

## **SECTION VIII. PARKS AND RECREATION**

### **Introduction**



Parks can provide structure, beauty, great economic value and environmental benefits. They can also provide health benefits by providing fresh air and encouraging physical activity, important for residents of all ages. Recreational programs and spaces can foster personal development and fulfillment. Preschool and school age children need recreational places and programs because they provide opportunities to engage, be creative and problem solve, develop gross motor skills and to develop emotionally and socially. This section of the plan explores the importance of parks and programming, identifies existing parks and provides goals and objectives related to desired improvements in the town's overall system of recreation areas and programs.

Windsor Locks is a mature town with many established and older neighborhoods. Throughout the community are a wide variety of parks and recreation areas. In fact, in 2014 – 2017 surveys of existing residents “the number of parks” is often touted by respondents as a valued asset. While these outdoor spaces are one of the reasons that the people of Windsor Locks love their community, various needed improvements have been identified. Over many decades, Windsor Locks has obtained and/or developed 18 sites under the cooperative stewardship of the Parks Department, Department of Public Works and the Conservation Commission. These sites range in size from 0.3 acres to 200 acres.

This inventory of Town Park and Recreation sites has been recently increased by the addition of a preservation / open space site known as Waterworks Brook Preservation Area formerly the Connecticut Water Company land and wellfields. Through major community support and partnership with CT Water and the Trust for Public Land, these wells have been abandoned by the water company and the 200-acre property has been acquired for open space and passive recreation as recommended in the 2007 Plan. Also, the Town's High School now hosts a Skate Park. The preservation of the Water Company land and the installation of the Skate Park were objectives of the 2007 Plan and are examples of working toward meeting the following goal: “To continue to provide a safe, convenient and enjoyable Parks and Recreation system for use by all Town Residents”.

## Park Inventory

The current list of Town Park and Recreational sites are as follows:

<i>Park</i>	<i>Facilities</i>
1. Ahern Avenue Park	Playground
2. Barbara Drive Park	Wooded Area, Passive Open Space
3. Bel-Aire Circle Park	Playground, Ballfield
4. Circle Drive Park	Basketball Court, Playground
5. Codey Way Park	Playground, Open Field
6. Denslow Park	Basketball Court, Ballfield, Playground, Soccer field
7. Green Manor Park	Playground, Baseball field
8. Juniper Drive Park	Basketball Court, Ballfield, Playground
9. Noden-Reed Park	Open Field, Fruit Trees, Gardens, Hens
10. Pesci Park	2 Baseball Diamonds, Pool and Bathhouse, Lighted Basketball Court, Playground, Grove Street Garden
11. Reed Park	Baseball Diamond, Softball Diamond, Playground, Basketball Court, Soccer
12. Southwest Family Park	Basketball Court, Playground, Softball Field, Soccer field
13. Spring Park	Pond with fish, Pavilion, Picnic Area, Basketball court, Playground, trails are underutilized
14. Sutton Park	Open Field
15. Veterans Memorial Park	Baseball Diamond, Lighted Softball Field, Playground, 2 Soccer Fields (one with lights), Football field
16. Waterworks Brook Preservation Area	Passive Recreation, Hiking, trail system could be improved
17. Windsor Locks Canal Park	Passive Recreation, River and Canal View, southern access to Canal State Park Trail (4.5 miles to Suffield CT, trail continues to Enfield CT)
18. Woodland Street Park	Playground, underutilized



Noden-Reed Park & Museum

Three sites are not developed: 1) Barbara Drive Park, 2.91 acres of wooded land which abuts Noden-Reed Park; 2) Sutton Drive Playground, 1.0 acre of open land abutting school property and 3) Waterworks Brook, just under 200 acres of wooded land off of South Center Street. The Barbara Drive and Sutton Drive park sites provide some potential areas for expansion of active recreational facilities if needed. In addition, The Parks Department also shares facilities under the jurisdiction of the School Department, both indoor and outdoor.

## Current and Future Needs

The Town's population has remained steady over the past few decades. This may suggest that the demand for town services, such as playgrounds and active recreation facilities, has leveled off reducing the likelihood for increased budgetary impacts of providing such services. According to the Partnership for Strong Communities 2015 Housing Data Profile, Windsor Locks is one of many municipalities projected to see an 8% drop in school age children and a 28% increase of those 65 and older by the year 2025. The largest age categories in 2025 are predicted to be the 15 – 19 and 20 – 24 age groups. These trends may have an impact on the prioritization and use of funds for parks and recreational services required and utilized by town citizens. The teen, young adult and senior populations should be highly engaged and considered in planning for park spaces and recreational programs for the decade or two to come. As discussed in the open space and preservation sections of the Plan, the community will need to consider the long term environmental benefits, community need and the budgetary impacts of maintaining property when presented with future opportunities to increase the park inventory.

The number and distribution of Town Park and Recreation sites would suggest that the Town generally has adequate sites to meet known needs. Efforts such as those made by the Planning and Zoning Commission in requiring appropriately located new parks and open space in newly developing residential areas are important efforts in maintaining adequate recreational space throughout town in new neighborhoods. One may typically think of parks as they relate to residential neighborhoods, and public space is certainly important

in proximity to single family neighborhoods. However, Windsor Locks should also continue to incorporate green space, plazas trees, benches, walkways and other public amenities throughout commercial areas, particularly where they are adjacent to activity nodes and mixed use (residential and commercial) development. The public realm (places that are accessible and inviting to everyone) attracts people to live, work and visit. These spaces have economic, social and health benefit and should be considered worthwhile and valuable.

As it did in 2007, the recreation program serves 400-500 youngsters up through middle-school age. Although the Town recognizes the importance of providing increased programs for older individuals as the population changes, the emphasis continues to be on the Town recreation efforts, as with all towns, is on the school-age population group. Outdoor activities such as soccer, Little League, softball, and summer swimming are much in demand while swimming and basketball are popular indoor activities. Program demands overall are met.



Generally, the Town has adequate water supply, either by utilizing wells or by extended public water lines, to the various parks so that the active recreation fields can be properly maintained. The Parks Department has provided a new bathhouse facility at Pesci Park, funded with a combination of grants and Capital Improvement Funds, as recommended in the 2007 Plan.

The community has shown interest in the following park improvements:

1. An established boat launch and waterfront park possibly at the southern edge of Town that could link to open space along the Connecticut River. This should be coordinated with the abutting Town of Windsor.
2. Improved landscaping and activated space at the underutilized Woodland Park
3. Additional walkways and associated lighting, increased positive activity, increased sense of safety and continued maintenance of the pool at Pesci Park

The Park Commission and Staff continue to discuss the desire for a Community Center. This involves a major expenditure for a building and possibly a site for such a large capital project. Inclusion of these types of

facilities in a comprehensive capital improvement program should receive serious consideration so that planning can be done in advance.

As mentioned in other sections of the Plan, including the section on Natural Resources, long range planning aimed at connecting parks and open space with greenways and trails is an effort worth continuing. Areas such as Kettle Brook and Merrigan Brook corridors, as well as along the CT River and along the Route 20 corridor and Strawberry Meadow Brook should continue to be assessed for preservation, bicycle and pedestrian recreational trail, habitat enhancement, environmental education and wayfinding opportunities.



### State Recreational Facilities

A recreational facility of State-wide significance is the Windsor Locks Canal State Park. The park offers a 4.5 mile recreational bicycle riding and walking trail which highlights the area's agricultural and industrial history. The trail features the historic Canal and Locks, as well as the Montgomery Mill. The Town should continue its active role in organizing with the Town of Suffield, property owners, the State Department of Energy and Environmental Protection and local developers in planning and seeking funding for a feasibility study to repair the trail surface, preserve the canal walls and locks, better maintain vegetation throughout and explore possible use of the canal for recreational purposes.

Operated by the State of CT and located at Bradley International Airport, the New England Air Museum offers a mix of educational and recreational activities that is unique in the State. The museum attracts both local residents, travelers and future possible residents, reflecting the town's strong airport and aerospace industries.

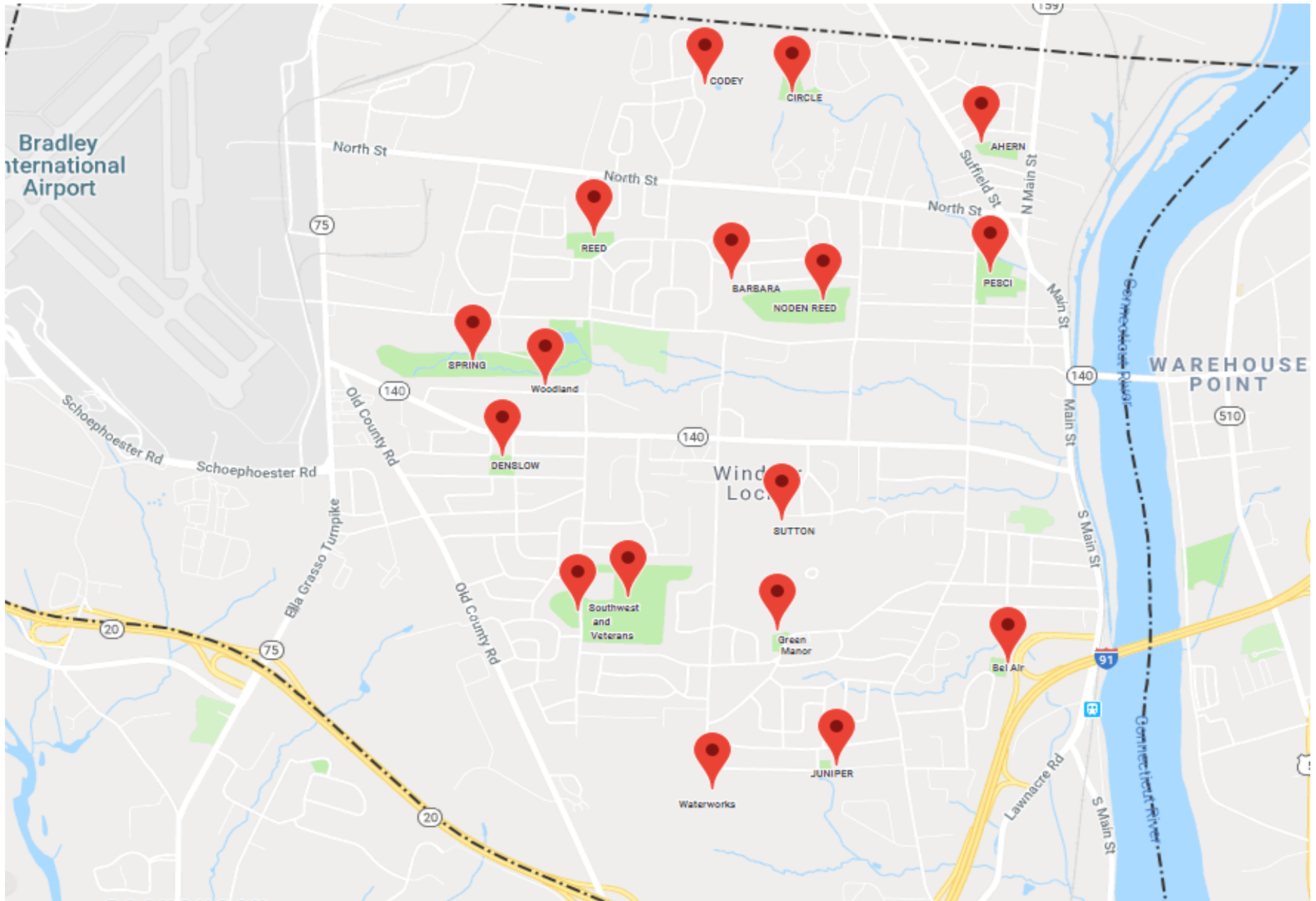


## Goals and Objectives

**Goal:** To continue to provide a safe, convenient and enjoyable Parks and Recreation system that encourages residents of all ages to be active, learn, socialize, experience the outdoors and feel a sense of community.

### Objectives:

1. To continue to support, with the Town's annual Capital Improvement Program on a yearly basis, the funds needed to properly maintain, make safe and improve the Town's park system, including the enhancement of underutilized spaces as identified in the Park Inventory or in future needs assessments.
2. Survey residents in proximity to underutilized park areas to understand the neighborhood needs and desires in order to improve and better utilize the space.
3. Seek out available grant opportunities to 1) assess community strengths and needs related to recreational programs and (indoor and outdoor) park spaces, 2) help fund needed improvements in the existing Town park system.
4. Establish a plan for consistent improvements to the Town park's system such as: improve outdoor basketball facilities, establish a boat launch facility to the Connecticut River, preserve and maintain the Canal Trail, Canal and Locks, establish a multi-use path along the Route 20 corridor, enhance walking trails at Spring Street Park the Waterworks Brook Preservation Area off of South Center Street.
5. Seek ways to increase safety in active recreation areas such as: neighborhood appropriate and low impact lighting, maintained pathways and landscaping, increased positive activity, community policing
6. Explore opportunities to establish a youth center space and increased programming for adolescent and teen youth.
7. Seek ways to install additional wayfinding and educational signage to direct and engage park users.
8. Continue to extend and establish town Greenways along several of the Town's watercourses, roadways or undeveloped areas and connect these to the Town Park system with access points and trails.
9. Seek opportunities to develop new trail connections and multi-use paths within new development sites understanding that both residents and local employers/employees may enjoy public trails and amenities.
10. Work with Property Owners, Developers and Town of Suffield and the State of Connecticut to expand, improve and maintain the Windsor Locks Canal State Park along the Connecticut River.



### Park Inventory 2017