

Derry Parks and Recreation

2020 Recreation Needs Assessment Study



Submitted March, 2020 by:

Robert J. Barcelona, Ph.D.
Matthew Frye, M.S., CTRS/L
James Hilton, M.S.

Department of Recreation Management and Policy
Community Planning and Research Collaborative (CPARC)
University of New Hampshire

About the Authors

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

Matthew Frye, M.S., CTRS/L, is a Clinical Assistant Professor with the Department of Recreation Management and Policy, College of Health and Human Services, University of New Hampshire, Durham, NH.

James Hilton, M.S. is an Adjunct Professor in the Department of Recreation Management and Policy, College of Health and Human Services, University of New Hampshire, Durham, NH, and former Director of the Newmarket (NH) Parks and Recreation Department.

Special thanks to Kira Babcock, Julianne Kelleher, and Laura Scrimshaw, UNH Recreation Management & Policy Graduate Students, for their assistance with this report.



**University of
New Hampshire**

Table of Contents

I.	Executive Summary	4
II.	Project Introduction.....	5
III.	Background Research and Trends.....	7
IV.	Focus Group Themes	22
V.	Household Survey Overview	26
VI.	Household Survey Data Tables.....	29
VII.	Summary Findings/Recommendations	43



Executive Summary

The Derry (NH) Parks and Recreation Department is a multifaceted parks and recreation department serving more than 34,000 residents in the town of Derry and surrounding areas. The department manages a wide-range of natural and built facilities used for passive and active recreation. For example, the department manages a variety of parks, conservation areas, playgrounds, waterfront areas, splash pads, dog parks, athletic fields, and indoor recreation facilities. The department also provides diverse, multi-generational program offerings, including senior programs, trips, youth and adult recreational and instructional sports, fitness classes, and outdoor activities. Programs are offered in a variety of locations, and the department partners with local schools and other community organizations to provide recreation services to residents.

Based on the activities associated with this project, including background research, benchmarking, trend analysis, stakeholder focus groups and community meetings, and a resident household survey, the following findings/recommendations are offered for consideration by the Derry Parks and Recreation Department:

1. Revitalize Hood Park focusing the park on nature-based recreation with active recreation elements. Consider expanding programming and events to draw more participants to the park.
2. Revitalize Alexander Carr-Park, including upgrading and renovating the Lodge for community activities and functions, renovate the existing playground, and renovate or repurpose the existing skate park.
3. Increase lighted, multipurpose rectangular field space, and add one additional 90' baseball diamond.
4. Finish the Derry Rail Trail/Bike Path, capitalize on Derry's shared notion of connectivity as a community value, and position Derry as a hub for trail networks in the state and region.
5. Investigate the feasibility for adding a 20-30,000 square foot community indoor recreation center with separate dedicated space for seniors and teens/youth.
6. Finance park and recreation improvements, including a multigenerational community center, from a diverse mix of funding sources.
7. Add additional full-time staff equivalents (FTEs) to the park and recreation department to better maintain and improve park and recreation facilities and amenities and to accommodate participant needs for recreation programming.

Project Introduction

The Derry (NH) Parks and Recreation Department is a multifaceted parks and recreation department serving the approximately 34,000 residents of the town of Derry, New Hampshire. The department offers and manages a wide-range of natural and built facilities used for passive and active recreation. For example, the department manages outdoor park and recreation facilities such as Alexander-Carr Park (including tennis/pickleball courts), Don Ball Park (including splash pad), Hood Park, Dana Ball Tennis and Pickleball Court, MacGregor Park, Rider Fields, and Veterans and O'Hara Fields. The department also manages the Gallien's Town Beach, as well as indoor recreation facilities such as the Lodge at Alexander-Carr Park and Veterans Hall, the home of the Derry Parks and Recreation Department. In addition to facilities, the department provides diverse, multi-generational program offerings, including youth sports, senior programming for residents over 50 years old, instructional programs, and a variety of community special events. Programs are offered in a variety of locations, including in Derry's indoor and outdoor recreation facilities, and in shared space with schools and various community groups.

Having enough indoor and outdoor space to satisfy the needs for diverse, multigenerational recreation and community activities is a common issue throughout New England. Successful park and recreation agencies "tailor their services to meet the demands of their community" (National Recreation and Park Association, 2016, p. 1). Engaging the public through a formal needs assessment process provides valuable information that agencies can use to drive future planning efforts. Obtaining input from the public on their wants, needs, and priorities helps to ensure that citizen voices are incorporated into facility and program development.

The scope of this report focuses on the work of the planning and evaluation team from the University of New Hampshire. The team completed a parks and recreation needs assessment for the Derry Parks and Recreation Department during the Fall and Winter of 2019-20. The study collected public input data addressing a broad range of indoor and outdoor recreation needs, with special attention given to: 1) indoor multigenerational community recreation center space, and 2) Hood Park. Specifically, the purpose of this study was to address the following:

1. To examine the park, recreation, and community activity needs identified by the residents and key stakeholders of the Derry Parks and Recreation Department;
2. To determine which park, recreation, and community activity needs expressed were deemed to be priorities for the Derry Parks and Recreation Department;
3. To develop a set of recommendations that would allow the Derry (NH) Parks and Recreation Department to meet the priorities that were identified throughout the study.

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, Vermont, Maine, Massachusetts, 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 heard during the data collection process. The results and recommendations presented in this report are a direct reflection of the data that was collected. While the team's expertise in parks and recreation planning played a role in the final recommendations and discussion, all recommendations were informed by the data gathered during an extensive research and public input process.

Project Activities

All project activities were designed to generate information to inform the recommendations contained in this report. In addition to background research and meetings with staff, this process included opportunities for public engagement. Public input activities were especially important to include broad citizen participation and input into the process. A description of project and public input activities precedes each section of the report. Project activities included:

1. Background research, benchmarking, and trend analysis
2. Meetings with key parks and recreation staff
3. Focus groups and community meetings with recreation stakeholders and the public
4. Development, distribution, and analysis of a town-wide online survey of Derry residents

Project Resources and Data Sources

The project team reviewed key town and department planning documents including the 2019 Derry Master Plan, annual park and recreation program reports, recreation program guides, and budget reports. In addition, the team toured and observed park and recreation facilities, programs, and services as a component of project activities. The team also conducted trend analyses of town demographics and recreation activity participation. The team used a variety of sources to obtain this information, including the 2019 National Recreation and Park Association's (NRPA) Agency Performance Review, 2019 Sport and Fitness Industry Association's (SFIA) Sports, Fitness and Leisure Activities Topline Participation Report, 2019 State of Play report on youth sports trends and developments by the Aspen Institute's Project Play, and Esri's Business Analyst tool that allows for location-based market analysis. In addition, the project team conducted a variety of public engagement activities, including holding focus groups with stakeholders and the public, conducting an open community forum meeting, and gathering needs assessment data through an online resident household survey.



Background Research and Trends

The town of Derry is New Hampshire's fourth largest town (behind Manchester, Nashua, and Concord). The town is located in a desirable area of the state to live, with easy access to cities such as Manchester and Boston, the mountains, lakes, and Atlantic Ocean. Derry's positive economic growth rates and diverse economic and housing mix, connectivity, and natural and cultural resources make it a desirable place to live, work, and play. Derry has access to variety of outdoor recreation areas including lakes, beaches, parks, forests, and trail systems. The town also provides access to a variety of built-recreation amenities such as playgrounds, athletic fields, tennis courts, a dog park, and indoor recreation facilities. Derry's outdoor park and recreation facilities are well-maintained, and well-used. Existing indoor facilities such as Veterans Hall and the Lodge at Alexander-Carr Park are at capacity, nearing the end of their usable lifespan, and are in need of repurposing or renovation to meet current recreation needs.

Derry's Demographics

The most recent estimates show that Derry has approximately 34,294 residents and 13,194 households. ***Derry's population growth is holding steady.*** Since 2000, the population of Derry has more or less stayed the same (increase of less than 1%), although the number of households has increased by approximately 6.6%. The population is expected to increase modestly in the next five years to 34,876 by 2024, for an expected Five-Year Average Growth rate of 1.7% (Esri Community Profile, 2019). Approximately 17.1% of Derry's population is under the age of 18, while 13.1% is over the age of 65. The current median age for Derry residents is 39.5 years. Derry has a higher percentage of adults ages 24-54 than the state of New Hampshire as a whole (42.7% vs. 37.9%). ***While Derry is a relatively young town compared to other towns and cities in the region, growth projections show that Derry is likely to get older over the next five years.*** For example, Derry's percentage of residents over age 65 is expected to increase by approximately 2.7%. Derry's percentage of residents under age 18 is expected to remain steady through the year 2024 (Esri Community Profile, 2019). ***These trends indicate that demand for youth, adult, and senior recreation programs and activities is likely to remain strong.***

Like much of the state, Derry is a majority-white town, with approximately 92.9% of its population identifying as "White-Alone". Approximately 1.2% of Derry's residents identify as Black or African American Alone, 2.0% as Asian Alone, 0.3% as Native American/American Indian Alone, 1.4% as Some Other Race Alone, and 2.2% as Two or More Races. Approximately 4.8% of Derry residents identify as being of Hispanic/Latino origin of any race. ***Derry has grown more diverse since 2000*** as the probability that two people from the same area will be from different race/ethnic groups has increased by 5.4% (16.2% probability in 2000 to 21.6% probability in 2019) (Esri Demographic and Income Profile, 2019). This is similar to trends seen in the state of New Hampshire as a whole over the past decade. In addition, ***approximately 8.6% of Derry residents under the age of 65 have a disability*** (US Census Bureau Quick Facts, 2019).

Derry has a diverse economic and housing mix. The median household income in Derry is \$69,549. Approximately 8.7% of Derry residents are living below the poverty level, and 33.0% of households earn more than \$100,000 per year (Esri American Community Survey Population Summary, 2019; US Census Bureau Quick Facts, 2019). Most Derry residents who work do so in another New Hampshire community (55.6%) or out-of-state (26.9%), and the average drive time to work is 32 minutes from home (NH Department of Employment Security, 2020). The table below shows the current and five-year projections for key demographic profiles in the town.

Table 1: Town of Derry – Key Demographic Profiles

	2019	2024 (Projected)	5 Year Projected Growth
Population	34,294	34,876	1.7%
Households	13,194	13,466	2.1%
Households with Children	37.9%	NA	NA
0-4 years	5.2%	5.2%	0.0%
5-9 years	5.6%	5.4%	-0.2%
10-14 years	6.2%	6.1%	-0.1%
15-24 years	12.6%	11.5%	-1.1%
25-34 years	14.5%	14.4%	-0.1%
35-44 years	13.0%	14.2%	1.2%
45-54 years	15.2%	13.4%	-1.8%
55-64 years	14.6%	14.0%	-0.6%
65-74 years	8.5%	10.0%	1.5%
75-84 years	3.3%	4.5%	1.2%
85 over	1.3%	1.3%	0.0%
17 years and younger	21.0%	20.4%	-0.6%
18 years and older	79.0%	79.6%	0.6%
65 years and older	13.1%	15.8%	2.7%
White Alone	92.9%	92.9%	0.0%
Black Alone	1.2%	1.2%	0.0%
American Indian Alone	0.3%	0.3%	0.0%
Asian Alone	2.0%	2.0%	0.0%
Pacific Islander Alone	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Some Other Race Alone	1.4%	1.4%	0.0%
Two or More Races	2.2%	2.2%	0.0%
Hispanic Origin	4.8%	4.9%	0.1%
Diversity Index	21.6%	21.6%	0.0%
Male	16,986	17,230	1.4%
Female	17,308	17,646	2.0%
Owner-Occupied Housing	60.2%	NA	NA
Rental Housing	34.5%	NA	NA
Unoccupied Housing	5.3%	NA	NA
Civilian Unemployed (16+)	4.8%	NA	NA

Esri Community Profile (2019); Esri ACS Population Summary (2019); NH Department of Employment Security (2020); US Census Bureau Quick Facts (2019)

Education in Derry

The Derry Cooperative School District operates 7 public schools, including 5 elementary schools (grades PK, K-5) and 2 middle schools (grades 6-8). High school students attend Pinkerton Academy. There is one private/parochial school operating in Derry, as well as 17 New Hampshire licensed child care facilities. Public school enrollment trends (Pre-Kindergarten, Kindergarten, Elementary, and Middle,) are down approximately 8.4% since 2010, with the largest declines happening in middle school. School enrollment declines over the last decade are a trend throughout the state. Despite the declines in school enrollment over the past decade, 37.9% of Derry households have children under the age of 18. This is above the New Hampshire state average of 31.0%. ***This suggests that youth programs will continue to be in demand, and the need for indoor and outdoor recreation space for youth activities will remain steady.***

Table 2: Derry School Enrollment Trends, 2009-2019

Year	Elementary (Grades PK-5)	Middle (Grades 6-8)	Totals
2019-20	2,098	1,197	3,295
2018-19	2,123	1,194	3,317
2017-18	2,200	1,177	3,377
2016-17	2,217	1,188	3,405
2015-16:	2,252	1,229	3,481
2014-15	2,241	1,239	3,480
2013-14	2,254	1,289	3,543
2012-13	2,314	1,273	3,587
2011-12	2,223	1,312	3,535
2010-11:	2,224	1,373	3,597

Retrieved from <https://www.education.nh.gov/who-we-are/division-of-educator-and-analytic-resources/bureau-of-education-statistics/enrollments-by-grade>

Indoor Recreation Facilities

Derry Parks and Recreation operates two facilities for indoor recreation - Veterans Hall and the Lodge at Alexander-Carr Park. In addition, the department partners with the Derry Cooperative School District to use school gymnasium space for recreation programming at Derry Village Elementary School, East Derry Memorial Elementary School, Ernest P. Barka Elementary School, Grinnell Elementary School, South Range Elementary School, Gilbert H. Hood Middle School, and West Running Brook Middle School. ***The town directly controls approximately 8,465 square feet of indoor recreation space, and its partnerships with the schools provide another 46,155 square feet of gymnasium space for a total of 54,620 square feet of indoor recreation space.***

Veterans Hall was built in 1928 and is located at 31 West Broadway Street. The building is the home of the Derry Parks and Recreation Department. Veterans Hall consists of one small elementary school-sized basketball court with very little room on the sidelines and baselines. Storage is a concern on the main level, as chairs, tables, mats and other equipment is stored adjacent to activity areas. The basement-level contains additional storage for equipment and supplies. Veterans Hall is used primarily for senior activities during the day. The department also holds or stages community events in the building. Other activities in the building include open gyms, wrestling, judo, and the Red Star Baton Twirlers. The department generates rental income from community groups (such as the Red Start Baton Twirlers) who use the building. Veterans Hall was renovated in 2009, including installing a new HVAC system, new windows, and improved lighting. The building is in

good shape for its age. However, the space is inadequate to run more than one small recreation program at a time. Other limitations include only having two public restrooms, and very limited parking proximate to the building. The building also has accessibility challenges for persons with disabilities. Total square footage for the public portion of the building (including gym, offices, etc.) is 6,035 square feet.

Lodge at Alexander-Carr Park is an indoor structure located adjacent to the sledding hill at Alexander-Carr Park. The lodge was built in the 1960's, and received a new addition in the early 2000's. The lodge is used by community residents for rentals, including large community events, art classes, sledding parties, birthday parties, non-profit and business meetings, health presentations, and luncheons. The lodge is showing considerable signs of wear-and-tear and deferred maintenance. The rear decking was removed when it became structurally unsound. The front deck has had several repairs completed, but needs to be refinished. The interior space on the main floor of the lodge is adequate for meetings and functions, but the finishes are dated and in need of upgrades. The kitchenette area has a sink and microwave but lacks a stove/oven. The lodge has 2,430 square feet available to the public. There is ample storage on the bottom floor of the building. In addition to maintenance needs, there are challenges to adequately staff the building for programs, as it requires pulling staff away from the main office at Veterans Hall.

The town of Derry also owns the Marion Gerrish Community Center, and leases the building to a non-profit organization to operate. A wide-variety of civic groups and organizations use the building, and Marion Gerrish is home to the town's Meals-on-Wheels program. The town does not have a dedicated senior center at this point in time.

Other Indoor Facilities Available for Public Recreation in Derry

The Derry Parks and Recreation Department partners with the Derry Cooperative School District to use gymnasium space in the town's five elementary and two middle schools. Gym use is exclusive to the schools during the school day. Middle school sports teams use middle school gym space from 2:30-6:30pm., and parks and recreation uses gyms from 6:30-9:00pm. The elementary school extended day care programs use elementary school gym spaces until 6:00pm, and the parks and recreation department uses the space from 6:00-9:00pm. Gyms are used throughout the school year, with little or no downtime. Shoulder seasons (late fall, early spring) are particularly difficult with multiple groups (e.g. middle school basketball, cheerleading, recreation basketball, travel basketball, baseball/softball, indoor soccer, lacrosse) needing gym time. Schools lose gym time for election days and other civic functions. Opportunities for adult recreation programming and gym use is extremely limited or non-existent due to the demands for gym space for the myriad of youth programs, and due to the limited timeframes when gym space is available.

In addition to public recreation opportunities, there are a number of private providers of indoor recreation services in the area. These include the Derry Boys and Girls Club, a non-profit youth development provider, and the New England Sports Center, a private 95,000 square foot indoor sports complex featuring multisport courts and two artificial turf fields. Both facilities are membership-driven and require fees for use.

Table 3: Derry Community Centers – Indoor Activity Spaces Available for Recreation

Facility	Square Feet
(Dedicated) Recreation Facilities	
Veterans Hall	6,035
Lodge at Alexander-Carr Park	2,430
Total Dedicated:	8,465
(Shared) Derry School Facilities - Gymnasiums	
Ernest P. Barka Elementary School	6,184
Derry Village Elementary School	6,184
East Derry Elementary School	3,105
Grinnell Elementary School	5,696
South Range Elementary School	6,184
Gilbert H. Hood Middle School	9,335
West Running Brook Middle School	9,467
Total Shared:	46,155
Total:	54,620

Parks and Outdoor Recreation Facilities

In addition to public indoor space, the Derry Parks and Recreation Department also manages approximately 132 acres of parks, playgrounds, athletic fields, trails, a town beach, and other outdoor recreation amenities. The Derry Parks and Recreation Department also maintains, schedules, and operates the fields owned by the Derry Cooperative School District. Derry's Public Works Department takes care of all of the outdoor recreation amenities in town, including mowing, striping, turf management, and general maintenance. In general, ***Derry's outdoor recreation facilities are well-maintained, well-used, and in good condition.*** Connectivity is a feature, with off-street access to a variety of trails and paths, including the Derry Rail Trail/Bike Path. ***High demand for outdoor field use, particularly for multipurpose rectangular field space in the seasonal cross-over period (principally from football, lacrosse, and soccer), as well as over-programming of existing fields points to the need for at least 1-2 additional rectangular fields and 1 additional 90' baseball diamond.*** Many of the town's fields are shared with the schools, which exacerbates demand. The town only has access to one 90' baseball diamond at Buckley Field which is shared between youth baseball and both middle school baseball programs, and is unavailable for fall baseball when the multipurpose field is being used. The lack of a central lighted field complex with multiple multipurpose fields (particularly for soccer and lacrosse) in one location limits the town's ability to host tournaments and other events.

Table 4 provides a list of the active and passive outdoor recreation amenities managed by the Derry Parks and Recreation Department, with notes regarding management challenges, conditions, and/or potential upgrades where applicable. In addition, Table 5 provides a list of school fields, with associated notes. A full inventory of outdoor recreation resources can be found in the 2019 Derry Master Plan (see <https://www.derrynh.org/planning-board/pages/master-plan-update-2020-volumes-i-iii>).

Table 4: Derry Outdoor Recreation Amenities – Observations

Facility	Observations by Planning Team
Alexander-Carr Park	Well-maintained park with connectivity to the Derry Rail Trail/Bike Path; 4 lighted tennis courts; 2 lighted pickleball courts and pavilion-area are high quality; sledding hill adjacent to lodge (see description on pg. 10); two playgrounds; consider upgrading or repurposing unused skate park (in disrepair) and renovating playgrounds that are experiencing wear-and-tear
Dana Ball Tennis / Pickleball Court	Single tennis and pickleball court located across the street from Hood Park
Derry Dog Park	Off-leash, fenced in dog park for both large and small dogs; includes agility amenities (obstacles, tunnels)
Derry Rail Trail / Bike Path	Four mile paved multi-use trail connecting to the Windham Rail Trail and Rockingham Recreational Rail Trail; additional sections are in planning stages to complete connectivity to the Londonderry Rail Trail
Don Ball Park and Splash Pad	Signature park; used for a variety of sport leagues - football, lacrosse, soccer; baseball, softball, camps and clinics, t-ball; splash pad, playground, concessions area; good parking; fields are well-maintained, but over-programmed and need rest, but there is nowhere to handle overflow
Gallien's Beach	Town-controlled beach on Beaver Lake opened for swimming, fishing, boat and kayak rentals, concessions, and playground; winter ice-skating when weather allows; hosts multiple events; Derry-resident only facility
Hood Park	Outdoor recreation area located proximate to downtown; playground, outdoor basketball and street hockey courts are well used and in need of renovation; winter ice skating rink; nature trail; community events are held here; no swimming in the pond due to water quality issues and lack of lifeguards; access point to the Derry Rail Trail; park would make a good natural/passive recreation area with additional trail development, signage, wayfinding; opportunities to kayak/paddle on Hood Pond
MacGregor Park	Passive recreation area downtown used as a veterans' memorial as well as for a variety of community special events including the town's popular summer concert series
Rider Fields	Two full-sized soccer fields (one with lights); storage shed; cinder stone parking lot; fields are over-programmed and need rest but there are is a need for additional field space; drainage appears to be a concern; few available parking spaces and amenities make tournament play difficult or impossible
Veterans and O'Hara Fields	One field for youth and adult softball (Veterans) and one 65' field for baseball (O'Hara); both fields are lighted; fields are proximate to residences and parking (which is limited); both built in the 1930's; continuous renovation to concession and press boxes; both softball and baseball fields need upgrades if participation trends warrant

Derry also manages a variety of neighborhood pocket parks and conservation areas that are used for active and passive recreation. These are described and inventoried in the town's 2019 Master Plan.

Table 5: Derry Shared Outdoor Fields

Facility	Observations by Planning Team
Buckley Field / Hood Middle School	Field is well-used by both Derry School District and the Parks and Recreation Department for youth sports programming; includes 90' baseball diamond, softball field, full-sized soccer field, small-sided soccer field, and field hockey/lacrosse field that can be converted to five (5) small-sided football fields; proximate to both the Derry Rail Trail and Grinnell Elementary School; the full-sized soccer field takes up the outfield of both the baseball and softball fields, taking both offline in the fall and taking the soccer field offline in the spring; in addition to field locations, parking and access limits the number of events that can take place at the field at one time
Derry Village Fields	Two baseball fields; multipurpose field; playground area (not maintained by Derry Parks and Recreation)
Barka Field	Multipurpose natural turf soccer field located behind the school; Derry Soccer Club has invested money into the field, including purchasing new soccer goals; also used by a Derry adult soccer league; electrical service but not currently lighted
Pinkerton Academy Fields	A variety of outdoor field spaces, including artificial turf, used primarily for Pinkerton Academy sports teams, although fields are available to the community to reserve; unlike other school fields, Pinkerton Academy fields are managed, controlled, scheduled, and maintained by Pinkerton; stakeholders expressed concerns regarding rental costs and application process for field reservations
East Derry Field	Multipurpose natural turf field used for lacrosse and soccer
West Running Brook Field	Multipurpose activity space that can be used for lacrosse, field hockey, and soccer; the field is undersized and needs further development for game play; there is space to expand and the town has started to provide fill for possible expansion and future development; there is no full-sized baseball field on-site, so the middle school team is forced to play home games at Buckley Field, and practice at Derry Village and Don Ball Park (which are connected by trails maintained by the Derry Parks and Recreation Department)

Facility Benchmarks - Indoor and Outdoor Recreation Space

Approximately 56.9% of recreation agencies nationwide provide recreation centers, including gyms and fitness centers, for their residents. The Derry Parks and Recreation Department controls and manages approximately 8,465 square feet of dedicated indoor recreation facility space, and shares an additional 46,155 square feet with the Derry Cooperative School District. ***The national level of service benchmark standard for dedicated indoor recreation space is approximately 2 square feet per resident.*** The local level of service standards for indoor recreation space in New Hampshire varies greatly by town, based on size, geography, support for community recreation, and local needs. We calculated the average level of service standard for dedicated indoor recreation square footage in four towns and cities with indoor recreation facilities - Concord, Dover, Hudson, and Rochester. These towns and cities are comparable to Derry in population size and scope of park and recreation services. The average level of service standard for dedicated indoor recreation space in these four municipalities is approximately 1.4 square feet per resident. ***Derry's current level of service standard is 0.25 square feet per resident - well below national and comparable local level of service standards.***

Derry's current level of service for indoor space is 0.25 square feet per resident when considering only the indoor recreation space directly managed by the town - far below the minimum level of service standards. Including 100% of shared school space would bring Derry's indoor recreation level of service to 1.59 square feet per resident - still below the top desired benchmark standards. Table 6 shows various options for meeting level of service target goals for indoor recreation space in Derry.

Table 6: Indoor Facility Space Level of Service Options

Target Goal: Indoor Square Feet Per Resident	Indoor Square Footage Needed		
	Option 1 (Dedicated Indoor Recreation Space Only)	Option 2 (Includes 50% of School SqFt)	Option 3 (Includes 100% of Schol SqFt)
2.0	61,287	38,209.5	15,132
1.5	43,849	21,236.5	0
1.0	26,411	3,333.5	0

Derry Parks and Recreation manages approximately 132 acres of parks and outdoor recreation areas, for an average of approximately 3.88 acres of park land per 1,000 residents. Nationally, the average benchmark standard is approximately 10.1 acres per 1,000 residents - this is similar to the New England average of 10.0 acres per 1,000 residents. This puts Derry below the lower quartile in park acres per 1,000 residents in New England.

Park and Recreation Expenditure and Revenue Benchmarks

Based on the FY 2019 approved budget, the Derry Recreation Division received approximately \$589,931 and the Park Division received approximately \$854,839 in general fund allocations to cover Division expenses (e.g. payroll, benefits, administrative services, contractual services, rentals, printing, supplies, and utilities). ***Derry's total park and recreation operating expenditure per capita was \$42.12 for 2019 - below the national and New England averages of \$78.60 and \$60.61 respectively.*** The Recreation Division generated \$182,764 in revenue through recreation program fees and charges, space rentals to outside groups, and trust transfers. ***The Recreation Division's cost recovery - or its non-tax revenue as a percentage of its operating expenditures - was 31.0% for FY 2019.*** Nationwide, the typical park and recreation agency recovers approximately 27.3% of its operating expenditures from non-tax revenue, ***putting Derry above both the national and New England averages.*** This demonstrates that the Derry Recreation Division knows how to generate revenue from its programs and services, and has been able to successfully monetize existing facilities through rental fees and charges. ***Derry appears to be adequately resourcing park management and maintenance, as it is close to the national average and above the regional average of park operating expenses per acre.*** Further, the percentage of the parks and recreation budget that is dedicated to parks is 59.1% - well above both the national and regional averages. Derry's well-maintained outdoor recreation and trail areas demonstrate this resource commitment.

Table 7: Expenditure and Revenue Benchmarks

Averages	Park and Recreation Operating Expenses Per Capita	Recreation Revenue as % of Operating Expenditures	Park Operating Expenses Per Park Acre	% of Overall Operating Expenses Dedicated to Parks
National	\$78.69	27.3%	\$6,750	44.3%
New England	\$60.61	29.2%	\$5,831	36.9%
Derry	\$42.12	31.0%	\$6,476	59.1%

Retrieved from <https://www.nrpa.org/publications-research/research-papers/agency-performance-review/budget/>



Park and Recreation Staffing Benchmarks

Derry Parks and Recreation currently has 2.25 FTEs (full-time equivalents) dedicated to its Recreation Division and 5.5 FTEs dedicated to its Parks Division for a total of 7.75 FTEs covering both parks and recreation for the town. *Derry Parks and Recreation’s staffing levels are below both national and regional average benchmarks for parks and recreation agencies across a range of indicators.* Parks and recreation staffing needs vary widely by town and jurisdiction, and it can be difficult to directly compare towns to one another because of the differences in size, scope, and responsibilities associated with each department. Table 8 compares Derry’s parks and recreation staffing levels to national and regional parks and recreation agencies across a range of indicators.

Table 8: Park and Recreation Staffing Levels

Averages	All Agencies	New England Agencies	Agencies w Population Between 20,000-49,999	Agencies with 250 or less acres of parkland maintained	Agencies maintaining between 10-19 parks
Agencies	38.2	11.9	16.5	16.5	24.9
Derry	7.75	7.75	7.75	7.75	7.75



Recreation Activity Trends

A large percentage of Americans participate in a diverse range of fitness activities, individual sports, team sports, and outdoor activities. ***In 2018, approximately 72.7% of Americans (ages 6+) participated in some form of recreation activity – a percentage that has held steady since at least 2013, indicating strong interest in recreation activity participation.*** Of the group of active recreation participants, 35.9% participated in some form of active high calorie activities, 18.9% participated in casual high calorie activities, and 17.9% participated in low or medium calorie activities (SFIA Topline Report, 2019). ***Approximately 71.8% of 6-12 year olds participated in a team or individual sport in 2018.*** The average number of team sports played by a 6-12 year old in 2018 was 1.87, and parents spent an average of \$693 per year per child on youth sports (Aspen Institute Project Play, 2019).

The fastest growing category of recreation activities are fitness-related, while individual sport and team sport participation has shown a modest decline in participation over the past 3 years. Outdoor activity participation growth remains relatively flat. While individual-dual and team sports and outdoor activity participation categories as a whole are either flat or declining, individual recreation activities in each of these areas are increasing. For example, activities such as pickleball, cross-country skiing, trail running, day hiking, BMX bicycling, recreational kayaking, rugby, and baseball have all increased participation by 5.0% or more over the past three years. The fastest growing category – fitness activities – is not surprisingly comprised of activities that are primarily indoor-related. Activities such as kettlebells, rowing machines, aquatic exercise, cross-training workouts, stair climbing, yoga, bodyweight exercises, free weights, group stationary cycling (spin), treadmill running/walking, high impact/intensity training (HITT), pilates, fitness swimming, dance, tai chi, and resistance weight lifting are all growth activities over the past three years. Other indoor activities that show participation growth in the last 3 years include indoor soccer, team swimming, basketball, gymnastics, pickleball, and martial arts. Likewise, four of the top six fastest growing youth sports are activities that are played indoors – cheerleading, wrestling, gymnastics, and volleyball (SFIA Topline Report, 2019). ***This shows that the demand for indoor recreation activities remains strong.***

Derry, in particular, is an active town. More than 8% of the population participated in the following activities in 2019: walking for exercise, swimming, jogging/running, hiking, overnight camping, weightlifting, bicycling, freshwater fishing, bowling, yoga, golf, aerobics, and basketball. Of these 12 activities, seven can be or are primarily offered indoors. ***Derry's Market Potential Index (MPI) – or the likelihood that adults in the household will exhibit certain consumer behavior or purchasing patterns – is higher than the national average for 30 of 35 recreation activities (80.0%).*** The indoor activities with a MPI over the national average include: aerobics, archery, backpacking, baseball, basketball, bicycling (mountain), bicycling (road), boating, bowling, canoeing/kayaking, salt water fishing, football, Frisbee, golf, hiking, horseback riding, ice skating, jogging/running, motorcycling, Pilates, ping pong, skiing (downhill), softball, swimming, target shooting, tennis, walking for exercise, weightlifting, yoga, and Zumba (Esri Sports and Leisure Market Potential Forecasts, 2019). ***Derry residents spent \$44.1 million on entertainment, recreation, and sports in 2019.*** Only housing, healthcare, and food were higher, and spending on recreation was the fifth highest (of 12) consumer spending categories (Esri Community Profile, 2019).

Summaries of the data reported above can be found in the figures and tables that follow.

Figure 1: U.S. Recreation Category Trends – 3-Year Average Annual Growth (2016-2018)

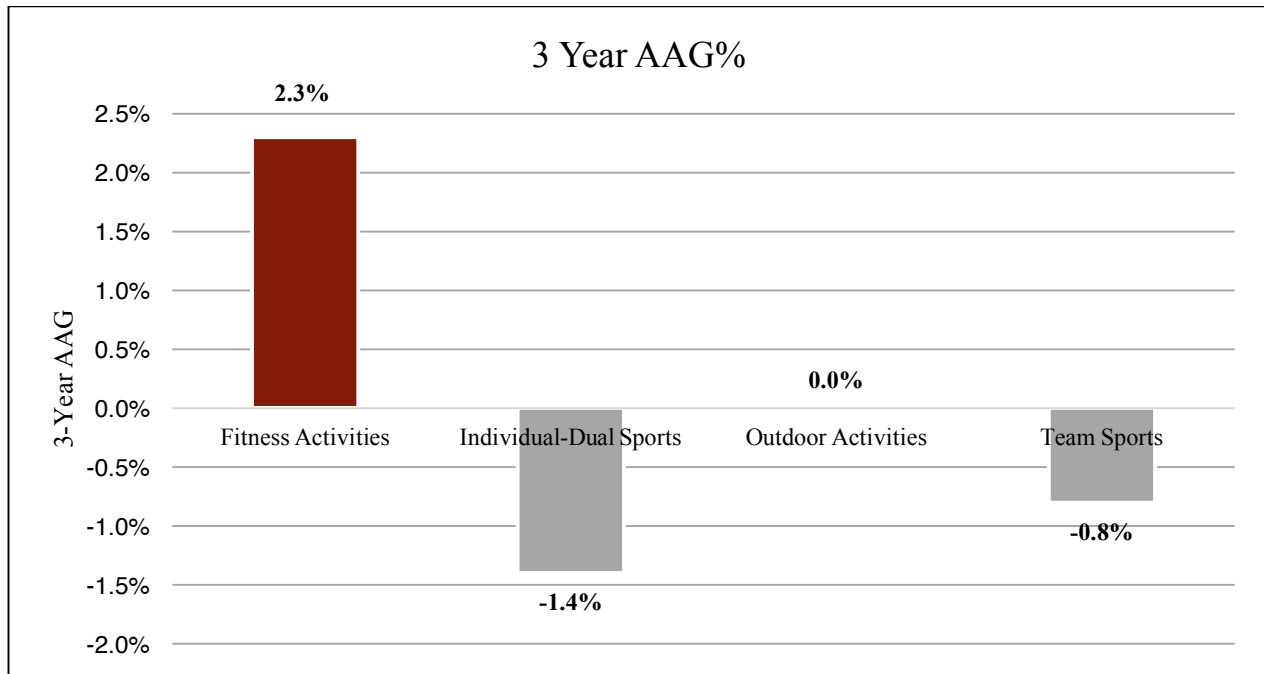


Table 9: Fastest Growing Fitness Activities – 3-Year Average Annual Growth 2016-2018

Recreation Activity	3-Year AAG (>1.0%)
Cardio Tennis	11.2%
Kettlebells	6.4%
Rowing Machine	6.2%
Aquatic Exercise	4.7%
Cross-Training Style Workouts	4.6%
Stair-Climbing Machine	4.5%
Yoga	4.4%
Bodyweight Exercise/Training	3.2%
Free Weights (Barbells)	3.1%
Stationary Cycling (Group)	2.8%
Treadmill	2.2%
High Impact/Intensity Training	1.9%
Pilates Training	1.9%
Swimming for Fitness	1.6%
Dance, Step, Choreographed Exercise	1.4%
Stationary Cycling (Recumbent or Upright)	1.0%
Tai Chi	1.0%
Weight Resistance Machines	1.0%

Sport and Fitness Association of America (2019) – Sport and Fitness Industry Association Sports, Fitness, and Leisure Activities Topline Participation Report – Ages 6+

Table 10: Core Participation in Youth Sports - 3-Year Average Annual Growth 2016-2018

Sport	3-Year AAG	# of Youth in 2018
Cheerleading*	18.20%	775,000
Wrestling	16.70%	218,000
Gymnastics	13.30%	1,000,000
Volleyball (court)	12.00%	846,000
Lacrosse	11.10%	296,000
Flag Football	10.00%	989,000
Softball (fast-pitch)	9.10%	359,000
Baseball	7.10%	4,100,000
Basketball	0.70%	4,200,000
Field Hockey*	0.00%	118,000
Golf*	0.00%	1,400,000
Ice Hockey	0.00%	324,000
Track and Field	0.00%	296,000
Tennis	-2.30%	1,300,000
Bicycling	-5.40%	4,700,000
Swimming (team)	-6.70%	417,000
Soccer (outdoor)	-12.90%	2,200,000
Tackle Football	-15.20%	839,000

* Cheerleading, Field Hockey, and Golf participation reflects 2-year AAG (2017-2018)

Figure 2: Youth Sports by the Numbers

Youth Sports by the Numbers:

- **1.87** = Average number of team sports played ages 6-12 in 2018
- **71.8%** = % of 6-12 year olds who played a team or individual sport in 2018
- **33.4% vs. 9.9%** = the % of kids in homes with incomes under \$25,000 who did not play sports in 2018 vs. kids in homes with incomes over \$100,000
- **10.5 years old** = Average age of last regular participation in youth sports
- **\$693** = Average annual family spending on sports for one child in 2018

Table and Figure: Aspen Institute Project Play (2019) – State of Play: Trends and Developments in Youth Sports

Figure 3: Derry Sports and Leisure Participation Market Estimates (2019 Participation)

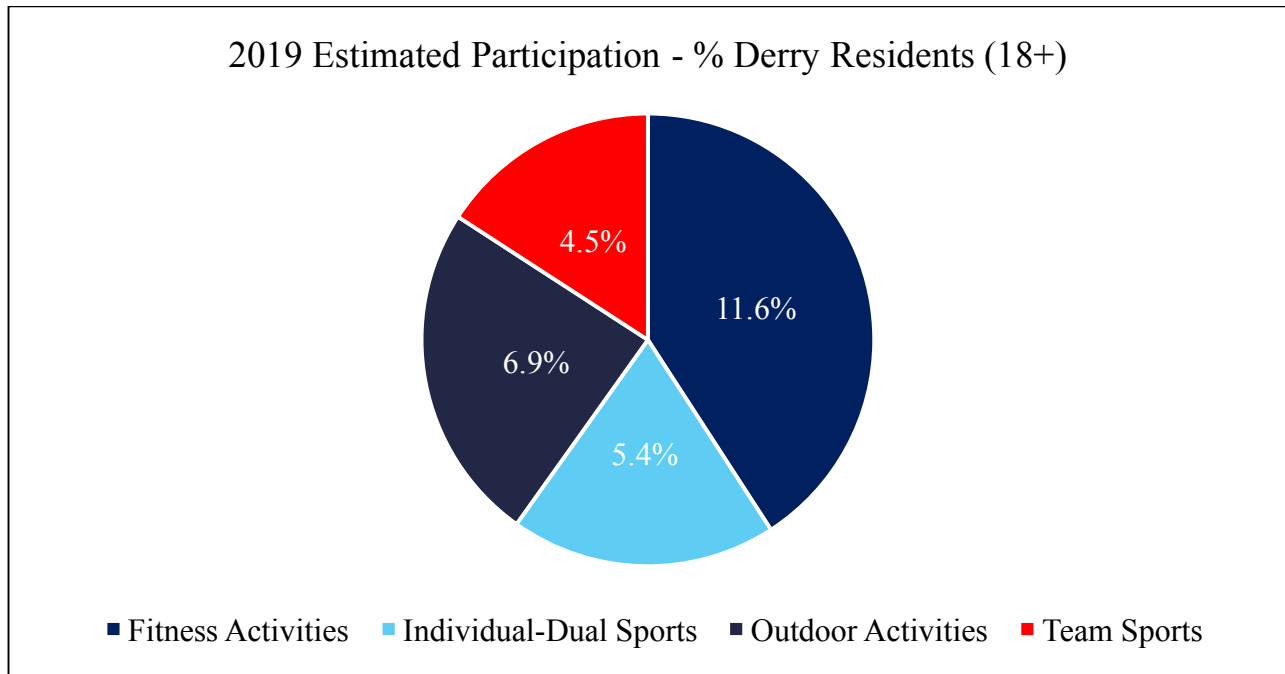


Table 11: 2019 Derry Sports and Leisure Participation – >8% of Population (18+)

Recreation Activity	Percent of Residents Participating
Walking for Exercise	26.9%
Swimming	18.7%
Jogging / Running	14.9%
Hiking	14.5%
Overnight Camping	13.2%
Weight Lifting	12.5%
Bicycling (Road)	11.2%
Fishing (Fresh Water)	11.0%
Bowling	10.2%
Yoga	9.8%
Golf	9.5%
Aerobics	8.4%
Basketball	8.0%

Both Chart and Table: ESRI Sports and Leisure Market Potential Forecasts (2019)

Table 12: 2019 Town of Derry Consumer Spending

Consumer Spending Category	2019 Total Consumer Spending in Derry	2019 Average Annual Household Spending in Derry
1. Shelter	\$254,349,204	\$19,277.64
2. Health Care	\$79,225,828	\$6,004.69
3. Food at Home	\$69,654,724	\$5,279.27
4. Food Away from Home	\$50,324,665	\$3,814.21
5. Entertainment/Recreation	\$44,142,923	\$3,345.68
6. Support Payments	\$33,353,522	\$2,527.93
7. Travel	\$31,146,807	\$2,360.68
8. Home Furnishings/Equipment	\$29,456,065	\$2,232.53
9. Apparel and Services	\$29,306,431	\$2,221.19
10. Education	\$21,793,526	\$1,651.78
11. Vehicle Maintenance/Repairs	\$15,564,309	\$1,179.65
12. Personal Care Products & Services	\$12,306,808	\$932.76

ESRI Community Profile – 2019 Consumer Spending (2019)



Focus Group Themes

The project team held 6 focus groups of residents and recreation stakeholders on Wednesday, October 16, 2020 and Wednesday, November 6, 2020. Stakeholder groups represented a range of interests including senior citizens, school staff, community organizations and groups, parks and recreation and town staff, and youth sports organizations and volunteers. In addition to the focus groups, the project team held an open community forum on Wednesday, November 13, 2020 at the Derry Municipal Center. 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 Derry. Detailed notes of public sessions were taken by the project team for each meeting. Guiding questions for focus groups consisted of the following:

- What do you like most about parks and recreation programs, facilities, and services in Derry?
- What are the main drawbacks about parks and recreation programs, facilities, and services in Derry?
- What new spaces do you wish you had for recreation activities in Derry, or what new program ideas do you have?
- Is new park and recreation activity space a priority for Derry, given other town priorities?

All of the focus group and community meeting events together were attended by approximately 50 residents and stakeholders. At the conclusion of these activities, the project team met to review focus group notes and discuss salient observations and trends that emerged across the interviews. Specific information related to various stakeholder groups is presented in the tables that follow.



Table 13: Focus Group Themes / Observations

What Stakeholders Liked Best About Derry Parks and Recreation	What Stakeholders Would Change/ Think Could be Better
1. Derry Parks and Recreation enjoys a strong, positive relationship with the Derry Cooperative School District, leading to shared-use of facilities and maintenance.	1. There is a lack of dedicated indoor space for recreation, events, and civic functions. Existing space at Veterans Hall and the Lodge at Alexander-Carr Park is inadequate to meet the recreation needs of the town.
2. Derry has strong, dedicated, and quality park and recreation staff members that have the respect of the public.	2. Indoor gym space in the schools is a challenge to schedule, particularly in the winter due to competing use priorities and gyms do not get a chance to rest during the year.
3. Derry has an active, engaged senior population interested in park and recreation programs, facilities, and amenities.	3. Derry lacks suitable indoor space for senior-specific programming, including senior center space.
4. Derry has well-maintained park and outdoor recreation facilities, with high standards for maintenance and upkeep of fields and park areas.	4. Athletic fields are similarly overused and overscheduled, particularly in the shoulder seasons (late fall/early spring) and do not get a chance to rest.
5. Derry has good connectivity and walk-bike infrastructure, and has the potential to increase connectivity in the town, state, and region.	5. There is a desire for additional lighted multiuse rectangle athletic field/s to accommodate sports in fall and spring/summer.
6. Derry has strong developmental and community-focused programs that focus on inclusive recreation programming particularly for residents with disabilities.	6. There is a desire for additional softball fields and one additional 90' baseball diamond to meet the needs of both sports.
7. Derry has a strong youth sports culture, with a variety of active youth leagues and organizations operating in partnership with the town.	7. There is considerable support for trails and connectivity, and strong support to complete the Derry Rail-Trail/Bike Path.
	8. There is interest in additional parks/outdoor recreation/conservation areas for passive and active recreation, including walking, unscheduled outdoor activities, nature appreciation, etc.
	9. There is a desire for improvements to Hood Park including dredging Hood Pond, increasing park trail systems, and adding/improving signage and amenities.

Focus group themes derived from 6 stakeholder focus groups with representatives from Derry Cooperative School District, Mario Gerish Community Center, Derry Rail Trail Alliance, Taylor Library, Derry Opera House, The Upper Room Family Resource Center, Derry Lacrosse, Derry Little League, Derry Girls Lacrosse, Derry Soccer Club, Derry Youth Football, Parks and Recreation Staff, Public Works Staff, Senior Citizen Recreation Participants

Community Open Forum – November 16, 2020

An open community forum was held to discuss issues related to parks and recreation in Derry at the Derry Municipal Center on Wednesday, November 16, 2020. The community forum was attended by approximately 15 residents, and was viewed by others via Cable Access Television. The forum provided a variety of opportunities for resident input. The following summarizes the key data collected from community forum participants.

Community forum participants were asked to choose their top park and recreation facility priorities from among a list provided. Facilities that were mentioned at least one time included:

- Multipurpose athletic fields
- Senior center
- Outdoor drop-in recreation space
- Outdoor multi-use fields
- Indoor gymnasium/athletic courts
- Outdoor walking/jogging track
- Indoor swimming pool
- Teen/youth center
- Playgrounds

Additional write-in options included: baseball fields, revitalizing Alexander-Carr Park, more outdoor winter recreation facilities such as skiing and sledding, handicap accessible swings, biking trails, and revitalizing Hood Park.

Community forum participants were asked to choose their top park and recreation program priorities from among a list provided. Program priorities that were mentioned at least one time included:

- Community special events
- Arts/cultural programming
- Senior programs
- Concerts/performances
- Outdoor equipment check-out rentals
- Non-sport teen programs
- Summer specialty camps
- Teen/afterschool programs
- Family programming

Additional write-in options included: additional senior programming, senior trips, youth programs, adult recreation activities/teams, Highland Games event, community fitness classes, and rail trail maintenance program.

Community forum participants were asked, “If you had \$100 to give to the Derry Parks and Recreation Department and you had to allocate it to THREE areas, where would you designate it to go? The following summarizes responses to this question in order of frequency:

- Indoor community spaces (meeting space, function rooms, multiuse activity areas)
- Outdoor rectangle/multiuse sports fields
- Conservation/passive outdoor recreation areas (forests, conservation land, loop trails, walking paths, natural areas, etc.)
- Active park/outdoor recreation areas (playgrounds, splash pads, green space, basketball courts, tennis courts, etc.)
- Multiuse linear trails and connectivity
- Recreation programs and activities
- Indoor recreation spaces (gyms, athletic courts, fitness areas)
- Outdoor sport-specific ballfields/baseball/softball diamonds

Community forum participants were asked about what they envisioned for the redevelopment of Hood Park. Participants seemed to be most in favor of maintaining the site as a park, and focused on further developing the natural elements of the space (trails, wildlife, pond, etc.). Comments from forum participants related to Hood Park are listed below:

- Preserve the pond. It is lovely and historic. It is getting filled in with sand. It will be a field if something isn't done soon.
- Hood used to be a place where kids could go swimming/ swim classes. You can't go swimming any more for some reason. The kids who live downtown should have a chance to go swimming. If it takes dredging that is something we can do. Or make it a nature preserve. I'm sure a lot of animals would utilize that.
- There's blue heron, ducks, geese
- Kayak program would be great to have available. (from local private company)
- More benches there would be great. [The park is] an access point for rail trail, there's parking so great starting point for trail.
- Spruce it up for ice skating rink but preserve the nature
- More trails around the pond for a continuous loop around pond
- You can ride your bike to there. Should be preserved as natural destination for biking
- Not feasibly a swimming area now, so maintain it as a better nature area

Finally, community forum participants were asked to “imagine it's the year 2030 and the Derry News is writing a story about Derry Parks and Recreation. If you could write the story's headline, what would it be? Responses included the following:

- Derry Parks and Recreation Supports New Sports Venue with Soccer Fields, etc.
- Derry Youth Leagues Partner with Town to Host Regional Tournaments at New Multisports Facility
- Derry Parks and Recreation Did a Good Job Bringing Back Hood Pond
- New Derry Senior Center is Beautiful!
- Derry Voted Best Place to Live and Play in New Hampshire

Household Survey Data - Overview

A link to an online recreation needs assessment survey was made available to Derry residents through a variety of methods, including the town website, e-mails to recreation participants via the recreation user database, invitations to participate in local media, and posts on the department's social media accounts. Residents were invited to complete the survey online, or if they preferred, paper copies were available to complete and return at the Parks and Recreation office at Veterans Hall on West Broadway Street. The survey was open and available for data collection for approximately six (6) weeks in October and November, 2020. ***A total of 479 surveys were completed with enough data for analysis.*** Thirty four (34) of the 479 surveys received were paper, and 445 were completed online. The total number of surveys received was comparable to recent town master planning efforts. The number of responses varied per question, as participants were given the option to answer or not answer all questions on the survey.

Compared to the town of Derry as a whole, survey respondents were more likely to be female (69.5% vs. 50.5%), had a higher median age (47.0 years vs. 39.5 years), were more likely to be over the age of 65 (16.4% vs. 13.1%), were more likely to have children under 18 living in the home (59.2% vs. 37.9%), and were more likely to own their own home (87.8% vs. 60.2%) (US Census Bureau, 2010; Esri Community Profile, 2019). A summary of key themes from the survey data are presented below. Data for all responses received are indicated in the tables that follow.

- ***94.5% of survey participants used at least one park or recreation facility “frequently” or “regularly”***, while 5.5% used park or recreation facilities occasionally or not at all; the most frequently used facilities were Outdoor Built Facilities (59.9%) followed by Natural Active Outdoor Recreation Areas (55.2%).
- ***73.2% of survey participants participated in a parks and recreation program, activity or special event*** in the last 12 months.
- ***Participants had positive perceptions of Derry Parks and Recreation programs and staff.*** 53.7% of respondents reported that programs, special events or activities were “Excellent” or “Above Average.” 91.2% of survey respondents were satisfied with the quality of recreation staff.
- Participants were less positive in their assessment of the quality of Derry parks and facilities. ***Just 37.8% of survey respondents who reported using Derry parks and recreation facilities rated those facilities as “Excellent” or “Above Average.”***
- ***The facilities that had the lowest percentage of residents rating them as “Excellent or Above Average” were all indoor facilities:*** Indoor Recreation Facilities (Veterans Hall, Lodge at Alexander-Carr Park); Indoor Community Facilities (Marion Gerrish Community Center); and Indoor School Facilities (gyms, athletic courts).
- ***The highest rated barriers to participation in Derry Parks and Recreation programs and facilities were related to facilities, time, and marketing and promotion.*** The top 5 barriers to participation were: “Lack of time because of work and other obligations”; “Lack of time because of other leisure activities”; “Not aware of available programs”; “Better recreation opportunities available elsewhere”; and “Not aware of available recreation facilities.”

-
- The best ways for residents to find out about recreation program and facility offerings include: **social media (68.1%); e-mail (57.6%); department website (45.9%); school announcements (38.2%); and the park and recreation office (32.7%)**. Printed flyers/brochures were still preferred by 30.9% of survey respondents.
 - Facility spaces that were rated as “High” (needed in the next 0-3 years) or “Medium” (needed in the next 4-6 years) priorities by more than 60% of survey respondents included: Outdoor Multiuse Trails; Playgrounds; Outdoor Walking/Jogging Track; Teen/Youth Center Space; Conservation Areas; Outdoor Space for Passive or Active Drop-In Recreation; Indoor Multipurpose Gyms; Indoor Swimming Pool; Indoor Walking/Jogging Track; Multipurpose Athletic Fields; Indoor Gym or Athletic Courts; Indoor Senior Center Space.
 - The program areas that were rated as “High” or “Medium” priorities by more than 60% of survey respondents included: Community Special Events; Musical Concerts and Performances; Youth Recreational Sports; After-School Programs for Middle School/Teens; Summer Day Camps; Summer Specialty Day Camps; Non-Sport Teen/High School Programs; Aquatics/Swim Programs; Open Gyms/Drop-In Recreation Programs; Arts and Cultural Programs; Recreation Programs for People with Disabilities; Sports Lessons or Instruction; Group Fitness Programs; Family Programming; Senior/Older Adult Recreation Activities, Trips, and Events; Senior Meals. Many of these program areas are facility-based.
 - The Top 3 largest importance-satisfaction gaps related to park and recreation facilities, programs, and amenities were: Indoor Recreation Spaces (-35.0%); Recreation Programs and Services (-33.1%); Active Park/Outdoor Recreation Areas (-28.0%). In addition, Outdoor Sports Fields, Conservation/Passive Outdoor Recreation Areas, and Trails and Connectivity also showed statistically significant importance-satisfaction significant gaps.
 - **Respondents spoke to the need for dedicated, controllable, indoor recreation space, particularly for seniors and youth.** 73.2% of survey respondents “Strongly Agreed” or “Agreed” that a town-supported multigenerational indoor community/recreation center is needed in Derry.
 - **Respondents were open to a variety of funding methods to build and maintain parks and recreation indoor and outdoor facilities,** including fees-for-use (66.9%) and property taxes (62.7%). Respondents were supportive of using tax dollars to offset the cost of recreation programs and activities (73.7%). They were less likely to agree to fees-for-use for outdoor recreation facilities (49.8%) but were supportive of using property taxes to build and maintain outdoor recreation facilities (60.8%). Strong majorities of survey respondents thought it was a good idea for the town to partner with other organizations for parks and recreation delivery (79.3%)
 - **Strong majorities of survey participants reported that they personally benefitted from town-supported parks and recreation programs and facilities (62.9%), 67.6% reported that their household benefits, and 78.9% felt that the town as a whole benefits.** A ranking of potential benefits included: Increased Health and Fitness; Increased Sense of Community; Improved Connectivity; More Positive Activities for Youth and Teens; Enhanced Environmental Quality; Improved Social Equity and Access for Everyone; Increased Access to Healthy Aging/Senior Activities; Increased Real Estate/Property Values; Increased Business/Economic Activity in the Town; and Reduction in Neighborhood Crime.

-
- Survey participants felt strongly that revitalizing Hood Park would contribute to economic development in Derry (69.5%), while fewer than half felt that the town should investigate private redevelopment opportunities at Hood Park (45.8%).
 - The most desired improvements to Hood Park included: Enhancing/expanding nature trails (71.8%); dredging Hood Pond (61.5%); upgrading outdoor basketball courts (59.8%); adding additional signage and wayfinding (53.5%).



Household Survey Data – Data Tables

Table 14: Survey Demographics

	Percent, Median or Mean
Gender	
Male	30.5%
Female	69.5%
Other	0.0%
Age	Mdn = 47 years
Resident or Taxpayer	95.6%
Years Living in Derry	Mdn = 20.1 years
Housing Arrangement	
Own Home	87.8%
Rent Home	10.6%
Other Housing	1.6%
Children 18 and Under Living at Home	
Children Ages 5 and Under	17.1%
Children Ages 6-12	38.9%
Children Ages 13-18	26.3%
At Least 1 Child 18 or Under	59.2%
Employment Status of Adults in Home	
Employed Full-Time	78.8%
Employed Part-Time	12.5%
Retired	22.2%
Not Retired, Not Employed	3.1%
Volunteer with Parks and Recreation	13.8%
Average Hours Volunteering for Parks and Recreation last year	20 hours

Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding
Participants were allowed to select multiple race categories

Table 15: Use of Derry Parks and Recreation Facilities

Facility	10 or more x per year	1 - 9 x per year	% use	Unaware
Natural Active Outdoor Recreation Areas (trails, parks, beach)	55.2%	33.2%	88.4%	2.1%
Outdoor Built Facilities (ballfields, playgrounds, splash pad, dog park, picnic areas, tennis/pickleball courts)	59.9%	26.5%	86.4%	2.1%
Passive Conservation / Recreation Areas	26.7%	41.0%	67.7%	14.1%
Indoor Community Facilities (Marion Gerrish Community Center)	24.9%	37.3%	62.2%	5.8%
Indoor School Facilities (gyms, athletic courts)	33.6%	26.6%	60.2%	5.1%
Indoor Recreation Facilities (Veterans Hall, Lodge at Alexander Carr Park)	14.3%	33.3%	47.6%	9.0%
% of Survey Respondents Who Used at Least One (1) Derry Parks and Recreation Facility	94.5%	2.9%	97.4%	0.4%

Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding



Table 16: User's Perception of the Quality of Recreation Facilities

Facility	Above Average or Excellent	Average	Below Average or Poor
Passive Conservation / Recreation Areas	52.2%	42.5%	5.3%
Natural Active Outdoor Recreation Areas (trails, parks, beach)	50.0%	43.6%	6.4%
Outdoor Built Facilities (ballfields, playgrounds, splash pad, dog park, picnic areas, tennis/pickleball courts)	41.1%	37.3%	21.5%
Indoor School Facilities (gyms, athletic courts)	33.6%	56.6%	9.7%
Indoor Community Facilities (Marion Gerrish Community Center)	25.9%	55.7%	18.5%
Indoor Recreation Facilities (Veterans Hall, Lodge at Alexander Carr Park)	24.2%	49.7%	26.2%
Averages:	37.8%	47.6%	14.6%

Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding



Table 17: Participation and Satisfaction - Recreation Programs

Program Participation	Yes	No
Have you or members of your household participated in programs, special events, or activities offered by the Derry Parks and Recreation Department over the past 12 months?	73.2%	26.8%

Program Participation	Excellent- Above Average	Average	Below Average- Poor
How would you rate the quality of programs, special events or activities that you or members of your household have participated in over the past 12 months?	53.7%	36.7%	9.6%

Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding



73.2% of survey respondents participated in recreation programs, special events or activities in the last 12 months



53.7% of program participants reported that programs, special events, or activities were “Excellent” or “Above Average”

Table 18: Participation Constraints

Participation Constraint	Strongly Agree-Agree	Neutral	Strongly Disagree-Disagree
Lack of time because of work or other obligations	54.4%	23.0%	22.5%
Lack of time because of other leisure activities	42.8%	39.5%	17.7%
Not aware of available recreation programs	31.0%	25.4%	43.6%
Better recreation opportunities available elsewhere	30.8%	36.9%	32.3%
Not aware of available facilities	29.6%	28.4%	42.0%
Lack of parking availability/convenience	23.1%	27.2%	49.7%
Facilities needed are not available	16.9%	39.6%	43.4%
Facilities are not adequate to meet my/family's needs	14.5%	36.6%	48.8%
No one to participate with	14.3%	34.3%	51.4%
Not interested in available recreation opportunities	13.1%	35.0%	51.9%
Difficult/confusing program registration process	13.0%	36.6%	50.4%
Programs get cancelled because of low enrollment	12.9%	55.3%	31.9%
Facilities too crowded	12.3%	44.6%	43.0%
Lack of childcare	10.5%	42.2%	47.3%
Facilities are not safe	9.2%	20.5%	70.3%
Not satisfied with the quality of recreation staff	8.8%	36.7%	54.6%
Disability/accessibility issues	7.0%	45.1%	47.9%
Inappropriate social environment	7.0%	29.5%	63.5%
Lack of money/too expensive	7.0%	35.4%	57.7%
Lack of transportation/difficult to get to	4.8%	20.7%	74.4%
Averages:	18.2%	34.6%	47.2%

Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding

Table 19: Promotion Ideas

Best Ways to Find Out About Recreation Program and Facility Offerings	Yes	No
Social media (Facebook, etc.)	68.1%	31.9%
E-mail	57.6%	42.4%
Department website	45.9%	54.1%
School announcements	38.2%	61.8%
Park and recreation office	32.7%	67.3%
Word of mouth	29.6%	69.1%
Flyer / Brochure	30.9%	69.8%
Newspaper	24.2%	75.8%
Cable access TV	6.5%	93.5%
Other	2.2%	98.1%



Table 20: Facility Prioritization

Facility	Hi Priority	Medium Priority	Lo Priority	Not a Priority
Outdoor multi-use trails	42.8%	30.0%	19.4%	7.8%
Playgrounds	38.4%	34.0%	14.1%	13.5%
Outdoor walking/jogging track	36.3%	34.6%	21.3%	7.8%
Teen/Youth center	39.7%	30.6%	16.7%	13.1%
Conservation areas	41.7%	28.0%	18.8%	11.5%
Green space for open recreation	29.4%	39.6%	21.6%	9.4%
Indoor multipurpose gym/s	33.1%	35.6%	22.8%	8.6%
Indoor swimming pool	35.3%	28.1%	20.4%	16.3%
Indoor walking/jogging track	31.7%	31.7%	23.5%	13.2%
Multipurpose athletic fields	41.6%	21.6%	19.1%	17.7%
Indoor gym or athletic courts	30.8%	31.3%	25.5%	12.4%
Senior Center	33.4%	27.1%	25.2%	14.2%
Outdoor bandstand/performing arts area	26.9%	33.0%	23.6%	16.5%
Baseball/softball fields	29.4%	27.5%	23.1%	20.0%
Indoor function/events room	23.1%	32.2%	30.0%	14.7%
Indoor ice/ice arena	23.6%	26.4%	28.6%	21.4%
Indoor meeting space	20.5%	28.8%	36.3%	14.4%
Indoor multipurpose turf	22.8%	25.8%	28.1%	23.3%
Outdoor swimming pool	22.7%	25.4%	27.9%	24.0%
Indoor weights/cardio center	19.6%	28.4%	30.3%	21.8%
Indoor performing arts stage	15.8%	29.9%	33.5%	20.8%
Public boat launch	19.4%	23.6%	28.1%	28.9%
Outdoor games	8.9%	29.4%	35.8%	25.8%
Community dog park	15.4%	22.9%	26.3%	35.5%
Indoor climbing wall	12.2%	25.0%	34.2%	28.6%
Outdoor volleyball	4.5%	24.0%	37.9%	33.7%
Outdoor tennis/pickleball	7.8%	20.6%	35.9%	35.7%
Indoor tennis/pickleball	5.3%	13.1%	33.5%	48.0%

Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding

Table 21: Program Prioritization

Program	Hi Priority	Medium Priority	Lo Priority	Not a Priority
Community special events	39.3%	41.9%	13.8%	50.0%
Musical concerts / performances	38.7%	34.3%	19.6%	7.3%
Youth recreational sports	48.1%	23.3%	14.6%	14.0%
Middle school / teen afterschool	34.1%	36.8%	13.8%	15.3%
Summer recreation camps	35.5%	35.2%	12.4%	16.9%
Summer specialty day camps	33.9%	36.6%	14.7%	14.7%
Non-sport teen / high school programs	32.5%	37.6%	15.1%	14.8%
Aquatics / swim programs	40.4%	26.4%	19.3%	13.9%
Open gyms / drop-in recreation	34.9%	31.1%	22.5%	11.5%
Arts and cultural programs	29.4%	35.6%	24.4%	10.6%
Programs for persons / disabilities	24.5%	39.2%	19.8%	16.5%
Sports lessons / instruction	30.8%	32.0%	24.0%	13.3%
Group fitness programs	28.0%	34.1%	23.9%	14.0%
Family programming	26.3%	35.8%	23.4%	14.5%
Senior / older adult activities	32.0%	29.3%	21.4%	17.3%
Senior meals	32.4%	28.0%	24.1%	15.5%
Nature / environmental education	23.7%	35.8%	23.4%	17.2%
Elementary afterschool	27.1%	31.3%	19.5%	22.1%
Outdoor equipment rental	22.0%	34.0%	26.6%	17.2%
Non-sport adult activities	22.9%	32.1%	29.7%	15.3%
Adult recreational sports	18.6%	32.0%	28.1%	21.3%
Pre-kindergarten activities	14.7%	26.7%	25.2%	33.4%

Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding

Table 22: Importance and Satisfaction - Recreation Programs and Facilities

Park and Recreation Amenity	Importance	Satisfaction	Gap
Indoor Recreation Spaces	61.2%	26.2%	-35.0%
Recreation Programs and Services	69.6%	36.5%	-33.1%
Active Park/Outdoor Recreation Areas	78.8%	50.8%	-28.0%
Outdoor Sports Fields	59.1%	34.5%	-24.6%
Conservation/Passive Outdoor Rec Areas	60.2%	35.9%	-24.3%
Trails and Connectivity	73.9%	49.8%	24.1%
Indoor Community Spaces	45.0%	36.5%	-8.5%

Neutral responses were omitted from analysis.
 All IMP-SAT differences were statistically significant ($p < .0001$) except Indoor Community Spaces



Table 23: Indoor Multigenerational Community Center

Multigenerational Community Center	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
To what extent do you agree or disagree that a town-supported multigenerational community/recreation center is needed in Derry	49.5%	23.7%	11.8%	8.7%	6.2%

Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding

Table 24: Community Center Priorities

Multigenerational Community Center	% of Respondents
A multigenerational community center open to all residents of Derry	30.1%
A multigenerational community center with separate, dedicated spaces in the building for specific age groups (seniors, youth, etc.)	41.0%
A separate senior center building with senior-only activity spaces and programs	7.6%
A separate teen center building offering youth/teen only activity spaces and programs	8.2%
None - there is no need for an indoor community center in Derry	13.1%



Table 25: Funding Mix - Willingness to Pay

Funding Source	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Pay a Fee for Indoor Recreation Facilities	25.5%	41.4%	16.9%	8.6%	7.7%
Pay a Fee for Outdoor Recreation Facilities	18.0%	31.8%	23.5%	16.8%	9.8%
Pay a Fee for Recreation Programs	25.2%	48.5%	16.9%	4.9%	4.6%
Property Taxes to Build and Maintain Indoor Recreation Facilities	29.4%	33.3%	12.2%	9.5%	15.6%
Property Taxes to Build and Maintain Outdoor Recreation Facilities	25.3%	36.6%	15.8%	7.5%	14.7%
Property Taxes to Offset Programs and Activities	24.4%	36.4%	16.4%	7.7%	15.1%
Good Idea for the Town to Partner with Other Organizations	43.8%	35.6%	15.2%	1.2%	4.3%

Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding



Table 26: Perceived Benefits from a Parks and Recreation Programs and Facilities

Level of Benefit	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Personal Benefits	32.8%	30.1%	16.3%	8.6%	12.3%
Household Benefits	34.6%	33.0%	16.5%	7.2%	8.7%
Community Benefits	46.4%	32.5%	8.7%	5.0%	7.4%

Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding

Table 27: Perceived Benefits from Conservation Areas

Level of Benefit	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Personal Benefits	25.1%	23.2%	31.0%	11.5%	9.3%
Household Benefits	24.0%	26.2%	29.3%	12.1%	8.4%
Community Benefits	32.5%	32.8%	20.4%	5.6%	8.7%

Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding



Table 28: Perceived Benefit Types (Ranked in Order of Response):

Rank	Benefit Type	% of Survey Respondents
1	Increased Health and Fitness	80.9%
2	Increased Sense of Community	74.1%
3	Improved Connectivity	68.4%
4	More Positive Youth Development Opportunities	62.8%
5	Enhanced Environmental Quality	48.4%
6	Improved Social Equity and Access for Everyone	48.1%
7	Increased Access to Healthy Aging / Senior Activities	45.6%
8	Increased Real-Estate / Property Values	40.6%
9	Increased Business / Economic Activity in Town	38.8%
10	Reduction in Neighborhood Crime	27.8%



Table 29: Revitalization of Hood Park

Hood Park	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
To what extent do you agree or disagree: Revitalizing Hood Park will contribute to economic development in Derry	39.4%	30.1%	19.9%	7.5%	3.1%
To what extent do you agree or disagree: The Town should investigate private redevelopment opportunities at Hood Park and reinvest recreation expenditures elsewhere	17.1%	28.7%	29.9%	11.5%	12.8%

Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding

Table 30: Hood Park Revitalization Priorities

Program	Hi Priority	Medium Priority	Lo Priority	Not a Priority
Enhancing/expanding nature trails	37.3%	34.5%	19.7%	8.5%
Dredging Hood Pond	35.3%	26.2%	19.6%	18.9%
Upgrading basketball courts	22.8%	37.0%	23.4%	16.8%
Adding additional signage /wayfinding	22.8%	30.7%	6.6%	19.9%
Upgrading street hockey area	15.8%	33.2%	30.1%	20.9%
Upgrading tennis courts	12.7%	32.9%	32.6%	21.8%

Totals may not add to 100 due to rounding



Summary Findings and Recommendations

Based on the activities associated with this project, including background research, benchmarking, trends analysis, stakeholder focus groups, community meetings, and the resident household survey, the following findings and recommendations are offered for consideration by the Derry Parks and Recreation Department:

1. Revitalize Hood Park focusing the park on nature-based recreation with active recreation elements. Consider expanding programming and events to draw more participants to the park.

- ✓ There was considerable support in this study for revitalizing Hood Park and keeping it as a place for outdoor recreation in Derry. Hood Park is proximate to downtown, making it an ideal place for community programs and events.
- ✓ Specific ideas for revitalizing Hood Park that emerged in this study included support for increasing linear feet of walking trails allowing users to walk around the perimeter of the park. In addition, there was support for exploring options to dredge Hood Pond and explore options for remediating runoff and erosion that is leading to a reduction in water levels and impacting water quality. Dredging Hood Pond would allow for additional recreational activities such as kayaking, fishing, or nature viewing. There was also support for upgrading the basketball courts and street hockey areas, including upgrading court lighting and repainting lines. Adding additional trails and access points to the pond will require additional signage and wayfinding. Storage buildings on site need to be evaluated for repair and maintenance. Consider adding functional fitness stations in the park as an additional draw, and to capitalize on increasing fitness participation trends.
- ✓ The survey responses in this study showed some support for having the town investigate private redevelopment opportunities at Hood Park and reinvest park and recreation expenditures elsewhere. However, support for this option was less than 50% of survey respondents, and the most intense support (in focus groups, community forum, and survey comments) was focused on investing to revitalize the park and keeping it as a town-owned property.

2. Revitalize Alexander Carr-Park, including upgrading and renovating the Lodge for community activities and functions, renovate the existing playgrounds, and renovate or repurpose the existing skate park.

- ✓ The existing lodge building needs significant renovations as noted earlier in this report. There are two potential options for the building – 1) renovate the current building, address exterior maintenance needs (painting, decking), and upgrade the interior finishes; 2) demolish the building and create a new lodge that could provide the town with needed indoor recreation activity space. The ideal option likely depends on whether the town sees a need for a larger multigenerational indoor community center (see Recommendation #5).
- ✓ Option 1: If the town sees the need for a multigenerational indoor community center in the future, then it makes sense to renovate the existing lodge building to provide needed indoor recreation activity space in the short term, including for senior and youth activities, as well as for community meetings, business functions, and private rentals.

-
- ✓ Option 2: If the town chooses not to pursue a larger multigenerational indoor recreation facility, then the lodge could be demolished and reconstructed to accommodate needs for indoor recreation activities, fitness/wellness classes, senior programming, youth development programming, and private rentals. Renovated space should be able to accommodate all of these functions, as well as have upgraded bathrooms, catering-level kitchen, and improved technology support. While this option does not give the town additional needed gymnasium space, it would provide much needed indoor recreation programming space.
 - ✓ Renovate and upgrade existing playgrounds and include accessible elements for youth with disabilities. Playgrounds and accessible play elements were both raised as priorities via the public input process in this study.
 - ✓ Renovate or repurpose the existing skatepark area. The existing lighting system is operational, so this is an ideal space to upgrade for future use. Participation trends point to growing participation in health and fitness activities as mentioned earlier in this report. The existing skatepark area would be a good candidate for an outdoor functional fitness structure. Consider adding outdoor fitness stations and other functional fitness elements in the park.
 - ✓ Consider using the park as a staging area for youth summer camp activities, potentially with a nature/outdoor or health/fitness theme. Summer specialty day camps for youth were mentioned as a program priority by participants in this study. A renovated lodge could be used for rainy day or indoor activities.

3. Increase lighted multipurpose rectangular field space, and add one additional 90' baseball diamond.

- ✓ There is a need for additional multipurpose rectangular field space for youth and adult recreational sports. The town currently manages athletic fields at Don Ball Park, Rider Fields, and Veterans and O'Hara fields, and manages, maintains, and schedules Buckley, Derry Village, Barka, East Derry, and West Running Brook fields which are owned by the Derry Cooperative School District. Youth sport organizations have used field space at Pinkerton Academy as well when it is available. Multiple challenges exist with existing athletic field space, including overuse particularly in the shoulder seasons (late Fall – early Spring), overlapping sport seasons (i.e. fall soccer and fall baseball), inadequate parking (Rider Fields), and concerns with drainage. In addition, Derry's fields are dispersed throughout the town, creating inefficiencies in scheduling, and making it difficult or impossible to host tournaments.
- ✓ The town should investigate the potential of adding at least two (2) multipurpose fields and one (1) 90' baseball diamond to meet current and future demand. Ideally, these fields would be located in close proximity to one another and to existing fields to create a central athletics complex. The town is already working to add two (2) multipurpose athletic fields at West Running Brook Middle School, and this will help alleviate some of the field pressure when it comes online. In addition, the town currently only has access to one (1) 90' baseball diamond. Adding one (1) additional 90' baseball diamond at or near West Running Brook would meet the needs of both West Running Brook (which currently plays its home games at Buckley Field/Hood Middle School) and the town. Adding additional multipurpose athletic field space proximate to Don Ball Park would help to centralize athletic fields and create a complex-like area.

-
- ✓ Having enough lighted multipurpose athletic fields was a consistent theme in focus groups. Lights extend the amount of time that fields can be used, particularly in the late fall and early spring seasons, and increase scheduling capacity. The town should consider adding lights at Buckley Field, West Running Brook, and/or Barka Field to help increase capacity for multipurpose field space.
 - ✓ In addition to meeting the needs of Derry's youth sport organizations and residents, the town is well-positioned geographically to host state and regional tournaments. The town's youth sport organizations are extensive and well-organized. Tournaments that attract out-of-town teams and visitors can be economic drivers for the local community, and can be revenue producers for the town (e.g. increased business activity, tax revenue, tournament entry fees) if the infrastructure is in place to host.

4. Finish the Derry Rail Trail/Bike Path, capitalize on Derry's shared notion of connectivity as a community value, and position Derry as a hub for trail networks in the state and region.

- ✓ Derry has a strong shared value regarding trails and connectivity. The Derry Rail Trail/Bike Path connects to the Windham Rail Trail and the Rockingham Recreational Rail Trail, and trail connectivity is specifically highlighted in the 2019 Derry Master Plan as a strategic priority. There was considerable support in this study to finish the Derry Rail Trail/Bike Path to connect it to the Londonderry Rail Trail.
- ✓ Derry should continue to highlight connectivity as a community feature, and should consider further studies that examine the benefits of the Rail Trail for the local community, including its impact on business development, transportation/traffic, real estate values, and overall quality of life. Derry should consider positioning itself as a "trail community" and highlight connectivity in its marketing and promotion efforts.

5. Investigate the feasibility for adding a 20-30,000 square foot community indoor recreation center with separate dedicated space for seniors and teens/youth.

- ✓ Derry lacks suitable, dedicated indoor space to meet the needs of public recreation participants in the town. The town is behind minimum benchmark square footage for controllable indoor recreation space for its population. For example, it controls only 8,465 square feet of indoor activity space spread across two buildings, and partners with the Derry Cooperative School District for use of school gymnasiums in the evenings after school activities have concluded. The town has access to only one full-sized regulation basketball court. The town's lack of dedicated indoor recreation space creates space demand issues particularly for teen, adult, and senior recreation activities. Assuming that the town would maintain its existing indoor recreation square footage and use at least some of the existing school gymnasium space, Derry should add approximately 22,000 square feet of indoor recreation space to meet a mid-level service standard.
- ✓ Parking, size, layout, accessibility, and availability are significant issues with current indoor recreation facilities. Parking limits the use of Veterans Hall, as there are few spaces available for participants to use that are proximate to the building. There are several considerable accessibility concerns, including the lack of accessible parking, no automatic door entry buttons for persons with disabilities, and no covered ramps which create accessibility challenges in snow, ice, or other inclement weather conditions. In addition, the building's size and layout prohibits the scope of activities that can take place there. Likewise, the existing

layout and amenities available at the Lodge at Alexander-Carr Park also create significant barriers to use. Public input supported the need for additional indoor recreation facilities to accommodate a range of active and passive indoor recreation activities.

- ✓ Large majorities of survey respondents believed that adding a multigenerational community center would provide personal, household, and community benefits such as increased health and fitness, better sense of community, more youth development opportunities, and more senior opportunities. Derry is an active town, with a strong interest in recreation activities. Derry's sport and recreation market potential suggests that there is a strong potential user base for additional recreation spaces, and market trends point to indoor recreation activities as areas of growth.
- ✓ There is a lack of dedicated space in Derry for facility-based, continuous, year-round senior programming. Participants in this study spoke to the need for dedicated senior space that could be used for senior activities, social programming, and meals. A good model to accommodate senior space is the Meredith (NH) Community Center, which has multiuse space with a kitchen that is available for seniors during the day, and is connected to a larger multigenerational indoor community recreation facility. Seniors are able to use all of the activity spaces within the building, but have use of their own activity space during the daytime hours. The space is flexible enough to be used for other activities during other times of the day.
- ✓ In addition, dedicated space for teens and older youth was also noted as a need in this study. The popularity of the positive youth development movement in the 1990s saw the construction of separate buildings for teens and youth (i.e. "teen centers") to accommodate the educational, social, emotional, and physical needs of this age group. Separate teen centers have largely fallen out of favor, as they present a challenge to program, staff and finance (Adler, 2018). Teens and youth need their own space to hang out and interact with their peers. However, research shows that different generations benefit when they spend time together (Abrahms, 2017). We recommend that a new community center include separate, connected, and dedicated activity space for teens and youth. In particular, programming should be available for non-sport related activities such as games, social space, art and music.
- ✓ This study pointed towards a number of indoor activity space needs. Based on the input and information gathered during this study, a multigenerational community center in Derry should ideally include one full-sized (high school regulation) gymnasium (approximately 84' x 50') with cross-courts (approximately 74' x 42') separated by a drop-curtain for basketball, volleyball, pickleball, etc.; multipurpose studio/gym space for dance, group fitness, yoga, martial arts, etc.; indoor walking/jogging track; fitness space with exercise equipment; kitchen with function/event space; dedicated space for senior activities; dedicated space for teen/youth activities; locker/changing facilities; staff offices; conference room/meeting space; and adequate and ample storage for recreation equipment. Public input supported the need for an indoor pool. This could be added if building plans and budget allow, or could be planned as a second phase to the project. Indoor pools add significantly to the cost of indoor community centers, but also provide a means for additional revenue generation for the facility.
- ✓ Three options exist for adding such a building: 1) new construction; 2) repurposing an existing building with additional new construction; 3) repurposing an existing building within the existing footprint. There are several models that exist throughout the state for each of these options. The Meredith (NH) Community Center is an 18,000 square foot facility opened

in 2006, and is a good example of new construction. The Concord (NH) Community Center is a 30,000 square foot facility that repurposed the former Dame School and added new construction to build a new gymnasium, auditorium, and function space. Finally, the Rochester (NH) Community Center is a 40,000 square foot facility that was repurposed from the former Rochester Middle School. The new facility created a shared community space for both the Rochester Parks and Recreation Department and a variety of community services. Dover's (NH) McConnell Center followed a similar model. Repurposing an existing building could be a good solution for Derry, particularly as plans for school consolidation and closure are being discussed.

- ✓ If the town decides to move forward, it should issue a Request for Proposals for a community center feasibility study, to include site and building plans, business plans, and cost estimates for a facility similar in size and scope to meet the needs identified in this study. The town should also investigate the possibilities of repurposing and renovating existing school properties, if such properties should come available to the town in the near-term.
- ✓ The Parks and Recreation Department should look at its marketing and promotion strategies to ensure that it is providing adequate information about its available recreation programs and facilities. Study participants noted that a "lack of awareness" was a one of the main barriers to participation, and had a preference for a diverse mix of promotion strategies to receive information about recreation opportunities. This includes distributing information through a mix of print and electronic sources, as well as through social and organizational networks.

6. Finance park and recreation improvements, including a multigenerational community center, from a diverse mix of funding sources.

- ✓ One of the questions that emerged from the focus groups as the project unfolded was, "*how are we going to pay for this?*" The town has approximately \$1.5 million allocated for parks and recreation improvements. This funding could be used to address immediate indoor activity space needs (i.e. renovation to the existing Lodge at Alexander-Carr Park) and to increase capacity for outdoor athletic fields in the near-term.
- ✓ It is unlikely that a new multigenerational indoor community center will be able to be 100% self-supporting in the sense that it will generate enough revenue to service the capital debt burden and cover annual operations and maintenance costs. The predominant funding model for public recreation facilities throughout the country is some combination of funding sources, including tax dollars, fees and charges, and sponsorship/philanthropy. It is likely that support for such a project in Derry (as in most communities) will be predicated on the facility being built with as little impact on taxes as possible. If the town has bonding capacity freed up within the next three to six years, it is possible that such a facility could be financed with minimal additional tax burden.
- ✓ Large majorities of participants in this study supported the idea of funding a new indoor facility with some combination of property taxes, user fees, rental charges, and partnerships with other user groups.
- ✓ Indoor facilities such as the one mentioned above can be economic drivers for communities, and can provide opportunities for business sponsorship, rental/contracts, and referral services. Partnerships with non-profit groups, local youth sport organizations, and the school district are natural fits for a project such as this. Parks and recreation staff should seek out private

entrepreneurs who might be interested in renting space in such a new facility in order to build and grow their existing programs. This could provide a source of income for the new facility and add to the economic vitality of the town by providing opportunities for new "pop-up" businesses to grow and serve the community. For example, multipurpose space could be rented to a local dance studio to run dance programs for all age groups, while adding to the range of program offerings available in town. The Derry Park and Recreation Department's track record of revenue generation through facility rentals and program fees and charges bode well for such a cost-recovery strategy.

- ✓ Investigate alternative sources of funding for the project. Alternative sources of funding are difficult to obtain, but can be used to supplement tax dollars needed to service debt for capital construction. Sources of funding could include fundraising, planned giving, sponsorships, and/or grants (e.g. USDA Rural Development Community Facility Grants, Community Development Block Grants). Information on these and other programs can be found at <https://www.nrpa.org/our-work/Grant-Fundraising-Resources/>.
- ✓ We recommend that the timing for any new project should be scheduled with the town's current and future bonding capacity in mind. Consistent with survey responses, we believe that a new facility project such as this should take place within a 6-year timeframe.

7. Add additional full-time staff equivalents (FTEs) to the parks and recreation department to better maintain and improve park and recreation facilities and amenities and to accommodate participant needs for recreation programming.

- ✓ Derry is behind national and regional benchmark comparisons for park and recreation staff. There appears to be a need for additional park laborers, and at least one (1) new FTE for recreation programming to meet the current needs of the town.
- ✓ Public perception of the quality of Derry's parks and outdoor recreation facilities is generally high, and public input in this process was positive with regards to routine maintenance and upkeep of park and recreation facilities (mowing, field lining, etc.). Our own observations confirmed this, as Derry's parks and outdoor recreation areas are well-maintained. The town relies heavily on seasonal labor for maintenance and upkeep. Given the scope of Public Work's responsibilities for the maintenance and upkeep of all of the town's facilities, there is a need for additional laborers to help take care of parks and recreation needs for on-going maintenance, including mowing, trimming, irrigating, fencing, netting, mulching, painting, filling holes, removing trash, seasonal cleanups, field restoration, contracting, turf management, accommodating special requests and permitted uses, and lining fields. When maintenance gets deferred, facility quality declines, and the high standards the town has for facility upkeep cannot be met.
- ✓ To sustain and grow programming, particularly at the Lodge at Alexander-Carr Park, the parks and recreation department should consider adding one (1) additional FTE. Focus group participants noted the current staffing challenges of having staff in multiple locations (Veterans Hall, Lodge, other locations around town), and not having enough staff to accommodate programming needs. Adding an additional recreation programmer would alleviate these challenges.

Final Note

The Community Planning and Research Collaborative (CPARC) at the University of New Hampshire is comprised of faculty and students in UNH's Department of Recreation Management and Policy. The CPARC team partners with parks and recreation agencies throughout the state and region to conduct applied research and planning projects to assist agencies and communities in decision-making, funding prioritization, and program improvement. CPARC team members use their real-world experience to create research-based solutions to the challenges facing communities.

The University of New Hampshire's Department of Recreation Management and Policy wishes thank the citizens and staff of the town of Derry in providing information and data to help complete this report.

