



PARKS AND RECREATION MASTER PLAN

FINAL DRAFT

TOWN OF AMHERST, NY

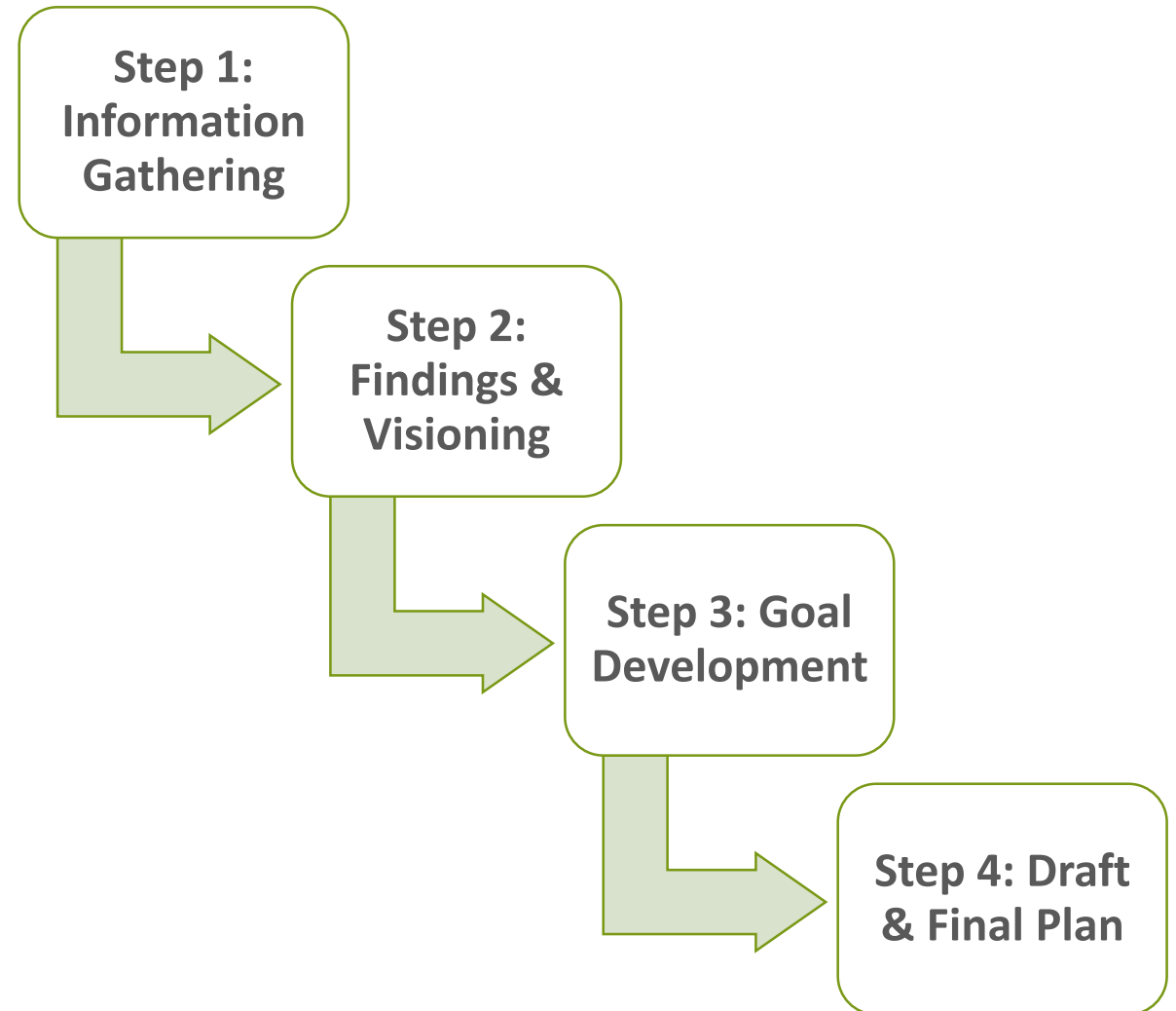
TOWN BOARD PRESENTATION – FEBRUARY 21, 2018

PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

- Inventories existing public parks and recreation assets
- Reviews current conditions impacting recreation in Amherst
 - Demographics, participation trends, facilities, staffing and budgets
- Identifies residents recreation wants, needs, and level of satisfaction with current opportunities; as well as ideas for improvement
- Provides goals and an implementable action plan for improving existing and future recreation opportunities

MAJOR PROJECT COMPONENTS

- **1. Information Gathering & Analysis**
 - Review background data
 - Stakeholder Focus Groups
 - Community Survey
 - Inventory Update & Gap Analysis
 - Organizational and Program Review
 - Analyze and Coalesce Data
- **2. Findings & Visioning**
- **3. Goals & Recommendations**
- **4. Draft and Final Plans**





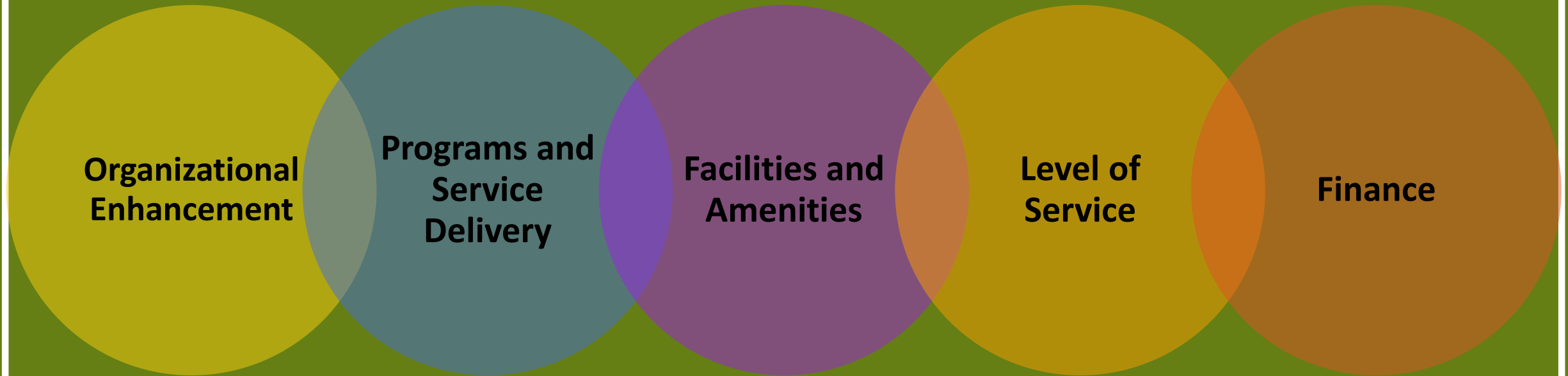
Basset Park – Fall 2017

KEY FINDINGS

- Recreation is tied to local quality of life
- Diverse parks and recreation system
- High levels of participation and satisfaction
- Growing population and service demands
- Some aging facilities, maintenance and capacity challenges
- Strong desire for bicycle/pedestrian connectivity

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

FIVE FOCUS AREAS



GOAL 1: ORGANIZATIONAL ENHANCEMENT

Improve aspects of the municipal organizational structure that support the provision and stewardship of Amherst's parks, recreation facilities, programs, and services.

Objective 1: Improve the ability of the Youth and Recreation Department to regularly share up-to-date information with residents and program users, especially online.

- Integrate the Department's marketing plan with the Town's communication and outreach program.
- Strengthen online presence and ability leverage web-based means of communication and information sharing.
- Create a user friendly municipal website with current and complete public information.



GOAL 1: ORGANIZATIONAL ENHANCEMENT

Improve aspects of the municipal organizational structure that support the provision and stewardship of Amherst's parks, recreation facilities, programs, and services.

Objective 2: Improve and formalize the working relationship between Town departments actively engagement in parks and recreation operations, maintenance, and service provision.

- Create an MOU to formally define roles and responsibilities of the Highway Department and Youth and Recreation in maintaining Amherst's parks and recreation facilities.
- Develop a park grounds operations and maintenance plan based on industry best practices.
- Hire and train staff for current and future programming, maintenance, and operational needs.
- Review sports field and facility allocation policy to ensure continued equitable distribution among user groups and residents.



GOAL 2: PROGRAM AND SERVICE DELIVERY

Increase awareness of existing public recreation opportunities and enhance program offerings to meet existing and future community needs.

Objective 1: Increase awareness of existing parks and recreation opportunities provided by the Town.

Objective 2: Expand the number of recreation programs and special events hosted by the Youth and Recreation Department.

- More fitness, wellness, nature programs, outdoor recreation activities, winter activities, and neighborhood events



Programs and
Service
Delivery

GOAL 3: FACILITIES AND AMENITIES

Improve existing park amenities and recreation facilities to create more and better user experiences, increase the utility of parks, and elevate levels of satisfaction.

Objective 1: Enhance the functionality of parks and recreation amenities to allow for more, and better user experiences.

- Repair/replace/maintain existing assets
- Add comfort features, beginning with sites with greatest need
- Create unique opportunities – ex. fitness trail, dog park, splash pad
- Improve access and opportunities for community members with disabilities
- Improve safety and security – lighting, cameras, visibility
- Explore opportunities to add lighting to outdoor sports fields and courts
- Explore conversion of natural surface sports fields to artificial turf



Facilities and
Amenities

GOAL 3: FACILITIES AND AMENITIES

Improve existing park amenities and recreation facilities to create more and better user experiences, increase the utility of parks, and elevate levels of satisfaction.

Objective 2: Develop new recreation amenities and opportunities for residents with a focus on expanding trails and opportunities for walking and biking.

- Refine and implement a comprehensive bicycle and pedestrian master plan
- Refine and implement a complete streets policy into the Town Comprehensive Plan
- Create new paths and sidewalks that connect places people live, work, shop, and play in Amherst. Improve opportunities for residents to safely walk and bike for exercise, leisure, and transportation purposes.
- Reevaluate the potential for trail development in the Peanut Line and Lehigh Valley corridors.



Facilities and
Amenities

GOAL 4: LEVEL OF SERVICE

Continue to regularly seek to enhance the level of service provided to residents by the Town's parks and recreation system.

Objective 1: Continue to review and improve the delivery of recreation services to Amherst residents.

- Create and adopt level of service criteria for parks and recreation services using the National Parks and Recreation Association's current Field Report data as a benchmark.
- Remove / eliminate barriers to walking and biking throughout the town, including in locations of future facilities.
- Continue to identify and map recreation opportunities offered by alternative service providers.



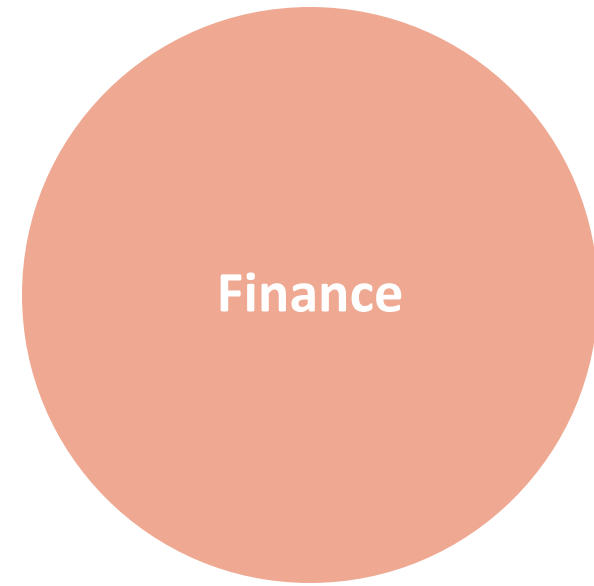
Level of
Service

GOAL 5: FINANCE

Continue to find new and innovative means to provide Amherst residents with expanded recreation opportunities.

Objective 1: Explore new funding and cost-saving mechanisms in order to maintain and enhance parks and recreation opportunities for residents.

- Create a sole-purpose parks and recreation equipment replacement fund
- Review the Youth and Recreation Department's program cost recovery policy and adjust as needed.
- Explore alternative funding opportunities.
- Investigate partnering with existing non-profit organizations to create a potential sustainable funding mechanism to improve parks, facilities, and open spaces.
- Strengthen existing public/private partnerships and explore new partnership opportunities that increase residents access to recreation opportunities, especially those expanding access to year-round aquatics and indoor recreation facilities.
- Develop bonding options to propose as a means for funding capital improvement projects.



GOALS ARE COMMUNITY-DRIVEN

- Existing guiding policies and resources
- Changing Demographics
- Inventory and Asset Assessment
- Resident and Town Staff Feedback
- Review of programs, participation and service provision
- Project team review and coordination

- Amherst Comprehensive Plan
- Imagine Amherst Project
- Youth and Recreation Department Strategic Directions: 2012-2016
- Town of Amherst Access Management Planning: Transit Road Corridor Study
- Town of Amherst Recreation and Parks Master Plan 2004
- Developmental Assets: A Profile of Your Youth (study 2016)

DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

2016 POPULATION STATISTICS

- 123,185 RESIDENTS
- 41. 2 YEARS OLD – MEDIAN AGE
- 49,733 HOUSEHOLDS
- \$67,654 MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME
- 80% CAUCASIAN, 10% ASIAN



Amherst's Population is:

- Growing steadily
- Getting older, but high youth and young adult population
- Earning more per household than NY peers
- More highly educated than NY peers

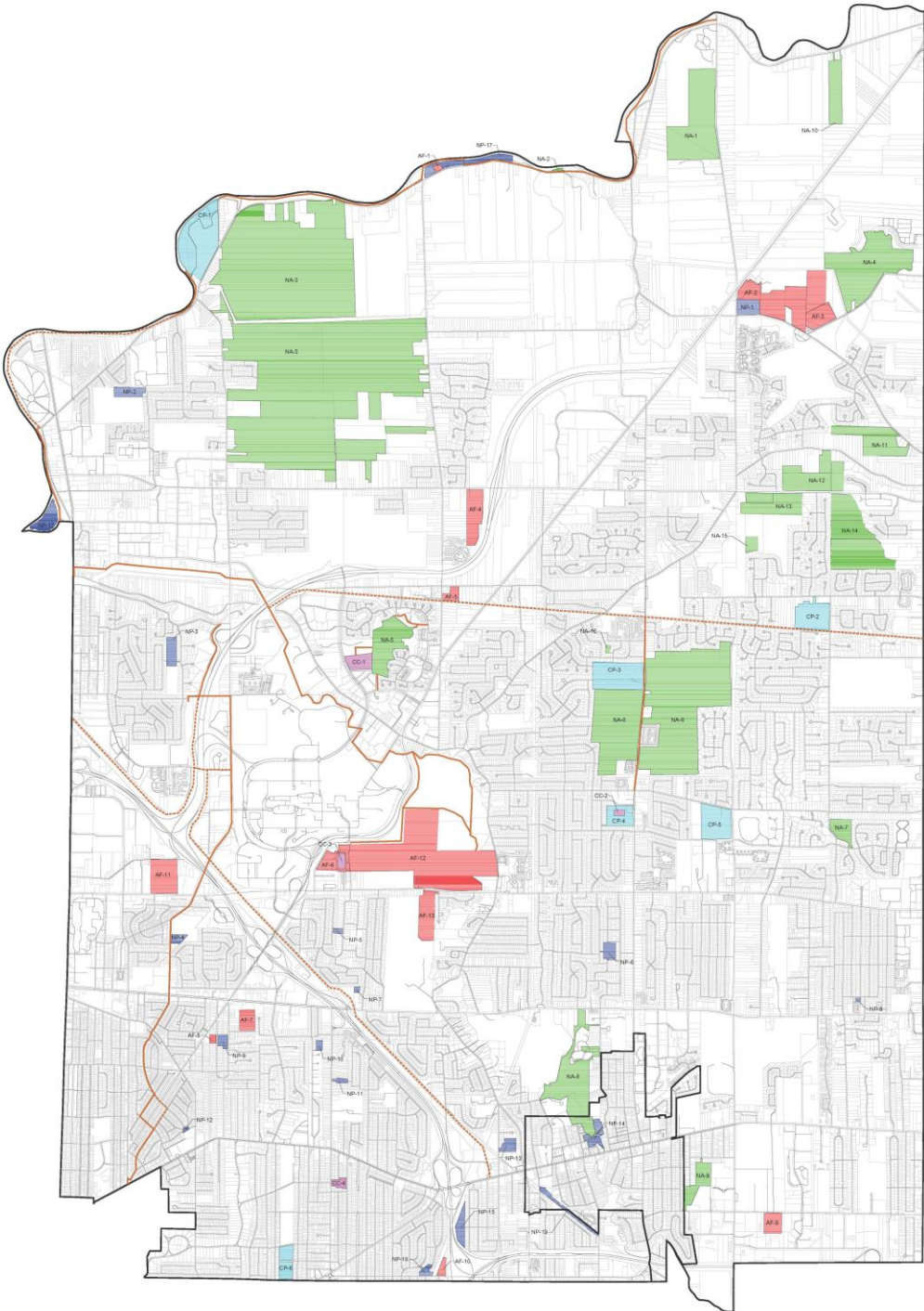
INVENTORY OF PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES

TOWN AREA: 53.6 SQ. MI

1,230 ACRES OF PARKS, OPEN SPACE, RECREATION FACILITIES

64 PARKS AND RECREATION AREAS

43/64 AREAS ASSESSED ON-SITE

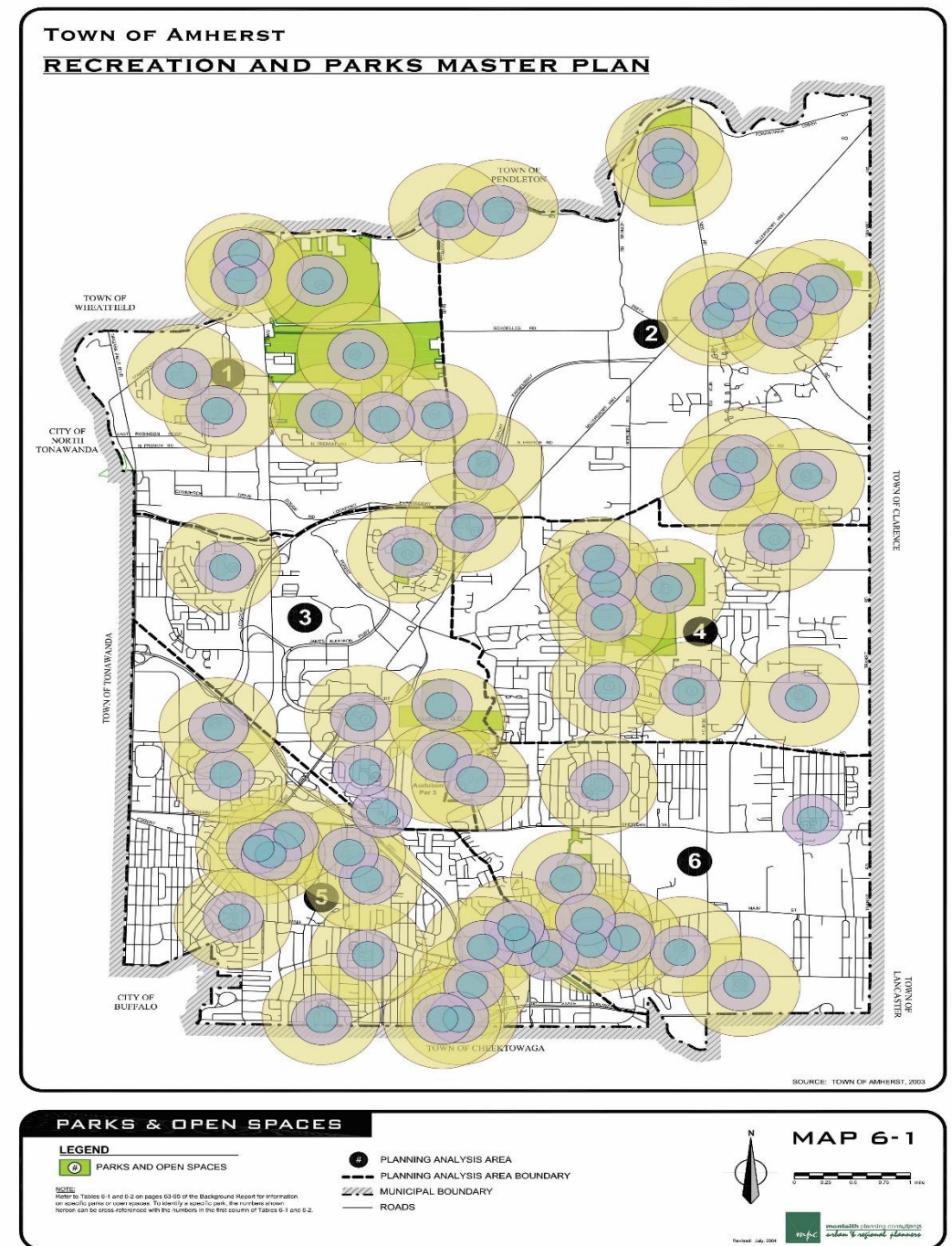


PARK AND RECREATION SITES

ATHLETIC COMPLEXES (8 to 50 acres)	COMMUNITY PARKS (20 or more acres)	NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS (8 or less acres)	RECREATION CENTERS	NATURE AREAS/ CONSERVATION AREAS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amherst Recreation Complex • Central Amherst Baseball Complex • Garnet Park • Getzville Fire Department Park • Kingsgate Park • Lou Gehrig Amherst Park • North Amherst Recreation Area • North French Recreation Area • Sattler Field • Wehrle FAA Recreation Area • West Royal Parkway Recreation Area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bassett Park • Billy Wilson Park • Clearfield Community Center Park • Eggertsville Community Park • Glen Park • North Forest Park (Pool) • Paradise Park • Saratoga Park • Willow Ridge Park • Windsor Woods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Briarhurst Park • Campus Drive Recreation Area • Cindy Drive Recreation Area • Creekwood Park • Dana Heights Park • Dellwood Park • ECO Park • Fetto Park • Jurek Post • North Amherst Fire Company • Park Forest Park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amherst Center for Senior Services • Clearfield Community Center (Pool) • Harlem Road Community Center • Northtown Center at Amherst 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amherst State Park • Amherst Veterans Canal Park • College Park • Dann Lake Park • East Amherst Conservation Area • Fisherman’s Wharf • Great Baehre Conservation Area • Nature View Park • Oakwood Conservation Area • Walton Woods Recreation Area

PARK AND RECREATION SYSTEM ANALYSIS

- MOST PARKS ARE ATHLETIC COMPLEXES OR COMMUNITY PARKS
- GOOD DISTRIBUTION
 - Larger parks in north
 - Neighborhood parks in south
- ACCESS IS PRIMARILY BY AUTOMOBILE
 - Barriers to bike/pedestrian access
- SATISFACTORILY MAINTAINED, BUT AGING FACILITIES WITH CAPACITY CONSTRAINTS
- SITE SPECIFIC IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED TO ENHANCE USER EXPERIENCES



PROGRAMS AND PARTICIPATION

PROGRAMS – KEY FINDINGS

- Diverse, year programs for all ages
- Many sports programs are managed by local sports league organizations; utilizing Town facilities.
- Indoor recreation facility space is constrained, limiting program capacity and growth.
- The Northtown Center is a regionally significant hub for ice and field sports.

PARTICIPATION – 2017 HIGHLIGHTS

- 5,000+ registrations for local sports leagues
- 2,000+ Youth and Rec. program registrations
- 37,000+ open skate session participants
- 100,000+ estimated visitors/users of all Amherst town parks, recreation facilities, and programs
- **Strong participation and interest in diverse sports, fitness, and recreation programs and activities**

ORGANIZATIONAL AND SERVICE PROVISION ANALYSIS

- TOWN DEPARTMENTS WITH KEY ROLES IN SERVICE PROVISION
 - **Youth and Recreation Department**
 - Highway Department – Parks Division
 - Amherst Center for Senior Services
- YOUTH AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT – STAFFING
 - Currently meeting needs satisfactorily, but additional staff will be needed to meet increasing demands as program offerings increase and/or new facilities come on-line
- YOUTH AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT – BUDGET
 - \$7.9 million operational budget
 - \$11.5 million capital improvement program
 - Revenues generated directed to Town General Fund
 - Supplemented by sponsorships, partnerships, and volunteerism

COMMUNITY AND STAFF FEEDBACK

- STAKEHOLDER FOCUS GROUPS AND PUBLIC MEETING
 - 10 sessions, 1 public meeting; May 9/10, 2017
 - 70+ focus group participants representing dozens of community organizations and recreational interests; 30+ public meeting participants
- TOWN STAFF FOCUS GROUP
- COMMUNITY SURVEY
 - 560 completed random-sample surveys; 16.3% response rate; +/-4.1% margin of error
 - 243 open-link / online public survey completed responses
 - Hosted July 2017
- FINDINGS AND VISIONING
- TOWN PROJECT TEAM INPUT AND REVIEW

TOP TEN COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

1

Residents are somewhat familiar with Amherst's offerings, but a smaller percentage are very familiar. There may be potential to increase awareness of the Town's parks and facilities.

2

Programs and parks are widely used by families with children at home. Those who do not have children seem to participate in programs and visit sites less. There may be new opportunities to attract households that without children.

3

Community /neighborhood parks and trail connectivity are very important to residents. Additionally, many would like to see improvements, additions, and expansions on into the future in this area.

4

A large share of comments around recreation needs and opportunities focus on a need to protect open space and continued expansion/linking of green space. This finding is consistent with results in Erie County.

5

Improving communication strategies may lead to a higher degree of effectiveness. Residents stated a moderate to low effectiveness rate currently and identify the Town newsletter as the best method of communication.

TOP TEN COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

6

In general community needs are being met by the majority of the facilities. There are a few key areas to monitor as they have high importance, but low needs met. These include aquatic facilities and programs/events.

7

When allocating dollars to projects, residents signal two actions as most important: 1) making improvements/renovating existing amenities and 2) preserving open space.

8

Safety and security, well-maintained amenities, and pleasant settings are the primary drivers for why residents choose to visit parks. These three factors are vital reasons why residents pick their favorite areas to recreate.

9

Creating a foundation for parks is the most desirable funding option for residents. On the contrary, invitation residents are much less likely to support sales tax increases or dedicated property taxes which fund parks.

10

Community events and fitness/wellness programs are most popular among Amherst's residents. These programs also receive high priority rankings. Close behind are programs which involve nature and outdoor recreation.

KEY FINDINGS

- **ENHANCE COMMUNICATION**
 - Improve information sharing with the public, especially online.
- **IMPROVE OPPORTUNITIES TO RECREATE**
 - Leverage the strengths of existing parks and recreation facilities
 - Strategically add new features to expand recreation opportunities and improve experiences
- **CREATE CONNECTIONS**
 - Add new pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, prioritizing the development of trails and paths that create connections between existing places people work, live, and play.

**Organizational
Enhancement**

GOAL 1: : Improve aspects of the municipal organizational structure that supports the provision and stewardship of the Amherst's parks, recreation facilities, programs, and affiliated services.

**Programs and
Service
Delivery**

GOAL 2: Increase awareness of Amherst's existing public recreation opportunities and enhance program offerings to meet existing and future community needs.

**Facilities and
Amenities**

GOAL 3: Improve existing park amenities and recreation facilities to create more and better user experiences, increase the utility of parks, and elevate levels of satisfaction.

**Level of
Service**

GOAL 4: Continue to regularly seek to enhance the level of service provided to residents by the Town's parks and recreation system.

Finance

GOAL 5: Continue to find new and innovative means to provide Amherst residents with expanded recreation opportunities.



PROJECT CONTACTS



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