

Recreational Needs Assessment Report

Town of Stillwater
Saratoga County, New York

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Engineers / Surveyors
Planners
Environmental Scientists
Landscape Architects

Prepared by:

Chazen Engineering, Land Surveying & Landscape Architecture Co., P.C.

or

Chazen Environmental Services, Inc.

100 Glen Street (Suite 3D)

Glens Falls, New York 12801

(518) 812-0513

Dutchess County Office
(845) 454-3980

Orange County Office
(845) 567-1133

Capital District Office
(518) 273-0055

Connecticut Office
(860) 440-2690

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1.0 INTRODUCTION/PURPOSE

The 2006 Stillwater Comprehensive Plan identified a lack of improved recreational facilities within the Town that are readily accessible to all, conveniently located, and serving the broad variety of needs of its residents. The purpose of this evaluation is to define the current and future demands for recreational facilities and plan for their construction/implementation.

The 2006 Comprehensive Plan gives the population of the Town at just over 7,000. The Buildout/Growth Projection completed as a component of the Town's Generic Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS) estimates that the Town could add 600 new homes over the 2007-2017 planning period. Population could grow by as much as 2400 over this same time period. Long term the Town has the development potential for over 5900 new homes. These numbers were used to theorize future need for recreation in the Town.

Several methods were utilized in an effort to gain an understanding of: the Town's current and future needs, condition and level of use of existing facilities, the quality/deficiencies of the existing facilities, and the current and future demand (or need) for new facilities. Utilizing the inventory of facilities included in the Town's Comprehensive Plan, all park and recreation facilities were first inspected and existing improvements was completed. The Town then established a working group of citizen representatives knowledgeable of local facilities and needs and programming of recreational activities. A roundtable discussion was conducted and issues concerning existing facilities, current usage, known deficiencies, and anticipated demands were identified. Additionally, interviews were conducted with the Director of Building Planning and Development, the Town's Committee for Parks & Recreation, and the athletic director for Stillwater Central School, as well as various representatives of non-scholastic teams and sports clubs.

The needs of scholastic teams and the conditions of the school's facilities are not included in this report. It has been determined that school facilities are generally available only to scholastic teams. Additionally, there are other important recreational activities not covered in this report as they are the focus of the Farmland and Open Space Preservation Report. Recreation covered in that report includes bike, snowmobile and equestrian trails and passive open space recreation.

2.0 RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

2.1 Existing Recreational Facilities

A composite map, titled Existing and Proposed Recreation Facilities Figure, identifies the location of current and proposed recreational facilities. Following is a description of these facilities.

American Legion

The American Legion owns one multi-use field located at American Legion Road. The facilities are owned and managed by the American Legion and are used for a variety of sports throughout the year including football, soccer, baseball and softball. The condition of the field is poor. The facility also lacks parking and changing facilities.

Cambridge Court

Cambridge Court is a newly built neighborhood park completed in 2007 and is located on Cambridge Court. The site is approximately 6 acres and includes the following amenities: two (2) half-court basketball courts, one (1) half-field soccer field, one (1) sand volley ball court and playground equipment with swings and slides. The park serves the neighborhood in which it is located. It is not an adequate facility for organized team sports.

Gurba North

The site is located at Gurba Drive North and is approximately 4.06 acres in area some of which is wetland. There is a basketball court in poor condition on the site. The site is not large enough for adding facilities for team sports.

Riverside Veteran's Park

Riverside Veteran's Park is located on East Street in the Town of Stillwater. It is approximately 2.5 acres in area and consists of a playground with multi use jungle gym (including swings and a slide), a softball field, a basketball court and a Veteran's monument/memorial.

The playground was recently refurbished with new children's play equipment, benches and picnic tables. The parking area has been expanded and paved. An irrigation system has been added to a portion of the park. The softball field and basketball court are still in poor condition. The softball field is used by the girls' softball league for practices.

This park could be improved by refurbishing the softball field and adding irrigation. If the basketball court is not used, this would also be a good location for a tennis court given that there is parking and residents throughout the Town can use the park. A comfort station is also needed at this facility.

Adjacent Town Site

The Town owns 1.23 acres of land known as “Boiler House” located directly east of Riverside Veteran’s Park. The Town has received funds from the New York State Environmental Restoration Program (ERP) (a.k.a. Brownfields Program) and has completed site clean-up activities. The administrative closeout through the NYSDEC program is being processed. The Town desires to convert the site to a park to support activities in the Riverside Veteran’s Park. Facilities would include public restrooms and a parking area. Visitor information would be dispensed for the *Lakes to Locks* passage which runs along scenic by-way Route 4. The Town has sought public funding through the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation.

Stillwater Community Center

The Community Center is located on Palmer Street on a 2.52 acre parcel. The Center is housed in the former Stillwater Elementary building and is operated by an independent not-for-profit organization. The Center is home to many community based organizations and activities including after school sports. A new playground has been added in front of the Center. A field in back of the Center is used for “Battle” football. However, the field is in poor condition. An indoor basketball court is used in the winter.

2.2 Planned Recreational Facilities

Glen Hollow Park

Glen Hollow Park is an undeveloped 6 acre property owned by the Town on Lake Road. Once built, it would be the only park facility on the west side of Town. Proposed facilities are a playground for ages 2-5 and another for ages 5-12, a basketball court, and a volleyball court. Parking and a comfort station are also proposed.

The park would most likely be used by the surrounding neighborhoods. Since there will be parking, people may come from other areas in the Town to use the playgrounds.

2.3 Town Property with Potential for Recreation

Gurba South

This site is approximately 1.1 acres and is currently vacant with an existing retention pond. It is located on Gurba Drive South. The site experiences regular flooding and has limited development potential for meeting recreational needs. The surround neighborhood is lacking a playground. This site could possibly be large enough for a small neighborhood playground.

Mullah Hill

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The Town owns this 6.6 acre parcel at the end of East Street. The site is currently vacant with a level area at the end of East Street sloping steeply down to the railroad tracks. It is possible that wetlands are adjacent to the railroad tracks. The Town is currently using the site for brush disposal.

The flat section of the site could possibly be used as a temporary multi-use field to fill some of the immediate needs not being met by other fields in Town. It could also be designed to be a neighborhood playground or possibly a tennis court. Because of the slope and wetlands, the site has limited possibilities to meet the long-term recreational needs of organized sports.

Riverfront Park

The Town recently purchased 18 acres of land in the northern part of Town near the Saratoga National Historical Park. One idea for this property is to create the Stillwater Riverfront Park. A concept plan developed for the site includes a boat launch and marina. The Town has entertained discussions with the SNHP regarding potential development of the site.

Hudson River Access and Beach

The site is currently owned by the Canal Corporation. It is vacant woodland sloping to a narrow natural beach at the Hudson River. It has potential to be used as a beach for swimming and fishing and a small boat access to the river for fishing and recreation.

Table 1 - Summary of Town's Facilities

| Location | Size (acres) | Notes | Baseball | Basketball | Football | Playground | Soccer | Volleyball |
|----------------------------|--------------|---|----------|--------------------|----------|------------|------------------|------------------|
| Existing Facilities | | | | | | | | |
| American Legion | | Multi-Use field needs renovation. Lacks parking and changing facilities | 1 | | 1 | | 1 | |
| Cambridge Court | 6 | New | | 2.5 ⁽¹⁾ | | | ½ ⁽²⁾ | 1 ⁽³⁾ |
| Community Center | 2.5 | Indoor Facilities | | 1 | 1 | 1 | | |
| Gurba North | 4 | Facilities degraded, property partially reverting to wetlands | | 1 | | | | |
| Riverside Veterans Park | 2.5 | Playground is new. Basketball and softball field need renovation. Additional parking is proposed. | | 1 | | 1 | | |
| Proposed Facilities | | | | | | | | |
| Glen Hollow Park | 6 | | | 1 | | 1 | | 1 |

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Table 2 - Property with Potential for Recreational Use

| Property | Size (acres) | Notes | Potential Use |
|---------------------|---------------------|--|---|
| Gurba South | 1.1 | Partially wetlands and partially mowed grass. | Possible use as a neighborhood playground. Wetlands limit use. |
| Mullah Hill | 6.6 | A flat area at the end of East Street with a steep slope down to the railroad rails. Town is currently using as a brush disposal area. | Possible use as a multi-use field or neighborhood playground. Steep slope limits use. |
| Riverfront Park | 18 | A piece of property adjacent to the Hudson River and Saratoga National Historic park. | Possible use as a harbor/marina. |
| Hudson River Access | Un-known | Woodland sloping to a narrow natural beach at the Hudson River | Possible boat and fishing access. |

3.0 RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES

3.1 Current Organized Recreational Activities

Organized/Team sports are popular recreational choices for individuals of all ages and especially youth. Programmed activities account for the greatest demands on facilities and are the easiest to ascertain. In addition to the players, parents provide active support as coaches, drivers and spectators. Referees add to the numbers of people involved in every game. When identifying overall facility needs it's important to account for all supporting individuals (referees, parents, spectators).

Based on the results of the roundtable discussions and outreach efforts to organizations and individuals programming recreational activities; the lack of facilities is a clear constraint to participation and expansion of programs to meet current and future needs. All of the participants contacted said that the numbers of teams and players in the various sports were limited by the available facilities. A brief outline of each of the sporting programs, participation levels and available facilities follows.

Baseball

Youth baseball programs are provided by Stillwater Little League including T-ball teams. The program includes children from both Mechanicville and Stillwater. There are currently 245 players (ages 5 to 12). Practice takes place at the American Legion Field in Stillwater and the Little League fields in Mechanicville. Because of the poor quality of the fields in Stillwater, all games are played in Mechanicville.

As the population grows, it's possible the two Towns could have their own leagues. Additional fields as well as improvements to existing facilities would be required.

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Basketball

Youth basketball is played as an indoor sport during the winter months. Local programs include an AAU league (ages x to y) and a youth program (z to a). Practices and games are played at the Stillwater Community Center. There are 220 players and 22 teams.

Football

Youth football is presented by Northeast Youth Football League. The league is divided into flag football for the younger ages and tackle football for the older ages. A total of 6 teams and 100 players are involved. In addition, there is a cheerleading team with about 30 participants.

Football practices and games are conducted at the Stillwater American Legion fields and behind the Stillwater Community Center September through November. League representatives indicated fields are in poor condition. There is inadequate parking and no concession, restroom or locker (changing) facilities.

Soccer

Soccer continues to gain tremendous popularity. Soccer is played as both an indoor and outdoor sport. Mechanicville-Stillwater United Soccer Club (MSUSC) programs soccer locally. The indoor season runs from October thru March. In 2006 there were 268 players, 12 coaches, 6 assistant coaches, and 20+ volunteers. Players are ages 6 to 19. Teams currently use facilities located in Malta and Halfmoon. Practice times are limited and are reportedly expensive. The Club director reports that the numbers of teams are limited by the availability of facilities.

The outdoor season runs from April through June. Numbers of participants are similar to indoor soccer. Teams use the American Legion field for practice. Outdoor games are not played locally (all games are played away) because of the poor quality of the field.

As with indoor soccer, current facilities limit the number of teams for practice and play. To host a tournament a club needs at least three full size regulation soccer fields and two modified fields with facilities to meet the needs of players, coaches, referees and spectators. Tournaments can benefit local businesses by bringing in customers needing accommodation, food, gas, and other services.

Softball

Softball is another sport gaining in popularity. In 2006 there were approximately 165 players. Practices are held at the American Legion Field, Riverside Veteran's Park and the Decrescente Fields in Mechanicville. Games are all played in Mechanicville due to the poor condition of the fields and facilities in Stillwater.

Adult softball is also a reported popular activity. The level of adult interest in softball in the Town is unknown at this time.

Volleyball

Volleyball is a popular indoor sport for children and adults. The Community Center has a volleyball court used in the winter for AAU Volleyball. There are approximately 72 players ages 18 and under. Adult volleyball is not an organized sport at this time.

3.2 Team/ Programmed Activities Not Currently Provided

Some team sports are not currently played in the Town. However, these sports are gaining popularity in adjacent areas of New York. It can be anticipated that there will be future interest in these sports.

Ice Hockey/Skating

Hockey is a popular sport in the region and within the Town. There are no current teams or facilities in the Town. Youth interested in the sport use rink/facilities in Clifton Park. Participation levels were not available. Likewise, there are no recreational ice skating facilities in the Town.

Lacrosse

There are no existing organized lacrosse teams in Town. Based on communications with stakeholders interest in this sport is high and growing in the state and is expected to grow in Stillwater in the near future. Locally, scholastic lacrosse is played in the spring and could share a multi-purpose field with football and soccer.

Swimming

Swimming continues to be popular as a team sport. However, there are no public swimming pools or beaches in Town and consequently, no swim teams. Stillwater Central School does not have a swimming pool.

3.3 Other Recreational Activities

Citizens engage in other recreational activities within the Town and there are additional opportunities for recreation that could be developed.

Boating/Fishing

Historically, boating and fishing were popular recreational activities in the Town. However, current facilities limit this activity. On the Hudson River, there is a private marina with a boat ramp. There are no public boat launches in the Town. Boat access to Saratoga Lake was historically provided at Brown's Beach. This facility is currently closed.

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With the increasing popularity of kayaking and canoeing, public access to both the Hudson River and Saratoga Lake would be beneficial. Citizens also indicated the potential for rowing (crew) teams on the Hudson and the stretch of river along Stillwater would be an ideal location.

Playgrounds

Playgrounds are an important recreational outlet. Small neighborhood playgrounds that can be walked to provide children and parents needed exercise and play. Larger regional playgrounds provide more opportunity for varied play equipment and interaction. Stillwater has several small neighborhood playgrounds but is lacking a large playground. Town’s people travel to Clifton Park to utilize the large playground there.

Swimming

Swimming is popular for general recreation. However, there are no public swimming pools or beaches in Town. Recreational swimming used to be available at Brown’s Beach on Saratoga Lake. As noted previously, that facility is currently closed.

Tennis

Tennis remains a popular recreational sport, although, there are no teams or public tennis courts in the Town.

3.3 Projected Growth of Participation in Team Recreational Activities

Table 3 shows the current level of participation in team sports, the existing facilities used by those teams and the anticipated growth of those teams due to increased population or increased interest in the sport.

Table 3 - Participant Level by Sport/Activity

| Activity | Age | Participants Current | Participants Projected* | Active Months | Existing Facilities |
|-------------------|------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------|---|
| Baseball | 5-14 | 245 | 319 | March-July | 1 diamond (American Legion) |
| Basketball | 8-16 | 220 | 286 | Winter | 1 indoor court (Community Center) |
| Football | 5-12 | 130 | 169 | Sept-Nov | 1 fields (American Legion and Community Center) |

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| | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------|-----|---------|----------------------|---|
| Hockey | 5+ | -- | Unknown | Winter | None |
| Lacrosse | 13-18 | 0 | Unknown | Spring | None |
| Swimming (Teams) | 10-18 | -- | -- | September - March | None |
| Soccer | 6-19 | 268 | 348 | April-June | 1 field (American Legion) |
| Softball | 10-16 | 165 | 215 | April-June | 1 field (Riverside Veterans Park) |
| Volleyballs (team) | 18 and under | 72 | 94 | Winter | 1 indoor court (Community Center) |

*Anticipated participation generated by current participation level increased by 30% over the next 10 years due to anticipated 30% increase in population.

4.0 CONCLUSIONS

Existing facilities generally do not meet acceptable standards and are lacking in number to meet current needs. Inadequate outdoor facilities include: softball fields, baseball fields, soccer fields, football fields, lacrosse fields, tennis courts, swimming pool, boat launch, and a large playground. Existing facilities also lack adequate accessory facilities including bleachers, restrooms, locker/changing rooms and adequate parking. The Town also lacks sufficient indoor public facilities including: indoor soccer courts, basketball courts, volleyball courts, swimming pool, and hockey/skating rink.

5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Many municipalities in upstate New York are building centrally located multi-use indoor/outdoor recreational facilities as a means to address a variety of needs. The consolidation of recreational facilities on a central site allows for efficient use of land and supporting facilities. Parking areas can be scaled appropriately to handle the numbers of people attracted to the facility. Centrally located and shared changing facilities and restrooms can conserve space. Scheduling of fields and courts can take place in one location and facilities can be expanded as needed. A large, centrally located multi-use indoor/outdoor facility in the Town of Stillwater would provide space for all the current and future recreational needs. Generally, the amount of land needed for this type of facility would be between 20 and 50 acres. A central, easy to access location in the Town would be desirable.

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Outdoor facilities needed to meet current needs include at least three (3) multi-use fields which would include football, soccer, and lacrosse, three baseball/softball fields, tennis courts and a large playground. An outdoor swimming pool would be a welcome addition to the Town.

Indoor facilities needed to meet current needs include two multi-use courts for basketball, volleyball, and indoor soccer. A swimming pool and ice rink for hockey and recreational skating could be added as needed.

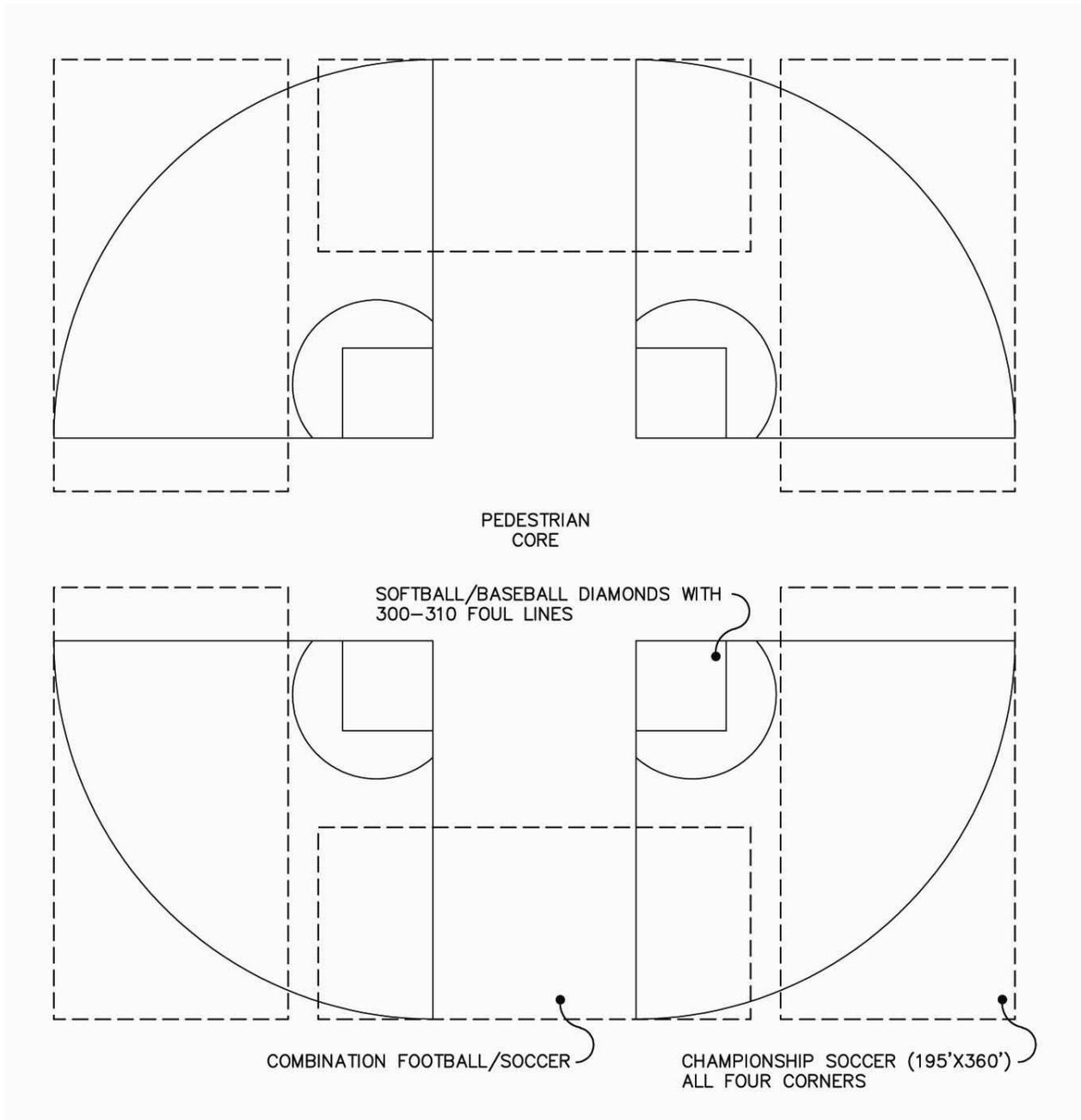
For the purpose of this evaluation and in an effort to establish a base (or benchmark) cost estimate, a simple and compact arrangement of multi-use fields has been developed and is shown below in Figure 1. This illustration shows an 800' by 800' area divided into 4 softball/baseball fields, 4 championship soccer fields and two football or soccer fields with room for spectators. This arrangement requires 15 acres for the fields plus 3-5 acres for parking, circulation and accessory structures.

An order of magnitude cost estimate for this type of facility is as follows:

Table 4 - Cost Estimates

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Land Acquisition 20 acres at say \$6,000/acre | \$120,000 |
| Building the basic fields | \$240,000 |
| Parking and Circulation | \$210,000 |
| Changing Rooms/Restrooms | \$200,000 |
| Allowance for lighting, possible irrigation and field underdrains | \$200,000 |
| Total | \$970,000 |

Figure 1: Compact Layout for Multi-use Fields



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Additional facilities could be added to the above basic fields as needed. Following are current order of magnitude cost estimates for these facilities:

Table 5 - Costs for Outdoor Courts, Field and Facilities

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Basketball Court | \$25,000 |
| Multi-Use fields (soccer, football, lacrosse) | \$33,000 |
| Playground (2-5 yrs) | \$30,000 |
| Playground (5-12 yrs) | \$40,000 |
| Outdoor Swimming Pool | \$200,000 |
| Tennis Courts | \$30,000 |
| Volleyball | \$4,000 |
| Picnic Pavilion | \$25,000 |
| Bleachers | \$8,000 |