

PORTSMOUTH COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY PLAN

ELEMENT 2 – RECREATION

This element is a combined inventory and analysis, providing the current status, usage and responsibilities relating to the existing recreational facilities. The inventory provided identifies public recreational facilities. The Town’s existing facilities are generally adequate for the existing need, facilities are being used quite extensively. A recreation needs assessment is also provided in this element.

2.1 PORTSMOUTH’S RECREATION VISION

PORTSMOUTH WILL BE AN ACTIVE AND COMMUNITY WITH A HIGH-QUALITY WELL-MAINTAINED SYSTEM OF PASSIVE AND ACTIVE RECREATION SITES, FACILITIES AND PROGRAMS THAT MEET THE CHANGING NEEDS OF ALL RESIDENTS.

2.2 EXISTING RECREATION INVENTORY

The text below provides descriptions for each Town-owned and non-Town-owned recreational facility in Portsmouth. This is followed by a tabular summary of recreational features and use limitations at each Town-owned facility. One or more maps showing the location of Portsmouth’s existing recreation inventory will be included in this element.

2.2.1 HISTORIC PARK

Bristol Ferry Town Common - Located at the northern end of Bristol Ferry Road at Bayview Avenue, the Bristol Ferry Town Common was established on March 12, 1714 by the Portsmouth Town Committee. This 1.5-acre space was originally used by farmers and others to keep their livestock and other goods while waiting for the ferry to Bristol. This historic common is currently maintained as a public park, with great views of Mount Hope Bay.

Fort Butts - An earthwork redoubt dating from the Revolutionary War. The fort was occupied successively by British, Hessian, and American troops and anchored the American northern line during the Battle of Rhode Island (1778). It offers today the same commanding view of the central bay that made it such a strategic location during the Revolutionary War. The fort is located north of the tennis courts at Portsmouth High School.



Photo 1—Founders Brook

Founders Brook - Off Boyds Lane, the Town's founding in 1638 is commemorated with memorials for Anne Hutchinson and the signers of the Compact of 1638.

Legion Park - Small park at the intersection of East Main Road and Middle Road (just north of Town Hall) that hosts a granite memorial dedicated to veterans of World Wars I and II, the Korean War and the Vietnam War, an 18th century British cannon, benches for sitting and a beautiful birch donated in 1979 as a "Liberty Tree" by the Portsmouth Garden Club. Just south across Hedly Street is a memorial to World War I veterans.

Patriots Park - Honors the 1st Rhode Island Regiment, the "Black Regiment," of free, black citizens who fought valiantly at nearby Bloody Brook during the Battle of Rhode Island. A mass grave of Hessian troops is located nearby.



Photo 2 —
Patriots Park

2.2.2 POCKET/MINI PARK

John F. Kennedy Park - Contains a small memorial to the late President at the corner of Freeborn Street and Turnpike Avenue.



Photo 3—John F. Kennedy Park

Hathaway School - Provides a basketball court, playground equipment, and athletic fields. Portsmouth school properties are reserved for school use during school hours; thereafter school related activities have first priority.

Heritage Park - A scenic overlook providing panoramic views of north Portsmouth, the upper reaches of Narragansett Bay, and Bloody Brook.

Lehigh Overlook - Off Route 114 provides a panoramic view of Prudence Island and Narragansett Bay.

2.2.3 NEIGHBORHOOD PARK

Coggeshall School - Two Little League baseball fields are located to the rear of the Coggeshall School building.

Elmhurst Park – A passive recreation facility with scenic views of the Sakonnet River. Parking available. Unlit basketball court.

Island Park Playground - Features a new modern playground, a basketball court, baseball field, and other amenities.

Mount Hope Park - Situated along the north end of Bristol Ferry Road at the intersection of Bayview Avenue, this 4.9 acre, yet-to-be-developed park has 1.4 land acres and 3.5 water acres and was newly acquired by the town in early 2016. The property has historical significance, having once been used for ferry service between Portsmouth and Bristol, beginning in approximately 1680 and ending with the completion of the Mount Hope Bridge in 1929. A partnership between the Town and the Aquidneck Land Trust made the purchase possible.

Portsmouth High School - Offers eight tennis courts, basketball courts, sports fields, and a modern, lighted track. Portsmouth school properties are reserved for school during school hours; thereafter school related activities have first priority.

Portsmouth Middle School - Athletic fields are available. Portsmouth school properties are reserved for school use during school hours; thereafter school related activities have first priority.

Turnpike Avenue Playground - Contains a modern playground for younger children and Little League ball field.

2.2.4 COMMUNITY PARK

Glen Farm - Includes the Gardner Seveney Sports Complex with soccer fields and ball fields.

Glen Park - Includes a horse ring, ball fields, picnic areas, bathroom facilities, and cooking facilities contained in a twenty five-acre parcel that stretches to the Sakonnet River. Saltwater fishing is available from the Glen Manor House dock.



Photo 4—Glen Park

2.2.5 PLAYGROUND

Frank Carson Playground - Neighborhood playground located at the end of Redwood Road has playground facilities for younger children

Melville School – School playground facilities. Portsmouth school properties are reserved for school use during school hours, thereafter, school related activities have first priority.

2.2.6 SPECIAL USE: FRESHWATER ACCESS

Melville Recreation Area - One hundred and fifty acres of coastal woodland dotted by wetlands, ponds, and brooks. Hiking trails provide a variety of opportunities for bird watching and other forms of nature appreciation. Freshwater fishing is available at the upper and lower ponds. Access to the Melville Ponds Campground, which is located within the reserve, is limited to registered campers. Needs signage to get to and within hiking area; bridge over steep gorge to enlarge hiking area.



Photo 5—Melville Recreational Area

2.2.7 SPECIAL USE: SALTWATER ACCESS

Cedar Island - On Blue Bill Cove off Route 24 offers a quiet spot for fishing along the water. Ample parking exists for the boat ramp. Needs signage and “danger - no swimming” signs. Entrance road needs leveling or paving. State owned and maintained.

Weaver Cove Boat Ramp - Located off Burma Road, is a modern boat launch facility accessible to the disabled. The launch provides access to Weaver Cove. This is a site for launching boats from trailers as well as direct water access to launch canoes and kayaks. Provides 25 parking spaces for vehicles and boat trailers.

2.2.8 SPECIAL USE: BEACH

McCorrie Point - Not a public facility, this barrier beach is open for access to the shoreline. Parking is on the beach.

Sandy Point Beach - Portsmouth’s town beach is located on the Sakonnet River and is staffed by lifeguards from Memorial Day through Labor Day. Bathhouses and restroom facilities are available in season.



Photo 6—Sandy Point Beach

2.2.9 NON-TOWN FACILITIES

Common Fence Point - Is a neighborhood playground owned and maintained by the residents of Common Fence Point.

Gull Cove Fishing Area - Gull Cove is a fishing area along the very busy Route 24. There are trails here, with a beach walk, make for a walk of a mile. This walk is tide dependent however as most of the trail along the shore can be submerged at higher tides.

Green Valley Country Club - The Green Valley Country Club is an 18-hole championship course, located in picturesque Portsmouth, RI. Known as Newport's finest semi-private country club, it is open to the public.

Newport National Golf Club - Newport National which started out as a 200-acre landscape nursery is now deemed the "Number One Public Access Course in New England," by New England Golf Monthly. The 18-hole course includes sloping fairways, marshes, and strategically placed bunkers.

Oakland Forest - Located off Carriage Drive, the Oakland Forest and Meadow Trail is a 0.6-mile loop trail through a beautiful, old growth American Beech forest. Includes one of the last remaining stands of old growth American Beech trees on the East Coast. This once threatened forest now serves as a haven for people and wildlife alike. Saved by a joint effort in 2000 by The Town of Portsmouth and the Aquidneck Land Trust.

South Prudence Management Area - The Management Area is located at the south end of Prudence Island. It is owned and operated by the RIDEM Division of Fish, Wildlife & Estuarine Resources, and part of the National Estuarine Research Reserve System. It is open to the public. It contains a small beach, picnic area with two fireplaces and two tables, bike path, and fishing pier. The facility is in serious disrepair with much unused land. The State allows hunting on Prudence but geographic limitations are unclear. This has created a very dangerous situation that must be corrected.

Teddy's Beach - On the Sakonnet in Island Park is not staffed by lifeguards but provides a scenic view of the Sakonnet. There is no off-street parking for the boat ramp and parking can be limited.

Table 1. Recreational Facility Features and Use Limitations			
Recreational Facility Name	Area (Approx. Acres)	Principal Features	Use Limitations
<i>Historic Park</i>			
Bristol Ferry Town Common	1	Scenic views	Parking restricted
Fort Butts	7	Hiking paths Scenic views	
Founders Brook	2	Scenic views	Parking Restricted
Legion Park	1	Scenic views	
Patriots' Park	3	Scenic views	Parking restricted
<i>Pocket/Mini Park</i>			
John F. Kennedy Park	< 1	Memorial park	Parking Restricted
Hathaway School	1	Two basketball courts One playground	Playground equipment is limited. School use only is allowed during school hours. School use takes precedent.
Heritage Park	3	Scenic views	
Lehigh Overlook	1	Scenic views	
<i>Neighborhood Park</i>			
Coggeshall School	2	Two baseball fields	Lighting would expand useable hours
Elmhurst Park	2	Two basketball courts One playground	Lighting at basketball court would expand useable hours
Island Park Playground	3	One baseball field One basketball court One playground	Lighting would expand useable hours
Mount Hope Park	5	Fishing Scenic views	Park is currently closed to public use

Portsmouth High School	5	Two baseball fields Two softball fields One football stadium Three basketball courts Eight tennis courts One soccer field One running track	School use only is allowed during school hours. School use takes precedent.
Portsmouth Middle School	1	One baseball field One basketball court One playground One soccer field	School use only is allowed during school hours. School use takes precedent. Lighting would expand useable hours.
Turnpike Ave. Playground	2	One baseball field One playground	Lighting would expand useable hours
Community Park			
Glen Farm	120	Three baseball fields One basketball court 10 soccer fields	Lighting would expand useable hours and restrooms are needed
Glen Park	25	One playground Three soccer fields Fishing	Access to the Glen Manor House and its accessories may be limited during functions
Playground			
Common Fence Point	6	One baseball field One playground Scenic views	Baseball field floods during extreme high tides/coastal storms
Frank Carson Playground	1	One playground	Playground equipment needs upgrade
Melville School	1	One playground	School use only is allowed during school hours. School use takes precedent.
Special Use: Freshwater Access			
Melville Recreation Area	152	Hiking paths Camping Fishing One playground Blue trails Scenic views	Access to the Melville Ponds Campground is limited to registered campers. Needs signage in hiking area. Bridge over steep gorge would add to hiking area.
Special Use: Saltwater Access			

Cedar Island	24	Fishing Boating access Scenic views	Entrance road needs leveling or paving
Weaver Cove Boat Ramp	2	Boating access Scenic views	Ramp is steep and in need of repair
Special Use: Beach			
McCorrie Point	8	Fishing Beach Scenic views	No services.
Sandy Point Beach	12	Fishing Beach Scenic views	Bathhouses and restroom facilities are available in season
Town Totals	389		

2.3 ASSESSMENT OF NEED

This section includes a review and summary of the site (space) type needs and facility needs in accordance with minimum NRPA standards, and other identified site (space) and facility needs.

Technical Paper 162 Rhode Island Population Projections 2010 – 2040 (RIDOA/Statewide Planning, April 2013) was used to determine both the existing and projected levels of need. The 2020 projections were utilized as the 2018 baseline (-0.1% change from 2010 – 2020) and 2025 projections for projected needs (+1.3% change).

- 2010 Population was 17,389
- 2015 Population projection was 17, 310 (-0.5% decrease)
- 2020 Population projection is 17,378 (+0.4% increase)
- 2025 Population projection is 17,606 (+1.3% increase)

Space and facility needs, for the 2018 baseline (2015 census) and projected 2025, are represented in Table 2 and Table 3, respectively, based on the 'low' estimate for needs, and includes acreage for Mt. Hope Park (2.37 acres Neighborhood Park) which is currently in planning stage.

Table 2. Existing and Future Active Recreation Acreage Needs ^a						
Facility Type	Acreage Standard per Population	Existing Acreage	2015 (Population: 17,310)		2025 (Population: 17,606)	
			Acres Needed ^b by Population	Deficit	Acres Needed ^b by Population	Deficit
Pocket/Mini Park	1:4,000	5	5	none	5	none
Playground	1:2,000	8	9	1	9	1
Neighborhood Park	1:1,000	20	18	none	18	none
Community Park	1:200	145	87	none	89	none

Notes:

- a. Based on NRPA Standards, 2015 census and projected 2025 population.
- b. Acreages needed are rounded up to next acre.

Table 3. Existing and Future Active Recreation Facility Needs ^a						
Facility	Unit Standard per Population	Existing Facilities	2015 (Population: 17,310)		2025 (Population: 17,606)	
			Units Needed ^b by Population	Deficit	Units Needed ^b by Population	Deficit
Basketball Courts	1:2,000	10	9	none	9	none
Tennis Courts	1:2,000	8	9	1	9	1
Baseball Fields	1:4,000	12	5	none	5	none
Soccer Fields	1:2,000	16	9	none	9	none
Softball Fields	1:3,000	2	6	4	6	4

Notes:

- a. Based on NRPA Standards, 2015 census and projected 2025 population.
- b. Units needed are rounded up to next unit.

2.4 GOALS, POLICIES AND IMPLEMENTATION

GOAL R - 1

Organize a system of high quality well-maintained active recreational facilities and passive recreation areas sufficient to meet the ongoing needs of present and future citizens of Portsmouth.

Policy R - 1.1

Maintain an active Parks & Recreation Department to manage recreational activity in Portsmouth.

Action R - 1.1a – Develop a comprehensive recreation master plan to identify long and short-term needs for recreational programs and facilities.

Action R - 1.1b – Restrict all Recreation Department revenue to maintaining Recreation Department programs and facilities as expressed in a comprehensive recreation master plan.

Action R - 1.1c – Establish an efficient and accessible scheduling and permitting system for recreational facilities use.

~~Action R - 1.1d – Pursue public and private grant funding opportunities for capital improvements to town-owned recreational facilities.~~

Action R - 1.1e – Adopt a recreational-facility-use fee policy and fee schedule and update as needed.

~~Action R - 1.1f – Actively manage day to day operations at Sandy Point Beach and other town-owned recreational facilities.~~

Action R - 1.1g – Create meaningful programs within the recreation department that will benefit all age levels.

Action R - 1.1h – Develop programs and facilities that extend the value of the recreation department beyond athletics and into general community wellness.

Policy R - 1.2

Continue to provide for high-quality maintenance of current public recreation areas and facilities.

Action R - 1.2a – Develop long-term maintenance plans for all town-owned recreation facilities.

~~Action R - 1.2b – Investigate coordination of maintenance efforts between the School and the Public Works Departments.~~

Action R - 1.2c – Pursue stewardship of recreational facilities through “friends of” groups and work with sports leagues to enhance maintenance efforts.

~~Action R - 1.2d – Maintain existing CRMC and public-designated rights-of-way to the shore to keep them clear and safe for all users.~~

Action R - 1.2e – Pursue state, federal, and private funding opportunities for recreation facilities maintenance.

Action R - 1.2f – Work with RIDEM, CRMC and other state agencies on a long-term plan to address issues at the Weaver Cove Boat Ramp and the Old Stone Bridge.

Policy R - 1.3

Explore opportunities to physically improve and increase access to existing recreational facilities as well as identify areas for potential expansion of our recreational system.

Action R - 1.3a – Pursue opportunities to establish active and passive recreational facilities accessible to all neighborhoods in Portsmouth.

~~Action R - 1.3b – Develop long-term rehabilitation plans for all town-owned recreation facilities to be incorporated into the annual CIP.~~

Action R - 1.3c – Work with the Narragansett Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve to improve open space access and educational opportunities on Prudence Island.

~~Action R - 1.3d – Establish a use, maintenance and signage policy for all “public” rights-of-way to the shore.~~

Action R - 1.3e – Work with the Melville Park Committee to expand recreational opportunities at Melville Park.

Action R - 1.3f – Investigate the development of an indoor, multi-purpose Community Recreation Center.

~~Action R - 1.3g – Investigate the long-term viability of establishing the Harbormaster Department as a civilian group within the Recreation Department, charged with management of the mooring fields.~~

~~Action R - 1.3h – Monitor grant funding opportunities for the physical improvement and expansion of the Town’s recreational facilities.~~

Action R - 1.3i – Implement short-term improvements to the Mt. Hope Park property to allow for its safe passive recreational use.