

Recreation

Londonderry's Recreation Community

In addition to the town's small recreation department, and the cooperation and participation of the school district, Londonderry is home to a number of diverse groups and supporters dedicated to improving, running, and maintaining the town's recreation resources. Related to team sports and other "active" recreation needs, the town's athletic groups, organizations, parents, and volunteers help to run leagues, sponsor fundraising events, and keep fields clean. Focusing on non-formalized recreation activities, other groups have worked to gain and improve public access to preserves and natural areas (e.g., through the design and construction of trails, development of trail maps, and promotion of these resources to the community) and to enhance the resources available to pedestrians (e.g., paved walkways and trails connecting neighborhoods and schools). Whether helping to run the town's soccer leagues or establishing a parking area and trailhead at the Musquash Conservation Area, the majority of these supporters are volunteers who are dedicating their free time to enhancing recreation opportunities for the entire community.

Issues and needs

Londonderry's high quality of life and popularity as a place to raise a family has resulted in a rather large youth population (1/3 of the town's population is under 18 years old). Compared with surrounding and regional communities, Londonderry's has the second-largest percentage of young people (see table).

Table 4.1: Age Characteristics Comparison

Municipality	Percent of Pop. Under Age 18
Litchfield	33.4
Londonderry	32.9
Derry	30.1
Windham	29.2
Auburn	28.9
Hudson	28.2
Manchester	23.7

Source: US Census 2000

The town has responded to increased need by developing new recreation space for residents and athletic organizations (for example, the recent establishment of Continental Park has added several soccer fields). However, according to the town's Recreation Director, even with this expansion, Londonderry's park and recreation system is being pushed to its limit. Furthermore, there has been a strong movement to establish a community center in Londonderry to serve as a multi-purpose cultural, youth, and senior facility.



Lacrosse practice at the Londonderry High School fields

A recent report prepared by Londonderry's Recreation Facilities Planning (RFP) Committee discussed a series of needs and opportunities ranging from maintenance and expansion of existing facilities to the establishment of new recreation resources.¹ The work of this committee, based on field visits, community surveys, interviews and analysis, identified the following primary recommendations:

- Maintenance and improvement of existing facilities.
- Establishment of new resources such as neighborhood parks, trails and pathways, a winter park, an indoor ice skating rink, an indoor/outdoor swimming pool, multi-purpose practice and game fields, and an auditorium/cultural arts center (among other possibilities).
- A prioritized Capital Improvement Plan that would quantify the need for specific recreation facilities.

Recreation Facilities

There is no uniform standard regarding the type and amount of recreation facilities required for individual towns. The National Recreation and Park Association no longer utilizes or recommends "per 1,000 residents" analysis or comparisons when determining need. Rather, appropriately planned recreation

¹ A summary of the RFP committee's work as well as a park resource inventory can be found in the appendix of this plan.

programs are tailored to the needs, demographics, and other characteristics of the community. Essentially, facilities and resources must be based on the town's recreation culture – taking into consideration seasonality issues, the natural environment and landscape, and the popularity of specific sports and activities (among other needs, issues and concerns).

In Londonderry, there is a very strong culture of children playing on local teams, and the need for more athletic facilities will likely continue to be higher than other similarly-sized communities. As one component of a program to deal with increased need for athletic fields, the RFP committee has recommended supporting the addition of lights and artificial turf for a field at the High School to allow more intense use of the facility. (Note: a recreation facilities inventory completed by the RFP committee is included in the appendix of this plan.)

|| *Support the pursuit of new recreational amenities, as well as the maintenance and improvement of existing recreational resources.*

As a first step, the town should work to prioritize the RFP committee's strategy and include specific projects in the town's CIP. The town should also investigate new opportunities to fund the acquisition and/or improvement of recreation fields and areas, as well as ways to encourage private investment. A summary of the RFP committee's recommendations is attached in the appendix.

|| *Develop a full recreation plan*

Develop a full recreation plan as a component of the recommended Open Space Plan (see page 4 – 24) to be adopted as an amendment to this Master Plan and coordinated with the CIP program. The plan should highlight funding opportunities, quantify the local need for specific park resources and facilities (e.g., number of fields needed, etc.), and identify ways to partner with private entities for the provision of these amenities.

|| *Continue to build on the relationship forged with the school district*

Facilities and services provided by the Londonderry School District are essential to the town's recreation program. The town should maintain and enhance this partnership and continue to find ways to share resources and improve the town's recreation services.

Partnerships (recreation, conservation, and others)

In recent years, Londonderry has been very successful protecting important and environmentally sensitive land in town (see Environment section). However, recreation groups and supporters have expressed frustration in the lack of public access made available to town-owned conservation land. In addition, there is a general need for increased awareness (town-wide) regarding existing access available on public lands (for example, during the youth workshop, students had difficulty placing the Musquash Conservation Area when drawing a map of the town).

|| *Enhance communication*

Enhance communication between all committees, groups, volunteers, and organizations involved with land acquisition, land stewardship and maintenance, open space planning, natural resource planning, recreation, and cultural and historical planning efforts.

|| *Strengthen and expand the partnership between conservation and recreation groups.*

The needs and concerns of recreation and conservation organizations should be addressed together, particularly in regard to access, use, use conflicts, and the impacts of recreation on sensitive natural resources and environments. In addition, the committees should work together during future recreation and open space acquisition efforts.

Take advantage of all partnerships to continue to increase awareness about existing and future park and recreation resources.

For example, trails and opportunities for public use of parks and preserves should be promoted through the town website and newsletters, at schools and school events, town meeting, and cultural events such as Old Home Day.

Trail and Pathway Amenities

Internally, Londonderry's neighborhoods are generally safe and pleasant for pedestrians and bicyclists. However, non-motorized transportation around town is considered rather difficult. In addition to the efforts of individuals and other groups, Londonderry Trailways has been the primary organization working to improve the local non-motorized transportation network. The group, in partnership with the town, was awarded \$688,490 by the state's Congestion Mitigation / Air Quality grant program to build a pathway connecting the schools in the town center as well as a path to connect the schools and recreation fields in the area to a surrounding neighborhood. The trail group also developed a trail map demonstrating potential trails and pathways through town (Note: additional recommendations regarding non-motorized travel are found within the transportation section of this plan on page 5 - 44).



Londonderry Trailways volunteers helping to construct a boardwalk within the Musquash Conservation Area. Funds for this project were provided through a grant from the New Hampshire Division of Recreation and Economic Development, Bureau of Trails

Continue non-motorized facility planning and implementation

Local volunteers and trail advocacy groups, such as Londonderry Trailways, have been integral to enhancing Londonderry's pedestrian network. Their efforts target both on and off-road improvements such as the planned pathway along Mammoth Road and an expanded trail system within the Musquash Conservation Area. The town should work closely with these groups and individuals to ensure for continued development and maintenance of non-

motorized resources. As a first step, Londonderry should develop an updated “non-motorized” (or bike and pedestrian) facility master plan (this could potentially be integrated with a recreation plan or developed as a stand-alone study). Some of the concepts and issues the plan should review include:

- Prioritization of the Londonderry Trailways map (see map #12);
- New opportunities for bicycle and pedestrian connections along existing roads, within parks and preserves, and connecting neighborhoods with recreation resources and commercial areas;
- Identification of funding for trail planning, construction, and maintenance;
- Development of trail character types or design guidelines for specific areas in town;
- Unified signage system and iconography; and
- A maintenance plan that targets funding and responsibilities to ensure trails and paths are well cared for.

Highlight: Initial Priorities of the Londonderry Trailways Plan

The Londonderry Trailways plan recommends connections between most neighborhoods, commercial centers, and civic areas along existing roads. The Trailways group has identified three priority areas for bicycle and pedestrian improvements:

1. Town Center
2. Route 102 corridor
3. Route 28 corridor

To achieve this far-reaching vision for non-motorized mobility, the plan should be revisited for the purposes of prioritization, identification of additional funding opportunities, and development of an implementation schedule. Further, in establishment of more detailed priorities, the town (or a task force) should consider how to safely connect residents with “high traffic pedestrian areas” such as the town center, commercial areas (e.g., Route 102 corridor), and recreation areas.

|| *Support regional trail efforts*

Support regional trail efforts such as the multi-state rail-to-trail effort along the abandoned Boston and Maine Railroad (the rail line passes through the north section of Londonderry).

|| *Continue to promote opportunities to access public land*

Continue to promote hiking, cross-country skiing, fishing, and other opportunities for residents to enjoy public land in Londonderry. Primary areas include the town center (around the town common and surrounding natural areas such as Adams Pond), the Musquash Conservation area, Mill Road, Ingersoll Property, and Kendall Pond.

