintained by the Town of Groton. It will also be the temporary location for the Senior Center, while the current location undergoes renovations. The grounds specifically on the Noank Elementary school site do not contain any programmable amenities at this time, therefore the ½ mile service radii is appropriate distance for service. If in the future the building houses a more permanent community use, it may be appropriate to expand the size of the service radius to match the other indoor facility radii of 3 miles.
- The Indian Memorial and the Nautilus Overlook are classified as Historic Markers, and serve as minor facilities.

ties in the Groton system, providing local information and an educational opportunity, but no additional areas for programming. The 1/8 mile service radius reflects the minimal opportunity for recreation.

- The Poquonnock River Walk is classified as a Trail facility with a 1/2 mile service radius in the inventory. While this is a unique feature within the Town of Groton, the small site includes a boardwalk/trail approximately 1/3 mile in length, and the trail does not connect to an additional trail network. Therefore, there is limited ability for it to have a greater service radius, similar to the special use parks.

School Parks

The 13 schools within the Town of Groton are under the jurisdiction of the Groton Public School District. None of these schools are fenced, and the only restrictions to public access of the outdoor facilities are during school hours. The public, as well as recreation leagues and other user groups use the facilities for practice, training, games and play. These are significant facilities for the adjacent neighborhood residents, hence the 1/2 mile service radius which matches the neighborhood park radius. Additionally, they supplement the Town of Groton facilities by providing additional recreation facilities, courts and playgrounds (see Tables 12.3 and 12.3A for more details). In the inventory and facility analysis, the school sites have been discounted to 30% (half of an adequate score) because of the limits on access and ownership by another entity (the school district). However their importance as recreational assets for the Groton community is significant and should not be discounted.

Indoor Facilities

The Town's three indoor facilities, including the Mystic Education Center, Groton Senior Center and William Seely Elementary School have a 3 mile service area radius, which adequately covers the majority of the Town with at least one facility. However, coverage with two or more of the facilities is limited to the central core. The areas on the northwest, northeast and the tips of the peninsulas are lacking service of more than one facility. This is significant because of the specialized programming of the facilities, specifically the Senior Center, which limits the user group of the facility to those over the age of 55.

Park and Recreation Assets

In addition to acreage for park facilities, programmed assets (a.k.a. – amenities) within the parks have also been evaluated against general NRPA guidelines. This allows the consultant

team and Town staff to evaluate where the shortfalls and overages in amenities are provided in the current system, as well as to plan for additional facilities as existing parks are updated and new park land is acquired. The following data is divided into two separate tables, both of which show the park and recreation assets in relation to the NRPA guidelines. The first table, Table 12.3, shows the assets located within the Town of Groton's park facilities only. The second table, Table 12.3A includes the extensive School Park properties as well. This allows analysis of the system under the Town of Groton's control, as well as the facilities owned by the school district that are also heavily used by the Town of Groton programs and residents.

Table 12.3: Groton Park and Recreation Assets Compared to NRPA Guidelines

Town of Groton-owned properties (excludes school /school park facilities)					
Amenity	NRPA Recommended Level of Service (1 per X residents)	Existing Number of Facilities	Current Facility Shortfall / Overage (using NRPA Recommended level of Service)	Total Facility need Based on Groton Estimated 2013 Population	
Outdoor Basketball*	1 per 5,000	10	2	8	
Tennis	1 per 2,000	3	(17)	21	
Volleyball	1 per 5,000	6	(2)	8	
Baseball/Softball	1 per 5,000	5	(3)	8	
Football	1 per 20,000	1	(1)	2	
Soccer	1 per 10,000	2	(2)	4	
Swimming Pool	1 per 20,000	0	(2)	2	
Running Track	1 per 20,000	0	(2)	2	
Trail System	1 mile per 3,000	20.0	6.44	13.73	miles
Playground	1 per 1,000	18	(22)	41	
Cultural Center	1 per 100,000	1	1	0	
Community Center	1 per 50,000	2	1	1	
Picnic Pavilion	1 per 2, 000	2	(18)	21	
Skate Park**	1 per 100,000	1	1	0	

*Includes both full and half-size courts

** Standard developed to respond to recreation trends and growth in certain sports. These numbers do not include facilities located at schools.

Table 12.3A: Groton Park and Recreation Assets Compared to NRPA Guidelines (including schools)

All facilities within the Town of Groton, including school/school parks.					
Amenity	NRPA Recommended Level of Service (1 per X residents)	Existing Number of Facilities	Current Facility Shortfall / Overage (using NRPA Recommended level of Service)	Total Facility need Based on Groton Estimated 2013 Population	
Outdoor Basketball*	1 per 5,000	20	12	8	
Tennis	1 per 2,000	11	(9)	21	
Volleyball	1 per 5,000	6	(2)	8	
Baseball/Softball	1 per 5,000	18	10	16	
Football	1 per 20,000	3	1	2	
Soccer	1 per 10,000	4	(0)	4	
Swimming Pool	1 per 20,000	0	(2)	2	
Running Track	1 per 20,000	1	(1)	2	
Trail System	1 mile per 3,000	20.00	6.44	13.73	miles
Playground	1 per 1,000	33	(8)	41	
Cultural Center	1 per 100,000	1	1	0	
Community Center	1 per 50,000	2	1	1	
Picnic Pavilion	1 per 2,000	2	(18)	21	
Skate Park**	1 per 100,000	1	1	0	

*Includes both full and half-size courts

** Standard developed to respond to recreation trends and growth in certain sports.

SERVICE AREA SUMMARY

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

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

Based on the surplus of acreage within the Town of Groton system, additional land acquisitions are not necessary to meet the NRPA guidelines on acres per 1,000 residents. However, in order to provide the recommended level of service to Groton residents, the development of programmed assets such as athletic fields and courts, playgrounds and picnic pavilions should occur on lands already owned by the Town of Groton. Careful consideration of the availability and desire for programmable asset development and construction within portions of existing Natural Resource Areas will be the ultimate deciding factor as to whether additional lands should be purchased for development of park facilities or developed on existing properties both now and in the future.



13. AREAS OF FOCUS



AREAS OF FOCUS

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PRIORITIES

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

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

TRADITIONAL AND ALTERNATIVE FUNDING

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

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

ways to invest in and fund desired and expected quality of life amenities.

INCREASE PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIONS

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

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

REVENUE GENERATION AND COST RECOVERY

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

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



14. RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTION PLAN



On the battlefield Fort Griswold, Georgia, 1864

RECOMMENDATIONS AND ACTION PLAN

MASTER PLAN GOALS

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

RECOMMENDATIONS

AGENCY RESOURCES AND CUSTOMER SERVICE:

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

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

Strategies:

- I.1.1 Obtain approval of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan by the Parks and Recreation Commission; present the plan to the Town Council for adoption and implementation
- I.1.2 Identify "champions" for priority recommendations and assign roles, responsibilities and deadlines for staff through the annual review, goals and objectives process.
- I.1.3 Provide staff the necessary professional development, equipment and tools to put the recommendations of the Master Plan into action.
- I.1.4 Establish an Implementation Advisory Committee to assist in putting the recommendations of the master plan into action.

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

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

Strategies:

- 2.1.1 Provide more cross-training for staff so that more than one person can complete a task, if the primary person leaves or is out for an extended period of time.
- 2.1.1a Formalize annual or biannual workshop/in-service training.
- 2.1.2 Support staff's interest in obtaining additional certifications, (ex: CPRP, CPSI, etc.) attending training sessions, and attendance at state and national conferences. All of these will benefit the Department through creative budgeting, programming, increasing maintenance efficiency and general professional advancement.
- 2.1.3 In-service training opportunities should be made available at least twice annually. Managers should find professionals in the field (ex: Certified Spray Technicians) to provide training to staff. These training exercises could be done in conjunction with regional or state conferences or seminars.
- 2.1.4 Update systems to accommodate current technologies, including but not limited to accepting credit/debit cards for all facilities and registration, and on-line registration that accessible from the Department's website that allows for use of credit cards and eliminates service fees.
- 2.1.5 Reinstitute a Division Head-level position for the Parks Division.
- 2.1.6 Restructure the agency to provide for an Assistant Director of Parks and Recreation position. As an alternative, promote the current recreation manager to formally serve in this capacity, so as to avoid tasks that are not addressed if this position were to ever change to a new staff member.
- 2.1.7 Identify expanded office space for staff that is central to most Town residents. The facility must meet ADA accessibility requirements. Current space is not accessible and customer-friendly.
- 2.1.8 Annually update and train staff on the department's parks and recreation software, so as to promote its use for tracking participants and enhancing marketing. Investigate the potential of tying this to the maintenance software currently used by the Parks Division.
- 2.1.9 Engage professional design experts to develop plans for renovations to the Shennecossett Clubhouse, with a focus on expanding the golf administration areas (Pro Shop and offices) as well as storage of equipment.
- 2.1.10 Pursue CAPRA (Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies) accreditation for the Department in order to promote the quality of the agency's services and support the value of recreation and parks within the community.

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

Strategies:

- 2.2.1 Enhance and empower the Parks and Recreation Commission and Golf Advisory Board to continue the work done on previous strategic planning and facility studies as well as for implementation of this Master Plan.
 - 2.2.1a These groups should be active advocates for the Agency throughout the education of the Town Council and RTM throughout the budget process, as well as become leaders for future grassroots campaigns for facility development.
- 2.2.2 Expand the role and activity of the Groton Parks Foundation by establishing a "Friends" group that recruits people within the community to advocate on behalf of parks and recreation and garner support for the Department by enhancing funding for operations and capital improvements.

- 2.2.2a The foundation should use its tax-exempt status (501c3) and in order to collect contributions and apply for grants on behalf of the Department.
- 2.2.2b A sub-branch of this non-profit could utilize volunteers to help fundraise for the Senior Center and this program area,
- 2.2.3 Seek out and utilize formal, documented partnerships to provide for the increasing and changing demands of the community. Partnerships should be based on equity and not create a burden for either group.
- 2.2.4 Establish a formalized volunteer program, which may help provide for the community's desires for increased recreational programming and basic improvements or maintenance to the parks and Natural Resource areas.
- 2.2.5 Explore the feasibility of a "round-up" program that allows residents to contribute to the Department through Town utility bills or other means.
 - 2.2.5a The program could be structured as follows; if a person has a utility bill that is \$23.40, the person could write a check for \$24.00 and have the overage (\$.60) go into a pooled account that could target playground enhancement or enhance youth program opportunities, for example.
- 2.2.6 Continue to work with Groton Public Schools and implement a formalized, written partnership agreement to make the construction of new facilities feasible and affordable.
- 2.2.7 Utilize the "working group" of recreation providers in the Town mentioned in the Recreation Programming Recommendations, to identify partnership opportunities for the development of new facilities.
 - 2.2.7a This group should include the City of Groton, the Naval Base, the Boys and Girls Club, etc.

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

Strategies:

- 2.3.1 Establish a Grants and Outreach Coordinator staff position that focuses on recruitment of volunteers, pursuing grants, and marketing of the agency. This position could potentially serve the entire Town or start out as part-time Parks and Recreation position and evolve into a full-time position.
- 2.3.2 Maintain the trust and support of the public by remaining open and proactive in addressing any potential issues that may affect program delivery. These may include, but are not limited to:
 - 2.3.2a Open communication regarding the areas of funding (both geographically and program/facility funding)
 - 2.3.2b Holding public meetings to discuss any new facility plans or to obtain the public's feedback for such plans.
- 2.3.3 Increase marketing of programs and activities on local TV channels, in local publications and at special events.
- 2.3.4 Create marketing efforts that are less dependent on paper and focused on newer technologies (i.e. - email blasts, electronic message boards, social media sites, Facebook, Myspace, Twitter, etc.)
- 2.3.5 Update and widely distribute the Department's Annual Gift Catalogue so as to bundle events and programs in order to generate larger, annual sponsors versus sponsors of individual events. This should generate more revenues and minimize marketing efforts for the agency.
- 2.3.6 Increase communications and marketing of existing programs and facilities, with a focus on communications to the residents in the area of the Naval Base.
- 2.3.7 Increase marketing to minorities for existing programming instead of incorporating programming specifically geared towards minorities.

- 2.3.8 Identify specific communication mediums (golf magazines, publications, email lists, etc.) to enhance marketing efforts for the Shennecossett Golf Course both regionally and throughout Connecticut in order to attract players from around the state.

RECREATION PROGRAMMING

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

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

Strategies:

- 3.1.1 In conjunction with the opening of the Senior Center renovation, Continue to accommodate the aging population through the development and expansion of programs for “baby boomers” who are 50 (rather than 55) and older (i.e. - fitness, wellness, day trips, etc.), in order to provide for the more active interests of these groups in addition to the traditional programs historically provided for seniors.
- 3.1.2 Increase the amount of programs for youth and adults that are more focused on health, wellness, culture and/or the arts. (i.e. – hiking, environmental education, music, arts and culture activities, etc.)
- 3.1.3 Partner with community youth organizations to promote and expand fitness programs for youth.
- 3.1.4 Increase the availability of boating activities to the public, which may require expansion of existing programs or partnering with private clubs to introduce both adults and youth to this locally historical and culturally significant activity.
- 3.1.5 Reference the results of the community survey to develop programs of interest to the community. See the Groton Community Survey section of the report for more details.
- 3.1.6 Develop day trip or sample activity programs to introduce youth to a variety of activities, both physical and cultural.
- 3.1.7 Increase the number of swimming classes offered for all ages and abilities. Due to the geographic location of Groton, this is a matter of community safety.
- 3.1.8 Partner with the appropriate facilities and groups to offer more indoor programs, such as swim lessons, ice skating and performing arts.
- 3.1.9 The Department should consider hosting “art days” with different programs for kids and families and opportunities to buy pieces from local artists.
- 3.1.10 Create a program where public art pieces would be placed in Groton’s parks and public spaces.
 - 3.1.10a These could be acquired through annual competitions among local schools and organizations.
 - 3.1.10b Temporary art pieces would be rotated each year in conjunction with the competition.

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

Strategies:

- 3.2.1 Establish a “working group” of recreation providers in the area that meets on a quarterly basis to share the programs and

services being provided by each agency and organization, so as to avoid duplication of services and identify opportunities for shared facility use, program partnerships and cross-marketing. This group should include the City of Groton, organizations at the Naval base, the Boys and Girls Club, etc.

- 3.2.2 The Department should increase efforts to expand partnerships with youth organizations, such as the Boys and Girls Club, as well as faith-based organizations, to engage these organization's existing participants in Town activities through events, group field trips and transportation.
- 3.2.3 The Department should continue collaborative efforts and coordinated use of facilities with existing and future athletic leagues and sports providers.
- 3.2.4 The agency should analyze areas where currently there may be gaps in service or a lack of capacity, such as soccer, racquetball and beach volleyball, softball and volleyball leagues; all which were activities that survey respondents had a high interest in (5.6%-12.6%), but low participation (0.8%-7.5%).
 - 3.2.4a Continue collaboration to maintain and expand services provided for Inclusive and Special Needs Programs through continued collaborations with existing partners as well as additional regional, state and national organizations.
 - 3.2.4b Consider the programs offered within the area's State Parks and work to minimize overlap or saturation in programs and services.
 - 3.2.4c Increase regional collaboration to maximize the use of the renovated Senior Center with existing partners as well as promoting use by residents from neighboring municipalities, as well as by regional and state organizations.
 - 3.2.4d Initiate regional collaboration with neighboring park and recreation agencies and providers to increase the number and type of special events offered to the greater southeastern Connecticut area.
- 3.2.5 The Department should coordinate and cross-promote all waterfront access points in the Groton area with the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection so as to increase awareness of the public of all state and Town-managed water access opportunities.

FACILITIES

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

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

Strategies:

- 4.1.1 Work with the Public Works and Planning Departments to develop trail connections within existing parks to exterior walks and streets.
- 4.1.2 Work with the Public Works Department, ConnDOT and neighboring jurisdictions to develop a bike lane or pathway system on existing roadways.
- 4.1.3 Implement the Town's Bicycle, Pedestrian & Trail Master Plan for viable linkages between park facilities.

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

Strategies:

- 4.2.1 Make development of Town-owned athletic fields a priority in funding for facility improvements. This will assist in alleviating the reliance on Groton Public Schools for facilities and enable the department's programs to expand.
- 4.2.2 Develop a clear and specific "wish list" for facilities (including indoor aquatics, trails, a multi-purpose recreation center and athletic fields) and include reliance on other provider's facilities as a primary concern.
 - 4.2.2a Work to educate the Town Council and RTM throughout the entire budget process the needs for these facilities, as illustrated through the Master Plan.
- 4.2.3 Investigate the potential and establish a grassroots campaign to gain support to evolve this wish list into a bond referendum, after establishing support of Town Council and a group of community members.
- 4.2.4 Identify funding for the development of a new recreation center. Work with the Town Council and Groton Public Schools to identify funds to make basic renovations and repairs to the William Seely School such as painting, safety protection for gymnasium windows and wall-mounted equipment, internet café and other minor repairs and improvements.

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

Strategies:

- 4.3.1 Evaluate specific open space lands for recreational potential. Groton has a significant amount of widely distributed and undeveloped land compared to similar communities studied for this report (data provided in the Benchmarking Section of the report). The careful use of these lands for the provision of needed recreational amenities would reduce the cost of acquisition and greatly improve the Level of Service provided to the community.
 - 4.3.1a Based on the existing Level of Service (LOS) and the Town's significant shortfalls in the provision of specific park and recreation amenities (i.e. – Tennis, Volleyball, Baseball/Softball, Football, Soccer, Swimming Pool, Running Track, Playgrounds and Picnic Pavilions). See Table 12.3A for more information.
- 4.3.2 Work in conjunction with natural resource advocates and interest groups to come to a consensus on the suitability of Town-owned lands for the establishment of high quality recreation amenities including indoor facilities. Strive to maintain the integrity of key natural resources within these parcels while balancing environmental conservation, public access, and recreational facility development.
- 4.3.3 Establish a study to evaluate open space according to environmental sensitivity and determine appropriate levels of public access and resource management. Highly sensitive areas and habitats should be protected from incompatible uses. Accessible areas should be programmed for passive activities including hiking, bird-watching, horseback riding and biking.
- 4.3.4 Maintain and/or enhance the quality of accessible open space by improving or creating trails, signage, support assets (such as benches, trail markers, bridges, on-trail interpretive signage, etc.) in order to enhance the activities within these spaces. Determine the appropriate needed support facilities, including parking areas and restrooms.

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

Strategies:

- 4.4.1 Initiate efforts to identify funding and partnerships to facilitate the development of new facilities that will increase the Town's Level of Service and create a well-balanced parks and recreation system. Following are some the key facilities identified through the community input process and consultant analysis.
- 4.4.2 High priority community needs include an indoor pool / aquatics center, multi-purpose community center, increased water access, providing trails within existing facilities and connecting recreation facilities and parks, as well as lighted athletic fields.
 - 4.4.2a Consider reprogramming or repurposing some of the lesser used facilities in order to activate the spaces and meet the needs of the community. Some of these facilities include Woodcrest Park, Bel Aire Park, Raheem Ali Carter Memorial Park, Central Avenue Park, Ring Drive Recreation Area and Tanglewood Park
 - 4.4.2b Evaluate the potential of locating some of the requested facilities on some of the larger existing sites and integrating them with the natural resource areas within those properties (Copp Property, adjacent to Fitch High School, River Road Open Space, as well as others are potential sites)
 - 4.4.2c Add an additional water access and/or beach facility to help off-set the heavy use at Esker Point Beach.
 - 4.4.2d Work with private organizations to expand the boating facilities at Spicer Park.
 - 4.4.2e Increase the marketing and promotion of Spicer Park for use of park and boating facilities by all members of the public.
- 4.4.3 Areas in the north and west areas of Town need additional neighborhood park facilities to serve the population in these areas. Enforce developer agreements to specify the design standards for parks to be developed by the builder and then transferred to Town ownership after two years. Developers must satisfy any deficiencies (punch list items) that need to be remedied prior to transfer. Refer to the capital improvements priorities in this master plan and gaps in service for individual assets in order to guide design.
- 4.4.4 In determining locations for new facilities to relieve the burden on existing ones, there should be the consideration to locate them to take advantage of public transportation, in underserved parts of town, or in areas with safer bike/ pedestrian access.
- 4.4.5 Identify existing Town-owned or partner facilities to place amenities that incorporate existing trends and demands for more non-sports youth activities, such as BMX, paintball, climbing walls, arts, cultural and performing arts. (i.e. – Sutton Park)
- 4.4.6 Initiate a Feasibility Study for a multi-purpose indoor facility that would incorporate the highest needs of the Groton community - aquatics (#1) and recreation amenities (#3), both which can act as revenue generators through admission fees, regional tournaments and special events.
- 4.4.7 Update the Master Plan for the Copp Property with a detailed site master plan, so as to incorporate development of new facilities (both indoor and outdoor) and the amenity needs identified in the LOS Analysis.
- 4.4.8 Continue to evaluate partnership and regional funding opportunities for the development of a large, centralized sports complex or facility would enable the Town to host revenue-producing events such as regional sports tournaments.
- 4.4.9 The Department should work to implement the Sutton Park Master Plan by gaining public support for funding to move into design and construction of the plan.

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

Strategies:

- 4.5.1 Evaluate and prioritize improvements to restroom facilities in all parks, so as to meet the needs of the community (as identified in the Community Survey) and to increase the experience and length of stay of park users.
- 4.5.2 Specific maintenance improvements that need to be a primary focus for the department include:
 - 4.5.2a New paint at older facilities
 - 4.5.2b Development of ADA compliant access to all indoor facilities and general accessible routes within parks. Any new assets within parks, such as playgrounds or picnic facilities should incorporate accessible routes and features into the design. See the Inventory Sheets in Appendix B.
 - 4.5.2c Improve and expand the parking at Poquonnock Plains Park.
- 4.5.3 Upgrade any non-functional lighting to increase safety and functionality within existing parks.
- 4.5.4 Upgrade any ineffective or unsafe fencing where appropriate.
- 4.5.5 The list of improvements to the golf course facilities includes:
 - 4.5.5a Refer to the Golf Course Master Plan for capital improvement recommendations for the Clubhouse and the Course and prioritize improvements, which include:
 - 4.5.5b Renovations to the Shennecossett Clubhouse in order to host more special events, weddings and tournaments, as well as window replacement and porch reconfiguration
 - 4.5.5c Paving and development of cart paths
 - 4.5.5d Development of a new facility for golf cart storage or integrate the development of storage in conjunction with the historic clubhouse
 - 4.5.5e Addition of a maintenance building that is strategically located on the course to provide easy access to most areas of the facility
- 4.5.6 Esker Point Beach - Develop a master plan that will evaluate needed improvements or additional facilities, potentially including the following:
 - 4.5.6a Remodel or improve the exterior of the concession building.
 - 4.5.6b Improve parking lot circulation and consider adding landscape islands to assist in clearer delineation of spaces and to accommodate some storm run-off.
 - 4.5.6c A reduction of the amount of paved area of the parking lot should be considered in favor of other uses
 - 4.5.6d Additional facilities including a playground, picnic shelter, and interpretive signage of the area's geology and estuaries should be considered.
 - 4.5.6e Improvements to the crossing at GLP Road
- 4.5.7 Establish a public art program for Groton's parks and public spaces that celebrates local art, history and culture.
 - 4.5.7a This program could be funded through a municipal code a requirement for 1% of construction budgets of all public buildings/projects be allocated to either an art fund to be distributed as appropriate or for installing art at that location (some pieces could be temporary or moveable).
 - 4.5.7b A commission or panel should be formed that selects the art and oversees the details. Some of the program's art could include temporary or moveable art pieces.
- 4.5.8 Allocate time and money to maintain the Senior Center's accreditation status.
 - 4.5.8a Improve operations of the new facility through the development of a Senior Center Policies and Procedures Manual.

ORGANIZATION, MANAGEMENT AND STAFFING

Goal 5: Evaluate pricing policies and increase department cost recovery

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

Strategies:

- 5.1.1 Develop a system which tracks program and indoor facility use by the participant's address. This will assist in determining how many non-residents are using the facilities and programs as well as the areas of town with the highest user rates.
- 5.1.2 Being one of the primary providers in the area, the Department should look at the market demand for the use of athletic facilities and charge user groups accordingly. Consider introducing a nominal fee and incrementally raising that fee to a market level over the next 5 years.
- 5.1.3 Collaborate with the City of Groton and the Mystic Chamber of Commerce to identify the levels of attendance, both of residents and visitors, as well as the economic impact of existing special events. This data could be used to champion additional community events, as well as the development of regional recreational and athletic facilities that would support and boost the local economy.
- 5.1.4 Work to increase enrollment in programs by expanding the marketing efforts to promote activities the Department currently provides (i.e. – dance), deliver them at more convenient locations and/or evaluate the compatibility of the times offered and the target markets' leisure time.
- 5.1.5 Develop a pricing policy and cost recovery goals that incorporate the community's values as well as the mission of the Department.
 - 5.1.5a This policy should reflect the philosophy that those who benefit should pay. The greater the community benefit, the more the subsidy.
 - 5.1.5b Create a tiered fee system for rentals which is structured by classification as private residents, non-profit organizations, and seniors.
 - 5.1.5c Increase the promotion of the Department's Scholarship Program for those who cannot afford to pay current fees (i.e. – youth and seniors on fixed income).
- 5.1.6 Evaluate the fee structure for facilities and programs annually to determine whether fees should be changed to accommodate increased demand, operations costs (both direct and indirect), market conditions, etc.

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

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

Strategies:

- 6.1.1 Actively distribute and refer to the Department's existing maintenance standards in order to make staff pro-active with regard to how the system is managed and maintained.
- 6.1.2 Develop a system which will track maintenance tasks. Utilizing the recommended parks and recreation software with

the maintenance management tracking module is recommended. This will assist in a clearer understanding of typical maintenance required for different types of parks.

- 6.1.3 Prioritize parks and recreation maintenance responsibilities. Utilize the data provided in this Master Plan report to determine resources needed and time allocation for specified tasks. See Table 9.3 for Labor Ratios on Maintenance Activities.
- 6.1.4 Consider outsourcing non-park related maintenance areas (i.e. - Town Hall) that would allow the agency to focus on program areas, the urban forest and parks. Apply the maintenance standards already in place as the basis for management of the maintenance contract to ensure tasks are occurring to the Town's standard.
- 6.1.5 Develop a Life-cycle Assessment Program, a system which will track the use of the maintenance equipment. This will allow the agency to better manage and maintain equipment and to better plan for purchasing equipment purchasing.
- 6.1.6 Develop an equipment and supply standard that would allow the Town to source specific types of mowers and allow the agency to inventory specific parts and supplies. This should allow for better tracking and storage of inventory.
- 6.1.7 As new facilities are planned, annual operations and maintenance costs estimates should be incorporated into budgets to ensure that facilities are maintained to standard.
- 6.1.8 As new facilities and parks are developed, outdoor maintenance staffing adjustments should be made at a ratio of 18 acres of developed/maintained property per person (not including natural undisturbed areas). It is currently at a ratio of 65:1. Indoor facility staffing ratios will be determined by what programs are developed and recommended in feasibility studies (where applicable).

FUNDING

Goal 7: Identify potential funding sources

Objective 7.1: Investigate Potential Traditional Funding Sources

Strategies:

- 7.1.1 As the economy rebounds, explore the feasibility of a bond referendum for the development of a multi-purpose recreation center with aquatics.
 - 7.1.1a Utilize the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee as advocates
 - 7.1.1b If deemed feasible, obtain professional public relations and marketing experts to assist in an educational campaign to the public for this effort.
- 7.1.2 Explore specific revenue-producing actions such as regional golf and athletic tournaments, expanding boating and aquatics programs, increasing user fees for groups with the ability to pay (i.e. - baby boomers), promoting maximum use and rentals of the renovated Senior Center, increasing the capacity to provide for athletic leagues and development of the Copp Property to provide a regional one-stop recreation complex.
- 7.1.3 Work with the Town Administration to identify and establish new and steady funding sources in order to address renovations and repairs to existing park and recreation facilities (i.e. – dedicated property tax and/or a special benefit assessment district). Also, see Appendix A for additional funding opportunities, and refer to the cost estimates in this section in order to gauge costs for implementation of improvements.
 - 7.1.3a With 15,473 households (2008) in the Town, a tax that collects \$5.00/household would generate \$928,380 annual for parks and recreation.

7.1.3b CT Statute 7-269 sets the precedent for allowing Benefit Assessment Districts (for acquisition or construction of a sewerage system). Based on this precedent special benefit assessments are allowed under (refers to water districts) must be taken to vote and approved through a public referendum.

7.1.4 Utilize the Master Plan to prioritize capital investments and allocation of funding to address the capacity and functional limitations of existing facilities as well as those necessary to address the community's concerns about bike and pedestrian routes to parks and facilities. (also, see detailed Facilities Recommendations in this section)

Objective 7.2: Pursue Alternative Funding Sources

Strategies:

- 7.2.1 Encourage more support and advocacy by the Parks and Recreation Commission and the Golf Advisory Board to assist in obtaining alternative funds for improvements to existing facilities or development of new facilities and programs.
- 7.2.2 Work with the Parks and Recreation Commission and the Golf Advisory Board to assist the department with grant writing and increasing advocacy to the RTM and Town Council to relay the Department's needs.
- 7.2.3 Utilize the addition of a recommended Grants and Outreach Coordinator to apply for state, federal and private grant monies (also see Appendix A for a list of alternative funding source opportunities):
 - 7.2.3a Investigate sources for historic building funds to assist in improving and restoring the Shennecossett Clubhouse and Golf Course.
 - 7.2.3b Apply for grants for trails and alternative transportation development (i.e. - TEA-21, Safe Routes to School, Greenway Small Grants Program, etc.).
 - 7.2.3c Pursue grants for inclusive and therapeutic recreation (i.e. - Rehabilitation Service Programs).
 - 7.2.3d Investigate grants for Environmental and natural resource preservation (i.e. – Trust for Public Lands, CT Clean Water Fund, Brownfield Redevelopment, etc.).
 - 7.2.3e Explore grants for water quality and boating (i.e. – Boating Infrastructure and Clean Boaters Program, Lakes Grant Program, Long Island Sound Research and License Plate Programs, etc.).
 - 7.2.3f Pursue grants for Athletics (US Soccer Foundation, USA Swimming, etc.).
 - 7.2.3g Investigate Homeland Security Grants (Development of public facilities that can also act as safe places in the event of a terrorist attack or natural disaster).
- 7.2.4 Some suggested alternative funding sources include:
 - 7.2.4a Increased fundraising through the activation of the Groton Parks Foundation and through establishing a Senior Center 501(c)3 to help fundraise for this program area, (see Agency Resources and Customer Service Recommendations).
 - 7.2.4b Providing naming rights to specific facilities and amenities.
 - 7.2.4c Selling name plates to be hung in the Golf clubhouse.
 - 7.2.4d Corporate sponsorship for programs (including tiered level of benefits)

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

Strategies:

- 7.3.1 Research and investigate private business partnerships, collaborative efforts with the City of Groton, the Groton Public Schools and non-profit organizations in order to share facilities, capital expenditure, operational costs, scheduling, etc.
- 7.3.2 Involve the Parks and Recreation Commission in assisting in the development, acquisition, and management of the agency's resources.
 - 7.3.2a Encourage the Commissioners to play an active role in fundraising for the Department.
 - 7.3.2b They are also a valuable resource in providing guidance, expertise, advocacy, political support, and fundraising

efforts and to represent the agency's constituents.

- 7.3.3 Investigate and consider the impacts of the alternative recreation services being provided to the Naval Base population, as well as by the City of Groton.

Table 14: Recommendations and Action Plan Priorities

Short Term - 2009 to 2012						
Priority	Strategy Number(s)	Category	Strategy Description	Strategy Leader	Strategy Team	Cost Estimate
High	1.1.1	Agency Resources / Customer Service	Obtain approval of the Master Plan by the Parks and Recreation Commission, present it to the Town Council for adoption and implementation.			Staff time
High	1.1.2	Agency Resources / Customer Service	Identify “champions” for priority recommendations and assign roles, responsibilities and deadlines for staff.			Staff time
High	1.1.3	Agency Resources / Customer Service	Provide staff the necessary professional development, equipment and tools to put the recommendations of the Master Plan into action.			Staff time
High	1.1.4	Agency Resources / Customer Service	Establish an Implementation Advisory committee to assist in putting the recommendations of the master plan into action.			Staff and volunteer time
High	2.1.5	Agency Resources / Customer Service	Reinstitute a Division-Head level position for the Parks Division.			\$82,350 annual salary and benefits
High	3.1.5	Recreation Programming	Reference the results of the community survey to develop programs of interest to the community. See the Groton Community Survey section of the report for more details.			TBD
High	4.1.3	Facilities	Implement the Town’s Bicycle, Pedestrian & Trail Master Plan for viable linkages between park facilities.			TBD, \$100,000/year for trail development
High	4.4.9	Facilities	Work to implement the Sutton Park Master Plan by gaining public support for funding to move into design and construction of the plan			Staff time;TBD based on final plan design
High	5.1.5	Organization, Management & Staffing	Develop a pricing policy and cost recovery goals that incorporate the community’s values and mission of the Department.			\$8,300
High	6.1.1	Organization, Management & Staffing	Actively distribute and refer to the Dept’s existing maintenance standards to make staff proactive regarding how the system is managed and maintained.			Staff time
High	7.1.4	Funding	Utilize the Master Plan to prioritize capital investments and allocation of funding to address the capacity and functional limitations of existing facilities as well as those necessary to address the community’s concerns about bike and pedestrian routes to parks and facilities. Also see the detailed Facilities recommendations in this section.			TBD
High	2.2.1, 7.2.1	Funding	Encourage more support and advocacy by the Parks and Recreation Commission and Golf Advisory Board to obtain alternative funds for improvements to or new facilities and programs. Make them active advocates for the agency and encourage them to assist in the implementation of this plan as well as continuing the work done on previous strategic planning and facility studies.			Staff and volunteer time
High	7.2.3b	Funding	Apply for grants for trails and alternative transportation development. See the appendix for a list of alternative funding source opportunities.			Staff and volunteer time
Medium	2.1.2	Agency Resources / Customer Service	Support staff’s interest in obtaining additional certifications and attending training sessions and state and national conferences.			TBD

Medium	2.1.4	Agency Resources / Customer Service	Update systems to accommodate current technologies, including but not limited to accepting credit/debit cards and on-line registration.			\$0 to 50,000 depending on whether purchasing a new system or adaptation of the existing system
Medium	2.1.8	Agency Resources / Customer Service	Annually update and train staff on the department's recreation software, so as to promote use for tracking participants and enhancing marketing. Investigate the potential of tying this with the maintenance software used.			Staff time,TBD
Medium	2.2.6	Agency Resources / Customer Service	Continue to work with Groton Public Schools and consider a formalized, written partnership agreement to make the construction of new facilities feasible and affordable.			Staff and legal time
Medium	2.3.4	Agency Resources / Customer Service	Create marketing efforts that are less dependent on paper and focused on newer technologies.			Staff time,TBD
Medium	3.1.2, 3.1.3	Recreation Programming	Increase the amount of programs for youth and adults that are more focused on health, wellness, culture and/or the arts. Partner with community youth organizations to promote and expand fitness programs for youth.			Staff time,TBD
Medium	3.2.4a	Recreation Programming	Continue collaboration to maintain and expand services provided for Inclusive and Special Needs Programs through continued collaborations with existing partners and other organizations.			Staff time,TBD
Medium	3.2.4b, 7.3.3	Recreation Programming / Funding	Investigate and consider the impacts of the alternative recreation services being provided to the Naval Base and City of Groton populations as well as those offered within the State Parks in the area and work to minimize overlap or saturation in programs and services.			Staff time
Medium	4.1.1, 4.1.2	Facilities	Work with the Public Works and Planning departments, as well as ConnDOT and neighboring jurisdictions to develop trail connections within existing parks to exterior walks and streets and a bike lane or pathway system on existing roadways.			TBD:As needed
High	4.2.3, 4.4.6, 7.1.1	Facilities	Initiate a Feasibility Study for multi-purpose indoor facility that would incorporate the highest needs of the community - aquatics and recreation amenities. As the economy rebounds, explore the feasibility of a bond referendum for the development of a multi-purpose recreation center with aquatics and other items from the "wish list" (noted in 4.2.2).			TBD: \$50,000
Medium	4.5.2c	Facilities	Improve and expand the parking at Poquonnock Plains Park.			Staff time
Medium	4.5.7	Facilities	Establish a public art program for Groton's parks and public spaces.			Staff time
Medium	6.1.3	Organization, Management & Staffing	Prioritize parks and recreation maintenance responsibilities. Utilize the data provided in this Master Plan report to determine resources needed and time allocation for specified tasks. See Table 9.3 for Labor Ratios on Maintenance Activities.			Staff time
Medium	7.1.3	Funding	Work with Town Administration to identify and establish new and steady funding sources in order to address renovations and repairs to existing park and recreation facilities. Also see the appendix for additional funding opportunities, and refer to the cost estimates in this section in order to gauge costs for implementation of improvements.			Staff time
Medium	7.2.3g	Funding	Investigate homeland security grants for development of public facilities that can also act as safe places in the event of a terrorist attack or natural disaster.			Staff time

Low	2.1.1, 2.1.1a, 2.1.3	Agency Resources / Customer Service	Provide more cross-training for staff so that more than one person can complete a task, if the primary person leaves or is out for an extended period of time. Formalize annual or biannual workshop/in-service training.			Staff time
Low	2.1.6	Agency Resources / Customer Service	Restructure the agency to provide for an Assistant Director of Parks and Recreation position, or promote the current recreation manager to formally serve in this capacity.			\$97,400 annual salary and benefits
Low	2.3.2	Agency Resources / Customer Service	Maintain the trust and support of the public by remaining open and proactive in addressing any potential issues that may affect program delivery. This may include open communication regarding the areas of funding (both geographically and program/facility funding) and holding public meetings to discuss any new facility plans or to obtain the public's feedback for such plans.			Staff time
Low	2.3.6, 2.3.7	Agency Resources / Customer Service	Increase communications and marketing of existing programs and facilities, with a focus on communications to residents of the Naval Submarine Base area and minorities.			Staff time, TBD
Low	3.1.6	Recreation Programming	Develop day trip or sample activity programs to introduce youth to a variety of activities, both physical and cultural.			Staff time, TBD
Low	3.2.4	Recreation Programming	The agency should analyze areas where currently there may be gaps in service or lack of capacity such as soccer, racquetball and beach volleyball, softball and volleyball leagues.			Staff time
Low	3.2.4c	Recreation Programming	Increase regional collaboration to maximize the use of the renovated Senior Center.			Staff time
Low	3.2.4d	Recreation Programming	Initiate regional collaboration to increase the number and type of special events offered to the greater southeastern Connecticut area.			Staff time
Low	4.2.4	Facilities	Identify funding for the development of a new recreation center. Work with the Town Council and Groton Public Schools to identify funds to make basic renovations and repairs to the William Seely School.			TBD - dependent on design (recreation center), Seely renovations (\$100,000 +)
Low	4.4.2a	Facilities	Consider reprogramming or re-purposing some of the Town's lesser used facilities in order to activate the spaces and meet the needs of the community. Some of these facilities include Woodcrest Park, Bel Aire Park, Raheem Ali Carter Memorial Park, Central Avenue Park, Ring Drive Recreation Area and Tanglewood Park.			Staff time, TBD base on improvements
Low	4.5.2a, 4.5.3, 4.5.4	Facilities	Priority renovations - evaluate and prioritize upgrades and maintenance improvements to existing facilities - such as fencing, lighting and new paint at older facilities.			Staff Time - Fencing - \$50 LF Lighting \$1200 EA
Low	5.1.2, 5.1.6	Organization, Management & Staffing	Evaluate the fee structure for facilities and programs annually to determine whether fees should be updated to accommodate increased demand, operations costs, market conditions, etc. This would include evaluating fees for the use of athletic facilities and charge user groups accordingly. Consider introducing a nominal fee and incrementally raising it to a market level over the next 5 years.			Staff time
Low	5.1.3	Organization, Management & Staffing	Collaborate with the City of Groton and the Mystic Chamber of Commerce to identify the levels of attendance, as well as the economic impact of existing special events.			Staff time

Low	6.1.2	Organization, Management & Staffing	Develop a system which will track maintenance tasks. Utilizing the recommended parks and recreation software with the maintenance management tracking module is recommended. This will assist in a clearer understanding of typical maintenance required for different types of parks.			Software - \$10,000
Low	6.1.4	Organization, Management & Staffing	Consider outsourcing non-park related maintenance areas that would allow the agency to focus on program areas, the urban forest and parks.			TBD - dependent on tasks
Low	7.2.2	Funding	Work with the Parks and Recreation Commission and Golf Advisory Board to assist the department with grant writing and increasing advocacy to the RTM and Town Council.			Staff and volunteer time
Low	7.2.4c	Funding	Alternative funding source - Sell name plates to be hung in the Shennecossett Clubhouse.			TBD - dependent on product
Low	7.3.2	Funding	Increase involvement of the Parks and Recreation Commission in assisting in the development, acquisition, and management of the agency's resources.			Staff and volunteer time
Mid-Term - 2013 to 2016						
Priority	Strategy Number(s)	Category	Strategy Description	Strategy Leader	Strategy Team	Cost Estimate
High	2.2.2, 7.2.4a	Agency Resources / Customer Service	Expand the role and activity of the Groton Parks Foundation by establishing a "friends" group that recruits people within the community to advocate on behalf of parks and recreation, with a sub-branch dedicated to Senior programs. Also as an Alternative funding source - Increase fund-raising through activation of the Foundation.			Staff and volunteer time
High	2.2.3	Agency Resources / Customer Service	Seek out and utilize formal, documented partnerships to provide for the increasing and changing demands of the community. Partnerships should be based on equity.			Staff and legal time
High	2.2.7, 3.2.1	Agency Resources / Customer Service	Create and utilize the "working group" of recreation providers in the Town to identify partnership opportunities for the development of new facilities.			Staff and volunteer time
High	2.3.3	Agency Resources / Customer Service	Increase marketing of programs and activities on local TV channels, in local publications and at special events.			TBD - dependent on mediums
High	3.1.1	Recreation Programming	Continue to accommodate the aging population through the development of programs for "baby boomers," who are 50 and older (rather than 55).			Staff time, TBD
High	3.1.7	Recreation Programming	Increase the number of swimming classes offered for all ages and abilities.			Staff time, TBD
High	3.2.2	Recreation Programming	Increase efforts to expand partnerships with youth organizations to engage these organization's existing participants in Town activities.			Staff and volunteer time
High	4.2.2	Facilities	Develop a clear and specific "wish list" for facilities (including indoor aquatics, trails, a multi-purpose recreation center and athletic fields). Work to educate the Town Council and RTM throughout the entire budget process the needs for these facilities.			Staff time
High	4.4.2	Facilities	High priority community needs include an indoor pool / aquatics center, multi-purpose community center, increased water access, providing trails within existing facilities and connecting facilities and parks and lighted athletic fields.			TBD - dependent on design and construction costs
High	4.4.7	Facilities	Update the Master Plan for the Copp Property with a detailed site master plan, so as to incorporate development of new facilities (both indoor and outdoor) and the amenity needs identified in the LOS analysis.			\$100,000 to \$200,000 - dependent on scope of work

High	4.5.2b	Facilities	Maintenance improvements - Development of ADA compliant access to indoor facilities and general accessible routes within parks. New assets within parks should incorporate accessible routes and features into the design. See the Inventory Sheets in the Appendix.			TBD, based on needs
High	4.5.5a, 4.5.5b, 4.5.5c, 4.5.5d, 4.5.5e	Facilities	Shennecossett Golf Course - Refer to the Golf Course Master Plan for capital improvement recommendations for the Clubhouse and the Course and prioritize improvements, which include: Renovations to the Clubhouse in order to host more special events and tournaments, as well as window replacement and porch configuration. Paving and development of cart paths. Development of a new facility for golf cart storage or integrate the development of storage in conjunction with the historic clubhouse. Add a maintenance building that is strategically located on the course to provide easy access to most areas.			Cart paths - \$35/LF golf cart storage - \$125,000 maintenance building - \$50,000
High	4.5.8	Facilities	Allocate time and money to maintain the Senior Center’s accreditation status.			Staff time
High	6.1.5	Organization, Management & Staffing	Develop a Life-cycle Assessment program, a system which will track the use of maintenance equipment.			Staff time
High	7.1.2	Funding	Explore specific revenue-producing actions such as regional golf and athletic tournaments, expanding boating and aquatics programs, increasing user fees for groups with the ability to pay (i.e.- baby boomers), promoting maximum use and rentals of the renovated Senior Center, increasing the capacity to provide for athletic leagues and development of the Copp Property to provide a regional one-stop recreation complex.			Staff time
High	7.2.3a	Funding	Investigate sources for historic building funds to assist in improving and restoring the Shennecossett Clubhouse and Golf Course. See the appendix for a list of alternative funding source opportunities.			Staff time
High	7.2.3c	Funding	Pursue grants for inclusive and therapeutic recreation. See the appendix for a list of alternative funding source opportunities.			Staff time
High	7.3.1	Funding	Research and investigate private business partnerships, collaborative efforts with the City of Groton, the Groton Public Schools and non-profit organizations.			Staff time
Medium	2.1.9	Agency Resources / Customer Service	Engage professional design experts to develop plans for renovations to the Shennecossett Clubhouse, with a focus on expanding the golf administration areas as well as storage of equipment.			TBD, based on scope of work
Medium	2.1.10	Agency Resources / Customer Service	Pursue CAPRA (Commission for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies) accreditation for the Department in order to promote the quality of the agency’s services and support the value of recreation and parks within the community.			Staff time
Medium	2.3.1, 7.2.3	Agency Resources / Customer Service and Funding	Establish a Grants and Outreach Coordinator staff position. This position could potentially serve the entire Town or start out as a part-time Parks and Recreation position and work into a full-time position. Utilize the addition of a recommended Grants and Outreach Coordinator to apply for state, federal and private grant monies.			\$34,000 annual salary for permanent part-time position
Medium	2.3.5	Agency Resources / Customer Service	Update and widely distribute the department’s Annual Gift Catalogue in order to generate larger, annual sponsors versus sponsors of individual events.			Staff Time, TBD
Medium	3.1.8	Recreation Programming	Partner with the appropriate facilities and groups to offer more indoor programs.			Staff time

Medium	3.2.5	Recreation Programming	The Department should coordinate and cross-promote all waterfront access points in the Groton area with the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection so as to increase awareness of the public of all state and Town-managed water access opportunities.			Staff time
Medium	4.2.1	Facilities	Make development of town-owned athletic fields a priority in funding for facility improvements.			\$500,000 / Field
Medium	4.3.1a, 4.4.1	Facilities	Initiate efforts to identify funding and partnerships to facilitate the development of new facilities that will increase the Town’s LOS and create a well-balanced parks and recreation system. Based on the existing LOS, and the Town’s significant shortfalls in the provision of specific park and recreation amenities, the Town needs to develop additional facilities such as playgrounds, picnic shelters, etc. See Table 12.3A for more information.			\$55,000/playground \$45,000/picnic shelter, etc.
Medium	3.1.4, 4.4.2d, 4.4.2e	Facilities / Recreation Programming	Work with private organizations to expand the boating facilities at Spicer Park and generally increase the availability of boating programs to the public throughout the Town of Groton and promote those facilities through additional marketing and promotion.			Staff time,TBD
Medium	4.4.5	Facilities	Identify existing Town-owned or partner facilities to place amenities that incorporate existing trends and demands for more non-sports youth activities such as BMX, paintball, climbing walls, arts, cultural and performing arts. (i.e. – Sutton Park).			Staff Time,TBD - dependent on amenity
Medium	4.4.8	Facilities	Continue to evaluate partnership and regional funding opportunities for the development of a large, centralized sports complex or facility to host revenue-producing events.			Staff time
Medium	5.1.1	Organization, Management & Staffing	Develop a system which tracks program and indoor facility use by the participant’s address.			Staff time, updates to existing software
Medium	6.1.8	Organization, Management & Staffing	Track and incorporate annual operations and maintenance costs into budgets to ensure facilities are maintained to standard.			Staff Time
Medium	6.1.8	Organization, Management & Staffing	As new facilities and parks are developed, outdoor maintenance staffing should be increased to a ratio of 18 acres of developed / maintained property per maintenance personnel (not including natural undisturbed areas). The current ratio is 65:1.			\$67,5000 per person annual salary and benefits
Medium	7.2.3d, 7.2.3e	Funding	Investigate grants for environmental and natural resource preservation and water quality and boating.			Staff time
Low	2.2.5	Agency Resources / Customer Service	Explore the feasibility of a “round-up” program that allows residents to contribute to the Department through Town utility bills or other means.			Staff time,TBD
Low	2.3.8	Agency Resources / Customer Service	Identify specific communication mediums to enhance marketing efforts for Shennecossett Golf course regionally and throughout Connecticut.			Staff time,TBD - dependent on mediums
Low	3.2.3	Recreation Programming	The Department should continue collaborative efforts and coordinated use of facilities with existing and future athletic leagues and sports providers.			Staff time
Low	5.1.4	Organization, Management & Staffing	Work to increase enrollment in programs by expanding the marketing efforts to promote those activities that the department currently provides, deliver them at more convenient locations and times.			Staff time,TBD - dependent on mediums

Low	6.1.7	Organization, Management & Staffing	Develop an equipment and supply standard that would allow the Town to source specific types of mowers and allow the agency to inventory specific types of parts and supplies.			Staff time
Low	7.2.3f	Funding	Pursue grants for athletics.			Staff time
Low	7.2.4d	Funding	Alternative funding source suggestion - Corporate sponsorship for programs.			Staff time
Long Term 2017 to 2019						
Priority	Strategy Number(s)	Category	Strategy Description	Strategy Leader	Strategy Team	Cost Estimate
High	2.1.7	Agency Resources / Customer Service	Identify expanded office space for staff that is central to most Town residents.			
High	3.1.9, 3.1.10	Recreation Programming	The Department should consider hosting “art days” with different programs for kids and families, and opportunities to buy pieces from local artists. Public art pieces to be placed in Groton’s parks and public spaces could be acquired through annual competitions.			Staff time
High	4.3.2	Facilities	Work in conjunction with natural resource advocates and interest groups to come to a consensus on the suitability of Town-owned lands for the establishment of compatible high quality recreation amenities including indoor facilities.			Staff and volunteer time
High	4.3.3	Facilities	Establish a study to evaluate open space according to environmental sensitivity and determine appropriate levels of public access and management.			\$50,000
High	4.3.4	Facilities	Maintain and/or enhance the quality of accessible open space by improving or creating trails, signage and support assets in order to enhance the activities within these spaces.			Town wide Marketing Plan \$25,000, Individual signage - \$3000
High	4.4.2b	Facilities	Evaluate the potential of locating some of the requested facilities on some of the larger sites and integrating them with the natural resource areas within those properties.			TBD: Based on site
High	4.4.2c	Facilities	Add an additional water access and/or beach facility to help off-set the heavy use at Esker Point Beach.			TBD: Based on Location
High	4.4.3	Facilities	Areas in the north and west areas of Town need additional neighborhood park facilities to serve the population in these areas. Enforce developer agreements. Refer to the capital improvement priorities in this master plan and gaps in service for individual assets in order to guide design.			Staff time
High	4.5.6	Facilities	Esker Point Beach - Develop a master plan that will evaluate needed improvements or additional facilities, including playgrounds, picnic shelters, interpretive signage, improvements to the crossing at GLP Road, improvements to the exterior of the concession building and improvements to the parking lot, including reducing the paved area and improving circulation and adding landscape islands.			Master Plan: TBD \$45,000
High	7.2.4b	Funding	Alternative funding source suggestion - Provide naming rights to specific facilities and amenities.			Staff time
Medium	2.2.4	Agency Resources / Customer Service	Establish a formalized volunteer program.			Staff and volunteer time
Medium	4.4.4	Facilities	In determining locations for new facilities to relieve the burden on existing ones, there should be consideration to locate them to take advantage of public transportation, in under-served parts of town, or in areas with safer bike/pedestrian access.			Staff time

