



Portsmouth, NH Recreational Needs Study Community Workshop #2 November 16, 2022

The second (and final) public workshop for the Portsmouth Recreational Needs Study was held on November 16, 2022 at the Community Campus. The focus of the community workshop centered on a presentation of findings from community engagement efforts, data collection and analyses, then offered residents the opportunity to weigh in on preliminary recommendations and prioritize actions the City should focus on first, according to category/topic area. Residents were also asked to contribute a word, phrase or full statement towards the creation of a vision statement. Results of public input are presented below.

FACILITIES (INDOOR)

Overarching Goal: *Enhance existing and develop new indoor facilities.*

Priorities...What should the City work on first?

- Indoor Ice Rink/Arena (44)
- Multi-Purpose Indoor Sports Complex (31)
- Teen Center (14)
- Indoor Courts: Basketball/Pickleball (11)
- Performance Theater/Amphitheater (8)
- Community Center (7)
- Senior Center (5)

Preliminary Recommendations (presented to the public)

- Utilize the Level of Service and Climate Change Analyses performed in this study as planning tools to inform future improvements/investments.

Public Input (What could be improved/what is missing?)

- Living on the coast having facilities to teach swimming is important for the safety of the community. One City-owned competition pool that is not open fully does not meet the needs of the community. Swim lessons fill within minutes of being posted showing the need for more availability.
- Bus from schools to pool at the end of the day, similar to the one that comes to the Community Campus could increase access for many kids.

- Existing facilities need some TLC. Specifically while it is understood that the Spinnaker Point lease will be up in a few years and we want to minimize expenditures there, it needs attention.
- Need an ice rink.
- Need an indoor sports complex with turf and courts.
- Need an ice rink/indoor facility rinks.
- Need an ice rink/arena.
- Need an ice rink.
- Need an ice arena.
- Indoor training facilities for youth athletic to properly train. Gyms don't work.
- Ice rinks...the City would benefit with the teams, but also with hotels/restaurants.
- Sherburne softball field is in horrible condition. Base paths are not properly distanced and aren't the same.
- Ice rinks.
- Indoor turf field.
- Indoor basketball court/gym that doesn't double as a school gym with very few open gym hours and complete closure in summer.
- A teen center is completely missing or any program dedicated to grades 9 – 12.
- More open gym hours available to existing gyms. Maybe utilize PHS gym in the summer or other schools. The Connie should be an option in the summer. There is nowhere indoors to play basketball in the summer.
- Indoor sports complex is missing. Need a large space that houses multiple sports options with better hours.
- Multi-sports complex with ice rink.
- Primarily places for youth sports that require large indoor spaces like ice hockey, soccer and baseball.
- Indoor track.
- Ice rink.
- Tween/Teen hangout space for video games, music, art, dance (non-sports oriented).
- Teen recreation center in the summer.
- Teen center...Connie Bean is not a teen center.
- Increasing annual funding of \$150,000 for the Jarvis Drive indoor pool to reflect the amount of inflation since 2010.
- Community center with focus for all age groups (teens, young adults, and seniors (big focus on youth/seniors) to close gap on age gaps.
- Indoor aquatics suitable to host meets
- A second indoor swimming pool...currently only option for swim team is for 8 yr. old to start at 6:30 pm and ends at 8 pm...too late
- Private swim lessons for kids with autism
- Pickleball
- Tennis courts
- Indoor facility that could host a variety of sports but also toddler time playtimes, fields to run and play during winter. Seacoast United did this prior to pandemic
- Indoor facility would be nice but the City should own it, not a private partnership
- Find it difficult to find a place open to play basketball
- More open gym activities for teens
- Indoor track

PROGRAMMING

Overarching Goal: *Expand program offerings and hours of operation.*

Priorities...What should the City work on first?

- More winter sports offerings (23)
- Disc Golf (14)
- Extend weekend hours for working families (13)
- Affordable swim lessons (13)
- Free Play options (10)
- Establish training opportunities for volunteer coaches (9)
- Programming for preschoolers/adults/people with disabilities (8)
- Pickleball lessons/leagues (6)
- Tennis Lessons (5)
- Coordination with Portsmouth Housing Authority: scholarships (4)
- Martial Arts programming for adults/empty-nesters (1)

Public Input (What could be improved/what is missing?)

- Free youth programming or scholarships for low-income in City programming.
- Teen programming.
- Tween/Teen programming, non-traditional sports, biking, yoga, climbing, roller skating, dance, surf, kayak (Durham seems to offer quite a bit of alternative programming).
- Teen programming/center accessible from PMS/PHS. Connie Bean is not a teen center.
- Adult programming (ages 18 – 40).
- Weekend swim lessons at the outdoor pool in summer
- Hiking trips/Ski club on weekends
- Gymnastics/Dance...private programs are expensive

FACILITIES (OUTDOOR)

Overarching Goal: *Enhance existing and develop new outdoor facilities.*

Priorities...What should the City work on first?

- Splash Pads (25)
- Synthetic Turf Fields (13)
- Outdoor Pools (12)
- Skate Parks (11)
- Multi-Purpose Fields: Soccer/Football (11)
- Baseball Fields: Adult/Youth (7)
- Basketball Courts (5)
- Tennis Courts (5)
- Softball Fields: Adult/Youth (4)
- Community Gardens (4)
- Pickleball Courts (3)

Preliminary Recommendations (presented to the public)

- Support the City's Open Space Plan recommendations:
 - o Complete an evaluation of the City's parks/playgrounds so the existing condition are documented. Use this to inform and guide the scheduling/design/upgrade of facilities.

- Consider a management structure that can oversee all of the parks/playgrounds in the City.
- Develop a community garden at the Senior Center.
- Develop a master plan for South Mill Pond Area.
- Expand natural playground elements at all elementary schools.
- Support the Prescott Park master plan.
- Support the City's Master Plan recommendations:
 - Enhance neighborhood parks, recreational facilities and playgrounds, and add new ones where appropriate.
 - Create additional outdoor recreational fields where appropriate.
 - Enhance the city-owned properties such as Prescott Park, Peirce Island and Sagamore Creek.
 - Create new public spaces that can be used for both recreation and floodplain storage.
 - Pursue opportunities for community gardens.
- Utilize the Level of Service and Climate Change Analyses performed in this study as planning tools to inform future improvements/investments.

Public Input (What could be improved/what is missing?)

- More adventure facilities and programming
- Rock climbing/climbing walls
- Elevated ropes courses
- Outdoor survival skills and workshops
- Teen facility/center
- Re-open/fix existing/former parks (under route 95 bridge)
- Pickleball courts
- Girls softball fields...girls are treated very much like 2nd class citizens compared to baseball
- Teen – adult (20 – 40-something options)
- Re-open closed courts/sites (Atlantic Heights)
- Adult outdoor fitness structures/elements
- Teen options (especially in colder months)
- Maintain/cover basketball courts
- Toddler options/splash pads
- Expanded hours at indoor pool
- Nature playgrounds
- Tweens/teen space
- Do not build on Community Campus...keep nature as is and maintain biking/walking dirt trails

CONNECTIVITY/MOBILITY

Overarching Goal: *Enhance walkability, bikeability and universal access throughout the community.*

Priorities...What should the City work on first?

- Walking trails/paths (33)
- Biking/Mountain biking trails/paths (26)
- Sidewalks (19)
- Reconsider removal of Middle St. bike lane (10)
- ADA accessibility/Universal access (3)

Preliminary Recommendations (presented to the public)

- Support the City's Master Plan recommendations:
 - o Work with state/regional partners to convert the former Hampton Branch to the off-road route of the NH Seacoast Greenway.
 - o Identify/Implement off-road, multi-use paths along North Mill Pond and other transportation/utility corridors.
 - o Create a passive recreation program focused on expansion/maintenance of recreational trails.
- Support the City's Open Space Plan recommendations for trail connections:
 - o Land between Gosling Meadows neighborhood and Durgin Lane
 - o Along the river, through parcels to Porpoise Way/Portsmouth Blvd./Dunlin Way
 - o Portsmouth Blvd./Dunlin Way to the river

Public Input (What could be improved/what is missing?)

- Accessibility/transportation/funding.
- Inter-connectedness (other than by car) among facilities.
- Connectivity for bike/ped. Mobility from rail trail at skate park to Plains Ballfield and Community Campus, Dondero, etc.
- Complete/fill gaps in bike path connections
- Paved walking/roller blading/bike path away from traffic
- Safe bike route to Community Campus
- More bike racks (especially on Court St.)
- Childcare for participants in sports indoors
- Stroller-friendly paved walking paths

AMENITIES

Overarching Goal: *Enhance, upgrade and develop new amenities at existing sites to improve the user's experience.*

Priorities...What should the City work on first?

- Comfort stations/Restrooms (28)
- Upgrade/Update playground equipment (24)
- Lighting to expand use (17)
- Backstops/Dugouts/Scoreboards (5)
- Picnic Areas (3)
- Seating: bleachers/benches (3)
- Warm-up areas/space (2)
- Fencing: playgrounds/ballfields (1)
- Parking (1)
- Noise abatement (1)

Public Input (What could be improved/what is missing?)

- Adult amenities (outdoor fitness)
- We need an actual bathroom building somewhere near Leary Field.
- More bike racks downtown.
- Nature playground like Dondero...kids always play around those big plastic structures and they're a waste. Use logs, boulders, berms, etc. to build areas kids love to play in

INFORMATION/COMMUNICATION/PROTOCOLS

Overarching Goal: Increase communications, formalize communications planning and promote the City's goal of equity and inclusion.

Preliminary Recommendations (presented to the public)

- Establish annual 'meet and greet' for sports league/organization administrators, coach and support staff with School District Facilities Director, Parks and Greenery Dept. and Recreation Director.
- Establish quarterly (by season) coordination meetings with sports league/organization administrators, coach and support staff with School District Facilities Director, Parks and Greenery Dept. and Recreation Director.
- Formalize protocols for field use, particularly after rain/weather events.
- Ensure that information is made available both in print and online.

Public Input (What could be improved/what is missing?)

- Announce programs earlier. We get information much later than private programs and it's too late
- Field access app for mobile phones and signing up for facilities
- Need to improve facilities and opportunities for seniors...enhance Spinnaker Point
- Promote all scholarship opportunities...this is secret currently and important for equity

MAINTENANCE/STEWARDSHIP

Overarching Goal: Maintain existing facilities in good working order and identify partnerships to facilitate stewardship.

Preliminary Recommendations (presented to the public)

- Support the City's Master Plan recommendations:
 - o Partner with locals schools and community organizations to create stewardship program.
- Establishing Memorandums of Agreement with sports leagues/organizations regarding maintenance and stewardship responsibilities, based on best practices and mutual agreement. Renew/Update these MOAs seasonally/annually.
- Identify/Encourage efficiencies for 'equipment crossover' between the City and School District.

Public Input (What could be improved/what is missing?)

- Spinnaker Point facility needs to be better maintained perhaps even purchased
- Include other City program departments in existing resources assessment (e.g. Library)
- Looks fine as is
- Explore long-term plans of private/non-profit for synergy (PMAC/YMCA)
- Circulating staff monitoring fields

VISION STATEMENT

Participants were asked to contribute a word or two, or a full statement that is reflective of the core values that should be included in the vision statement.

Public Input (What could be improved/what is missing?)

- Nature
- Nature-based
- Long-term sustainability
- Sustainable + Ecological
- Centralized
- Environmentally sound