

Chapter 8

Recreation and Open Space

1. Introduction

Windham's rapid growth over the past three decades has substantially increased demand for recreational facilities in the town. The popularity of team sports such as soccer, Little League baseball, and youth football has created a growing need for fields that is extremely difficult to satisfy. As a result the town's recreation department and school administration have worked closely with a wide variety of organizations to accommodate program schedules and increased participation by both youth and adult organizations.

In addition to the increasing demand for organized recreational activities, there has also been a growing desire among Windham residents to protect and maintain open space land for a number of different purposes. For example, open undeveloped land provides opportunities for a variety of outdoor activities such as hiking, hunting, fishing, snowmobiling and cross-country skiing to name just a few. In some instances these types of activities can be undertaken in more formal park like settings. In other instances larger land areas, such as preserves or wildlife sanctuaries, are required in order to provide the continuity and ambiance necessary for these types of outdoor activities that are commonly associated with rural areas. Finally, it must be understood that open space cannot exist in rural settings as isolated islands. Large undeveloped land areas should be connected in order to provide opportunities for wildlife movement and the protection of native plant life.

Administrative operations of the Parks and Recreation Department, the primary organization responsible for recreation activities, are located at Town Hall on School Road. The day to day operations and long range planning for the Department are overseen by the Director.

During the summer the Parks and Recreation Department (P&RD) offers a variety of programs to residents of the town. Summer activities include: a seven week day camp for kids ages 5 through 14; soccer, basketball, tennis, field hockey, wrestling, cheering and baseball camps in conjunction with

the school athletics department; summer track program; trips to various sporting events; and senior citizen trips. P&RD also manages the skate park and Dundee Park facilities.

During the fall and winter the P&RD offers a variety of programs including: open gym time; travel basketball teams; snowmobile and ATV safety courses; Red Cross babysitting; indoor track; gymnastics; skiing; and day trips to various activities.

In contrast to the Parks and Recreation Department, the ownership and management of land areas in Windham regarded as open space are the responsibility of several different public and private organizations. In some instances oversight of open space is even a cooperative effort among different organizations.

2. Major Finding and Conclusions

- Windham’s recreation facilities are in high demand and the current availability of public recreation facilities has not kept pace with the growth of the community.
- Outdoor facilities available at the existing preserves, nature parks and sanctuaries are minimal.
- Access to water bodies for swimming, fishing and boating is limited in spite of the amount and types of water bodies located within Windham.
- Areas suitable for hunting are being reduced by the construction of new houses in Windham.
- Windham needs to identify priorities for the acquisition and maintenance of open space and recreation lands. If possible, land acquired for open space uses should serve multiple purposes and various sites should be connected by trails and/or wildlife corridors.
- The Town needs to examine various opportunities for financing the acquisition of open space land, such as the involvement of public land trusts and funding provided by governmental organizations such as the Land for Maine’s Future Program.

3. Existing Recreation Facilities and Open Space Locations

Existing municipal recreation and open space in Windham involve three major types of facilities and land areas:

- Nature Parks, Preserves, and Sanctuaries
- Public Access to Water Bodies
- Sports Fields, Facilities, and Playgrounds

Nature Parks, Preserves, and Sanctuaries total approximately 590 acres. Many of these locations have hiking trails in various stages of development. In most instances the trails and observation platforms have been constructed by volunteers, such as the Boy Scouts. All the facilities are available to the public at no charge, except for Dundee Park.

Dundee Park provides the only public access for swimming at a water body within Windham. Along with swimming, the Park provides a beach area, picnic site with grills, and volleyball and basketball courts. A season's pass allows all persons in the pass holder's vehicle to enter the Park on an unlimited basis between Memorial Day and Labor Day. The Park is open to non-residents, as well as residents of Windham. A resident's season pass is \$30, while seniors (over 65) are only charged \$20.

Public access to the various water bodies within Windham for swimming, boating, and fishing has been an issue for a number of years. As more land is developed along lake and river fronts, opportunities for public access have been eliminated. As noted earlier, public access for swimming is primarily limited to Dundee Park.

Boat access in Windham is limited to two locations. The first is a public boat landing on Little Sebago Lake, which is owned by the State Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, and has a parking area for 12 vehicles and trailers. The other is a three (3) acre parcel leased from Florida Power and Light (FPL), at Great Falls, on the Presumpscot River. The FPL site is for carry-on boats only and has parking for just six (6) vehicles.

Access to the streams and rivers for fishing is limited to roadway crossings. Parking at these carry-on crossings is inadequate too virtually non-existent.

The sports fields, facilities, and playgrounds are primarily concentrated at the High School and Manchester School complexes. The one major non-school facility is the Gambo Road complex which has six soccer fields. This land area is currently leased from the Portland Water District. The Lowell Preserve has one Little League field. The High School, Middle School, and Primary School complex accommodates Little League, softball, tennis, track, soccer, football, field hockey, baseball and basketball, along with one playground. The demand for the use of these facilities continues to increase as youth and adult activities expand. For example, the Little League has over 700 participants in baseball and softball, Windham Youth Football has 190 participants in grades 3 through 12, and Youth Soccer has 750 participants. The facilities are used seven days a week from spring through fall. The recent approval (2002) for the expansion and rehabilitation of the High School, however, will also involve the development of new ballfields that will be available for the use of town residents.

Existing open space areas and recreation facilities are outlined in Table 8-1 and illustrated on the Open Space, Recreation and Key Natural Resources Map (Map 8-1) at the end of this chapter.

Table 8-1
OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION FACILITIES
TOWN OF WINDHAM
 (All facilities are town-owned unless otherwise note)

Nature Parks, Preserves and Sanctuaries

LOWELL PRESERVE - 312 acres

- 4 acres are occupied by the East Windham Fire Station and Little League Field
- 308 acres Nature Preserve

Hiking Trails (4-5 miles)	Cross-Country Skiing
Fishing	Streams
Hunting	

DEER HOLLOW SANCTUARY - 20 acres

Nature Trail	Wildlife
Mud Pond	Fishing
Observation Platform	

CLAMAN SANCTUARY - 14 acres

Nature Trails	Wildlife
Wild Blueberries	

OTTER BROOK SANCTUARY - 41 acres

- Common area around subdivision
- Facilities

Nature Trails	Cross-Country Skiing
Observation Platform	Hiking Trails

DUNDEE PARK - 21 acres

- Entrance Fee
- Facilities

Swimming Area and Beach	Volleyball Court
Picnic Area with Grills	Basketball Court
Restrooms	

INSERT MAP 8-1 OPEN SPACE, RECREATION & KEY NATURAL RESOURCES

BACK OF MAP 8-1

Table 8-1 (continued)

CHAFFIN POND - 78 acres (leased land from the Portland Water District)

- No facilities at this time or planning efforts to determine the feasibility of using the site.

BLACK BROOK PRESERVE - 104 acres

- Site recently acquired by the Windham Land Trust, with financial assistance provided by the Town of Windham and the Land for Maine's Future program
- Will include a trail system

Sports Fields, Facilities and Playgrounds

SOUTH WINDHAM GAMBO ROAD COMPLEX

- 7 Soccer Fields (leased land from the Portland Water District)

EAST WINDHAM FIRE STATION (LOWELL PRESERVE)

- 1 Little League/Softball Field
- Full Playground with slide and swings

WINDHAM HIGH SCHOOL/MIDDLE SCHOOL COMPLEX; NORTH WINDHAM MANCHESTER SCHOOL COMPLEX; PRIMARY SCHOOL PLAYGROUND

- Outdoor Running Track
- 3 Tennis Courts
- 1 Lighted Soccer Field
- 1 Soccer/Football Field
- 1 Field Hockey Field
- 4 Little League Fields/Softball Fields
- 2 Softball Fields
- 2 Regulation Baseball Fields
- 4 Gymnasiums
- Outdoor Basketball Court
- Tire Play Structures
- Small Play Objects
- Ice Skating Rink
- Full Playground with Slide and Swings

WINDHAM SKATE PARK

- Skateboarding Facilities (Fully Supervised)

Table 8-1 (continued)

WINDHAM COMMUNITY CENTER

- Gymnasium
- Fenced in Playground with slide and swings
- Picnic Tables

ROUTE 302 PICNIC AREA (Owned by the Maine Department of Transportation)

- Picnic Tables with Grills (town owned property abuts this site)

The Parks & Recreation Department offers a wide variety of activities during the summer and winter months including the following during 2001:

Summer Activities		Winter Activities	
<u>Activity</u>	<u>Participants</u>	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Participants</u>
Outdoor Track	65	Skiing on Fridays	110
Sports Clinics	166	Skiing on Saturdays	37
Men's Basketball League	80	Skiing on Wednesdays	125
Day Camp	380	Gymnastics	44
Tennis	15	Swim Team	20
Cheering	25	Karate	41
Dundee Park (Passes Sold)	402	Swing Dance	15
Skate Park (Sign-Ins)	8,300	Ballet	8
		Wrestling	30
		Baton Twirling	14
		Indoor Track	30
		Girls/Boys Basketball	260
		Men's Basketball League	80

The Parks and Recreation Department also indicates that during the year 2001, over 24,000 visitors used facilities at Dundee Park, especially the waterfront area. In total, almost 48,000 individuals participated in or were customers of various parks and recreation programs.¹

¹Some individuals may have participated in more than one program or activity.

Locations for bike riding in Windham are very limited. Some people use utility corridors and wood roads for mountain biking. Also, even though there are no designated bike routes in Windham, Route 202 does have paved shoulders from the Gorham line to the Gray line, which are used as bike lanes. However, the section between Webb Road and Pope Road only has gravel shoulders. Route 302, which has paved shoulders from Foster's Corner to Raymond, is also used for bike riding.

The Parks and Recreation Department has noted that bike lanes should probably be added to Route 35, Route 115, Falmouth Road, Albion Road from Falmouth Road to Windham Center Road, and Windham Center Road. The routes would provide access to recreation facilities at Lowell Preserve, Manchester School, and the High School complex.

4. Non-Municipal Facilities

Windham's position as a tourism center adds another facet to recreation demand within the town. Although the municipal recreation program primarily services year-round residents, a number of other facilities have been established by the private sector to support the influx of tourists, as well as year-round residents.

Private facilities available within the town offer the following types of activities:

- Health clubs
- Martial arts training
- Miniature golf and golf driving range

There are also several utility corridors which are used for biking, hiking, hunting, and all terrain vehicle (ATV) trails. Use of these corridors, in some cases, is occurring without proper authorization. The town is continuing to work with utility companies and property owners to formalize access to these areas. In addition there are numerous snowmobile trails in Windham which are illustrated on Map 8-1.

5. Recreation Facilities Standards and Guidelines

In order to provide a well-rounded community recreation program that can service all segments of the population, it is usually necessary to provide a variety of recreation facilities. Typical classification of recreation areas include both a physical description and broad functional categorization. In essence, a recreation facility should be designed and programmed to serve the particular needs of a defined segment of the population. These segments may be identified by age, special interests, or a combination of both factors.

A generic classification system of open space and parks can also be used to assess the adequacy of Windham's recreation areas from a community-wide perspective. The following provides a brief description of different classification categories in relationship to existing facilities in Windham.

Neighborhood Park/Playground - This type of facility provides areas for intense recreation activities such as field games, court games, crafts, playground equipment, skating, picnicking, etc. The desirable size is 15 acres. The Park should be easily accessible, and geographically centered. It should have safe walking and bike access, and could be developed as part of a school/park facility.

Community Park - Community parks are described as areas of diverse environmental quality. They may include areas suited for intense recreational facilities, such as athletic complexes or large swimming pools. They may also be an area of natural quality for outdoor recreation, such as walking, viewing, sitting, or picnicking, or any combination of the above, depending on community needs. A community park is usually intended to service several neighborhoods with a desirable minimum size of 25 acres.

Regional Park Preserve - The park preserve is an area of natural quality for nature-oriented outdoor recreation, such as viewing and studying nature, wildlife habitat, conservation activities, hiking, fishing, boating, and trail uses. It may also include active play areas. Generally 80 percent of the land is reserved for passive recreation, conservation and natural resource management, with less than 20 percent developed for active recreation uses.

Linear/Greenbelt Park - The greenbelt park is a concept that has received widespread recognition and use. It is an area developed for one or more modes of recreational travel, such as hiking, biking, snowmobiling, horseback riding, or cross-country skiing. It may include active play areas which function as nodes along the length of the park. These types of parks are either built or serve as existing natural corridors, such as utility right-of-way, bluff lines, stream channels, scenic roads, or vegetation patterns. It is desirable to have them structured so that they link other components of the recreation system or community facility areas.

Table 8-2 defines Windham's existing recreation facilities in terms of the park classification described above.

Another type of standard used to evaluate the adequacy of recreation facilities is based on a per capita comparison. These standards are typically expressed as the number of facilities available per 1,000 persons and are based on national averages and the practical experience of people administering municipal recreation programs. This approach is also intended to act as a guide when determining what additional facilities may be required in order to round out a community's recreation programs.

Table 8-2		
CLASSIFICATION OF WINDHAM’S RECREATION FACILITIES		
Neighborhood Park/Playground		
	Manchester School Complex East Windham	Gambo Road Complex
Community Park		
	Dundee Park High School Complex	Skatepark
Regional Park		
	Lowell Preserve Deer Hollow Sanctuary Claman Sanctuary	Otter Brook Sanctuary Chaffin Pond Black Brook Preserve
Linear/Greenbelt Park		
	Snowmobile Trails Mountain Division Railroad	Powerline Pipeline

Windham utilizes the *Recreation and Open Space Planning Workbook* prepared by the Bureau of Parks and Lands, Maine Department of Conservation as its guidelines. These standards, along with Windham’s current facilities, are illustrated in Table 8-3. The State Bureau of Parks and Lands is currently in the process of updating the *State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)* which may provide some revised standards for determining recreation facilities demand and therefore, should be reviewed by the town when it becomes available.

The figures suggest that there is an immediate need for a skating supervisor, playground supervision, community music group, an arts and crafts program, organized dance group, Little League/softball fields, outdoor basketball courts, tennis courts, multi-purpose fields, beach and swimming area, playgrounds, and additional funding. The recommended items are based on a population of 15,000. These standards indicate that the town needs to consider expanding its existing recreation areas as well as the potential for creating other parks and playgrounds to service portions of the community that do not have convenient access to existing neighborhood or community parks.

Table 8-3
Comparison of Windham's Existing Recreation Program
to Recommended State Guidelines

	2001	
	RECOMMENDED	ACTUAL
I. ADMINISTRATION		
A. Recreation & Park Board		U
B. Recreation & Park Department	U	U
C. Community Education/Recreation Combined School/Town Rec Dept	U	U
II. LEADERSHIP		
A. Summer Program		
1. Swimming Instructors	U	U
2. Summer Recreation Director	U	U
B. Winter Program		
1. 1 Skating Rink Supervisor/Each	U	
2. 1 General Program Supervision (Part Time)	U	
C. Year Round Program		
1. Full Time Recreation Director	U	U
2. 1 Full Time Staff	U	U
3. Part Time or Contractual Program Specialists	U	U
III. PROGRAM		
A. Swimming Instruction Program	U	U
B. Supervised Playground Program	U	
C. Senior Citizen Club	U	U
D. Teen Program	U	
E. Skiing Instruction Program	U	U
F. Ice Skating	U	U
G. Community-Wide Special Events	U	U
H. Organized Community Music Group	U	
I. Arts & Crafts Programs	U	

		2001	
		RECOMMENDED	ACTUAL
J.	Evening Adult Education Recreation Program	U	U
K.	Organized Dance Group	U	
L.	Day Camp Program (Existing Program in Windham for children 5 to 15 - facilities are at capacity)	U	U
IV. FACILITIES (includes school areas)			
A.	Outdoor Facilities		
1.	Neighborhood Playground, 2-10 acres, playground, basketball court, playfield	U	U
2.	Community Recreation Area, 2-25 acres, ballfields, tennis courts, swimming, ice skating, etc.	U	U
3.	Community Park, 100+ acres, undeveloped for walking, cross-country skiing, nature study, etc.	U	U
4.	Special Facilities		
a.	Baseball diamond (0.16/1000 pop.)	2	2
b.	Softball and/or Little League diamond (0.75/1000 pop.)	11	7
c.	Basketball court (0.50/1000 pop.)	7	3
d.	Tennis court (0.67/1000 pop.)	10	3
e.	Multi-purpose field - football, soccer, field hockey (0.50/1000 pop)	8	8
f.	Swimming facility to serve 3% to 5% of Town population		
	Pool - 27 sq ft/user	22,500 SF	0
	Beach - 50 sq ft of water/user, 50 sq ft of beach/user	22,500 SF	11,000 SF
g.	Ice skating (5000 sq ft/1000 pop.)	75,000 SF	17,000 SF
h.	Playgrounds (0.50/1000 pop.)	7	4
i.	Day Camping Area	U	U
j.	Horseshoe Courts	U	U
k.	Shuffleboard Courts	U	
l.	Picnic Area with tables and grills (2 tables/1000 pop.)	30	30
m.	Outdoor Education Area or Nature Center	U	U

	2001	
	RECOMMENDED	ACTUAL
B. Indoor Facilities		
1. Recreation Center Building	U	
2. School Facilities Available for Public Use	U	Weekends & some weeknights
3. Gymnasium or Large Multi-Purpose Room (0.20/1000 pop.)	3	4
4. Auditorium or Assembly Hall	U	U
5. Arts and Crafts Shop	U	
6. Teen Center	U	
7. Senior Citizen Center	U	U
8. Game Rooms	U	
9. Public Library	U	U
10. Sheltered Multi-Purpose Facility	U	

V. FINANCE

(Funds spent for operation and maintenance – does not include capital expenditures.)

A. Minimum \$6 per capita for part-time program	\$90,000	N/A
B. Minimum \$12 per capita for full-time program	\$180,000	\$154,360

Source: Windham Parks and Recreation Department and *Recreation Open Space Planning Workbook* prepared by the Bureau of Parks and Lands, Maine Department of Conservation

6. Implications for the Future

Existing and future needs for open space and recreation facilities in Windham fall into three broad categories: (1) maintain existing facilities at their current or improved levels; (2) expand the uses of the existing facilities to maximize the potential of each location; and (3) provide additional facilities and areas of open space to round out the town’s programs and service future population expansion.

Windham has done an excellent job in providing recreation facilities with limited resources. By working with the schools and various volunteer groups, funds, materials, and labor have been donated for the development of much of the existing resources. The town, however, needs to consider maintenance and replacement costs of existing recreational facilities in future budgets. As various groups continue to add teams, increased demand is beginning to stress the capabilities of existing facilities.

Another important need in Windham involves the identification and acquisition of key parcels of land that can be designated for open space and conservation purposes. As indicated on Map 8-1, and discussed earlier in this chapter, several land parcels in Windham have been designated for recreation and park use, as well as nature preserves. Some of these parcels are owned by the town, while others are under lease agreements. Recently the Windham Land Trust was created to acquire and manage important conservation land in the community. Their first acquisition, as noted on Map 8-1, was the Black Brook Preserve (containing approximately 104 acres) in Windham Center. This property, which was acquired with financial participation by the town and the Land for Maine's Future, will be managed as a nature preserve and include hiking trails. This parcel offers some unique opportunities since it is located in Windham Center, which has been identified as a growth area (see Map 8-1) in the Comprehensive Plan for Windham (2002). As development, especially residential, occurs in this portion of Windham, a nature preserve will be within walking or bike riding distance for a number of present and future residents.

In order to address the need for future open space and recreation lands within the community, Windham should identify key land parcels for possible acquisition. In certain parts of the community efforts should focus on land that serves multiple purposes such as public access to water for swimming, boating and fishing, as well as provide opportunities for creating new athletic fields. In other portions of Windham natural areas of the town should be conserved to protect wildlife, woodlands, plant species and open farmland. If possible areas for hunting should be permitted on these types of properties. Finally, possibilities for connecting these various sites through a trail system and/or wildlife corridors should be explored.

This type of effort will require significant financial support. The Windham Land Trust, as noted earlier, has already demonstrated that local fund raising and municipal financial support can be obtained. Other sources of funding, however, will be required in the future. The town needs to investigate the possibility of acquiring funds to match local efforts from governmental and private organizations. One state governmental source would be the Land for Maine's Future. Other organizations and regional trusts should also be contacted.