

Town of Southampton Recreation Plan

I. Introduction

A. Plan Background & Purpose

Recreation is a broad topic, encompassing many things to many people. Water-based activities like swimming, boating and fishing. Active team sports. Tennis. Golf. Bicycling. Hiking. Skating. Horseback riding. Passive activities like sunbathing, picnicking, bird watching and people watching. Landscape painting. Organized programs such as crafts, dance and exercise. Children's play. Special events like outdoor music or the annual lighting of the Town's Big Duck.

Each of these types of activities has its own parameters, standards and issues for planning. Each can rightfully be the subject of its own study and some, such as golf and swimming, have been. Given the range of the topic and the volume of existing material and studies bearing on recreation in the Town, what is the purpose and scope of this particular plan?

This plan aims to pull together the current thinking, policies, recommendations and activities concerning recreation from various Town plans and departments into one document so that providing for recreation in Southampton can be approached from a comprehensive perspective.

Given the breadth of the topic and the existing Town studies bearing on recreation, what is the purpose of this plan?

This plan aims to build on and advance current thinking, policies, recommendations and activities concerning recreation in Southampton. It will identify needs and chart a course for Town action.

Building on existing studies and programs, as well as new research, this plan aims to identify needs for new and/or improved facilities and services. It will then explore ways of meeting those needs, and chart a course for Town action.

The plan also approaches recreation from a geographic, or neighborhood perspective, looking at how well different areas of the town are served. This community-oriented approach is important for a Town bisected by a canal, and where the traffic encountered in getting from one to the other side of it causes people to rethink — and forego — their plans. Locally oriented recreation is also important because a large portion of the population that engages in recreational activities (i.e. young people and seniors) may not readily access facilities. Providing opportunities for recreation involves not only places and programs, but *access*.

Finally, this plan looks at how to provide for recreation from the standpoint of Town capacity and administration. The phrase “if you build it, they will come” has been burned into the public consciousness as part cliché, part mantra, and the pent up demand for recreational facilities in Southampton makes it particularly apt for this project. But a few clauses are missing. If you build it, they will come, *and* it must be paid for, it must be programmed, and it must be maintained. The recommendations portion of this document will include a management component.

The Recreation Plan has two special foci:

- 1. Local access — to ensure that all areas of the Town are served; and*
- 2. Fiscal and administrative capacity — to provide options for developing and maintaining facilities.*

B. Plan Methodology

The Southampton Recreation Plan was prepared in three phases:

- Phase 1 identified community needs and a vision for recreation. It included development of a baseline of existing data, public policies, goals and objectives, regulations and activities concerning recreation in the Town of Southampton. Community preferences were gauged through a telephone survey, open forums, and extensive interviews, as described further below.
- Phase 2 involved development of an inventory of existing recreation facilities and programs, along with an analysis of the adequacy of these facilities to serve Southampton’s population. Levels of service were calculated and recreation targets developed.

- In Phase 3, options were identified for addressing the needs explored in previous phases, and an action plan developed for their implementation.

C. Public Process

This plan is guided by a multi-part public process, involving:

- *A Recreation Plan Advisory Committee:* Advisory Committee members were recruited by the Town Board from active citizens involved with grassroots recreation projects in the Town, CACs, community groups, etc. Their role was to provide input into the project and review interim work products.

Meetings of the Advisory Committee highlighted the strength and knowledge of local recreation providers — and the value of bringing people involved in Southampton recreation together. In addition to discussing the plan, Committee members used the informal gathering time before and after the meetings to share information and exchange ideas. These interactions gave rise to the recommendation, discussed in Section IV, of a Recreation Roundtable to serve as a forum for continuing these exchanges.

- *A Community Survey:* A telephone survey was conducted of a statistically-valid random sample of more than 400 Town residents and property owners, with questions intended to gauge their recreation habits, interests and opinions.
- *Public Forums:* Two public forums were held with identical formats, one east and one west of the Shinnecock Canal, for the purpose of giving any and all interested individuals the opportunity to provide input on Town recreation needs, beyond those who were reached through the telephone survey, invited to serve on the Advisory Committee, etc.
- *Interviews and Focus Groups:* Individual and group interviews were conducted with “key stakeholders” — that is, people directly involved with providing recreational opportunities in the Town. Interview subjects included Town Board members, Trustees, Town Department heads and staff members, school board officials, recreation providers, community activists, etc.

Information from these efforts is discussed in detail below under section II.D. See the Appendices for a list of people and groups interviewed, as well as the telephone survey questionnaire and results.