

Town of Exeter, NH:

2014-15 Recreation Needs Assessment and Planning Report

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Robert J. Barcelona, Ph.D.
Department of Recreation Management and Policy
College of Health and Human Services
University of New Hampshire

Nate Trauntvein, Ph.D.
Department of Recreation Management and Policy
College of Health and Human Services
University of New Hampshire



About the Authors

Robert J. Barcelona, Ph.D., is an Associate Professor with the Department of Recreation Management and Policy, College of Health and Human Services, University of New Hampshire, Durham, NH.

Nate Trauntvein, Ph.D., is an Assistant Professor with the Department of Recreation Management and Policy, College of Health and Human Services, University of New Hampshire, Durham, NH.

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Cover Photo:

Basketball court at the Recreation Park on Hampton Road. Courtesy of the Town of Exeter Parks and Recreation Department.

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Abstract/Summary

The town of Exeter's Parks and Recreation Department currently contributes successfully to the quality of life of residents and non-resident participants. Based on the activities associated with this project, including background research and observations, stakeholder focus groups, a town-hall style public input session, and a resident household survey, the following recommendations are offered for consideration by the town of Exeter:

- ✓ Build a new indoor sports center with turf fields to accommodate indoor sport and athletics activities, along with recreation office space, function rooms, and storage at the Recreation Park.
- ✓ Redesign, renovate, and expand available outdoor recreation facilities and amenities at the Recreation Park.
- ✓ Focus on basic maintenance and upkeep of neighborhood park and playground facilities, and provide renovation to Park Street Common to accommodate safe, active, non-formal recreation and play.
- ✓ Extend partnerships with the Exeter Conservation Commission and work to expand multi-modal trail networks and connectivity throughout the town.
- ✓ Work with the Southeast Land Trust to repurpose Gilman Park as a place for passive outdoor recreation and nature-based activities.
- ✓ Create and maintain partnership opportunities with relevant stakeholders, including businesses and organizations that are aligned with and share the values of the town of Exeter regarding parks and recreation provision.

Exeter's demography and geography suggest that the parks and recreation department is well-positioned to be a significant contributor to the quality of life and economic development of the town and region in the short- and long-term.

Introduction

The scope of this report focuses on the work of the planning and evaluation team from the University of New Hampshire in conducting a parks and recreation needs assessment for the town of Exeter, NH during the Fall and Winter of 2014-15. The project team was lead by Dr. Bob Barcelona and Dr. Nate Trauntvein from the University of New Hampshire's Department of Recreation and Policy, with assistance from graduate students in the same department. Specifically, the purpose of this study was to determine the current and future parks and recreation needs and planning priorities for the town of Exeter, NH. This was accomplished by the following activities:

1. Reviewing past park and recreation planning efforts, facility site visits, interviews with park and recreation staff, and reviewing community demographic profiles data;
2. Analyzing the results of the online household Recreation Needs Assessment Survey conducted by the town of Exeter in the summer of 2014;
3. Engaging citizens and stakeholders in public input sessions, including facilitating a series of focus groups and conducting a town-hall style public meeting.

All activities associated with the project took place between October, 2014 and March, 2015. The team from UNH has expertise in community planning and parks and recreation administration, and team members have conducted similar community planning studies in New Hampshire and throughout the country.

The team's philosophy and approach in undertaking the study was one of "holding up a mirror" and reflecting back to the community what was seen and heard during the data collection process. The results and recommendations presented in this report are a reflection of the data that was collected. While the team's expertise in parks and recreation planning played a role in shaping the final recommendations and discussion, all recommendations were informed by the data gathered during the research and public input process.

All public input activities were designed to get citizen participation and input into the process. Planning meetings were held with the park and recreation staff and town administrator to discuss the methodology used for this project, and suggestions and feedback were incorporated where feasible and when consistent with the project's scope of work. Summaries and snapshots of study data are included throughout the report. Expanded data tables from the household survey and public input session are included in the Appendices.

Summary of Project Activities

The following section provides a summary of project activities. This section provides information on the methodologies used and descriptions of project participants. An integration of the key ideas and themes across project activities, with specific references to data obtained to support the recommendations, will be discussed in the Recommendations section that follows.

1. Background and Information Gathering

The project team reviewed information provided by the Recreation Director that helped to provide historical, statistical, and demographic context for the report. In particular, the project team reviewed the Town of Exeter Master Plan of 2002, with a particularly focus on Chapter 7 (Parks and Recreation), the Town of Exeter's parks and recreation general fund budget, and the parks and recreation revolving fund budget. In addition, the team reviewed overall town demographic information and trends provided by the New Hampshire Employment Security Office's Community Profiles section, and public school enrollment data provided by the New Hampshire Department of Education.

Demographic trends for Exeter show that the community is growing steadily, consistent with demographic patterns in Rockingham County as a whole. The median age of the town is approximately 45 years, and approximately 33% of Exeter residents falling between the ages of 35-54. There appears to be a growing senior population in the town as well, as approximately 21% of

town residents are over the age of 65. Exeter is a relatively affluent town with an educated population. The median household income for Exeter residents is approximately \$72,231 and almost half of the population over age 25 holds a bachelor's degree or higher. Exeter is home to a prestigious private school (Phillips Exeter Academy), and has access to a high quality hospital and health care system. Exeter is a hub community, with connections to nearby communities such as Brentwood, Kensington, East Kingston, and Stratham. Analysis of school district enrollment data shows a steady enrollment pattern year-to-year from pre-K through high school, with an increase of approximately 5 percent over the past 10 years.

Tours of indoor and outdoor facilities available for public recreation in Exeter were conducted in late Fall, 2014. The town provides a wide-range of recreation facilities and amenities, including parks, playgrounds, athletic fields, tennis courts, multi-use trails, and an outdoor swimming pool. Park and recreation facilities appear to be in good condition, and generally appear to be meeting the current recreation needs of the town. It should be noted that this process identified areas where current facilities are not adequate to meet resident's needs, or where certain types of recreation facilities were needed but not perceived to be available. These will be discussed in the Recommendations section to follow.

The town also provides a range of recreation programs for citizens, including youth sports, instructional programs, community festivals, swimming lessons, day camps, and adult programs. Past planning efforts show that park and recreation facilities and programs are popular with Exeter residents, and in fact, the town's programs are popular with residents of surrounding towns as well, as the park and recreation department's service area extends through towns such as Stratham, Kingston, East Kingston, and Kensington. The park and recreation department has been successful generating revenue from its recreation programs and special events, as the department generates almost 50% of its revenue from non-general fund sources. This is an indication of the popularity of

the department's programs and services and the entrepreneurial approach and innovation of recreation department staff.

The park and recreation department partners with the Exeter school district to use gymnasium space for indoor recreation activities, such as youth and adult basketball. While this arrangement appears to be meeting the current needs for recreational youth basketball, the town lacks suitable indoor recreation facilities that are accessible to the public, particularly for recreational sports and fitness activities during the cold weather months. The town also partners with a number of outside private youth sports organizations to facilitate access to youth sports programming such as lacrosse, football, soccer, and baseball/softball. These private groups offer seasonal and year-round youth sports programs ranging from recreational and developmental in scope, to highly competitive travel clubs. Private youth sport groups have a strong connection with the recreation department, and some have partnered with the town actively in the past (i.e. Exeter Youth Soccer Association) to develop suitable facility space to run practices and games. The town has benefited from these arrangements by being able to facilitate a wide-range of youth sport experiences to area residents, while gaining access to athletic facility space for town programs and activities. Another key partner is Phillips Exeter Academy (PEA), which provides opportunities for town residents to use its indoor and outdoor facilities (e.g. walking/biking trails, athletic fields, field house, track). The new Performing Arts Center that is currently in development also represents an emerging opportunity for partnership and collaboration between PEA and the town. Finally, an emerging potential partner is the new Exeter Area YMCA, which is building a full-service indoor recreation facility that is being constructed on Linden Street.

2. Secondary Analysis of 2014 Exeter Recreation Needs Assessment Survey

An online household survey was developed by the town of Exeter and was presented to the public in the summer of 2014. The survey was developed by the park and recreation staff and was

based on similar needs assessment studies conducted by other cities and towns throughout the state and country. The survey asked residents a variety of questions related to their perceptions of parks and recreation programs and facilities, including their level of satisfaction, awareness, use, priorities for future development, and willingness to pay (e.g. fees, taxes). Questions consisted of both closed-ended, fixed choice categories and open-ended responses. The survey was made available to the public during the months of June-August, 2014. Approximately 577 residents participated in the survey.

Of those who participated in the survey, approximately 70% were Exeter residents, while almost 30% were non-residents who participated in Exeter parks and recreation programs. A majority of survey respondents were over age 40 (67.1%) and the highest percentage of respondents were in the 41-50 range (43.4%), consistent with the median age of the town. A majority of the respondents were female (76.6%), and a majority of respondents or their families (76.3%) had participated in town recreation programs over the past 12 months. A large percentage of respondents reported that they believe well-maintained recreation facilities provide economic benefits to the town (80.3%), and more than half (51.4%) felt that there was a need for additional recreation facilities in Exeter. Respondents generally supported fee increases for facility improvements and program expansion (74.0%), and almost half said that they would be willing to support town recreation efforts through additional tax dollars (49.0%). Data supporting specific recreation facility and/or program development will be noted in the Recommendations section that follows.

3. Public Input Sessions

Focus groups were held with recreation stakeholder groups in Exeter throughout the day on Monday, November 3, 2014. Separate 1-1 interviews were held with the parks and recreation director, assistant director, and town manager at various dates and times in November, December,

and January. Four (4) focus group were held with approximately 15 stakeholders identified and invited by the park and recreation department. Stakeholder groups represented a range of interests including town and department staff, program partners, adult recreation participants, and private youth sport organizations. Meetings were scheduled through the town and coordinated with the parks and recreation department, and were facilitated by the project team from UNH. Meetings consisted of an open, guided conversation related to the recreation needs and priorities in Exeter. Detailed notes of focus group sessions were taken for each meeting by at least two of the project team members. Following each focus group, the project team would debrief, discuss what was heard, and triangulate information obtained in the notes. In this way, the project team was able to distill key ideas and themes from each of the sessions. Focus group data supporting specific recreation facility and program development priorities will be presented in the Recommendations section below.

A town hall-style public input session was held on Wednesday, November 5, 2014 in the historic Exeter Town Hall. All Exeter residents were invited to attend, and the event was publicized through printed information located in town offices, via e-mail, and through the town's website. Approximately 21 residents attended the public input session, which included gathering quantitative and qualitative data related on key questions related to recreation needs and priorities, as well as group exercises designed to receive public input on important recreation planning issues, such as facility development, management priorities, and willingness to pay. Those who attended the public input session were active users of the recreation department's programs and facilities, as more than half (57.9%) reported that they or their families used town recreation facilities 3 or more times per week, and almost half (47.4%) reported that they or their families had participated in 3 or more recreation programs in the past year. All of the participants reported that the town should offer quality recreation programs and facilities, and a majority (61.1%) were satisfied with the Exeter Parks

and Recreation Department. More than half of the participants (68.4%) were over age 40, and most (84.2%) reported having at least one dependent child under the age of 19 living at home. All participants reported that they were Exeter residents. Public input data supporting specific recreation facility and program development priorities will be presented in the Recommendations section below.

Exeter Parks and Recreation Planning Study Recommendations

The town of Exeter's Parks and Recreation Department currently contributes successfully to the quality of life of residents and non-resident participants. In addition to serving Exeter residents, the Department serves as a hub for recreation activity in the surrounding area, drawing participants from Stratham, Kingston, East Kingston, and Kensington. The Department's diverse array of facilities and program offerings are generally well-thought of by the public. For example, the public is either satisfied or very satisfied with the location, quantity, and quality of recreation facilities and programs, and reports a high level of satisfaction with the Exeter Parks and Recreation Department as a whole.

Exeter is located in a desirable area of the state, with easy access to the seacoast, southern Maine, and northern Massachusetts and the North Shore, and has convenient transportation routes to Manchester and the rest of the state of New Hampshire. In addition, Exeter's population is growing and affluent. Access to and the availability of park and recreation facilities, programs, and amenities are important factors for residents' decisions to live in the town. For example, when given a list of town services such as "schools", "library", "public works", "parks and recreation", and "public safety", participants in the 2014 Recreation Needs Assessment Survey ranked parks and recreation second behind "school" as a factor in their decision to live in Exeter. Exeter's demography and geography suggest that the parks and recreation department is well-positioned to

be a significant contributor to the quality of life and economic development of the town and region in the short- and long-term.

Based on the activities associated with this project, including background research and observations, stakeholder focus groups, the public input session, and the resident household survey, the following recommendations are offered for consideration by the town of Exeter:

1. Build a new indoor sports center with turf fields to accommodate indoor sport and athletics activities, along with recreation office space, function rooms, and storage at the Recreation Park.

- ✓ Partner with existing outside competitive sport organizations (e.g. Exeter Youth Soccer, Lacrosse, Baseball, and Football) to pursue funding for the construction and operation of a permanent steel-framed indoor sports center with turf athletic fields for indoor sport play, practice, etc.
- ✓ Relocate Park and Recreation administrative offices to this new building. Repurpose, rent, or divest from the existing Park and Recreation office building.
- ✓ Include adequate space for functions, meetings, and multipurpose activity space for recreation programs, in addition to adequate storage for equipment and supplies and locker/changing rooms.
- ✓ Pursue sponsorship opportunities and/or naming rights with businesses or private organizations that are appropriately aligned to the mission of the town as one mechanism to help offset annual operating costs of the facility.

Data Support:

- ✓ Over 90% of respondents to the Recreation Needs Assessment Survey reported that athletic fields/facilities (soccer, baseball, softball and basketball) were either important or very important.

- ✓ 100% of public input participants reported that Athletic Fields/Sports Complexes were Very Important, and the largest Importance-Satisfaction gap (-72.8%) was for Indoor Recreation Facilities.
- ✓ 94.8% of public input participants believe that it is a good idea for the town to partner with other organizations in the development of new programs and facilities.
- ✓ Focus group participants reported that there was a need for “fields, fields, fields”, and a lack of indoor space for recreational sports activities on fields that could be used from November to March. Focus group participants also talked about the need to centralize recreation department operations and facilities, and expressed a desire to repurpose or divest from the existing recreation administrative offices if a new indoor building was built at the Rec Park.

2. Redesign, renovate, and expand available outdoor recreation facilities and amenities at the Recreation Park.

- ✓ Create new entrance-way into the park providing access to the developable acreage in the rear of the property. Options could include relocating tennis courts to another spot on the property, and creating new entranceway where the tennis courts were located.
- ✓ Tennis is a popular activity in the town. Add lighting to the tennis courts to expand tennis capacity. Options could include coin-operated lights to offset costs of utilities.
- ✓ Relocate Planet Playground and obtain an easement to expand the parking lot for the newly renovated Recreation Park. Create a “grand entrance” into the park with street-scaping, signage, and outdoor lighting.
- ✓ Consider adding a zero-entry leisure pool with splash pad and water features adjacent to/behind the existing lap pool. This will expand outdoor aquatics space and provide a different aquatics experience for participants. This will enhance aquatics options for

children and youth. The existing pool can be used for swim lessons and lap swimming. Another possibility is to partner with the new Exeter YMCA to develop and jointly manage a new outdoor aquatics facility on their property.

- ✓ Design and build a new bathhouse and concessions facility to accommodate the needs of increased aquatics participants.
- ✓ Add additional multi-purpose playing fields and/or expand the size of the existing fields on the site.
- ✓ Add a perimeter walking/jogging path with outdoor fitness stations.
- ✓ Add an additional bathroom facility at the east end of the property to accommodate spectators and participants on the playing fields – this could be located near the small playground next to the ball fields.
- ✓ When a new building is constructed and the Recreation Park is fully renovated and built-out, it will be necessary to add at least 1 full-time equivalent (FTE) for building and facility supervision.
- ✓ Contract with a landscape architect/site engineer to conduct a feasibility study, including plans and cost-estimates for site work related to renovation and building.

Data Support:

- ✓ The current tennis courts and pool facilities are heavily utilized and appreciated by the community. Over 90% of respondents to the Recreation Needs Assessment Survey reported that the tennis courts and outdoor pool were important or very important recreation facilities in Exeter. In addition, survey respondents reported that access to restrooms and expanded hours of operation were both constraints to using town recreation facilities.

- ✓ 100% of public input participants noted that safe walking trails were important or very important, and the second largest Importance-Satisfaction gap (-50%) was for trails and greenways. Fitness facilities/programs was noted as a need by 50% of public input participants. All (100%) of public input participants reported that the town of Exeter should provide quality recreation facilities and amenities.
- ✓ Focus group participants stated that there was a strong need for athletic fields, particularly for soccer and lacrosse. Focus group participants consistently mentioned Exeter's location in the state, its strong reputation in the area of youth sports, and its active, successful, and financially stable private youth sports organizations as assets that could be used to attract out-of-town residents for regional and national sport tournaments and events. Hosting such events requires an adequate number of high quality athletic fields and facilities. Focus group participants also noted the popularity of Exeter's tennis program, and the need to expand capacity by adding lights and/or expanding public use of school tennis courts, particularly in the summer months.
- ✓ A recent playground safety inspector's report on Exeter's playground facilities noted that there were currently no safety concerns with Planet Playground. However, in conversations with the recreation director, the safety inspector noted that Planet Playground will likely need renovation within the next 5 years in order to keep up with current playground safety standards. According to the inspector, the estimated cost of these renovations would be approximately \$250,000.

3. Focus on basic maintenance and upkeep of neighborhood park and playground facilities, and provide renovation to Park Street Common to accommodate safe, active, non-formal recreation and play.

- ✓ Ensure that all playgrounds are renovated/maintained according to recommendations from a recent playground safety inspection. If Planet Playground is relocated as part of a renovated Recreation Park, ensure that all safety issues are addressed based on recent playground safety inspection.
- ✓ Ensure that all playground elements are accessible for youth with disabilities.
- ✓ Provide safety features at all playgrounds to promote accessibility including fencing, cross-walks, and safe walking access.
- ✓ At Kids Park – rearrange and expand multi-age play options with additional playground elements.
- ✓ At Park Street Common - expand playground elements to accommodate a wider range of ages, eliminate the hedges surrounding the existing play area, and fence the perimeter of the property for safety. Fencing should be consistent with the historic aesthetic of the neighborhood. Eliminate the current baseball diamond, creating a larger grass area for non-formal active recreation. Add picnic tables and shade elements. Continue to provide an area for outdoor ice skating in the winter.

Data Support:

- ✓ A vast majority of respondents to the recreational needs assessment had children under the age of 19. Nearly 60% of respondents had children under the age of 10.
- ✓ 53% of public input participants noted that there was a need for pre-Kindergarten programs/services, and 64.7% reported that outdoor ice skating was a need. Accessible playgrounds and parks were listed as priorities by public input participants when they

were asked to create priorities for parks and recreation facilities and amenities in Exeter.

In addition, public input participants mentioned that there should be more of a focus on quality facilities and programs. Public input participants noted the need for shade elements at town park and playground facilities.

- ✓ A recent inspection of Exeter playground facilities noted areas that need to be addressed to continue to meet playground safety standards.
- ✓ Focus group participants discussed the challenges of using Park Street Common, particularly related to perceptions of safety. Focus group participants mentioned the lack of fencing, the proximity of the hedges to the playground elements, and the lack of safe walking access, particularly the lack of cross-walks. Some concern was raised in the focus group and staff interviews regarding possible issues with fencing the park due to neighborhood concerns based on the aesthetics of fencing.

4. Extend partnerships with the Exeter Conservation Commission and work to expand multi-modal trail networks and connectivity throughout the town.

- ✓ Consider partnering with the Conservation Commission to develop new opportunities for youth environmental/outdoor education or nature-based programs that could be based in Exeter parks or the Town Forest.
- ✓ Update and develop a trails inventory for the town and promote walking and biking opportunities on town properties and right of ways.

Data Support:

- ✓ 96.7% of Recreation Needs Assessment Survey respondents stated that walking trails were important or very important.
- ✓ 100% of public input participants reported that parks and open space, and trails and greenways were important or very important. The second largest Importance-

Satisfaction gap for public input participants was related to trails and greenways (-50%). While public input participants generally felt that existing walking trails met their needs, more than 66% felt that bike lanes/paths were a need for the town. Biking trails were also mentioned as a group/table priority for new parks and recreation facilities and amenities. Program marketing was also noted as a group/table priority. Existing hiking and biking opportunities should be catalogued and widely publicized.

- ✓ Focus group participants discussed many possible ways to partner between the Conservation Commission and Parks and Recreation Department. Ideas included potentially working with parks and recreation to mow conservation properties, to take care of open grassland areas and trail heads, and to water small microparks in town during the summer. There was also discussion about the possibilities for coordinating Eagle Scout projects and possibly identifying joint needs that could be met through such projects. One of the more promising ideas was the possibility of partnering on youth programs focusing on environmental/outdoor education and nature-based programming. Ideas discussed were joint-programs focusing on building outdoor skills for youth, geocaching, and nature-based learning.

5. Work with the Southeast Land Trust to repurpose Gilman Park as a place for passive outdoor recreation and nature-based activities.

- ✓ Eliminate the basketball court at Gilman Park and reduce the size of the parking lot, creating additional natural viewsapes and turning this into a natural area or pastoral setting.
- ✓ Consider adding cultural or historical interpretation elements on the history of the property, the town of Exeter, or the Little and Exeter Rivers.

- ✓ Provide access to the river for traditional outdoor recreation activities, such as fishing and canoeing/kayaking.
- ✓ Obtain permission from the Southeast Land Trust to promote passive recreational activities at Gilman Park by building a covered picnic area that could be used for outdoor/nature-based youth camp/program space in the summer months.

Data Support:

- ✓ Respondents to the Recreation Needs Assessment Survey were least satisfied with the condition of Brickyard Park, followed closely by Gilman Park.
- ✓ All (100%) public input participants stated that parks and open space was important or very important, yet almost half (47.4%) stated that parks and open space was inadequate in Exeter. More than half of public input participants stated that there was a need for nature or environmental programs (52.7%).
- ✓ Focus group participants mentioned Gilman Park as a potential gem that could be used for passive recreation activities. Focus group participants also talked about the need for better boat ramps/launches, linkage to Swasey Parkway, controlling runoff and improving water quality, and developing connections to town conservation land. There was also discussion of building a community garden area at Gilman Park. Park and recreation amenities were seen to be key factors in economic development, and better marketing of parks and their connection to the historical and cultural fabric of the town was seen as important for enhancing economic development opportunities.

6. Create and maintain partnership opportunities with relevant stakeholders, including businesses and organizations that are aligned with and share the values of the town of Exeter regarding parks and recreation provision.

- ✓ Engage in active discussions regarding potential short- and long-term partnerships between the town and YMCA to create efficiencies in program and service delivery, to avoid duplication of programs and services, and to provide expanded capacity for multigenerational indoor recreation programs and activities in Exeter. For example, consider partnering/actively collaborating with the Y to gain access to additional indoor facility space for traditional recreation activities possibly through joint-programming efforts.
- ✓ Explore the possibility of a partnership with the YMCA for the planning, building, funding, and operating of an indoor and outdoor pool on or near the YMCA property.
- ✓ Continue maintaining active partnerships with outside private sport organizations (soccer, lacrosse, baseball/softball, football) to ensure that the youth sport needs and opportunities of the area are being met.
- ✓ Continue to collaborate with Phillips Exeter Academy for shared use of important recreation and sports facilities, including but not limited to trails, indoor recreation space (i.e. field house), outdoor sport and athletic areas (i.e. track and field), and performing arts.
- ✓ Collaborate with private land and property developers to assess issues with residential growth, and to identify potential pieces of property that have significance for the town, particularly as they impact parks and recreation.

Data Support:

- ✓ 79.3% of Recreation Needs Assessment Survey respondents reported that an indoor pool was important or very important to them, 96.6% reported that an outdoor pool was important or very important, and 92.4% reported that indoor basketball courts were important or very important.
- ✓ 94.8% of public input participants agree or strongly agree that it is a good idea for the town to partner with other agencies and organizations to provide recreation programs and services. Indoor recreation activity space was consistently noted as a need by more than 50% of public input participants, and the largest Importance-Satisfaction gap was for indoor recreation facilities (-72.8%).
- ✓ Focus group participants talked about the desire and willingness to partner, and pointed to examples of successful partnerships between YMCAs and parks and recreation departments around the country. There appeared to be a desire to engage in an on-going and intentional dialogue to define what the scope of partnerships might look like, to create a common goal, and to outline roles that parties might play in the process. There was a desire for open dialogue and communication, and focus group participants felt that there needed to be an atmosphere of trust to make a partnership successful. Focus group participants talked about plans for an indoor pool as part of a phase 2 building effort at the Y.
- ✓ Interviews with town staff revealed that indoor recreation activity space for traditional sports such as basketball and volleyball do not appear to be major priorities for the parks and recreation department at this time, as the relationship with the Exeter schools for indoor activity space appears adequate to meet the current needs of the town. However, focus group participants expressed an interest in expanded opportunities for indoor

sports and activity space, and more opportunities for adult recreational sport programs and leagues. There was considerable interest among public input participants for expanding capacity for the town's popular summer camp program, and the summer camp was listed as a group/table priority.

Appendix A: Public Input Session Data – Descriptive Data

November 5, 2014 – Exeter Town Hall - Total Attendance = 21 citizen participants

Times per week participants and/or their families use Exeter Parks and Recreation facilities:

- 0 times = 15.8%
- 1 time = 15.8%
- 2 times = 10.5%
- 3 times = 36.8%
- 4 or more times = 21.1%

Number of Exeter Parks and Recreation programs participants and/or their families participated in over the last year:

- 0 programs = 5.3%
- 1-2 programs = 47.4%
- 3-4 programs = 26.3%
- 5-7 programs = 21.1%
- 8 or more programs = 0.0%

The Town of Exeter should provide quality recreation programs and services.

- Strongly Agree = 100.0%

The Town of Exeter should provide quality recreation facilities and amenities.

- Strongly Agree = 94.8%
- Agree = 5.2%

Overall level of satisfaction with the programs, facilities, and services provided by Exeter Parks and Recreation:

- Very Satisfied = 0.0%
- Satisfied = 61.1%
- Neutral = 27.8%
- Unsatisfied = 11.1%
- Very Unsatisfied = 0.0%

Willingness to Pay	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I would be willing to pay a fee for the use of certain recreation <i>facilities</i> in Exeter.	36.8%	42.1%	0.0%	15.8%	5.3%
I would be willing to pay a fee to participate in recreation <i>programs and activities</i> in Exeter.	36.8%	57.9%	5.3%	0.0%	0.0%
I believe that some portion of a resident's property tax should be used to offset the costs to build and maintain park and recreation <i>facilities</i> in Exeter.	57.9%	31.6%	0.0%	10.5%	0.0%
I believe that some portion of a resident's property tax should be used to pay to run recreation <i>programs and activities</i> in Exeter.	21.1%	36.8%	21.1%	21.1%	0.0%
I believe that it's a good idea for the Town to partner with other organizations.	73.7%	21.1%	5.3%	0.0%	0.0%

Adequacy of Park and Recreation Facilities

Program Area	Meets My Needs	Available but Inadequate	Important but not Available	Not Interested
Parks/open space	52.6	47.4%	0.0	0.0
Non-motor trails	44.4	27.8	0.0	27.8
Bike lanes/paths	27.8	61.1	5.6	5.6
Motorized trails	11.8	0.0	82.4	5.9
Indoor athletics	42.1	36.8	15.8	5.3
Indoor multipurpose gyms	27.8	38.9	27.8	5.6
Indoor senior center	25.0	12.5	50.0	12.5
Teen/youth center	36.8	36.8	10.5	15.8
Weights/fitness center	31.6	42.1	21.1	5.3
Indoor meeting space	41.2	17.6	23.5	17.6
Indoor performing arts center	11.8	29.4	35.3	23.5
Indoor ice skating	6.3	6.3	31.3	56.3
Indoor swimming pool	27.8	55.6	16.7	0.0
Indoor tennis courts	20.0	50.0	30.0	0.0
Outdoor swimming pool	36.8	5.3	10.5	47.4
Public boat launch	5.9	11.8	47.1	35.3
Outdoor multiuse athletic fields	38.9	0.0	11.1	50.0
Baseball/softball fields	41.2	0.0	5.9	52.9
Skate/action sports park	16.7	5.6	33.3	44.4
Playgrounds	21.1	0.0	5.3	73.7
Outdoor tennis courts	5.9	0.0	0.0	94.1
Outdoor performing arts	11.1	11.1	5.6	72.2
Dog/pet parks	23.5	35.3	41.2	0.0
Outdoor ice skating	17.6	47.1	17.6	17.6

Note: Green (>50%) and yellow (>40%) highlighted facilities indicate perceived need for growth in those areas.

Possible Areas for Future Park and Recreation Development:

- ✓ Indoor athletics/recreation/tennis center
- ✓ Public boat launches
- ✓ Pet/dog parks
- ✓ Outdoor ice skating
- ✓ Improvements to parks/open space

Possible Areas for Partnerships with Other Agencies/Organizations:

- ✓ Bike lanes/paths
- ✓ Motorized trails
- ✓ Indoor senior and/or teen center
- ✓ Weight/fitness center
- ✓ Performing arts center
- ✓ Indoor swimming pool

Adequacy of Programs/Services

Program Area	Meets My Needs	Available but Inadequate	Important but not Available	Not Interested
Arts and cultural programming	50.0	6.3	6.3	37.5
Concerts	22.2	11.1	5.6	61.1
Holiday/special events	0.0	5.9	11.8	82.4
Recreation programs for people with disabilities	18.8	43.8	37.5	0.0
Pre-K programs	23.5	11.8	41.2	23.5
Out-of-school programs for youth/teens	52.9	23.5	23.5	0.0
Bus trips/travel	0.0	5.9	58.8	35.3
Out-of-school programs for elementary/middle school	38.9	11.1	22.2	27.8
Summer day camps	29.4	5.9	5.9	58.8
Adult recreation programs	29.4	0.0	52.9	17.6
Senior/older adult Programming	25.0	0.0	62.5	12.5
Fitness programs	33.3	22.2	27.8	16.7
Cycling	27.8	5.6	33.3	33.3
Running	38.9	5.6	22.2	33.3
Outdoor adventure activities	36.8	21.1	36.8	5.3
Nature or environmental programs	26.3	21.1	31.6	21.1
Sports Instruction	5.6	11.1	38.9	44.4
Adult recreational sports	37.5	12.5	31.3	18.8
Youth recreational sports	43.8	6.3	0.0	50.0
Open gyms	61.5	30.8	7.7	0.0
Aquatic programming	35.3	29.4	11.8	23.5
Competitive youth sports	31.3	12.5	6.3	50.0

Note: Green (>50%) and yellow (>40%) highlighted program areas indicate perceived need for growth in those areas.

Possible Areas for Future Park and Recreation Development:

- ✓ More recreation programs for persons with disabilities
- ✓ Pre-kindergarten programs
- ✓ Bus trips and travel programs
- ✓ Sports instruction
- ✓ Adult recreational sports
- ✓ Adult recreation programs (non-sports)
- ✓ Aquatics programming

Possible Areas for Partnerships with Other Agencies/Organizations:

- ✓ Out-of-school programs for youth/teens
- ✓ Senior/older adult programming
- ✓ Fitness programs
- ✓ Outdoor adventure activities
- ✓ Nature or environmental programs

Importance of Recreation Amenities

Amenity	Very Important	Important	Neither Important nor Unimportant	Unimportant	Very Unimportant
Parks and Open Space	94.7%	5.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Recreation Programs	94.7%	5.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Athletic Fields/Sports Complexes	84.2%	15.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Trails and Greenways	89.5%	10.5%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Indoor Recreation Facilities	73.7%	15.8%	10.5%	0.0%	0.0%

Satisfaction with Recreation Amenities

Amenity	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neither Satisfied nor Unsatisfied	Unsatisfied	Very Unsatisfied
Parks and Open Space	5.6%	72.2%	5.6%	16.7%	0.0%
Recreation Programs	0.0%	55.6%	22.2%	22.2%	0.0%
Athletic Fields/Sports Complexes	5.6%	77.8%	0.0%	16.7%	0.0%
Trails and Greenways	22.2%	27.8%	16.7%	33.3%	0.0%
Indoor Recreation Facilities	0.0%	16.7%	16.7%	44.4%	22.2%

Importance/Satisfaction Gaps

Amenity	Importance	Satisfaction	Gap
Parks and Open Space	100.0%	77.8%	-22.2%
Recreation Programs	100.0%	55.6%	-44.4%
Athletic Fields/Sports Complexes	100.0%	83.4%	-16.6%
Trails and Greenways	100.0%	50.0%	-50.0%
Indoor Recreation Facilities	89.5%	16.7%	-72.8%

Note: Importance = the % of respondents that rated the amenity as either very important or important; Satisfaction = the % of respondents who reported that they were either very satisfied or satisfied with the amenity.

Allocation of \$100 to Exeter Parks and Recreation Amenities:

- Parks and Open Space = 15.8%
- Recreation Programs = 10.5%
- Athletic Fields/Sports Complexes = 15.8%
- Greenways, Trails, Complete Streets = 15.8%
- Indoor Recreation Facilities = 36.8%
- Other (more accessible programs and facilities for people with disabilities) = 5.2%

Place of Residence

- 100% = Exeter resident

At least 1 child under 6 living in the home:

- 31.6% = Yes
- 68.4% = No

At least 1 child between ages 6-12 living in the home:

- 68.4% = Yes
- 31.6% = No

At least 1 child between ages 13-18 living in the home:

- 31.6% = Yes
- 68.4% = No

At least 1 child under 19 years old living in the home:

- 84.2% = Yes
- 15.8% = No

Appendix B: Public Input Open Comments – Group and Individual Prioritization Exercise

Group/Table Priorities for Parks and Recreation Facilities and Amenities

Indoor Recreation

- ✓ Indoor swimming pool
- ✓ Indoor badminton court
- ✓ Indoor tennis courts
- ✓ Indoor badminton courts
- ✓ Indoor playground
- ✓ Indoor pool
- ✓ Indoor swimming pool
- ✓ Indoor courts for basketball and volleyball
- ✓ Indoor swimming

Playgrounds and Parks

- ✓ Community gardens with playground area
- ✓ Playgrounds
- ✓ Disabled/handicapped accessible areas
- ✓ Improve safety of existing parks and playgrounds
- ✓ Outdoor skating rink

Bike/Hiking Trails

- ✓ Bike trails
- ✓ Paved bike paths and lines – make Exeter a bike-friendly town!
- ✓ Bike paths for kids and adults so they don't have to travel on roads – “rail trail”
- ✓ Bike trails
- ✓ Biking and hiking trails
- ✓ Bike lanes
- ✓ Trail maps and markets for trails or easy walking/running paths

Outdoor Recreation/Rec Park Improvements

- ✓ Multisport complex with facilities and concessions
- ✓ Improved bath house at pool
- ✓ Add pavilion or covered space near/adjacent to pool
- ✓ Remove old factory by the swimming pool

Dog/Pet Park

- ✓ Dog friendly areas in some parks
- ✓ Dog park

Performing Arts Space/Community Center

- ✓ Indoor and outdoor performing arts space
- ✓ Buy IOKA as a co-investment and utilize it for teen/youth activity, performing arts, events, indoor community meeting spaces/rooms, and or for music events

Group/Table Priorities for Parks and Recreation Programs and Services

Partnerships

- ✓ Collaborate to connect parks and recreation with other partners
- ✓ Maximizing outdoor community resources to meet multigenerational needs

Access and Opportunity

- ✓ Transportation (to/from recreation programs)
- ✓ Disabled sports/programs

Summer Programming/ Camp

- ✓ More summer camp programs
- ✓ Summer camp that is not pool-oriented

Program Marketing

- ✓ Better marketing efforts
- ✓ Better marketing of programs and events
- ✓ Improve facebook, instagram, etc. of parks and recreation
- ✓ Improved registration and online programs
- ✓ Online forum for pickup games for indoor and outdoor sports on Exeter Town website
- ✓ Focus on quality – not more, but better!

Adult Programming

- ✓ Adult (non-senior) recreation programs
- ✓ More adult recreation services
- ✓ Provide social opportunities for isolated seniors
- ✓ Low impact yoga

Child and Youth Programming

- ✓ Age appropriate based activities for no school days
- ✓ Continue track and field program
- ✓ Increase flag football for older ages
- ✓ More recognition for kids and programs
- ✓ Intramural sports programs for all levels
- ✓ Drop in activities for middle and high school aged youth
- ✓ Track and field across area communities
- ✓ Increase program offerings for preschool children

Individual Comments Regarding Park and Recreation Facilities/Amenities

- ✓ Add dog hours to parks
- ✓ Increase use of all parks and playgrounds for events
- ✓ Multigenerational opportunities
- ✓ Nature trails for walking and hiking
- ✓ Community garden to support local food effort
- ✓ More outdoor trails for walking, low impact bike riding
- ✓ Community space for gardens
- ✓ Bike paths for kids to get around off the roads
- ✓ Community garden
- ✓ Bike paths for adults like unused logging roads
- ✓ More fenced in playgrounds and parks to protect kids from surrounding traffic
- ✓ Better linkability (access, crosswalks, sidewalks) connecting parks and playgrounds
- ✓ The town needs to pay close attention to the safety and accessibility of existing playgrounds and parks – improve what already exists before building new things
- ✓ Rec complex with baseball, softball, and multi-use fields, snack building with seating indoors and out, with bathroom services
- ✓ Bath house is much needed/needs to be improved
- ✓ Bike trails that are family friendly
- ✓ Dog parks
- ✓ Bath house at the pool needs renovation
- ✓ Pavilion or covered space for rainy days at the rec complex on Hampton Road
- ✓ Bike trails – paved for family biking, not just mountain biking
- ✓ More picnic tables at rec complex
- ✓ Dog parks
- ✓ Special needs/accessible areas – straps on swings for handicap safety
- ✓ Need handicap accessible areas and equipment
- ✓ Safety harnesses on swings
- ✓ Open air ice skating rink / summer roller hockey rink
- ✓ Indoor pool
- ✓ Bike trails
- ✓ Outdoor running paths
- ✓ Multisport, multi-field complex (larger than existing rec location)
- ✓ Indoor multipurpose gyms

Individual Comments Regarding Park and Recreation Programs

- ✓ Adult yoga through the parks and recreation department
- ✓ Spin classes
- ✓ Sport programs for kids with special needs
- ✓ Sports programs for kids with disabilities
- ✓ More adult leagues
- ✓ Open gym times
- ✓ Music programs
- ✓ Adult recreational sport badminton
- ✓ Summer camp is awesome – but need more space for all Exeter needs
- ✓ Better marketing – A lot of things I'm not sure if Exeter has
- ✓ Flag football for older kids (girls too!)
- ✓ Keep the track and field program
- ✓ Fence Park Street Parks
- ✓ Crosswalks to all park facilities
- ✓ Disc golf course
- ✓ Keep track and field program
- ✓ If possible, look at developing a public disc golf course (Amesbury and Dover have successful public courses and the seacoast should explore this. Manchester is developing one as well)
- ✓ Yoga for all age groups
- ✓ Programming for toddler/preschool age children
- ✓ Drop-in space/times for parents with infants/toddlers
- ✓ Perception that the quality of programming is poor via parks and rec – not enough trained staff experts
- ✓ Increase social media presence of programs, events, accomplishments of kids in programs
- ✓ Better use of technology
- ✓ Better fencing and crosswalks to parks/playgrounds
- ✓ Middle school competitive flag football
- ✓ Continuation of “Hershey Track and Field”
- ✓ Concerts – better quality –profit center

Appendix C: 2014 Recreation Needs Assessment Survey Data Tables

<i>Table 1: Demographics for the Resident Survey</i>		
Variable	%, Median or Mean	N
<i>Exeter Residency</i>		
Resident	69.7%	402
Non-Resident	28.2%	163
<i>Age</i>		
18-30	3.5%	20
31-40	29.4%	170
41-50	43.4%	251
51-64	13.1%	76
65 and older	10.6%	61
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	20.2%	117
Female	76.6%	443
Prefer not to answer	3.1%	18
<i>Number of Years in Exeter</i>		
	M = 12.05 (SD 12.6)	N = 410
0-5	33.2%	136
5-10	28.5%	117
11-15	15.6%	64
16 and more	22.7%	93
<i>Household Size</i>		
	Median = 4 (SD 1.22)	576
1	5.7%	33
2	13.4%	77
3	17.4%	100
4	43.1%	248
5	13.9%	80
Over 5	6.6%	38
<i>Households w/ Children</i>		
	79.8%	471
Households w/ Children under 5	21.2%	125
Households w/ Children 5-9	48.1%	284
Households w/ Children 10-14	40.7%	240
Households w/ Children 15-19	15.3%	90
<i>Current Tax Bill</i>		
Under \$1000 per year	6.6%	31
\$1001 - \$5000 per year	17.5%	82
\$5001 - \$9999 per year	49.5%	232
\$10000 and up	26.4%	124
<i>Recreation Program Participants in the past 12 months</i>		
Yes Participated	76.3%	335
No Not Participated	23.7%	104

Note: This survey was developed and administered by the town of Exeter in the Summer of 2014. Secondary analysis of this data was conducted by UNH as part of this project.

<i>Table 2. Importance of Parks and Recreation to Residents</i>		
<i>What factors most effected your decision to live in Exeter?</i> (Scored on a scale of 1 = least important reason and 6 most important reason.)		
Variable	%, Median or Mean	N
School	M = 4.99 (SD 1.76)	383
Parks and Recreation	M = 4.17 (SD 1.35)	359
Police/Fire and Public Safety	M = 4.02 (SD 1.53)	349
Library	M = 3.62 (SD 1.57)	345
Public Works	M = 3.34 (SD 1.49)	330
Other	M = 4.29 (SD 1.97)	186
Other Examples: close to work, close to family, close to the seacoast, affordable.		
<i>Do you feel that Parks and Recreation funding is as important as schools, roads, and public safety?</i>		
Somewhat Agree or Strongly Agree	87%	460
Somewhat Disagree or Disagree	10.4%	55
Not Sure	2.6%	14
<i>Do you think well-maintained recreation facilities can provide economic benefits to town?</i>		
Yes	80.2%	373
No	3.9%	18
Not Sure	12.5%	74
<i>Current Tax Bill</i>		
Under \$1000 per year	6.6%	31
\$1001 - \$5000 per year	17.5%	82
\$5001 - \$9999 per year	49.5%	232
\$10000 and up	26.4%	124
<i>Would you support fee increases for Recreation programs for facility improvements or program expansion?</i>		
Yes	73.3%	365
No	26.7%	133
<i>Would you be willing to support Town Recreation Efforts Through Additional Tax Dollars</i>		
Yes	49%	229
No	51%	238
<i>Where would you like those additional tax dollars to be spent?</i>		
Improved Facilities	21.4%	51
More Programs	17.2%	41
Both	60.5%	144
Neither	0.8%	2
<i>How much more would you be willing to pay towards improvements of facilities, more programs or both?</i>		
\$0	1.4%	3
\$1-\$9	13.7%	30
\$10-25	24.7%	54
\$26-\$50	21.9%	48
\$51-\$75	6.8%	15
\$76-\$100	31.5%	69

Location	% Important/Very important	N
Playgrounds	98.6%	410
Soccer Field	96.7%	393
Walking Trails	96.7%	418
Outdoor Pool	96.6%	417
Baseball & Softball Fields	92.8%	390
Basketball Courts	92.4%	386
Tennis Courts	90.7%	386
Picnic Areas	86.9%	398
Indoor Pool	79.3%	407
Non-Athletic/Memorial Parks	75.2%	386
Skate Park	67.7%	387
Indoor Athletic Fields	67.7%	381
Flag Football Field	40.5%	376
Artificial Fields	35.1%	370

Location	% Good/Excellent	% Needs Improvement	Don't Know about it	N
Recreation Park	69%	7.8%	14.3%	449
Tennis Courts	66.2%	3.8%	25.1%	442
Daniel R. Healy Pool	64.1%	9.3%	14%	443
Founder's Park	53.1%	3.1%	34.2%	450
Gale Park War Memorial & Park	50.6%	3.3%	34.1%	449
Kid's Park	48.4%	7.2%	28.4%	444
Recreation Office	45.7%	9.2%	17.3%	445
Park Street Common	43.5%	9%	30.1%	442
Town House Common	38.9%	1.2%	49.1%	432
Stewart Park	38.2%	1.1%	49.4%	435
Gilman Park	28.6%	13.4%	39.6%	447
Winter Street Cemetery	28.4%	6.3%	45.6%	430
Brickyard Park	28.2%	13.8%	46%	450
John C. Littlefield Memorial Skate	23%	6.5%	57.7%	444

<i>Table 5. What program areas would you like to see expanded?</i>		
Location	%	N
Adult Fitness/Sport Programs	27.6%	163
Family Programs	26.8%	158
Summer Camps	24.7%	146
Youth Sport Programs	23.6%	139
Youth Non-Athletic Programs	18.3%	108
Educational Programs	18.3%	108

<i>Table 6. Satisfaction with Recreation Facilities</i>		
Location	% Somewhat Satisfied or Very Satisfied	N
Location of Recreation Facilities	92.9%	338
Quantity of Recreation Facilities	89.3%	337
Town Recreation Facilities	88.2%	338
Quantity of Recreation Programs	84.9%	337
Quality of Recreation Programs	84.8%	328
Quality of Recreation Facilities	83.5%	334

<i>Table 7. Reasons preventing use of Town Recreation Facilities and Programs</i>		
Reasons	%	N
Times of programs are not convenient	17.5%	103
Class/Program is Full	15.1%	89
Lack of knowledge regarding services and programs	14.6%	86
Parks do not contain facilities/restrooms we need	14.6%	86
Hours of operation are not convenient	12.5%	74
Not enough time	10.8%	64
Lack of parking by facilities and parks	7.5%	44
Fees are too expensive	6.9%	41
Lack of quality programs	5.9%	35
Facilities not well maintained	5.3%	31
Use facilities provided by other agencies/towns	4.6%	27
Facilities lack the right equipment	2.5%	15
Accessibility	2.5%	15
Don't know where facilities are located	2.4%	14
Poor customer service by staff	2%	12
Location of facilities	1.9%	11
Poor sportsmanship at athletic events	1.2%	7
Town facilities are not close to my home	1%	6
Security is insufficient	.8%	5