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PLANNING & ZONING
COMMISSION

TOWN OF ESSEX

MASTER DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR MUNICIPAL PARKS AND RECREATION

Prepared for:

Essex Park and Recreation Commission
Essex, Connecticut

May 5, 2000

Prepared by:

VOLLMER ASSOCIATES LLP
ENGINEERS•LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS•PLANNERS

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Essex Town Park
Canfield Woods Nature Reserve
Grove Street Park/Town Hall Auditorium
Harriet Cheney Downing Preserve
Sunset Pond
Essex Elementary School
Valley Railroad
Grieder Field
Mill Pond
Ivoryton Park
Comstock Fields
Clark's Pond
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John Winthrop Jr. Middle School

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I. INTRODUCTION

I. INTRODUCTION

A. PURPOSE

Our goal, in conjunction with the Town of Essex, was to establish a master plan to guide the Town with future recreation related decisions including: the development of new facilities, expansion and improvements to existing facilities and how to fulfill the passive and active recreation needs of the residents of Essex.

The Town of Essex is located on the western shore of the Connecticut River in Middlesex County, Connecticut. Essex is approximately 10.4 square miles in size, bordered by the Connecticut River to the east, Deep River to the North, Old Saybrook to the south, and Westbrook to the west. The Town consists of three village areas: Essex, Centerbrook and Ivoryton. The Town population is approximately 6,400 persons.

The Essex Park and Recreation Commission (EPRC) initiated this study and selected Vollmer Associates to assist in generating a Master Development Plan for Town parks and recreation. The EPRC is a volunteer based committee that provides the human resources to manage park facilities, direct on-going programs, and plan for future activities and events. Facilities and activities that are under the jurisdiction and/or supported by the Commission include:

Facilities:

- Comstock Field
- Hubbard Field
- Grove Street Park
- Essex Town Park
- Ivoryton Park

Activities:

- Town dances
- Youth summer program
- Kindergarten soccer
- Basketball leagues
- Easter egg hunt
- Aerobics classes
- Tennis lessons
- Bus trips
- Family Day

Independent Programs (supported by EPRC):

- Little league baseball
- Tri-town football
- Valley Soccer Club

This plan will consider the aforementioned facilities and activities to develop a comprehensive master plan recognizing that recreation suggests a broad range of activities and that it is essential to respond to recreation trends and the needs of Town residents. Satisfying the public recreation needs within the Town of Essex will require looking beyond the current activities and facilities currently provided by the EPRC.

Our challenge is to prepare a Master Development Plan that responds to public need and recommends economically viable improvements to existing facilities and development of new recreation facilities over a specific time frame. The final Master Development Plan will be a useful tool for the EPRC to review its current activities, foresee the needs of the community, and plan its future.

B. PARK CLASSIFICATIONS

For information purposes, a park classification system is utilized on the following site inventory summary sheets. The classifications used in this study were derived from the National Recreation and Park Association and are included for information only.

Community Park: Community parks meet community-based recreation needs and preserve open space typically attracting users from two or more neighborhoods within a three mile distance. Community parks may offer active, passive, cultural and educational recreational opportunities to all age groups.

School Park: School parks directly service the students, physical education programs and school extracurricular activities. In addition, school parks serve as neighborhood and community parks since outdoor recreation facilities are shared between the Board of Education and the Parks and Recreation Departments.

Greenways/Park Trails/Natural Resource Areas: For the purpose of this inventory, this category represents lands set aside for preservation of significant natural resources, remnant landscapes, open space, rivers, floodplain, wetlands, and for aesthetics and buffering. They may serve neighborhoods, the town at large or the region. These open spaces may also form a continuous park environment by linking town parks.

Other: Other facilities include cultural centers, not-for-profit institutions, current non-park or open space areas, recently acquired open space and subdivision open spaces.

C. PLANNING APPROACH

Vollmer Associates, in conjunction with the Essex Park and Recreation Commission implemented a three phase process to complete the Master Development Plan. The three phases include:

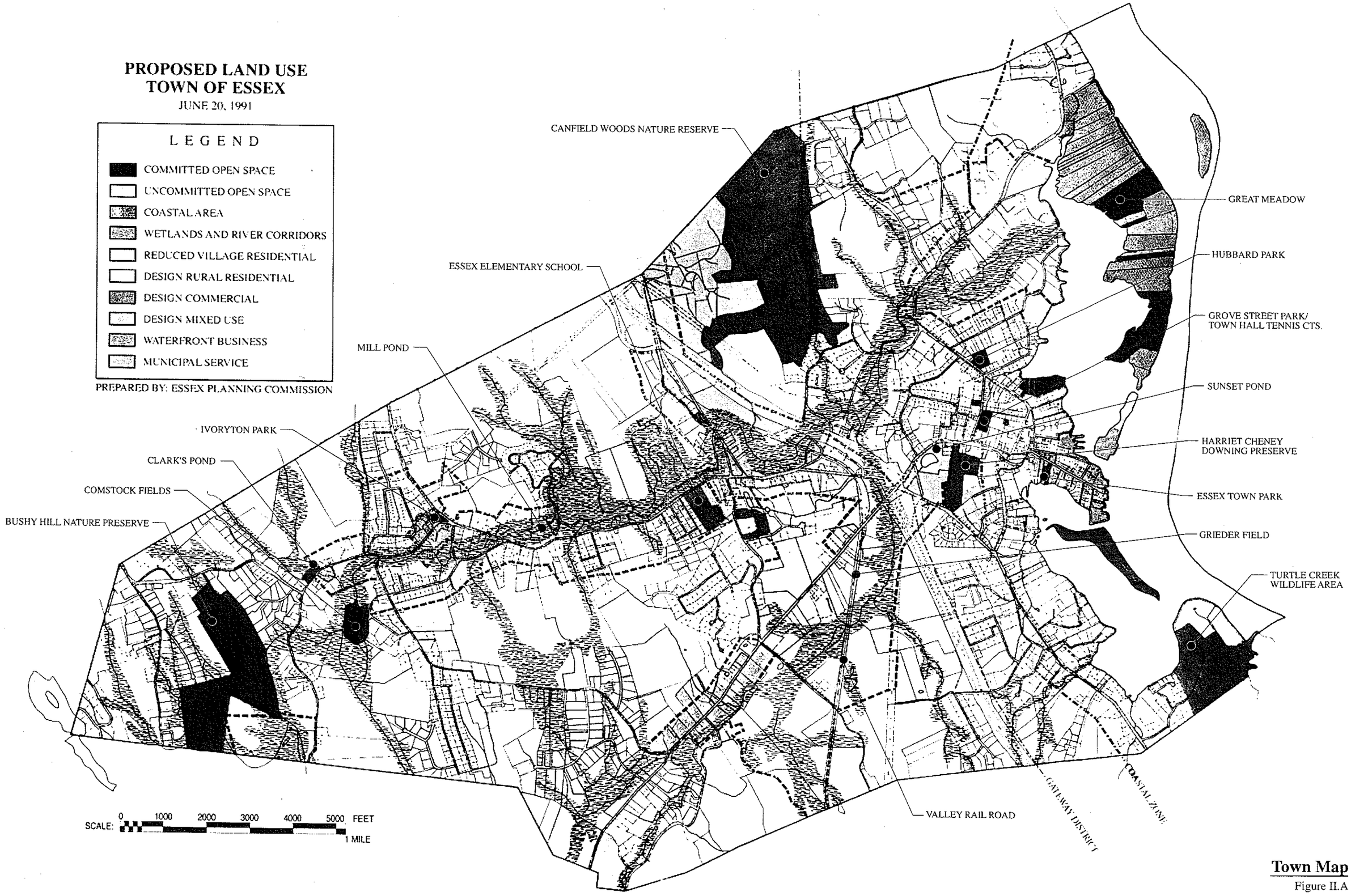
1. Inventory and analysis of existing recreation facilities and programs
2. Recreation needs assessment and identification of recreation and demographic trends
3. Recreation improvement recommendations

The inventory and analysis of existing recreation facilities and programs phase allowed our team to determine what the Town of Essex currently has in terms of recreation opportunities. The inventory includes facilities and programs under the jurisdiction of the EPRC and other privately owned sites which permit public access and use for active and passive recreation purposes. Understanding the availability, condition and utilization of existing recreation resources enables our team to prepare cost effective recommendations.

A needs assessment was also conducted which included a resident survey and town meetings to obtain public input during the planning process. The recreation survey was mailed to each household in town, the response rate to which was an impressive 25%. The town meetings which were held were essentially informational sessions and public comment forums led by Vollmer Associates and the EPRC. The needs assessment phase was a critical part of this study. Based on the results, we were better able to understand public needs and how residents would like to see the Town's financial and human resources allocated in the future. Responding to these needs and priorities will result in the most effective plan.

The final phase in our approach includes our recreation improvement recommendations, their associated costs and a listing of potential funding mechanisms.

II. RECREATION SITE INVENTORY



Town Map

Figure II.A

II. RECREATION SITE INVENTORY

A. QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

The following table was prepared to compare the National Recreation and Park Association guidelines for select facilities to the actual facility availability in Essex. The guidelines do not dictate the level of service each municipality should provide; however, they do function as baseline information. Climate and seasonal availability of recreation facilities are not factored into these guidelines and it is encouraged, especially by the NRPA, to respond to community needs and recreation trends to develop an effective parks and recreation plan.

Table II.B: NRPA Guidelines/Town of Essex Quantitative Comparison

Facility Type	NRPA Guidelines	Required per NRPA Standard(1)	Developed Total in Essex
Community Parks	2½ ac./1,000 people	15 ac.	20± ac.
Neighborhood Park/ School Park	1½ ac./1,000 people	9 ac.	14 ac. min.
Mini-park	1½ ac./1,000 people	9 ac.	<4 ac.
Recreation Center (3)	½ sf./person	3,000 sf.	2,200 sf. auditorium
Tennis Courts (2)	1 court/2,000 people	3	4
Swimming Pools	1 sf./person	6,000 sf.	0
Athletic Fields	1 field/4,000 people	1.5 fields	>5 fields
Golf Course	1/25,000 people	1 min.	0

(1) Town population projected for year 2000 @ 6,000
(2) Outdoor only
(2) Excludes support space, common space, restrooms, offices, hallways, etc.

Though not inclusive of all Town recreation amenities, this comparison reveals a few conditions worth noting. Anticipating that the Town population could potentially reach 12,000 persons (per the 1991 Plan of Development) shortfalls are expected in recreation amenities based on the aforementioned NRPA guidelines. Currently, there is a shortage of mini-parks in Essex which are an integral part of the daily recreation routines of residents within a neighborhood. Also, there is a deficiency in available indoor recreation space and swimming facilities.

B. CONNECTICUT STATEWIDE COMPREHENSIVE OUTDOOR RECREATION PLAN

The State of Connecticut's recreation plan, Connecticut Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), established goals for the year 2000 for total land area State-wide dedicated to open space. The State goal is to preserve 17% of its total land area to open space distributed as follows: 10% State-owned, 5% Town-owned, and 2% privately owned. The following statistics are included for information purposes only but may, however, give leverage to those organizations in Town that are pursuing funding for open space acquisition from the State of Connecticut.

The total land area of Essex is 6,656 acres. Based on Town area and according to SCORP goals, the total open space area required in Essex is 1,398 acres; the actual area is approximately 600 acres including state, municipal and quasi-public properties. Currently, 4.2 acres are State-owned (0.3%) excluding the railroad right-of-way. The remaining acreage is either Town-owned or quasi-public property (Nature Conservancy, Land Trust, etc.). Though the SCORP goals are for the entire State of Connecticut and not specifically for each municipality, consideration should be given to the large deficit in State owned land in Essex. If the State goal of 10% were met in Essex, the total open space area would increase to 1,256 acres, still 132 acres short of the 17% SCORP goal.

Though the aforementioned data is based on a 17% goal, the State of Connecticut has recently increased the percentage goal to 21%.

TABLE II.C.
TOWN OF ESSEX RECREATIONAL FACILITIES INVENTORY: EXISTING CONDITIONS

SITE LOCATION	ACTIVITY/FACILITY																								
	Basketball Courts	Tennis (outdoor)	Tennis (lighted)	Softball	Little League Baseball (multi -use)	90' Baseball	Indoor multi-use room (aerobics)	Indoor gymnasium	Football	Soccer (single-use)	Soccer (multi-use)	Lacrosse/Field Hockey	Multi-use lawn area	Playground	Playscape	Picnic Facilities	Nature Trail	Boat Launch	Track & Field	Skating (outdoor)	Jogging/Park Trails	Restrooms	Concession	Gazebo	Storage
Bushy Hill Nature Preserve																1	1								
Clark's Pond																									
Comstock Fields						2					1														1
Ivoryton Park																1								1	
Essex Elementary School	2.5	2			2			1			2				2	1									
Canfield Woods Nature Preserve																	1								
Hubbard Park	1				1								1									1	1		1
Harriet Cheney Downing Preserve (Cross-Lots)																									
Grove Street Park/Town Hall Auditorium	1		2				1						1	1	1	1									
Sunset Pond																				1					
Essex Village Park													1			1		1						1	
Grieder Field				1																					
Turtle Creek Wildlife Area																	1								
Great Meadow																									
John Winthrop Junior High School					3	1				2		1													
Valley Regional High School		6			1	1			2	1	2								1						
Mill Pond																									
Valley Regional Railroad State Park Trail																									
TOTALS	**4.5**	**8**	**2**	**1**	**7**	**4**	**1**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**5**	**1**	**3**	**1**	**3**	**5**	**3**	**1**	**1**	**1**	**0**	**1**	**1**	**2**	**2**

NOTE: Site location in italics indicates ownership or jurisdiction by other than the Town or Board of Education.

FIGURE II. D.

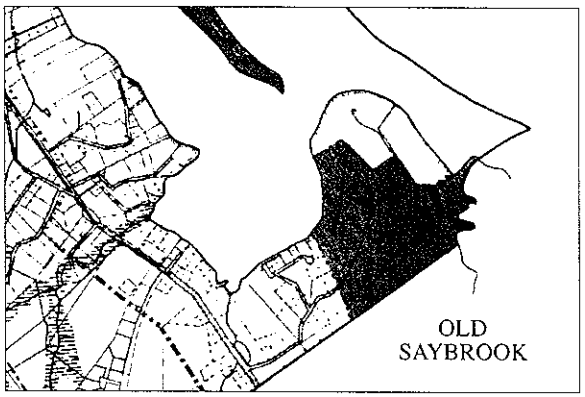
Turtle Creek Wildlife Area
Hubbard Park
Essex Town Park
Canfield Woods Nature Reserve
Grove Street Park/Town Hall Auditorium
Harriet Cheney Downing Preserve
Sunset Pond
Essex Elementary School
Valley Railroad
Grieder Field
Mill Pond
Ivoryton Park
Comstock Fields
Clark's Pond
Bushy Hill Preserve
Valley Regional High School
John Winthrop Junior High School

FIGURE II.D: SITE INVENTORIES

The following site descriptions were prepared for primary active and passive recreation sites in the Town of Essex. The sites include those owned by or under the jurisdiction of the Town of Essex, Nature Conservancy, Land Trust, Board of Education, the State of Connecticut and other private owners and not-for-profit associations. The following data sheets include information on each site including location, land acreage, classification, a list of amenities, site condition information based on the results of the 1999 resident survey and representative photographs.

Turtle Creek Wildlife Area

SITE PHOTOS



SITE DESCRIPTION

Location: Haydens Point Road on South Cove and the Connecticut River

Acreage: 62.5 Acres

Jurisdiction: Nature Conservancy

Classification: Natural Resource Area / Park Trail

Site Description / Amenities:

- Walking trails for public use
- Cove and river frontage
- No formal entrance, parking or visible signage
- No water access
- Cove and river views are obstructed

Hubbard Park

SITE PHOTOS

SITE DESCRIPTION

Location: North Main Street just north of Grove Street

Acreage: 3.5 Acres ±

Jurisdiction: Town of Essex

Classification: Community Park

Site Description / Amenities:

- Unmarked entrance to the park
- Baseball field w/dugouts and bleechers
- Basketball court in parking area (striped seperately)
- Multi-purpose field (soccer)
- Batting cage (portable)
- Restrooms
- Concession structure
- On-site parking for 15 cars (often overflows to basketball court)

Site Conditions per the 1999 Resident Survey:

General Use: Excellent: 34%
Good: 54%

Frequent Users: Excellent: 36%
Good: 45%

Essex Town Park

SITE PHOTOS

SITE DESCRIPTION

Location: Main Street, Essex Village

Acreage: 1.83 Acres

Jurisdiction: Town of Essex

Classification: Community Park

Site Description / Amenities:

- "Town Square" in Essex Village
- Gazebo (used for summer music series)
- Benches & picnic tables (3)
- Mature trees and lawn
- On-site tree identification list (gazebo)
- Waterfront views
- Boat launch
- Parking available in bank / post office lot and on Main Street

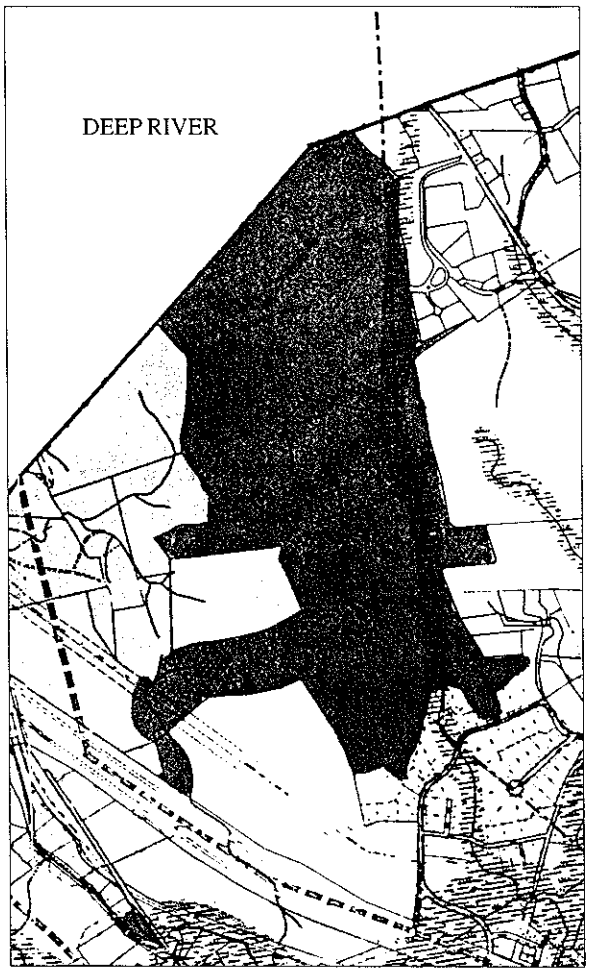
Site Conditions per the 1999 Resident Survey:

General Use: Excellent: 30%
Good: 55%

Frequent Users: Excellent: 47%
Good: 49%

Canfield Woods Nature Reserve

SITE PHOTOS



SITE DESCRIPTION

Location: East of Route 154 and 9 on the Deep River/Essex Town Line

Acreage: 124 Acres

Jurisdiction: Town of Essex

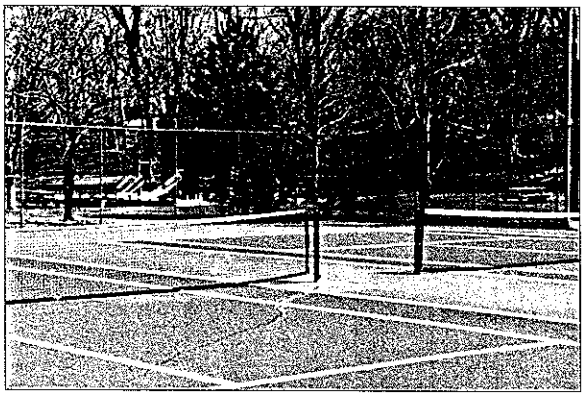
Classification: Natural Resource Area

Site Description / Amenities:

- Wooded parcel contains nature trails
- No designated parking
- No formal signage/directional signage
- Adjacent to Meadow Woods (115 acre Land Trust property)
- Meadow Woods is a 115 acre tract contiguous with the town-owned Canfield Woods
- Deep River Land Trust property is also contiguous to the Canfield and Meadow Woods parcels

Grove Street Park / Town Hall Auditorium

SITE PHOTOS



SITE DESCRIPTION

Location: Town Hall

Acreage: 2.66 Acres

Jurisdiction: Town of Essex

Classification: Community Park

Site Description / Amenities:

- No entry signage
- New playscape
- Playground equipment (old)
- 2 tennis courts (w/lights; no windscreen)
- Picnic tables
- Lawn with mature trees
- Basketball backstop in Town hall parking lot
- Parking in Town Hall lot (additional unpaved area designated for play area parking)
- Multi-use auditorium used by Fit for Life Aerobic Program and Fitness Aerobics

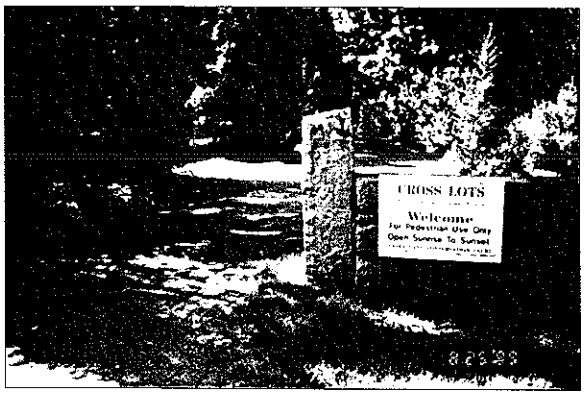
Site Conditions per the 1999 Resident Survey:

Park: Excellent: 32%
Good: 54%

Tennis Courts: Excellent: 17%
Good: 62%

Harriet Cheney Downing Preserve

SITE PHOTOS



SITE DESCRIPTION

Location: Essex Village, Town Hall Vicinity

Acreage: 15.01 Acres

Jurisdiction: Essex Land Conservation Trust

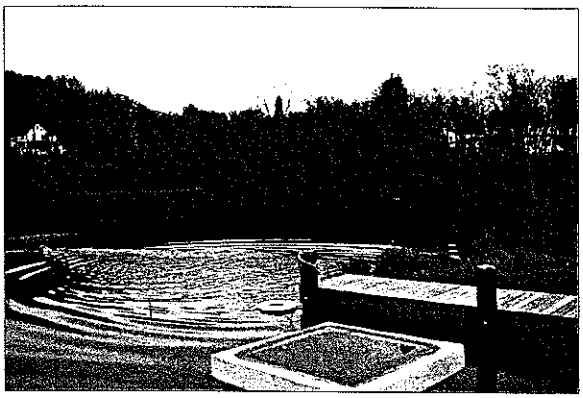
Classification: Community Park

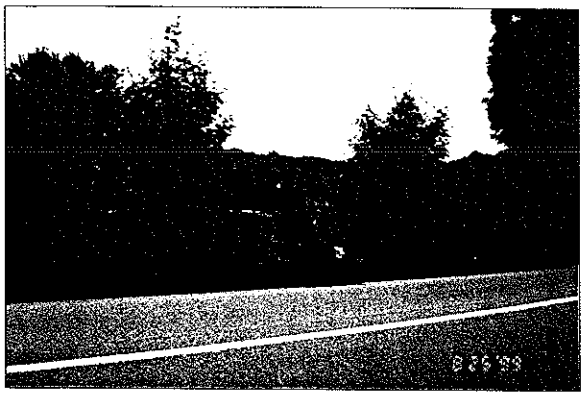
Site Description / Amenities:

- Pedestrian access only (parking at Town Hall)
- Paved path (6' width ±)
- Open lawns, stone walls and mature trees
- Rolling topography
- Barn
- Minimal seating (commemorative bench)

Sunset Pond

SITE PHOTOS





SITE DESCRIPTION

Location: West Avenue near Town Hall

Acreage: N.A.

Jurisdiction: Private ownership (Town Lease)

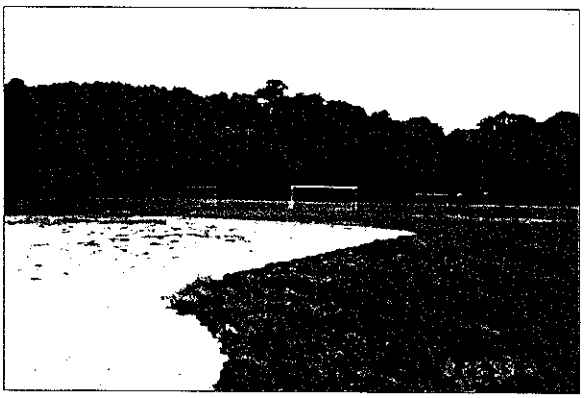
Classification: Private Park

Site Description / Amenities:

- Informal parking area (south side)
- Unmarked entry from West Avenue
- Wood dock on pond edge (south side)
- Winter ice-skating use (weather conditions permitting)
- Remainder of parcel contains light industrial and storage activity
- Adjacent to light industrial sites

Essex Elementary School

SITE PHOTOS



SITE DESCRIPTION

Location: Main Street, Centerbrook

Acreage: 14 Acres

Jurisdiction: BOE

Classification: School Park

Site Description / Amenities:

- Two playscapes
- Portion of parking area designated for play use
- 2 basketball courts in paved play area
- Wooden backstop
- 2 tennis courts
- Benches (6) and table in play area
- Portable toilets
- Multi-use field: 2 little league baseball fields with backstops and 2 soccer fields
- Indoor gymnasium: used for winter soccer, summer youth program, men's basketball, Jr. High School Boys Basketball, Special Olympics, Elementary School Basketball (clinic for 1st and 2nd grades), Elementary School Basketball (grades 3-6)

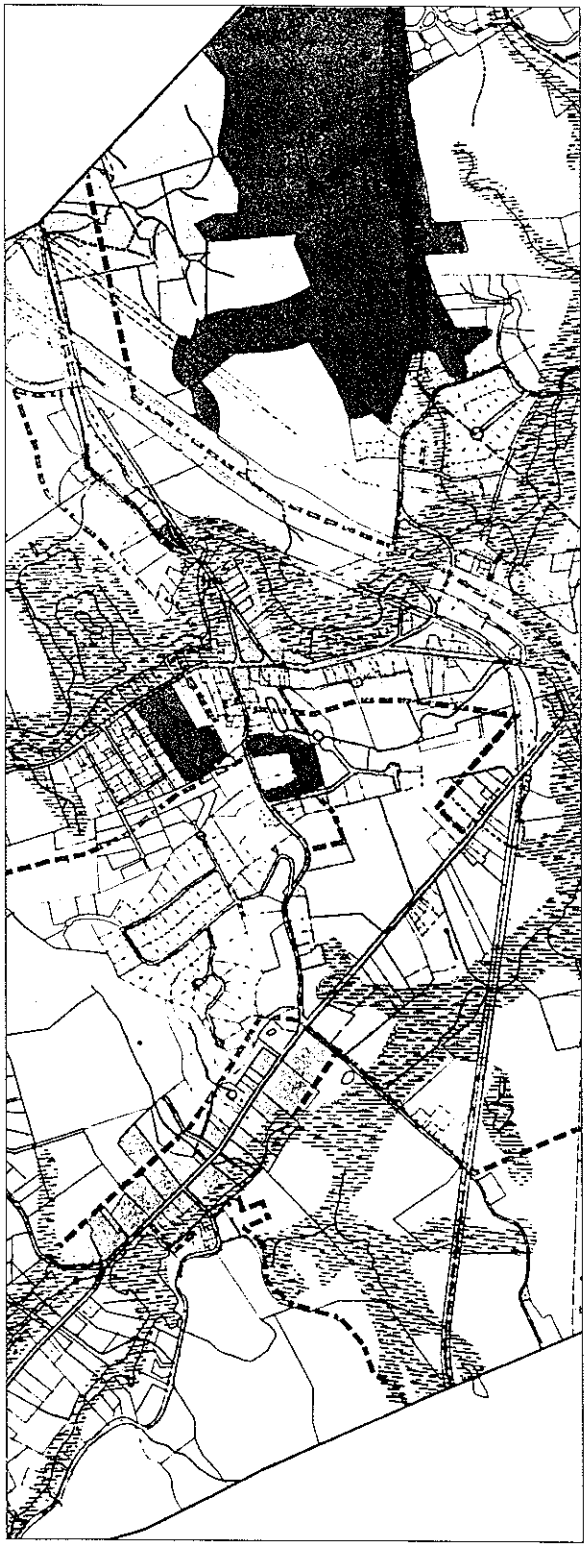
Site Conditions per the 1999 Resident Survey:

Overall Site: Excellent: 37%
Good: 53%

Tennis Courts: Excellent: 12%
Good: 61%

Valley Railroad

SITE PHOTOS



SITE DESCRIPTION

Location: Essex

Acreage: N.A.

Jurisdiction: Ownership: State od Connecticut; Leased by Valley Railroad

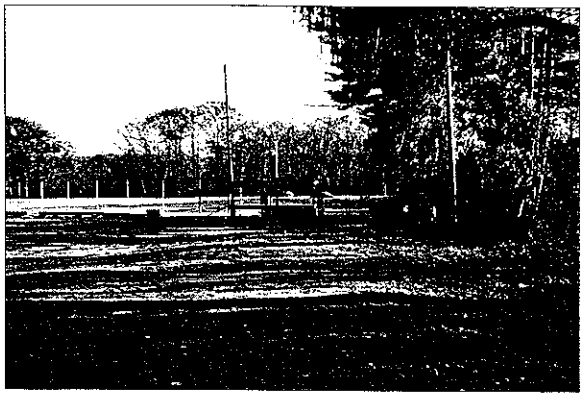
Classification: Other

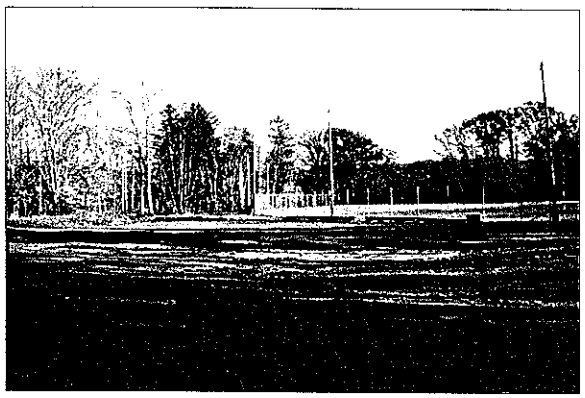
Site Description / Amenities:

- Recreational / Tourist Steam-Train line
- Seasonal use
- Holiday schedule
- Single track in railway right-of-way
- Narrow bridges (2) along rail line

Grieder Field

SITE PHOTOS





SITE DESCRIPTION

Location: Plains Road (Rte 153) west of Route 9

Acreage: 2 Acres ±

Jurisdiction: Firemans Association

Classification: Private Park

Site Description / Amenities:

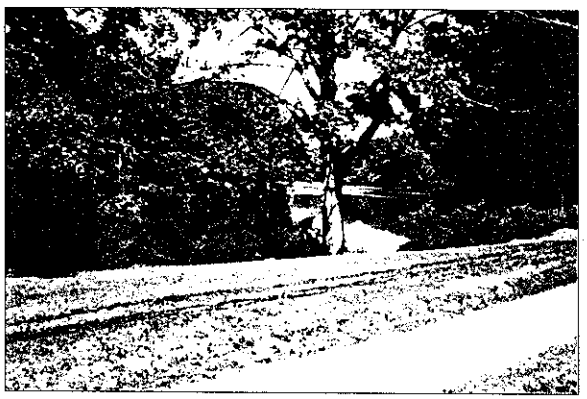
- Privately owned recreation field (softball)
- Fenced in field
- Informal entrance on Plains Road
- Unmarked dirt parking area
- Adjacent to wetlands and light industrial property

Site Conditions per the 1999 Resident Survey:

Excellent: 10%
Good: 56%
Poor: 9%

Mill Pond

SITE PHOTOS



SITE DESCRIPTION

Location: North Main Street between Centerbrook and Ivoryton

Acreage: 4.5 Acres

Jurisdiction: Land Trust

Classification: Natural Resource Area

Site Description / Amenities:

- No parking or formal access
- Linear orientation (lawn and pond)
- No active recreation uses
- Water resource

Ivoryton Park

SITE PHOTOS

SITE DESCRIPTION

Location: Main Street, Ivoryton

Acreage: 1.03 Acres

Jurisdiction: Town of Essex

Classification: Community Park

Site Description / Amenities:

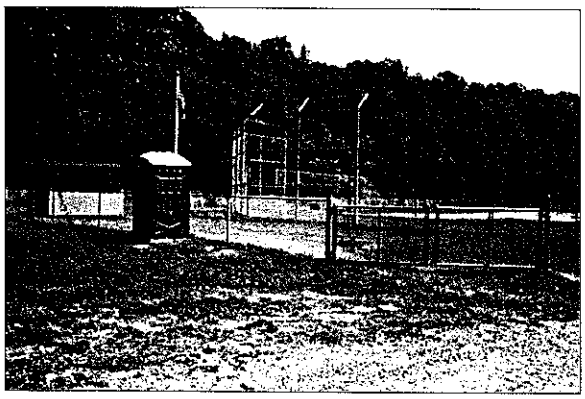
- Ivoryton "Town Square" adjacent to playhouse
- Gazebo (used for summer music series)
- Parking Area
- 2 picnic tables
- 3 benches
- Lawn area with mature shade trees

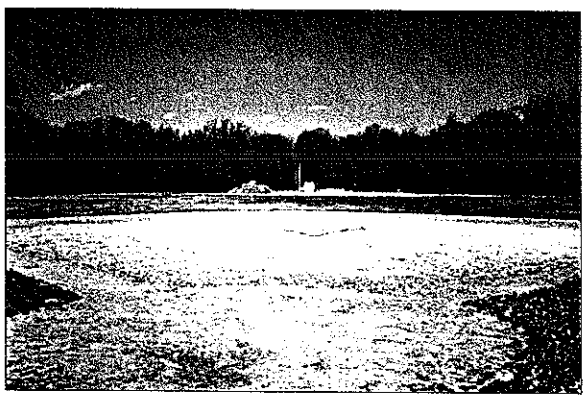
Site Conditions per the 1999 Resident Survey:

Excellent: 18%
Good: 52%

Comstock Fields

SITE PHOTOS





SITE DESCRIPTION

Location: Park Road, Ivoryton

Acreage: 11.53 Acres

Jurisdiction: Town of Essex

Classification: Community Park

Site Description / Amenities:

- Unmarked entry
- Informal dirt parking area
- 2 little league baseball fields
- Portable toilet
- Storage / maintenance shed
- Multiuse field between baseball fields (soccer)
- Bleachers

Site Conditions per the 1999 Resident Survey:

Fair: 33%
Poor 19%

Clark's Pond

SITE PHOTOS

SITE DESCRIPTION

Location: Main Street and Brooks Lane, Ivoryton

Acreage:

Jurisdiction: Town of Essex

Classification: No designated use

Site Description / Amenities:

- Undeveloped level parcel consisting of meadow, successional vegetation and pond
- Compacted dirt driveway leads to pond edge
- No vehicular barricades
- No signage
- Adjacent to light manufacturing (specialized) and residential properties

Conditions:

Fair: 38%
Poor 32%

Bushy Hill Preserve

SITE PHOTOS

SITE DESCRIPTION

Location: Bushy Hill Road, Ivoryton

Acreage: 107.7 Acres

Jurisdiction: Incarnation Center

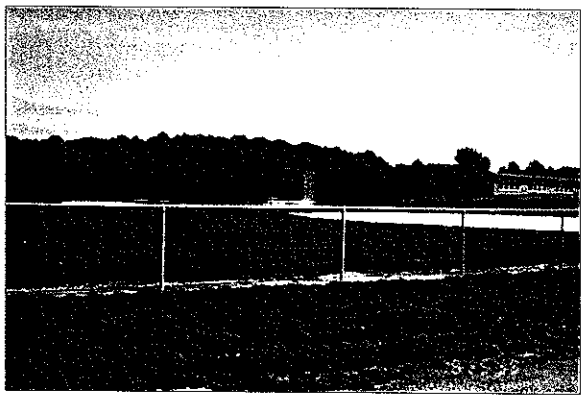
Classification: Natural Resource Area

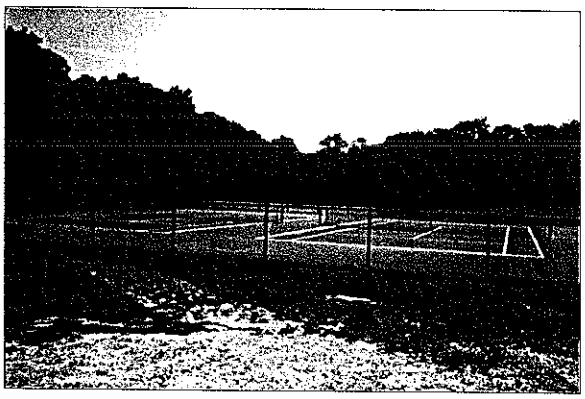
Site Description / Amenities:

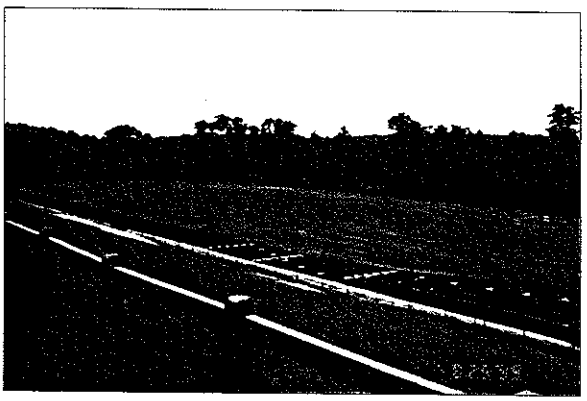
- Nature trails / passive recreation
- No designated parking area
- Blazed trail through varied scenery
- Trail maps posted / available
- Informal picnic area

Valley Regional High School

SITE PHOTOS







SITE DESCRIPTION

Location: Deep River

Acreage: 57.65± Acres

Jurisdiction: Board of Education

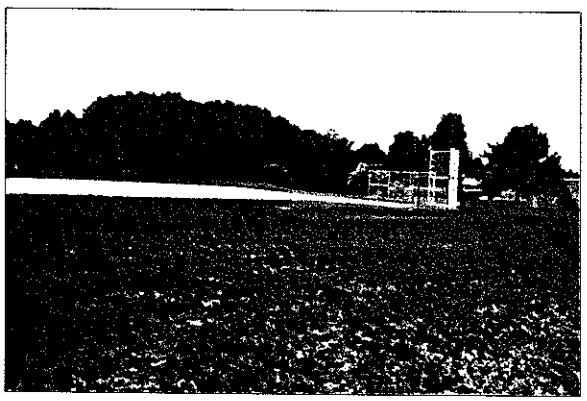
Classification: School Park

Site Description / Amenities:

- 400m track
- Football field
- Footbal practice field
- Field event facilities
- Highly used multi-use field: 2 little league fields / 2 soccer fields
- Highly used single-use soccer field
- 6 tennis courts

John Winthrop Jr. Middle School

SITE PHOTOS



SITE DESCRIPTION

Location: Deep River

Acreage: 40+ Acres

Jurisdiction: Board of Education

Classification: School Park

Site Description / Amenities:

- Highly used multi-use fields: 4 little league baseball fields, soccer, lacrosse & field hockey
- On-site paved parking

III. RECREATION PROGRAMS

III. RECREATION PROGRAMS

The EPRC currently offers a variety of indoor and outdoor programs in Town and supports numerous others. Figures III.A and III.B contain a partial list of the current recreation programs that utilize facilities in the tri-town area (Essex, Deep River and Chester) and that Essex residents take part in. The Table illustrates current program demand for existing facilities. Chapter V., "Recreation Needs Assessment" contains an evaluation of each program interpreted from the 1999 recreation survey.

FIGURE III.A.

TOWN OF ESSEX RECREATION PROGRAM SCHEDULE 05/05/2000

INDOOR PROGRAMS	JAN.	FEB.	MAR.	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG.	SEPT.	OCT.	NOV.	DEC.
Fit for Life Aerobics -15-34 adults -Mon. 5-6 pm; Wed. 4:30-6 pm -Town Hall Auditorium (Gym)												
Fitnesse-Aerobics -20 adults -Mon. and Fri. (Wed in summer) 9:15-10:30 -Town Hall Gym												
Jr. High Boys' Basketball -40-50 children -Sat. 1:30-4:30 pm -Essex El. School Gym												
Men's over-35 Basketball -50-65 adult males -Wed. 6:30-10 pm; Th. 7:30-11 pm -Essex El. School Gym												
Elem. School Basketball: -60-100 3rd-6th grade boys and girls -Mon-Th. 4:30-7:30 pm; Fri. 4:30-9 pm; -Sat. 8:30 am - 1:30 pm -Essex El. School Gym												
Elem. School Basketball: -25-40 1st and 2nd grade children -varies dep. on availability of gym (1x per week) -Essex El. School Gym												
Valley Soccer Club **Club Soccer-Winter** -300 1st -6th grade boys and girls -weekend games, practice during week -Essex. El. School Gym												
Park and Rec. Summer Program -60 children (1st-6th grade) -Mon.-Fri. 9am-3 pm -Essex El. gym and cafeteria												

KEY

- Town Hall Auditorium
- Essex Elementary School Gym
- Valley Regional High School
- Hubbard Fields
- Comstock Fields
- Essex Elementary School Fields
- Soccer Fields: VRHS, JWJrHS, Comstock, Devitt, Chester Elementary, Essex Elementary, Hubbard
- Outdoor Tennis Facilities
- Essex Town Park

FIGURE III.B.

TOWN OF ESSEX RECREATION PROGRAM SCHEDULE 05/05/2000

OUTDOOR PROGRAMS	JAN.	FEB.	MAR.	APRIL	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG.	SEPT.	OCT.	NOV.	DEC.
Tri-town Youth Football												
-125 children												
-Aug 1-school: MTuThFri 5-7:30 pm;												
during school session: TuWFri: 5-7:30												
-Valley Regional HS												
Essex Little League												
-299 children												
-April-June: Mon-Fri 5:30-9 pm;												
-March-April: Mon-Fri 4-6 pm												
-Hubbard (March-June);												
-Comstock (March-Aug.)												
- Essex El. (March-June)												
Valley Soccer Club												
Club Soccer-Fall												
-550 children (1st-6th grade)												
- mid-week practice 5pm-dusk, games Sa. and Su.												
-JWJrHS, VRHS, Comstock, Devitt												
-Chester El., Essex El., Hubbard												
Valley Soccer Club												
Travel Soccer												
-180 children (130 of which are also in Club Soccer)												
-5-6 games on weekend, 1-2 mid-week practice												
-JWJrHS, VRHS, Comstock, Devitt												
-Chester El., Essex El., Hubbard												
Tennis Clinic												
-40 children, 3-5 adults												
-MTuTh 3:10-4:10; Fri addtl class as req'd												
-Essex El. (children), Town Hall Courts (Adults)												
Summer Music Series												
-Wed. 7-8 pm												
-Essex and Ivoryton Parks-gazebos												
Farmer's Market												
-Fri. 3-6 pm												
-Essex Town Park												
Park and Rec. Summer Program												
-60 children (1st-6th grade)												
-Mon.-Fri. 9am-3 pm												
-Essex El. School ball fields												

**Club Soccer includes children from Chester (25%), Deep River (25%), and Essex (50%)

KEY

- Town Hall Auditorium
- Essex Elementary School Gym
- Valley Regional High School
- Hubbard Fields
- Comstock Fields
- Essex Elementary School Fields
- Soccer Fields: VRHS, JWJrHS, Comstock, Devitt, Chester Elementary, Essex Elementary, Hubbard
- Outdoor Tennis Facilities
- Essex Town Park

IV. POPULATION GROWTH PROJECTIONS AND RECREATIONAL TRENDS

IV. POPULATION GROWTH PROJECTIONS AND RECREATION TRENDS

A. REGIONAL AND TOWN POPULATION GROWTH PROJECTIONS

In order to predict future demand for recreation facilities, it is necessary to evaluate population growth projections for the Town of Essex. Understanding population growth within certain age groups is essential to predict which activities may be in the greatest demand in the future. The age groups expected to experience the largest growth to the year 2010 are the school age population aged 5-17, adults 45-64 years of age, and the elderly 65 years of age and older; these expectations are based on regional trends. However, population distribution in Essex varies significantly from State-wide distribution based on comparisons of Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development Data. The municipal population and age distributions for the Town of Essex and the State of Connecticut for 1990 and 1998 are as follows:

1990 Figures	State of Connecticut	Town of Essex
Total Population:	3,287,116 (100%)	5,904 (100%)
Preschool Age (0-4):	228,356 (6.9%)	336 (5.7%)
School Age (5-17):	521,225 (15.9%)	808 (13.7%)
Labor Force (18-64):	2,091,628 (63.6%)	3,414 (57.8%)
Retired (65 and over):	445,907 (13.6%)	1,346 (22.8%)
Median Age:	34.4	41.7

1998 Figures	State of Connecticut	Town of Essex
Total Population:	3,271,239 (100%)	6,175 (100%)
Preschool Age (0-4):	216,119 (7.0%)	326 (5.3%)
School Age (5-17):	550,400 (17.0%)	916 (14.8%)
Labor Force (18-64):	2,037,122 (62.0%)	3,539 (57.3%)
Retired (65 and over):	467,598 (14.0%)	1,394 (22.6%)
Median Age:	37.2	43.5

The U.S. Census projects that the population of Connecticut will increase from 3.28 million people in 1995 to 3.74 million people in the year 2025. The projected population increases in Connecticut rank the state's net gain as the 35th largest among the 50 states. The Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development projects a 3.16% increase in growth between 1998 and 2003 for the Town of Essex compared to an increase of 0.03% for the State over the same five year period.

It is evident that the population of Essex will increase, based on percentage, at a rate greater than the State as a whole. The 1991 Plan of Conservation and Development projected that the fully developed population of Essex, based on average household size of 2.1 persons/household, will be 12,000. This projection practically doubles the 1999 Town population.

The Town of Essex has a considerably greater percentage population of seniors aged 65 and over compared to the State percentage both in 1990 and 1998. The comparison brings to bear the following assumptions:

- Essex will not experience a significant percentage increase in the senior population by the year 2020
- The percentage of seniors is likely to stabilize due to an influx of younger families in Town and as new development attracts families with pre-school and school aged children
- The current labor force population is significantly lower than the State percentage. Trends in Essex currently indicate a transition from a population with a high percentage of senior citizens to a labor force population which will begin to equalize the Town and State age group percentages

The 1999 recreation survey revealed an average household size of 2.5 persons/household compared to 2.1 persons/household (1991) which indicates that, in fact, more homes are being occupied by families. The following section "Recreation Trends" will focus on general trends and the popular activities of various age groups.

B. RECREATIONAL TRENDS

According to national surveys conducted by the Trust for Public Land (TPL), demand for open space is high no matter how strained local budgets may be. In general, respondents consider their supply of open space inadequate. The TPL surveys indicate that youth recreation and community aesthetics are the primary benefits of a local park and open space network and that open space acquisition is a priority issue. Greenways, river access, and trails are also in great demand and tend to benefit all age groups. Trails and greenways provide links between neighborhoods and open spaces, encourage use of alternate modes of transportation, revitalize the community and appeal to a large constituency.

Many trends will influence park and recreation planning in the future including environmental, social, economic, demographic, technological, and urban pattern trends. These trends are broad ranging but underscore the need for a responsive planning approach that will shape and optimize recreation opportunities in the future. Although the accuracy of long-term forecasting of recreational trends is limited, several common factors that influence recreational activities in parks today are likely to continue in the future. These factors include:

- increased use (public visitation) of public recreation and cultural facilities,
- increased discretionary income for leisure,
- deteriorating infrastructure,
- dwindling public budgets and increased public concern about municipal spending,
- greater division between the "haves' and "have-nots" resulting in extreme levels of support for user fees, increased taxes for recreation based funding, etc.
- increased awareness of health and physical fitness,
- increased concern about the environment and the preservation of physical, historical and cultural resources,

- changing demographics (family size, age, ethnic diversity), and
- utilizing alternative modes of transportation (e.g. walking, biking, in-line skating).

Current trends also indicate that recreational facilities must meet a diverse population with varying physical abilities. The best suited recreational programs will be those structured to provide exercise, social connections, challenges, and education for all. With the enactment of the Federal Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in 1992, barriers to persons with disabilities are disappearing nationwide. More people with disabilities are participating in fully-integrated park and recreation programs nationwide, and the variety of these activities are expanding at the Town level. For this reason, on a site-by-site basis, universal accessibility should be programmed into future capital improvements. In some instances, simple improvements such as curb ramps at parking areas or transfer platforms on playscapes could make a great difference to a physically challenged person.

Issues that face municipalities that must now respond to recent trends include:

- how to ensure adequate funding for capital improvements or development,
- determining spending priorities when forced to make budget cuts,
- how to compete for funding within the Town against other community services,
- consideration of a more business-like approach to managing recreation services,
- how to ensure future investment in park maintenance and improvements, and
- how to develop partnerships and cooperation between other service providers to maximize Town resource utilization.

C. AGE GROUP RECREATION TRENDS

According to sources noted in the "Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines" prepared by the National Recreation and Park Association and the American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration, there is a consensus that participation will grow in activities such as mountain biking, in-line skating, salt water and fresh water (pond, lake, river) swimming, golf, soccer and ice hockey as well as cultural events and historic site visitation. Documented recreation surveys previously conducted in the New England region also indicate the following:

Major activities of interest for the 5-14 age group include:

- swimming
- bicycling
- playground use
- ice skating/hockey
- soccer
- basketball
- in-line skating
- interpretive natural history displays

Major activities of interest for the 15-18 age group include:

- swimming
- bicycling
- basketball

Major activities of interest for the 18-45 age group include:

- jogging/walking
- swimming
- bicycling

Major activities of interest for the 46-64 age group, expected to realize the greatest percentage increase in population in Essex, include:

- jogging/walking
- swimming
- cultural performances
- historic site/museum visitation
- bicycling
- picnicking

The elderly population (ages 65 and up) will increase substantially on a national level; projections estimate that the number of elderly will grow nearly 50% between 1990 and 2020. Major activities of interest for this age group include:

- jogging/walking
- swimming
- cultural performances
- historic site/museum visitation
- bicycling
- picnicking

D. COST OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

The Southern New England Forest Consortium Inc. (SNEFCI) conducted a region-wide cost study to assist officials in making informed open space decisions. The study contained the analysis of eleven diverse southern New England communities and uncovered trends regarding the fiscal impact of various types of land use and development. The study received Merit Awards in 1996 from two regional chapters of the American Planning Association.

The Cost of Community Services study (COCS) indicates that the services used by residential development cost more than the tax revenue generated by that land use, whereas open space lands contribute revenue to towns. Financially, conversion of wooded and farm land and open space for development is not advisable. Such a practice is a short-term fix and will most likely result in future tax increases. The study revealed that for every dollar of revenue raised from the residential sector, the towns spent an average of $1.14 on residential services. For every forest, farm, and open space land dollar, towns spent an average of $0.42 on public services. In effect, by keeping open space in private ownership, landowners are helping to stabilize their towns taxes and create a positive financial contribution.

The COCS study also revealed that residential development of open space today will most likely result in long term higher community costs, for example, education costs due to a larger student population. Funding of open space acquisition through bonds typically requires only a short term tax increase. Also, in Southern New England, bond ratings of towns that have purchased and preserved open space have increased thereby reducing the municipalities cost of borrowing money.

V. RECREATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT

V. RECREATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The recreation needs assessment is a key element of the planning process since it essentially validates the subsequent improvement recommendations. This chapter contains a general overview of the town's existing recreation facilities, the results of the 1999 resident survey conducted as part of this plan and a summary of facility and program needs.

A. OVERVIEW: EXISTING RECREATION FACILITIES

Vollmer Associates identified a number of factors which may contribute to any perceived or experienced shortage of recreation facilities in the Town of Essex. These factors include the following:

- Programming: Many residents responded that a full-time professional program director is needed to properly schedule use of Town and school recreation facilities and avoid conflicts.

- Reliance on multi-use fields: Outdoor multi-use fields typically restrict play of individual sports to certain times and seasons.

- Availability of lighted facilities: Lighted facilities maximize utilization of outdoor fields and provide opportunities for more working adults to participate in organized sports. Sports play is limited to day time hours since few lighted facilities exist (tennis only).

- School and Recreation Department shared facilities: School properties account for a significant portion of the Town's overall active use recreation facilities. Essex Elementary School is the only public school located within Essex; Valley Regional High School and John Winthrop Middle School are located in Deep River. There are certainly advantages to sharing school and recreation facilities, however, since school needs are given priority, other organized league play is often abbreviated or interrupted.

- Parking: Access to park facilities is inconvenient for visitors who arrive by car since parking availability and conditions need improvement.

- Restrooms: Permanent restrooms within Town park facilities are either limited or non-existent.

- Maintenance: Dispersion of recreation facilities increases maintenance cost, however, adequate distribution is necessary to serve the neighborhoods throughout Town. Improved maintenance on some Town facilities would increase demand for these facilities and reduce demand for field time on the current popular facilities and defer major capital expenditures on new facilities.

- Facility distribution: Current and projected future population growth areas have insufficient active recreation area.

B. 1999 RESIDENT SURVEY RESULTS

A survey was prepared specifically for the Town of Essex and delivered to each household. 2,900 surveys were delivered and 730 were returned representing a response rate of approximately 25%. Based on the survey responses, we have summarized the recreation needs within the Town of Essex. The Appendix contains a complete summary of the survey results; the most critical information obtained from the survey relevant to specific needs is summarized as follows:

- the most popular recreation activities in Town
- the most popular activities enjoyed by Essex residents at out-of-town locations
- the most popular programs in Town
- the most needed recreation programs
- the most needed recreation facilities in Essex
- the most opposed facilities

The **most popular recreation activities in Town** listed in descending order of popularity include:

- Hiking, walking and jogging
- Tennis
- Boating and Sailing
- Swimming
- Golf
- Soccer
- Aerobics/fitness
- Playground use
- Baseball
- Canoeing/kayaking

The **most popular recreation activities at out-of-town locations** listed in descending order of popularity include:

- Swimming
- Playgrounds
- Aerobics/fitness
- Hiking/walking
- Soccer

With respect to the two lists above, it is important to note that the popularity of existing activities will be based on the availability of facilities to participate in those activities. This information will assist in determining which existing recreation facilities are essential to the Town. Additional information pertaining to needs, also interpreted from the 1999 survey, will steer the direction of future recreation improvements.

Currently, the **most popular recreation programs** in Town listed in order of descending popularity include (the following list contains all of the recreation programs under the jurisdiction of the EPRC):

The **most needed recreation facilities, based on resident responses to a list of recreation facilities listed on the Resident Survey**, include the following (the following list contains only those facilities which obtained a response of 50% or greater in support for more of that type of facility based on the actual number of respondents who selected either more, less or the same; the list is in order of descending popularity):

- Bicycle trails
- River/linear parks
- Outdoor swimming pool
- Indoor Swimming pool
- Recreation center
- Improved river access
- Youth center
- Nature areas
- Outdoor skating rink
- Municipal golf course
- Indoor skating rink
- Picnic areas
- Senior center

Few facilities obtained a **response greater than 10% requesting a reduction of those facilities**; this may indicate future opposition to developing the following facilities:

- Campgrounds (23%)
- Racquet/handball courts (21%)
- In line skating/skateboard park (21%)
- Municipal golf course (20%)
- Indoor skating rink (18%)
- Indoor tennis courts (16%)

C. NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Facilities

By evaluating current recreation trends, anticipated demographic changes, and the results of the 1999 recreation survey, we have prepared a prioritized list of the activities and/or facilities that should be supported or provided by the EPRC and the Town of Essex. To establish the list, we first evaluated the most needed recreation facilities in Town; second, the most popular activities which will need to be accommodated at existing or new facilities. The needs assessment will also consider the current recreation programs in Town and how developing new or improving existing facilities may help enhance the programs. The list of needed facilities includes the following:

Multi-Use Recreation Paths: Multi-use recreation paths include a variety of amenities, i.e., nature trails, bike routes, neighborhood sidewalks, and others which would meet the needs of many residents in Essex. The 1999 recreation survey revealed great support from Town residents for facilities such as:

- hiking, walking and jogging paths
- bike trails and paths
- neighborhood sidewalks (Ivoryton, Centerbrook, Canfield Woods neighborhood)

Ancillary to these activities and amenities are the following activities which also received great support from Town residents:

- river/linear parks: a linear park may consist of a trail or continuous trail system adjacent to the cove and/or the Connecticut River
- nature and picnic areas: by providing additional and improved paths through some of the existing open space parcels in Town and providing access to new picnic areas within these parcels, more nature and picnic areas may be made accessible to the public at relatively minimal capital cost

Swimming Facilities: The recreation survey revealed overwhelming support for the development of new swimming facilities in Town. Swimming facilities not only received great support on the predetermined list of potential recreation facilities but many residents also commented specifically on the great need for both indoor and outdoor swimming facilities. New swimming facilities in Town will benefit many residents who currently travel to neighboring towns to swim. Also noted from the survey is the need for additional toddler, pre-teen, teenage, adult and senior citizen programs in Town. Indoor swimming facilities will help meet these needs, especially during the cooler weather seasons. Outdoor swimming facilities at natural ponds or the Sound would also benefit many residents and a summer youth recreation program. Many residents are surprised that Essex, ideally located along major rivers and coves, does not have a man-made or natural outdoor public swimming area.

Improved River Access: Access to coves and rivers within Essex may serve the needs of many residents. Improved access, parking and amenities should focus on the following:

- Public vehicular parking for boaters and sailors
- Improved launch areas for car-top boat carriers (kayaks, canoes, etc.) and parking for these vehicles in close proximity to the launch sites
- In conjunction with natural swimming areas (see above) provide public parking, shower and changing stations at safe swimming locations (cove, river, pond).

Recreation Fields: Little league baseball and soccer are popular activities in Essex, especially for the Town's youth. Participation levels in youth soccer and little league programs are expanding at rates greater than the overall population growth. Currently, the number of facilities including school properties in Deep River are sufficient to meet current needs. Anticipating population growth and an increase in families with young children, suitable and centrally-located land for development of multi-use fields should be acquired and designated for future active recreation use. To meet current need at existing facilities, the Town of Essex should provide more suitable parking and restroom facilities for public use. Ideally, common field activities should be consolidated to reduce maintenance costs and formalize organized play, however, considering the distribution of recreation fields in Essex, the Town may be best served by enhancing one or two existing facilities as the premiere spectator and game field(s) while the neighborhood and school facilities are maintained for informal and school play and league practice use.

Indoor Recreation Facility: The Town of Essex contains limited indoor public recreation facilities. The Town Hall auditorium and elementary school gymnasium, though very well maintained and used extensively, are not adequate to serve the recreation needs of the Town. The recreation survey identified numerous facilities, activities and programs that could be accommodated by an indoor recreation facility which include:

- swimming pool
- basketball courts/adult basketball program
- youth activity center
- senior citizen activity center
- summer and winter venue for school age/teenage youth activity
- adult volleyball programs
- evening recreation for working adults/adults
- aerobics and physical fitness facility.

An indoor recreation facility would provide a recreation venue for winter activity, working adults and individual and family oriented activities and also fulfill numerous resident-identified needs. By combining multiple uses, concession areas and implementing membership fee categories and "pay as you go" type uses, an indoor recreation complex can be a revenue generating and self-sustaining facility.

Roller/Ice Skating Rink: Skating and hockey are increasingly popular activities, and the need for an outdoor skating facility was evident in the recreation survey. On the other hand, approximately 20% of the survey respondents are opposed to the development of an indoor skating rink.

Municipal Golf Course: Golf is currently a popular activity among Essex residents even though the Town does not have a facility. The demand for a municipal golf course and the public recreation revenue generating potential in Essex is offset by a response of approximately 20% of residents who are opposed to development of a golf course and by the overwhelming support of residents to preserve naturalized open space and minimize future development in Town. An 18-hole, 5,500+ yard golf course would require a minimum of 140 acres to develop.

Playgrounds: Surprisingly, demand for playgrounds and playscapes was relatively low based on the recreation survey. We do, however, recognize a deficiency in available facilities in Ivoryton.

Tennis Courts: Currently, the Town of Essex contains an adequate number of tennis facilities; however, ongoing maintenance is an issue. By improving the condition and playability of existing tennis courts, current and short-term future needs will be met. The Ivoryton area is currently underserved and as part of an overall and long-term plan to expand recreation opportunities in Ivoryton, the Town should consider providing additional courts. Generally, development of indoor tennis facilities within the Town is opposed by over 15% of the survey respondents.

Programs

Most EPRC supported recreation programs received a rating of "good" or better by at least 85% of the residents who responded to the particular item. Those programs that received "excellent" or "good" responses less than 85% are as follows:

- tennis lessons-73%
- bus trips-59%
- town dances-67%

The Town of Essex should survey these particular program participants to determine means to improve the programs. Town sponsored dances received the least support of the programs evaluated; one-third of the survey respondents who addressed this program believe the program is unnecessary. The EPRC may consider reallocating resources to improve other existing and more popular programs.

Recreation Program Survey Results

The EPRC conducted a survey of the major recreation programs in Town. A separate survey, contained in the Appendix of this report, was distributed to the coordinators of the major organized indoor and outdoor recreation programs in Town. The results are as follows:

Indoor Programs:

Junior High School boys basketball program:
-Essex Elementary School is too small and over scheduled
-facility with bleachers and lockers (for competition, expanded programs)
-full-time recreation director is needed

Elementary school basketball program:
-need additional gym for increased flexibility
-need facility with space for bleachers
-full-time recreation director is needed

Over 35 men's basketball:
-need multi-use court
-Essex Elementary School is too small and over scheduled
-program is limited by available space and time

Park and Recreation Summer program:
-need additional indoor space to accommodate increased participation by Town residents

Outdoor programs:

Tri-town Football
-Provide practice facilities in Essex; games and practices currently take place in Deep River

Essex little league

–need more fields (current conflicts with other program uses)
-need softball field
-improve maintenance on existing fields

Valley Soccer Club

-increase number of fields (multi-use complex)
-improve fields at Essex Elementary; require more frequent maintenance of fields
-modify Essex Elementary School fields to better accommodate multiple uses
-provide lighting on two Town fields
-need on-site storage facilities
-"master scheduler" to track and schedule field events

Tennis clinics

-improve maintenance of existing courts

Summer music series

-provide better advertising

D. SUMMARY

Referring to Chapter IV, "Age Group Recreation Trends," the recognized regional trends among various age groups closely coincide with the Town-specific recreation needs noted above. Similarities include the need for additional swimming facilities, trails, paths and walks, water access and a skating/hockey rink.

With respect to meeting the needs of the residents of Essex, the resident survey was developed to measure public support for various fee and taxing structures, capital expenditures, and land use initiatives. Relevant information obtained from the recreation survey will be useful in setting guidelines for the overall program of capital improvements within the next 15-20 years. The survey revealed 71% public support for the acquisition of additional land or facilities for recreation purposes; 73% support for increased Town expenditures to address recreation needs; and approximately 70% support for low or modest user fees for access to certain recreation facilities or programs assuming public recreation related improvements are a consequence. Regarding land use objectives, the survey revealed significant resident support for Town based initiatives that protect open space from development and preserve environmentally sensitive areas. By evaluating the resident responses and understanding what the Town priorities are we are better able to prepare responsive recommendations.

VI. RECREATION IMPROVEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

VI. RECREATION IMPROVEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS:

Our recommendations to the EPRC are categorized as either improvements to existing facilities or expansion of existing facilities and the development of new facilities. Our recommendations are then categorized as either short or long term improvements. Our goal, in conjunction with the EPRC, is to establish a development strategy respectful of the Town's current and future budget parameters. The intent is to prioritize recreation development based on needs and the Town's ability to obtain funding. We also recognize the need to demonstrate progress in improving the recreation facilities in town, to garner public support for recreation and future development of other needed and potentially more costly facilities. The recommendations contained herein, particularly the new facilities, respond to the needs of a broad range of age groups. The new facilities will provide recreation opportunities for youths, families, adults and senior citizens alike.

Above and beyond the specific recommendations contained herein and in response to the aforementioned trends and needs, the Town of Essex should consider a number of initiatives including but not limited to:

- maximizing utilization of all existing parks and open space,
- acquiring and dedicating additional public land,
- encouraging public participation in park planning and funding policy,
- encouraging public and private partnerships in park services, recreation facility development and maintenance,
- protecting watershed and natural areas,
- supporting private and not-for-profit cultural and historical institutions which are essential to the Town's recreation resources,
- identifying potential growth areas and providing adequate open space or recreation areas,
- identifying additional means to advertise programs and available recreation facilities particularly to senior citizens and new residents,
- encourage use of alternative means of transportation (for recreation and occupational purposes), and
- maintaining a full-time recreation director.

This chapter also contains an inventory matrix of recreation facilities should all improvements to passive and active facilities be realized and maps depicting large scale improvement recommendations. Construction costs are included in this chapter for those improvements which can be quantified at this time. The Appendix contains cost breakdowns of the recommended improvements to existing facilities.

A. IMPROVEMENTS TO EXISTING FACILITIES

Essex Town Park, Essex Village

- Maintain lawn areas particularly after seasonal events
- Provide additional trash receptacles

Cost: $2,000 (site furniture only)

Comstock Fields, Ivoryton

- Provide directional/entry signage at Walnut and Park Road
- Improve parking area surface
- Provide foot path on perimeter of fields and for access to Clark's Pond
- Install a new playscape
- Provide a full basketball court
- Provide an additional pedestrian and/or vehicular entrance to the park
- Install drinking fountain/potable water service
- Define area for future tennis court installation
- Provide permanent restrooms and storage area
- Extend ballfield fencing; install vehicular barrier along perimeter access road

Cost: $335,000 (construction; excludes additional vehicular entry)

Clark's Pond, Ivoryton

- Provide on-site parking (6-8 passenger cars)
- Install a wooden dock/platform for water access
- Provide a shelter/warming hut for summer shade and winter skating
- Provide a soft surface perimeter path
- Define pedestrian and vehicular access; provide safe separation
- Establish a maintained lawn area for picnicking
- Install shade trees and other native plant material

Cost: $107,000 (construction)

Hubbard Park, Essex

- Provide signage at the entrance to the park (develop Town standard/signature treatment)
- Improve the park entrance
- Prevent vehicular parking within basketball court area (court to be used for overflow parking due to limited space available to expand existing parking area)
- Provide a striped safety zone between the parking area and the basketball court
- Install a scoreboard for the baseball field

Cost: $34,000 (construction)

Grove Street Park and Tennis Courts, Essex

- Repair tennis court surface (resurface; color seal coat)
- Prune adjacent trees
- Increase light levels on the tennis courts (increase wattage of the luminaires)
- Improve parking facilities for playground use (curbing, surfaces, paths, signage)
- Provide signage at the entrance to the park (develop Town standard/signature treatment)
- Provide restrooms (convenient access to Town Hall restrooms)

Cost: $54,000 (construction)

Grieder Field, Centerbrook (work in conjunction with the local fireman's association)

- Improve existing parking area (surface, paths, edge treatments)
- Improve the entrance to the site (widen entrance; install standard signage)

Cost: $65,000

Sunset Pond, Essex (privately owned site leased to the Town of Essex)

- Provide a more formalized and attractive parking area
- Enhance views of the pond from the road
- Monitor water and soil quality; conduct a hydrological study to determine source(s) of pond water pollutants; improve water quality for future swimming
- Maintain adequate depth of the pond for future swimming; control sediment in-flow

Cost: $80,000 (construction; excludes work within the pond basin)

Essex Elementary School, Centerbrook (in conjunction with the Board of Education)

- Provide spectator area (bleachers with universal access from the parking area)
- Replace existing baseball backstops with full backstops; replace dugout fencing and benches
- Restore one baseball infield skinned area
- Reposition one baseball field to maximize available lawn area for other activities,
- Provide access to restrooms within the school building
- Improvements to hard court/picnic area (edge treatments, paths, surfaces, site amenities and fencing)
- Provide a vehicular gate between the parking and hard court area to permit authorized overflow parking only

Cost: $127,000 (construction)

Ivoryton Park, Ivoryton

- Provide additional parking areas to support recreation events and local businesses
- Provide pedestrian paths and clear separation between pedestrian and vehicular traffic

Cost: To be determined

Coastal Access (sites may not be under the jurisdiction of the EPRC)

Sites: Little Point Street; Bushnell Park; Town Dock; Scholes Lane, Essex Town Park; Novelty Lane; Nott Lane Open Space; Collins Lane; Mack lane

- Improve access, signage and street and lot parking
- Identify and establish safe swimming areas
- Delineate private and public property
- Separate swimming and boating facilities

Cost: Varies from site to site; additional studies are necessary to accurately project costs

B. NEW FACILITIES

Pedestrian and Bicycle Paths

Trends indicate that walking, jogging, hiking and bicycling are popular activities among most age groups. The 1999 recreation survey also revealed strong support for pedestrian and bicycle paths. By providing more trails, paths, lanes, walkways and designated routes, the Town of Essex may effectively fulfill other needs including linear parks and improved river access. In general, a well-defined path network will help relieve traffic congestion, reduce the dominance of the automobile and maintain the character of the Town.

Bikeways: Refer to the "Pedestrian and Bicycle Circulation Plan" for recommended Town-wide improvements. There are four (4) primary types of bikeways which are utilized to accommodate the functional and recreational needs of bicyclists. These methods include:

- Bicycle Paths: includes an 8-12' wide path separate from the roadway. In general, with the popularity of in-line skating, path widths should be a minimum of 12' to accommodate multiple uses safely
- Bicycle lane: The lane is part of the road and separated by pavement markings or a textured strip; 5-6' widths should be provided on both sides of a two-way road
- Wide Outside Lane: Outside lanes may be 14' wide to accommodate bicyclists within the designated roadway
- Shared Roadway: Shared roadways are designated for vehicles and bicycles. This is the most common condition, however, it has the greatest potential for vehicular and pedestrian conflicts

Neighborhood Pedestrian Circulation Improvements: Based on the results of the 1999 Recreation Survey and our field observations the following walkway and trail improvements should be considered:

- Pedestrian walkways linking key public amenities and residential areas; for recreation and public safety in Centerbrook and Ivoryton
- Pedestrian link between Main Street and Town Hall in Essex Village
- Partnership with the Nature Conservancy for improved trails and access to Turtle Creek
- Install pedestrian walkways within roadway right-of-ways between Walnut Street and the Mill Pond
- Provide a second pedestrian access to Comstock Fields from Clark's Pond area
- Install walkways along Dennison and River Roads for improved access to Town open space
- Install pedestrian paths in the Bushy Hill area for resident access to open space

Valley Regional Railroad Corridor Pedestrian/Bicycle Path: The Valley Regional Railroad currently leases an existing track from the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection which links Old Saybrook and Deep River through the Town of Essex. The rail line is utilized by a recreational steam train which, during its operating season, runs 12 trips per day plus work trains. The Essex Steam Train is a popular regional attraction.

The rail line corridor runs north-south through the center of Essex; and its location, coupled with the current and anticipated future demand for recreation trails, provides an opportunity to develop a valuable centrally-located recreation amenity and alternative means of transportation. We recommend that the Town investigate the feasibility of constructing a multi-use recreation trail parallel to the Valley Regional Railroad. The trail must not interfere with railroad traffic. Clearly, a number of functional and safety issues would need to be addressed before this trail could be realized. These issues include but are not limited to:

- opposition from the State of Connecticut
  - proximity of pedestrians to an operable rail line
  - two narrow bridge crossings (off limits to pedestrians)
- quantity of cut and fill required
- coordination with the Valley Regional Railroad
- pedestrian safety barrier required for the entire length of the trail

Though faced with many hurdles, there would be many benefits to establishing a pedestrian greenway within the railroad right-of-way including:

- satisfying local and regional recreation needs
- encouraging alternative modes of transportation
- providing emergency vehicle access along the trail parallel to the railroad
- non-automotive access to neighboring towns, historic and cultural resources and other recreation facilities and open space

Where the Town of Essex has primary jurisdiction, the EPRC should initiate a program to improve circulation within Town along local routes and within public parks and open space for pedestrian and bicycle use. From a recreation standpoint, this will enhance day-to-day recreation opportunities for many residents. Improvements along State roads may also be initiated by the Town and partial funding may be obtained by the State for installation of pedestrian sidewalks. A significant portion of the recommended circulation improvements do occur along State Roads as indicated on the "Pedestrian and Bicycle Circulation Plan" contained in this report.

Within the past 10 years or so, public support for rail to trail conversions, rail corridor multi-modal uses and greenways has grown tremendously. The recreation survey revealed an overwhelming need for trails in Town, particularly in Centerbrook and Ivoryton. Investigating the feasibility of, for example, a trail parallel to the Valley Railroad is a worthwhile effort considering the potential benefits to Ivoryton and Centerbrook, Essex and the region..

Indoor Skating Rink

Recent discussions in the Town of Westbrook have included development of an indoor skating rink. The southeastern coastal area of Connecticut is in need of a skating complex for recreation and youth hockey. Skating rinks are costly to develop and operate and must appeal to a regional and/or multi-town market to turn a profit or to simply sustain itself. If there is an opportunity, the Town of Essex should take part in the development of the Westbrook rink for many reasons.

- The 1999 Recreation Survey revealed a demand for a skating facility.
- Land is scarce in Essex and many residents are opposed to development, particularly a skating rink (18%).
- The town is at less financial risk.
- A facility in Westbrook is well within reach for those residents who chose to use the rink based on typical travel distances for visitors at other Connecticut indoor skating facilities.
- A multi-town and possible public/private partnership may assist in funding, operating and programming use of the facility.

Recreation Center

The 1999 Recreation Survey and our field observations revealed the need for a centralized recreation center in Essex. Many residents suggested that the Town provide an indoor recreation facility to reduce demand on the Essex Elementary School gymnasium and increase opportunity for youth, adults and senior citizens recreation programs year-round.

The recreation center should provide for numerous activities. By consolidating uses within one facility, the Town may minimize land area requirements, reduce maintenance costs, and more effectively return revenues from revenue generating activities back into the center for upgrades, staff and operating costs. In addition, by providing for numerous activities, the center may meet the needs of young and school-aged children, adults and senior citizens. The complex should consist of:

- an indoor swimming pool and youth swimming annex (6 lanes, 25 yards)
- multi-use court area (basketball, volleyball, junior soccer) with spectator area
- youth center annex
- multi-purpose room (daycare, toddler activity room)
- multi-purpose room (senior activity)
- support facilities (restrooms, offices, locker rooms, concession, parking)

Space Requirements:

Multi-Use Gymnasium	7,600 sf
(potential to subdivide for concurrent activities)	
Basketball	
Volleyball	
Physical fitness programs	
Bleachers	
Indoor Pool	
6 lane, 25 yard	6,500 sf
Senior Citizen and Youth Activity Rooms	3,200 sf
Support Facilities	
Lockers	2,600 sf
Offices, Equipment and Mechanical	1,600 sf
Concession and kitchen areas	1,700 sf
Hallways and Lobby	2,200 sf
Total Building Area	25,400 sf

Parking Requirements

1 space/250 sf floor space	101 spaces
325 sq. ft. per space x 101 spaces	32,825 sf
Sidewalks, landscaping	10,000 sf

Minimum lot size required = 25,400 + 32,825 + 10,000 = 68,225 = 1.56 acres

Development Cost (year 2004 dollars):

Building construction: $3,810,000 (based on approximately $150.00/ sf)

Site work: $450,000

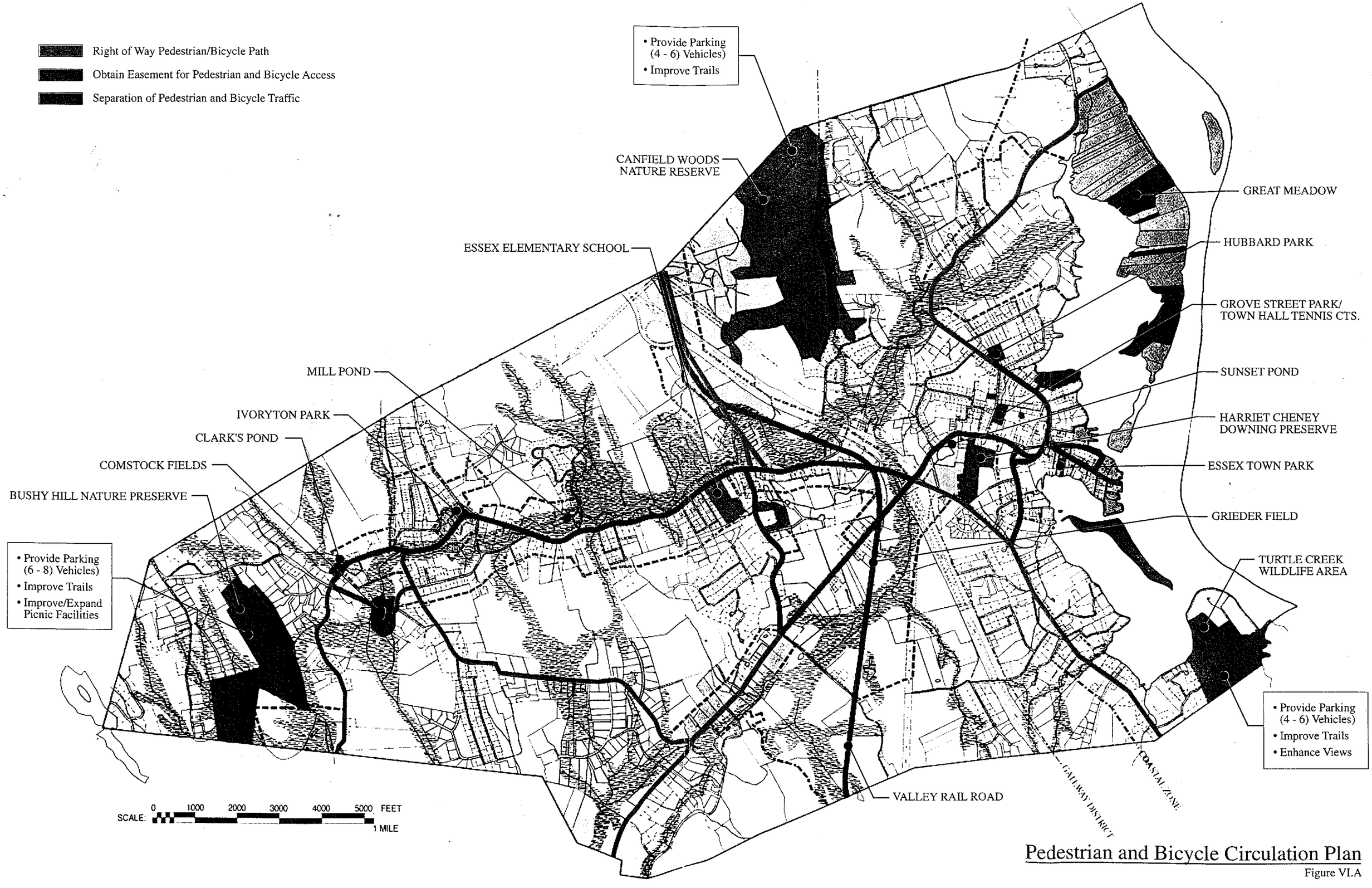
An indoor recreation complex would accommodate many Town needs and reduce the great demand on the Essex Elementary School gymnasium to a more manageable level. In addition, the recreation complex will contain an indoor pool; a Town swimming facility is greatly needed as evidenced by the 1999 Recreation Survey.

Softball/Little League Fields

Recognizing the need for adult recreation facilities, we recommend that the Town establish a softball complex (2 fields) designed for men's, women's and possibly little league play. This facility would permit softball league and competition play for adults and minimize conflicts with little league use and soccer use on other fields in Town. By providing a facility solely for softball and little league, demand for playing time at Essex Elementary and Comstock Fields may be reduced allowing expanding soccer programs to begin practice and play in spring and early summer.

The estimated construction cost is based on expansion of Grieder Field to two softball fields; land acquisition costs are excluded; coordination with current property owners including the local fireman's association would be required.

Development Cost: $240,000



Pedestrian and Bicycle Circulation Plan

Figure VI.A

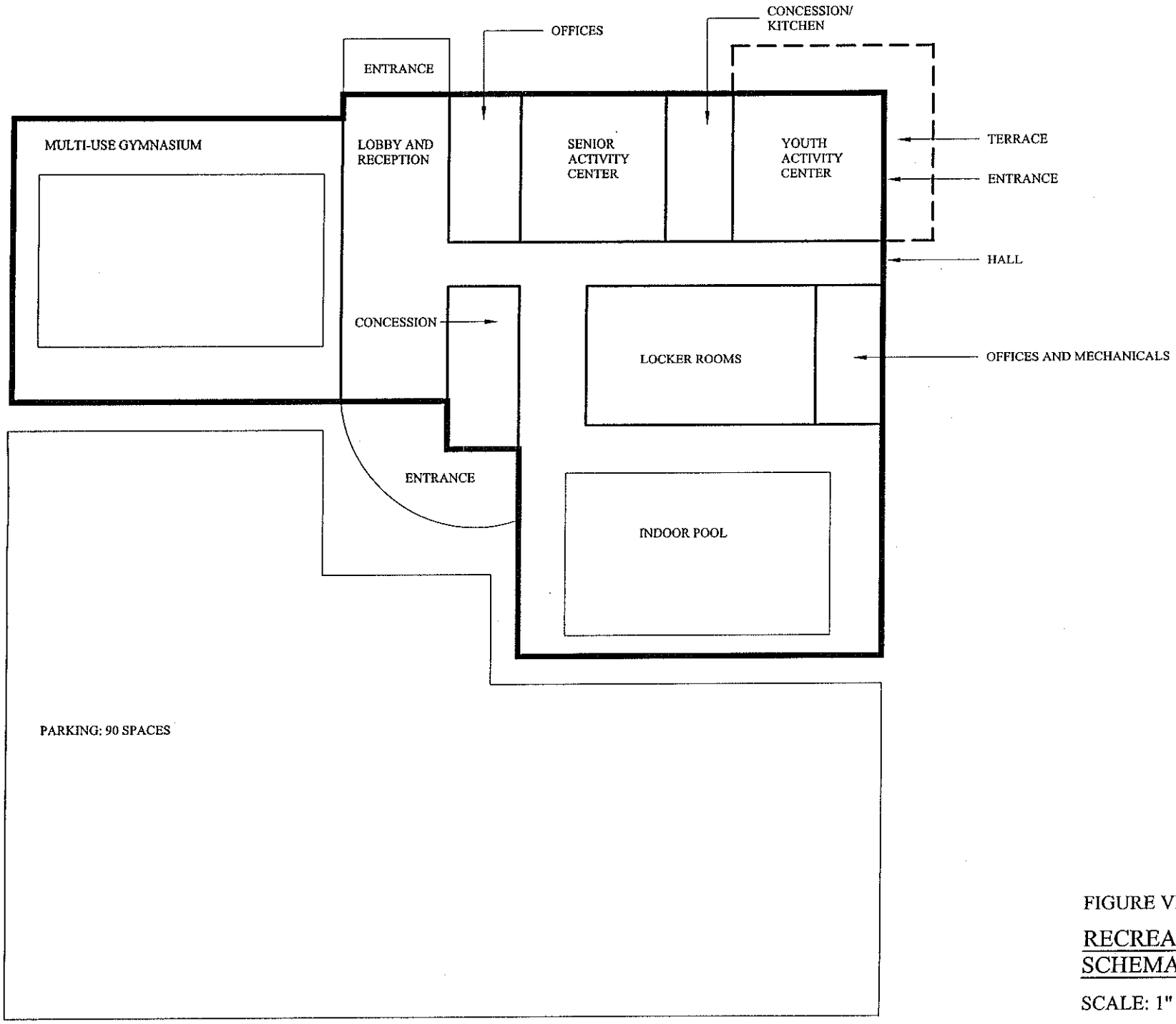
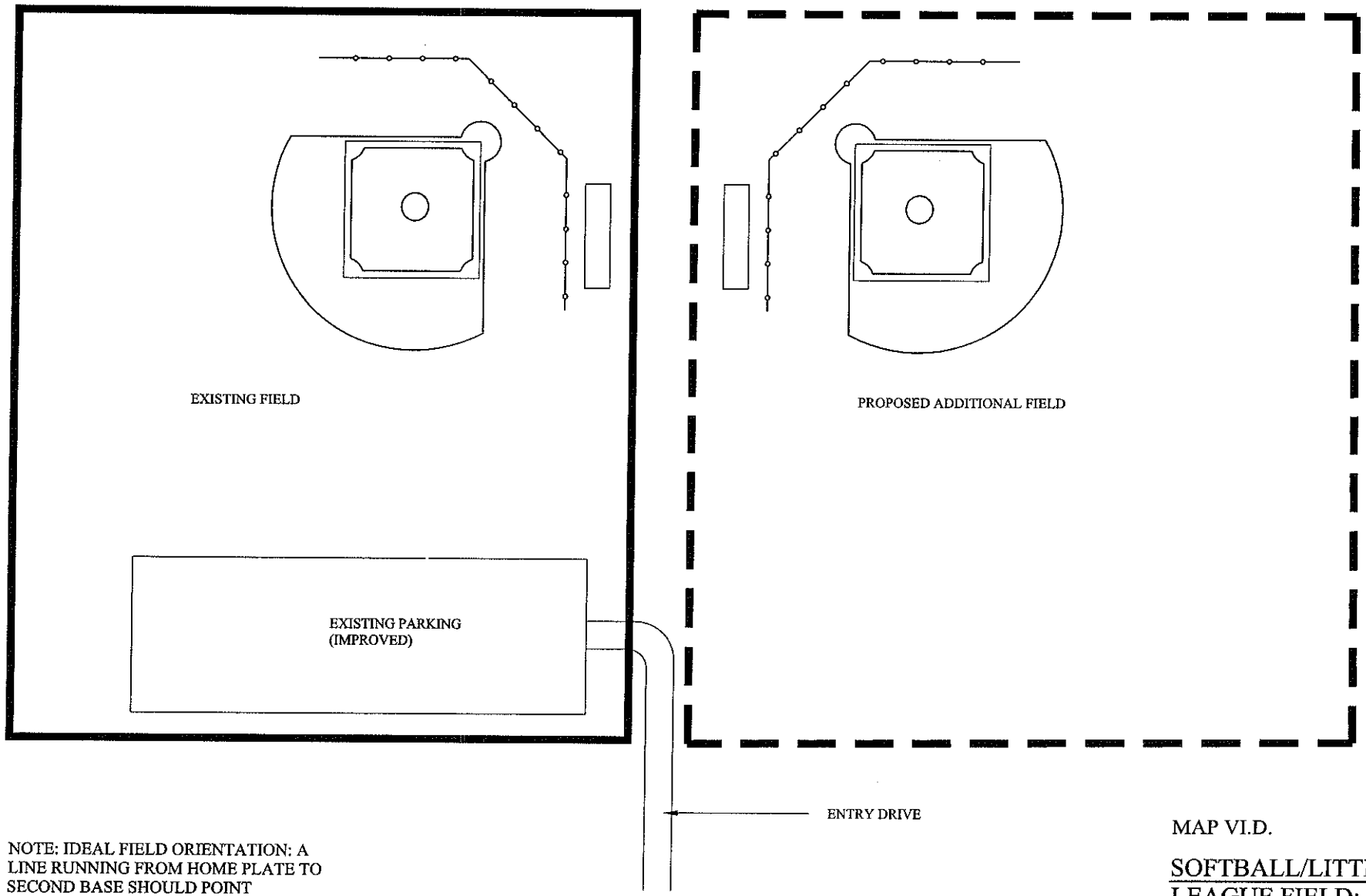


FIGURE VI.B.

RECREATION CENTER:
SCHEMATIC PLAN

SCALE: 1" = 40'-0" APPROX.



NOTE: IDEAL FIELD ORIENTATION: A LINE RUNNING FROM HOME PLATE TO SECOND BASE SHOULD POINT EAST/NORTHEAST

MAP VI.D.

SOFTBALL/LITTLE LEAGUE FIELD: SCHEMATIC PLAN

SCALE: 1" = 100'-0" APPROX.

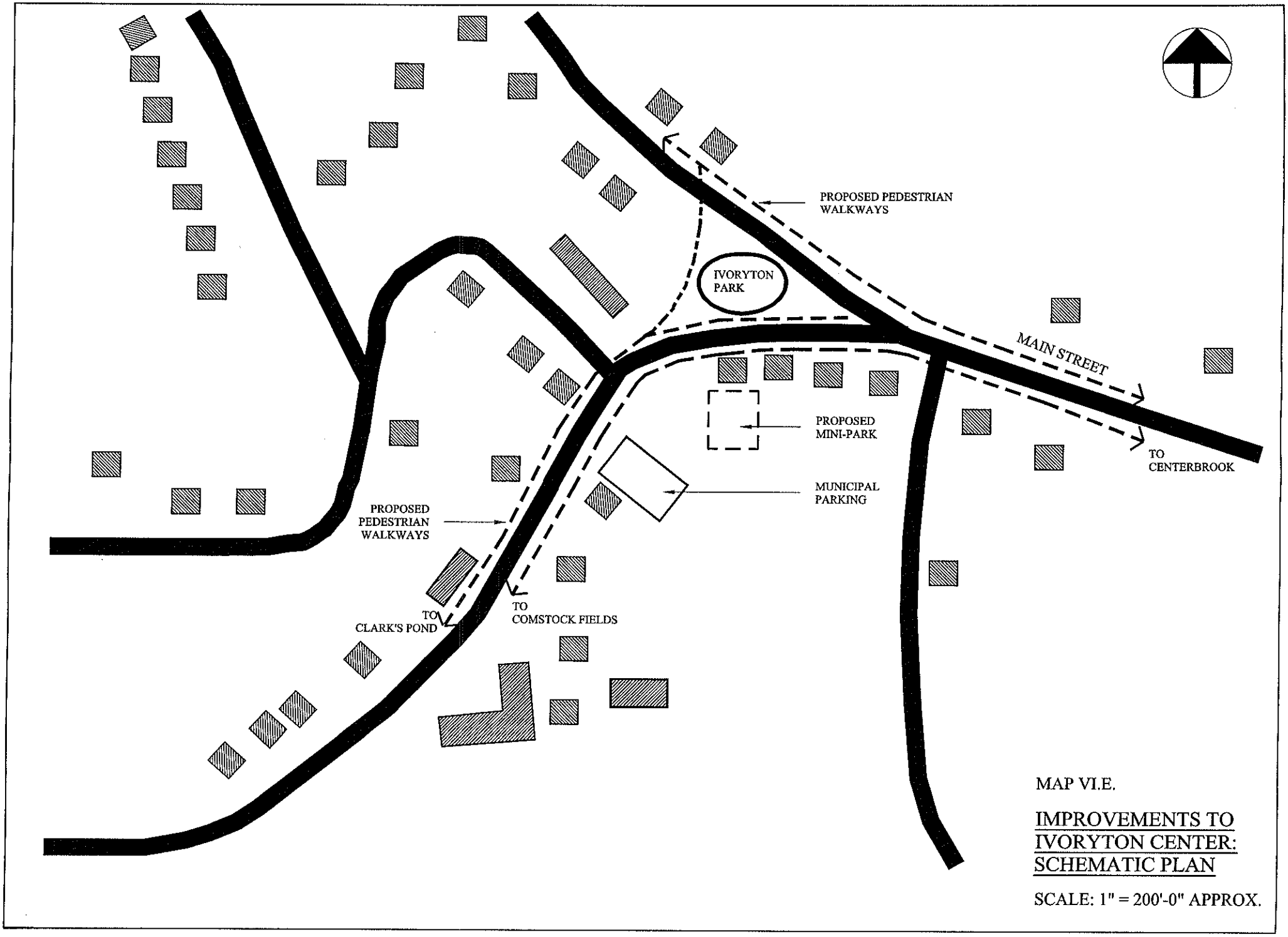

PROPOSED PEDESTRIAN WALKWAYS
IVORYTON PARK
MAIN STREET
PROPOSED MINI-PARK
TO CENTERBROOK
MUNICIPAL PARKING
PROPOSED PEDESTRIAN WALKWAYS
TO CLARK'S POND
TO COMSTOCK FIELDS
MAP VI.E.
IMPROVEMENTS TO IVORYTON CENTER: SCHEMATIC PLAN
SCALE: 1" = 200'-0" APPROX.

TABLE VI.F.

TOWN OF ESSEX RECREATIONAL FACILITIES INVENTORY: WITH RECOMMENDED IMPROVEMENTS

SITE LOCATION	ACTIVITY/FACILITY																										
	Basketball Courts	Tennis (outdoor)	Tennis (lighted)	Softball	Little League Baseball (multi -use)	90' Baseball	Indoor multi-use room (aerobics)	Indoor gymnasium	Football (multi-use)	Soccer (single-use)	Soccer (multi-use)	Lacrosse/Field Hockey	Multi-use lawn area	Playground	Playscape	Picnic Facilities	Nature Trail	Boat Launch	Track & Field	Skating (outdoor)	Jogging/Park Trails	Restrooms	Concession	Gazebo	Storage	Swimming (indoor)	Swimming (outdoor)
Bushy Hill Nature Preserve																1	1										
Clark's Pond																1				1	1						1
Comstock Fields	1	2				2			1		1				1						1	1			1		
Ivoryton Park and Vicinity	1															1								1			
Essex Elementary School	2.5	2			2			1			2				2	1											
Canfield Woods Nature Preserve																	1										
Hubbard Park	1				1								1									1	1		1		
Harriet Cheney Downing Preserve (Cross-Lots)																											
Grove Street Park/Town Hall Auditorium	1		2				1						1	1	1	1											
Sunset Pond													1			1				1							1
Essex Village Park													1			1		1						1			
Grieder Field				2																		1					
Turtle Creek Wildlife Area																	1										
Great Meadow																											
John Winthrop Junior High School					3	1				2		1															
Valley Regional High School		6			1	1			2	1	2								1								
Mill Pond																											
Valley Regional Railroad State Park Trail																					1						
Indoor Recreation Complex							1	1															1			1	
TOTALS	**6.5**	**10**	**2**	**2**	**7**	**4**	**2**	**2**	**3**	**3**	**5**	**1**	**4**	**1**	**4**	**7**	**3**	**1**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**3**	**2**	**2**	**2**	**1**	**2**

NOTE: Site location in italics indicates ownership or jurisdiction by other than the Town or Board of Education.

C. RECOMMENDED TIMELINE FOR RECREATION IMPROVEMENTS

Our recommendations are categorized in the Table VI.F, below, as short or long term improvements. Short-term improvements are generally those which should be initiated or implemented within a one to four-year timeframe. Long-term improvements, for the purpose of this study, are those that should be initiated or implemented within four to fifteen years. Table VI.F also references potential funding sources which are listed in the next section.

Priority	Recommended Improvements	Construction Cost	Funding Source
	Initiatives		
1	Pursue multi-town indoor skating rink opportunities (Town of Westbrook)	N/A	10, 11
2	Valley Regional Railroad right-of-way multi-use recreation trail (parallel to railroad)	N/A	7, 8, 9, 15
3a	Ivoryton/Ivoryton Center pedestrian, bike and recreation paths	N/A	7
3b	Centerbrook pedestrian, bike and recreation paths	N/A	7
3c	Essex Village pedestrian, bike and recreation paths	N/A	7
4	Improvements to public access boat launching facilities/identify potential swimming sites	N/A	2, 13, 14, 15
	Short-term Improvements (1-4 years)		
1	Essex Town Park	$2,000.00	Essex
2	Comstock Fields (phase-in improvements)	$335,000.00	Essex
3	Clark's Pond	$107,000.00	Essex
4	Hubbard Park	$34,000.00	Essex
5	Grove Street Park	$54,000.00	Essex
6	Grieder Field*	$65,000.00	Essex
	Long-term improvements (4-15 years)		
1	Sunset Pond*	$80,000.00	Essex
2	Indoor recreation complex	$4,260,000.00	Bond Funding
3	Essex Elementary School	$127,000.00	Essex, Bd. Of Education
4	Softball Complex	$240,000.00	Essex

*Privately owned property with public use permitted.

D. PLAN FUNDING SOURCES

To realize each of the improvement recommendations contained in this plan funding must be obtained. Potential sources of funding may include:

-General Funds
-Municipal Bonds
-Corporate Donations
-State Aid
-Federal Aid
-Special Assessments
-Capital Outlay Funds

Obtaining funding through either of these sources can be a difficult task requiring a substantial effort from Town staff and volunteers and support from elected officials and the public at large. The following listing contains a number of programs and funding sources the Town may pursue to realize elements of the recreation master plan and to generate revenue for recreation and open space based initiatives in the future. It is likely that each of these individual sources will fall under one of the categories noted above.

1. Fee in lieu of open space: This is a provision whereby a developer may make payments to the municipality instead of donating parcels of land when subdivisions are constructed. This provision allows the municipality to acquire other land with potentially greater benefit to the public. Fees collected may only be used for preserving open space.

2. Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition Grant Program (Public Act No. 98-157): This program provides financial assistance to municipalities and non-profit land conservation organizations to acquire land for open space. Grants may be made to purchase land that is valuable for recreation, forestry, fishing, conservation of wildlife or natural resources; a natural feature indicative of the State's prime landscape; habitat for native plant or animal species of special concern; contains undisturbed native ecological communities; and importance to water quality, particularly the Long Island Sound, to name a few of the qualifying attributes. Other factors include regional impact, greenway capacity and potential for appropriate public recreation use and river access.

3. Governor's 1998 $166,000,000 Open Space Initiative: Governor Rowland and the State of Connecticut have initiated a plan which calls for 21% of the State's total acreage to be protected as open space. To realize this goal the State must protect an additional 213,000 acres of open space. The plan includes an increase in bond funds through the Recreation and Natural Heritage Trust Program and a new matching grant program. The 21% goal declared by Governor Rowland surpasses the 17% objective of the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP).

4. Transfer of Development Rights (TDR): TDR "motivates private property owners to voluntarily record permanent preservation easements on their properties when they are

compensated by the sale of their development rights. These development rights are purchased, not by public agencies, but by private sector developers who use them to build additional development in areas where communities prefer extra growth." The objective, in effect, is to have growth pay for preservation and to appropriately locate development and preserve land with ecological, aesthetic, historic or recreational appeal.

5. Purchase Development Rights: A public entity (State and/or Town) may purchase the development rights of a particular parcel to preserve open space or agricultural land.

6. Public Land Lease: Under this concept, the municipality would lease a public parcel to a private operator and/or developer under the condition that the operator finance, construct and provide a predetermined recreation benefit (e.g. indoor recreation complex). The operator would be offered a long term lease at a reduced rate and would be permitted to charge membership and user fees to the facility. The Town, in effect, provides a needed service for the community.

7. Future Transportation Enhancement Acts: ISTEA (Intermodal Surface Transportation Enhancement Act) and TEA-21 (Transportation Enhancement Act) committed extensive funding to transportation enhancements throughout the Unite States. This act permits the use of federal transportation funds toward enhancement projects including bike, pedestrian and recreation trails, transportation corridor improvements, alternative modes of transportation and scenic byways. Though funding through each program has already been allocated in the State of Connecticut, the Town should anticipate future acts that continue the success of the predecessors. Essex should position itself by identifying specific improvements that may qualify for future funding. Competition among Connecticut municipalities for funding is high; defining a project, its benefits and demonstrating public support may give the Town a head start when preparing future grant applications. Many of the pedestrian and trail related improvements contained in this plan would qualify under current parameters. The Town must recognize and understand the requirements for obtaining funding or retain personnel who may assist with the process.

8. Federal Highway Administration Recreation Trails Program: The State of Connecticut was allotted $486,113 in 1999. The allotment is expected to increase every year by approximately 10-25% to the year 2003.

9. Millennium Trails Program (USDOT): Directly related to TEA-21 and administered through various federal agencies including the National Park Service, U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management, funding is available for projects or acquisitions to commemorate or preserve the American landscape, culture and history.

10. Town recreation fees: Over 70% of the survey respondents are in support of future recreation user fees if improvements to overall recreation opportunities are a consequence. Fees may be applied, for example, to parking for special events, municipal pool or league field use. A "pay as you go" approach may be appropriate to cover maintenance and operations costs so that the overall population is not overly taxed for recreation improvements. A "pay as you go"

approach essentially allows customers to segment themselves into rate categories based on their needs and willingness to pay. This approach also allows recreation personnel (public and/or private) to develop better rationale for user fee rates.

11. Source of revenue: Essex should consider developing recreation facilities and relationships with private operators that have the potential to generate revenue. If private/public partnerships are pursued, special services and/or facilities may be provided, for a fee, by a private entity; these services would include those not typically provided by a municipality that have revenue generating potential. Aside from golf courses, recreation-based revenue generators are unpredictable. The goal is to generate enough revenue to cover future operating, maintenance and staff costs and a portion of the development costs.

12. Park/Open Space Bonds: The public in recent years has been very supportive of recreation bonds. The public is progressively linking park, recreation and open space investments to enhanced quality of life, environmental improvement and positive economic development.

13. Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection State Bond Commission: This funding may be directly linked to the aforementioned State programs. The funding is typically tied to clean water projects, lake improvements and municipal recreation projects. The program contained $13,500,000 in 1998 and projects ranging in size from $25,000 to $1,450,000 were funded in Connecticut.

14. Long Island Sound and Greenways Fund: Through the State license plate programs, many projects providing river side access, habitat restoration, fishing areas, picnic areas, trails and greenways have or will be funded. These grants are generally small, approximately $5,000, and may be used to conduct feasibility studies, fund not-for-profit initiatives, etc. related to projects that improve water quality of tributaries to and the Long Island Sound and promote greenway and trail development.

15. Connecticut Outdoor Recreation Fund: This program includes grant funding available for projects with design and construction costs in the range of $100,000 to $125,000.

E. CONCLUSION

The "Cost Projection and Timeline for Major Recreation Improvements" prioritizes the plan recommendations in response to the needs of the residents of Essex, current and projected recreation trends and potential development costs. Our purpose in prioritizing the improvements was to serve immediate recreation needs by increasing the utilization of currently underutilized facilities. By increasing the utilization of existing facilities, costly expenditures for land acquisition and construction may be avoided or deferred.

Recreation encompasses a broad range of activities. It is very difficult for municipalities to meet the needs of all people considering budget, staff, environmental and land availability factors. Development of new facilities and maintenance of existing facilities is a challenge considering the lack of funding available and the increased demand and wear and tear on active recreation amenities.

Demand for new programs and growing participation in all programs is also a strain on municipal resources. To maximize efficiency in program scheduling, directing maintenance contractors, pursuing capital funding and grants, identifying potential multi-town and public/private ventures, the Town of Essex should maintain a full-time professional recreation coordinator and administrator. By doing so, the Town may optimize conditions and utilization of existing facilities and continue to measure the need for future capital improvements.

In regard to the recommended time-line for improvements and associated costs, it is difficult to estimate cost or put a timeframe on land acquisitions and recreation trail, bikeways and streetscape improvements. However, we highly recommend that the Town acquire additional water front land for dedication as public open and recreation space and pursue mechanisms to realize the pedestrian path and trail recommendations contained herein. Existing and newly acquired open space may accommodate much-needed trail and bike path networks, water access and swimming and protect land from further development all of which are greatly supported by Essex residents.

Our recommendations emphasize preserving open space, greenways, and natural areas and are consistent with the State of Connecticut's goals of increasing State-wide open space. By acquiring additional waterfront properties, the Town may better preserve and protect watershed and natural areas, realize a premiere network of Town-wide recreation trails in the future and preserve the river front character of Essex and public access to its rivers and coves. It is also well-documented that open space has many other benefits: it contributes to the long-term stability of the Town's cost to provide services; increases property values; and enhances the quality of life for residents and neighboring communities.

Based on the recreation survey, over 70% of Town residents support acquisition of land for recreational purposes, an increase in expenditures to address recreation needs and low to modest user fees for access to certain recreation programs and facilities. In addition, protecting open space from development and preserving environmentally sensitive areas are considered the two most important issues related to parks, recreation, development and open space in Essex. Our recommendations respond to these concerns and are generally light-handed in that we focused on containing improvements and expansion to existing recreation sites and to contiguous properties with no disturbance to environmentally sensitive properties. Though properties have not been identified for future shoreline access and development of an indoor recreation facility, it is evident that residents will support Town initiatives to acquire suitable property and develop new recreation facilities.

APPENDIX

Improvements to Existing Facilities: Cost Summaries

Essex Town Park:

Trash receptacles:	$2,000
Total:	$2,000

Comstock Fields:

Signage:	$2,500
Parking area (ADA access):	$25,000
Footpaths:	$27,000
Playscape	$50,000
Safety surface and seating: $25,000	
Basketball court:	$46,000
Water service/quick couplers:	$25,000
Lighting:	$60,000
Restrooms and storage:	$70,000
Wooden guiderail:	$4,500
Total (excluding new vehicular access):	$335,000

Clark's Pond:

Parking:	$20,000
Wood dock:	$12,000
Warming hut/gazebo:	$20,000
Perimeter paths:	$24,000
Wood guiderails:	$3,000
Establish lawn:	$3,000
Grading:	$5,000
Landscaping:	$8,000
Miscellaneous:	$12,000
Total:	$107,000

Hubbard Park:

Signage:	$2,000
Entrance improvements:	$10,000
Fencing:	$5,000
Pavement marking:	$2,000
Scoreboard:	$15,000
Total:	$34,000

Grove Street Park and Tennis Courts:

Tennis court surface:	$16,000
Color seal coat:	$9,500
Tree pruning:	$500
Improve tennis court lighting:	$500
Parking improvements:	$19,000
Signage:	$2,500
Restroom access (day time only)	$6,000
Total:	$54,000

Grieder Field:

Parking area:	$33,000
Grading:	$2,500
Paths::	$5,000
Signage:	$2,500
Entrance treatment:	$22,000
Total:	$65,000

Sunset Pond:

Parking:	$33,000
Entrance signage and driveway:	$26,000
Selective clearing of vegetation:	$2,000
Seating area:	$6,000
Landscaping:	$3,000
Miscellaneous:	$10,000
Total:	$80,000

Essex Elementary School:

Bleacher:	$15,000
Baseball backstops:	$40,000
Dugout fencing:	$3,000
Restore infield:	$4,000
Relocate field:	$30,000
Restroom access:	$12,000
Hard court improvements:	$19,000
Vehicular gate:	$4,000
Total:	$127,000

Town of Essex Recreation Survey

The following survey has been mailed to each household in the Town of Essex. The purpose is to obtain resident input and other pertinent data to be used for long-range Park and Recreation Commission planning. We request that one member of your household complete the survey. It should only take a few minutes to complete and your participation would be greatly appreciated. For your convenience, we have enclosed an addressed and postage paid return envelope. **Please return the survey by October 20, 1999.** Thank you.

Please note: Italicized numbers are for Town use only.
N/A where used = no answer or non-applicable.

1. **How many years have you been a resident of Essex?**
   ____ Less than 2 years *(001)*
   ____ 2 to 5 years *(002)*
   ____ 6 to 10 years *(003)*
   ____ 11 or more years *(004)*

2. **How many people in your household in each of the following age groups:**
   Under 6 *(005)*_____
   6- 14 *(006)* _____
   15-34 *(007)* _____
   35-45 *(008)* _____
   46-55 *(009)* _____
   56-65 *(010)* _____
   65+ *(011)* _____

3. **How often do you use town recreation facilities and/or participate in town-run recreation programs? Check one.**
   ____ Frequently (at least once per week) *(012)*
   ____ Occasionally (1-2 visits per month) *(013)*
   ____ Infrequent (few times per year) *(014)*

4. **Which park and/or school facilities do you frequent most often for recreation purposes, second most often and third most often? Please rate these facilities:**

_____	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
_____	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
_____	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor

5. **Which recreational activity do you participate in most often?** _____ **Do you use a private or public facility?** ____ Private ____ Public

6. **Do you use facilities in other Towns?**
   ____ Yes *(015)* or ____ No *(016)*
   If yes: What activity?_____ What facility?_____
   What activity?_____ What facility?_____

7. **Please rate the overall condition of these Essex Park and Recreation facilities:**

Hubbard Field	Excellent *(017)*	Good *(018)*	Fair *(019)*	Poor *(020)*	N/A *(021)*
Comstock Field	Excellent *(022)*	Good *(023)*	Fair *(024)*	Poor *(025)*	N/A *(026)*
Grieder Field	Excellent *(027)*	Good *(028)*	Fair *(029)*	Poor *(030)*	N/A *(031)*
Ivoryton Park	Excellent *(032)*	Good *(033)*	Fair *(034)*	Poor *(035)*	N/A *(036)*
Grove Street Park	Excellent *(037)*	Good *(038)*	Fair *(039)*	Poor *(040)*	N/A *(041)*

Essex Town Park	Excellent *(042)*	Good *(043)*	Fair *(044)*	Poor *(045)*	N/A *(046)*
Clark's Pond	Excellent *(047)*	Good *(048)*	Fair *(049)*	Poor *(050)*	N/A *(051)*
Sunset Pond	Excellent *(052)*	Good *(053)*	Fair *(054)*	Poor *(055)*	N/A *(056)*
Town Hall Tennis Courts	Excellent *(057)*	Good *(058)*	Fair *(059)*	Poor *(060)*	N/A *(061)*
Essex Elem. School Tennis Courts	Excellent *(062)*	Good *(063)*	Fair *(064)*	Poor *(065)*	N/A *(066)*

8. **Please rate the quality of the following recreation programs in Essex in which you are enrolled or involved.**

					Is the program needed?
Youth Summer Program	Excellent *(067)*	Good *(068)*	Fair *(069)*	Poor *(070)*	Yes No
Youth Basketball	Excellent *(071)*	Good *(072)*	Fair *(073)*	Poor *(074)*	Yes No
Men's Basketball	Excellent *(075)*	Good *(076)*	Fair *(077)*	Poor *(078)*	Yes No
Town Dances	Excellent *(079)*	Good *(080)*	Fair *(081)*	Poor *(082)*	Yes No
Summer Concerts	Excellent *(083)*	Good *(084)*	Fair *(085)*	Poor *(086)*	Yes No
Easter Egg Hunt	Excellent *(087)*	Good *(088)*	Fair *(089)*	Poor *(090)*	Yes No
Family Day Picnic	Excellent *(091)*	Good *(092)*	Fair *(093)*	Poor *(094)*	Yes No
Aerobic Classes	Excellent *(095)*	Good *(096)*	Fair *(097)*	Poor *(098)*	Yes No
Tennis Lessons	Excellent *(099)*	Good *(100)*	Fair *(101)*	Poor *(102)*	Yes No
Essex Farmer's Market	Excellent *(103)*	Good *(104)*	Fair *(105)*	Poor *(106)*	Yes No
Kindergarten Soccer	Excellent *(107)*	Good *(108)*	Fair *(109)*	Poor *(110)*	Yes No
Bus Trips (various)	Excellent *(111)*	Good *(112)*	Fair *(113)*	Poor *(114)*	Yes No
Little League Baseball	Excellent *(115)*	Good *(116)*	Fair *(117)*	Poor *(118)*	Yes No
Valley Soccer Club	Excellent *(119)*	Good *(120)*	Fair *(121)*	Poor *(122)*	Yes No
Tri-Town Youth Football	Excellent *(123)*	Good *(124)*	Fair *(125)*	Poor *(126)*	Yes No
Other: _____	Excellent *(127)*	Good *(128)*	Fair *(129)*	Poor *(130)*	Yes No
_____	Excellent *(131)*	Good *(132)*	Fair *(133)*	Poor *(134)*	Yes No
_____	Excellent *(135)*	Good *(136)*	Fair *(137)*	Poor *(138)*	Yes No

9. **What recreation programs or facilities would you like to see more of? Examples include: adult basketball or junior soccer programs, basketball courts, soccer fields, trails, boat launches, etc. Please list three in order of priority:**

1._____

2._____

3._____

10. **Please read the following list of current or potential activities and indicate where you think the town should be providing MORE, LESS, or ABOUT THE SAME level of service (facilities, programs and maintenance) in the future for this activity.**

Children's Playgrounds (6 years and older)	More *(139)*	Less *(140)*	Same *(141)*	N/A *(142)*
Tot Lot (2-6 years of age)	More *(143)*	Less *(144)*	Same *(145)*	N/A *(146)*
Tennis Courts (indoor)	More *(147)*	Less *(148)*	Same *(149)*	N/A *(150)*
Tennis Courts (outdoor)	More *(151)*	Less *(152)*	Same *(153)*	N/A *(154)*
Swimming Pool (indoor)	More *(155)*	Less *(156)*	Same *(157)*	N/A *(158)*
Swimming Pool (outdoor)	More *(159)*	Less *(160)*	Same *(161)*	N/A *(162)*
Lake /Pond Areas (Swimming)	More *(163)*	Less *(164)*	Same *(165)*	N/A *(166)*
Municipal Golf Course	More *(167)*	Less *(168)*	Same *(169)*	N/A *(170)*
Racquetball/Handball Courts	More *(171)*	Less *(172)*	Same *(173)*	N/A *(174)*

Recreation Center (indoor)	More *(175)*	Less *(176)*	Same *(177)*	N/A *(178)*
Soccer Fields	More *(179)*	Less *(180)*	Same *(181)*	N/A *(182)*
Football Fields	More *(183)*	Less *(184)*	Same *(185)*	N/A *(186)*
Softball Fields	More *(187)*	Less *(188)*	Same *(189)*	N/A *(190)*
Baseball Fields	More *(191)*	Less *(192)*	Same *(193)*	N/A *(194)*
Multi-purpose Field	More *(195)*	Less *(196)*	Same *(197)*	N/A *(198)*
Bicycle Trails	More *(199)*	Less *(200)*	Same *(201)*	N/A *(202)*
River/Linear Parks	More *(203)*	Less *(204)*	Same *(205)*	N/A *(206)*
Improved River Access	More *(207)*	Less *(208)*	Same *(209)*	N/A *(210)*
Marinas and Boat Ramps	More *(211)*	Less *(212)*	Same *(213)*	N/A *(214)*
Walk, Jog and Exercise Trails	More *(215)*	Less *(216)*	Same *(217)*	N/A *(218)*
Skating Rink (indoor)	More *(219)*	Less *(220)*	Same *(221)*	N/A *(222)*
Skating Rink (outdoor)	More *(223)*	Less *(224)*	Same *(225)*	N/A *(226)*
In-line skating/skateboard park	More *(227)*	Less *(228)*	Same *(229)*	N/A *(230)*
Basketball Courts (indoor)	More *(231)*	Less *(232)*	Same *(233)*	N/A *(234)*
Basketball Courts (outdoor)	More *(235)*	Less *(236)*	Same *(237)*	N/A *(238)*
Nature Areas	More *(239)*	Less *(240)*	Same *(241)*	N/A *(242)*
Campgrounds	More *(243)*	Less *(244)*	Same *(245)*	N/A *(246)*
Picnic Areas	More *(247)*	Less *(248)*	Same *(249)*	N/A *(250)*
Open Play Areas	More *(251)*	Less *(252)*	Same *(253)*	N/A *(254)*
Youth Center	More *(255)*	Less *(256)*	Same *(257)*	N/A *(258)*
Senior Center/Events	More *(259)*	Less *(260)*	Same *(261)*	N/A *(262)*
Volleyball	More *(263)*	Less *(264)*	Same *(265)*	N/A *(266)*
Other: _____	More *(267)*	Less *(268)*	Same *(269)*	N/A *(270)*
_____	More *(271)*	Less *(272)*	Same *(273)*	N/A *(274)*
_____	More *(275)*	Less *(276)*	Same *(277)*	N/A *(278)*

11. From what source do you typically obtain information regarding recreation programming and activities? Check one.

____ School *(279)*
____ Newspaper *(280)*
____ "Essex Events" (Town Newsletter) *(281)*
____ Mailings *(282)*
____ Signage *(283)*
____ Word of mouth *(284)*
Other _____

12. In your opinion, should the Town of Essex acquire additional land or other facilities for recreational purposes?
____Yes *(285)* or ____No *(286)*

13. Are there any parcels of land or other facilities in Essex which come to mind that you would like to see the Town purchase for recreational use? If yes, where?

14. Would you support increased town expenditures to address additional recreation needs?
____Yes *(287)* or ____No *(288)*

15. **Would you support use of modest user fees for certain recreation programs and facilities if additional and/or improved programs and facilities are provided? Which one of the following fee arrangements would you prefer?**

____ No fees (Fully funded by tax dollars) *(289)*

____ Low fees (Substantially funded by tax dollars) *(290)*

____ Moderate fees (About half funded by tax dollars) *(291)*

____ High fees (Little funding from tax dollars) *(292)*

____ Full user fees (No funding from tax dollars) *(293)*

16. **When you consider the quality of life in your neighborhood, on a scale of 1 to 6 (1 being most important), indicate the importance of each of the following statements about park and recreation areas.**

____ Protecting open space from development *(294)*

____ Making neighborhoods more attractive *(295)*

____ Preserving environmentally sensitive areas *(296)*

____ Providing play areas for youth *(297)*

____ Creating areas where neighbors can get to know each other *(298)*

____ Offer recreation facilities for adults *(299)*

17. **Do you have any additional comments or suggestions ?**

SURVEY RESULTS

Residency:

Results suggest that there has been approximately a 4.5% increase in new residents each year. This may be due to new development or turnover of existing homes.

- 56% of respondents have resided in Essex more than 11 years
- 72% of respondents have resided in Essex more than 6 years
- 91% of residents have resided in Essex more than 2 years

Age Distribution:

The survey accounts for 1,802 residents (723 surveys received) which yields an average household size of 2.5. The age distribution interpreted from the returns is relatively consistent with State of Connecticut data published by the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development, with the exception of the senior citizen category (65 years of age or older)..

Under 6 years of age:	9%
6-14 years of age:	14%
15-34 years of age:	14%
35-45 years of age:	21%
46-55 years of age:	15%
56-65 years of age:	11%
65 years of age or older:	16%

Recreation Facility Utilization:

Of the 723 surveys returned, the following utilization rates for Town recreation facilities and programs were determined:

- 19% visit recreation facilities at least once/week
- 18% visit 1-2/month
- 53% visit a few times/year
- 10% do not utilize recreation facilities

Most Popular Recreation Facilities (listed in order of descending popularity):

1. Essex Elementary School and Tennis Courts
2. Grove Street Park and Tennis Courts
3. Essex Town Park
4. Hubbard Park
5. Comstock Fields

Most Popular Recreation Activities (listed in order of descending popularity) and Percentage of Respondents Who Use Public Facilities:

1. Walking, Jogging and Hiking (74%)
2. Tennis (60%)
3. Boating/Sailing (17%)
4. Swimming (24%)
5. Golf (47%)
6. Soccer (93%)
7. Aerobics/Fitness (50%)
8. Playground Use (100%)
9. Baseball (100%)
10. Canoeing/Kayaking (89%)

Thirty-six percent (36%) of the 494 residents who responded use recreation facilities in other towns. The most popular out-of-town activities include:

1. Swimming (pools, beaches)
2. Playground Use
3. Aerobics/Fitness
4. Hiking and Walking
5. Soccer

Essex Recreation Programs

The following list consists of current public recreation programs available in the Town of Essex. The programs are listed in order based on their popularity, the first program being the most popular. Program popularity was determined based on the results of the 1999 resident recreation survey; the number in parentheses indicates the total number of responses that support the program of the 723 surveys returned.

The quality of each program (excellent, good, fair or poor) is also noted based on survey responses from program participants.

1. Summer Concerts (220): 58% rated good; 35% excellent
2. Essex Farmer's Market (197): 54% rated good; 35% excellent
3. Little League Baseball (169): 47% rated good; 41% excellent
4. Family Day Picnic (166): 33% rated good; 59% excellent
5. Youth Summer Program (166): 51% rated good; 35% excellent
6. Valley Soccer Club (159): 36% rated good; 60% excellent
7. Youth Basketball (143): 62% rated good; 29% excellent
8. Easter Egg Hunt (141): 51% rated good; 31% excellent
9. Kindergarten Soccer (124): 44% rated good; 49% excellent
10. Tennis Lessons (114): 53% rated good; 20% excellent
11. Tri-town Youth Football (111): 61% rated good; 24% excellent

Recreation Advertising and General Information:

Many residents commented that they are unaware of recreation facilities and programs that are available and events that are taking place. Currently, residents obtain their information by the following means:

Newspaper	41%
Essex Events Newsletter	22%
Word of Mouth	15%
School	12%
Mailings	6%
Signage	4%

Acquire additional land or other facilities for recreational purposes?:

Yes	71%
No	29%

Support increased town expenditures to address additional recreation needs?:

Yes	73%
No	27%

Preferred fee arrangements:

Residents were asked if they would support the use of modest user fees for certain recreation programs and facilities if additional and/or improved programs and facilities are provided?

Modest fees (about half funded by tax dollars)	43%
Low fees (substantially funded by tax dollars)	27%
No fees (fully funded by tax dollars)	13%
Full user fees (no funding from tax dollars)	11%
High fees (little funding from tax dollars)	6%

Parks, recreation and open space priorities where 1=most important issue and 6=least important issue (value represents an average from all responses):

1.92	Protecting open space from development
2.16	Preserving environmentally sensitive areas
2.97	Providing play areas for youth
3.17	Making neighborhoods more attractive
3.63	Offer recreation facilities for adults
4.09	Creating areas where neighbors can get to know each other

Town of Essex
Park and Recreation Commission
Essex Town Hall
29 West Avenue, P.O. Box 98
Essex, CT 06426

July 21, 1999

The Park & Recreation Commission has hired Vollmer Associates to compile a master plan in order to determine our future park and recreation needs. The more useful information we provide to Vollmer, the better the outcome.

We are asking anyone who conducts or helps conduct park and recreation programs to spend a few minutes completing the following questionnaire. Please return it to Paul Magoulas in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope as soon as possible. Thank you for your time and support.

1. NAME OF PROGRAM:
   Over 35 Men's Basketball
2. CONTACT PEOPLE AND PHONE NUMBERS:
   Denis Marois 767-0042
3. IS YOUR PROGRAM FOR CHILDREN OR ADULTS?:
   Adult males.
4. NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS IN PROGRAM?:
   50-65
5. WHAT IS THE ANTICIPATED GROWTH OF THE PROGRAM?:
   Potential for a younger adult program and female program.
6. WHEN DOES YOUR SEASON BEGIN?:
   Nov. to March when the gym becomes unavailable.

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7. WHEN DOES YOUR SEASON END?:

End of March.

8. NUMBER OF TOTAL GAMES PLAYED?:

10 - 12 depending on snow and other school activities in gym.

9. NUMBER OF TOTAL PRACTICES?:

Open gym in November, No other time for practice.

10. LIST THE DAYS OF THE WEEK AND TIMES YOUR PROGRAM RUNS (Ex: every Monday night from 7pm-10pm):

Wednesdays 6:30 to 10 PM.
Thursdays 7:30 to 11 PM.

11. WHAT FIELDS ARE UTILIZED?:

None.

12. WHAT FACILITIES ARE UTILIZED?:

Essex El. School Gym.

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13. DO YOU NEED ADDITIONAL FIELDS/FACILITIES OR DO THE EXISTING FIELDS/FACILITIES NEED TO BE IMPROVED? IF YES, EXPLAIN:

1) Park and Rec should have it's own building big enough for 2 full courts.
2) Essex El. School gym too small (can only do 1 game at a time) and drinking fountains in dangerous location.
3) This program very limited by space and time.

14. DO YOU UTILIZE ANY NEIGHBORING TOWN FIELDS/FACILITIES? IF YES, SPECIFY WHICH ONES:

No.

15. DO YOU HAVE ANY MAINTENANCE AND/OR OPERATIONAL CONCERNS FOR THE FIELDS/FACILITIES?:

Nice facility but too small and drinking fountains in dangerous location.

16. IF YOU UTILIZE MORE THAN ONE FIELD/FACILITY, PRIORITIZE THE FIELDS/FACILITIES FROM 1 TO 5 (1 BEING MOST PREFERRED AND 5 BEING LEAST PREFERRED). EX: HUBBARD FIELD-1, COMSTOCK-2, ESSEX ELEMENTARY-3:

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17. WHAT DO YOU NEED TO MAKE YOUR PROGRAM BETTER?:
This town needs an indoor/outdoor facility so our existing programs can expand and new ones can be started. Though the school is very generous about sharing its facility, there are too many programs for the space available. Having its own facility is a very expensive venture, but planning for such an area should be an important goal of the park and recreation department.

18. ARE THERE ADDITIONAL COMMENTS YOU WOULD LIKE TO MAKE?: This town needs a college trained, full time park and recreation director to coordinate and expand existing programs as well as to start and promote new programs involving more groups like the elderly, female, young adults, etc. The more people involved the more support for the park & rec programs. Though the park & rec. volunteers have done a wonderful job, I think a trained professional could help bring their work to new heights.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Paul Magoulas at 767-1551. Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

Paul A. Magoulas
Park & Recreation Administrator