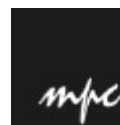


Town of Amherst
RECREATION & PARKS
MASTER PLAN

BACKGROUND REPORT
June 21, 2004

Prepared For:
The Town of Amherst
Recreation and
Planning Departments

Prepared By:



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Introduction**SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION****1.1 PURPOSE OF THE MASTER PLAN**

The Town of Amherst's Recreation and Parks Master Plan has two key functions. First, it serves as background document, providing a comprehensive source of up-to-date information on the recreation facilities, parks, programs and services which are available within the Town. Second, the Plan provides a strategy for the future provision of recreation facilities, parks and services. Policies, standards and action plans (recommendations) have been provided to guide the future decisions and planning of recreational facilities and services in the Town.

Both the short and long term recreation and parks needs and priorities of residents are identified in the Master Plan, thereby providing the Town with a planning tool that describes how these needs can be met in a fiscally responsible manner. The Plan has also been designed to be flexible in order to deal with forces of change such as emerging social and leisure trends, ensuring that an appropriate level of recreation facilities, parks and services are sustained into the future.

This Plan is an update to the Recreation and Parks Master Plan that was prepared for the Town in 1992. The mandate of this new Plan is to assist in the planning of recreation facilities, parks and services for the entire Town to the year 2012. This document summarizes the research, inventory and analysis of the recreation venues and facilities that are available within the Town and provides action plans based upon the analysis.

*This document is the "**Background Report**" to the "**Recreation and Parks Master Plan**". The Recreation and Parks Master Plan is a separate document that contains an executive summary of the information and analysis contained in the Background Report, as well as all of the action plans. The Background Report should be read in association with the Master Plan.*

1.2 CONTEXT

Recreation is an essential service within the community as it contributes to the social, cultural, and economic wellbeing of residents and enhances the overall quality of life. The Town is a major provider of all types of recreation services, including parks, facilities, pathways, and programming.

The timing of the Master Plan could not be more appropriate. The Town, like most other urban municipalities, is facing the challenge of balancing a healthy community with an economically prosperous one. Increased fiscal pressures and infrastructure demands are evident. Public expectations surrounding municipal services, and recreation in particular, continue to rise.

Since the 1992 Master Plan, the Town of Amherst has redeveloped both the Audubon Recreation Center (now the Amherst Pepsi Center) and Clearfield Community Center, acquired and developed the North Amherst Recreation Center, acquired a significant amount of natural land and open space, made considerable headway in establishing a linked trailway network, and undertaken minor improvements to other parks and facilities.

Despite the Town's recent efforts, the overall quality and quantity of the Town's recreation facilities remain deficient to fully meet the leisure-time needs of its current citizens, let alone

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future residents. The shortage of certain types of facilities and play areas and the aging condition of others can be attributed to insufficient reinvestment in recreation. **The result is two-fold – not only must the Town address existing deficiencies and the needs of current residents, it must also work proactively to meet the needs of its growing population.**

In order to enhance the quality of life of its residents, it is imperative that the Town address the current deficiencies within its recreational system not only through capital investment, but also through improving the way in which it coordinates with the community and makes use of other community resources. This Plan will not only provide a guideline for facility and park investment, but also for the development of a delivery system that is forward-thinking and community-responsive.

The study area for the Recreation and Parks Master Plan encompasses the entire Town of Amherst and the Village of Williamsville, which are located within the County of Erie. Although Williamsville is a separate municipal entity, its location within Amherst and its role within the overall recreation system necessitate its inclusion in this Plan. As such, all references to the Town of Amherst include the Village of Williamsville, unless otherwise noted.

Amherst is situated to the north and east of the City of Buffalo and is surrounded by the Towns of Pendelton, Clarence, Lancaster, Cheektowaga, Tonawanda, Wheatfield and the City of North Tonawanda. The Town is a suburb of Buffalo and has a year 2000 population of 116,510.

The physical character of Amherst's neighborhoods varies from urban in the southwest to rural in its northern extremes. It contains a number of significant institutional land uses, including the State University of New York at Buffalo (North Campus), Daeman College, and Erie Community College. The highest concentration of residents is in the southwestern portion of the Town.

1.3 MASTER PLAN PROCESS

The Master Plan was prepared in collaboration with the Town's Recreation Director, the Planning Department's Senior Landscape Architect, and Steering Committee (Recreation Commission). Furthermore, the community's input through the various community consultation methods was invaluable in developing the Plan. The Study process for Amherst's Recreation and Parks Master Plan is detailed below.

Phase One - Background Research, Community Profile and Inventory

- A review of background information and data relating to the provision and delivery of recreation facilities, parks and programs in the Town.
- The distribution of a press release to media agencies serving the study area and posting of a notice throughout the community informing residents of the Study.
- The compilation and review of community demographic data.
- The generation of population projections based on five-year cohort groups to supplement the projections in the Amherst Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan.
- The completion of a community profile based on the collected and projected data.
- The identification and analysis of prevailing trends in the provision and delivery of leisure facilities and in leisure activity patterns.
- Discussions with Town Board members, Town of Amherst staff regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the Town's parks, facilities, programs, and delivery system.
- The completion of an inventory and site visits of recreation facilities and parks.

Introduction

Phase Two - Community Consultation Program, Needs Assessment

- The administration and analysis of the public opinion household survey.
- Interviews with community recreation organizations, special interest groups, and other stakeholder groups involved with the delivery of leisure programming or facilities to the residents of Amherst, including School Districts.
- The development of a Progress Report detailing current and future requirements for recreation facilities, parks, programs and the service delivery system based on an analysis of the community consultation program and collected data.
- Focus group sessions to provide youth and community organizations with an opportunity to provide broad-based input into the process.
- The preparation of the Draft Master Plan detailing the findings of the project and recommended action plans.
- Public meetings for the general public to review the Draft Plan and provide additional feedback.
- A review of the action plans and Draft Master Plan by the Steering Committee (Recreation Commission) and key staff.
- The finalization of action plans resulting from the needs assessment portion of the project.
- The preparation of the implementation strategy and monitoring process for the Plan.
- The finalization of the Master Plan and presentation to the public and Town Board.

1.4 REPORT ORGANIZATION

The Background Report to the Town of Amherst Recreation and Parks Master Plan is organized as follows:

Section 2 **Community Profile**

Contains an overview of the Town's demographic characteristics, detailed population projections by 5-year cohort groups, major activity and facility provision trends, and a discussion of the impact of the key changes and trends in the community regarding the delivery and provision of recreation facilities, parks, programs and services.

Section 3 **Community Consultation Program**

Outlines and evaluates the public's perceptions of the current state of the recreation and parks system in the Town as well as future needs, opportunities and constraints as identified through the public opinion survey, community forums, and interviews with local leisure organizations and key stakeholder groups.

Section 4 **Leisure Delivery System and Programming**

Identifies the strengths and weaknesses of the current leisure service delivery system, the implications of such characteristics on the Town's overall recreation and parks system, and provides strategies for addressing these implications; an assessment of recreational programming and program delivery in the Town is also provided and areas of deficiency and/or oversupply are identified.

Introduction

- Section 5 Facility Inventory and Analysis
Provides an inventory of recreation facilities within the Town and identifies the specific current and future requirements for each facility.
- Section 6 Parks Inventory and Analysis
Provides an inventory of parks within the Town and identifies the specific current and future requirements for each park.
- Section 7 Current and Projected Demand for Recreation Facilities and Parks
Includes an assessment of participation trends, current and potential levels of participation in key recreational activities, resulting in an assessment of the adequacy of the existing supply of facilities/parkland and the need for additional facilities/parkland to the year 2012. This section is largely based on the findings of the Needs Assessment and Issues Progress Report prepared during the Master Plan process.
- Section 8 Implementation Strategy
Identifies a process for monitoring and updating the Plan.

Recommended action plans to improve the existing recreation and parks system within the Town of Amherst are included throughout the Plan, where applicable.

1.5 INTERPRETATION

For the purposes of this Plan, the terms **Recreation** and **Leisure** are used interchangeably and are broadly defined as consisting of all sporting, fitness, creative, cultural, intellectual, and social activities that a person or group freely pursues during their spare time for purposes of personal satisfaction and development.

Many action plans have been assigned a proposed timing. These timeframes are defined as follows:

- Short term (2004 to 2008)
- Medium term (2009 to 2013)
- Long term (2014 to 2022)

SECTION 2: COMMUNITY PROFILE

This section of the Plan considers the socio-demographic features of the Town and their implications on the delivery and provision of recreation and parks facilities, programs and services. More specifically, detailed population projections by 5-year cohort groups are presented, as is an overview of the Town's demographic characteristics. It is within this context that a demographic community profile has been developed.

Population growth, aging trends, migration levels, and socio-economic factors play an important role in determining recreation facility, park, program and service needs. In order to understand the relationship between the demographic characteristics of the population and the recreation and parks needs, a profile of the community has been developed. This profile is described below and relies on statistical information from the U.S. Census Bureau and the Town of Amherst. Through demographic analysis, current population characteristics as well as how they will evolve over the next ten years and beyond have been evaluated.

The demographics of a community are a blueprint for determining both current and future needs. Demographics provide information on how many children there are today within the community that are within the age range of most minor sports associations; how many "baby boomers"; how many senior citizens, and all ages before, after and in between; as well as how many of those people are female and how many are males. By knowing the details of who currently lives within the community and who is going to live within the community, it is possible to create an accurate picture of enrollment trends in minor hockey, figure skating, adult hockey, minor baseball, adult slo-pitch, minor soccer, adult soccer, and even senior's activities.

2.1 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Family structure, household size, ethnicity, household income, education level, and location of work all impact on the use and ability to use recreation facilities, programs and services. There is general agreement that, in today's world, there is greater ethnic diversity, a broader separation of economic classes, a greater number of single parents, increased commuting, smaller households, and a more educated population. Taken together, these trends create the need to design and provide recreation facilities, parks and programs that are able to meet the needs of our changing society.

Generally, physical activity is more prevalent in children and youth whose families have higher incomes and in children who live with two parents, especially if the parents have higher education levels. Depending on a community's demographic profile, consideration should be given to these socio-economic factors and their impact on recreation activities.

As of the date of this Plan, only limited socio-demographic information from Census 2000 has been released. It is, therefore, difficult to draw comparisons between Amherst in 1990 and Amherst today.

Profile

The following conclusions, however, can be drawn from the available Census data:

- Amherst experienced a steady population growth of 4.2% between 1990 and 2000;
- the Town is becoming slightly more ethnically diverse;
- the number of married-couple households is declining while the number of single-parent households is on the rise; and
- the overall household size has declined from 2.56 persons in 1990 to 2.42 persons in 2000.

While, on their own, the aforementioned items do not indicate much that would have a significant impact on recreational participation and needs within the Town, consideration need to be given to the projected population growth, which is addressed below.

2.2 POPULATION PROJECTIONS

The Master Plan is a 10-year plan (2004-2013). As such, it is critical that the Plan fully examines the population profile of the community for this time frame. It is also important to consider the longer term population profile (to the year 2020) in order to provide confidence that any recommendations for major facilities are truly needed beyond the next ten years. This helps to ensure that facilities are not built simply to meet current needs, then later found to be unnecessary in the longer term or to be inflexible to adapt to changing demographic needs.

A detailed population breakdown for the Town of Amherst has been provided. The population estimates have been based on the figures provided in the Amherst Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan. Using the estimated population inputs and inserting them into a cohort survival model where birth and death rates are defined for each age/sex cohort, the detailed population breakdowns were generated.

Critical in evaluating community recreation facility, park and program needs is a solid understanding of who the users are both now and in the future. As such, the population projections contained in this Plan have been broken down to estimate the number of people anticipated at various time frames in various age cohorts. This information has been illustrated in Table 2-1 allowing for a number of important observations:

- the Town's current population (year 2000) is 116,510 and is expected to grow by approximately 4% over the next ten years (to 121,339 in 2010) and by approximately 9% over the next twenty years (to 127,264 in 2020) – this represents a steady, but modest growth rate;
- the 5 to 19 age group, which is the primary age group for community recreation and is known as the “baby boom echo generation” (children of baby boomers), is expected to decline slightly as a percentage of the overall population (from 21% in 2000 to 19% in 2020), but will remain steady in absolute population (24,259 in 2000 and 24,567 in 2020); this age cohort will peak in 2005 at a population of 25,804 due largely to the development of new residences at the North Campus of the University;
- the 20 to 34 age group will increase slightly (from 20,412 in 2000 to 23,724 in 2020) as the “baby boom echo generation” ages;
- the 35 to 54 age group, otherwise known as the “baby boom generation”, will experience a significant decline in the years to come (from 34,110 in 2000 to 28,861 in 2020); and

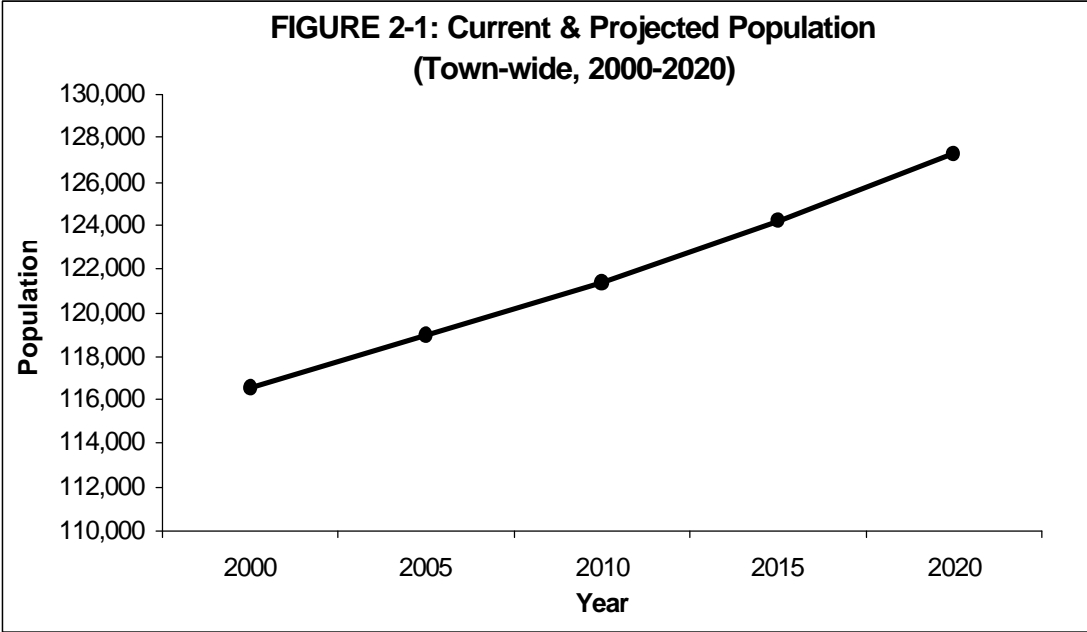
TABLE 2-1: Town of Amherst - Population by Age Cohorts: 1980 - 2020

Cohorts	1980		1990		2000		2005		2010		2015		2020	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
0 - 4	5,881	5.41%	6,966	6.23%	6,270	5.38%	5,473	4.60%	5,829	4.80%	6,340	5.10%	6,551	5.15%
5 - 9	7,166	6.59%	7,030	6.29%	7,264	6.23%	6,259	5.26%	5,929	4.89%	6,401	5.15%	6,803	5.35%
10 - 14	9,183	8.45%	6,627	5.93%	7,807	6.70%	7,334	6.17%	6,822	5.62%	6,608	5.32%	6,979	5.48%
15 - 19	11,380	10.47%	8,356	7.48%	9,188	7.89%	12,212	10.27%	11,808	9.73%	11,254	9.06%	10,785	8.47%
20 - 24	9,420	8.67%	9,000	8.05%	7,924	6.80%	9,877	8.30%	10,096	8.32%	9,735	7.84%	9,128	7.17%
25 - 29	7,647	7.03%	7,151	6.40%	5,690	4.88%	6,044	5.08%	7,239	5.97%	7,482	6.02%	7,127	5.60%
30 - 34	8,409	7.74%	8,584	7.68%	6,798	5.83%	5,584	4.69%	6,086	5.02%	7,322	5.89%	7,469	5.87%
35 - 39	6,615	6.09%	8,740	7.82%	8,009	6.87%	6,835	5.75%	6,141	5.06%	6,759	5.44%	7,867	6.18%
40 - 44	6,605	6.08%	8,739	7.82%	8,997	7.72%	7,846	6.60%	7,142	5.89%	6,571	5.29%	7,077	5.56%
45 - 49	6,438	5.92%	6,857	6.14%	8,770	7.53%	8,800	7.40%	7,974	6.57%	7,363	5.93%	6,711	5.27%
50 - 54	6,433	5.92%	5,440	4.87%	8,334	7.15%	8,459	7.11%	8,617	7.10%	7,843	6.31%	7,206	5.66%
55 - 59	6,266	5.76%	5,601	5.01%	6,124	5.26%	7,916	6.66%	8,032	6.62%	8,118	6.53%	7,419	5.83%
60 - 64	5,218	4.80%	5,751	5.15%	4,746	4.07%	5,716	4.81%	7,406	6.10%	7,526	6.06%	7,670	6.03%
65+	12,045	11.08%	16,898	15.12%	20,589	17.67%	20,595	17.31%	22,219	18.31%	24,928	20.06%	28,472	22.37%
TOTAL	108,706	100.00%	111,740	100.00%	116,510	100.00%	118,950	100.00%	121,339	100.00%	124,250	100.00%	127,264	100.00%

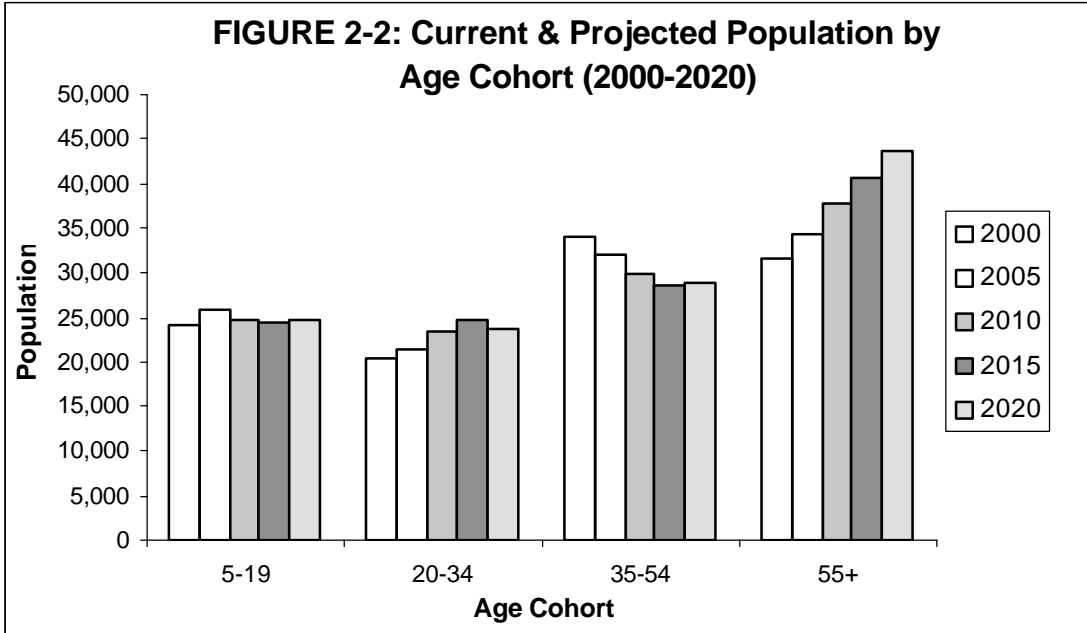
Source: US Census 1980, 1990 and 2000; Monteith Planning Consultants, 2002

- the bulk of the Town’s overall population growth is the result of a dramatic increase in the 55+ age group (the aging “baby boom” cohort), which is expected to grow from 31,459 in 2000 to 43,561 in 2020, representing an increase of approximately 38% over twenty years.

Figures 2-1 and 2-2 illustrate the projected population changes (from 2000 to 2020) for the Town as a whole and for specific age cohorts, respectively.



Source: US Census 2000; Monteith Planning Consultants, 2002

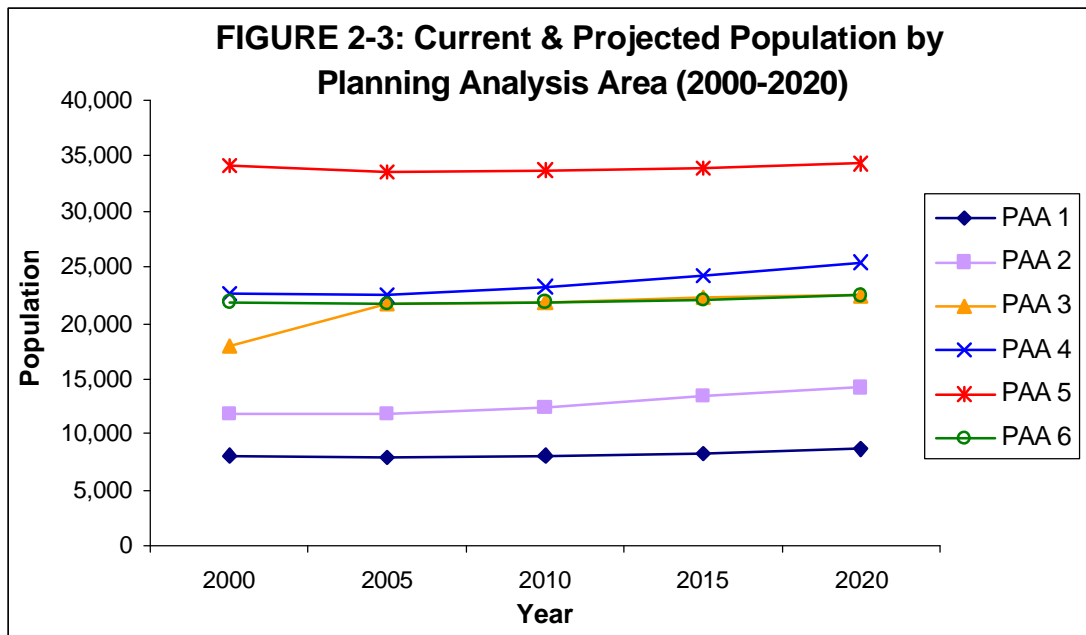


Source: US Census 2000; Monteith Planning Consultants, 2002

A closer look at the six geographic planning analysis areas (PAA) (see Map 2-1) in the Town indicates that:

- significant population growth is anticipated in the northeast and central-west areas (PAAs 2 and 3) of the Town, while little growth is forecasted for the southern portion of Amherst (PAAs 5 and 6);
- the northern half of Amherst contains a significantly greater proportion of children and youth, while older adults and seniors are more predominant in the southern half of the Town (as a percentage of the population);
- the only area in which the 5 to 19 age cohort is expected to increase as a percentage of the population over the next twenty years is PAA 3 (central-west), which is also expected to contain the greatest overall percentage of children and youth;
- the most significant increases in the 55+ population are anticipated to be in the northeast areas of the Town (PAAs 2 and 4), however, the southeast is expected to contain the greatest overall percentage of older adults and seniors (PAAs 4 and 6);

Figure 2-3 illustrates the current and projected populations for each of the Town’s six planning analysis areas (PAA).



Source: US Census 2000; Monteith Planning Consultants, 2002

2.2.1 Implications of Projected Population Growth

The primary users of community recreation facilities and parks are youth between the ages of 5 to 19. The overall youth population will remain steady over the next twenty years and will actually decline as a percentage of the population. It is anticipated that the percentage of facility and park users will begin to stabilize within the next decade as the “echo” generation moves out of the prime demographic. Modest overall population growth is anticipated for Amherst, resulting in a need for some new or expanded facilities – an effect that will be felt gradually over time. As such, demand for additional facilities and programs to serve children and youth is expected to be minimal (assuming that participation rates remain steady). Demand may, however, increase for upgraded/new facilities to replace aging and/or poorly functioning facilities, for sports/activities that are currently under-served, and for facilities and programs to serve emerging sports and activities.

The ageing of the Town's youth will result in an increase in the 20 to 34 age group over the next twenty years. It is, therefore, likely that more facilities and programs will be required to meet the needs of this group. The demands on this age group are many (e.g., family, work, etc.) and, therefore, it is often difficult to make time for organized and scheduled recreation. The expected result is that, although there may be an increased need for adult sporting leagues and recreation programs (e.g., softball, soccer, hockey, fitness, hobby/instructional courses, etc.), the emphasis will be on facilities and venues for unstructured and spontaneous recreation serving both individuals and families. (See the following discussion on trends for more information).

The ageing population also means that there will be a movement of the baby boom generation (currently 35 to 54 or so) into retirement age. This shift will have significant impacts on the recreation sector, namely the need for recreation venues and programs that are less vigorous in nature. The needs of seniors are changing given that this age group is much more active than it was in previous decades. Overall, the emphasis in recreation circles will revolve around children and youth (and rightly so), however, increased attention must be given to the needs of the older adult and seniors population.

Geographically, the greatest population growth is expected to be experienced in the northeast and central-west portions of the municipality, thereby creating greater demand for facilities, parks and services (especially if the areas are found to be under-served at present). Population growth for children/youth is expected to be the greatest in the central-west portion of the Town, while the largest increases in the 55+ age group are expected to occur in the northeast and central-east areas.

2.3 LEISURE TRENDS

As a result of an extensive community consultation program, the Recreation and Parks Master Plan is based on a thorough understanding of local trends. However, in facility planning, a greater appreciation of those trends can be gained by assessing national trends. The following provides an overall assessment of the national trends that are driving the delivery of recreational facilities and programs across the country.

The National Survey on Recreation and the Environment (NSRE), first begun in 1960, has been a key resource. This analysis also draws upon the Consultant's experience and contrasts national trends with trends observed through this process and the 1992 Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

2.3.1 Socio-Demographic Trends

Many of the trends that are identified below have a strong connection to the demographic profile of the United States, New York State and Amherst in the 21st century.

Aging

The population of the nation is aging and this has significant implications for the provision of recreational services. While youth and children will always remain a focus of recreational programming, research indicates that there will be an increased demand for programs to serve an older population base. It is interesting to note that in the household survey of Amherst residents, there was only moderate support for the statement "Children's programs should have priority over adult programs" (46% agree, 38% disagree).

Trends towards early retirement and the fact the older age cohort are living longer, are more fit and healthier, and have higher disposable incomes than previous generations, indicate that there will be a growing need to consider the needs of older adults in recreational facility planning. As they have been introduced to a greater array of recreational activities than previous generations, baby boomers will continue to participate in a wider range of recreational activities than their parents. There will, however, be a shift to less physically vigorous activities. The NSRE 2000 Study found that the “growth of retired participants” exceeded their growth as a proportion of the population.

Youth

The baby boom echo generation (children of the baby boomers), which are currently moving through the school system, are fuelling a demand for recreation facilities and programs geared to older youth (e.g., skateboarding). The household survey in Amherst assigned a relatively low priority to skateboarding and BMX facilities, however, the priority level is often very different when teenagers are consulted directly.

Income and Education

Participation in recreation is both income and education dependent. The NSRE 2000 Survey found that higher income individuals have higher levels of participation and participate in a wider range of activities. Education is also a factor – participation in recreation increases with education. As the population of Amherst has an average income higher than national levels, Amherst should continue to anticipate high levels of interest and demand in leisure facilities and programming.

Work and Leisure Patterns

Lack of time is one of the main factors affecting participation in recreation, and while older adults may have more time and money to participate in recreation, working age households are finding themselves to be increasingly “time-stressed”. This impacts directly on recreational providers by demands for longer hours of access and for multi-purpose facilities where more than one family member can participate at the same time (e.g., swimming, fitness, library, gymnasium activities, etc.).

2.3.2 Trends in Participation

Outdoor Recreation

Table 2-2 shows the percentage of persons 16 years and older in the United States who participate in twelve different categories of outdoor recreational activities. The household survey of residents of Amherst confirmed that Amherst residents are in line with these national trends, as the most popular activities were walking for pleasure (trail/street/road activities), cycling and swimming. The factors that link the most popular activities are their low cost; minimal physical exertion and the lack of any special equipment or developed skills. Of the 10 most popular activities, 4 focus on viewing and learning.

TABLE 2-2 - National Participation Levels

Type of Activity	Percent of Population 16 or older
Participated in Any Activity	97.5
Trail/Street/Road Activities*	88.7
Traditional Social Activities (e.g. picnicking)	80.1
Viewing and photographing activities	69.4
Viewing and learning activities	68.8
Driving for pleasure	63.0
Swimming activities	60.0
Outdoor Adventure activities	55.2
Boating/floating/sailing activities	36.1
Fishing	34.1
Snow and Ice Activities	25.7
Outdoor Team Sports	22.1
Hunting	11.3

Source: 1999 –2000 National Survey on Recreation and the Environment

* Trail/Street/Road Activities include bicycling, mountain biking, walking, horse riding and hiking.

In 1960, driving, walking, swimming and picnicking were the most popular outdoor recreational endeavors. Driving is no longer in the top four, but the most popular single activities for persons 16 and over today are quite similar, namely walking, going to the beach, family gatherings out of doors and sightseeing. From a recreational provider’s perspective, the national trends show high levels of interest in the outdoors and in nature.

Through the household survey, Amherst residents reported a high demand for parkland and open space, nature trails and paved trails. Protection of natural areas has an obvious correlation to an interest in birdwatching. This suggests that the top priorities for Amherst residents have not shifted a great deal since the 1992 Master Plan was prepared. At that time, preserving the natural environment and support for expansion of the bicycle/trailway network also emerged as priorities.

Looking at the activities that have grown the slowest, this list includes outdoor team sports (which has risen by only 10.6% between 1982 and 2000), compared to substantial growth in birdwatching (235.9%) and walking (91.2%). The trends data suggests a need to carefully monitor participation in sports such as baseball and softball in the future.

Activity Pattern Shifts

Across the country, the following trends have been observed:

- increased interest in golf;
- decreased interest in racquet sports;
- basketball remains number one for children and youth;
- greater participation levels in soccer and declining participation rates in both football and baseball;
- an increase in female participation in both hockey and soccer; and
- continued interest in activities such as inline skating and skateboarding, suggesting that these activities are here to stay.

In Amherst, the increased interest in golf did not directly translate into a desire for a public golf course (29% agreed that the Town should build a new public golf course while 49% disagreed).

Participation in Team Sports

There has been a general decline in participation in most team sports, however, according to the Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association 2001 survey, the decline is most evident in sports such as baseball. The factors contributing to this decline include the aging of the population, shortage of free time and the fact that there are more recreational and leisure options available. The data indicates that participation in team sports peaks at about age 10, which is a concern because of rising obesity levels amongst youth and children.

The Soccer Industry Council of America has been tracking sport participation. Their 2000 Survey for ages 6-11 identified the following as the top team sports (nationwide) by overall participation:

1. Basketball (9.5 million)
2. Soccer (5 million)
3. Baseball (5 million)
4. Softball (4.7 million)
5. Volleyball (3.8 million)
6. Tackle football (2.6 million)
7. Ice hockey (431,000)

For the 12-17 age bracket, the results are similar: the top team sports are basketball, volleyball, soccer, football, baseball, softball and ice hockey. Soccer has become increasingly popular with the younger age groups.

Since 1995, Little League Baseball statistics show a decline in participation due partially to sports such as basketball and soccer that are attracting participants. According to the Baseball Participation Survey (2001) of the Sporting Goods Manufacturing Association, baseball participation is in serious decline in the United States.

Clearly interest in hockey in Amherst exceeds national levels. While national data puts hockey on the lower level of team sports, locally, there is strong interest in youth hockey and figure skating.

2.3.3 Facility & Delivery System Trends

Multi-Purpose Facilities

Without question, the leading facility trend has been the emergence of large, high quality multi-purpose facilities. Multi-purpose facilities provide cross programming opportunities allowing, for example, one family member to swim while other members take part in another program.

From a consumer's perspective, the combined facility also addresses the "shortage of time" factor, which is one of the major issues limiting participation in recreational activities.

Aquatic Facility Trends

Swimming continues to be identified as one of the most popular recreational endeavors. In Amherst, there are no Town-owned indoor pools and the Town does not offer the leading trend in aquatic facility development – the leisure pool. Warmer water temperatures and other design features of leisure pools have led to increased use of indoor pools by all ages.

Although pools are desired and swimming is a popular activity, the issue with respect to pool development is the high costs. Capital and operating costs associated with aquatic facilities are among the highest of any recreational type. The leisure pool compared to the standard rectangular fitness pool, however, has a bigger capture area due to the fact that it appeals to a large cross-section of the population and can physically accommodate more people.

With respect to outdoor pools and aquatic facilities, outdoor wading pools are increasingly being replaced by spray pads, which offer greater cost efficiencies and reduced staffing requirements. It is noted that Amherst does not have any spray pad facilities, although it does have a splash park (Clearfield). Furthermore, due to the high costs associated with outdoor pools and their limited season of use, municipalities are generally maintaining but not replacing outdoor pools.

Arena Facilities

The leading trend relating to arena development is the twinning of single pad arenas and the development of four-plex facilities. Amherst's four-plex arena is a reflection of this trend. While industry observers in the late 80's were predicting decline in hockey participation, the United States' strong performance at the international level in both men's and women's hockey, the development of more NHL franchises, as well as strong growth in women's hockey, suggests that there will be sustained interest in arena-based sports in the years to come.

Gymnasium Facilities

Particularly among youth and young adults, there is a growing interest in gymnasium space for sports such as basketball and volleyball. Strong varsity level programs, as well as community education courses, occupy most school gymnasiums at least during the school year. While school gymnasiums have historically met community needs for gymnasium space, this may emerge as a higher municipal priority as school facilities become less available for public use by non-school groups.

Indoor Soccer

Indoor soccer is growing in popularity. Single pad arenas in many municipalities are being converted to indoor soccer facilities. Double gymnasiums also provide a suitable venue for indoor soccer. As growth in outdoor soccer continues to increase or at least level off, it is expected that the demand for indoor soccer facilities will continue to be strong.

Clustering of Outdoor Sports Fields

Past planning practices typically provided one soccer field/one ball diamond per neighborhood. This practice has largely been abandoned due to the advantages of clustering like facilities, namely greater opportunities for tournament play, more flexibility in programming and the ability to reduce maintenance costs. Furthermore, the development of baseball or soccer-only complexes reduces the common conflicts that frequently occur between the two competing sports and provides for a more efficient use of space.

Funding and Partnerships

The private sector is expanding its role as a supplier and sponsor of recreational facilities throughout the United States. In Amherst, the four-pad arena is an example of such a partnership. Leisure facilities such as community centers, libraries, and arenas are the facilities most commonly considered for partnership ventures. According to the household survey results, 79% of Amherst residents strongly support the use of corporate sponsorships in developing new facilities.

Funding of recreational facilities remains a key issue. Research indicates that most federal, state and local land agencies have experienced flat to slightly decreasing budgets for recreation acquisition and management. According to the household survey, only 19% would support an increase in taxes to pay for new parks or recreation facilities. A significant majority (77%) prefers user fees as an alternative to tax increases.

2.3.4 Summary of Trends

Although many of these trends have been discussed above, Table 2-3 contains a brief summary of the key trends that are expected to have significant implications on the future of recreation in Amherst.

TABLE 2-3 – Key Trends Affecting Recreation in the Town of Amherst

CATEGORY	TREND / SUBJECT AREA	DESCRIPTION / IMPLICATIONS
Socio-demographic	aging of the population	→ increased demand for seniors' programming, including active living & wellness; decreased/stable demand for child & youth programming
	ethnicity	→ greater diversity may lead to demand for new sports/activities and the need for increased sensitivity to how current facilities are used
	growing economic disparity	→ income is a significant barrier to participation
	sports tourism	→ balancing and/or prioritizing local needs with impact on the economy
	changing patterns of work and leisure	→ the number one barrier to participation for both youth and adults is "lack of time"; translates into need for multi-purpose facilities & more flexible hours
Participation	children & youth	→ children become less active as they enter adolescence; long term health risks & economic impacts – need to find ways to engage those who are inactive
	adult activity patterns	→ adults are more active than they were ten and twenty years ago; active adults will become active seniors as they age
	popularity of physical recreation activities	→ increased demand for trails and open space; swimming continues to be the most popular recreational activity for all ages; increased demand for unstructured and individual activities (e.g., golf, walking, aerobics, skateboarding, in-line sports, open gym time, drop-in opportunities)
	female participation	→ increasing female participation may help offset potential decline in male sports
	declining participation in sport	→ income is a key variable; potential to increase sport participation rates if adequate facilities exist
Delivery System	volunteerism in decline	→ need to attract growing seniors cohort and youth as volunteers
	school district budget pressures	→ accessibility & affordability of school facilities for community use in jeopardy, creating greater pressure on Town-run programs and/or facilities; emphasis on market-driven standards;
	facilities planning	→ "one-stop shopping" - multi-purpose and multi-generational facilities; increased activity among females and seniors has implications on facility design
	programming	→ children & youth remain focus, but more emphasis on older adults & seniors as members soar
	role of government	→ affordability & accessibility are priorities, but budget is limited (must do "more with less"); community-led programming is important, but onus to lead remains on the Town
	user fees	→ subsidy should be based on ability to pay, not age
	partnerships	→ greater need for creative arrangements with other providers; need to reduce duplication and reallocate responsibilities based on strengths

SECTION 3: COMMUNITY CONSULTATION PROGRAM

The results and analysis of the community consultation program are presented in this section. Insight into the public's perception of the current state of the recreation and parks system in the Town as well as perceived future needs, opportunities and constraints were identified through the household survey, community response panels, and the community forums. Furthermore, the results of discussions with local recreation and community organizations are also provided.

The community consultation program for this Study consists of a number of components including:

- a random household survey (see Appendices A and B);
- telephone interviews with recreation and community interest groups (see Appendix C);
- telephone interviews with other key groups including School Districts and post-secondary institutions;
- interviews with the Town Board, Recreation Commission, Parks and Playground Committee, and key Town Staff (see Appendix D);
- two focus group sessions (one with youth and one with community organizations) held to obtain further input, identify issues and discuss potential solutions; and
- public meetings and open houses to present the draft Plan to the public.

It is important to recognize that the comments in this section are the opinions of the public, user groups and others involved in the provision and/or usage of parks and recreation facilities and services in the community.

3.1 RANDOM HOUSEHOLD SURVEY

The Town of Amherst in February/March 2002 administered a random sample mail-out survey (see Appendix A). The purpose of the survey was to determine the recreation and parks needs of Amherst residents. A total of 2,500 surveys were distributed to 1,741 owner-occupied addresses and 759 rental/apartment addresses. A stratified random sampling method was used to ensure that the surveys were distributed in proportion to the population in each of the Town's six Planning Analysis Areas. A total of 570 households completed the survey by the imposed deadline, for a response rate of 23%. This response rate achieves a 95 percent level of confidence with confidence intervals ranging from $\pm 4.1\%$ to $\pm 4.6\%$, depending on the question.

The survey was not designed to produce representative data for specific areas of the Town as this would have necessitated a much larger sample size. Nevertheless, an effort was made to ensure that responses would be received from a cross-section of the Town's population. The breakdown of the responses by Planning Analysis Area (PAA) is shown in Table 3-1 and by household age composition in Table 3-2.

TABLE 3-1: Geographic Distribution – Household Survey

Planning Analysis Area	Completed Surveys	Population (2000 Census)	Survey: Population Ratio
1	7%	7%	1:192
2	13%	10%	1:165
3	13%	15%	1:239
4	22%	20%	1:182
5	28%	29%	1:214
6	16%	19%	1:243
No Response	1%	--	--
Total	100% (570)	100% (116,510)	1:204

Source: Random Household Survey, 2002

TABLE 3-2: Household Age Composition – Household Survey

Age Group	Survey	Population (1990 Census)*
Under 5 years	6%	5%
5 to 9 years	7%	6%
10 to 14 years	8%	7%
15 to 19 years	7%	8%
20 to 34 years	13%	17%
35 to 49 years	24%	39%
50 to 64 years	20%	
65 and over	15%	18%
Total	100% (1431)	100% (116,510)

Source: Random Household Survey, 2002

As the preceding tables illustrate, good representation was received from all areas of the Town and the sample is very representative of Amherst's age composition, despite a slight under-representation within the 20 to 34 and 65+ age groups.

The average household size for those involved in the survey was 2.65 persons. Data from the 2000 Census indicates that the average household size of Amherst is approximately 2.42 persons. Also of interest is that the average year of birth of survey respondents was 1949, that 58% of those surveyed were female (54% of Amherst's over-18 population is female), and that the average length of residency within Amherst is 23 years.

3.1.1 Summary of Key Results

The survey solicited information on a number of subjects ranging from participation in leisure activities to facility and program needs and from awareness of recreational opportunities to how new facilities should be funded. The following is a summary of the key results from the survey of random Amherst households. Detailed data tables are included in Appendix B.

Participation

According to the survey results, the most popular recreational activities are walking for leisure, cycling, swimming and golfing (the same activities, although in a slightly different order, were also in the top four in the previous Master Plan survey). Not surprisingly, these activities are generally able to be enjoyed by all age groups, are less structured than most other activities, and are generally not facility-intensive (with the exception of swimming, golf and tennis). Participation in nearly all activities has increased since the 1992 Master Plan, with walking, aerobics/fitness/weights, sledding/tobogganing, and recreational skating experiencing the largest increases.

The top ten activities are shown in Table 3-3.

TABLE 3-3: Participation in Recreational Activities – Household Survey

Activity	Households Participating	People Participating
Walking for Leisure	73%	57%
Cycling	44%	42%
Swimming	41%	39%
Golf	39%	26%
Aerobics, Fitness, Weights	34%	23%
Running, Jogging	29%	19%
Recreational Skating	27%	25%
Inline Skating	26%	21%
Sledding, Tobogganing	26%	28%
Tennis	23%	18%

Source: Random Household Survey, 2002

When asked if they feel that they and members of their households are able to participate as often as they would like, 45% of respondents indicated that they are not satisfied with their levels of participation. Although the reasons were varied, the most common were: lack of time; being unaware of the opportunities; a lack of facilities nearby; activities being too expensive; lack of desired programming; and programs not being offered at convenient times. While the Town is powerless over the “lack of time” issue, it does have some level of control over the others. Overall, it appears that a significant proportion of Amherst residents would like to participate in recreational activities more often and also have high expectations surrounding the provision, convenience, and affordability of facilities and programming. This same question was also asked in the 1992 Master Plan survey – at that time a slightly higher percentage indicated that they were unable to participate as often as they would like, indicating that recreational opportunities within Amherst may have improved somewhat over the past decade.

Over half of those responding to the survey use Town-owned facilities for the majority of their recreational activities (in comparison with private facilities and school/post-secondary facilities).

Programming

Over two-thirds (69%) of respondents indicated that they are satisfied with the recreation programs offered by the Town’s Recreation Department. However, numerous suggestions were received for expanding the recreational programming and offering organized activities in aerobics and skating, among others.

Respondents generally agreed that the recreational opportunities available to all age groups are, on average, good to excellent. The highest ratings were given to child and youth opportunities, while the opportunities available to people with disabilities and adults are felt to be good to fair overall.

Facilities

The survey included a question pertaining to the need for a wide range of recreation facilities and park features. Respondents were able to rate the need for facilities by using a “Likert scale” (strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree, no opinion). Through the coding of responses (a score of 1 indicates a very high level of demand, while a score of 4 indicates a very low level of demand), Table 3-4 illustrates the public’s perceptions relating to facility needs.

TABLE 3-4: Recreation Facility Demand – Household Survey

Facility/Feature	Score	Demand
Parkland / Open Space	1.75	High
Nature Trails	1.84	High
Paved Trails	1.90	High
Playgrounds	2.19	Moderate to High
Wading Pools	2.20	Moderate to High
Indoor Swimming Pool	2.32	Moderate
Tennis Courts	2.44	Moderate
Outdoor Swimming Pool	2.48	Moderate
Outdoor Basketball Courts	2.48	Moderate
Gymnasiums	2.53	Moderate
Golf Courses	2.56	Moderate
Community Halls	2.57	Moderate
Soccer Fields	2.70	Moderate
Baseball Diamonds	2.72	Moderate
Skateboarding Facilities	2.76	Moderate to Low
Arenas / Ice Rinks	2.89	Moderate to Low
BMX (off-road biking) Facilities	2.91	Moderate to Low
Football Fields	2.92	Moderate to Low
Disc/Frisbee Golf Facilities	3.06	Low

Source: Random Household Survey, 2002

Not surprisingly, there is a high level of demand for parks and trails, as well as playgrounds and pools. Conversely, the more specialized the facility/activity becomes, the lower the demand. Despite being among the ten most popular activities, the facilities required for golfing and ice skating garnered relatively low scores in this analysis, indicating that these activities and facilities are adequate at present.

The 1992 Master Plan survey included a similar question. At that time, the public expressed the greatest need for playgrounds, golf courses, and swimming pools (trails were not surveyed). The most significant differences between the 1992 and 2002 surveys are with regard to demand for outdoor basketball courts (greater demand in 2002) and golf courses (greater demand in 1992).

A number of interesting patterns emerge when the survey results for this question are correlated to the area of the Town in which the respondents lived through the use of Planning Analysis Areas (PAA). Although confidence in the results is decreased when the data is segmented, broad conclusions can still be drawn:

- PAA 1 – This area appears to be extremely “facility-hungry” due to a significantly higher proportion of respondents agreeing with the need for soccer fields, football fields, tennis courts, wading and swimming pools, arenas, golf courses, and skateboarding facilities. Not coincidentally, PAA 1 has the lowest population of each of the six Planning Analysis Areas and has few existing facilities and/or parks.
- PAA 2 – This area exhibited levels of facility demand that were consistent with the Town as a whole. The demographic information that was collected for the survey indicated that the households in this area are younger and larger than the sample population.
- PAA 3 – This area displayed a slightly higher than average demand for both indoor and outdoor swimming pools, as well as a golf course. The demographic information that was collected for the survey indicated that the households in this area are older and smaller than the sample population.
- PAA 4 – In contrast to PAA 1, appears to be “facility-rich” or content with the quantity of existing facilities. Significantly lower levels of demand were expressed for swimming and wading pools, football fields, tennis courts, community halls, and even parkland and playgrounds. The demographic information that was collected for the survey indicated that the households in this area are slightly younger and larger than the sample population.
- PAA 5 – Demand levels in this area were found to be generally consistent with that of other areas, although there was a slightly higher level of demand for playgrounds and an outdoor swimming pool.
- PAA 6 – This area exhibited levels of facility demand that were consistent with the Town as a whole. The demographic information that was collected for the survey indicates that the households in this area are slightly older and smaller than the sample population.

When asked where new recreation facilities should be built in the Town, there were very few common threads as responses varied significantly. The three most common responses were East Amherst, Eggertsville, and "centrally located", although other areas also received substantial support.

Funding

If new parks or recreation facilities are needed in Amherst, the option that the public supports most for financing them is the use of corporate sponsorships (79% agree or strongly agree). Other alternatives supported by the respondents include fundraising and the implementation of user fees. Only 19% of those responding agreed or strongly agreed that taxes should be increased to pay for new parks or recreation facilities. A similar question was asked later in the survey and only 14% felt that property taxes should be increased to pay for the development and/or operation of new facilities. Once again, user fees (pay per use) found a great deal of support (77%) as an alternative to a tax increase.

Delivery System

When asked how they usually learn about the recreational programs that are offered in Amherst, 33% of respondents mentioned the Towns program guide, 17% the newspaper, and 15% through friends and relatives. Surprisingly, 14% indicated that they were not fully aware of the recreational opportunities available to them.

General

Respondents were asked the degree to which they agreed with a series of statements pertaining to a broad range of topics.

There was a high degree of agreement with the following statements:

- “Recreation is very important to me and members of my household.” (81% agree, 10% disagree)
- “Town parks and recreation facilities are well maintained.” (77% agree, 11% disagree)
- “Public access to school facilities is good.” (68% agree, 15% disagree)

There was a moderate degree of agreement with the following statements:

- “There are sufficient parks and open spaces in my neighborhood.” (55% agree, 38% disagree)
- “Children’s programs should have priority over Adult programs.” (46% agree, 38% disagree)

There was a low degree of agreement with the following statement:

- “The Town should build a new public golf course.” (29% agree, 49% disagree)

Furthermore, respondents were given the opportunity to provide open-ended comments in the margins and at the end of the survey. Although not a statistically valid indicator, the most common issue was the need for more parks, natural areas, and trails within the Town.

3.2 INTEREST GROUP INTERVIEWS

During March and April 2002, telephone interviews were conducted with a wide variety of community interest groups, clubs, organizations and facility providers in the Town of Amherst. Not all group representatives could be reached by telephone. Where possible, the survey was faxed or mailed to the group. In total, 26 groups participated in the telephone/fax interviews.

Groups successfully contacted include:

- Amherst Adult Slo-Pitch Softball
- Amherst Lacrosse
- Amherst Men's Figure 8 Softball
- Amherst Skating Club
- Amherst Soccer Association
- Amherst Swim Team
- Amherst Youth Basketball
- Amherst Youth Board
- Amherst Youth Hockey
- Central Amherst Little League
- COMMAC
- Connie Mack Little League
- Eggertsville Community Association
- Fat Man's Hardball
- Golf Oversight Committee
- Jurek Post (baseball)
- Lamm Post (baseball)
- Lou Gehrig Babe Ruth Baseball
- Mathewson-McCarthy Babe Ruth Baseball
- Mel Ott Little League
- Pop Warner Football of Amherst, Inc.
- Sweet Home Junior Football Association
- Town of Amherst Recreation Badminton Program
- UB Swimming
- Williamsville Junior Football
- Women's Softball League (WSSL)

The purpose of the group questionnaire survey (see Appendix C) was to obtain background information on the types of programs and facilities used and/or provided, their level of satisfaction with the provision of existing recreation and parks services in the Town, and to identify major issues that groups felt needed to be addressed. This process allowed the Consultant to gather valuable information on the various groups and gain a greater understanding of the recreation and parks delivery system in the Town.

Community interest groups were asked a series of standardized questions pertaining to the services offered by the organization, the facilities used, registration levels, and the need for improvements to their key facilities. These aforementioned issues will be discussed in latter sections of the Plan under the appropriate park or facility.

Opinions on a number of issues pertaining to the delivery of services in the Town were also solicited from the interest groups. Specifically, groups were asked to comment on issues not directly related to their primary facility needs. The majority of these issues pertain to the need

for improved coordination and the willingness to pay for the use of community facilities. These issues are more fully explored in Section 4 (Leisure Delivery System and Programming).

Interest groups were also asked what facilities, unrelated to their core programs, are currently required in the Town. Approximately one-third felt that additional soccer fields are required in their communities, while just under one-quarter of the respondents suggested that parks, playground equipment, and another indoor ice surface are needed in their area.

Summaries of the group interviews are provided below and are grouped by recreational activity.

3.2.1 Badminton

Town of Amherst Recreation Badminton Program

The Town of Amherst Recreation Badminton Program is open to people of all ages and has approximately 120 participants each year. The Program relies on facilities within two local schools, as well as the Harlem Road Community Center. The instructor feels that there is a need for additional badminton courts and for continued support from the Town.

3.2.2 Baseball / Softball

Amherst Adult Slo-Pitch Softball

The Amherst Adult Slo-Pitch Softball league is open to men ages 18 to 55. The group currently has approximately 1800 players on 106 teams and has seen registration increase by 6% to 16% in each of the past four years. The league is expected to continue to see increases in its enrollment over the next decade. A variety of diamonds are used throughout Amherst, including diamonds at the Amherst Recreation Complex, St. Leo's Ball Diamond, Creekwood Park, Briarhurst Park, Clearfield Community Center, South Long Ball Diamond, Highway Department Ball Diamond, Getzville Ball Diamond, North Amherst Fire Hall, and the East Transit Fire Hall. The group is satisfied with the condition of the diamonds, however, they feel that there is a shortage of adult softball fields in the Town and would like to see a complex with four lighted diamonds developed. With an increasing population and the growing popularity of office softball teams, the group feels that additional diamonds are justified. Furthermore, a ball complex would allow the area to attract additional tournaments.

Amherst Girls Softball League

The Amherst Girls Softball League had 760 players ages 6 to 18 in 2001, an increase of approximately 27% over the past four years. The league uses the diamonds at Amherst Recreation Complex, as well as some school diamonds for practices. Although the group is satisfied with these facilities, they indicated that they are in desperate need of 2 to 4 additional diamonds ideally located at the same complex.

Amherst Men's Figure 8 Softball

The Amherst Men's Figure 8 Softball League offers softball for men ages 18 to 55. The group has approximately 120 players on ten teams (registration has fluctuated in recent years) and uses the South Long Ball Diamond and Getzville Ball Diamond. The group feels that both facilities contain safety hazards and require significant improvements. The group also feels that there is need to establish a dialogue between them and the Town, possibly in an effort to improve the condition of the diamonds.

Central Amherst Little League

The Central Amherst Little League has seen moderate increases in its registration over the past few years and had approximately 600 players (ages 5 to 18) in 2001. Continued increases in the 13 to 18 age group are expected in the coming years. The League uses the Central Amherst Baseball Complex (5 diamonds), Kingsgate Park (1 diamond) and the Amherst Recreation Complex for its programs. Although all of the facilities are generally adequate, suggestions for improving the Baseball Complex were made, including paving the parking lot (for the benefit of their Challenger division), installing restrooms and a new snack bar, and repairing some fencing. The group feels that there is sufficient demand to warrant the development of additional senior hardball diamonds in the Town. The league suggested that the Town organize regular meetings with all of the youth leagues to improve relationships and also indicated that funding from the Town for minor repairs has been more difficult to get in recent years.

COMMAC

COMMAC is a combination of three local Little League organizations and offers recreational and competitive baseball programs for youth ages 13 to 18. The league has approximately 208 players this year, a figure that is up considerably from the previous season. The group expects this upward trend to continue. The league uses diamonds at the Wehrle FAA Recreation Area, Dellwood Park, Mel Ott Baseball Complex, Amherst Recreation Complex, and Sweet Home Middle School; these parks are generally considered to be adequate, although drainage at the Middle School is poor. Currently, the lack of diamond availability is the most pressing issue for the group. COMMAC strongly feels that there is a need for two additional regulation size ball diamonds in the Town (ideally near the Amherst Pepsi Center, Sweet Home Middle School, or Sweet Home High School), as well as additional monies for diamond maintenance.

Connie Mack Little League

The Connie Mack Little League has seen its registration fluctuate slightly in recent years, but remains relatively steady around 500 players a year (ages 5 to 18). The group uses the diamonds at Garnet Park, Dellwood Park, Sattler Field, the Amherst Recreation Complex, and the Getzville Ball Diamonds. Improved maintenance of each of the facilities was requested, as was increased funding and support from the Town. The group also indicated that they are in need of additional ball diamonds to meet their current needs.

Fat Man's Hardball

Fat Man's Hardball is a competitive amateur hardball league consisting of 16 teams. One team with approximately 18 players (ages 18 and over) is based in the Town of Amherst. Although the league has grown in recent years, the number of teams is expected to remain stable over the next few years. The league uses Diamond #1 at the Amherst Recreation Complex, as well as a number of diamonds outside of Amherst. The group is generally satisfied with the existing facilities, but did note some minor concerns regarding Diamond #1 (the light standards are too low and the outfield fence is too short). Fat Man's does not require any additional facilities, however, the group indicated that there is an overall need for more regulation size ball diamonds and soccer fields in the Town. Financial support and improved scheduling were cited as the primary areas that the Town could provide additional assistance.

Jurek Post

Jurek Post organizes a competitive baseball team consisting of approximately 18 youth, ages 16 to 18. The team uses Diamond #1 at the Amherst Recreation Complex and, although the diamond is considered to be adequate for their needs, scheduling and lack of availability were identified as problems. The group feels that additional diamonds will be required to help alleviate current demand and to serve the growing population.

Lamm Post Baseball

A member of the American Legion, Lamm Post sponsors and offers baseball programs for approximately 50 youth under the age of 19. The group uses the baseball diamond at the Amherst Recreation Complex and considers this to be a first class facility. The group feels strongly that there is a need for an additional senior hardball diamond as there is only one in Town.

Lou Gehrig Babe Ruth Baseball

Lou Gehrig Babe Ruth Baseball had approximately 1450 players (ages 5 to 18) in 2001 and has been experiencing a decline of about 50 players per year over the past few years, which is expected to continue. The league uses the diamonds at the Lou Gehrig Baseball Complex, as well as Jurek Post. The league is generally satisfied with the quality of the facilities, although drainage is an issue at the Baseball Complex and overall better maintenance is required at Jurek Post. The group does not require any additional facilities, but did suggest improvements in communication between ball groups and the Town.

Mathewson-McCarthy Babe Ruth Baseball

Mathewson-McCarthy Baseball has approximately 625 to 650 hardball players (ages 5 to 18) in 2002 and has seen a slight resurgence in registration in recent years. The group uses the five diamonds at Wehrle FAA Recreation Area nearly seven days a week and the four diamonds at West Royal Parkway Recreation Area approximately two nights a week. The diamonds at West Royal Parkway are inadequate for the group's needs due to a lack of restrooms and serviced concession stand and the condition of the diamonds are more appropriate for practices than games. The Wehrle Drive facility, although generally meeting the organization's needs, requires a larger parking area. Mathewson-McCarthy indicates that they require two additional diamonds to meet their current and future needs and have proposed that the Town of Amherst acquire the adjacent property to the east in order to allow the group to develop two diamonds. Under this proposal, all of the group's games would be consolidated at Wehrle FAA Recreation Area and West Royal Parkway Recreation Area would be used solely for practices. Although the organization is satisfied with its relationship with the Town, greater awareness and assistance regarding grant and funding opportunities was suggested.

Mel Ott Little League

Mel Ott Little League has 942 players (ages 5 to 18) in 2002 and has seen increases of approximately 5% per year. The group uses the diamonds at Mel Ott Baseball Complex, the Amherst Recreation Complex, and at Sweet Home Middle School. With redevelopment plans at Sweet Home Middle School, the group is concerned that they will lose the diamonds on that property, although there may be an opportunity to replace the diamonds elsewhere on the site. The league indicated that there is a need for an additional senior hardball diamond in the Town, as well as a new little league diamond. Furthermore, installing light standards on a couple of diamonds at the Mel Ott Baseball Complex would benefit the program by allowing the diamonds to be used at night. The group is willing to finance a portion of any capital or maintenance project that they would benefit from.

Women's Slo-Pitch Softball League

The Women's Slo-Pitch Softball League (WSSL) is open to women ages 18 and over. The league has approximately 80 players in 2002 and has experienced a recent decline in participation (to the point that the viability of the league may be challenged). The group uses ball diamonds at South Long, Getzville and the Highway Department. It was indicated that maintenance practices at South Long Baseball Diamond are very poor. The league does not require any additional facilities.

3.2.3 Basketball

Amherst Youth Basketball

The Amherst Youth Basketball (AYB) league offers instructional basketball for over 600 youth in grades 4 through 12. The group has seen its registration increase significantly over the past ten years and expects the popularity of the program to continue to increase. The league uses the gymnasiums at Clearfield Community Center and also uses a number of schools in Amherst. The group is generally satisfied with the supply of gymnasium facilities in the Town, however, if participation in the program continues to increase, a shortage of facilities may result, in which case the league would require approximately 6 courts. Furthermore, it is felt that the Town's basketball facilities are not up to the same quality or standard as those in neighboring municipalities. The group also indicated that there is a need for accessible outdoor basketball and tennis courts within the Town.

There appears to be a severe rift between the Amherst Youth Basketball League and the Town's Recreation Department and Recreation Commission. The position of the AYB is that the scheduling of the Clearfield Community Center is not meeting the needs of their group. The AYB does not feel that they are getting the support from the Town that is necessary to sustain their program. In particular, the AYB does not feel that the Town's rental rates or the allocation of court time are reasonable – the AYB feels that it should be considered a "town program" and, therefore, be given the same privileges with regard to the scheduling of court time. The AYB is of the opinion that if both school and Town facilities continue to become less accessible, it will need an additional facility in order to expand its program.

3.2.4 Football

Pop Warner Football of Amherst, Inc.

The Pop Warner junior football league has approximately 80 players ages 7 to 15. The group plays at Bob Jones Field at the Amherst Recreation Complex and indicates that this facility is inadequate for their needs as they are unable to use the concession stand and press box and the facility is subject to vandalism and poor maintenance. The group strongly feels that there is a need for an additional junior football field in the Town. Pop Warner also indicated that the growth of their program is limited by the lack of facilities and they currently use fields outside of Amherst on a regular basis.

Sweet Home Junior Football

Sweet Home Junior Football offers football and cheerleading activities for children and youth ages 6 to 14. The group has approximately 160 to 180 participants, 110 to 120 of which are involved in football. The organization uses Sweet Home Middle School approximately 4 nights a week from July to November, however, this field is considered inadequate due to poor field

conditions and uncertain availability (school and community education uses get priority). The group strongly feels that there is a need for an additional football field in the Town, possibly at the proposed Sweet Home Park, and would be willing to contribute some of the required amenities. Another problem facing the group is that because its boundaries coincide with the Sweet Home School District and not the Town of Amherst, only approximately 60% of its participants are Amherst residents – the Town's residency policy, therefore, limits the group's usage of Town fields and services. The group indicated that additional support from the Town's Recreation Department is required for youth organizations such as theirs to remain viable.

Williamsville Junior Football

Williamsville Junior Football has approximately 300 to 350 players between the ages of 7 and 14. The group uses football fields at the Amherst Recreation Complex, Clearfield Community Center, and Maple West Elementary School. The group considers the Clearfield and Maple West fields to be inadequate for their needs as there are no light standards and there is generally not enough space. The group strongly feels that there is a need for an additional junior football field with lights, possibly at the Amherst Recreation Complex.

3.2.5 Golf

Amherst Golf Oversight Committee

The Golf Oversight Committee is a Town body that oversees certain aspects of the operation of Amherst's public golf courses. The Committee indicates that the demand for the Town's three existing courses is greater than their capacity and the expansion and/or establishment of additional courses is necessary. The group suggested that the Oakwood Golf Course (currently 9 holes) be expanded to 18 holes in order to alleviate some demand. The Committee also requested that the Town Board become more involved in their meetings. The Committee reports directly to the Recreation Commission.

3.2.6 Hockey / Skating

Amherst Youth Hockey

Amherst Youth Hockey offers year-round hockey programs to players ages 3 to 17½. For the 2001/02 season, the group had approximately 1500 players – an increase of approximately 600 players since 1998/99. The group uses the rinks at the Amherst Pepsi Center and feels that this facility is adequate for their current needs. If the group sustains the same rate of growth that it has experienced in recent years, however, it feels that additional ice surfaces may be required.

Although they are a part of Amherst Youth Hockey, the Amherst Girls Hockey was also interviewed. The Girls league currently has approximately 100 players and registration has increased rapidly since they began three years ago. The group intends on adding two new teams next year, however, the group feels that it will be difficult to get the additional ice time and they suggested that another ice pad be built to satisfy this demand. In order to ensure that the league's travel teams are competitive, the group feels that the Town should open the hockey program up to non-Amherst residents (as many neighboring municipalities are doing the same).

Amherst Skating Club

The Amherst Skating Club offers both instructional/basic and competitive/club skating programs for residents of all ages. The group's enrollment has remained steady over the past few years

at approximately 1,370 skaters per year and may increase in the coming years if they add a synchronized skating program. The Club is generally satisfied with the facilities at the Amherst Pepsi Center, however, they indicated that there is a need for harnesses in a couple of the rinks. The group requested a dedicated ballet/conditioning room separate from the Buffalo Athletic Club so that they can keep their costs down. The Club is concerned with the Town's residency policy, which does not allow them to offer their programs to non-residents at the same rates. By lifting this restriction, the group feels that they would be better positioned to afford the costs of ice rentals, to remain competitive, and to host major competitions. In this regard, the Club has proposed that it be allowed to fill vacancies in its allocated ice time by offering its programs to a limited range of non-residents. The group also suggested that a Club representative be given a seat on the Ice Oversight Committee or Recreation Commission.

3.2.7 Lacrosse

Amherst Lacrosse Association

The Amherst Lacrosse Association offers a lacrosse program to youth ages 5 to 18. The group currently has 262 players and has seen increases of 8% to 22% in each of its last four years, particularly in girls lacrosse. The league uses the indoor field at the North Amherst Recreation Center from November to March. Suggested improvements to this facility include the installation of bleachers at one end of the field, the painting of goal creases on the turf, and the installation of a scoreboard. Given the sport's rapid growth, the group has requested four additional hours each week. The group is satisfied with the supply of indoor lacrosse facilities, but did indicate the need for an outdoor field with lights and AstroTurf.

3.2.8 Soccer

Amherst Soccer Association

The Amherst Soccer Association (ASA) serves male and female players ages 5 to 20. The group's 2002 registration is 2,358 players. Over the past five seasons, the group's membership has increased by 3% to 7% annually, however, it appears that its growth rate is beginning to taper off, although participation is still expected to increase in real terms. The ASA also runs the AIM (Amherst Invitational Memorial) Tournament each Memorial Day and attracts approximately 150 teams each year.

The Association uses fields at a variety of Town and School facilities, typically seven days a week during the season, and feels that improvements are needed to nearly all fields. The fields that are used and their deficiencies are described below:

- North French Soccer Complex (5 full fields) – there are no shelters or permanent restrooms; parking and traffic flow are felt to be inadequate;
- Amherst Recreation Center (3 mini fields) – poor drainage;
- Clearfield Community Center (2 mini fields) – fields are not useable due to severe drainage problems;
- Erie Community College North Campus (2 full fields and 2 mini fields) – lack of parking, restrooms, and shelter are concerns;
- North Amherst Recreation Center (2 mini fields and indoor field) – use the indoor field during the winter and 2 outdoor mini fields during the fall; lack of available time is the largest concern;
- Briarhurst Park (1 full field) – there are no shelters or permanent restrooms; conflicts with softball and soccer usage in the park; and

- a variety of Amherst Central, Sweet Home Central and Williamsville Central Schools – outdoor fields at nearly 20 schools are used for practices and for the ASA’s AIM tournament, however, usage during the school season is limited due to school priorities.

The group indicates that they are currently in dire need of additional soccer fields and demand will only increase as the groups’ registration continues to climb. The potential loss of the ECC North fields would also have a severe impact on the group. The group also believes that the North Amherst Recreation Center would be an ideal location for the development of joint soccer, football, and baseball/softball facility.

The ASA is also concerned about losing time at the North Amherst Recreation Center to the Buffalo Destroyers due to the change in their season (i.e., it previously began in April, but now begins in January). If more time were available, the group would like to expand its indoor winter programs.

3.2.9 Swimming

Amherst Swim Team

The Amherst Swim Team offers recreational and competitive aquatics activities to youth and adults ages 2 and up. The group has approximately 120 child and youth participants and approximately 15 adult members. Registration is expected to remain stable in the coming years. The group uses the indoor pools at Heim and Casey Middle schools in the winter and Williamsville North High School in the summer (the group is using North Forest pool this summer due to repairs at the high school). All of the school aquatic facilities are felt to be aging and access to the pools is becoming increasingly more restricted due to expanded school and community education usage. The team strongly felt that an additional indoor pool is required in the Town, in particular a 50-meter indoor pool contained within a multi-purpose recreation complex (similar to the facility in the Town of Tonawanda).

UB Swimming

UB Swimming is a competitive swim team with approximately 100 to 120 members ages 6 to 19. The organization uses a number of school pools within the Williamsville School District, as well as the aquatic center at the University of New York at Buffalo (North Campus). Problems with the existing facilities include an overall lack of pool time, inconsistent access to school pools, and the high cost of renting the UB pool. The group strongly feels that the Town needs an indoor pool and recreation complex similar to the one in the Town of Tonawanda in order to alleviate the demand for pool time and to increase the size and level of competition of their swim team.

3.2.10 Other Organizations

Amherst Youth Board

The Youth Board is a separate department within the Town of Amherst. Their mandate is “To serve youth and families through youth development, advocacy, prevention and intervention programs that strengthen family and community”. The Board offers a wide range of childcare, day camp, and family support programs and services to an estimated 7,500 youth participants from 4,500 families. It is felt that usage of their services will increase in the coming years. The Board has dedicated space at the Harlem Road Community Center, Amherst Pepsi Center, and Clearfield Community Center – there is a great deal of pressure for additional space at the latter

of the two facilities due largely to the need for child care and vacation care programs. New space is also required in the Williamsville and Eggertsville areas. Within the next few years, the group also feels that there will be pressure for its programs in the northeast and northwest sections of the Town. Aside from the lack of space, the Youth Board's most important issues are its ability to attract new funding and volunteers.

Eggertsville Community Organization

The Eggertsville Community Organization was formed a number of years ago to advocate on behalf of Eggertsville residents and businesses in an effort to improve the overall quality of life within the community. With regard to recreation and leisure, the group is currently involved with the Eggertsville Community Center initiative (along side a number of other partners) in an effort to develop a multi-generational recreation facility within the heart of Eggertsville. The Organization is also pursuing – in association with the Town – the installation of playground equipment and other features within the Eggertsville Community Park. Overall, the group feels strongly that the Eggertsville area is lacking recreation facilities and parkland.

3.3 ADDITIONAL INTERVIEWS

In April 2002, the Town's School Districts were contacted to obtain information about the facilities at each institution, the level of use by community groups, information on community education courses, and plans for the addition or elimination of any indoor or outdoor recreation facilities on school grounds. These interviews are very important as schools play a key role in the provision of recreation facilities and programs to the community. The results of the school interviews are provided in Section 5 of this Plan.

Key Town staff, and members of the Town Board, Recreation Commission and Parks and Playground Committee were also interviewed to identify issues and priorities and to gather information on the facilities, programs and services within Amherst (see Appendix D). These interviews focused on obtaining an inventory of facility amenities and usage, an indication of necessary improvements, and current and future facility and program needs. This information has been used to verify data collected from the interest group surveys and site visits and has been incorporated throughout the Report.

3.4 FOCUS GROUPS

In September 2002, two focus group sessions were organized by the Town and administered by the Consultant. The purpose of the sessions was to identify the major issues affecting the parties and to reach a level of consensus regarding preferred solutions to each of the issues. A summary of the items raised during the focus groups is provided below.

3.4.1 Youth

Only one representative attended the focus group session organized for youth participants. Although the individual was very active in the community and provided valuable input, the overall lack of participants limited the usefulness of the session. To compensate for the poor attendance, additional focus on youth issues will be emphasized at the open public meetings.

3.4.2 Community Organizations

Sixteen representatives from ten local sports organizations attended this focus group session. Sports that were represented included baseball, softball, football, swimming, synchronized swimming, and soccer. Despite the wide range of interests, consensus around a number of items was reached. **The main issues raised at the session are listed below; although there may be action plans in the Master Plan addressing some of these issues, the items below are merely the concerns that were raised by the groups and are not considered to be recommendations:**

- The lack of assistance from the Town of Amherst, especially with regard to:
 - communication with groups;
 - dissemination of information;
 - coordination with schools;
 - park and facility maintenance; and
 - financial assistance.
- Recreation Department staff is the front-line contact for most groups, but the groups feel that they tend to be reactive rather than proactive. There is a need for staff to work with the groups, not against them. More staff (or expanded job descriptions) are needed to:
 - respond to community needs and priorities;
 - assist organizations in grant writing;
 - undertake long term facility and strategic planning;
 - develop and implement allocation and funding policies and processes;
 - establish appropriate rental and/or subsidy rates for facilities and fields;
 - liaise with – and establish collaborative initiatives with – groups, school districts, and community associations;
 - improve maintenance practices at Town-owned parks and facilities; etc.
- Many groups indicated that they feel that the Town is ignoring their needs and that there is no suitable mechanism in place for the Town to address their concerns. There is clearly a need to repair the relationship between the Town (i.e., Recreation Department and Recreation Commission) and local not-for-profit volunteer organizations. This can be partially achieved by:
 - organizing regular meetings between the Department/Commission and community organizations/sports groups; and
 - involving groups in projects that may affect them (groups must be consulted early on before major decisions are made).
- The absence of a Town-adopted mandate or mission statement has resulted in lack of direction for recreation in the Town of Amherst. For example, it is unclear as to whether or not youth needs should take priority over adult needs or if tournaments/meets should be priorities (even at the expense of meeting community needs). The groups feel that child and youth activities and facility needs should be the main focus of the Town.
- There is concern that the Town is attempting to turn recreation into a profit center and, in doing so, has disregarded the true purpose of recreation and the needs of residents. The provision of recreation by the Town is seen as a vital part of the basic services provided at the local level and is essential for Amherst's health and quality of life.

- Municipal subsidies for most not-for-profit recreation groups have declined dramatically or been eliminated completely in recent years. This has hindered the ability of groups to provide their services and to expand and/or improve their programs. Despite the reduction in funding, the groups have not seen any improvements in other areas of recreation (e.g., maintenance, new facilities, upgraded facilities, etc.). There is a strong need to reinvest in recreation and to improve the Town's commitment to this basic service.
- Many groups feel that the Recreation Commission is not community-responsive. It was indicated that the Commission's members are unable to relate to recreation in the Town because they are not actively involved with any groups. Furthermore, it was asserted that the Commission's members are appointed largely on political platforms and, therefore, do not always act in the best interest of "unconnected" groups. There is a need for better communication between the Commission and community groups in order to address these issues and perceptions. It was also suggested that the composition of the Recreation Commission be modified to include representatives from the Town's many community organizations.
- The Town needs to make greater efforts to recognize the value and contributions of volunteers. Without the tireless efforts of the volunteer sports organizations, the burden on the Town would be much greater and overall quality of life would decline.
- There are a number of long-standing park and facility needs and others that are more recent (as a result of population growth and significant increases in participation). Upgrades to existing parks facilities are just as important as the development of new parks and facilities. As the financial capabilities of not-for-profit groups are limited, greater assistance from the Town is required to fund and organize these infrastructure projects.
- In order to assist in meeting facility and park needs, the Town should explore creative solutions with the private sector regarding the provision of land or funding for recreation purposes.
- Schools and their associated playing fields, pools, gyms, etc. are seen as community resources. Despite this, accessibility to schools by community groups is extremely unreliable and the condition of many facilities is poor. The Town should work with the groups to establish joint use agreements with the School Districts and the University of New York at Buffalo that would allow groups greater and more dependable access to schools. The agreement would also govern the use of Town-owned facilities by schools (e.g., establish usage levels, priorities for usage, etc.).
- There is no formal (Town-adopted) policy governing the allocation of playing fields, ice time, gymnasium usage, etc.
- There is no formal process by which groups can apply to the Town for financial assistance or facility improvements. With so many groups vying for scarce municipal dollars, there does not appear to be any criteria to guide the Town in deciding which groups receive the assistance. The result is that politically connected groups receive the most assistance ("squeaky wheel gets the grease").

3.5 KEY ISSUES ARISING FROM THE COMMUNITY CONSULTATION PROGRAM

The following are considered to be the key issues and directions arising through the random household survey, focus group sessions, and interviews with user groups/community organizations, community leaders and Town staff. The issues are not listed in any priority order:

- (1) The Town needs to reinvest in recreation and renew its commitment to this basic service. The adoption of a mandate and mission statement was suggested as a means of clarifying this new direction.
- (2) There is demand for regulation size hardball diamonds, football fields, soccer fields, playgrounds, and a recreation complex (e.g., indoor pool, fitness center, gymnasiums, youth/family space, etc.). Less frequent requests included additional ball diamonds (little league, girls softball, and adult slo-pitch), water play/splash pads, leash-free dog areas, outdoor basketball courts, ice pads, and expanded golf facilities.
- (3) Although parks, natural areas and trails are rated very highly and more are always preferred, residents appear to be generally satisfied by the existing supply of parks in the Town. The development of new trails or pathways, although desired, creates concerns related to safety and their impact on residential property values.
- (4) Improved communication and coordination between the Town (including staff and the Recreation Commission) and community organizations is required. A greater level of assistance (financial and otherwise) is also required to ensure the local recreation groups are able to continue to provide community-responsive programs and services.
- (5) Park and facility maintenance and scheduling practices and procedures require improvement.
- (6) There is a need for formal policy, guidelines, and processes to govern: the allocation of Town facilities and fields; the usage of Town facilities by non-residents; and the process by which groups may obtain financial assistance.
- (7) School facilities and fields are becoming increasingly less accessible by community organizations, resulting in greater demand for affordable and accessible facilities and fields. Creative arrangements must be explored to ensure that these facilities remain accessible to the community at large.
- (8) Greater efforts should be made to recognize the value and contributions of volunteers within the community.

SECTION 4: LEISURE DELIVERY SYSTEM AND PROGRAMMING

To properly plan for recreation and leisure facilities and programs within a community, it is first necessary to understand how the local delivery system for recreation services works. This section evaluates the inner-workings of the leisure delivery system in the Town of Amherst and identifies the roles, responsibilities, strengths and weaknesses of the current system. The implications of the delivery system on the Town's recreation activities and strategies for addressing these implications are discussed.

An assessment of existing recreation programming opportunities that are available to selected age groups is also provided. The intent of the analysis is to identify any programming deficiencies or gaps in the community.

4.1 EXISTING DELIVERY SYSTEM

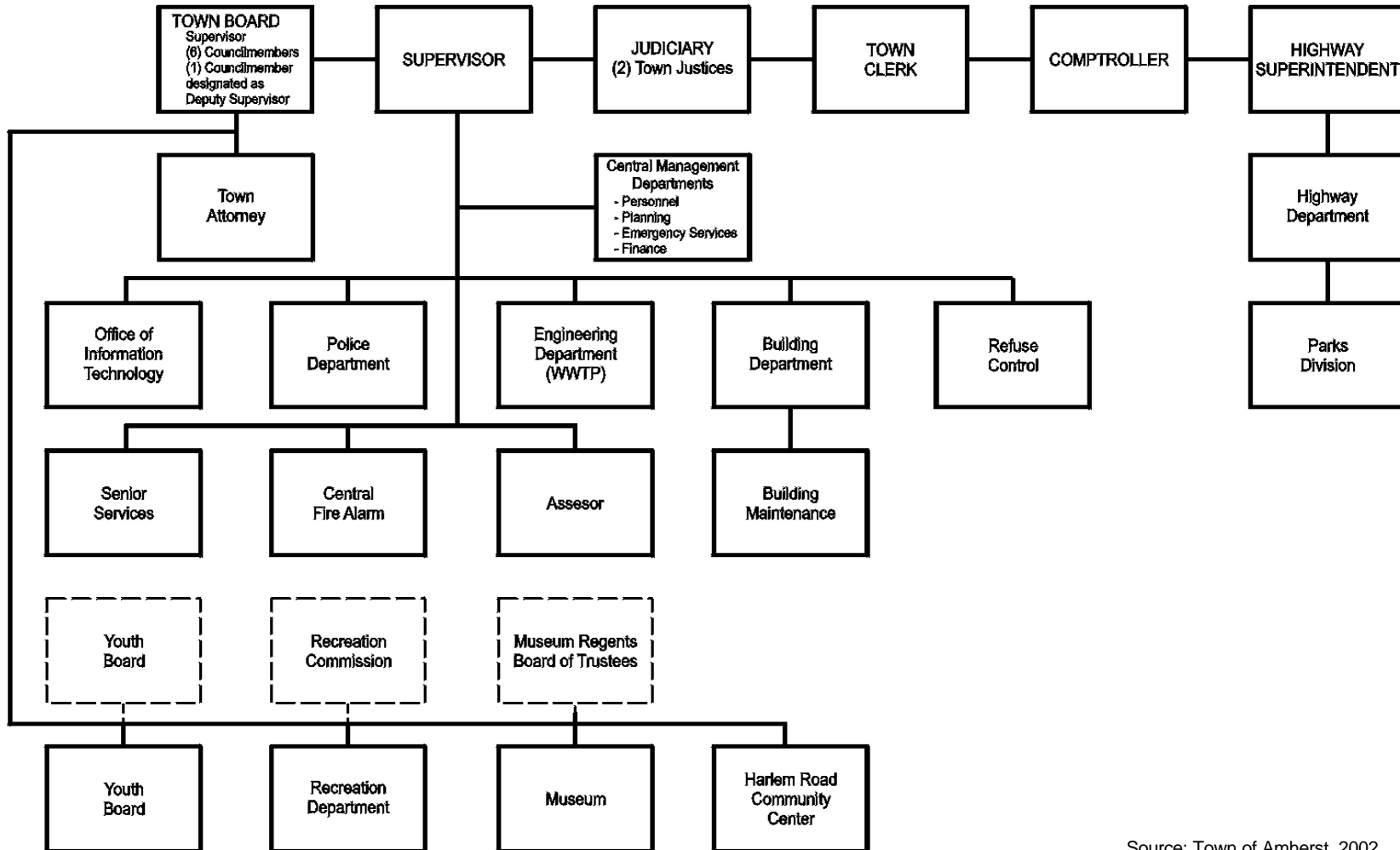
4.1.1 The Town

The Town of Amherst is the primary provider of public recreational facilities and parks and also administers a number of leisure programs and services for all ages. The Town's administration includes the following leisure-related departments and boards.

- Recreation Department – Responsible for the planning and operation of Town-owned recreation facilities and golf courses, direct programming, facility and parks scheduling, coordination of community recreational activities, and field maintenance at all complexes. Reports to both the Recreation Commission and the Town Board.
- Highway Department – The Parks Division is responsible for the maintenance of Town parks, natural areas, golf courses, sports fields (except for those at complexes), and bike paths. Reports directly to the Town Board.
- Planning Department – Responsible for parks and trails planning, conceptual design, capital improvement programming, and providing assistance in developing grant funding application for capital projects. Reports directly to the Town Board.
- Youth Board – Responsible for providing a variety of services in support of children, youth and families, and for operating the Harlem Road Community Center. Reports to the Town Board.
- Department of Senior Services – Responsible for providing programs and services to seniors and for the operation of the Amherst Center for Senior Services. Reports directly to the Senior Services Advisory Board, which reports to the Town Board.

Figure 4-1 on the following page (Town of Amherst Organizational Chart) illustrates the various departments within the Town and their respective reporting responsibilities.

FIGURE 4-1
Town of Amherst
Organizational Chart



Source: Town of Amherst, 2002

Other committees that are pertinent to recreation and parks include the following.

- Ice Oversight Committee, Golf Oversight Committee, and Parks & Playground Committee – Subcommittees of the Recreation Commission.
- Glen Park Joint Board – Responsible for the management of Glen Park, which is jointly owned by the Town of Amherst and the Village of Williamsville.
- Conservation, Parks and Recreation Foundation – An independent 501(c)3 not-for-profit foundation dedicated to the acquisition of park and recreation land, facilities, and open space for residents of the Town of Amherst. The foundation is not affiliated with the municipality.

The Town department and board structure has been in place for a number of years and generally appears to be working well. There are, however, some overlapping duties between departments, most significantly the Recreation Department and the Youth Board. Fortunately, there appears to be good coordination among these departments.

In addition, numerous comments regarding park and facility maintenance were received during the interviews with staff, committee members and user groups about the gaps that exist between the Recreation Department and the Highway/Parks Department. In particular, there is a feeling that **there is a need to create a better link between the departments** because the decisions made by one department inevitably impacts the other. Although the Recreation Department relies upon the parks and sports fields that are maintained and managed by the Highway/Parks Department, there is no coordinating body to ensure that the practices and decisions are mutually beneficial to each department and the general public. A common scenario involves the Recreation Department receiving complaints regarding park maintenance and, in turn, being unable to address the situation because this is a responsibility of the Highway/Parks Department.

The separation of parks maintenance from recreation services makes a certain amount of sense from an operational perspective, but the result is an inability to provide complete customer service functions. Even the rationale for the current arrangement can be questioned as both Recreation and Highway/Parks Departments are responsible for maintaining public lands and, therefore, offer a duplication of service and machinery.

Furthermore, because the scope of the Highway/Parks Department is not limited to parks and natural areas, it becomes difficult to internally prioritize capital and operational budget demands between road/sewer infrastructure and parks, often resulting in a less favorable budget allocation for parks and playground maintenance. The issue of playground equipment maintenance and replacement has been cited as an example of an area where more funds need to be dedicated.

The organizational structure also hinders the ability of the Town to understand the true costs of its programs and facilities because much of the operating expenditures are incurred by the Highway/Parks Department, but the revenues are received by the Recreation Department. Capital improvements approved through the Recreation and Planning Departments' budgets also have operating implications on the Parks Division. Understanding the financial implications of any capital decision is the key to establishing user fee rates that are fair and reflect economic realities. For example, if the Town is approached by a community sports organization to develop additional fields through a partnership, the Town needs to know its current level of service and net cost per field (including costs for maintenance, administration, debt repayment,

etc. and revenues from field rentals, grants, etc.) – this will help to establish the current subsidy rates. If the Town decides to assist in developing new fields, but is not willing to increase its standard of service (e.g., it will provide the basic field, but not irrigation and lighting), then the Town can determine the capital and operating costs that are over and above the basic standard of service and adjust the rental/user fee accordingly. In this way, user fees can be set at a level that accurately reflects the cost of providing the service/facility minus the rate of subsidization.

Although there has been a cooperative relationship between all departments and boards over the years, there is a sense that **greater coordination and communication** – or even restructuring – is required in order to eliminate the duplications and gaps in service.

4.1.2 Other Public and Quasi-Public Sector Providers

In addition to the Town, there are a number of other public and quasi-public sector organizations that play important roles in the leisure delivery system, including the three School Districts, the State University of New York at Buffalo (North Campus), Erie Community College (North Campus), the YMCA, the Jewish Community Center, the Boys and Girls Club, and others. There is some duplication of services between these providers and the Town.

Local schools and colleges/universities play a significant role in the provision of both recreational programs and facilities. In addition to the traditional varsity and intramural activities offered as part of school curriculums, the School Districts offer a wide range of recreation and leisure focused community education courses. The Town and residents make good use of school facilities after hours and during the summertime. Examples of this relationship include the Town's reliance on indoor swimming pools in schools and usage of school playing fields and gymnasiums by community groups.

Although school facilities represent a significant resource in the Town, their continued availability and affordability are ever-present concerns. As participation in school sports and community education courses increase, there is less time and space available for Town recreation programs and other community-based programs. Furthermore, issues of liability and after-hours maintenance cause operational costs to rise and these increased costs are often borne by the groups using the facilities. While these concerns do not appear to be significant in Amherst at present, they may become so in the near future.

One manner of ensuring continued community access to school facilities at reasonable times and rates is to establish reciprocal use agreements between the Town and the School Districts. Reciprocal use agreements allow for Town and/or community programs to use school facilities and, in turn, for schools to use Town facilities (the details of which are contained in the agreement). The Town does not currently have any such agreements in place, but has recently been awarded a grant that will allow for the joint development of facilities within Sweet Home Park (in partnership with the Sweet Home School District). As demands for additional facilities and playing fields continue, **more emphasis must be placed on partnerships and agreements with area schools and recreation providers** for both the usage and development of facilities and services.

4.1.3 The Community

There is an active network of community organizations and volunteers within the Town. These organizations, which include minor sports associations, special interest groups, and individual volunteers, have traditionally played a large role in the delivery of recreation programs to the various communities within the Town. These groups have a strong track record of active participation in the provision of community services, fundraising and sponsorship.

In addition to acting as the primary provider of organized sports activities, many community organizations have been involved in fundraising for the development of new or improved equipment and facilities. For example, the Amherst Soccer Association has helped to fund the development of soccer fields at Paradise Park and many little league associations fund improvements to their facilities. Although many facilities and parks are acquired and developed by the Town, the Town provides only limited assistance to groups interested in upgrading or expanding the facilities.

There are few formal relationships or procedures among community organizations and the Town of Amherst. Many groups indicated their frustration in trying to get their needs addressed by the Recreation Department and Recreation Commission. Furthermore, the overall leisure delivery system is somewhat fragmented, with most groups operating independently from each other. Suggestions were received for the initiation of regular meetings between community groups and the Recreation Department that would allow for discussion on concerns and opportunities. By bringing all parties together, it is felt that a greater understanding of the pressures facing each group will result and lead to the development of strategies to resolve these issues.

4.1.4 The Private Sector

Private sector enterprises play an important role in the leisure delivery system in the Town of Amherst as they provide for a number of activities, including tennis, fitness and golf. The Town offers programs in many of these areas, however, their services and facilities are generally targeted towards the segments of the population that cannot afford access to private facilities or that requires a more basic level of instruction and/or competition.

4.1.5 Surrounding Municipalities

As a result of the Town's proximity to other settlement areas, local residents often utilize facilities and programs offered in these neighboring communities. Residency policies and increased user fees in surrounding jurisdictions, however, often discourage Amherst citizens and other non-residents from participating in programs and/or using facilities in other municipalities. Due to Amherst's size, however, it is generally able to provide a range of facilities and services that are on par or even exceed those that are offered in neighboring municipalities.

Amherst has formed agreements with the Village of Williamsville for the joint use of a variety of facilities and programs. This arrangement appears to be working well and is beneficial to both parties (e.g., Amherst leases the South Long Baseball Diamond, while Williamsville residents are able to use Amherst facilities). Furthermore, although Williamsville has its own Recreation and Parks Committees, a joint board has been formed to oversee Glen Park, which is jointly owned by the Village and the Town.

4.2 DELIVERY SYSTEM POLICY DIRECTIONS

Through discussions with, and surveys of, the general public, community groups, Town staff, and local leaders, a number of issues related to the Town's recreation delivery system emerged. Some of these issues require a more detailed analysis than this Plan can provide, nevertheless, action plans have been recommended in an effort to improve the overall coordination, effectiveness, and efficiency of the delivery system. The primary issues are examined below.

4.2.1 Residency Requirements

For the most part, Amherst parks, recreation facilities, programs and services are intended for the exclusive use of Amherst residents. The underlying basis for this policy is that the parks, facilities and services are paid for by Amherst residents partially through property taxes and, therefore, they should be given priority over non-residents.

The Town is currently in the process of formalizing Residency Rule Guidelines that will apply to all municipal indoor and outdoor venues and property and has recently modified its guidelines governing the usage of the Amherst Pepsi Center. The Guidelines give first priority to all participants in youth organizations and leagues, where the participants live within the Town of Amherst or the boundaries of one of its three school districts; any organization meeting this requirement would be considered to be a "resident" organization. A minimum of 75% of adult league/organization/team participants must live within the Town of Amherst in order to qualify for usage of municipal facilities. Youth and adult participants living outside of the Town will be charged an additional non-resident fee. In instances where there is limited space in a program, said program will be limited to Town of Amherst residents only; the Recreation Commission has the authority to require this criteria for any and all programs using municipal facilities. Non-resident usage of Town facilities will be permitted only after the demands of resident organizations have been met. The Residency Rule Guidelines set out additional eligibility criteria pertaining to divorce situations, foreign students, and other specific circumstances.

Some community groups do not agree with the Town's Residency Rule Guidelines, claiming that the policy is limiting their ability to be competitive. The groups argue that a higher percentage of non-residents will result in greater revenues and will maximize the facility time/space that is already rented by the group. Additional revenue for the Town and community groups also improves the position of the groups and/or Town to fund improvements to existing facilities and/or develop new facilities. Furthermore, the groups feel that lifting the non-resident restrictions will attract more elite athletes, thereby allowing the groups to be more competitive on regional, state and national levels.

There continues to be merit in giving priority to Town of Amherst residents. The participation of non-residents should never supercede the needs of local citizens. If there is no available time or space in programs and/or facilities, then the participation of non-residents should not be allowed. Non-resident usage should be charged a fee that represents the true cost of providing the facility and/or program. Currently, the Town of Amherst subsidizes most of its programs and facility rentals. Non-residents should be expected to pay their portion of the actual cost of the facility rental and/or program because they have not contributed to the subsidy through their taxes, while Amherst residents have. No changes are recommended to the Town's Residency Rule Guidelines, however, it is suggested that the Town continue in its efforts to ensure that all affected organizations are familiar with, and fully understand, the Guidelines.

4.2.2 Departmental Structure

As discussed earlier, a number of concerns have been identified with regard to the structure of the Town's Departments, particularly the separation of parks (Highway Department) and recreation (Recreation Department). The 1992 Parks and Recreation Master Plan recommended that the Parks Division of the Highway Department, as well as the Youth Board, be joined under the leadership of the Recreation Department. This recommendation was not implemented. Although the amalgamation of the parks, recreation, maintenance, programming, and administrative functions may result in a format that is more coordinated and responsive to the community's needs, it is acknowledged that this is a major political and administrative decision that is beyond the scope of this Plan. Nevertheless, it is a structure that should be revisited, as the reasons for creating a single Parks and Recreation Department remain valid.

In the absence of an amalgamated Parks and Recreation Department, **there is still a need to better coordinate the functions of the existing Parks Division and Recreation Department.** It is essential that "one hand knows what the other is doing", that the operating implications of capital decisions are stated, that the public knows who is responsible for which functions, and that the needs of citizens can be addressed in an effective, efficient and coordinated manner. In this regard, the establishment of a Committee to assist in coordinating the activities of the Parks Division and Recreation Department is recommended. One potential option is the establishment of a separate Committee that has links to the Parks Division, Recreation Department, Youth Board and Senior Services. This option is preferred because of its comprehensiveness and it encompasses the entire recreation, parks and leisure system. Although the creation of a new committee would add another layer to the administrative/political system, the establishment of appropriate links to the existing committees/commissions and administrative regimes would create a system that is more responsive to the current and future needs of Amherst residents.

Action Plans:

- Establish a committee that coordinates the functions and decisions of the Recreation Department, Parks Division, Youth Board and Senior Services.
- Establish a clear, equitable, and detailed division of responsibilities between the Recreation Department and the Parks Division.
- Give consideration to the amalgamation of the Recreation Department and the Parks Division, resulting in the formation of a Parks and Recreation Department.

4.2.3 Playground Maintenance

The United States Consumer Product Safety Commission has published a *Handbook for Public Playground Safety*. In addition, the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) has published standards for public playground equipment impact attenuation and accessibility that are intended to reduce incidences of life threatening and debilitating injuries. More than 200,000 children are treated in U.S. emergency rooms each year for injuries associated with playground equipment. Approximately 15 children die each year because of playground injuries.¹

¹ National Safety Council. Playground Safety Fact Sheet. <http://www.nsc.org/library/facts/plgrdgen.htm>. Accessed: April 29, 2002.

Although these standards are guidelines and their implementation is voluntary, they are considered to be best practices that are in the interest of public safety. **Ignoring these standards may result in potential liability issues for playground equipment providers.**

Many groups and community leaders noted that the Town Board has not allocated sufficient funds to the replacement and/or maintenance of playground equipment in recent years, despite the Recreation Department placing a very high priority on this budget item. There is no annual fund in the Capital Improvement Program that allows for the ongoing repair and replacement of play structures. Although the Town has recently replaced and/or updated some play structures, there is a sense that more effort needs to be directed to this issue.

In the interest of public safety, the Town should conduct an audit of existing playground structures to ensure their compliance with the standards established by the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission and ASTM. A staff member of the Recreation Department has recently received accreditation as a certified playground safety inspector and will be responsible for conducting the safety audits. A thorough inspection and assessment of playground equipment was not conducted for this Plan.

All equipment and surface systems under and around the equipment should be inspected frequently for any potential hazards. Once the necessary improvements have been identified, the Town should establish a comprehensive playground maintenance and replacement program that identifies priorities for the repair and replacement of play structures. Any damage or hazards should be repaired immediately in accordance with the accepted standards.

Actions Plans:

- Conduct an audit and inspection of playground equipment in the short term in order to identify deficiencies. Qualified individuals should conduct the inspections at appropriate intervals. Repair identified hazards immediately.
- Establish a program for the replacement and maintenance of playground equipment and ensure that it is updated on an annual basis. This will require allocating sufficient funds in the Capital Improvement Program for the immediate improvement of play equipment.
- Approach and work in cooperation with neighborhood associations and community groups to ensure that playground safety issues are identified and rectified.

4.2.4 Coordination & Communication

Many groups indicated that they are not getting the desired level of attention and support from the Town. Although the meetings of the Recreation Commission are open to the public and any group can request to speak at the sessions, few groups choose this avenue to discuss their concerns. It appears that the relationship between both the Recreation Department and Commission and many community groups is somewhat fractured. To illustrate this point, many groups currently refuse to speak with the Town because they feel that their concerns have been blatantly ignored in the past. The fact that many groups feel that additional assistance is required to support their efforts is a concern because, with this view, it is unlikely that they will be willing to expand their activities or develop new community-based programming.

Some groups suggested that there should be a “point person” or liaison within the Recreation Department responsible for addressing their concerns and other community recreation issues. For the most part, groups want to have someone they can communicate their concerns to and who has the authority to act on those concerns.

In order to provide groups with an opportunity to present ideas and concerns to Town staff, it is recommended that the Town organize and coordinate semi-annual meetings (spring and fall) with community groups. The purpose of these meetings would be to disseminate information regarding community events and funding/grant opportunities, and also to assist in establishing coordinated efforts between the Town and organizations, especially regarding facility planning and scheduling issues. Such a gathering would also serve to familiarize people with the activities and concerns of other groups and to establish a valuable network of contacts. The meetings may also offer opportunities to recognize the efforts of volunteers in the community and to engage new volunteers. Minutes of these meetings should also be distributed to all groups, including those that were unable to attend, and/or posted on the Town's web-site.

Action Plans:

- Hold semi-annual meetings with those directly involved in local leisure and recreation services in order to improve coordination between the Town and community groups, as well as among community groups. The minutes of these meetings shall be distributed to all groups, including those that were unable to attend, and/or posted on the Town's web-site.
- Create a central registry containing contact information for the representatives of local community groups. This registry should be produced, maintained and regularly updated by the Town.
- Distribute the minutes of the Recreation Commission meetings to all community groups.
- Consult affected groups prior to undertaking projects that would impact upon their activities.
- Provide a support network for the training, coordination and recognition of volunteers.
- Explore the feasibility of implementing an Internet-based program registration system for residents in the medium to long term.

4.2.5 Facility Scheduling & Allocation

Some facilities and playing fields are not scheduled in a manner that maximizes their usage. For example, the junior football field at the Amherst Recreation Complex sits idle during spring and summer, while soccer has a shortage of fields during this time. Another scheduling concern is the priority for facility rental that is given to Town-run programs over community-run programs (e.g., Clearfield Community Center and Amherst Youth Basketball), despite the fact that both groups serve Amherst residents. Furthermore, the agreement with the Buffalo Destroyers to use the North Amherst Recreation Center limits the use of the facility by local groups and gives priority to the non-resident Destroyers. Although it is acknowledged that the agreement with the Destroyers has been financially beneficial to the Town, the recent announcement concerning the changes to the Arena Football League season (now beginning in February instead of April) may have an impact on community groups that rely on this indoor facility during the winter.

For the most part, the Town of Amherst schedules its facilities (e.g., ice pads, gymnasiums, ball diamonds, etc.) based upon past allocations. For example, if a group was allocated a certain time slot last year, they will be given the same hours and time this year. That being said, more and more municipalities are implementing allocation and scheduling policies that are linked to the number, age, and residency of the participants in each group. Policies of this nature typically give priority to Town-run programs, residents, and children/youth and provide additional

opportunities for new groups to be established. **The benefits of allocation and scheduling policies are that they are equitable and consistent and allow for municipalities to ensure that their facilities are being used by those that need them most.** In order to create understandable and justifiable policies, user groups should be consulted in their development.

Action Plans:

- Seek creative arrangements in order to accommodate the facility and playing field needs of all community groups.
- Encourage the development of joint-use facilities and fields in order to maximize use. Scheduling must, however, not create conflicts between uses and activities.
- Prepare and adopt allocation and scheduling policies for municipal ball diamonds, soccer fields, ice surfaces, gymnasiums, and indoor fields. The policies should give priority to Town-run programs, residents, and youth and the number of hours should be based upon the size of the group. The policies should be developed in consultation with the user groups. Implementation of the policies will require the Town to collect information from each group regarding the number, age, and residency of all registered participants.

4.2.6 Access to School Facilities

Schools and their associated playing fields, pools, gyms, etc. are seen as community resources. Despite this, accessibility to schools by community groups is extremely unreliable and the condition of many facilities is poor.

Access to school facilities is seen as a major barrier by many community organizations in Amherst. As school and community education recreational activities expand in scope and scale, increasing pressures are being experienced at school recreational facilities. Furthermore, many community programs that rely on school facilities are also expanding, while the supply of facilities and space remains finite.

In the case of school facilities, the demands of the school curriculum take priority, and rightly so. The result, however, is that community use of these facilities is decreasing due to competing demands and there are few alternatives available for most organizations. As such, **the continued availability and affordability of school facilities are major concerns for many community organizations.**

To ensure continued community access to school facilities at reasonable times and dates (not only through community education, but also non-affiliated community organizations), it is recommended that the Town pursue the establishment of reciprocal use agreements with the local school districts and the University of New York at Buffalo. Such agreements allow for Town and/or community programs to use school facilities and, in turn, for schools to use Town facilities.

Action Plans:

- That the Town pursue reciprocal use agreements with the public School Districts and/or post-secondary institutions to ensure that indoor and outdoor school facilities remain accessible to community user groups and that Town facilities and parks are available for school and community education activities.

4.2.7 Partnership Arrangements

As the demand for new or expanded facilities and parks increases, additional forms of creative arrangements will be necessary. Gone are the days in which the municipality was the sole provider of recreation programs and venues. There are numerous recreation providers within the Town, including organizations within the private, not-for-profit/voluntary, and public sectors. With financial accountability being an ever present and growing concern, partnerships among these sectors are becoming more prevalent. If properly executed, partnerships allow for public services and facilities to be provided in a more efficient and cost effective manner, capitalizing on the qualities and strengths of each partner. The role of the Town in such partnerships must, however, reflect the need for transparency of operations and accountability to the community. As the need for new or expanded facilities, parks and services arises, it is recommended that the Town of Amherst explore different opportunities for their financing, developing, operating, and/or maintaining. While the benefits of partnership arrangements are many and vary widely in their implementation, they are not appropriate for all situations.

Action Plans:

- That the Town, where appropriate, consider entering into partnerships with reliable third party organizations in developing, financing, operating, and/or maintaining recommended capital and operating improvement projects in an effort to better serve the residents of Amherst through improving cost efficiency, customer service, and accessibility.

4.2.8 Public Awareness

The Town of Amherst has significantly improved its network of parks and trailways in recent years. There is a sense, however, that the general public is not fully aware of the locations or access points to these public areas. Although a parks map is now included in the Town's program guide, a similar publication for trails and pathways is recommended.

Also of note, only one-third of residents indicated that their household learns about recreational programs through the Town's program guide. Many were not aware of the programs that are available. Furthermore, the Town's guide only includes contacts and information for Town-run programs and events, while there is no mention of the opportunities offered by community organizations (e.g., little league, soccer, swim teams, football, etc.). Community groups, most of which are operated by volunteers, provide a substantial amount of recreational opportunities and assistance from the Town is often required to advertise their programs.

Action Plans:

- That the Town explore ways to increase public awareness of its trails, pathways, and programs.
- That the Town, over time or as the program guide evolves, include contact information for community-based recreation organizations in its program guide.

4.2.9 Financial Assistance for Community Groups

Although the fiscal priorities within municipal capital and operating budgets change from year to year, some trends are evident. Nationwide, municipalities are showing greater fiscal restraint and are placing greater emphasis on creative arrangements that shift direct financial costs from the municipality to other sectors or users (e.g., alternative service delivery, partnerships,

sponsorships, user fees, etc.).

The Town of Amherst has taken a similar approach with many of its recreation services and facilities, such as arrangements affecting the Amherst Pepsi Center and North Amherst Recreation Center and the partnership with the Sweet Home School District for the development of a park. At the same time that the Town was implementing such initiatives, it was also significantly reducing its direct financial assistance to not-for-profit community recreation groups. For example, in the past baseball groups received money for each child that was registered; this money would go towards uniforms, travel expenses, facility upgrades, etc. The Town has since eliminated this practice. Similar approaches have been taken with regard to the maintenance and improvement of facilities and playing fields. **Without this direct subsidy, many community groups have indicated that they are unable to afford necessary improvements to their facilities, that their registration fees are greatly increasing, and that their heightened reliance on volunteers is leading to volunteer burnout.** This is not to say that the Town does not provide assistance (financial or otherwise) to organizations, rather that the amount of funding has declined in recent years. There is, however, a strong need to reinvest in recreation and to renew the Town's commitment to this basic and essential service.

Part of the problem is that there is no formal process by which groups can request financial assistance from the Town or facility improvements. With so many groups vying for scarce municipal dollars, there does not appear to be any criteria to guide the Town in deciding which groups should receive the assistance. A lack of a formal and understandable decision-making framework creates tension between organizations and the Town (e.g., "why did that group receive assistance but we didn't?") and frustrates groups and their volunteers. The Town should adopt a decision-making framework and associated criteria to assess the merit of requests in consultation with local groups.

Action Plans:

- That the Town establish a decision-making framework for assessing requests for financial assistance and facility improvements in consultation with community organizations. Criteria may include, but shall not be limited, to the following:
 - the availability of funds;
 - consistency with the Master Plan;
 - the number of people that would benefit from the assistance;
 - demonstrated current and long-term need;
 - level of community support;
 - level/type of contribution by requesting body;
 - priority should be given to activities that serve children, youth, seniors and individuals at-risk; etc.

4.2.10 The Structure of the Recreation Commission

The Recreation Commission (established in 1960) oversees the Town's involvement in recreation and is the link between the Recreation Department and the Town Board. The Commission's purpose, as stated in its mission statement is:

To maintain a strong liaison with the Amherst Town Board, Town Recreation Department, activity volunteers and the varied recreation and sport constituencies conducting programming and competition on Town property through sharing communication, trust and strategies which serve and promote the advancement of recreational participation for all age levels in Amherst.

Although few question the importance of having such a Commission, some recreation organizations have indicated that the Recreation Commission's structure limits its ability to be effective and community-responsive. There is a perception by some groups that the Commission is unable to relate to recreation in the Town. Many believe that the Commission members are not actively involved in recreation anymore and, as such, cannot relate to current circumstances. Commission members disagree with such assertions. Furthermore, some groups asserted that the Commission does not always act in the best interest of "politically unconnected" groups. The Recreation Commission, however, has indicated that political platforms do not play a role in their discussions or decision-making process.

It is essential that residents and groups have faith in the Commission members and, from the discussions with local groups, it would appear that a great deal of work in this area needs to be done. Regardless of what is perception or fact, there is a need for better communication between the Commission and community groups in order to improve this relationship. There is merit in the Town undertaking an examination of the composition of the Recreation Commission, including the length of terms that its members serve (terms are currently seven years).

Action Plans:

- That the Town investigate ways to improve the effectiveness, responsiveness, and representation of the Recreation Commission.

4.2.11 Mandate, Vision Statement & Objectives

A commitment by the Town regarding the importance of recreation to the social, cultural, economic, and physical wellbeing of the community is required in order for the Town to implement the action plans in this Plan. **The absence of a Town-adopted mandate or mission statement such as this has resulted in lack of direction for recreation in Amherst.** For example, it is unclear as to whether or not youth needs should take priority over adult needs or if tournaments/meets should be priorities (even at the expense of meeting community needs). The Town's provision of recreational opportunities through the development and maintenance of facilities and parks and the offering of programs is a vital part of the Town's services and this needs to be reflected in both the Town's philosophical and financial commitment to recreation.

Action Plans:

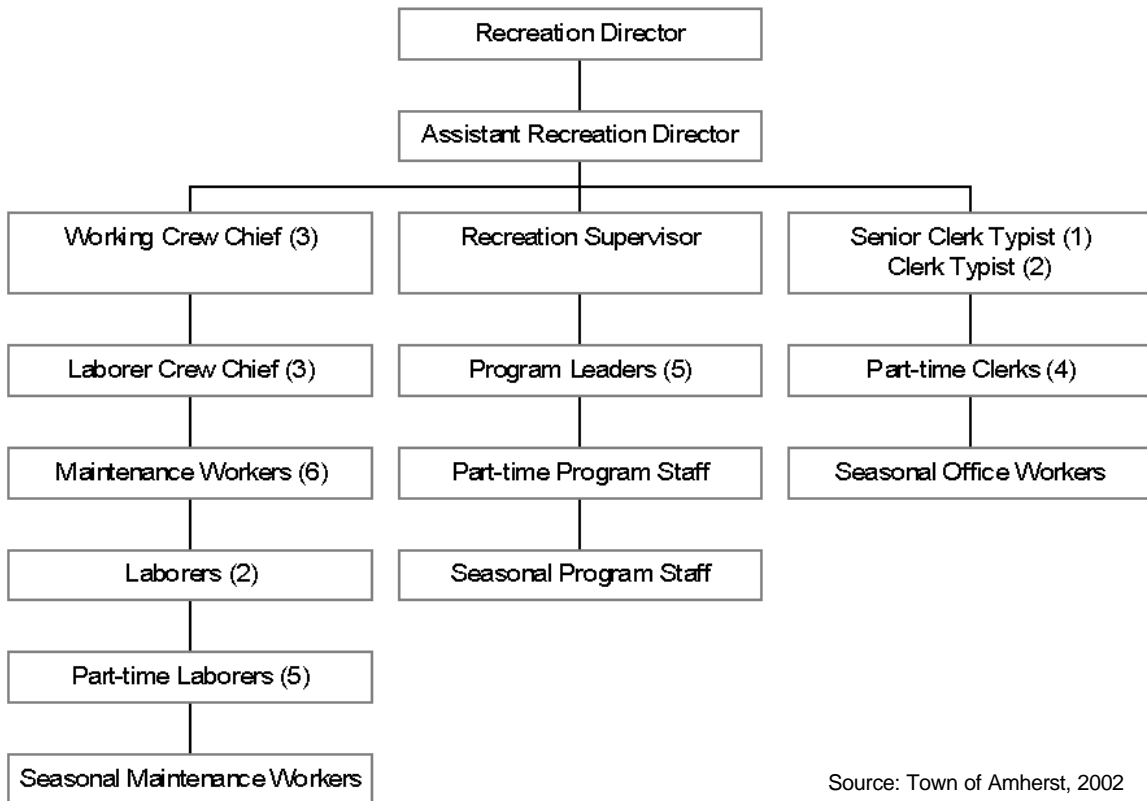
- That the Recreation Department develop and formally adopt a mandate, vision statement, and/or guiding principles pertaining to recreation and parks services that recognizes the importance of these services to improving the social, cultural, economic, and physical wellbeing of the community. Issues such as core services and target markets should be addressed to guide the decisions of administrators and politicians when making decisions between competing courses of action.

4.3 STAFFING

Over the past few years, as more parkland and facilities have been added to the Town’s overall supply, increased pressure has been placed on staff resources within the Recreation and Highway/Parks Departments. This, in turn, has affected the quality of maintenance of several parks and facilities and has also impacted upon the accessibility of recreation staff to address the immediate needs of many community groups.

Figure 4-2 illustrates the staff complement and reporting relationships within the Town of Amherst Recreation Department. The Recreation Department reports directly to both the Recreation Commission and Town Board.

Figure 4-2
Town of Amherst Recreation Department
Organizational Chart



Source: Town of Amherst, 2002

Recreation Department staff are the front-line for most community groups and residents interested in recreation. Due to a variety of other pressures, however, staff are generally more reactive than proactive.

Residents and groups have raised a number of significant issues that can be partially addressed through the addition of more staff. In particular, there is a need for more staff (or expanded job descriptions) to undertaken community development initiatives and address the following items:

- to offer additional programs to people with disabilities;
- to properly respond to community needs and priorities;
- to assist organizations in grant writing;

- to undertake long-term facility and strategic planning;
- to develop and implement allocation and funding policies and processes;
- to establish appropriate rental and/or subsidy rates for facilities and fields;
- to liaise with – and establish collaborative initiatives with – groups, school districts, and community associations;
- to improve maintenance practices at Town-owned parks and facilities; etc.

Although a full-scale administrative review is beyond the scope of this Plan, it would appear that **the Recreation Department is grossly understaffed to properly address all of the aforementioned duties.** It is suggested that the Town review the job descriptions of senior Recreation Department staff and make more detailed recommendations about the need for, and viability of, adding more staff to take on the expanded duties recommended in this Plan. A comprehensive review of park and facility maintenance schedules and responsibilities should also be undertaken at that time.

Action Plans:

- Review the job descriptions of senior Recreation Department staff in the short term in an effort to identify the need for, and viability of, adding more staff to take on the expanded duties recommended in this Plan. A comprehensive review of park and facility maintenance schedules and responsibilities should also be undertaken at that time.

4.4 ANALYSIS OF PROGRAMMING OPPORTUNITIES

As previously indicated, programming of recreational activities is administered and run by a variety of community groups, the Town, the School Districts, and private and not-for-profit providers. The Town of Amherst runs a fairly extensive range of active recreation programs in the areas of tennis, swimming, day camps, etc. The following is an assessment of the general programming opportunities available in the Town and is not intended to be a detailed inventory.

4.4.1 Public Demand

The household survey produced the following data with regard to recreational programming:

- 9% of respondents feel that their household was unable to participate in recreational activities as often as they would like because the desired program was not available and 8% indicated that the programs were not offered at convenient times;
- 22% of respondents indicated that they are not satisfied with the programs offered by the Town of Amherst Recreation Department (69% are satisfied, while 9% did not respond);
- program suggestions were diverse, however, there was a sense that additional programs were required;
- for the most part, the public feels that the recreational opportunities in Amherst are quite good, with programs for children receiving the highest marks and programs for adults and people with disabilities receiving a lower level of satisfaction; and
- there are mixed opinions regarding whether or not children's programs should have priority over adult programs (priority for children's programs received slightly more support).

Based on the household survey and the interviews with community groups and community leaders, there does not appear to be a high demand for expanded or new recreational programming. Given the wide range of programs offered through Community Education and other not-for-profit providers, ongoing efforts must be made to ensure that duplication of programming is avoided and that gaps are identified.

Action Plans:

- In cooperation with the School Districts, ensure that duplication of programming between the Town and Community Education is avoided and that gaps are identified.

4.4.2 Programming Opportunities and Improvements

In the discussion that follows, the deficiencies of existing programs for specific age groups are highlighted and recommended improvements are suggested.

Preschool Aged Children (Ages 0-4)

Programming for preschool children is offered through the Amherst Youth Board (Family Room), the YMCA, the Jewish Community Center, the Town's Recreation Department, Community Education, as well as a number of church, nursery school, and daycare institutions. Specifically, the Recreation Department offers a daily "Pre-K Drop-off Program" (includes activities such as athletics, arts and crafts, music and dance, and storytime), "Toddler Tune-up" (includes games, songs, and athletic activities), "Toddler Open Gym", summer playground program, as well as swimming programs, including "Water Babies", "3 year old Splash Time", and swimming lessons. Public skating times are also available for preschool aged children and their parents/families. Additional programs, focused more on social and educational development, are available through the public libraries.

The organized program opportunities for preschool aged children are wide-ranging and include activities for physical development, coordination skills, self-esteem and peer socialization in recreational settings. Most of the programs are offered at Town-owned recreation centers, the YMCA, and the Jewish Community Center (which is open to all community residents). There is some duplication with the courses offered through Community Education, especially with regard to swimming lessons.

The household survey found that the recreational opportunities available to preschool children are good to excellent (33%). Only 8% feel that the opportunities are fair or poor (59% did not offer an opinion or did not respond).

Typically, the recreational activities that preschoolers participate in most often are running and kicking, swimming and bicycling. Accessible and safe playground equipment and open space opportunities for unstructured play are also significant requirements for preschoolers. The household survey results indicate that there is a moderate to high need for more playground equipment. Furthermore, additional opportunities for swimming programs during the daytime may be warranted, as well as socialization and learning courses during the evenings. From a recreational standpoint, since most of the activities for preschool children are unstructured, their needs tend to be more reliant upon spaces/facilities instead of programs/services (see Sections 5, 6, and 7 for action plans relating to parks and facilities).

Programming for preschool children typically has a strong locational preference as people prefer to stay in their local areas. As a result, it is important that programs be available at centers throughout Amherst. As the population continues to grow in the north and east of the Town, more pressure will be felt to operate preschool programs in these areas.

Action Plans:

- Continue to monitor registration levels in preschool programs offered by the Recreation Department and the Amherst Youth Board (Family Room) and adjust the supply accordingly, particularly in the north and east.
- Consider offering additional evening and weekend programming opportunities for preschool children.

Children (Ages 5-12)

There are several different organizations involved in the provision of programs for children in the community, including the Town's Recreation Department, the Amherst Youth Board, YMCA, Jewish Community Center, School Districts/Community Education, and community groups. Programs for children offered directly by the Recreation Department include floor hockey, inline hockey, badminton, after-school gym activities, swimming lessons, tennis, summer playground activities and day camps, golf lessons, an open basketball shoot, and a variety of summer sports clinics. There is some duplication with the courses offered through Community Education.

The variety of program opportunities for school aged children are very well developed. A good range of traditional team sports are offered (e.g., soccer, hardball, hockey, etc.), as well as many other emerging activities (e.g., inline hockey, girls hockey, etc.). Furthermore, the activities appear to be as abundant in the wintertime as they are in the summertime.

One potential gap for children's programming is team basketball and open gym time. Currently, a basketball program is offered by a community organization for children and youth in Grade 4 and over, however, the capacity of the program is limited due to a lack of facilities. Community Education also offers a series of basketball clinics, however, team play opportunities are limited. Additional gymnasiums and/or a re-prioritization of gym time allocations will be necessary to ensure that indoor basketball opportunities continue to be offered to local children.

The household survey results indicate that programming opportunities for this age group are very good, with 44% indicating that they are good to excellent and only 8% suggesting that they are fair to poor (48% did not offer an opinion or did not respond).

The top activities enjoyed by children ages 5 to 12 include biking, swimming, ice and inline skating, walking, running/jogging, baseball, soccer, basketball, and gymnastics. Like preschool children, many of these activities are unstructured and do not require any direct programming. Community Education, local organizations and private enterprise offer the more organized sports and activities although, as mentioned earlier, basketball programming is limited.

Although the needs of children generally are being met, it will be important to continue monitoring registration levels and locations and adjust program offerings accordingly. Participation in the summer playground program may also require that it be offered at new locations within the Town and to ensure that the proper facilities are supplied in those areas.

The Town's Recreation Department must continue to offer programs that are at an introductory level in order to provide programs to those that need them most. Furthermore, local community groups that are heavily dependent upon volunteers supply a great amount of child and youth programming.

Action Plans:

- Greater effort should be made to accommodate the needs of the community-based child and youth basketball program and to offer more open gym time.

Youth (Ages 13-19)

The program opportunities for youth are very similar to those available to younger children. Like children in the 5 to 12 age bracket, a review of the programming opportunities for youth reveals a number of team-oriented sports, as well as a good balance of seasonal activities and competitive/non-competitive programs. Primary programs include soccer, baseball, basketball, hockey, figure skating, lacrosse, and junior football, most of which are provided by community organizations. The Recreation Department offers a more limited range of recreational opportunities for youth compared to younger children. Direct youth programming includes badminton, swimming instruction, open basketball shoot, inline hockey, golf and tennis. A number of advocacy, intervention, prevention and development programs are also offered by the Amherst Youth Board. Schools are also a major provider of recreational activities and community education courses for youth.

Typically, youth are identified as the group least well served by a community's recreation programs, in part, because of the difficulty in developing programs that are attractive to teenagers and young adults. The household survey, however, indicates that recreational opportunities for youth are generally considered to be adequate; 33% feel that the opportunities are good to excellent, while only 13% feel that they are fair to poor (54% did not respond or offer an opinion). The Town should make a continuous effort to identify the leisure programming needs of local youth by encouraging suggestions from youth.

The most popular recreational activities for youth include biking, swimming, ice and inline skating, basketball, walking, running/jogging, social dance, baseball, and volleyball. Most of these pursuits are accommodated in the parks, facilities and services within the Town with the exception of youth volleyball, which the Town may want to consider offering should demand warrant. Like programming for children, there is also a need to expand the youth basketball league that is currently operating at Clearfield Community Center and a number of area schools. Further assistance is required from the Town in order to meet the demand for organized basketball programming, as well as open gym time.

Activities that were once considered to be non-traditional, such as lacrosse, inline skating and skateboarding, are emerging as popular activities among youth and have proven that they are here to stay. In response to the demand, the Town and community have provided opportunities for inline hockey and lacrosse, while a paved trail network accommodates inline skating. The Town, however, does not offer any skateboard/rollerblade parks or facilities for youth. Facility needs are addressed later in this Plan.

Action Plans:

- Greater effort should be made to accommodate the needs of the community-based child and youth basketball program and to offer more open gym time.
- The Town should make a continuous effort to identify the leisure programming needs of local youth by encouraging suggestions from youth.

Adults (Ages 20-64)

Adults residing in Amherst appear to have a good variety and supply of recreational opportunities available to them. The YMCA, Jewish Community Center, Community Education, and private enterprise provide most of the fitness and aerobics opportunities for adults. In addition to Community Education courses and community-based baseball/softball, hockey and figure skating programs, the Recreation Department offers adult basketball, tennis, swimming, co-ed volleyball, and badminton programs. It is understood that male participants largely dominate the Town's adult basketball program. Consideration should be given to establishing a women's basketball league/program.

Many of the active and team-oriented activities are desired by younger adults, less strenuous programming (e.g., walking, golf, arts and crafts, and social events) are typically preferred by older adults. It is recognized that older adults today are more physically active and interested in alternative recreational pursuits than those traditionally offered. Given that the population of older adults (ages 55 to 64) in the community is expected to increase rapidly over the next ten years, it is imperative that the leisure needs of this demographic be addressed.

Recently, there has been a trend for adults to participate in unstructured activities such as walking, bicycling, golf and fitness – each of these activities rated high in the household survey. Although many of these activities are low cost, adults (and especially older adults) tend to have the highest levels of disposable income and are able to pay the full cost for many of the programs in which they participate. It is largely for this reason that private enterprise is able to accommodate a large portion of the needs of this age group and that municipal programming tends to focus on segments of the market that require subsidization of program fees.

Through the random household survey, the public indicated that the recreational opportunities for adults are generally not as well developed as those for children and youth; 43% feel that the opportunities are good to excellent, while 19% feel that they are fair to poor (38% did not respond or offer an opinion). Although this is still a high rate of approval, there is a sense that if any area needs improvement it is adult programming.

As indicated, the private sector, YMCA, Community Education, and Jewish Community Center provide all of the fitness, aerobics and weight-training programs to the community. YMCA programs tend to be more affordable than those offered by private enterprise, however, the YMCA is located in southeast Amherst and its location limits participation by those living in north and east Amherst. Presumably, this gap is filled largely by Community Education courses. The Town may, however, wish to consider offering introductory fitness and aerobics programs in order to serve the segment of the adult population that desires an active lifestyle, but is not able to afford or travel to existing providers.

Action Plans:

- The Town should maintain and enhance the existing cultural and passive recreational programming opportunities and events in the community.
- The Town should consider offering introductory level fitness and aerobics programs for adults.
- The Town should consider offering a women’s basketball league/program.

Seniors (Ages 65+)

The Town of Amherst, through the newly constructed Amherst Center for Senior Services, is the largest provider of facilities, programs and services for older adults and seniors in the community (ages 55 and over). The Center offers a variety of programs in the areas of fitness, wellness, music, arts and crafts, cards, socialization, community outings, cooking, education, special interests, health clinics, and additional support services. Other active recreational programs include golf, bicycling, bowling, horseshoes, ice skating, nature walks, swimming, and tennis. Programs at the Center are offered from 7:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The Center also has a number of rooms within the facility that can be used for unstructured activities, however, aside from its location adjacent to Walton Woods Park, the Center offers few opportunities for outdoor recreation. This would be an ideal location for bocce courts, which appeal to certain ethnic segments of the seniors’ population.

Apart from the Center for Senior Services, the Recreation Department offers swimming, tennis and badminton programs to adults and seniors in the community. The Jewish Community Center and Community Education are also major program providers for this age group.

Seniors’ programming received a high rating with respect to the degree of satisfaction with recreation opportunities with 31% indicating that opportunities are good to excellent. Only 12% feel that they are fair to poor (57% did not offer an opinion or respond).

At the present time, the variety and supply of programming for older adults and seniors appears to be adequate. Amherst’s seniors’ population, however, is expected to grow rapidly over the next decade and will place additional pressures on seniors’ programming and facilities, including the need for additional outreach services. Given the trend toward early retirement, it is likely that older adults and seniors will require programming that coincide with more active lifestyles.

Action Plans:

- The Recreation Department, in cooperation with the Senior Services Department, should carefully monitor the need for expanded and new programming to address the needs of two generations of seniors.
- When the Amherst Center for Senior Services and its programming near their respective capacities, a comprehensive review of the need for additional or expanded outreach services should be undertaken.

People with Disabilities

The Recreation Department offers a number of programs for citizens of all ages with mental and/or physical disabilities, including swimming, Special Olympics training, open gym, socialization, crafts, cooking, music and games. In addition, the Senior Services Department offers adult day services for people with disabilities over the age of 18, including life skills, exercise programs, live entertainment, crafts, games and field trips. The Amherst Youth Board also offers the Centerstream program for children ages 5 to 12 with special needs.

Despite the range of programs available to this group, household survey respondents generally feel that recreational opportunities for people with disabilities are the poorest, with 12% indicating that the opportunities are good to excellent and 12% indicating that they are fair to poor (76% did not respond or offer an opinion). Few suggestions, however, were received for how the system could be improved.

Given the number of programs available to people with disabilities, it would appear that the supply of recreational opportunities for this segment of the population is adequate. Continuing effort must, however, be placed on ensuring that facilities, parks and playground are fully accessible by people with disabilities.

Action Plans:

- Continue to adapt local recreation facilities, parks and playgrounds for access and programming for people with disabilities.
- Monitor and respond to the needs of people with disabilities through regular consultation with local organizations and individuals.

SECTION 5: FACILITY INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

This section includes an inventory of recreation facilities and schools and provides an assessment of the adequacy of the existing facilities. All parkland and associated outdoor facilities are addressed in Section 6 (Parks Inventory and Analysis).

5.1 RECREATION FACILITY INVENTORY & ANALYSIS

Table 5-1 shows a summary of key Town-owned recreation facilities in Amherst (see also Map 5-1). Private recreation facilities have not been identified.

TABLE 5-1: Recreation Facilities in the Town of Amherst

NAME	PAA	ACREAGE
Amherst Pepsi Center (Amherst Recreation Complex)	3	11.50
Clearfield Community Center	4	19.50
Harlem Road Community Center	5	4.60
North Amherst Recreation Center	2	93.00
Amherst Center for Senior Services	3	--

Source: Town of Amherst Planning Department, 2001

The following provides a brief synopsis of each Town owned and/or operated recreation facility, including an inventory of features and suggested improvements.

5.1.1 Amherst Pepsi Center (Amherst Recreation Complex)

The Amherst Pepsi Center and its accompanying outdoor recreation facilities, known as the Amherst Recreation Complex, are situated on 11.5 acres of land on Amherst Manor Drive, adjacent to the State University of New York at Buffalo (North Campus). Since the 1992 Master Plan, the Center has undergone a major transformation from a single pad arena to a four-pad arena complex. The facility contains:

- 3 regulation size ice pads;
- 1 Olympic size ice pad;
- 4 meeting rooms (2 are “sky boxes” that overlook main ice pad);
- fitness facility;
- Town of Amherst Recreation Department offices;
- Sport Service office;
- restaurant;
- food court;
- arcade;
- retail goalie & skate shops;
- other ancillary uses including dressing rooms, skate rental room, lockers, etc.;
- Amherst Youth Board - Youth and Family Center;
- paved parking lot; and
- outdoor recreational uses (addressed in the Parks Inventory Section).

The Amherst Pepsi Center is a state-of-the-art arena complex and is in excellent condition. The diversity of ice pad sizes, seating capacities, and surfaces (i.e., ice and sport court) allow for a

wide range of year-round activities and programming for all users. Furthermore, the intensified (e.g., four ice pads) and multi-purpose nature of the site attract a very high number of users to the facility. The Town has been able to capitalize on these opportunities by providing space for retail uses which, in turn, creates an additional source of revenue for the Town. No changes to the Amherst Pepsi Center are recommended at this time.

5.1.2 Clearfield Community Center

The Clearfield Community Center is located on 19.5 acres of land on Plaza Drive near Hopkins Road. The facility contains:

- single gymnasium;
- double gymnasium (not divisible);
- 2 change rooms for outdoor pool;
- restrooms;
- staff office area;
- Youth Center with multi-purpose room;
- maintenance garage;
- paved parking lot; and
- outdoor recreational uses, including a lane pool and splash park (addressed in the Parks Inventory Section).

The Clearfield Community Center has also been redeveloped in the past decade, with an indoor ice rink being transformed into 2 gymnasiums (one single and one double). The gymnasiums are in good shape and their multi-purpose nature allows for a number of groups to use them. Greater efficiencies could be realized if the double gymnasium could be separated by a retractable wall or netting. The Youth Board has identified the need to consolidate its Clearfield and Williamsville services at one facility. This would require the renovation of 3,500 square feet of space at the Clearfield Community Center, however, funding has yet to be allocated to this Project.

Action Plans:

- Install a retractable wall or netting in the large gymnasium in the short term to allow the court to be divided in two.

5.1.3 North Amherst Recreation Center

The North Amherst Recreation Center is located on New Road at the corner of Millersport Highway. To the south of the Center is Jurek Post Park. The 93-acre site was the former location of the North Amherst Aviation Museum until it was cancelled in mid-construction in the early 1990's. In 1994, the Center began to be used as an indoor arena for soccer, lacrosse and volleyball. In 1998, the Town of Amherst formed an agreement with the Buffalo Destroyers (Arena Football League) to allow the team to use the Center as a practice facility. This agreement, which is up for renewal in late 2003, required the Destroyers to pay for significant capital improvements to the facility in lieu of rent for the first four years of the arrangement.

The Center currently contains:

- 1 indoor soccer/football field;
- change rooms;
- training room and offices for the Buffalo Destroyers;
- paved parking lot; and
- outdoor recreation uses (addressed in the Parks Inventory Section).

Overall, the facility is in good condition. The soccer/football facility is ideal for practices, however, it does not have any space for spectator seating which limits its ability to be used for competitive games and events. The facility is well used, especially during the wintertime, and the soccer organization has requested additional time to expand its winter programs. One of the facility's major tenants, the Buffalo Destroyers, will be moving its season up and will now begin in January (starting in 2003) instead of April, which had been the norm during past seasons. Since community usage of the North Amherst Recreation Center is greatest during the winter months, the additional winter hours required by the Destroyers may require creative scheduling to ensure that community usage is not severely impacted. Since most of the Destroyers usage will be during the daytime on weekdays, this scheduling change is not expected to have a significant impact on the overall availability of the facility for community groups.

The Center is located in the northeast area of the Town in an area which is, and will continue to be, experiencing growth. The Center's location and ample room for expansion make this an ideal site to accommodate future indoor and outdoor recreation facilities.

The 1992 Master Plan had recommended that this facility, which was undeveloped at the time, should contain a community center, multi-purpose gymnasium/fitness facility, an ice pad capable of being twinned, and outdoor facilities. With the development of the Amherst Pepsi Center and the subsequent redevelopment of the Clearfield Community Center, the need for an additional ice surface, gymnasium and fitness facility at the North Amherst Recreation Center was reduced and/or eliminated.

Action Plans:

- Explore the possibility of installing a scoreboard and bleachers within the Center.
- Consideration should be given to expanding the North Amherst Recreation Center should the need for additional indoor and/or outdoor facilities be required in this area.

5.1.4 Harlem Road Community Center

The Harlem Road Community Center is located on Harlem Road, south of Main Street, within a residential neighborhood. The 4.6-acre parcel of land contains a three-level Community Center, as well as an outdoor playground area. The facility contains:

- the Amherst Youth Board administrative offices, Youth Center, Conference Room, Activity Room, Family Room and a small single gymnasium;
- offices for the Erie County Council for the Prevention of Alcohol and Substance Abuse;
- offices for the Federal Headstart (preschool) Program;
- 4 community meeting rooms;
- 1 boardroom;

- 1 cooking/meeting room;
- 1 dance room;
- internal courtyard; and
- outdoor recreational uses (addressed in the Parks Inventory Section).

The Center was established in 1990 as an adaptive re-use of an old school building. The facility is different from the other community centers within the Town as the Youth Board and not the Recreation Department operates it. As a result, most community groups are not charged a fee to use the facility. Private groups, however, must pay a fee. The Center is very much a community-based type of facility that caters to the needs of the surrounding neighborhoods.

Given the age of the building, the Center is in reasonable condition and is also fully accessible to people with disabilities. The floor-plan also allows for some flexibility among uses, as is witnessed by the number of organizations currently based within the Center, however, there is no real opportunity to expand the type of uses that are currently using the Center (e.g., office space, meeting/community rooms, theater).

Despite the relative good condition of the facility, there are some deficiencies, including an under-sized gymnasium, lack of air conditioning, and a poorly maintained central courtyard (which only has one entrance). While there is little opportunity to expand the height of the ceiling in the gymnasium, the addition of a proper heating and cooling system would likely increase usage and comfort within the entire facility.

Action Plans:

- Give consideration to installing a proper heating and cooling system in the short term.

5.1.5 Amherst Center for Senior Services

The Amherst Center for Senior Services was opened in 2000 and is located on the John James Audubon Parkway, adjacent to the Town's Central Library and Police/Court Building and Walton Woods. The Center serves more than 9,000 people ages 55 and over. The 59,000ft² facility contains:

- Meals on Wheels;
- Seniors Outreach Services;
- activity, craft, arts, billiard, dancing, music, card, lounge, dining, and health resource rooms;
- outdoor patio; and
- 4 classrooms.

Prior to the facility's construction, Senior Services operated facilities at the Harlem Road Community Center and on North Union Road adjacent to North Forest Park. The amalgamation of these two facilities has resulted in a more central location with shuttle service available for those without transportation. The Center is in excellent condition, appears to be very well used by the Town's seniors' population, and is expected to accommodate the facility needs of the Senior Services Department for the foreseeable future. Access to Walton Woods is available within a short distance of the Center and there is ample parking. The Center does not have any associated outdoor recreation facilities, however, this would be an ideal location for the installation of bocce courts, if the required space were available.

Action Plans:

- Develop bocce courts in the short to medium term.
- Provide a direct link to the Walton Woods Park trail system in the short term.

5.2 SCHOOLS

Table 5-2 contains a summary of public, parochial, and private schools and major post-secondary institutions within the Town of Amherst (see Map 5-2). Continuing education institutions have not been identified.

TABLE 5-2: Public, Parochial, & Private Schools and Major Post-Secondary Institutions

#	NAME	SCHOOL DISTRICT	TYPE	PAA
1	Amherst Central Senior High School	Amherst Central	Public	5
2	Amherst Christian Academy	Williamsville Central	Private	2
3	Amherst Middle School	Amherst Central	Public	5
4	Buffalo Academy of the Sacred Heart	Amherst Central	Private	5
5	Cantalician Center for Learning North	Amherst Central	Private	5
6	Casey Middle School	Williamsville Central	Public	4
7	Christ the King Elementary	Amherst Central	Private	5
8	Christian Central Academy	N/A	Private	6
9	Country Parkway Elementary	Williamsville Central	Public	6
10	Dodge Road Elementary	Williamsville Central	Public	2
11	Forest Elementary	Williamsville Central	Public	5
12	Gateway-Longview Lynde School	Williamsville Central	Private	6
13	Heim Elementary	Williamsville Central	Public	4
14	Heim Middle School	Williamsville Central	Public	4
15	Heritage Heights Elementary	Sweet Home	Public	1
16	Kadimah School of Buffalo	Sweet Home	Private	5
17	Maple East Elementary	Williamsville Central	Public	4
18	Maple West Elementary	Williamsville Central	Public	6
19	Maplemere Elementary	Sweet Home	Public	3
20	Martin Luther Christian School	Amherst Central	Private	5
21	Mill Middle School	Williamsville Central	Public	6
22	Park School of Buffalo	Amherst Central	Private	5
23	Smallwood Drive Elementary	Amherst Central	Public	5
24	St. Benedict Elementary	Amherst Central	Private	5
25	St. Gregory the Great Elementary	Williamsville Central	Private	4
26	St. Leo the Great Elementary	Sweet Home	Private	5
27	SS. Peter & Paul Elementary	N/A	Private	6
28	Sweet Home Middle School	Sweet Home	Public	5
29	Sweet Home Senior High School	Sweet Home	Public	3
30	Temple Beth Zion	N/A	Private	5
31	Transit Middle School	Williamsville Central	Public	4
32	Williamsville East Senior High School	Williamsville Central	Public	4
33	Williamsville North Senior High School	Williamsville Central	Public	4
34	Williamsville South Senior High School	Williamsville Central	Public	6

TABLE 5-2: Public, Parochial, & Private Schools and Major Post-Secondary Institutions (continued)

#	NAME	SCHOOL DISTRICT	TYPE	PAA
35	Willow Ridge Elementary	Sweet Home	Public	3
36	Windermere Blvd. Elementary	Amherst Central	Public	5
37	Daemen College	Amherst Central	Post-secondary	5
38	Erie Community College, North Campus	Williamsville Central	Post-secondary	6
39	State University of New York at Buffalo, North Campus	N/A	Post-secondary	3

Source: Town of Amherst Planning Department, 2001

In July 2001, the Consultant visited the majority of the schools listed in Table 5-2 in an effort to identify the recreational resources that exist within the community. The fieldwork catalogued outdoor facilities/features, while indoor facilities (e.g., gymnasiums, swimming pools, etc.) were identified through telephone conversations with the various School Districts and/or Schools. Table 5-3 contains an estimate of the number of facilities located on school properties within each Planning Analysis Area (facilities at post secondary and non-School District schools have not been included). It should be noted that the actual number of facilities is likely underestimated as the Consultant was not able to obtain information on certain schools. Furthermore, Table 5-3 should not be construed to imply that all school recreation facilities are available for public use. In most cases, agreements and/or permits are required for the use of facilities and certain restrictions may apply. For example, the School Districts, Colleges and University regulate community usage of their facilities and may restrict usage according to time of day, week or year. Priority for school facilities is generally given to school functions over community usage. Fees may or may not be charged by the schools.

TABLE 5-3: Recreation Facilities at Public & Parochial Schools

Facility/Feature	PAA 1	PAA 2	PAA 3	PAA 4	PAA 5	PAA 6	Total
Creative Playground Locations	1	2	2	3	6	3	17
Traditional Playground Locations	1	1	2	2	2	2	10
Baseball/Softball Diamonds			3	3	7	1	14
Practice Ball Diamonds	2	2	3	10	8	5	30
Full Soccer Fields		1	3	8	7	2	21
Mini Soccer Fields					2	1	3
Full Basketball Court			1		6	2	9
Half Basketball Court					1		1
Single Basketball Hoops	4		2	3	1	1	12
Unlighted Tennis Courts	4		8	10	24	5	51
Football Fields		1	1	3	1	1	7
Running Tracks	1		1	2	2	1	7
Indoor Swimming Pools			1	5	4	2	12
Gymnasiums	not surveyed						

Note: all numbers are approximate; all facilities may not be publicly accessible

Source: Monteith Planning Consultants, 2001

The facilities at non-School District and post-secondary institutions are not included in the above table due to concerns regarding accessibility.

Erie Community College North and the State University of New York at Buffalo (North Campus) contain a number of recreation facilities that are significant resources within the Town, including

indoor swimming and diving pools, gymnasiums, fitness centers, baseball facilities, football stadiums, tennis courts, soccer fields and other specialized facilities. It is important to note, however, that some agreements exist with these institutions for community use of their facilities (e.g., soccer at Erie Community College North).

The three campuses of the Erie Community College system are undergoing an institutional assessment, which may ultimately recommend closing the ECC North Campus. Should this occur, there might be a loss of recreation facilities, many of which are available for community use. Pending the outcome of the institutional assessment, the Town should discuss the opportunity of acquiring and/or operating the ECC North Campus indoor and outdoor recreational facilities (e.g., gymnasiums, indoor pool, playing fields, etc.) for community use. If this were to occur, many of the facility-oriented action plans of this Plan would require re-evaluation.

Overall, the schools in Amherst provide a considerable amount of recreation facilities and opportunities to the community. At present, their most important contributions to non-school sponsored recreation activities (i.e., not including intramural/varsity sports or community education) are as a provider of neighborhood playground space for unstructured/spontaneous activities and as a provider of soccer fields, tennis courts, playgrounds, ball diamonds, indoor pools, etc. for organized programs.

The Amherst community relies quite heavily upon school swimming pools and soccer fields. This arrangement is expected to continue into the foreseeable future, however, regular communication between the School Districts, Colleges, University, and the Town should be maintained in order to ensure that this arrangement continues to be one that benefits both the school population and the community at large. An effort should be made by both parties to ensure that the cost of facility rentals (which is largely a factor of custodian fees and liability concerns) remains at a level that is affordable to the not-for-profit leisure organizations within Amherst.

The Amherst Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan notes that projected population increases are likely to result in the demand for expanded or new school facilities, particularly in the Williamsville School District. There may, therefore, be opportunities for the joint development of school and community facilities by the local School Districts and the Town of Amherst, where appropriate and feasible.

Action Plans:

- The Town shall establish and/or maintain regular contact with the local School Districts, Colleges and University to ensure that community access to school facilities remains both available and affordable and to discuss potential partnership opportunities in relation to future capital projects.
- Pending the outcome of the Erie Community College institutional assessment, the Town should discuss the opportunity of acquiring and/or operating the ECC North Campus indoor and outdoor recreational facilities for community use.

SECTION 6: PARKS INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

Public open space and parks contribute to the quality of life of Amherst residents as they provide the land base required for recreation activities and outdoor facilities. Parks and open space also contribute to the ecological health of the municipality by preserving and enhancing natural areas. Finally, parks and open space areas enhance the aesthetic quality of the community, thereby creating an attractive environment in which to live, work and play.

This section provides an analysis of the parks and open space system in the Amherst. More specifically, this section contains an inventory of the municipally owned parks and open space system (including outdoor recreation facilities and amenities), an evaluation of the linked open space network, and action plans pertaining to the Town's parks and open space system.

6.1 PARKS AND OPEN SPACE INVENTORY

There is a total of approximately 2,836 acres of Town-owned parkland and open space in the Town of Amherst.

Tables 6-1 and 6-2 identify the inventory of developed and undeveloped municipal and quasi-public parks and open spaces within the Town of Amherst. The location of the parks are illustrated on Map 6-1. "Developed" parks have been classified according to their function as either "active" ("A") or "passive" ("P"), which are defined as:

***"Active"** parks are those designed to serve the organized games needs of the municipality for both day and evening use. An active park would contain a combination of games areas or a single purpose games area in a landscaped setting. Activities could include baseball, soccer, tennis, picnic areas, playgrounds, and arena use.*

***"Passive"** parks are usually either creatively landscaped areas designed for aesthetic appeal (and possibly a specific municipal purpose, such as a War Memorial) or are natural areas with limited active uses, but may include playgrounds and picnic areas. They are primarily used for walking, viewing, sitting, bird watching, hiking, wildlife habitat, or any combination of the above. Biking may also be an intended activity in passive areas. They are primarily designed for daytime use.*

TABLE 6-1: Developed Parkland in the Town of Amherst

#	NAME	ACTIVE/ PASSIVE	PAA	ACREAGE	OWNERSHIP
1	Amherst Highway Department	A	6	2.00	Town
2	Amherst Museum Colony Park	P	2	35.00	Town
3	Amherst Veterans Canal Park (partially developed)	P	1	41.60	Town
4	Amherst Recreation Complex (Amherst Pepsi Center)*	A	3	11.50	Town
5	Bassett Park	P	4	35.22	Town
6	Briarhurst Park	A	6	7.40	Town
7	Campus Drive Recreation Area	A	5	2.20	Town
8	Central Amherst Baseball Complex	A	5	3.73	Town
9	Clearfield Community Center (Park)*	A	4	19.50	Town
10	Creekwood Park	A	1	10.20	Town
11	Dana Heights Recreation Area	A	6	0.62	Town

TABLE 6-1: Developed Parkland in the Town of Amherst (continued)

#	NAME	ACTIVE/ PASSIVE	PAA	ACREAGE	OWNERSHIP
12	Dellwood Park	A	5	4.73	Town
13	Garnet Park	A	5	11.30	Town
14	Garrison Park	A	6	2.30	Village of Williamsville
15	Getzville Fire Department	A	4	5.00	Getzville Fire Dept. (leased by Town)
16	Glen Park	P	6	10.15	Town & Village of Williamsville
17	Great Baehre Conservation	P	4	410.05	Town (139.83) NYSDEC (270.22)
18	Harlem Road Community Center Playground*	A	5	4.60	Town
19	Island Park	A	6	5.60	Village of Williamsville
20	Jurek Post (Legion Field)	A	2	11.48	Leased by Town from Jurek Post
21	Kingsgate Park	A	5	3.59	Town
22	LaClair-Kindel Wildlife Sanctuary	P	5	6.52	Niagara Mohawk Power Corp. (easement to Town)
23	Lou Gehrig Baseball Complex	A	2	18.13	Town
24	Margaret-Louise Park	P	4	47.83	Town
25	Mel Ott Baseball Complex	A	5	18.43	Sweet Home School (leased by Town)
26	North Amherst Fire Company	A	2	2.97	North Amherst Fire Company
27	North Amherst Recreation Center (Park)*	A	2	93.00	Town
28	North Forest Park	A	5	6.70	Town
29	North French Soccer Complex	A	2	27.94	Town
30	Oakwood Conservation Area	P	2	127.97	Town
31	Paradise Park (partially developed)	A	4	32.27	Town
32	Sattler Field	A	5	1.87	Town
33	South Long Street Recreation Area	A	6	5.40	Village of Williamsville
34	T.O.A. Conservation Area (North French Road)	P	2	45.97	Town
35	Walton Woods Park	P	3	50.03	Town
36	Wehrle FAA Recreation Area	A	6	12.60	Town
37	West Royal Parkway Recreation Area	A	5	9.40	Town
38	Willow Ridge Park	A	3	10.22	Town
TOTAL ACREAGE				1155.02	

* acreage includes both outdoor and indoor uses.

Source: Town of Amherst Planning Department, 2001

TABLE 6-2: Undeveloped Parkland in the Town of Amherst

	NAME	PAA	ACREAGE	OWNERSHIP
39	Alran Woods	4	1.40	Town
40	Amherst State Park	6	77.00	State (agreement with Town)
41	Amherst Veterans Canal Park	1	34.70	State
42	Canalway Trail Park	2	15.95	Town
43	Cindy Drive Play Area	3	1.55	Town
44	College Park	6	21.24	Town
45	Egbertsville Community Park	5	4.10	Town
46	Fetto Park	5	1.6	Town
47	Marinaccio Property	2	29.00	Town
48	Nature View Park	1	1263.76	Town
49	Park Forest Park	3	1.20	Town
50	Sable Woods	2	6.75	Town
51	Saratoga Park	5	16.19	Town (8.89) Amherst Central School District (7.30)
52	Sweet Home Park	1	20.00	Sweet Home School District
53	Windsor Woods	4	15.00	Town
54	Dann Lake Park	2	172	
TOTAL ACREAGE			1681.44	

Source: Town of Amherst Planning Department, 2001

The following provides a brief synopsis of each developed and undeveloped park, including an inventory of features and suggested improvements. Parks are listed in alphabetical order.

6.1.1 Alran Woods

Alran Woods is a 1.4 acre undeveloped wooded parcel with access to Alran Drive, just north of Margaret-Louise Park. The Town of Amherst owns the site. No changes to this park are recommended at this time.

6.1.2 Amherst Highway Department

Located adjacent to the Town of Amherst Highway Department on North Forest Road, the Amherst Highway Department park is 2 acres in size and contains:

- 1 unlighted hardball diamond;
- open space; and
- parking lot.

The ball diamond and park are in very good condition. Although the park is not fully utilized by facilities, the available open space is located near the road and would, therefore, not be conducive to the development of additional facilities for youth. It is recommended that the park's existing uses be maintained.

6.1.3 Amherst Museum Colony Park

The Amherst Museum Colony Park is located on lands that include the Amherst Museum, Oakwood Golf Course and Oakwood Conservation Area. The Park is 35 acres in size and is located at the corner of Tonawanda Creek Road and New Road. No changes to the park are recommended at this time.

6.1.4 Amherst State Park

Although owned by the State of New York, the Town of Amherst is responsible for the planning, development, operation and maintenance of the Amherst State Park. The park, which is approximately 77 acres in size and located on Mill Street, is currently the subject of a Master Plan that will provide direction for the future of this undeveloped park. The agreement between the Town and the State stipulates that the property will be used for passive recreation and conservation purposes. Potential recreation uses for the park include fishing, hiking, biking, cross-country skiing, birding and wildlife observation, canoeing, picnicking, dog walking (on leash), and informal lawn games. This area is currently under-served with regard to playground equipment.

Action Plans:

- That the park be developed in accordance with the Amherst State Park Master Plan.

6.1.5 Amherst Veterans Canal Park

Owned by both the Town (41.6 acres) and the State (34.7 acres), Amherst Veterans Canal Park is a largely undeveloped parcel of land bounded by the Tonawanda New York Barge Canal, Tonawanda Creek Road and Brenon Road in the northwest corner of the Town. The park contains:

- boat launch;
- canal overlook/seating area;
- shelter/gazebo
- maintenance building with public restrooms and vending;
- picnic tables;
- fishing dock;
- paved parking area; and
- wooded and agricultural lands.

The park is linked to the Amherst Canalway Trail and primarily serves as a facility for the launching of pleasure crafts.

Action Plans:

- Develop a second overlook/seating area on the east side of the boat launch.
- Resurface the parking area with asphalt paving in the medium term.

6.1.6 Amherst Recreation Complex (Amherst Pepsi Center)

The Amherst Recreation Complex is an 11.5-acre site that contains a variety of indoor and outdoor recreation facilities, not the least of which is the Amherst Pepsi Center that contains four ice pads and the Town's Recreation Department offices. The Audubon Golf Course, the State University of New York at Buffalo (North Campus), and a residential subdivision surround the park and facility. All indoor facilities and components are discussed in Section 5 of this Plan.

Located on Amherst Manor Drive, the Amherst Recreation Complex contains:

- 2 hardball diamonds (1 lighted);
- 4 girls softball diamonds (1 lighted);
- 1 lighted adult softball diamond;
- girls softball clubhouse (office, concession, pavilion);
- public restrooms;
- 3 mini soccer fields;
- 1 lighted junior football field;
- Williamsville Junior Football clubhouse and pavilion;
- creative play structure (associated with the Youth and Family Center);
- parks maintenance garage; and
- paved parking lot.

All of the outdoor facilities are in excellent condition, including the ball diamonds which are all irrigated and have outfield fences, players benches and spectator seating. With the recent redevelopment of the Recreation Complex, a 50-meter outdoor pool, a wading pool, a basketball court, 4 tennis courts, and traditional play equipment were removed from the site to accommodate the enlarged Amherst Pepsi Center. All of the outdoor recreation amenities at this site appear to be very well used by the community. It is imperative that these uses remain available for local residents and local not-for-profit organizations.

Action Plans:

- Install a basketball/multi-purpose pad in the short term.
- The Town, in conjunction with the Amherst Girls Softball Association, should explore the possibility of installing light standards on one or more of the existing softball diamonds in the short term.
- The Town, in conjunction with the Amherst Girls Softball Association, should develop two additional girls' softball diamonds at the Audubon Recreation Complex in the short to medium term. The development of the diamonds would require the elimination of three mini soccer fields and, therefore, should not take place until the fields are replaced elsewhere. (see Section 7).

6.1.7 Bassett Park

Bassett Park is located at the intersection of Klein Road and Youngs Road. The park is 35.22 acres in size and is used mainly for passive recreation uses. Residential uses and a medical clinic surround the park. It contains:

- creative play structure;
- bandshell;
- permanent restrooms;
- pond & open space;
- woodlots; and
- small unpaved parking lot off Klein Road.

It appears that many of the same problems identified for Bassett Park in the 1992 Master Plan remain today. Additional on-site parking is needed as are additional measures to mitigate vandalism and unauthorized use of the park. The recent addition of a permanent restroom facility, creative play equipment and signage has, however, improved the aesthetics and usability of the park. Ongoing communications between residents and the Recreation Department and information received at a public meeting held August 22, 2000 regarding Bassett Park were used to develop the recommendations in the park-specific master plan.

Action Plans:

- Implement all remaining elements of the park-specific master plan, including a new covered performance stage, picnic shelters (gazebos), paved pathway system, bocce courts, additional parking, lighting, landscaping and drainage improvements.

6.1.8 Briarhurst Park

Briarhurst Park is located on Craigmore Drive, with additional access via Heathwood Road and a path to Briarhurst Road. The park is 7.4 acres in size and is situated within a low-density residential neighborhood. This active recreational park contains:

- 1 unlighted softball diamond;
- 1 practice hardball diamond;
- 1 full soccer field;
- 1 full basketball court;
- 2 unlighted tennis courts;
- creative play structure;
- 6 swings;
- 2 rocking horses;
- tire swing;
- drinking fountain;
- signage; and
- small shelter.

Briarhurst Park is in generally good condition, although certain minor improvements are required in the short to medium term: the tennis court surface requires painting, the soccer standards require better netting, the practice diamond backstop requires repair, the basketball nets and backboards require painting, and a proper base and border should be installed around the swing set. Furthermore, the baseball diamond at the north end of the park is not well maintained and has likely fallen into disuse. There are also potential conflicts between soccer and baseball due to the proximity of the fields to each other. It appears that most of the recommendations contained in the 1992 Master Plan have been addressed.

Action Plans:

- Repair soccer standards netting in the short term.
- Remove the practice diamond backstop and shift the soccer field to the north in order to minimize baseball/soccer conflicts in the short term.
- Paint the basketball nets and backboards in the short term.
- Install a proper base and border around the swing set in the short term.
- Paint the tennis court surface in the medium term.

6.1.9 Campus Drive Recreation Area

Campus Drive Recreation Area consists of 2.2 acres of active recreational space. The park does not have frontage on a street, however, access by way of a path is gained from Campus Drive. The Recreation Area is intended to serve the surrounding residential neighborhood, which includes single unit dwellings and townhouses. The park contains:

- 1 practice ball diamond;
- 8 swings;
- drinking fountain; and
- open space.

The park is in poor condition. The swing set is rusty and requires painting or replacement, the drinking fountain is not in working order, the ball diamond is not well maintained (nor does it have benches or bleachers), and grass coverage throughout the park is poor. There is a noticeable lack of overall maintenance. Due to its location, the park is not visible from the street and there are few signs indicating its existence. There is only one entrance to the park, which creates concerns with safety. Furthermore, the traditional playground equipment is located at the far end of the park, which acts as a deterrent to use.

The 1992 Master Plan provided a number of suggestions for the park, none of which have been implemented. The Plan identified the need to improve access, add signage, add swings, improve maintenance practices, and to fix the drinking fountain. It appears that the park has changed very little since the time of the 1992 Plan.

The park is meant to serve the medium density residential area within which it is situated, however, the overall lack of facilities limits its use for unstructured, unorganized activities requiring open space. To adequately serve the neighborhood, additional playground equipment is required. The park could accommodate additional facilities, however, due to its accessibility and visibility issues, development of the park for additional playing fields would be inappropriate. Given the large number of deficiencies within Campus Drive Recreation Area, redevelopment of the park is recommended in the short to medium term. It is further suggested that residents of the adjacent townhouse complex be directly consulted regarding the redevelopment of this park.

Action Plans:

- Undertake a park-specific master plan in the short to medium term.

6.1.10 Canalway Trail Park

The Town recently acquired this parkland, which forms part of the Amherst Canalway Trail. The park is bounded on the west by the North Amherst Fire Company, which contains some outdoor recreation facilities. Passive recreational use of the Canalway Trail Park is recommended.

Action Plans

- Transfer the ownership of the land acquired by the Town of Amherst to the fire district.
- Install picnic tables in the short term.
- Resurface the basketball court in the medium term

6.1.11 Central Amherst Baseball Complex

Central Amherst Baseball Complex is located on Wehrle Drive, adjacent to Interstates 290 and 90. A residential area and Kingsgate Park are situated immediately to the west of the 3.73-acre ball complex, separated only by an electric transmission corridor. A municipal water tower is located at the rear of the park. The complex contains:

- 5 unlighted baseball diamonds (3 with outfield fences);
- batting cage;
- small shelter and concession with paved patio area;
- maintenance building; and
- gravel parking lot.

The complex is in adequate condition, however, some minor maintenance improvements are required, including the painting of the bleachers and repair of the occasional players bench and backstop. The park does not offer much in the way of a shelter, nor does it contain any permanent restroom facilities. Although not a high priority, for a single-use park of its magnitude, permanent restroom facilities should be provided. It would also be prudent to pave the gravel parking lot.

Action Plans:

- Resurface the parking area with asphalt paving in the medium term.
- Undertake minor repairs to benches, bleachers and backstops in the short term.
- Install restrooms in short to medium term

6.1.12 Cindy Drive Play Area

Cindy Drive Play Area is a 1.55 acre undeveloped passive park site located on the block bounded by Cindy Drive, Lyndon Lane and West Maplemere Road. The park does not contain any facilities and is comprised of open space and a small hill. There is no signage identifying the park and parking is provided on the street. The park is surrounded by a residential neighborhood and contains a power or telecommunications line that traverses the western end of the site.

Cindy Drive Play Area could accommodate future facilities, such as a playground or mini soccer field. The 1992 Master Plan recommended that a playground area be developed and that plantings, picnic tables and park benches be added. With the possible exception of the planting of trees along the north side of the park, none of the recommendations have been implemented. This area is generally under-served with regard to neighborhood playground space.

Action Plans:

- Hold a neighborhood meeting regarding the future of the park in the short term. Potential uses for the park include playground equipment and associated neighborhood parkland amenities.

6.1.13 Clearfield Community Center Park

The Clearfield Community Center and Park is located on Plaza Drive near Hopkins Road on 19.50 acres of land. In addition to the Center's many indoor facilities (which are addressed in the Section 5), there are significant outdoor amenities including:

- 1 outdoor 50-meter pool;
- 1 outdoor wading pool (1.5 feet deep) with waterplay apparatus;
- 2 pavilions in pool area;
- 1 unlighted softball diamond;
- 1 unlighted hardball diamond;
- 2 mini soccer fields;
- 1 asphalt basketball court;
- 1 creative play structure;
- 1 set of 4 swings (toddlers);
- 1 tire swing;
- 2 rocking horses;
- 4 unlighted tennis courts;
- open space; and
- parking.

The park is in very good condition and appears to be well utilized. Since the 1992 Master Plan, there have been few changes to the park, although some improvements to the tennis courts and pool area have been made. The Town also installed a new playground structure in 2002. While the park contains a number of facilities, there does appear to be some open space at the east end of the park that could accommodate future playing fields or other facilities. It is understood, however, that this area of the park is subject to periodic flooding that limits its usefulness for organized sporting activities.

Action Plans:

- Correct drainage problems on mini soccer fields and at the east end of the park.
- Install an outdoor sand volleyball court in the short term.

6.1.14 College Park

College Park is a 21.24 acre undeveloped parcel of property located east of the Village of Williamsville on Wehrle and Richfield Drive. The area is part of a light industrial/business park and it is expected that the parkland will be developed in the long term, once more tenants move into the area. Due to the siting of stormwater detention areas at the park, it is recommended that this park be used for passive recreational purposes, including playground equipment, trails, benches, and picnic tables to serve the adjacent residential areas.

Action Plans

- Develop park for passive recreational purposes and install playground equipment, trails, shelters/gazebos, benches, and picnic tables in the medium term.

6.1.15 Creekwood Park

Creekwood Park is located at the northern end of Sundridge Drive, in the northwest end of the Town and is 10.2 acres in size. The park is long and narrow and is surrounded by residences as well as a sewage treatment plant to the north. The park contains:

- 1 unlighted softball diamond (no fence or bleachers);
- 2 fenced basketball courts (vandalized and overgrown with vegetation);
- 2 unlighted tennis courts (no nets and overgrown with vegetation);
- 1 swing set with 2 swings;
- 1 creative play structure;
- grills and picnic tables; and
- open space.

The park has a history of vandalism and is in poor condition, although the playground equipment is in relatively good shape. There appears to be a sandbox or a space set-aside for additional playground equipment. The tennis courts located at the rear of the park are abandoned and unusable due to the weeds on the courts. The basketball courts are vandalized and, like the tennis courts, the fence is overgrown with vegetation, which is a potential safety issue due to decreased visibility. In addition, two of the picnic tables are broken. The ball diamond does not appear to be adequate for organized games. Parking is limited to approximately 10 spaces on the gravel shoulder of Sundridge Drive. There is a considerable amount of open space at the rear the park that could accommodate additional facilities. Overall, it does not appear that very many of the recommendations for Creekwood Park provided in the previous Master Plan were implemented and many of the same concerns remain.

Action Plans:

- Remove sandbox in the short term.
- Repave/paint tennis courts and cut back vegetation on fence / or remove tennis courts in the short term.
- Cut back vegetation on basketball court fence and repair vandalized nets in the short term.
- Consider developing a small paved parking area in the medium term.
- Link the park with trail to proposed N.W. connector road bike trail in the medium term.

6.1.16 Dana Heights Recreation Area

Situated on Shetland Drive, Dana Heights Recreation Area is surrounded by low and medium density residential uses. This neighborhood park is 0.62 acres in size and contains:

- creative play structure;
- slide;
- picnic tables; and
- signage.

The park is in good condition and provides recreational opportunities for preschool and school-aged children. Although there is an insufficient land base for playing field development, additional playground equipment could be accommodate at the park. The addition of a swing set to complement the slide and creative play equipment is recommended.

Action Plans:

- Install a swing set in the short term.

6.1.17 Dellwood Park

Located in a residential neighborhood on Ivyhurst Road, Dellwood Park is 4.73 acres and is situated adjacent to Sattler Field. The park contains a number of features including:

- 2 unlighted softball diamonds;
- 1 full basketball court;
- creative play structure;
- 3 swing sets;
- monkey bars;
- gazebo;
- pavilion;
- signage; and
- benches.

The park is in very good condition and is highly accessible for residents in the immediate area. There is, however, a need for more picnic tables. Overall, the majority of the recommendations outlined in the 1992 Master Plan have been addressed.

Action Plans:

- Install picnic tables in the short term.

6.1.18 Eggertsville Community Park

The Eggertsville Community Park, located on Sweet Home Road, is currently undeveloped. The 4.10-acre park was the subject of public meetings in 2002 and 2003 from which a park master plan was developed. The master plan includes a small parking area, creative play equipment, swings, basketball court, shelters/gazebos, a splash-pad, paved pathways, benches and landscaping. Construction of the parking, creative play equipment, swings, basketball court, pathways, benches and some landscaping is expected to begin in August, 2004.

Action Plans:

- Implement all elements of the park-specific master plan.

6.1.19 Ellicott Creek Island Park

Ellicott Creek Island Park is owned and operated by Erie County. The park and parking area are located within the jurisdiction of the Town of Amherst. The park has not been included in the Town's parkland inventory.

6.1.20 Fetto Park

Fetto Park is a 2.6 acre undeveloped parcel located on Harlem Road. The site was established as a park in 2002 by the Town Board. An adjacent 0.62-acre privately owned parcel is in the process of being donated to the Town for the park. Two small grants have been secured for the park, one from the NYS Legislature and one from the Erie County Legislature for the purpose of establishing a passive park. A neighborhood meeting was held in May, 2004 to review a preliminary concept plan for the park featuring a pedestrian walkway, lighting, a small shelter/gazebo, water feature, plaza, benches and landscaping. A formal entranceway to the park was completed in 2003.

Action Plans:

- Implement all elements of a final park-specific master plan.

6.1.21 Fisherman's Wharf

Fisherman's Wharf, as it is known locally, is a small sliver of land along Tonawanda Creek (New York Barge Canal). It has not been included in the parkland inventory as it is considered to be part of the Amherst Canalway Trail. This popular fishing location contains picnic tables and grills. There are no parking facilities aside from the gravel shoulder of the road.

Action Plans:

- Examine the State-owned parcel on the south side of Tonawanda Creek Road for the development of a parking area.

6.1.22 Garnet Park

Located on Garnet Drive near Dellwood Road, Garnet Park is the home of the Connie Mack Little League. The park is 11.30 acres in size and is surrounded by residential uses and a woodlot. The park contains:

- 2 unlighted hardball diamonds;
- 1 batting cage;
- concession building;
- maintenance building; and
- paved parking lot.

The park is used solely for baseball activities and is in good condition. Each of the diamonds has bleachers, covered dugouts, and 200 to 210 foot fences. There is a sign identifying the park, however, there are no permanent restroom facilities.

There have been no significant changes to the park since the 1992 Master Plan, despite recommendations for the addition of playground equipment, the development of an additional ball diamond (if required), and the painting of lines in the parking lot. Given the proximity of Garnet Park to Dellwood Park, there is a reduced need for playground equipment at this

location. Although this is a quality facility that would be a candidate for night-use, its location within an established residential neighborhood makes the addition of light standards a less preferred option. In order to ensure that the amount of parking at this site is optimized, lines should still be added to delineate each parking space.

Action Plans:

- Stripe the parking lot in the short term.
- Install permanent restroom facilities in the short term.

6.1.23 Garrison Park

Garrison Park is owned by the Village of Williamsville. The park is 2.3 acres in size and is located within the block bounded by Garrison Road, Park Drive and South Ellicott Street. The area is primarily residential, although it is only one block removed from the commercial development on Main Street. The park contains:

- wading pool (1.5 foot depth);
- 1 full basketball court;
- creative play structure;
- traditional play equipment (swings, teeter totters, slide, sandbox);
- large gazebo;
- paved path (lighted);
- portable restrooms with privacy fence;
- benches and picnic tables;
- barbecue grills; and
- Memory Garden.

The park is in good condition and is very well used by local residents. Parking is provided on-street. Mature trees are scattered throughout the park, enhancing its overall appearance. The only identified deficiency is the need for a new asphalt surface for the basketball court, which is currently uneven. Existing uses should be maintained.

Action Plans:

- Resurface the basketball court in the short to medium term.
- Replace the wading pool with a spray pad/water play apparatus at such time that the wading pool requires substantial capital upgrades.

6.1.24 Getzville Fire Department Park

The Getzville Fire Department lands are located at the southeast corner of Dodge Road and Stahl Road. The Town leases the land. Contained within the 5.0 acre parcel are:

- 2 unlighted softball diamonds (one with an outfield fence); and
- large paved parking lot and additional on-street parking.

The ball diamonds are both in good condition. Since the 1992 Master Plan, additional parking has been provided (as recommended) and the traditional play equipment has been removed.

Action Plans:

- Examine the site's potential use as a trailhead for the Peanut Line multi-use trail.

6.1.25 Glen Park

Glen Park is located on the north and south sides of Glen Avenue in the Village of Williamsville. The 10.15-acre park is jointly owned by the Town and Village and is maintained by the Glen Park Joint Board. The park is largely comprised of natural features, including Ellicott Creek, and is intended for passive recreational uses and nature observation. The north end of the park abuts the Amherst State Park and the Williamsville Water Mill is adjacent to the south end. Glen Park contains:

- gravel and paved trails;
- benches;
- creek, ponds, and waterfall;
- enclosed pavilion building (currently vacant); and
- parking lots.

The park is in satisfactory condition, but may require upgrades in the coming years. Deficiencies include the lack of public restroom facilities, limited signage, and the need for the installation of steps from Main Street (steep path that exists is a safety hazard in the winter). Although the park does not contain picnic tables, it is recommended that park furniture be kept to a minimum to discourage picnicking and, therefore, litter. Other maintenance issues include the re-paving of some paths, the replacement of some benches and the installation of ornamental lighting. Given the picturesque setting of this park and its positive impact on the Williamsville community, it is important that it be maintained at a very high standard.

Action Plans:

- Install proper signage at park entrances in the short term.
- Repair/replace benches in the short term.
- Replace steep path from Main Street with steps in the short term.
- Re-pave pathways in the short to medium term.
- Install ornamental lighting in the short to medium term.
- Consider developing public restroom facilities.

6.1.26 Great Baehre Conservation Area

The Town (139.83 acres) and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (270.22 acres) jointly own the Great Baehre Conservation Area. The Conservation Area is located on both sides of Hopkins Road and is mainly comprised of wetlands. Part of the site is located adjacent to Margaret Louise Park. Trails and paths have been developed throughout the park. To promote linkages with the adjacent residential neighborhoods, additional trails should be developed.

Action Plans:

- Develop trails linking the park to adjacent residential neighborhoods in the medium term.

6.1.27 Harlem Road Community Center Playground

The Harlem Road Community Center Playground is located adjacent to the Harlem Road Community Center on Harlem Road in south Amherst. In addition to the Community Center, the 4.60-acre Town-owned site contains:

- 2 creative play structures;
- 3 swings;
- 2 tire swings;
- 1 set of monkey bars;
- drinking fountain;
- picnic tables and benches;
- temporary shelter; and
- open space.

The playground is surrounded by a residential neighborhood and has ample parking in the lot serving the community center. The park is in good condition and has some land for expanded facilities, however, this open space is used, from time to time, for public gatherings and events based in the Community Center. Despite this, the park is still able to accommodate some additional uses. Prior to the development of the playground in 1993, the park contained 2 practice ball diamonds, a basketball half court and traditional playground equipment. These amenities have since been removed, as was suggested in the 1992 Master Plan, and the maintenance of the park has been greatly improved. No changes are recommended to the park.

6.1.28 Island Park

Located within Ellicott Creek and behind the Town Hall, Island Park is the home for many Village functions including Old Home Days, Taste of Williamsville Food Festival, Music in the Park Series and Christmas Caroling in the Pines. The 5.6-acre park contains:

- wading pool (2 foot depth);
- creative play equipment;
- traditional play equipment (swings, rocking horses, teeter totters, monkey bars, sandbox);
- paved trail;
- benches and picnic tables;
- drinking fountains;
- public restrooms;
- large pavilion with storage/maintenance space;
- small picnic gazebo; and
- parking lot shared with Town Hall.

The park is well maintained and serves as a focal point for civic events in Williamsville. The existing playground equipment appears to be adequate to meet the needs of the park's users. It is important, therefore, that no additional recreation facilities be developed at this location, so as not to diminish the park's natural setting and ability to host Village events and activities.

Action Plans:

- Replace the wading pool with a spray pad/water play apparatus at such time that the wading pool requires substantial capital upgrades.

6.1.29 Jurek Post

Jurek Post, otherwise known as Legion Field, is located at the intersection of New Road and Smith Road, adjacent to the Legion Hall and North Amherst Recreation Center. The park is approximately 11.5 acres in size and is leased by the Town from Jurek Post. It contains:

- 3 unlighted ball diamonds (no outfield fences);
- 6 swings;
- slide; and
- small shelter.

Overall, the park is in fair condition, but upgrades are necessary. The ball diamonds all have benches and bleachers, however, the infields require additional maintenance. The play equipment and shelter all require painting. Furthermore, there is a need for one or two picnic tables near the playground area. Parking for the site is available in the lot adjacent to the Legion Hall, as well on the roadsides. A sign for the park has been erected at the southwest corner of the site.

Due to the park's location adjacent to the North Amherst Recreation Center and that it is situated in an area that will experience new growth in the future, Jurek Post represents an ideal site for future public recreation uses. As the site is not currently in public ownership, however, the long-term availability of this site for recreation cannot be guaranteed. It is recommended that the Town explore the acquisition of this parcel for redevelopment at a later date (possibly as an adult softball complex – see Section 7).

Action Plans:

- Paint the play equipment and shelter in the short term.
- Install picnic tables in the short term.
- Explore the potential acquisition of Jurek Post for future recreation uses.

6.1.30 Kingsgate Park

Kingsgate Park, situated in a residential neighborhood adjacent to the Central Amherst Baseball Complex on Wehrle Drive (separated by an electric transmission corridor), contains:

- 1 unlighted hardball diamond (no outfield fence);
- 1 full basketball court;
- 1 creative play structure;
- 2 sets of 2 swings;
- tire swing;
- rocking horses; and
- picnic tables.

Parking for the 3.59-acre park is provided at the nearby Baseball Complex or on Ridgewood Drive, which provides access at the north end of the park. The park is well maintained and appears to be well used by residents. The baseball backstop may, however, require replacement in the near future.

Action Plans:

- Replace the baseball backstop in short to medium term.

6.1.31 LaClair-Kindel Wildlife Sanctuary

The LaClair-Kindel Wildlife Sanctuary is situated between Main Street and Park Club Lane in southern Amherst. The 6.52-acre parcel is part of an electric transmission corridor owned by the Niagara Mohawk Power Corporation. Niagara Mohawk has provided an easement to the Town allowing for public access to this parcel for walking and nature observation. The Sanctuary is undeveloped and contains a variety of natural plant and animal habitats. No changes to this park are recommended.

6.1.32 Lou Gehrig Baseball Complex

Located on Dann Road, the Lou Gehrig Baseball Complex is a single use facility that is owned by the Town. The park contains:

- 2 junior ball diamonds (135 foot fences);
- 5 hardball diamonds (with fences ranging from 200 to 300 feet), one is lighted;
- 1 senior ball diamond (375 foot fence);
- 2 women's softball diamonds (225 foot fences), one of which is lighted;
- 2 concessions;
- pavilion;
- 2 batting cages; and
- 2 parking lots.

In total, the ball complex contains 10 diamonds, all of which are irrigated and have benches, bleachers and scoreboards. Two of the ten diamonds are lighted (diamonds #3 and #7). The park has two gravel parking lots, one at the south end and one at the west end of the complex. The surrounding land use is a woodlot. Since the 1992 Master Plan, diamonds #9 and #10 have been developed, as has the parking lot at the west end of the park. The park is well maintained and no changes are proposed.

6.1.33 Margaret-Louise Park

Margaret-Louise Park is located adjacent to the Great Baehre Conservation Area on Hopkins Road and is 47.83 acres in size. The park is passive in nature and contains:

- paved trails;
- public restrooms;
- 2 small shelters with picnic tables;
- wheelchair accessible lookout platform with 2 children's slides;
- boardwalk trail/overlook;
- open space and pond;
- sledding hill;
- small portable classroom/office; and
- paved parking lot.

Most recently, a boardwalk/trail, pond, and sledding hill have been developed within the park and two mini soccer fields have been removed. The 1992 Master Plan called for the addition of playground equipment, picnic areas, compatible passive recreation facilities, and tree plantings and flower gardens, however, none of these recommendations have been acted upon. Given the location of the park in relation to the Great Baehre Conservation Area, it would be prudent to continue to develop Margaret-Louise Park for passive recreation uses, including the development of a nature center or interpretive sites.

Action Plans:

- Develop trails linking the park to adjacent residential neighborhoods in the medium term.
- Examine the possibility of developing a nature center in the medium term.
- Evaluate a two-acre area of the park near the cellular tower as a possible location for a fenced leash-free dog area.

6.1.34 Marinaccio Property

The Marinaccio Property was donated to the Town. The 29-acre parcel is currently undeveloped and is located in a residential area near Transit and North French Road in the east end of the Town. It is possible that the Town will acquire additional acreage (largely comprised of wetlands) adjacent to this land. This land should remain as a nature preserve.

Action Plans:

- Develop nature trails within the park in the long term.

6.1.35 Mel Ott Baseball Complex

Located on Meyer Road adjacent to Sweet Home Middle School, the Mel Ott Baseball Complex is the home of the Mel Ott Little League and is leased by the Sweet Home School District to the Town. The park is 18.43 acres in size and is surrounded by a variety of commercial, residential, industrial and institutional land uses. The complex contains:

- 8 unlighted hardball diamonds (two t-ball diamonds);
- 1 batting cage;
- small pavilion;
- restrooms;
- concession;
- maintenance shed; and
- gravel parking lot.

The single-use park is in very good condition and few improvements are necessary. Aluminum bleachers have been installed on some diamonds, however, some wooden bleachers and benches on other diamonds require painting and additional maintenance. The diamonds themselves are well maintained, although only four have outfield fences. This site would also be a good candidate for the installation of lighting on one or two diamonds if demand exists in future years. There appears to be an adequate amount of parking, which is likely supplemented by parking facilities on adjacent lands. The only real shortcoming of this facility is its lack of an adequately sized pavilion to shelter participants from inclement weather. Given the layout of the park and full use of the site, however, there may not be sufficient room to accommodate a pavilion.

Action Plans:

- Explore the possibility of constructing a larger pavilion in the short to medium term.

6.1.36 Nature View Park

Nature View Park contains approximately 1264 acres of wooded land that was recently acquired by the Town. The Park is located in the northwest area of Amherst and is not in contiguous ownership. Aside from a recently developed gravel parking lot and signage on Tonawanda Creek Road, the park is undeveloped and contains informal nature trails.

The establishment of a conservation easement between the Town and the Western New York Land Conservancy is in litigation. Until this legal action is resolved, no planning or development action can be contemplated.

Action Plans:

- Prepare a Master Plan for this significant natural area in the short term.

6.1.37 North Amherst Fire Company

The North Amherst Fire Company lands are located on North Tonawanda Creek Road near Campbell Boulevard. The North Amherst Fire Company site includes both a fire hall and a park that contains:

- small shelter;
- 1 unlighted ball diamond (no outfield fence);
- 1 unfenced basketball court;
- slide;
- 6 swings; and
- adequate parking (paved).

The park is well maintained, however the asphalt surface of the basketball court may require repair within the next ten years, as it is becoming cracked and uneven. A limited number of picnic tables should also be added to the site.

6.1.38 North Amherst Recreation Center Park

The North Amherst Recreation Center and Park is located at the intersection of New Road and Millersport Highway on 93 acres of land. The site contains an indoor soccer/football field (see the Facility Inventory and Analysis section of this Plan) and the following outdoor amenities:

- practice football field/2 mini soccer fields.

There may be room for expansion of indoor and/or outdoor features at this site. Furthermore, the Town recently acquired an adjacent 172-acre parcel (now Dann Lake Park) from the Sutton Lake/Dockside Village development. The proposed use of this environmentally significant land is for passive recreation and/or nature appreciation.

Action Plans:

- Should the recreation facilities and parks in this area be expanded, consideration should be given to developing a maintenance garage to serve Northeast Amherst.
- Link North Amherst Recreation Center and Park to Dann Lake Park with multi-use trail.

6.1.39 North Forest Park

North Forest Park is a multi-purpose community park situated on North Forest Road. The park is 6.7 acres and is surrounded on three sides by a residential area and on a fourth by a commercial building. The park contains:

- 25 meter outdoor swimming pool (6 lanes);
- small wading pool;
- pool building with change rooms, restrooms, etc.;
- creative play structure;
- 2 swing sets;
- 3 unlighted tennis courts;
- pavilion building;
- 3 horseshoe pits;
- picnic tables and benches;
- signage;
- paved parking lot.

The park is in very good condition and is beautifully landscaped and well maintained. The multi-purpose nature of the park allows for increased usage by all segments of the population. With the construction of the outdoor pool in 1992, the park is now fully developed. The Town Board has approved improvements to the basketball court. The park's existing uses should be maintained and changes are not recommended at this time.

6.1.40 North French Soccer Complex

North French Soccer Complex is a 27.94-acre special use park located on North French Road. The complex contains:

- 5 full size soccer fields; and
- paved parking lot.

Developed in 1991, the soccer complex is in very good condition and each soccer field is irrigated and contains one aluminum bleacher. There are no permanent restrooms, shelters, or concessions at the park and there are concerns regarding safety in the event of lightning. The park is surrounded by the I-990 Expressway, a woodlot, a light industrial use and a residential subdivision across North French Road. Since the 1992 Master Plan, the parking lot has been graded and paved and bleachers have been added to the site. Construction of a sixth full size field and one mini field/practice area is underway with potential usage beginning in 2003 or 2004.

Action Plans:

- Install a central building with a shelter, permanent restrooms, and concession stand in the short term.
- Install lighting on two soccer fields and give consideration to developing two mini fields across one or more full size fields at such time as the three mini fields at Audubon Recreation Complex are replaced by softball diamonds (short to medium term).
- Plant shade trees annually.

6.1.41 Oakwood Conservation Area

The Oakwood Conservation Area is part of a site that includes the Amherst Museum and Colony Park and the Oakwood Golf Course. The Conservation Area is 127.97 acres in size and owned by the Town of Amherst.

Action Plans:

- Expand Oakwood Golf Course into the Conservation Area to create an 18-hole course in the medium term.

6.1.42 Paradise Park

Located on Paradise Road just south of Casey Road, Paradise Park features active recreation, an undeveloped woodlot and a large dry stormwater detention facility. The east area of the park has recently been developed for active recreational use. Overall, the park is 32.27 acres in size. Currently the site contains:

- 1 full-size soccer field (irrigated);
- 1 creative play structure;
- 1 set of 4 swings;
- a small pavilion;
- 1 practice ball diamond/kickball (grass infield);
- picnic tables; and
- 80 space paved parking lot.

Paradise Park is located within a residential setting. A master plan for the park has been prepared that includes the existing facilities listed plus two additional full-size soccer fields, trails and a restroom/concession building. The Amherst Soccer Association secured a grant from NYS and contributed additional funds towards the development of the soccer field.

A small baseball backstop has been constructed within the park to serve local residents. The grass ball diamond, however, has a slight drop in grade within the infield/outfield area that may interfere with its use for local pick-up games. There is currently no signage for the park.

Action Plans:

- Work with the Amherst Soccer Association to develop additional soccer fields at this site in the medium term.
- Install proper signage at park entrances in the short term.
- Regrade the existing kickball diamond.
- Develop an internal trail system short to medium term.
- Install plantings along the east and north sides of the park to buffer adjacent residences
- Develop two tennis courts medium.

6.1.43 Park Forest Park

Park Forest Park is an undeveloped parcel of land without street frontage. Access to the 1.2-acre parcel is provided by walkways from Sunrise Boulevard and Park Forest Drive. Although the park is accessible from two streets, the entrances are not well marked. More importantly, the location of the park creates safety concerns due to the lack of visibility and because the two entrances are located together at the northeast corner of the park.

Park Forest Park consists of open space with some trees and is surrounded by residences and commercial uses. The park does not provide any scheduled recreational use, but does allow for some neighborhood-level unstructured play. No changes to the park are recommended at this time.

6.1.44 Sable Woods

Located in the northeast quadrant of the Town on Sable Drive, Sable Woods is a 6.75 acre undeveloped parcel of land that is owned by the Town of Amherst. This property is mostly wetlands and should remain an undeveloped, natural area.

6.1.45 Saratoga Park

Saratoga Park is a largely undeveloped passive park area that contains open space, stone-dust pathways, benches, trash receptacles, a small memorial garden and a sledding hill. The park does not have any signage or parking facilities. The Park (16.2 acres) is comprised of four separate parcels: a 6.1 acre Town-owned parcel (Berryman Woods); a 2.8 acre Town-owned parcel (former Erie County Water Authority); the right-of-way of Yorktown Road (Paper Street); and the 7.3 acre Amherst Central School District parcel fronting on Saratoga Road.

The 1992 Master Plan recommended the development of a new creative playground, walking paths, as well as possible sports fields. None of these recommendations have been implemented and the area remains deficient with regard to playground equipment. No recommendations for Saratoga Park are contained in this Plan.

6.1.46 Sattler Field

Sattler Field is situated directly west of Dellwood Park on North Ivyhurst Road and is used by the Connie Mack Little League. The park is also surrounded on two sides by residential uses and the rear of a commercial strip to the west. Sattler Field is 1.87 acres and contains:

- 2 unlighted baseball diamonds (one little league and one t-ball).

Sattler Field is a single-use park that is well maintained. The park does not offer any on-site parking facilities, which could pose a problem on evenings when both the Sattler Field and Dellwood Park ball diamonds are being utilized. Unfortunately, both parks are fully developed and, therefore, there is no opportunity for the development of additional parking areas. There are no outstanding issues from the 1992 Master Plan. No changes to the current uses of this park are recommended at this time.

6.1.47 South Long Street Recreation Area

The South Long Street Recreation Area is located within, and owned by, the Village of Williamsville on 5.4 acres of land. Adjacent uses to the park are low and medium density residential, industrial, and commercial. The park contains:

- 1 unlighted softball diamond;
- 2 unlighted tennis courts;
- 1 lighted full basketball court (with four nets);
- creative play equipment;
- 2 sets of swings;
- teeter-totters;
- rocking horses; and
- parking lot.

The park is not well maintained. The fencing surrounding the tennis courts will require replacement within the medium term, some of the benches require repair, the basketball court was party vandalized and there are cracks in the pavement, and the teeter-totters have been vandalized and require painting. Furthermore, the base of the swings and teeter-totters should contain a defined border and be filled with wood chips or alternative substance rather than grass and dirt (similar to the base upon which the creative play structure is situated). The park lacks signage and temporary or permanent restroom facilities. The recommendations contained in the 1992 Master Plan appear to have largely been met.

The ball diamond within the park is heavily used by adult softball leagues. The size of the park, however, is not conducive to adult softball as the ball is often hit across South Long Street or onto private property along Village Square Lane. At such time that another adult softball diamond becomes available within another park (e.g., Jurek Post), it is recommended that the diamond within South Long Recreation Area be removed or that adult groups be prohibited from using it.

Action Plans:

- Paint the basketball backboard and teeter-totters in the short term.
- Repair benches in the short term.
- Resurface the basketball court in the short term.
- Install a proper base and border around swings and teeter-totters in the short term.
- Replace/repair tennis court fencing in the medium term.
- Give consideration to developing permanent restroom facilities. Discontinue allocating the diamond to adult softball organizations or remove the diamond from the park at such time that a suitable replacement diamond becomes available.

6.1.48 Sweet Home Park

The Sweet Home School District owns a 60-acre parcel on the west side of Sweet Home Road and a 40-acre parcel on the east side of Sweet Home Road adjacent to and surrounded by Nature View Park. A proposal has been discussed with the School District to develop outdoor recreational facilities on 20 acres of the 60-acre parcel and a nature center on the frontage of the 40-acre parcel. Recreational facilities would include a premier hardball diamond, multi-use sports fields (e.g., two soccer fields and one football field), a playground, restroom/concession building, parking, and a network of trails. A State grant was recently awarded for this project.

Action Plans:

- Negotiate a long-term lease or purchase of the 40-acre parcel on the east side of Sweet Home Road as a vital addition to Nature View Park.
- Negotiate an agreement to ensure the long-term community use of the recreation facilities on the 60-acre parcel.
- Proceed with the planning, design, and implementation of Phase 1 of the park development.
- Explore a partnership with Sweet Home Junior Football for the outfitting of the football field.

6.1.49 T.O.A. Conservation Area

Located on North French Road, the T.O.A. Conservation Area is owned by the Town and is comprised of 45.97 acres. This area is primarily wetlands. No development is recommended at this time.

6.1.50 Walton Woods Park

Walton Woods is a 50.03-acre parcel of passive parkland located to the east of the complex containing the Amherst Center for Senior Services, Library, Police, and Court buildings. Other than the civic uses, the park is surrounded on three sides by medium density residential development. The park contains:

- paved trail system;
- wooded areas and Lake Audubon;
- benches; and
- parking shared with the Police Department, Court, Senior Center and Main Library.

There are a number of entrances to the park from the abutting residential neighborhood, however, they are poorly marked and there is no internal signage illustrating the trail route. The entrance from the Town parking lot has recently been extended to allow for greater accessibility, however, it is not in a location to properly serve the users of the Senior Center. Members of the Senior Center are one of the main user groups of the park and an effort should be made to accommodate their needs, which include an extension of the park entrance closer to the facility. Furthermore, although signage for the park exists in the Town parking lot, the sign is faded and in disrepair. The area is also under-served with regard to playground equipment – this issue may require additional attention in the medium to long term.

Action Plans:

- Install proper signage at park entrances in the short term.
- Install internal trail maps/signage in the short term.
- Extend the park entrance closer to the Amherst Center for Senior Services in the short term.

6.1.51 Wehrle FAA Recreation Area

The Wehrle FAA Recreation Area is a single-purpose community park located on Wehrle Drive in the southeast corner of the Town. The complex, used by Mathewson-McCarthy Babe Ruth Baseball, is 12.6 acres in size and is surrounded by light industrial uses, Erie Community College, and limited residential. Contained within the park are:

- 1 lighted hardball diamond;
- 4 unlighted hardball diamonds;
- concession and maintenance building;
- public restrooms;
- maintenance shed; and
- paved parking lot.

The baseball complex is in very good condition, with each diamond having aluminum benches and bleachers, outfield fences, and scoreboards. Although the recreation area contains a large paved parking lot, intensive use of the site results in vehicles parking along the road and on grassed areas. Expansion of the parking lot is required to ensure that safe and accessible parking facilities are provided. The quality of the ball diamonds could also be improved through the installation of an irrigation system.

Action Plans:

- Expand the parking lot in the short to medium term.
- Install an irrigation system in the medium term.

6.1.52 West Royal Parkway Recreation Area

West Royal Parkway Recreation Area is located on 9.4 acres of land between Interstate 290 and Royal Parkway West and is surrounded by the Interstate and a residential area. The park contains:

- 2 unlighted tennis courts;
- 4 unlighted junior hardball diamonds;
- 1 full basketball court;
- 1 creative play structure;
- concession and storage building;
- drinking fountain;
- picnic tables and benches; and
- paved parking lot.

The park is generally well maintained and in good condition. Minor repairs to one of the baseball backstops are required. The recommendations contained in the 1992 Master Plan pertained to the need for improved park maintenance and appear to have been adequately rectified. The Town Board has approved improvements to the basketball court. Local residents have requested that swings be installed at the park. This request is reasonable, as the swings would serve a slightly older age group that does the existing creative play structure.

Action Plans:

- Undertake minor repairs to the baseball backstop in the short term.
- Install swings in the short term.

6.1.53 Willow Ridge Park

Located at the end of Bedford Drive, this 10.22-acre park is mainly undeveloped, although it contains some developed active recreation components. The park contains:

- 4 unlighted tennis courts;
- 1 creative play structure;
- 1 swing set;
- benches;
- paved parking lot; and
- large undeveloped area.

Willow Ridge Park is located within a residential neighborhood and is adjacent to Willow Ridge Elementary School. Overall, the park is in good condition and could accommodate additional facilities. Since the 1992 Master Plan, creative play equipment has been installed in the park. The undeveloped parkland remains unused. At this time, no changes are proposed to the park.

6.1.54 Windsor Woods

Windsor Woods is a 15-acre undeveloped parcel of land located on Covent Garden Lane in east Amherst. The parcel is intended to be a passive park and was created primarily to preserve the mature beech/maple forest in the area. Development recommendations are limited to walking trails and a small playground for neighborhood residents (this area is currently under-served with regard to neighborhood playground space).

Action Plans:

- Remove debris from the property in the short term.
- Develop trails along the road frontage and the stream located along the southern property line in the medium term.
- Install creative playground equipment in the medium term.

6.1.55 Dann Lake Park

Dann Lake Park is a 172-acre undeveloped park acquired in 2004. The parcel is intended for passive use and features 22-acre Dann Lake. Development recommendations are limited to multi-use and natural trails, canoeing, fishing and environmental enhancements. A preliminary concept plan was prepared in December 2003.

Action Plans:

- Work with the Dann Lake Planning Committee to develop a Master Plan for the park in the short term
- Remove trash and debris from the site in the short term
- Implement recommendations of the master plan in the medium to long term

6.2 LINKED OPEN SPACE SYSTEM

The Town of Amherst has an extensive network of paved bicycle and pedestrian paths and has plans to upgrade existing trails and develop new paths over the coming years. Funded partially through State and Federal government grants, the expansion of the Town’s trail network is intended to link existing trails together as well as major public facilities, parks and commercial centers in an effort to increase pedestrian accessibility to all destinations. The Town’s paths are a mixture of on and off-street routes.

The trailways are a valuable asset to the community as they assist not only in alleviating traffic congestion, but also in providing space for a variety of unstructured, low-impact recreational pursuits (e.g., walking, bicycling, and inline skating). The continued development of both nature trails and paved trails received a great deal of support from the public through the household survey.

The bikeways and trailways that are owned and/or maintained by the Town are shown in Table 6-3. All on-street routes identified in the following tables are designated bicycle routes and lanes.

TABLE 6-3: Existing Bikeways and Trailways in the Town of Amherst

NAME	PAA	LENGTH (Miles)	ROUTE
Amherst Canalway Trail (Tonawanda Creek Trail)	1 & 2	5.7	On and off-street
Ellicott Creek Trailway	1, 3 & 4	7.2	Off-street
Inter Campus Bikeway (Bailey Campus to Amherst Campus)	3 & 5	3.0	On-street
Hopkins Road Boardwalk and Trail	4	1.3	On and off-street
Willow Ridge Bike Path (I-990 Trailway)	3	0.8	Off-street

In addition to the trailways in the Town of Amherst, the Lehigh Memory Trail is located in the Village and is owned and maintained by the Village of Williamsville. The trail, developed in 1990, runs from South Cayuga Road to South Long Street along a former rail line and is approximately 0.6 miles long. A parking lot has been developed off of South Long Street adjacent to the now vacant Lehigh Valley Railroad Station. At present, there is no link to the overall trail system.

The Town Board has approved the trail development projects contained in Table 6-4 and construction of the new trailways is expected to be completed within the short term.

TABLE 6-4: Proposed Bikeways and Trailways in the Town of Amherst

NAME	DESCRIPTION	PAA	LENGTH (Miles)	ROUTE
Lehigh Valley Multi-use Trail	New trail between Niagara Falls Boulevard and Millersport Highway with a link to the Willow Ridge Bike Path and pedestrian bridge over the I-990; future link to the Ellicott Creek Trailway	3	3.0	Off-street
Amherst Canalway Trail (Tonawanda Creek Trail)	Phase I extension of existing trail along the Erie Canal between Sweet Home Road and Ellicott Creek Park (Erie County project)	1	3.0	On and off-street

Existing and proposed multi-use and natural trails are illustrated on Map 6-2.

The Amherst Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan (February 2004) recommends that a comprehensive bicycle network be developed using a rating system to identify and prioritize improvements. A comprehensive and safe network of sidewalks, crosswalks and trails is also encouraged. It also bears mentioning that many of the paved trails are used for inline skating and that there is a need to identify areas requiring improvement (e.g., where there is a change in surface, steep grades, road crossings, etc.).

Judging by the items identified in the Town’s Capital Improvement Program, the Town appears to be steadily making headway in their efforts to establish a fully linked pedestrian and bicycle trail network. Although progress has been considerable, many substantial parks are not connected to the trailway system and remain isolated from each other.

Some of the key considerations in trail development are identified below.

1. Identifying a priority listing for open space or parkland acquisition and dedication that follows a system or corridor approach.
2. Attempting to utilize all green space including appropriate environmental areas, abandoned railroad right-of-ways, woodlots, parks, cemeteries, electric transmission corridors and transportation corridors, schools, as effective green corridors to ultimately create an inter-connected and uninterrupted system of green space and bicycle and pedestrian corridors throughout the Town.
3. Coordination between the Town and land stewardship organizations in encouraging linkages.
4. Incorporating private open space into the open space linkage system, where possible, if integral linkage points are found to be under private land ownership.
5. Implementing a strategy to develop pedestrian and bicycle recreation corridors to supply a comprehensive recreational corridor system. This system should encourage and enhance the pedestrian and bicycle movement throughout the Town and build upon existing pathways and parks.
6. Encouraging development of active and passive recreational open space within and surrounding such landscaped areas as schools and churches by pursuing an agreement with the various public and private agencies controlling such lands and incorporate these areas, where appropriate, into the linkage system.

7. Providing amenities such as benches, shelters and access to water and restrooms at key locations along the trail system and in locations that minimize impacts to individual residences.
8. Identifying and prioritizing trailway areas requiring lighting and other safety measures. The trailway system should be pedestrian-friendly and all reasonable safety precautions should be taken.

Actions Plans:

- Continue in efforts to develop a comprehensive, linked trail system in Amherst, including pedestrian and bicycle linkages between key community and passive parks, open spaces and recreation facilities.
- Establish a uniform trailway funding strategy (capital and operating expenditures).

6.3 PARKLAND ACQUISITION

Although there are numerous parks and open space areas within Amherst, it is often necessary to acquire and develop additional parkland to better serve existing and future citizens of Amherst. The Town Code allows for fees to be charged for land development in order to ensure that appropriate and adequate recreation and open space facilities are provided. The fees that have been established by the Town Board consist of two components: one relating to recreation and the other to open space facilities. The fees vary according to the type and size of development, however, only the open space component of the charge is imposed on industrial, commercial and institutional developments. Only developments that are subject to site plan and/or subdivision approval are required to pay the established fees. The collected fees shall be used exclusively for the acquisition of land for and equipping of open space and recreation facilities.

Alternately, the development applicant may propose to dedicate a parcel of land in lieu of the payment of fees. It is up to the discretion of the Town to decide whether or not the land is suitably located and that the value is at least equal to the amount of the fees that would otherwise be due.

The Amherst Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan (February 2004) indicates that the Town will require funding well beyond the levels generated by its recreation and open space fund in order to maintain an appropriate supply of parkland and open space. The Amherst Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan also recommended that the Town consider adjusting the fee schedule to more accurately reflect the value of the land being developed.

Action Plans:

- In evaluating whether to accept the dedication of parkland or fees in lieu of parkland in new subdivisions, consideration should be given to the overall parkland requirements established in this Plan (see Section 7.4.2).

6.4 EXISTING POLICY FRAMEWORK

The Amherst Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan has noted that open space preservation is one of the primary issues identified by citizens during that process. Furthermore, the continued maintenance and expansion of park areas and trails is viewed as a very high priority during the household survey conducted for this Plan.

The Amherst Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan established a number of policies relevant to the planning of parks and open space areas. Although some of these policy directions are pertinent to this Plan, others cannot be addressed within the scope of this Plan and require further action by the Town government and citizens. The Amherst Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan's open space policies are identified briefly below, followed by comments on the relevance to this Plan:

- *“Designate a town-wide open space and greenway network to be achieved through a variety of mechanisms.”* This Plan encourages the acquisition of additional parkland and open spaces in appropriate amounts and locations in order to meet public demand for this resource and to establish and/or enhance both ecological linkages and pedestrian/bike linkages (on and off-street) between areas.

“The Town should identify and pursue properties for acquisition in residential areas that are under-served by existing parks and recreational facilities.” This Plan encourages the development of active and appropriately scaled parkland in under-served areas and endeavors to identify and prioritize areas that require additional parkland and facilities.

- *“Encourage conservation development with incentives for the dedication of open space in private developments.”* Development patterns are the responsibility of the Amherst Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan, however, this Plan does encourage the public dedication of open space in appropriate situations. General standards for the type, size and design of parks are established in this Plan under Section 7.
- *“Initiate a public open space acquisition program consistent with the open space, recreation, and greenway network.”* This Plan identifies geographic areas that should be targeted for parkland development and also offers guidance on the type of park that is required. The preparation of a formalized open space acquisition program that focuses on needs and financial realities, however, is encouraged and would build upon the action plans of this Plan.

Action Plans:

- Implement the recommendations pertaining to parkland funding and acquisition contained in the Amherst Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan.

SECTION 7: CURRENT AND PROJECTED DEMAND FOR RECREATION FACILITIES AND PARKS

The Town of Amherst Recreation and Parks Master Plan has been prepared to provide the municipality with a set of comprehensive strategies respecting open space, recreation facilities and programs for the existing and projected population. This section of the Background Report includes an analysis of demand for recreation facilities and parkland within the community and a determination of the need for additional facilities. Discussion relating to how the demand correlates with the existing supply is included in the previous sections (Facility Inventory and Analysis, Parks Inventory and Analysis).

Recreation needs assessments serve to indicate what a community requires in the way of parks, open space, and recreation facilities. By comparing requirements (demand) to the inventory of existing recreation opportunities (supply) it is possible to determine community "need" for such facilities and spaces. Such determinations can then be used to formulate appropriate policy, allocation and site-specific decisions with regard to recreation and parks.

7.1 METHODOLOGY

Needs assessments of this type are perhaps the most complicated of all components comprising a Recreation and Parks Master Plan. Nevertheless, there are a number of methodologies that are utilized to complete an accurate assessment and estimate of community demand and need for recreation facilities. Each approach has its attributes and no one approach is entirely sufficient to stand on its own merits. In assessing demand for recreation facilities and parks, the most common methodologies include:

- market-driven standards
- population standards
- survey/poll
- political/stakeholder opinion

A description of each approach, including their respective advantages and disadvantages, is contained in Table 7-1 on the following page.

Although the household survey results and stakeholder opinion have been referenced and accounted for where appropriate, this Plan relies most heavily on population standards. Market-driven standards have been used where applicable and where data was available. The use of standards is felt to be the most accurate, rational, and scientific approach to determining facility needs. Other contributing factors, such as demographics trends, public opinions, and user group comments have also been incorporated in order to provide an overall estimation of need.

TABLE 7-1: Methodologies for Assessing Recreation Facility Demand

Methodology	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages
Market-Driven Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ works best for activities for which the number of participants can be easily identified and correlated to the capacity of the facility (e.g., baseball, soccer, etc.) ➤ need to know number of participants by age cohort, facility supply, facility capacity, and current and future population by age cohort ➤ example: 1 soccer field per 80 participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ most accurate method ➤ participation rates can be adjusted to account for trends ➤ able to be applied to all geographic areas, despite differences in age composition and participation levels ➤ demand can be adjusted as new population and participant data is collected ➤ once standards are developed, they are generally easy to apply 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ cannot be applied to all activities/facilities ➤ participation rates are not able to account for pent-up demand ➤ on its' own, it is unable to provide an indication of participants' wants and needs for recreation facilities
Population Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ applied to activities/facilities where the actual number of participants is unknown ➤ example: 1 basketball hoop per 750 youth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ once standards are developed, they are generally easy to apply ➤ demand can be adjusted as new population data is collected 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ cannot fully account for changes in participation rates, trends, age composition, etc. ➤ on its' own, it is unable to provide an indication of participants' wants and needs for recreation facilities
Survey/Poll	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ public opinion surveys ➤ exit polls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ community-responsive if properly conducted ➤ presents a means for obtaining direct answers to complex questions ➤ adaptable to fit specific areas of interest and the characteristics of the community ➤ able to correlate responses to demographic characteristics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ accuracy is dependent on the quality and validity of the survey ➤ public opinion can be influenced by a number of outside factors ➤ difficult to conduct properly (survey bias, sampling error, etc.) ➤ can be costly to administer
Political/ Stakeholder Opinion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ consultation with individuals and representatives from organized groups ➤ decisions made by politicians without employing any of the methodologies noted above ➤ otherwise known as the "the squeaky wheel gets the grease" approach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ low cost ➤ easy to undertake ➤ quick response to residents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ political process can be unduly influenced by outside parties with hidden or improper agendas ➤ based on the assumption that the comments and opinions represent the community as a whole ➤ unscientific and difficult to justify ➤ can easily result in certain services being neglected ➤ can result in local variations

Demand for

7.2 INDOOR FACILITIES

7.2.1 Recreation/Community Centers

The Town currently has a supply of four (4) municipal recreation/community centers: Amherst Recreation Complex (Amherst Pepsi Center), Clearfield Community Center, North Amherst Recreation Center, and Harlem Road Community Center. The Amherst Center for Senior Services also serves as a community facility, however, its clientele is limited to residents 55 and over. Other community center facilities available to Amherst resident include: the YMCA Northeast family branch (located in PAA 5 and containing a gymnasium, indoor pool, multi-purpose rooms, weight room, etc.); and the Jewish Community Center (located in PAA 2 and containing indoor and outdoor pools, track, tennis courts, racquetball/squash, gymnasium, weight rooms, multi-purpose space, and an auditorium).

<u>Recreation/Community Center Supply</u>	
PAA 1:	0
PAA 2:	1
PAA 3:	1
PAA 4:	1
PAA 5:	1
PAA 6:	0
Total:	4

In Amherst, each community center offers a significantly different complement of amenities that serve distinctive target markets and geographic areas. For example, the Amherst and North Amherst facilities serve the entire Town due to their specialized nature (e.g., ice pads, indoor turf field), while the collection of gymnasiums, meeting rooms, and youth programs at the Clearfield and Harlem Road facilities are aimed primarily at serving the surrounding neighborhoods.

Due to their ability to serve multiple user groups, recreation/community centers are prominent and essential facilities that provide focal points for recreation and social interaction. Community centers, therefore, can play an important role in achieving other local objectives, including community safety, urban revitalization, etc. Common features include meeting and multi-purpose space, fitness facilities, gymnasiums, aquatic facilities, ice pads, outdoor playgrounds and sports fields, and often specialty facilities (e.g., theater, community resource offices, etc.). More and more, community centers are being designed to be multi-purpose and/or multi-generational, meaning that they allow for a broad range of programming (structured and unstructured activities) for all ages (preschool to seniors).

Another important characteristic of community centers is that they are usually located within densely populated and high need neighborhoods, as these are the areas that most require accessible and affordable recreation programs. Amherst’s size and population, as well as financial realities, however, make it impractical to provide community centers in close proximity to all those who use them. To maximize their accessibility, facilities and major parks should be provided with appropriate transit, sidewalk, and bicycle connections.

There is demand for additional community centers and public gymnasiums in the Town. Both the local basketball and badminton programs, in addition to many of the programs offered directly by the Town, require additional gymnasium space in order to expand their programs. Compounding this need is the fact that school gymnasiums are becoming increasingly less accessible and affordable for after-hour community usage. Furthermore, moderate demand for both gymnasiums and community halls was identified through the household survey. North Amherst, Eggertsville, and Williamsville are considered to be the areas most under-served by community facilities.

The need for a community center in the Eggertsville area has been proposed for a number of years. A separate study to assess demand for such a facility is currently underway. In February 2001, a report was released that summarized community awareness, perceptions, reactions and attitudes toward such a project. The report concluded that there is a need for a community center in this under-served area, that it be multi-functional and multi-generational, and that it be centrally located within the Eggertsville area. Previous studies have shown that the Eggertsville neighborhood has a substantial need for educational services, especially before and after-school programs and summer-break activities. Financing, the involvement of partners, and location are three of the major concerns regarding a community center in Eggertsville. Support for a center has already been offered by the Recreation Department, Boys and Girls Club, the Amherst Central School District, the State University of New York at Buffalo, the Amherst Youth Board and others who would potentially be involved in providing services or program support. Phase 2 of this project is currently underway, which involves an assessment of location, cost, partners and preliminary design concepts. The Town's Capital Improvement Program has identified monies in 2005 for the planning and design of a 17,000 square foot facility in the Eggertsville area.

Also of note, the Amherst Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan indicates that Northwest Amherst lacks community identity and focus on a clearly defined activity center. There are currently no Town-owned recreational facilities in this area.

The Youth Board Town's Capital Improvement Program has also identified the need for a 10,000 square foot facility in the Williamsville area (2004-2005). Furthermore, over the long term, a potential need has been identified by the Youth Board for new facilities in Northeast and Northwest Amherst to serve the growing population (possibly in conjunction with the development of new schools). A fourth branch library, located in Northeast Amherst, is planned for 2009. The Amherst Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan recommends that the library be located in the vicinity of the Millersport Highway/New Road/Smith Road intersection in order to support the establishment of a mixed-use activity center.

The standards proposed in the 1992 Master Plan were one community recreation center and one public gymnasium per 20,000 population. This provision level remains appropriate. The Town's current population of 116,510 translates into the need for 5.8 community centers with gymnasiums. Requirements are not expected to change dramatically over the projection period of this Plan, although 6 community centers/gymnasiums will become fully justified by the year 2010 when the Town reaches a population of 121,339.

Amherst currently contains 4 municipal community centers and 4 gymnasiums (3 at Clearfield and 1 at Harlem Road). Based on the recommended standard, this represents a deficit of 2 community centers and 2 gymnasiums over the next decade. Not only is this need justified through the standard of one facility per 20,000 residents, it is also supported by community demand, demographic projections, recreation and leisure trends, and previous studies.

Due to the multi-purpose nature of community centers, however, the need for such facilities cannot be fully evaluated without looking at their component parts. For example, the analysis in this Section of the Plan indicates that there is a need for an indoor pool in the medium term and possibly additional ice surfaces as well. Furthermore, other community facilities and services will be required in the coming years (e.g., schools, branch library, youth board facilities, seniors' outreach services, sports fields, etc.) and could possibly be developed in tandem with a community center, resulting in cost efficiencies and "one-stop shopping".

Given that the need for a community center is more pressing in the Eggertsville area, it is recommended that a center (with a gymnasium, outdoor spray pad/water play, playground, and other indoor and outdoor amenities as required) be developed in this area in the short term. With a growing population, another community center (with a gymnasium, indoor pool, playground, and other indoor and outdoor amenities as required) will be required in Northeast Amherst in the medium term.

TABLE 7-2: Recreation/Community Center Demand and Need Summary

DEMAND	Stakeholder Opinion	➤ Moderate to high demand
	Survey	➤ Community Halls – Moderate demand (2.57) ➤ Gymnasiums – Moderate demand (2.53)
	Market-Driven/Standards	➤ High demand (1 Center and 1 gymnasium per 20,000 population)
	Other Factors	➤ Benefits of multi-purpose facilities ➤ Growing participation in gymnasium sports and activities
NEED	Current Supply	➤ Recreation/community centers: 4 ➤ Gymnasiums: 4
	Current/Future Demand	➤ Recreation/community centers: 5 in short term, 6 in long term ➤ Gymnasiums: 5 in short term, 6 in long term
	Current/Future Need	➤ Recreation/community centers: 1 in short term, 1 in long term ➤ Gymnasiums: 1 in short term, 1 in long term

- Action Plans:**
- Maintain a provision level of one community/recreation center and gymnasium per 20,000 population.
 - Pending the outcome of the ongoing Community Center Feasibility Study, develop a community recreation center (with a gymnasium, outdoor spray pad, playground, and other indoor and outdoor amenities as required) in the Eggertsville area in the short term.
 - Develop a community recreation center (with a gymnasium, indoor pool, playground, and other indoor and outdoor amenities as required) in Northeast Amherst in the medium term.
 - That the Town explore partnerships with other service providers and/or organizations for the joint development, financing, operation, and/or maintenance of the recommended community centers.

7.2.2 Arenas/Ice Pads

The Town has a total of four indoor ice pads located within one facility – the Amherst Pepsi Center, which opened in 1998 and is regarded as a premier facility for ice sports. The facility is centrally located within the Town. Two of the ice surfaces remain in operation over the summer, while the other two pads are used for activities such as inline hockey and training camps. The facility is owned by the Town and operated under an agreement with a private management corporation.

<u>Arena/Ice Pad Supply</u>	
PAA 1:	0
PAA 2:	0
PAA 3:	4
PAA 4:	0
PAA 5:	0
PAA 6:	0
Total:	4

At present, the Amherst Pepsi Center is well used, with approximately 98% of its prime time ice being used by “resident” programs (e.g., Amherst Youth Hockey, Amherst Figure Skating, Federation Hockey, University of New York at Buffalo, etc.) and the remainder by casual renters. Most adult league usage occurs outside of prime time hours or after 10 p.m. at night. With all of the prime time ice being allocated to existing groups, the only opportunity for programs to be expanded or for new groups to become established is during non-prime hours.

In speaking with the youth hockey leagues, it was noted that the total number of both boys and girls participating in hockey has been steadily increasing over the past few years. The groups felt that if this trend continues, there may be a need for an additional arena somewhere near the end of the ten-year projection period. The user groups are, however, generally satisfied with the current supply of ice surfaces.

Open skate activities (e.g., general skate, shinny, hockey skills, etc.) are a priority for the Town and are offered mostly during non-prime hours. It is estimated that, for the 2001/2002 season, there were approximately 2,870 youth participants registered in Amherst Youth Hockey and Amherst Skating Club at the Amherst Pepsi Center. In addition to these two major organizations, Federation Hockey (high schools), the University of New York at Buffalo, adult hockey leagues, and casual renters also use ice time.

Focusing only on Amherst Youth Hockey and Amherst Skating Club, there is an average of 718 active participants per ice surface during the winter season. The number of participants in other organizations and leagues is unknown and, therefore, a comprehensive ratio of participants to ice pads cannot be calculated, although it is in excess of 718 per pad.

Provision standards for ice pads suggests that many larger communities operate at levels between 700 and 1,000 participants per ice surface, with communities at the higher end of this range experiencing great pressure to provide additional ice surfaces.

Prior to the development of the Amherst Pepsi Center in 1998, there was a supply of 2 public indoor ice surfaces in Amherst. With the construction of the Amherst Pepsi Center and its positioning as a premier facility within the Town and region, latent demand for ice time was satisfied and additional demand emerged. Furthermore, the development of four ice pads in one facility has further generated additional demand for tournaments and other events. As such, organizations such as Amherst Youth Hockey and Amherst Skating Club have experienced significant increases in registration over the past four years. In order to accommodate demand and maximize usage of the facility, not only has all prime ice time been booked, but groups are also being scheduled into non-prime hours (e.g., mornings, afternoons, and late evenings). **Overall, it appears that the Town’s ice surfaces are operating at a reasonable level, although there is slight pressure for additional prime time ice as indicated by some organizations.** Future demand for additional ice surfaces associated with youth participation is not expected to be significant because the size of the Town’s youth population is expected to remain consistent (or even decline) over the next decade and beyond. Female hockey participation may, however, increase slightly due to its increasing popularity. As the youth that are currently participating in ice activities enter into adulthood, however, there may be an increased demand for adult hockey and skating programs.

From the Consultant’s extensive experience in assessing ice pad requirements, 700 users per ice pad is a reasonable level of provision for Amherst. This standard is consistent with the standard proposed in the previous Master Plan and remains applicable because the existing facility is currently operating at a reasonable level with only minor demand for expansion.

Demand for

Standards, however, are only guidelines and may be adjusted based on input from user groups and facility managers. The recommended standard recognizes a proper balance with user needs and is reflective of the number of active participants that can be accommodated or scheduled on an ice pad for prime time usage. This standard also provides allowance for public skating and recognizes that non-prime hours would be available to meet other programming needs, including most adult participants.

It is recommended that a closer examination of ice surface needs be undertaken in approximately five years time (i.e., detailed needs assessment). In the meantime, it is suggested that the Town continue to monitor arena registration figures to ensure that they compare favorably with the recommended provision standard and that major user groups be contacted annually to discuss their ice time needs.

TABLE 7-3: Arena/Ice Pad Demand and Need Summary

DEMAND	Stakeholder Opinion	➤ Low demand
	Survey	➤ Moderate to low demand (2.89)
	Market-Driven/Standards	➤ Moderate to high demand (one pad per 700 participants)
	Other Factors	➤ Demand may be a result of the Amherst Pepsi Center’s success ➤ Hockey is identified as a growth sport for both males and females ➤ Adult hockey expected to grow; youth demand will remain steady
NEED	Current Supply	➤ 4 ice pads (718+ participants per ice pad)
	Current/Future Demand	➤ ice pads in short term ➤ 5 ice pads in medium to long term
	Current/Future Need	➤ Potential need for additional ice surface(s) in the medium/long term

Action Plans:

- Maintain a provision level of 700 participants per ice surface.
- Undertake a detailed needs assessment in the medium term to evaluate the need for additional ice surfaces.

7.2.3 Indoor Pools

The Town of Amherst does not have a municipally owned indoor pool. Limited public access is available to 15 indoor pools at:

- the YMCA Northeast family branch;
- the Jewish Community Center (JCC);
- the University of New York at Buffalo (North Campus); and
- local schools (Amherst MS, Amherst HS, Casey MS, Heim MS, Mill MS, Sweet Home MS, Sweet Home HS, Transit MS, Williamsville East HS, Williamsville North HS, Williamsville South HS, and Windermere ES).

<u>Public Indoor Pool Supply</u>	
PAA 1:	0
PAA 2:	0
PAA 3:	0
PAA 4:	0
PAA 5:	0
PAA 6:	0
Total:	0

The school indoor pools are used largely for curricular and varsity athletics, however, community usage is scheduled through programs offered by Community Education, local swim teams/organizations, and Town programming. Usage during school hours, however, is extremely limited despite the fact that these are often the preferred times for seniors and preschoolers to swim. Lack of access, reliability of access, affordability, and age/condition of the pools were issues raised during the public consultation process.

The benefits of indoor pools are many. First of all, they offer year-round swimming opportunities and do so in a climate-controlled environment that appeals to all ages. They also tend to be more cost effective to operate than outdoor pools due to the greater number of participants. Although operating costs per user are typically lower than outdoor pools, indoor pools have significantly greater annual operating costs and also cost more to construct. Indoor pools also serve as community facilities and people show a willingness to travel to use them. When combined with other leisure and recreation amenities (e.g., fitness facility, ice surfaces, gymnasiums, sports fields, library, etc.) indoor pools become prominent destinations, resulting in even greater usage.

The results of the household survey indicate that there is moderate demand for additional indoor aquatic facilities. This demand was echoed by the swim teams that were interviewed, who also feel that a 50-meter pool was required to allow the community to host competitions.

Swimming is one of the most popular recreational activities in Amherst (behind only walking and cycling) and can be enjoyed by persons of all ages and abilities. Climate-controlled indoor pools are especially appealing to older adults and seniors, an age group that is expected to grow by 38% between 2000 and 2020. **The popularity of swimming, an increasing aging population, the declining condition and unreliability of school pools, and the many benefits of indoor pools over outdoor pools all indicate a growing need for indoor swimming facilities in Amherst.**

A typical provision standard for public pools (indoor and outdoor combined, but not including wading pools) is one per 20,000 population. The Town currently has 2 outdoor pools. With a current population of approximately 116,510, this correlates to a need for nearly 6 indoor and/or outdoor municipal swimming pools, resulting in a deficit of 4 public pools. This Plan does not recommend any additional outdoor pool facilities.

As indicated earlier, there are 13 indoor pools in schools (including the University) that are accessible to some degree by the general public (the YMCA and JCC pools are not included in this analysis, as the Town cannot rent time in these facilities for its programs). Assuming that the 13 pools can be used by the general public approximately 25% of the time (i.e., 3.75 hours per day, year-round), this would translate into the equivalent of 3.25 indoor pools, resulting in a deficit of 0.75 indoor pools. This deficit will increase as the Town's population increases and will reach a need for 1 full pool by the year 2010.

In summary, one municipal indoor pool is needed in the Town within the next ten years. This recommendation is consistent with the 1992 Master Plan, which established a provision level of one indoor pool for the Town. As the school pools within the community appear to be only experiencing moderate levels of fatigue and overuse, the development of an indoor pool is not recommended until the medium term. This timing would also coincide with the need for a community recreation center in Northeast Amherst and possibly additional ice surfaces. **As such, it is recommended that the indoor pool be developed as part of the community**

Demand for

center in the medium term.

Demand for

TABLE 7-4: Indoor Pool Demand and Need Summary

DEMAND	Stakeholder Opinion	➤ Moderate demand
	Survey	➤ Moderate demand (2.32)
	Market-Driven/Standards	➤ High demand (1 public indoor/outdoor pool per 20,000 population)
	Other Factors	➤ No comparable facility currently exists in Amherst ➤ Greater usage and cost efficiencies compared to outdoor pools
NEED	Current Supply	➤ 3.25 indoor pools = 0 (Town) + 13 (Schools @ 25% community use)
	Current/Future Demand	➤ 4 public indoor pools (or equivalent) – medium term, assuming that 2 municipal outdoor pools remain open
	Current/Future Need	➤ 1 public indoor pool (associated with multi-purpose facility) in medium term

Action Plans:

- Maintain a provision level of one indoor or outdoor pool per 20,000 population.
- Develop an indoor pool/aquatic facility in conjunction with a community recreation center in Northeast Amherst in the medium term.

7.3 OUTDOOR FACILITIES

7.3.1 Outdoor Pools / Wading Pools / Spray Pads / Water Play Areas

The Town of Amherst operates two (2) outdoor lane pools; one at Clearfield Community Center and one at North Forest Park; each also has a wading pool/splash park area. Additional opportunities for outdoor water play are offered in two (2) wading pools located in Garrison and Island Parks in the Village of Williamsville.

<u>Outdoor Lane Pool Supply</u>		<u>Wading Pool/ Splash Park Supply</u>	
PAA 1:	0	PAA 1:	0
PAA 2:	0	PAA 2:	0
PAA 3:	0	PAA 3:	0
PAA 4:	1	PAA 4:	1
PAA 5:	1	PAA 5:	1
PAA 6:	0	PAA 6:	2
Total:	2	Total:	4

Today, few municipalities are building new outdoor pools due to their limited season, the unpredictable impact of weather on the season, and the high cost to maintain the facility in the northern environment. Due to location and function of the Town’s existing outdoor pools, they serve as neighborhood rather than community facilities. **The Town cannot afford to provide this neighborhood level of service equally across the Town and, therefore, no new outdoor pools are recommended.**

A typical provision standard for public pools (indoor and outdoor combined) is one per 20,000 population. In order to meet this level of provision, one public indoor pool has been recommended over the course of the projection period.

Wading pools can also be costly to operate and appeal to a limited age group. **This Plan recommends the replacement of the wading pools in Garrison and Island Parks in the Village of Williamsville with spray pads/water play areas at such time that the wading**

Demand for

pools require significant capital improvements.

Although the trends research shows that outdoor lane and wading pools are slowly giving way to spray pads and even indoor pools, through the household survey residents placed a higher priority on wading pools. The survey did not, however, inquire about the need for spray pads or water play areas. Residents may not be familiar with these facilities given that none exist in Amherst. As wading pools and spray pads offer similar opportunities for water play for young children, it follows that there is also a great deal of demand for spray pads.

A children's spray pad can generally be described as an outdoor play area comprised of a variety of waterspouts and jets. A spray pad provides refreshing water play for children during the summer and acts as a "cooling" feature. Water is continually draining from the paved basin and little to no water is allowed to accumulate. Providing a fun and simple design minimizes the need for supervision and increases the safety/security of younger children. Operating and maintenance costs for spray pads are relatively low. Spray pads are one of the few facilities that specifically caters to the young age group, are a meaningful passive opportunity, contribute to the diversity of experiences in a park, are family-oriented, and are benefit to low income households as they are free of charge.

A recommended standard (to be used as a guide) is a ratio of one spray pad / water play facility per 11,000 children between the ages of 0-14. The size of each facility should be determined on a site-by-site basis. There are currently over 21,300 children between the ages of 0 and 14 within the Town. The 0 to 14 age group is expected to decrease over the next 10 years to approximately 18,600. Based on the demographic projections, approximately two (2) spray pad/ water play locations could be sustained in Amherst. With the supply of a facility often comes greater desire for similar facilities, therefore, it is recommended that the Town monitor this provision standard.

If one or both of the wading pools in Garrison and Island Parks in Williamsville are redeveloped as spray pads, one additional spray pad area will be needed within Amherst, preferably to serve the central or northern areas of the Town. The functional life of the existing wading pools in Williamsville, however, is unknown, as is the probability of their replacement. Due to this uncertainty, **two (2) spray pad / water play venues are recommended for Amherst.** Given that this type of facility, although extremely popular in other jurisdictions, will be new to Amherst, it is recommended that one spray pad be built in the short term. Usage of the spray pad should be monitored before the second spray pad facility is developed in order to ensure that the need for the second facility is warranted.

The preferred location for the spray pad to be developed in the short term is in conjunction with the proposed community recreation center in Eggertsville. The lack of facilities in this area, its dense population, and the opportunity to combine the facility with a multi-purpose complex make Eggertsville an ideal location for a spray pad. The second spray pad, which is to be constructed in the short to medium term if the Eggertsville experiment is successful, is recommended in the northern half of Amherst. One potential location for the second spray pad is Paradise Park, to which the Peanut Line trail may be linked within the coming years.

TABLE 7-5: Outdoor Pool, Wading Pool, & Spray Pad/Water Play Demand and Need Summary

DEMAND	Stakeholder Opinion	➤ Moderate demand
	Survey	➤ Outdoor Pools: Moderate demand (2.48) ➤ Wading Pools: Moderate to high demand (2.20) ➤ Spray Pads/Water Play: not surveyed
	Market-Driven/Standards	➤ Outdoor & Wading Pools: Low demand ➤ Spray Pads/Water Play: High demand (1 per 11,000 children 0-14)
	Other Factors	➤ Other jurisdictions replacing outdoor/wading pools with spray pads ➤ Spray Pads/Water Play – lower operating costs, accessible, safe
NEED	Current Supply	➤ Outdoor Pools: 2 ➤ Wading Pools: 4 (including 2 in Williamsville) ➤ Spray Pads/Water Play: 0
	Current/Future Demand	➤ Outdoor Pools: 2 ➤ Wading Pools: 4 (possible replacement of 2 pools with spray pads) ➤ Spray Pads/Water Play: 2
	Current/Future Need	➤ Outdoor Pools: 0 ➤ Wading Pools: 0 ➤ Spray Pads/Water Play: 1 in short term, 1 in short to medium term

Action Plans:

- Maintain a provision level of one spray pad per 11,000 children (ages 0-14).
- Develop a spray pad in conjunction with the proposed community recreation center in Eggertsville in the short term and monitor its usage.
- Pending the successful operation of the spray pad in Eggertsville, develop a second spray pad location in North Amherst in the short to medium term, possibly in Paradise Park.
- The Town should not develop any new outdoor pools or wading pools.

7.3.2 Soccer Fields

The recent growth in soccer has been quite visible in Amherst and the nation as a whole. With this growth has come the need for additional playing fields, and most municipalities have had difficulty keeping pace with the demands. Amherst is no exception, although significant efforts have been made to improve and/or expand its inventory of soccer fields. Based upon input received through the public consultation program, however, **there remains a need for additional soccer fields to serve the current population.**

<u>Mini Soccer Field Supply</u>		<u>Full Soccer Field Supply</u>	
PAA 1:	0	PAA 1:	0
PAA 2:	1	PAA 2:	6
PAA 3:	3	PAA 3:	0
PAA 4:	2	PAA 4:	0
PAA 5:	0	PAA 5:	0
PAA 6:	0	PAA 6:	1
Total:	6	Total:	7

In 2000, 2,358 children and youth participated in the Amherst Soccer Association's (ASA) summer program. Soccer participation in Amherst has grown by an average of 5% per year over the past five years, but at a declining rate (it grew by only 3% between 2001 and 2002). This recent growth can largely be attributed to increased coverage of the World Cup, the

establishment of a national professional league, and overall growth in the 5 to 19 age cohort population (which grew by approximately 1% per year between 1990 and 2000). Although soccer has seen tremendous growth in the past decade, it appears that this is beginning to taper off and is expected to be generally commensurate with population growth rates in future years.

The prime demographic for soccer is 5 to 19. Over the next twenty years, the total population of the 5 to 19 age cohorts in Amherst is expected to remain steady, although a peak may be experienced around 2005. This trend, coupled with slowing participation rates, indicates that **the total number of soccer players will grow only very slightly over the projection period.** Although growth may continue to increase over the short term, it is expected to return to current levels in the medium and long term. Some growth in adult soccer may, however, be experienced as current youth participants move into adulthood. The popularity of indoor soccer has also increased in recent years, however, the existing indoor facility at the North Amherst Recreation Center is considered sufficient to meet current and future needs.

The Town of Amherst currently owns and operates 6 mini soccer fields and 7 full soccer fields at the following locations:

- North French Soccer Complex (5 full fields, plus 1 full and 1 mini under construction);
- Amherst Recreation Complex (3 mini fields);
- Briarhurst Park (1 full field);
- North Amherst Recreation Center Park (2 mini fields); and
- Clearfield Community Center Park (2 mini fields – fields are not used due to poor drainage and are not included in the overall inventory; a recommendation of this Plan, however, is to improve drainage in order to bring these fields back into use).

The Town's soccer fields are used 7 days a week and are considered to be at capacity during prime time hours. **This high level of usage raises concerns regarding the need to rest the fields to ensure their long-term viability.** Field monitoring and turf management is an issue in many municipalities because over-use can cause damage to fields. The best circumstance would involve a 7-day schedule with a 2-day rest period for all fields. Amherst uses its soccer fields 7 days per week and, therefore, no allowances for rest periods are made under the current situation.

An unlighted field can support approximately 10 hours of use per week (without drainage or irrigation) to 26 hours (with drainage and irrigation) without sustaining long term damage. A lighted, irrigated, and drained field is able to sustain 36 hours of usage each week. Fields containing irrigation or drainage improvements, however, require additional maintenance.

The key to quality turf is ensuring that there is adequate drainage under wet conditions and sufficient irrigation while in drought conditions. Improvements like irrigation will allow turf plants to continue to grow, set roots and develop the ability to tolerate trampling from cleated feet. Healthy, vigorously growing turf can respond to damage from foot traffic much more quickly than stressed turf. Drought stressed turf, on the other hand, eventually deteriorates and is subject to weed invasions, compaction and plant death to a point where the field cannot support the intended use without risk to the participants or taking the field out of use.

The Town is currently awaiting a legislative grant that would allow 3 full soccer fields to be developed at Paradise Park. Furthermore, a grant was recently awarded for the development of Sweet Home Park, which is proposed to include 2 soccer fields, among other amenities

(although owned by the School District, this park will be available for partial community use). These proposed developments, including the rehabilitation of the 2 mini fields at the Clearfield Community Center, would bring the Town's supply up to 8 mini fields and 12 full size fields within the next few years. Also of note, one full size field can often be divided into two mini fields due to its size, thereby maintaining flexibility amongst the supply of full and mini fields.

The ASA is the primary provider of soccer opportunities in the Town. In addition to the Town's fields, the ASA also uses 2 full and 2 mini fields at the North Campus of Erie Community College (ECC), as well as a variety of school fields for practices and their annual tournament. Due to the possible closure of the ECC North Campus, the long-term availability of these fields for community use is uncertain. **Efforts have been made by the Town to ensure that the ECC fields remain available, however, should they become inaccessible in the future, the fields will need to be replaced elsewhere within the Town.**

The number of soccer fields available for community use in Amherst are illustrated in the following table:

TABLE 7-6: Soccer Field Inventory

	# of Full Fields	# of Mini Fields
Town	7	6
ECC North	2	2
School Districts	21	3
Proposed (Town)	5	2
Total	35	13

The provision standards established in the previous Master Plan remain applicable for this Plan and are as follows:

- 1 mini field per 50 to 70 participants (ages 10 and under)
- 1 full field per 35 to 40 participants (ages 11 and over)

Based upon these standards, there is a current need for 36 to 41 full size fields and 13 to 18 mini fields. Counting all of the Town's existing and proposed fields, as well as ECC and School District fields, **the supply of existing and proposed fields is at the low end of this range.** The Town should monitor soccer participation levels on an annual basis in order to ensure that long term projected needs remain appropriate.

Since the proposed Paradise and Sweet Home Park projects have been included in the inventory, as has the redevelopment of the Clearfield Community Center fields, it would appear that there is sufficient justification for these proposals. **There is a need to develop the proposed fields as soon as possible in order to address current demand.** Furthermore, it is imperative that any new fields that are developed be of "game play" quality, as there is currently a shortage of such fields in the Town (most School District fields are suitable only for practices).

This Plan proposes the elimination of the three mini fields at the Amherst Recreation Complex in favor of ball diamonds in the medium term in order to address the need for additional girls softball diamonds. This will, however, place additional pressure on the supply of soccer fields throughout the Town. The three fields to be removed must be replaced elsewhere. The Town's 5 to 19 population is also expected to increase slightly by the year 2005 before returning to

Demand for

current levels, thereby creating additional demand in the short term.

In addition to replacing the three fields to be removed from the Amherst Recreation Complex, approximately five additional full and/or mini fields (not including those already proposed) should be developed to satisfy current and future demand and to allow for the existing fields to be properly rested and maintained. The development of the five additional fields and the three replacement fields would bring the Town’s supply to a level that is safely within the recommended standard.

A partial solution to dealing with this under-supply is to install lights at select soccer sites as one lighted soccer field is considered equivalent to two unlighted soccer fields due to increased usage potential. An ideal location for lighted fields would be North French Soccer Complex due to the quality of the fields and the absence of sensitive surrounding land uses. **It is recommended that two fields at North French Soccer Complex be lighted in the short term and that six (6) additional full and/or mini fields be developed at a site to be determined in the short to medium term.**

TABLE 7-7: Soccer Field Demand and Need Summary

DEMAND	Stakeholder Opinion	➤ High demand
	Survey	➤ Moderate demand (2.70)
	Market-Driven/Standards	➤ High demand (1 full field per 35-40 participants) (1 mini field per 50-70 participants)
	Other Factors	➤ Registration is increasing, albeit at a declining rate ➤ The 5-19 population is projected to remain steady to the year 2020 ➤ There is uncertainty surrounding the ECC (North Campus) fields
NEED	Current Supply	➤ Full: 30 = 7 (Town) + 2 (ECC) + 21 (Schools) ➤ Mini: 11 = 6 (Town) + 2 (ECC) + 3 (Schools)
	Current/Future Demand	➤ Full: 36 to 41 ➤ Mini: 13 to 18
	Current/Future Need	➤ As proposed, develop fields at Paradise and Sweet Home Parks ➤ Redevelop 2 fields at Clearfield Community Center ➤ Install lighting on 2 fields at North French Soccer Complex ➤ Develop 6 more full and/or mini fields in the short to medium term

Action Plans:

- Maintain standards of 1 mini field per 50 to 70 participants (age 10 and under) and 1 full field per 35 to 40 participants (age 11 and over). Each lighted soccer field is equivalent to 2 unlighted soccer fields due to the increased usage potential of the lighted facility.
- Continue to explore the acquisition and/or long term lease of the soccer fields located at the North Campus of Erie Community College. If these fields become unavailable for community use, they will need to be replaced elsewhere.
- Continue with plans to develop soccer fields at Paradise and Sweet Home Parks in the short term.
- Install lighting on two (2) fields at the North French Soccer Complex in the short term.
- Develop six (6) additional fields within the Town in the short to medium term. The fields should be clustered at one or two sites to reduce maintenance costs and benefit from better use of resources for the scheduling of games and tournaments.
- If and when the three mini soccer fields at the Audubon Recreation Complex are removed, they should be replaced at an alternative site.
- In order to ensure the viability of existing fields, better turf management practices are required, including making allowances for field rest periods and installing proper drainage and irrigation at key facilities.
- Drainage improvements are required in the medium term for the mini fields at Clearfield Community Center.

7.3.3 Football Fields

There is one (1) football field located on Town-owned lands at the Amherst Recreation Complex (Williamsville Junior Football and Pop Warner Football use this field). There is also a football field proposed at Sweet Home Park, which will likely become the home for Sweet Home Junior Football. All three organizations also use school fields for practices and/or games. One of the organizations also periodically uses a field at the Clearfield Community Center, however, due to the poor condition of the field it is not included in the inventory. There are also approximately seven (7) football fields at local middle and high schools.

<u>Junior Football Field Supply</u>	
PAA 1:	0
PAA 2:	0
PAA 3:	1
PAA 4:	0
PAA 5:	0
PAA 6:	0
Total:	1

Each of the three football organizations identified the need for an additional lighted football field within the Town, due largely to the poor condition and lack of availability of school fields. The household survey, on the other hand, found only moderate to low demand for additional fields.

Since the previous Master Plan, enrolment in football has increased considerably, yet no new football facilities have been developed. A standard of one field per 20,000 population is recommended in order to achieve an adequate level of provision. Based on the most recent population figures for Amherst, nearly 6 fields would be required within the Town. Assuming that the 7 school fields are available 50% of the time (supply of 3.5 fields), and accounting for the field at the Amherst Recreation Complex, this would bring the total supply to 4.5 football fields, leaving a deficit of 1.5 fields. With the upcoming development of a football field at Sweet Home Park, however, this under-supply will become approximately 0.5 fields.

As access to school fields is becoming more limited, and as a result of an expressed need from community organizations, **a third football field on municipal lands is required to satisfy demand** (in addition to fields at the Amherst Recreation Complex and Sweet Home Park). A potential solution would be to reconstruct the existing outdoor practice field at the North Amherst Recreation Center as a full-size football field suitable for use by both the Buffalo Destroyers and local junior football. The Amherst Soccer Association should also be consulted to ensure that their use of this field would not be unduly impacted. If this option is not feasible, alternate park sites should be examined for their potential to accommodate a junior football field. If school sites are considered, a long-term agreement should be developed to ensure adequate access to the field and to establish maintenance standards. Furthermore, the need for additional football fields should be reassessed if and when a school is built adjacent to Sweet Home Park if continued access to the field cannot be maintained.

TABLE 7-8: Football Field Demand and Need Summary

DEMAND	Stakeholder Opinion	➤ Moderate demand
	Survey	➤ Moderate to low demand (2.92)
	Market-Driven/Standards	➤ High demand (1 per 20,000 population)
	Other Factors	➤ Registration has increased over past decade ➤ By 2010, target age group (7 to 14) is expected to decrease by 15%
NEED	Current Supply	➤ 4.5 fields = 1 (Town) + 7 (Schools @ 50% community use)
	Current/Future Demand	➤ 6 fields
	Current/Future Need	➤ 1 field in short term (Sweet Home Park) 1 field in short to medium term (possibly at the North Amherst Recreation Center)

Action Plans:

- Maintain a standard of one football field per 20,000 population (including school fields at 50% availability).
- Ensure that a lighted junior football field is developed at Sweet Home Park in the short term. The field and associated amenities should be built with the cooperation of the football user groups in an effort to meet their specific requirements.
- A third municipal football field should be developed in the Town in the short to medium term. To meet this need, the reconstruction of the existing outdoor practice field at the North Amherst Recreation Center as a full-size football field suitable for use by both the Buffalo Destroyers and local junior football should be considered. The Amherst Soccer Association should also be consulted to ensure that their use of this field would not be unduly impacted. If this option is not feasible, alternate park sites should be examined for their potential to accommodate a junior football field. If school sites are considered, a long-term agreement should be developed to ensure adequate access to the field and to establish maintenance standards.
- The need for additional football fields should be reassessed if and when a school is built adjacent to Sweet Home Park.

7.3.4 Ball Diamonds

Equating one lighted diamond with two unlighted diamonds due to the potential for increased usage, the total number of diamonds within Amherst is as follows:

<u>Baseball Diamond Supply (unlit/lit)</u>	<u>Softball Diamond Supply (unlit/lit)</u>	<u>Practice Diamond Supply (unlit)</u>
PAA 1: 0/0	PAA 1: 1/0	PAA 1: 0
PAA 2: 7/1	PAA 2: 5/1	PAA 2: 0
PAA 3: 2/0	PAA 3: 2/3	PAA 3: 0
PAA 4: 1/0	PAA 4: 3/0	PAA 4: 1
PAA 5: 24/0	PAA 5: 0/0	PAA 5: 1
PAA 6: 5/1	PAA 6: 2/0	PAA 6: 1
Total: 39/2	Total: 13/4	Total: 3

- 50 baseball/hardball diamonds (43 in parks and 7 at schools);
- 28 softball diamonds (21 in parks and 7 at schools); and
- 33 “practice” (or “scrub”) diamonds (3 in parks and 30 at schools); practice diamonds are not included in this analysis due to their poor condition.

Many of the hardball and softball diamonds at schools are used by community groups for games and/or practices and, therefore, have been included in this analysis. It should be noted, however, that continued access to school diamonds by community organizations is not guaranteed due to the school permitting system and the lack of long term agreements. Also of note, the proposed Sweet Home Park development is expected to include a premier/senior hardball diamond that, if lighted, would increase the supply of baseball diamonds by 2.

Some Town-allocated ball diamonds can accommodate greater levels of use (e.g., Clearfield hardball diamond), while others are at capacity (e.g., Amherst Recreation Complex diamonds). Overall, it appears that the supply of diamonds is generally meeting demand, although certain age groups and types of ball are better served than are others.

The trends research indicates that participation in baseball has declined in many jurisdictions in recent years due partially to the increased popularity of soccer. This trend has not been as noticeable in Amherst, however, overall participation has not grown despite increases in the population; participation in girls and adult softball have been observed since the previous Master Plan, while Little League registration has leveled off. Stagnant or even declining registration levels are expected in the coming years due to a lack of growth in the Town’s youth population. Furthermore, it is possible that participation in adult ball may eventually suffer as a result of decreased youth participation (i.e., fewer players coming up through the ranks; “snowball effect”). Due to this uncertainty, it is important that the Town monitor participation levels to ensure that supply and demand remain in relative equilibrium.

Through the consultation process, many leagues and organizations identified the need for additional diamonds, particularly senior hardball diamonds and a softball complex. These needs are consistent with the profile of an aging population (i.e., greater needs for youth and adult ball, fewer needs for children’s ball). One potential solution to the perceived shortage of diamonds that was requested by the groups involves the installation of lighting standards on select diamonds in order to extend the hours of service. Other improvements to specific diamonds and complexes were also identified by the groups and through site visits. **It is imperative that the Town dedicate monies to existing ball complexes in the short term, including the installation of swing cages and permanent restroom facilities, and the replacement and/or improvement of fencing, backstops, irrigation, and drainage. The**

deferral of these improvements will only increase safety and usability concerns.

The previous Master Plan established standards of one hardball diamond per 80 participants and one softball diamond per 100 participants. These standards remain relevant today.

Based upon the registration figures provided by the ball organizations, there are approximately 4,000 to 4,200 players enrolled in baseball/hardball programs in the Town. Based on a supply of 50 hardball diamonds (43 Town and 7 school), this equates to 80 to 84 players per diamond. The recommended standard indicates a current need for 50 to 52.5 hardball diamonds. With the development of the lighted senior hardball diamond at Sweet Home Park in the short term, the total supply of hardball diamonds will be 52 and will match overall demand. This finding is consistent with the household survey, which found only moderate support for additional diamonds. **The development of a premier hardball diamond at Sweet Home Park is much needed.** If the size or quality of this diamond is diminished, or if its development is delayed beyond 2003/04, it is recommended that the Town develop a similar quality diamond elsewhere or improve an existing diamond to the required standard.

The Town's population of 5 to 18 year-olds is not expected to change significantly between 2000 and 2020. Furthermore, trends indicate that participation in hardball has fallen off in recent years. As such, it is anticipated that overall participation in hardball will remain steady, if not decline slightly, in the coming years. Given that the overall demand for hardball diamonds is generally equivalent to supply, no additional hardball diamonds are recommended during the projection period with the exception of the Sweet Home Park diamond. **As supply is barely meeting demand, the loss of any high quality hardball diamonds (e.g., the 90-foot senior diamond at Amherst Recreation Complex) would, however, require the Town to replace the facility elsewhere.**

Despite the adequate supply of diamonds, it is possible that pressure for additional hardball fields may be felt over the next few years. Five key factors may cause this pressure:

- (1) an inadequate distribution of diamonds throughout the Town;
- (2) an inadequate supply of diamonds for certain age groups (hence the current need for a senior hardball diamond at Sweet Home Park);
- (3) poor maintenance causing diamonds to fall into disrepair;
- (4) insufficient use of – or access to – ball diamonds located at schools; and
- (5) a desire to consolidate games and tournaments at multi-diamond complexes.

Due to these factors, **there is a need to continually monitor participation levels and the level of use of existing diamonds.** It is recommended that proposals for additional diamonds be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. If justified, one option for addressing growing demand is the installation of lights on existing fields, which allows for extended hours of operation.

There are approximately 3,000 softball registrants, which is equal to 107 players per diamond based on a supply of 28 softball diamonds (21 Town and 7 school). The recommended standard indicates a need for 30 softball diamonds – a current deficit of 2 diamonds.

The demographic characteristics affecting participation in softball are similar to those impacting on hardball, namely the lack of growth in the youth population. In addition, many softball participants are aged 20 to 54, which is an age group that is expected to decline by approximately 4% between 2000 and 2020. Nevertheless, trends research indicates that the market for softball tournaments remains strong and that there is a move towards grouping like-

facilities at one location. The best softball tournament venue in Amherst is at the Amherst Recreation Complex, however, this site is primarily suitable for female play.

The need for additional girls' diamonds has been raised through the consultation process. Given the large number of participants in the girls' program, **the development of 2 additional girls' softball diamonds is justifiable.** The development of these diamonds would bring Town-wide ball diamond supply into general equilibrium with demand. The most appropriate location for the additional diamonds would be at the Amherst Recreation Complex, where four girls' diamonds currently exist. The development of additional diamonds at this site, however, would require the relocation of three mini soccer fields, which are also in demand. It is recommended that the Town work with Amherst Girls Softball and the Amherst Soccer Association to explore potential solutions to this issue in the short to medium term.

There is a modest need for an adult softball complex within the Town. The Jurek Post site represents a suitable location for a softball venue due to its size, lack of sensitive surrounding land uses (thereby allowing for lights to be installed on the diamonds), proximity to the North Amherst Recreation Center, and location within a future growth area. Three ball diamonds are currently located on the site, however, they are in poor condition and the entire park is in need of significant upgrades. **The redevelopment of Jurek Post as an adult softball complex, however, is not recommended at this time.** Despite the park's ability to meet the demands of the adult softball market, there are currently a significant number of improvements to minor/youth ball facilities that should take priority. This recommendation is based on an assumption that the recreation needs of children and youth should be addressed before the recreation needs of adults. If the Town is able to undertake the necessary improvements and additions to youth ball complexes, or if the Town decides to adopt a mandate that is different from the direction proposed in this Plan, then the development of an adult baseball complex at Jurek Post may be reconsidered.

TABLE 7-9: Ball Diamond Demand and Need Summary

DEMAND	Stakeholder Opinion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Hardball diamonds: High demand (senior diamonds) ➤ Softball diamonds: Moderate demand
	Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Moderate demand (2.72)
	Market-Driven/Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Hardball diamonds: High demand (1 diamond/80 players) ➤ Softball diamonds: High demand (1 diamond/100 players)
	Other Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Hardball participation is stagnant and may decrease in coming years ➤ Softball participation remains steady, however, snowball effect may result in decreased interest in the future
NEED	Current Supply	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Hardball diamonds: 50 = 43 (Town) + 7 (School) ➤ Softball diamonds: 28 = 21 (Town) + 7 (School)
	Current/Future Demand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Hardball diamonds: 50 to 52.5 ➤ Softball diamonds: 30
	Current/Future Need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Hardball diamonds: 0 to 2.5 (equivalent of 2 at Sweet Home Park) ➤ Softball diamonds: 2

Action Plans:

- Maintain a standard of 1 baseball/hardball diamond per 80 participants and 1 softball diamond per 100 participants. Each lighted diamond is equivalent to 2 unlighted diamonds due to the increased usage potential of the lighted facility.
- Continue with the proposed plan to develop one lighted senior hardball diamond at Sweet Home Park.
- Ensure that the 90-foot senior hardball diamond at the Audubon Recreation Complex remains available for use by local not-for-profit baseball organizations.
- Assist local not-for-profit baseball organizations in installing swing cages in the short term in order to address safety concerns. The Town may also facilitate additional investments in youth ball complexes in the short to medium term, including the development of permanent restroom facilities, and the replacement and/or improvement of fencing, backstops, irrigation, drainage, etc.
- In conjunction with the Amherst Girls Softball Association, develop two additional girls' softball diamonds at the Audubon Recreation Complex in the short to medium term. The development of the diamonds would require the elimination of three mini soccer fields and, therefore, should not take place until the fields are replaced elsewhere.
- The redevelopment of Jurek Post as an adult softball complex is not recommended as a Town project at this time. Should the Town undertake the necessary improvements to the minor/youth ball complexes, or should the Town adopt a mandate that is different from the direction proposed in the Master Plan, then the development of an adult baseball complex at Jurek Post may be reconsidered.
- Work with local School Districts to improve school diamonds to a standard required for community usage.
- Where possible, future diamonds should be clustered at park sites to reduce maintenance costs and benefit from better use of resources for the scheduling of games and tournaments.

7.3.5 Tennis Courts

There are 19 municipal tennis courts and 61 tennis courts on school property (including the lighted courts at the University) within Amherst. There are also a number of private tennis clubs within the Town that offer indoor and outdoor tennis facilities. Assuming that 50% of the school courts are available for public use, there is a total supply of 49.5 tennis courts in the Town.

Tennis Court Supply

PAA 1:	2
PAA 2:	0
PAA 3:	4
PAA 4:	4
PAA 5:	5
PAA 6:	4

Total: 19

Trends research indicates that tennis is not a significant growth sport, however, it remains one of the more popular activities in Amherst, with approximately 18% of the population participating according to the household survey. The survey found moderate demand for additional tennis courts in Amherst. The Town offers a wide variety of tennis programs for children, youth, and adults and there is also a significant program operated at the

Demand for

University. Tennis is, however, a largely spontaneous activity that is enjoyed by people of all ages. Furthermore, tennis courts are considered to be neighborhood level facilities, requiring that they be located within a reasonable distance of the population that they serve.

Given a year 2000 population of 116,510 and a supply of 49.5 tennis courts, there is an average of one court per 2,354 residents. The previous Master Plan established a standard of one tennis court per 2,000 population, with lighted courts being counted as two courts due to extended opportunities for play. Based on the current supply, this standard yields the need for 58 tennis courts (i.e., 8 to 9 additional courts) in the short term. The standard also indicates that approximately 60 tennis courts will be required in the medium term and 62 courts in the long term.

As Planning Analysis Area 2 is the only area without tennis courts, it would be prudent to develop tennis facilities in or around this area. The location that represents the best opportunity to serve this area is newly developed Paradise Park, which is located directly adjacent to the PAA 2 boundary. The proposed community recreation center in Northeast Amherst would also be a reasonable location for tennis courts in the medium term.

The Eggerstville area is also lacking tennis facilities and, given the area’s older than average population, tennis courts would be an appropriate recreation facility for the community. Eggertsville Community Park or at the community recreation center that is recommended in the short term are potential locations for tennis courts.

Although the provision standard indicates the need for 8 courts in the short term, this figure may be slightly excessive, as demand for tennis courts appears to be only moderate. **Therefore, 4 courts are recommended in the short term (two serving PAA 2 and two in Eggertsville). The Town should also develop 2 to 4 courts in the medium term and 2 to 4 courts in the long term in order to serve the growing population.** When developing new courts, some should be designed to be multi-purpose in order to allow for basketball, street hockey, or other activities. Installing lighting standards on existing courts may also help to satisfy ongoing demand due to the increased hours of service.

TABLE 7-10: Tennis Court Demand and Need Summary

DEMAND	Stakeholder Opinion	➤ Moderate to low demand
	Survey	➤ Moderate demand (2.44)
	Market-Driven/Standards	➤ High demand (1 court per 2,000 population)
	Other Factors	➤ Not considered to be a growth sport ➤ Appeals to all ages, including ageing population
NEED	Current Supply	➤ 49.5 courts = 19 (Town) + 61 (School/University @ 50% public use)
	Current/Future Demand	➤ 54-58 courts in short term, 60 in medium term, 62 in long term
	Current/Future Need	➤ 4-8 courts in short term, 2-6 in medium term, 2-6 in long term

Demand for

- Action Plans:**
- Maintain a standard of one tennis court to 2,000 population. Each lighted court is equivalent to 2 unlighted courts due to the increased usage potential of the lighted facility.
 - Develop two tennis courts to serve Planning Analysis Area 2 in the short term (possibly at Paradise Park).
 - Develop two tennis courts to serve Eggertsville in the short term (possibly at Eggertsville Community Park or at the recommended community recreation center).
 - Develop two to six tennis courts in the medium term. Tennis courts are best supplied in groupings of two and, ideally, four.
 - Develop two to six tennis courts in the long term. Tennis courts are best supplied in groupings of two and, ideally, four.
 - Installing lighting at existing tennis courts may be explored as an alternative or partial solution to meeting demand.

7.3.6 Outdoor Basketball Courts

There are a total of ten (10) outdoor basketball courts within Amherst and Williamsville parks. There are 9.5 additional courts on school property, as well as numerous single hoops. Assuming that 50% of the school courts are available for public use, then there is a total supply of nearly 15 outdoor basketball courts in the Town.

<u>Outdoor Basketball Court Supply</u>	
PAA 1:	2
PAA 2:	1
PAA 3:	0
PAA 4:	1
PAA 5:	3
PAA 6:	3
Total:	10

The household survey results indicate moderate community support for the development of additional outdoor basketball facilities, while a number of community organizations confirmed the need. Furthermore, there is a significantly higher demand for basketball courts today than in 1992 at the time of the previous Master Plan (based on comparable household survey data). The 1992 Plan identified the need for six new basketball courts, however, none of these courts were developed. In fact, since 1992, 1.5 municipal basketball courts have been removed (Amherst Recreation Complex and Harlem Road Community Center), thereby compounding the need for additional courts.

The trends research indicates that basketball is a **growth sport** in which younger ages are beginning to participate to the point that it is one of the most favored activities for both children and youth. The flexibility of the sport (e.g., it can be played indoors or outdoors, individually or on teams) and its low cost only add to its appeal. Not only do asphalt courts provide a venue for basketball or tennis, but they can also be used for other unstructured activities such as street hockey.

There is a poor distribution of outdoor basketball courts within Amherst, with the vast majority of the municipal and school courts being located south of Maple Road (PAAs 5 and 6). **Basketball courts are very much neighborhood level facilities and there are many areas that do not have access to them, particularly within North and Central Amherst.**

The previous Master Plan established a standard of one outdoor basketball court per 5,000 population. Given the existing inventory, the Town is currently operating at a level of approximately one court for every 7,800 residents, resulting in a significant shortage. Projecting demand across the 20-year planning period of this Plan, there is a current need for 8 additional

Demand for

Recreation Facilities and Parks

courts (for a total of 23) and one additional court in each the medium and long terms. Demand for these courts over the short term is high, however, it is unlikely that the required supply of courts will be developed in the short term. **Therefore, the development of approximately 9 courts should be phased in between 2003 and 2012.**

The Town should consider locating the bulk of the required courts in Planning Analysis Areas 1, 2, 3 and 4. Potential sites include Paradise Park, Sweet Home Park, Willow Ridge Park, Jurek Post, Windsor Woods Park, Amherst Recreation Complex, and the recommended community recreation center in Northeast Amherst, among others. Each of these parks serve distinct neighborhoods and would provide ideal locations for basketball activities. The Town should consult with surrounding residents/neighborhood associations prior to developing basketball courts at these parks.

TABLE 7-11: Outdoor Basketball Court Demand and Need Summary

DEMAND	Stakeholder Opinion	➤ Moderate demand
	Survey	➤ Moderate demand (2.48)
	Market-Driven/Standards	➤ High demand (1 per 5,000 population)
	Other Factors	➤ Basketball is a growth sport ➤ Offer venues for unstructured youth recreation
NEED	Current Supply	➤ 15 courts = 10 (Town) + 9.5 (School @ 50% public use)
	Current/Future Demand	➤ 23 courts in short term, 24 in medium term, 25 in long term
	Current/Future Need	➤ 9 courts in short to medium term, 1 in long term

Action Plans:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain a standard of 1 outdoor basketball court per 5,000 population. • Develop 9 outdoor basketball courts over the short and medium term. The bulk of these courts are required in the northern and central portions of Amherst. Potential sites include Paradise Park, Sweet Home Park, Willow Ridge Park, Jurek Post, Windsor Woods Park, Audubon Recreation Complex, and the recommended community recreation center in Northeast Amherst, among others. • Develop 1 outdoor basketball court over the long term. 	

7.3.7 Play Structures

There are sixteen (16) creative and sixteen (16) traditional play locations within a total of nineteen (19) municipal parks in Amherst and Williamsville. Most parks contain both creative and traditional play equipment. Furthermore, there are seventeen (17) creative and ten (10) traditional play locations at seventeen (17) local schools that are also available for community use. In Amherst, school sites play a very important role in satisfying playground needs and, therefore, each school play location is counted as one full location. As a result, there are a total of 36 play structure locations (19 municipal and 17 school). This represents a significant increase from the supply of 28 noted in the previous Master Plan.

Over the past decade, new **playground safety requirements** have been developed, thereby causing municipalities and schools to replace certain play structures and install additional safety measures on others. In some cases, these standards have resulted in the replacement of traditional play equipment with creative play structures. The Town of Amherst and the local

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School Districts are currently working toward fully implementing these standards.

The household survey found a moderate to high level of demand for playgrounds, ranking behind only parkland/open space and trails. Conversely, the interviews with community organizations, Town administration, and politicians indicated that there is a pressing need to for significant improvements to existing playground equipment. In its Capital Improvement Program, the Town Board has dedicated funds to replace playground equipment in a number of parks in order to meet the new safety requirements.

Traditional (e.g., swings, teeter totters, etc.) and creative (e.g., integrated play systems with slides, climbers, bridges, etc.) play structures are located in nearly every neighborhood and community level park, with the exception of those intended strictly for passive use. Because of this, an under-supply of play structures is usually a result of a shortage of parks or poor distribution. It is for this reason that two provision standards are used to assess playground need: one based on distance and another on a population threshold.

The previous Master Plan recommended that there should be a play structure within a 1500-foot radius of each Amherst resident's home (uninterrupted by major barriers) or one playground per 3,000 population. Due to the mixed urban and rural landscape of the Town, it is now felt that a slightly larger radius is more appropriate for Amherst. A new radius of 1/3 of a mile (1760 feet) is recommended. As the purpose of this methodology is to identify under-served areas, as opposed to quantifying overall need, it is explored more fully in the "Parks and Open Space" assessment contained later in this Section.

The standard of 1 playground per 3,000 population continues to be appropriate for Amherst. Based on this standard, there is a current need for approximately 39 playground locations (based on a year 2000 population of 116,510), resulting in a current under-supply of 3 playground locations. Projected population growth dictates that one additional play structure location will be required approximately every 5 years over the projection period.

In the short term, the installation of playground equipment is proposed for Sweet Home Park and Eggertsville Community Park, bringing the overall supply up to 38 locations. This Plan also recommends the installation of play structures in College Park and Windsor Woods in the medium term. Cindy Drive Play Area is another potential location for play equipment, as are the recommended community recreation centers in Eggertsville and Northeast Amherst. If play structures are established at each of the aforementioned parks and facilities, this will result in an overall supply of 39 to 40 play locations in the short term and 40 to 43 play locations in the medium term. This more than satisfies the need for 6 additional locations by the end of the projection period. If play equipment is not installed at all of the parks and facilities noted above there will be a need to ensure that the equipment is installed elsewhere, preferably in an area that has a shortage of playgrounds.

Although this analysis indicates that no additional play structures are required in the Town (other than those that are currently proposed or recommended), further investigation regarding the distribution of playgrounds is required. As noted above, **since the supply and location of parkland largely dictate the distribution of play equipment, the playground gap analysis has been placed in Section 7.5.2.** This analysis of parkland distribution identifies areas within the Town that are under-served with regard to parkland and play structures. In order to correct these deficiencies, the overall supply of play structures will have to be increased.

TABLE 7-12: Playground Demand and Need Summary

DEMAND	Stakeholder Opinion	➤ Moderate to high demand
	Survey	➤ Moderate to high demand (2.19)
	Market-Driven/Standards	➤ High demand (1 playground per 3,000 population)
	Other Factors	➤ Many existing play structures require improvements ➤ Must also ensure an adequate distribution of play structures
NEED	Current Supply	➤ 36 locations = 19 (Town) + 17 (Schools)
	Current/Future Demand	➤ 40 locations in short term, 41 in medium term, 42 in long term
	Current/Future Need	➤ 4 locations in short term, 1 in medium term, 1 in long term ➤ Additional play structures may be required as a result of the gap analysis in Section 7.5.2 of this Plan

Action Plans:

- See recommendations in Section 4.2 regarding the inspection, replacement and maintenance of playground equipment.
- That the Town adopt a standard of one playground for every 3,000 population or within a 1/3-mile radius (in built-up residential areas), whichever is greater. The radius should be uninterrupted by barriers such as major roads, railways, and watercourses.
- Continue with plans to install play structures at Sweet Home Park and Eggertsville Community Park in the short term.
- Install play structures in College Park, Windsor Woods, and the recommended community recreation centers in Eggertsville and Northeast Amherst in the short to medium term. A combination of creative and traditional play equipment at each site is recommended. See recommendations in Section 7.5.2 regarding future municipal parkland requirements and areas with play structure deficiencies.
- In consultation with neighborhood residents, explore the need to install play structures at Cindy Drive Play Area in the short term.
- The Town shall identify and acquire appropriate sites within the six (6) geographic areas that have been identified as being deficient with regard to neighborhood parkland and play structures (see Section 7.4.2).
- In cooperation with community partners, work towards making playgrounds and play equipment accessible for people with disabilities.

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7.3.8 Golf Courses

There are currently three (3) municipal golf courses in the Town of Amherst: the Audubon Golf Course (18 holes); the Audubon Par-3 (9 holes); and the Oakwood Golf Course (9 holes). In addition to the Town-owned and operated courses, there are six privately owned courses in Amherst, two of which are open to the public. There are a total of 135 holes at 9 municipal, public, and private courses.

<u>Municipal Golf Supply (courses/holes)</u>		<u>Non-Municipal Golf Supply (courses/holes)</u>	
PAA 1:	0	PAA 1:	1/9
PAA 2:	1/9	PAA 2:	1/18
PAA 3:	2/27	PAA 3:	1/18
PAA 4:	0	PAA 4:	1/18
PAA 5:	0	PAA 5:	0
PAA 6:	0	PAA 6:	2/36
Total:	3/36	Total:	6/99

An inventory of golf courses is shown in Table 7-13 and illustrated on Map 7-1.

TABLE 7-13: Golf Courses in Amherst

#	NAME	PAA	HOLES	OWNERSHIP	ACCESIBILITY	ACREAGE
1	Audubon Golf Course	3	18	Town	Public	141.16
2	Audubon Par 3	3	9	Town	Public	28.00
3	Country Club of Buffalo	6	18	Private	Private	256.80
4	Evergreen Golf Course	1	9	Private	Public	59.90
5	Glen Oak Golf Course	2	18	Private	Public	175.27
6	Oakwood Golf Course	2	9	Town	Public	59.27
7	Park Country Club	6	18	Private	Private	149.73
8	Transit Valley Country Club	4	18	Private	Private	150.60
9	Westwood Country Club	3	18	Private	Private	172.60
	TOTAL		135			1193.33

Source: Town of Amherst Planning Department, 2001

The 1992 Plan recommended that an 18-hole golf course be developed between 1995 and 2000 or that the Town acquire an existing non-municipal course. The previous Plan also recommended against the Town constructing a municipal driving range, indicating that the private sector was best suited to providing this type of facility. Recently, the Town Board has approved improvements to drainage, cart paths and sand traps at the Audubon Golf Course and is negotiating the construction of a driving range on private property adjacent to the site.

There has also been a great deal of discussion about the need for an additional Town-owned golf course. In response to this demand, the Town has suggested that nine additional holes be developed at Oakwood Golf Course in the year 2003.

The household survey undertaken for this Plan found only moderate to low demand for a new or expanded public golf course in the Town. In fact, when asked if the Town should build a new public golf course, 49% disagreed while only 29% agreed (the remainder did not offer an opinion). Interestingly, the 1992 Master Plan survey found a much higher level of demand for a new or expanded golf course, which indicates that the demand for additional golf facilities is currently not as strong as it has been in the past. Golf remains, however, one of the most popular recreational activities for Amherst residents (the household survey indicates that 26% of residents golf).

Golf is considered to be a growth sport that appeals to all ages. Since 1986, the number of golfers in the United States has increased by 34%. A National Golf Foundation report has found that 44% of U.S. golfers are between the ages of 18 and 39, 27% are age 50 and over, 21% are between 40 and 49, while 8% are between the ages of 12 and 17.² This is significant because the age groups that currently comprise 71% of all U.S. golfers are expected to increase by approximately 12% over the next ten years and 21% over the next twenty years in Amherst.

One of the key variables in explaining the demand for golf is the percentage of a population over age 65, which has an impact on demand, nearly twice that of any other variable³. It is forecasted that Amherst's 65+ cohort will increase by approximately 8% over the next ten years and 38% over the next twenty years. **Clearly, demographic shifts over the next 20 years paint a very positive picture for golf, if there is an adequate supply of facilities.**

The previous Master Plan established a standard of one hole per 2,000 population, which was based on a provision level recommended by the State of New York. This standard includes only public golf courses, of which there are currently 63 holes (36 municipal and 27 non-municipal). The private courses in Amherst cater to a completely different clientele than do the public courses, therefore, they are not included in the calculations. The 1:2,000 standard indicates the need for approximately 58 holes at the current time, translating to a surplus of 5 holes.

According to the National Golf Foundation⁴ (NGF), the average number of golf holes (public and private) per 100,000 population among the nation's Metropolitan Statistical Areas is 80, resulting in a provision level of one hole per 1,250 people. Furthermore, the NGF indicates that 72% of golf courses in America are public, which equates to approximately one public golf hole per 1,750 population. The 1:1,750 standard indicates that there is a need for approximately 67 public golf holes at the current time, resulting in a deficit of 4 holes.

By averaging the results of the two standards, no new or expanded public golf courses would be required in Amherst. The popularity of golf, however, is increasing rapidly and the demographics are favorable for this trend to continue into the future. **It would appear that current needs are being met, although use of public courses is approaching capacity. The growing popularity of this sport may, therefore, result in the need for a new or expanded public golf course in the future.**

It bears noting that public golf courses require a more intensive financial investment by the Town to develop and operate than do most other community recreation facilities. For example, approximately two-thirds of the maintenance effort of the Parks Division of the Amherst Highway Department is allocated to the Town golf courses; the remainder goes to the maintenance of baseball diamonds, playgrounds, etc. Due to the specialized nature of the golf industry and the high costs that are involved, there is a heavy reliance on user fees (i.e., green fees and memberships) and an expectation that, at the very least, public golf courses be financially self-supporting.

Furthermore, golf courses are one area in which the public and private sectors are placed into direct competition, although the target markets are often different. Public golf courses, although typically considered to be profit centers for municipalities, are often built with public funds or bonds. It is often argued that this creates an unfair disadvantage for privately developed courses.

² National Golf Foundation, 2001. Available: <http://www.ngf.org/faq/>

³ Iseminger, J. November 6, 1998. *Golf course development study finds surprises*. University of Wisconsin-Madison Press. Available: <http://www.news.wisc.edu/view.html?get=645>

⁴ National Golf Foundation, 2001. Available: <http://www.ngf.org/faq/>

As indicated earlier, Oakwood Golf Course has the potential to be expanded to 18 holes. Although the current need for golf facilities is generally being met by existing courses, this expansion can be justified based upon the increasing popularity of the sport, Amherst's demographic profile, and future needs. **If the Town takes the position that the expansion of Oakwood would not unduly affect the viability of non-municipal golf courses in the Town, then the expansion of Oakwood Golf Course in the medium term is a reasonable option. The expansion of the golf course should not, however, come at the expense of higher priority action plans in this Plan, especially those that are intended to address current deficiencies as opposed to future needs.**

Prior to expanding the course, however, it is recommended that a feasibility/market study be undertaken in order to examine the anticipated costs and revenues associated with the development and to ensure that there is sufficient need for additional golf facilities within the area. Although it is anticipated that the addition of 9 holes at Oakwood Golf Course will be sufficient to serve the Town over the course of the projection period, continued monitoring of participation levels is recommended.

It is understood that the Town is currently examining the opportunity to acquire land adjacent to the Audubon Golf Course for the development of a driving range. The question of whether or not to develop a municipal driving range is not addressed in this Plan as it is a matter that is better left to the Recreation Commission and Town Board.

TABLE 7-14: Golf Course Demand and Need Summary

DEMAND	Stakeholder Opinion	➤ Demand is mixed; controversial issue
	Survey	➤ Moderate to low demand (2.56 & 2.89)
	Market-Driven/Standards	➤ Low demand (1 hole per 1,750 to 2,000 population)
	Other Factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Despite operating costs, golf courses can be revenue generators ➤ Golf is a growth sport and appeals to all ages ➤ Demographic analysis indicates that golf participation may increase ➤ Possible competition with private enterprise
NEED	Current Supply	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 63 public holes = 36 (municipal) + 27 (non-municipal) ➤ 72 private holes (not included in demand calculations)
	Current/Future Demand	➤ 31-42 municipal holes in short/medium term, 37-45 in long term
	Current/Future Need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ municipal holes in the long term, however, other factors may ➤ create this need during the medium term

Action Plans:

- Develop nine (9) additional public golf holes within the Town in the medium term, ideally at Oakwood Golf Course. A feasibility/market study should first be undertaken to examine the anticipated costs and revenues associated with expanding Oakwood Golf Course to 18 holes and to ensure that there is sufficient need for additional golf facilities in Amherst. The expansion of the golf course should not, however, come at the expense of higher priority action plans in this Master Plan, especially those that are intended to address current deficiencies as opposed to future needs.

Action Plans:

- All net profits from the Town's municipal golf courses shall be directed into a general recreation fund (as opposed to a specific golf course improvement fund) so that monies may be used for capital improvements to any and all facilities and fields (including golf courses) under the jurisdiction of the Recreation Department.
- Capital funds for improvements to existing recreation facilities and for the development of new facilities are in short supply at the present time. In this regard, the Master Plan supports a variety of creative approaches, including partnerships with other municipalities, community organizations, not-for profit providers and the private sector. The Town may also wish to consider revenue-generating activities, such as the operation of a golf driving range, as another option to raise capital funds for recreation. Although the Master Plan does not consider the development and operation of a driving range to be a high priority, such an initiative could be supported if it would improve other recreation opportunities through bolstering the general recreation fund and not draw focus or money away from other leisure activities.

7.3.9 Skate Parks

Skate parks (often referred to as skateboard or stunt parks) offer paved areas with specially constructed ramps, quarter pipes, rails and other structures specifically for rollerblading, skateboarding and/or freestyle BMX biking. Skate parks can be user pay or free of charge, indoor or outdoor, and portable/temporary or fixed/permanent. There are no municipal skate parks in the Town of Amherst.

<u>Skate Park Supply</u>	
PAA 1:	0
PAA 2:	0
PAA 3:	0
PAA 4:	0
PAA 5:	0
PAA 6:	0
Total:	0

Skateboarding and rollerblading are increasingly popular activities and are no longer considered to be fads. These activities, however, often occur in open public plazas or on private lands, resulting in conflicts with other activities. Many municipalities and volunteer organizations have developed skate parks in response to these conflicts and to provide recreational opportunities for children and youth.

One of the most important criteria for a successful skate park is the commitment from the community. For example, often the development of a skate park is the result of a grassroots fundraising effort. Even if a municipality provides the funding for the ramps and space for the facility, the community is usually relied upon to enforce proper behaviors within the park and to assist with maintenance efforts. Municipal supervision is not required at “skate at your own risk” parks, while supervised parks often require registration, waivers, and approved safety equipment in order to reduce risk or liability concerns. Most participants are respectful of the opportunity to use such a facility and, as a result, the parks are kept in good condition due to a sense of pride and community stewardship. Generally, the greater the commitment from the community, the greater the success of the project.

The preferred approach to skate park development for Amherst would be to build two or three modestly sized parks around the Town, rather than building one large facility. This concept substantially decreases overcrowding at any one park and better serves individual neighborhoods. The “neighborhood” approach may also create increased opportunities for

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community fundraising and stewardship (residents will feel a greater sense of ownership for a neighborhood facility than a Town-wide facility).

That being said, the need for a skate park is relatively untested in the Town. The household survey indicated only moderate to low demand for a skate park, however, this is likely not a true measure of demand as the surveys were completed by adults, not youth who are the target demographic. **Demand for skate parks is best gauged by speaking directly with local children and teens.** Furthermore, proposals to develop skate parks are often led by groups of concerned citizens or youth organizations. This has not yet been the case in Amherst.

Skateboarding is one of the fastest growing sports in the United States and the demand for skate parks is high. Skate parks appeal to older teens – a demographic that has traditionally been challenging to serve. The primary demographic for skateboarding is males ages 10 to 20. According to the population projections, this age group is expected to increase in Amherst by approximately 11% over the next ten years (from 18,580 youth in 2000 to 20,649 in 2010).

In the absence of the desired level of community commitment, it is difficult to recommend the development of a skate park in Amherst. Still, the emergence of skateboarding, inline skating and freestyle BMX riding cannot be ignored. They are activities that are here to stay, whether or not dedicated facilities are built to contain them. **It is, therefore, recommended that additional consultation be undertaken with the children and youth of Amherst in order to identify the need for a skate park.** Various community organizations and private enterprises should also be contacted to explore fundraising opportunities if the need for a skate park is justified. More research may also be required to address issues related to skate park design, staffing, location, and liability. With the population of 10 to 20 year-olds in the Town increasing nearly as fast as the popularity of skateboarding, it is imperative that such efforts be undertaken in the short term.

Public skate parks should be placed in centrally located areas, close to other recreational activities, and highly visible from the street. Public amenities such as telephones, water fountains, and restrooms should also be in close proximity. Furthermore, skate parks should be accessible to non-drivers, preferably along a bus route or within easy walking distance to residential areas. Parking is not a major issue, though some should be provided along with bicycle racks. The preferred location for a skate park is within an existing park or recreational area – the Amherst Recreation Complex and Clearfield Community Center are potential locations.

TABLE 7-15: Skate Park Demand and Need Summary

DEMAND	Stakeholder Opinion	➤ Unknown
	Survey	➤ Skateboard/Rollerblade parks - Moderate to low demand (2.76) ➤ BMX / Off-road biking facilities - Moderate to low demand (2.91)
	Market-Driven/Standards	➤ N/A
	Other Factors	➤ The popularity of skateboarding is increasing and is here to stay ➤ Appeals to the “hard to reach” segment of older youth ➤ Controversial issue due to poor image of skaters ➤ Issues with liability and operation need to be addressed
NEED	Current Supply	➤ 0 skate parks
	Current/Future Demand	➤ Additional consultation/research is required

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	Current/Future Need	➤ To be determined
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Action Plans:

- The Town of Amherst should consult with local children and youth in the short term in order to identify the need for a skate park in the Town. At this time, fundraising opportunities should be explored with local residents, groups, organizations, and businesses.

7.3.10 Leash Free Zones (Dog Parks)

Leash free zones are designated areas for dog owners who wish to run their dogs off leash. There are currently no leash free zones in Amherst.

Dog parks are quickly becoming a reality of urban living. With municipal by-laws regulating the use of leashes, dedicated off-leash areas provide residents with the opportunity to let their dogs to run free. The development of leash free zones, however, is controversial. Primary issues include enforcement, fencing, and disposing of fecal matter.

<u>Leash Free Zone Supply</u>	
PAA 1:	0
PAA 2:	0
PAA 3:	0
PAA 4:	0
PAA 5:	0
PAA 6:	0
Total:	0

It is recommended that the Town explore the possibility of creating a leash free zone at Margaret-Louise Park on a trial basis, which is an ideal site for a dog park due to its location, abundance of space, and low level of use. It is also suggested that the Town investigate other potential sites for leash free zones; sites should not be limited to Town-owned property, but may include any under-utilized properties that meet the guidelines for leash free zones. A key aspect to the success of the leash-free zones in other municipalities is the involvement of community groups in the establishment, maintenance and ongoing management of the zones. In this regard, it is suggested that the Town identify groups that would be willing to be involved with such an area.

The following are guidelines that may be used in the establishment and management of leash free zones:

- (1) Environmentally sensitive sites are not appropriate.
- (2) Sites that, due to their unique properties attract high volumes of visitors are not appropriate. While the Town will endeavor to accommodate residents and their dogs, people come first.
- (3) The impact of leash free zones on surrounding residents and park users should be minimized.
- (4) Leash free zones should, wherever possible be located on main access roads in order to minimize traffic impacts on surrounding communities (physical separation from all roadways is a requirement for any site).
- (5) Leash free zones must be provided with a physical barrier (man-made or natural) which will provide all park users with a clear delineated area for the leash free zones.
- (6) Adequate signage must be provided at every entry point to the zone to alert park users of their existence.

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- (7) Leash free zones should be sited so as to minimize crossover traffic, including but not limited to pedestrians/cyclists, picnickers, and playing fields.
- (8) Leash free zones should avoid backing onto residential properties.
- (9) All leash free zones must be subject to periodic evaluation including input from surrounding residents to ensure that they continue to adhere to the guidelines.

TABLE 7-16: Leash Free Zone Demand and Need Summary

DEMAND	Stakeholder Opinion	➤ Unknown
	Survey	➤ Not surveyed
	Market-Driven/Standards	➤ N/A
	Other Factors	➤ Increasing in popularity ➤ Concerns with enforcement, fencing, and disposal of fecal matter
NEED	Current Supply	➤ 0 leash free zones
	Current/Future Demand	➤ Additional consultation/research is required, however, a leash free area at Margaret-Louise Park is recommended on a trial basis
	Current/Future Need	➤ 1 or more leash free zones

Action Plans:

- The Town of Amherst should explore the possibility of creating a leash free zone at Margaret-Louise Park in the short term on a trial basis. Pending the outcome of the trial, the Town should develop additional leash free zones as needed. Public consultation is the preferred method for determining need.
- The Town should engage community groups interested in the establishment, maintenance and ongoing management of the zones.
- The Town should, at a minimum, follow the guidelines proposed in this Plan when establishing and/or operating a leash free zone.

7.3.11 Additional Recreational Facilities

From time to time over the period of this Plan, there will be various recreational pursuits that will need to be reviewed and analyzed to determine overall facility demand. Trends and fads will need to be monitored in order that the Town does not commit funds to a sport or activity that may wane in interest in the future. Facilities for specialized activities such as “disc/frisbee golf” and “bocce” (currently not provided in the Town) are examples of recreation activities that may need to be considered based upon demands within the Town. Ongoing communication and cooperation with local groups and organizations will assist in determine recreation requirements for the future.

7.4 PARKS & OPEN SPACE

Parks provide the land base for both structured and unstructured outdoor recreational activities, such as baseball, soccer, swimming, and tennis. Parks also provide space for many of the Town’s indoor facilities, such as the Amherst Pepsi Center. Conversely, open space areas – most often associated with greenways, natural areas and public environmental lands – provide

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opportunities for more passive recreational pursuits, such as picnicking, hiking, biking, and nature appreciation.

7.4.1 Parks Hierarchy

Existing Standards

The 1992 Master Plan, building upon the Town's Open Space Acquisition Plan (1988), established standards for the overall provision of parkland and provided a hierarchy for the Town's parks system. The appropriateness of the standards is largely based on the known and projected demographic characteristics of the population, expressed local interests, and comparison with recognized national and state standards for recreational lands and facilities. Proper standards should be sufficient to accommodate the recreational facility, trail, playing field, and open space requirements of the Town's population.

The establishment of local parkland standards should be considered as a general guideline for acquiring and developing land for recreation over the life of this Plan. It is probable that all recreational needs cannot be optimally met and that future trends and socio-demographic changes will vary from those projected, thereby impacting on parkland requirements. Standards must not be used indiscriminately and should be adjusted over time based on a host of factors. Furthermore, standards imply little about the characteristics of parks, such as their locations, accessibility, shapes, topography, environmental significance, etc. Standards do, however, act as valuable guidelines upon which priorities for parkland acquisition and development can be rationalized. It is important to ensure that the standards that were identified in the previous Master Plan remain appropriate for the present and future needs of the community.

Previously, standards were classified by the following park types:

- Neighborhood Parks (2 acres per 1,000 population)
Neighborhood parks are generally highly developed and contain active recreation facilities such as playing fields, courts, playgrounds and some passive recreation features. Frequently, school sites that are available for community use serve a portion of this function. A minimum size of 10 acres is recommended for efficiency of development, maintenance and operation. It is also important that this type of park be located within walking or biking distance of the neighborhood that it serves.
- Community Parks (8 acres per 1,000 population)
Community parks are intended to serve several neighborhoods and typically contain a mix of passive and active recreational areas. Intensely developed facilities (e.g., sports complexes) are also a common characteristic. A minimum size of 25 acres is recommended.
- Special Use Parks (4.5 acres per 1,000 population)
Special use parks include golf courses, outdoor theaters, museums, interpretive sites, arboreta, gun and archery ranges, linear parks, trailways and similar areas that are frequently provided at the municipal level.

The standard adopted in the 1992 Master Plan was 15 acres per 1,000 population and recommended that Amherst maintain four classifications for open space including neighborhood parks, community parks, regional spaces, and special use spaces.

The National Recreation and Park Association has historically recommended between 6.25 to 10.5 acres of parkland per 1,000 population for Neighborhood and Community type parks with an additional 15 to 20 acres per 1,000 being required to meet regional park space needs.

Proposed Standards

Over the past decade, numerous forces and trends have had a profound affect on the parks and recreation profession and philosophies about the extent and nature of municipal involvement in recreation. The decline in funding from state and federal levels, the growth of public-private partnerships, increasing awareness of environmental issues, increasing pressures on community and social support services, a greater emphasis on customer service, an aging population, and the emergence of new recreational activities are just a few of the changes that have affected municipal recreation in recent years.

The previous standards and classifications are limited in their application today because they do not adequately account for the large local and state parks that are now located (or are currently being developed) in the Town (e.g., Nature View Park, Amherst State Park, etc.). For instance, the 1992 Master Plan park inventory noted that there were approximately 1,230 acres of municipal parkland in the Town (not including 449 acres of golf courses). This total, however, did not fully include publicly accessible conservation areas (e.g., TOA Conservation Area, Oakwood Conservation Area, and a large portion of Great Baehre Conservation Area) or leased parkland (e.g., Getzville & North Amherst Fire Departments, Mel Ott Ball Complex, and Jurek Post). In addition, over the past decade, the Town and State have acquired a significant amount of passive parkland in Amherst, including Nature View Park, Amherst State Park, and others. These factors account for the differences in the recorded park areas in 1992 (1,230 acres) and in 2002 (approximately 2,664 acres).

Furthermore, the former classifications included land dedicated to golf courses, which have significantly different characteristics than public parks and open spaces. For example: a fee is charged to use golf courses; public courses are in direct competition with the private sector; and they are high acreage land uses that can significantly affect parkland standards/supply. As such, the inclusion of golf courses into a parkland standard is inappropriate for Amherst and overall golf course provision should be based on a more involved assessment of need. Similarly, the inclusion of museums, arboreta, interpretive nature centers, gun and archery ranges, etc. into an overall standard is also inappropriate for Amherst – the use of a parkland to population ratio for these uses could be costly for the municipality and some may be more appropriately provided by the private sector. A facility to population ratio could better address these special uses in order to quantify their potential use and cost to the Town.

In addition, the acquisition and development of trails should not be influenced by an overall parkland standard because their supply should be based on the need to provide linkages between parks and natural areas rather than on a ratio of acreage to population.

There are also greater pressures on municipal operating budgets, which, coupled with the trend toward the development of larger community-wide sports facilities and parks, translates into lower supply and demand of neighborhood-based parkland (especially tot lots and small, remnant park parcels). There remains, however, a reliance on local schools to provide features

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such as playground equipment, tennis courts, open space, and other outdoor facilities for spontaneous unorganized play.

The park classification scheme that is recommended by this Plan for the Town of Amherst is shown in Table 7-17.

Overall, it is recommended that the Town maintain a minimum standard of 4.25 acres of publicly accessible neighborhood and community parks per 1,000 population (this standard does not include public golf courses, passive parks, nature preserved, or trailways). The Town's current level of supply for neighborhood and community parks is 3.98 acres per 1,000 population, indicating a slight deficit. A provision standard has not been provided for "passive" parks as these lands are provided as opportunities are presented.

TABLE 7-17: Town of Amherst – Parkland Classification System

Category	Description	Provision Level	Facilities/Amenities	Location
Neighborhood Parks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - intended to serve as the recreational and social focus of neighborhoods - may provide a combination of active and limited passive opportunities - ideally suited to encourage users to walk or bicycle to the park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 0.75 acre per 1,000 population - optimal size is 4 to 8 acres 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - playground equipment - benches & picnic tables - walkways/pathways - basketball court and/or tennis courts - no more than one ball diamond or one soccer field for unstructured play - on-street parking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - service radius of approximately 1/3 mile uninterrupted by major roadways or other physical barriers - school sites are often a suitable substitute for a Neighborhood Park as long as accessibility is ensured
Community Parks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - intended to meet the needs of the broader community (from several neighborhoods to the entire Town) - may provide active and some passive recreation opportunities - typically include multiple uses, although may include single-use parks where groupings of like-facilities are provided - characterized by their larger size and grouping of facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 3.5 acres per 1,000 population - optimal size is 20 to 50 acres, but size is generally determined by the amount of land required to accommodate the desired use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - playground equipment - groupings of competitive ball diamonds and/or soccer fields (heavily programmed) - basketball courts and/or tennis courts - recreation facilities such as community centers, swimming pools, arenas - picnic pavilions - linkages to trailway system - off-street parking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - service radius of ½ to 3 miles - accessible by a large proportion of the population and serve two or more neighborhoods - located along an arterial or collector road - may be developed in conjunction with a school property
Passive Parks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - intended to serve all Amherst residents and also to attract people from outside the municipality - focus is on preserving unique cultural, heritage and natural landscapes and open space - provide passive recreational opportunities although limited active recreational components may be permitted as secondary uses - includes publicly owned woodlands, wetlands, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - supply is determined more by the need to preserve natural landscapes than to meet an overall provision standard (i.e., provision is not correlated with population) - size varies, but land area is typically larger than a community park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - nature trails - nature/interpretive centers - horticultural gardens - open space - unique natural, physical, aesthetic, historical, or cultural features - may contain limited, low-impact recreation facilities if the area in which the park is located is under-served with regard to such facilities and the ecological integrity of the park is maintained 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - service radius is the entire Town and beyond

for

Recreation Facilities and Parks

The following table illustrates the classifications for all parks within the Town of Amherst and the Village of Williamsville. The classification of parks was based on the facilities/features within the parks, as well as its purpose, service radius and size.

TABLE 7-18:
Classification of Developed & Undeveloped Parks in the Town of Amherst (including Williamsville)

Neighborhood Parks		Community Parks		Passive Parks	
Park	Acres	Park	Acres	Park	Acres
Briarhurst Park	7.40	Amherst Highway Department	2.00	Alran Woods*	1.40
Campus Drive Recreation Area	2.20	Amherst Veterans Canal Park**	76.30	Amherst Museum Colony Park	35.00
Cindy Drive Play Area	1.55	Amherst Recreation Complex	11.50	Amherst State Park*	77.00
Creekwood Park	10.20	Central Amherst Baseball Complex	3.73	Bassett Park	35.22
Dana Heights Recreation Area	0.62	Clearfield Community Center (Park)	19.50	Canalway Trail Park*	15.95
Dellwood Park	4.73	Garnet Part	11.30	College Park*	21.24
Eggertsville Community Park*	4.10	Getzville Fire Department	5.00	Dann Lake Park	172
Fetto Park	2.26	Island Park	5.60	Glen Park	10.15
Garrison Park	2.30	Jurek Post	11.48	Great Baehre Conservation Area	410.05
Harlem Road Community Center Playground	4.60	Lou Gehrig Baseball Complex	18.13	LaClair-Kindel Wildlife Sanctuary	6.52
Kingsgate Park	3.59	Mel Ott Baseball Complex	18.43	Margaret-Louise Park	47.83
North Amherst Fire Company	2.97	North Amherst Recreation Center (Park)	93.00	Marinaccio Park*	29.00
Park Forest Park*	1.20	North Forest Park	6.70	Nature View Park*	1263.76
Saratoga Park*	16.19	North French Soccer Complex	27.94	Oakwood Conservation Area	127.97
Sattler Field	1.87	Paradise Park	32.27	Sable Woods*	6.75
South Long Street Recreation Area	5.40	Sweet Home Park*	20.00	T.O.A. Conservation Area	45.97
Willow Ridge Park	10.22	Wehrle FAA Recreation Area	12.60	Walton Woods Park	50.03
TOTAL	81.31	West Royal Parkway Recreation Area	9.40	Windsor Woods*	15.00
		TOTAL	384.88	TOTAL	2370.84

* currently undeveloped

** partially undeveloped

Note: acreage may include land area associated with built recreation facilities

Source: Town of Amherst, Planning Department (2001, 2002); Monteith Planning Consultants (2002)

for

TABLE 7-19: Park Classifications by Planning Analysis Area (Acres)

	Neighborhood	Community	Passive	TOTAL	Acres per 1,000 population*
PAA 1	10.20	96.30	1263.76	1370.26	169.6
PAA 2	2.97	150.55	432.64	586.16	34.9
PAA 3	12.97	11.50	50.03	74.5	4.16
PAA 4	0.00	56.77	509.50	566.27	24.9
PAA 5	39.52	49.56	6.52	94.60	2.8
PAA 6	15.72	20.2	108.39	144.31	6.6
TOTAL	81.38	384.88	2370.84	2836.10	22.9
Acres per 1,000 population*	0.7	3.3	18.9	22.9	--

* year 2000 Census population

Source: Town of Amherst, Planning Department (2001, 2002); Monteith Planning Consultants (2002); 2000 Census

Based upon the 2000 population of 116,510, publicly accessible parks and open spaces in the Town total approximately 2,664 acres, 2,200 acres of which are considered to be passive parkland and are not suitable for active recreation. All parkland combined, there is a ratio of approximately 23 acres per 1,000 persons, 19 acres of which are passive parks and nature preserves.

Plan Areas 3, 4, 5, and 6 are the most under-served when it comes to neighborhood and community parkland, although the overall parkland supply in Plan Area 4 is dramatically increased when passive parkland is included. Unfortunately, these areas are largely built-out and few opportunities exist to correct these deficiencies. Plan Areas 1 and 2 have significantly higher ratios of parkland to population.

Action Plans:

- The Town shall adopt an overall provision standard of 4.25 acres of active “neighborhood” and “community” parkland per 1,000 population (this standard does not include passive parks, nature preserves, public golf courses, or trailways).
- The Town shall adopt the following three-tier parks hierarchy:
 - Neighborhood Parks (0.75 acres/1,000 population)
 - Community Parks (3.5 acres/1,000 population)
 - Passive Parks (supply is not correlated with population)

7.4.2 Future Municipal Parkland Requirements

The standard of 4.25 acres of “neighborhood” and “community” parkland per 1,000 population translates into the need for 495.2 acres in the year 2000 (based on a population of 116,510). This represents a current deficit of 31.22 acres.

There is ample “passive” parkland and open space in the Town, however, since this parkland category is not linked with population, the need for additional land is determined on a case-by-case basis and is largely a result of parkland dedication, land exchanges, or environmental preservation opportunities.

Table 7-20 further breaks down the parkland requirements by park classification.

for

TABLE 7-20: Parkland Requirements by Type

Year	Population	Parkland Classification	Parkland Requirements	Surplus (Deficit)
2000	116,510	Neighborhood (0.75 acre/1,000 persons)	87.4	(8.26)
		Community (3.5 acre/1,000 persons)	407.8	(22.96)
		Total (4.25 acres/1,000 persons)	495.2	(31.22)
2005	118,950	Neighborhood	89.2	(10.06)
		Community	416.3	(31.42)
		Total	505.5	(41.48)
2010	121,339	Neighborhood	91.0	(11.86)
		Community	424.7	(39.82)
		Total	515.7	(51.68)
2015	124,250	Neighborhood	93.2	(14.06)
		Community	434.9	(50.02)
		Total	528.1	(64.08)
2020	127,264	Neighborhood	95.4	(16.26)
		Community	445.4	(60.52)
		Total	540.9	(76.78)

Source: Town of Amherst, Planning Department (2001, 2002); Monteith Planning Consultants (2002)

As the previous table illustrates, there is currently a deficit of neighborhood and community parkland, which will only become larger as the population increases. This conclusion is further rationalized by the opinion poll of Amherst household that found a high level of demand for parkland and open space (1.75 on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 “is strongly agree” to the need for more parkland and open space). The slight majority of household survey respondents indicated, however, that there were sufficient parks and open space areas in their neighborhood, indicating that there may be greater pressures for community parkland than for neighborhood parkland.

Over the life of this Plan, the neighborhood and community parkland deficit may be partially offset by the development of two community recreation centers that are recommended in the short and medium term. The potential acquisition and/or long term lease of the Erie Community College (North Campus) playing fields may also assist in increasing the overall active parkland supply. Furthermore, the opportunity exists to convert some passive parks to neighborhood or community parks. This strategy is only recommended in instances where the environmental functions of the site will not be adversely affected, there is an identified lack of active parkland in the area, and public accessibility to the park is adequate. It is recommended that the Town identify the passive parks (or areas within passive parks) that are able to accommodate active recreational usage and consult with local residents regarding the future use of these sites.

In addition to the land requirements for the recommended community recreation centers, this Plan has identified the current and/or future need for additional soccer fields, tennis courts, basketball courts, and the potential need for indoor ice surfaces. Each of these facilities will require parkland upon which to be built, thereby increasing the total supply.

A number of geographic areas within the Town have been identified as being deficient with regard to neighborhood parkland and play structures. A number of previous studies have also identified areas requiring additional parkland. For example, the Eggertsville Action Plan (October 2000) recommended that the Town consider acquisition and development of a “pocket park” near the center of the newly established residential area (between Ruth Avenue and Longmeadow Road and/or between Freemont Street and Oxford Street). Furthermore, the Amherst Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan identified four areas as lacking local park space.

for

This Plan generally concurs with the areas identified by the Amherst Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan, however, a more detailed examination is required. As indicated earlier, this Plan recommends a service radius of 1/3 mile for neighborhood parks and play structures. In some instances, local school grounds may be suitable substitutes for municipal parkland. The location of existing municipal parkland and school grounds have been examined to determine gaps in geographic parkland provision. This Plan has identified the following six areas as being deficient with regard to neighborhood and/or community parkland (see Table 7-21 and Map 7-2 for their general locations).

TABLE 7-21: Areas deficient in Neighborhood and/or Community Parkland

PAA	GENERAL BOUNDARY			
	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
2	Smith Road	Transit Road	Dodge Road	New Road
4	Cottonwood Drive	Cottonwood Drive, Ranch Trail Drive	Old Orchard Drive, Red Oak Drive	Ellicott Creek
4	Shadow Wood Drive, Halston Pkwy	Transit Road	Britannia Drive	Great Baehre Conservation Area
5	Eggert Road	Eggert Road	Longmeadow Road	Niagara Falls Boulevard
5	Sheridan Drive	North Forest Road	Morningside Lane	Interstate 290
6	Sheridan Drive	Transit Road	Wehrle Drive	Spindrift Drive, Hampton Hill Drive

In meeting the parkland needs of the identified areas, the challenge will be acquiring appropriate parcels for the development of neighborhood parks due to the lack of available land. Creative arrangements, including partnerships with the not-for-profit and/or private sector, joint-use agreements with other providers, and infill redevelopment, may be required in order to provide adequate levels of parkland to such neighborhoods.

Action Plans:

- The Town shall identify the passive parks (or areas within passive parks) that are able to accommodate active recreational usage and consult with local residents regarding the future use of these sites. Any lands redeveloped for active recreational use shall be re-categorized as Neighborhood or Community parkland, thereby reducing the Town's future parkland requirements.
- The Town shall acquire land (or identify available and appropriate municipal lands) for the community recreation centers, soccer fields, tennis courts, basketball courts, play structures, and other recreation facilities and parkland recommended in this Master Plan. Land may be acquired through methods such as parkland dedication, donations, long-term agreements with public and/or private landholders, acquisition through funds collected through the recreation and open space fund, etc.
- Six (6) geographic areas within the Town have been identified as being deficient with regard to neighborhood parkland and play structures. The Town shall identify and acquire appropriate sites within these areas for park/playground development in the short to medium term. Alternately, the Town may explore other arrangements for addressing these deficiencies, including partnerships with the not-for-profit and/or private sector, joint-use agreements with other providers, infill redevelopment, etc.

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7.5 PROVISION LEVELS

Table 7-22 contains a summary of the provision levels recommended in this Plan. Provision levels (or standards) are the recommended measures for the supply of recreation areas and facilities within Amherst. They are based on a combination of accepted industry/municipal standards, market-driven factors (demand, trends, demographics, etc.), and the past and present circumstances within the Town.

TABLE 7-22: Summary of Recommended Provision Levels by Facility/Park Type

FACILITY / PARK	RECOMMENDED LEVEL OF PROVISION
Recreation/ Community Centers	One community/recreation center and gymnasium per 20,000 population.
Arenas/Ice Pads	One indoor ice surface per 700 participants.
Indoor & Outdoor Pools	One indoor or outdoor pool per 20,000 population. No new outdoor pools are recommended.
Spray Pads/Water Play	One spray pad/water play area per 11,000 children (ages 0-14).
Soccer Fields	One mini field per 50 to 70 participants (age 10 and under) and one full field per 35 to 40 participants (age 11 and over). Each lighted soccer field is equivalent to 2 unlighted soccer fields due to the increased usage potential of the lighted facility.
Football Fields	One football field per 20,000 population (including school fields at 50% availability).
Ball Diamonds	One baseball/hardball diamond per 80 participants and one softball diamond per 100 participants. Each lighted diamond is equivalent to 2 unlighted diamonds due to the increased usage potential of the lighted facility.
Tennis Courts	One tennis court to 2,000 population. Each lighted court is equivalent to 2 unlighted courts due to the increased usage potential of the lighted facility.
Outdoor Basketball Courts	One outdoor basketball court per 5,000 population.
Play Structures	One playground for every 3,000 population or within a 1/3-mile radius (in built-up residential areas), whichever is greater. The radius should be uninterrupted by barriers such as major roads, railways, and watercourses.
Parks Hierarchy	4.25 acres of active "neighborhood" and "community" parkland per 1,000 population (this standard does not include passive parks, nature preserves, public golf courses, or trailways). The three tier parks hierarchy is as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Neighborhood Parks (0.75 acres/1,000 population) - Community Parks (3.5 acres/1,000 population) - Passive Parks (supply is not correlated with population).

SECTION 8: IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

This final section of the Background Report identifies a process for monitoring and updating the Plan.

8.1 MONITORING THE MASTER PLAN

A Recreation and Parks Master Plan is a long-range, strategic planning document. It is intended to be used to guide decision-making in the municipality for the next 10 years. With any document that utilizes a long term planning horizon, the further into the future that projections are made, the more difficult it becomes to ensure accuracy. As a result, there is a need for the action plans contained in this Plan to be reviewed periodically to ensure that the Plan remains reflective of current realities and responsive to the changing needs of the community.

Many of the action plans in this Plan are based upon the number of participants per facility and/or modified provision standards. Although participation data has been projected over the next twenty years using traditional participation rates, it is recognized that trends and external factors have significant implications on future facility usage levels. These qualitative factors have been considered in formulating the Plan's action plans.

Unfortunately, trends change and often unforeseen factors emerge which create unanticipated increases or decreases in participation and which, in turn, may impact substantially upon facility provision. Continued monitoring of the participation levels (as well as overall population figures) in Amherst's major recreational activities is necessary to identify significant changes and to relate the change to the corresponding impact on the facility and park provision action plans. As a result, the direction of the Plan may need refocusing from time to time.

A number of action plans have been put forth in the Leisure Delivery System section of this Plan that relate to the implementation and maintenance of processes for the monitoring of this Plan. Increased coordination with community interest groups through the scheduling of semi-annual meetings and improved avenues for dialogue will be valuable assets in monitoring not only the action plans of the Plan, but also its effectiveness. Furthermore, it is recommended that the Town implement and regularly update a central booking system that tracks the rental of municipal parks, playing fields and recreation facilities.

To properly monitor the Plan, some additional tasks are required, including the monitoring of participation levels by the Town. Ongoing tracking of the status of the action plans should also be the responsibility of one member of staff. Tracking should include status updates at the discretion of senior management or Council. This approach will assist in keeping the Plan current and community responsive.

Furthermore, it is essential that the Plan's action plans be linked to the Town's CIP/budgeting process and that the needs be reconciled with the Town's fiscal capacity.

Action Plans:

- That the Town implement a system for the regular monitoring of the Recreation and Parks Master Plan.
- That the Town establish a process to link the Implementation Strategy to the CIP/budgeting process in an effort to reconcile needs with the fiscal capacity of the Town.

8.2 UPDATING THE MASTER PLAN

As noted previously, unanticipated circumstances may dictate the need to reassess the priorities and action plans of the Plan. Through the monitoring of participation levels and qualitative considerations, adjustment of resource allocations, and implementation of shifts in political pressures and direction, it is possible that certain components of the Plan will require updating.

Updating the Plan requires a commitment from all staff involved in the delivery of leisure services, Recreation Commission, Council, and the public. An appropriate time for an update of the Plan is during the annual CIP/budgeting process. The following steps may be used to conduct an annual review of the Plan early on in the CIP/budgeting process (i.e., prior to June 1st of every year).

1. Review of the past year (Plan action plans implemented, capital projects undertaken, success/failure of new and existing recreation initiatives, changes in participation levels, issues arising from the public and community groups, etc.).
2. Issues impacting the coming year (anticipated financial and operational constraints, political pressures, etc.).
3. Review of Plan for direction regarding recommended action plans.
4. Staff identification of Plan action plans to be implemented in the short term. Due to implications identified during steps #1 and #2, the output of this task may result in the identification of projects or timing that do not correspond with the action plans of the Plan.
5. Prioritization of short term projects and determination of which projects should be implemented in the coming year based upon criteria established by staff (e.g., financial limitations, community input, partnership/funding potential, etc.).
6. Preparation of staff report. If staff recommendations and priorities differ significantly from the Plan's action plans, the report should detail the reasons for the new direction. If staff recommendations support those established in the Plan, the report should explain how their recommendations conform to the direction of the Plan.
7. Communication to staff, Recreation Commission and Council regarding the status of projects, criteria used to prioritize projects, and projects to be implemented in the coming year.
8. CIP/budget revisions as necessary.

Although the mandate of the Plan is 10 years (to the year 2012), some analysis has been carried over a 20 year span (to the year 2021). A more detailed review and update of the Plan shall be required once the original directive of the Plan expires in 2012 and/or when a major update of the Amherst Bicentennial Comprehensive Plan is undertaken.

Action Plans:

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• That the Town implement a system for the regular review and updating of the Recreation and Parks Master Plan. |
|---|