

VI. RECREATION PLAN

INTRODUCTION

This element of the Master Plan was prepared in accordance with the Municipal Land Use Law NJSA 40:55D-28b: *A recreation plan element showing a comprehensive system of areas and public sites for recreation.* The Borough of Mendham last updated its Parks and Recreation element during the 2000 Master Plan Reexamination, which was preceded by the 1994 Master Plan. Following the review and analysis of the information provided by the Recreation Department, the Board examined a series of planning considerations relating to needs and opportunities for recreation.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The following goals and objectives for recreation outline a consistent vision to provide Mendham Borough residents of all ages with adequate active and passive recreation facilities, to protect and enhance the natural rural environment, and to preserve the established quality of life:

- ◆ To provide a wide range of recreational facilities to meet the present and future needs of the Borough for all age groups
- ◆ To encourage the preservation of areas with exceptional recreational or scenic value
- ◆ To preserve environmentally sensitive land for the protection and conservation of natural resources and maintenance of wildlife habitats
- ◆ To consider development of a skate park facility
- ◆ To maintain parks and recreation areas using best management practices
- ◆ To explore opportunities to connect the existing walking path to realize a complete looped trail

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

To determine the adequacy of the current recreation system in Mendham Borough, the Recreation Department conducted a comprehensive needs analysis. The analysis reviewed the existing recreation system and identified where the Borough might be deficient in providing these resources to its residents.

According to Census 2000 data, Mendham has a population of approximately 5000 people occupying roughly 1800 housing units. By 2015 Mendham's population is expected to increase to approximately 5200 persons. With the Borough expected to experience minimal residential growth, the need to provide additional recreational opportunities for Borough residents has become less critical.

The Recreation Department believes that providing recreational opportunities and facilities contributes to the high quality of life experienced in the Borough. Therefore, proactive maintenance of the existing recreational facilities and design improvements are recommended as part of the Recreation Plan.

In the past, towns have relied on the New Jersey Balanced Land Use Concept and the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) “Level of Service” approach to determine recreational needs. The land use method recognizes that land is a finite resource and sets its goals in perpetuity, while the NRPA method uses a standard based on current or forecasted population. It should be noted that these methods provide minimum guidelines. As New Jersey continues to become more densely populated, parks are more highly prized.

The NRPA approach includes generic ratios for “Suggested Facility Development Standards.” The NRPA defines a hierarchy of recreational facilities used to classify a recreational facility in light of its size, service area, and population served. Table VI-1 Mendham Borough Recreational Facility Matrix compares the Borough’s recreational facilities to the NRPA standard for a population of 5000.

The NRPA recommends a minimum of 10 acres of recreation land per 1000 people in the community. Six (6) of the 10 acres per 1000 should be provided at the local level; the remainder should be provided by a County, State, or other regional authority. Based on the Borough’s 2000 population, a minimum of 50 acres of the total recreation space should be provided currently in the Borough with 30 acres under municipal control. The Borough’s existing recreation system (approximately 170 acres, not including Board of Education sites) far exceeds the recommended standard.

TABLE VI-1 RECREATIONAL FACILITY MATRIX*		
ACTIVITY	AVAILABILITY	NRPA STANDARD
BASKETBALL	1	2
ICE SKATING	1	N/A
PICNIC AREA	2	N/A
PLAYGROUND	1	1
TENNIS COURTS	4	3
VOLLEYBALL	1	1
COMMUNITY CENTER	2	1
SKATEBOARD	0	N/A
SOCCER	3*	**
BASEBALL/SOFTBALL	4*	5
LACROSSE	0	1
* does not include facilities available at schools located within the Borough		
** NRPA standards for soccer are a function of local popularity of the sport		

In recent years, the NRPA has renounced the "one size fits all" approach and recommends that communities develop park and recreational facility standards that fit individual needs and circumstances. Under this approach, the NRPA recommends using public meetings, community surveys, and interviews with various department heads, league presidents, and the recreational program directors to establish the current facility utilization and future needs. It should be noted that continual use of playing fields can result in damage to turf surfaces and related safety hazards. A schedule of resting periods for these facilities helps to ensure that these fields are maintained in safe condition and ready for play.

In another effort to enhance quality of life, Mendham Borough runs a half-day Summer Day Camp, hosts concerts and movies, and presents an annual Labor Day parade and carnival. All of these activities take place at, or culminate at, the Borough Field.

INVENTORY

This plan includes an inventory of land that provides recreational opportunities for residents of Mendham Borough. The inventory identifies the size, location, and usage of each property.

Mendham Borough Active Recreation Facilities – 169.9 Total Acres

Borough Park (Mountain & Park Avenue) – 15.0 acres

- ◆ 3 softball/baseball fields
- ◆ 1 basketball court with 2 baskets
- ◆ 1 sand volleyball court
- ◆ 4 all-weather tennis courts
- ◆ 1 building with facilities
- ◆ 1 barrier playground
- ◆ 1 gazebo

Mountain Valley Park (Mountain Avenue) – 33.1 acres

- ◆ 1 picnic area
- ◆ 1 trout pond/ice skating (multi-use)
- ◆ 1 fireplace
- ◆ 1 softball/baseball field
- ◆ 1 soccer field

West Field (West Main Street) – 9.9 acres

- ◆ 2 soccer fields

India Brook Park (Mountainside Road) – 27.0 acres

- ◆ 1 picnic area
- ◆ Primarily undeveloped

Arboretum/Dean Road Park (adjacent to Mendham Commons) – 46.8 acres

- ◆ 1 arboretum
- ◆ 1 walking path

Franklin Road Tract (Franklin/Coventry Roads) – 4.1 acres

- ◆ 1 soccer field (multi-use)

Cosma Place Tract (Cosma Place) – 13.3 acres

- ◆ Primarily undeveloped, planned for passive or active use

Heather Way Tract (Heather Hill Way) – 5.2 acres

- ◆ Primarily undeveloped

Linden Lane Tract (North Linden Lane) – 6.8 acres

- ◆ Primarily undeveloped

Patriot's Path – 8.7 acres

- ◆ Portion not part of other parkland or open space area

Garabrant Community Center (Wilson Street)

- ◆ 1 building with facilities

Loop Trail

The Loop Trail is a walking trail that was conceived in the early 1980s and was designed to provide a path around Mendham Borough, connecting the east and west sides of Patriot's Path. The trail, shown on Exhibit #5, *Environmental Features and Loop Trail*, begins at Patriot's Path adjacent to North Linden Lane and proceeds to the south through the Cosma Place tract and Cosma Drive. Crossing Main Street, the Loop Trail continues to the south through West Field and the Thomas and deNeufville lots, before it turns to the southeast and connects with Thomas Road. The path continues south on Hilltop Road and then to the east again along the easement on the north side of Cherry Lane. The path then turns to the north along Prentice Lane and continues to Talmage Road where it turns east and then north again along Coventry Road. At the north side of Coventry Road, the path proceeds into the high school property and continues back to East Main Street where it crosses Main Street and continues on the sidewalk of Dean Road. From Dean Road, the path connects again to Patriot's Path via the Biarbor Park on Dean Road just north of Forest Drive.

There is a large portion of the path that does not currently have easements and is not on public roads. This includes the portion through the Thomas and deNeufville lots. In addition, there are opportunities to connect this trail with Mendham Township's trail system to the east and west. To the west there are trails in the Schiff Natural Lands Trust that could be connected to the Loop Trail. There are also trails off Tempe Wick Road that could be connected on the east side of the Loop Trail between Franklin Road and Lowery Lane.

Mendham Borough Educational Recreation Facilities – 184.7 Total Acres

Mendham Borough is home to three (3) public educational facilities. Two (2) of the three (3) are for Mendham Borough residents only (Hilltop School and Mountainview School); the third is a regional high school whose attendance is drawn from Mendham Borough, Mendham Township, and the Chesters.

EXHIBIT #5 ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES AND LOOP TRAIL

West Morris Mendham Regional High School (East Main Street) – 20.0 acres

West Morris Mendham High School (WMMHS) provides both indoor and outdoor recreational facilities. The former is for the exclusive use of its students while the latter is available to the general public when not in use for organized, school-sponsored activities. The following represents the inventory of recreational facilities available at WMMHS:

- ◆ Ball fields (baseball, lacrosse, soccer, field hockey, etc.)
- ◆ Football stadium and field
- ◆ Running track
- ◆ 2 indoor gymnasiums
- ◆ Weight training/exercise area

Hilltop School (Hilltop Road) – 2.5 acres

Hilltop School, renovated in 2000, contains both indoor and outdoor recreational facilities. The former is for use by students while the latter is for use by students and the general public when not in use for organized, school-sponsored activities. The following represents the inventory of recreational facilities available at Hilltop School:

- ◆ Ball field
- ◆ Playground
- ◆ Indoor gymnasium

Mountainview School (Dean Road) – 1.6 acres

Mountainview School, serving grades 5-8, offers both indoor and outdoor recreational facilities. As true with the elementary school, the indoor facilities are used by students only. The outdoor facilities are available to students and the general public when not in use for organized, school-sponsored activities. The following represents the inventory of recreational facilities available at Mountainview School:

- ◆ Ball fields
- ◆ Playground
- ◆ Indoor gymnasium

Mendham Borough Private Recreation Facilities

The majority of the private recreation opportunities in the community lie outside of Mendham Borough. There are two (2) private facilities, wholly or partially, in the Borough of Mendham.

Roxiticus Country Club (Bliss Road)

A private club for residents of Mendham Borough and surrounding areas, Roxiticus offers a range of recreational facilities for the exclusive use of its members and guests which include:

- ◆ Golf course
- ◆ Swimming pool
- ◆ Tennis courts

Mendham Racquet Club (East Main Street)

A membership required facility in Mendham Borough, the Mendham Racquet Club provides a range of membership levels. Intended for the exclusive use of its members and guests, the club is also available for private rental outside of its normal business hours. Facilities available at Mendham Racquet Club are as follows:

- ◆ Indoor tennis, racquetball, squash
- ◆ Indoor weight training including cardiovascular equipment
- ◆ Exterior swimming pool (seasonal)

OVERALL ASSESSMENT

The Borough of Mendham recognizes the benefits of sport and recreational programs as an important aspect of the quality of life in Mendham. In most cases the facilities that are available in the Borough are adequate to meet the Borough needs. Often in conjunction with our neighboring communities, Mendham Township and The Chesters, the Borough offers its residents a range of organized youth and adult recreational programs on a year-round basis, although the indoor activities available for older adults are impacted by the facility's limitations. Indoor facilities, currently available privately, should be considered for possible public use in the future for all age groups.

Programs shared by the communities have had a positive impact on quality of life in Mendham Borough, often allowing for greater program depth and participation. One such example is the Twin Boro (Mendham Borough and Chester Borough) Bears football and cheerleading programs. With limited space for expansion and considering budgetary limitations, the sharing of recreational facilities is benefiting the entire community.