

CHAPTER 13

# PARKS & RECREATION

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	<b>Background</b>
3	<b>Existing Conditions</b>
4	<b>Goals and Objectives</b>
4	<b>Goal 1: Ensure Diverse Programming</b>
5	<b>Goal 2: Maintain Existing Facilities and Grounds</b>
6	<b>Goal 3: Create New Recreational Opportunities and Facilities</b>
7	<b>Goal 4: Ensure Access to Recreation Opportunities</b>
8	<b>Goal 5: Promote Health and Wellness</b>

*See next page for list of tables and figures.*

## CHAPTER 13 | PARKS & RECREATION

### Tables

13.1 | National Recreation and Park Association Outdoor Facility Standards

### Figures

13.1 | Public Parks, Preserves, and Bike Routes in Southold Town





## 13 | PARKS & RECREATION

Southold Town offers numerous recreational opportunities on its land and in its waters, and has acquired and managed many acres of recreational lands through its diverse programs. **Figure 13.1**, at the end of this chapter, shows the public parks, preserves, and bike routes currently available for use in Southold Town. Further opportunities have been established by the four park districts: Mattituck, Cutchogue-New Suffolk, Southold, and Orient-East Marion. The Southold Recreation Department offers many programs for the recreational use of residents.

The County of Suffolk, State of New York, School Districts, and several private organizations also have landholdings within the Town for recreational purposes. A complete inventory is listed in **Appendix 10**.

This chapter addresses providing numerous activities and programs that offer recreational, educational and leisure opportunities that meet the needs, preferences, and financial abilities of Southold's residents and visitors. An effort to determine future needs relating to these activities requires an examination of the existing inventory of programs and facilities. In addition, it requires the engagement of the public to determine the types of recreational and leisure activities they envision for the future.

### Background

In the past, participating in recreational activities or enjoying parks and open space for recreational purposes was an informal arrangement. Unlike many chapters found within this plan, there are limited studies and recommendations regarding parks and recreation. In 1981, the League of Women Voters issued a survey assessing recreational needs in which it was reported that the Town's residents wanted more parks and trails and an indoor pool/gymnasium complex. Two consultants also provided reports to the Town Board in the early 1980's that featured concrete

recommendations including the development of a "professional staff" for recreational purposes.

The Town established a recreation department in 1985. Currently the recreation staff consists of one full-time director and one part-time staff member to develop and administer programs. In 2004, the Town transferred responsibility for the maintenance of public properties, including parks and recreation, to the Department of Public Works. In addition, the Town created a volunteer committee (Parks, Beaches and Recreation) that was charged with making recommendations to the Town Board to promote recreational opportunities.

In 2004, the Town Board increased the collection of parks and recreation fees to the amount of \$7,000 per lot, which the Planning Board may collect if an applicant cannot suitably accommodate a park or public trail for recreational purposes within a subdivision plat (\$3,500 per lot for conservation subdivision and no charge for Affordable Housing District). Fees are maintained in a separate trust fund and can be used exclusively for the acquisition of public parks, playgrounds, or recreation, and/or for the improvements of public parks and recreational facilities.



In May 2008, the voters approved a referendum for the Town to purchase the site formerly known as "the Peconic School" situated on 4.3 acres on Peconic Lane next to the Town's existing Recreation Department. Now known as the Peconic Lane Community Center (shown above), the Town has utilized much of its Suffolk County

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding toward the rehabilitation of the site. The Center features three rooms that can hold up to 30 people for meeting space and educational classes as well as leisure activities and a small auditorium with stage.

## Engaging the Public to Determine Perceived Recreational Needs and Gaps

To determine what types of recreational activities the public would like for the future, a survey was developed and launched on the Town's website. Respondents were solicited through the Recreation Department's E-Newsletter, a link on the Town's website, and an advertisement in the Suffolk Times. Initially this effort provided 118 responses. Additional strategies of community outreach increased the survey response to almost 200. Surveys were also provided to students at local schools to ascertain the types of recreational and leisure activities that youth would like to see developed in Town. Seniors (55 years of age and older) comprise 40 percent of the Town's population; therefore, the Special Projects Coordinator met with seniors at the Human Resource Center to discuss the Town's Comprehensive Plan and distribute surveys.

In addition to soliciting public feedback through surveys, three focus groups were conducted at the Southold Town Recreation Center to elicit ideas about what types of recreation and leisure activities are needed in the Town, what obstacles and impediments exist for current programming, and what kinds of recreational activities offered in other East End towns would be suitable for Southold.

The Southold Youth Bureau board and Youth Advisory Council convened a meeting devoted to strategic planning for youth services in preparation for Chapter 11, "Human Services," of the Comprehensive Plan. Over 90 percent of respondents stated that priority planning should include the development of a year-round multi-purpose gymnasium and swimming pool complex with the capacity to provide space for a teen center for afterschool activities.

### Survey Responses:

**Appendix 10** contains a detailed response of surveys received by the public. Initially, responses were collected online. Printed copies were later made available.

The top five survey responses from the public regarding the recreational facilities/programs that they

perceived to be most needed in town are noted below in order of priority:

- Indoor swimming pool
- Bicycle, walking, and jogging trails
- Bowling lanes
- Performing arts
- Indoor sports complex

In reviewing written comments/suggestions from the public, many emphasized combining functions to meet needs, i.e., combining the swimming pool and gymnasium complex so that it could host teen activities as well as childcare. A few participants noted the inferior condition of the dog park and the need for expansion and improvement of grounds. Several comments referenced the need for diverse programming with additional instructors to offer "advanced programming."



*Southold Town Dog Park*

### Focus Group Comments:

Three focus groups were convened to discuss recreation in Southold Town. The content of the discussion strongly favored the development of additional cultural programming such as performing arts, theatre, movies, musical programs, and arts and crafts activities within the newly acquired Peconic Lane Community Center site. In addition, it was suggested that the name of the department responsible for administering programs should be changed from "Recreation" to another name such as "Recreation, Education and Leisure."

## Performance Standards

The National Recreation Park Association adopted standards for basic outdoor recreational facilities that provide guidelines for municipalities planning recreational activities (see **Table 13.1**). These standards may

be applicable to other suburban or rural communities, but they are not necessarily appropriate for Southold Town with its preserved farmland and semi-rural hamlets. Its reference is merely to provide guidelines for planning.

**Table 13.1 National Recreation and Park Association Outdoor Facility Standards**

Facility	Standard per Persons <i>(Southold population approximately 21,000)</i>
Baseball	1 per 5,000
Basketball	1 per 5,000
Handball	1 per 20,000
Golf Course	1 per 50,000
Softball	1 per 5,000
Tennis	1 per 2,000
Swimming Pool	1 per 20,000
Ice Hockey	1 per 100,000
Volleyball	1 per 5,000
Soccer	1 per 10,000
Football	1 per 10,000
Field Hockey	1 per 20,000
Track (1/4 mile)	1 per 20,000

## Existing Conditions

The Town contains a range and diversity of parkland and other open space suitable for recreational purposes. However, not all of this land is in public hands. Private owners and operators provide recreational opportunities, as became evident in the crafting of the Town’s Local Waterfront Revitalization Program document. This includes private marinas and golf courses. The Inventory contained in **Appendix 10** denotes all land used for park and recreation purposes. A distinction is made between government-owned properties, school-district properties, and private properties. Below is a listing of Southold Town’s recreational parks with current sports activities:

### Robert Tasker Park

- Tennis courts (3) with lights
- Little League baseball fields (3), 1 with lights

- T-ball baseball field (1)
- Playground area (1)
- Restroom facilities
- Pickleball courts (3)

### Jean Cochran Park

- Roller hockey rink (1)
- Baseball field, with lights (1)
- Tennis courts (3)
- Basketball court (1)
- Football field (1) (also used for lacrosse, soccer)
- T-ball baseball fields (2)
- ½ mile walking track

### Laurel Lake Park

- Little League baseball fields (2)
- Playground area (1)

### Strawberry Fields Fairgrounds (leased from Suffolk County)

- Sports fields (3) used for soccer, lacrosse

### Old School House Park (leased from Orient/East Marion School District)

- Basketball court (1)
- Tennis court (1)
- Playground
- Little League baseball field (1) also used for soccer

## Facility and Program Planning and Adequacy Analysis

To develop the Town’s goals and objectives for this chapter, the following methods were utilized:

- Review of previous studies
- Review of survey responses and comments
- Review of focus group discussions
- Review of National Recreation and Park Association performance standards
- Review of existing inventory
- Interviews with recreation department staff and members of the Parks, Beaches and Recreation committee

# GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

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## 🎯 Goal 1: Ensure Diverse Programming

Provide for a variety of recreational, educational, and leisure experiences and programs to meet the diverse needs of the community in an efficient and cost-effective manner.

Recreational, educational, and leisure activities evolve with time and it is important to remain current as well as satisfy the needs of a diverse population of seniors, youth, and part-time residents. Technological advances require that the facilities and activities remain compelling and instructional for all Town residents.



*Southold Town Recreation Center*

### 🎯 Objective 1.1

Issue annual surveys to assess the parks and recreational needs of the community. Meet with participants at the Human Resource Center and Youth Bureau to further ascertain the needs of seniors and youth.

### 🎯 Objective 1.2

As a follow-up to survey responses, facilitate focus groups to garner additional information regarding what the community desires in terms of recreational needs.

### 🎯 Objective 1.3

Provide exit surveys to participants who take classes and participate in recreation activities.

### 🎯 Objective 1.4

Continually research and assess recreational programs of other municipalities in the region as well as throughout the country.

### 🎯 Objective 1.5

Develop and enhance cultural programs and activities to be contained in the Peconic Lane Community Center.

### 🎯 Objective 1.6

Partner with existing entities that provide cultural programming to offer educational classes, performances, art exhibits, concerts, and other leisure activities.

### 🎯 Objective 1.7

Enhance technological capacities of the Town Recreation Center and Peconic Lane Community Center to promote cutting-edge program offerings.

### 🎯 Objective 1.8

Utilize social media to learn about new programs and activities at the Recreation Department and to gather feedback on program offerings.

### 🎯 Objective 1.9

Increase staffing of the Recreation Department to include skilled and experienced full-time staff and part-time staff that could research funding opportunities and resources.

Staffing could also include employment opportunities for youth.

### 🎯 Objective 1.10

Change the name of the Town's Recreation Department to something else (e.g., "Recreation, Education and Leisure"). The newly named department can raise its profile through branding.

➤ **Responsible Parties:** Southold Recreation Department, Southold Parks, Beaches and Recreation Committee, Department of Data

Processing and Information Technology, Planning Department, Southold Human Resource Center, Southold Youth Bureau

- **Possible Partnerships:** Peconic Landing, Fishers Island Community Center, historical societies, libraries, East End Arts Council, North Fork Community Theatre, Group for the East End

## 🎯 **Goal 2: Maintain Existing Facilities and Grounds**

**Enhance utilization of existing park lands, open spaces, beaches, and recreational facilities through ongoing maintenance, stewardship, and facility improvement.**

The Town has an impressive inventory of park lands and recreation facilities. Through aggressive efforts to preserve farmland and open space, the Town has acquired land suitable for the development of passive and active recreation. This conversion of land requires some expense to promote safety, access, trails, etc. It is important that existing resources are maintained and protected to prevent overuse and degradation. While existing resources may appear adequate at present, it is imperative that the Town continually assess whether recreational needs are being met and purchase additional land and develop sites when warranted.

### 🎯 **Objective 2.1**

**Collaborate with schools to explore the feasibility of adding a shared sports turf (artificial turf) field with lighting to an existing Town park that is centrally located for field sports such as lacrosse and soccer and a regulation track.**

School teams need a field that can be intensively used in all seasons and where big games can be hosted, and natural turf is easily overused and destroyed. Other athletic club teams could rent the field. The Town would manage the field and its schedule.

### 🎯 **Objective 2.2**

**Promote compatible and multiple uses of parks and recreational sites.**

### 🎯 **Objective 2.3**

**Develop a database of existing parks and recreational facilities that notes the condition of the site, what needs to be improved to enhance utilization, and when enhancement must take place (e.g., replace sod on baseball fields in spring.)**

### 🎯 **Objective 2.4**

**Establish point-in-time surveys to assess utilization rates of parks and recreational facilities during different times of the year, month, and day.**

### 🎯 **Objective 2.5**

**Increase collaboration and communication with schools and park districts to coordinate the use of fields and facilities to maximize recreational opportunities for residents to prevent overuse and degradation.**

### 🎯 **Objective 2.6**

**Install permanent bathrooms at Jean Cochran Park and Strawberry Fields and consider installation of portable toilets at other locations if warranted.**

### 🎯 **Objective 2.7**

**Through land preservation stewardship offer more bicycle and walking/jogging trails.**

### 🎯 **Objective 2.8**

**Finish the restoration of the Pavilion at Laurel Lake.**

### 🎯 **Objective 2.9**

**Continue participation in the Bay to Sound trails project.**

### 🎯 **Objective 2.10**

**Ensure seasonal installation of receptacles to collect refuse and provide timely removal of refuse from public beaches. Educate the public on the maintenance of parks and beaches with campaigns such as “Carry Out What You Carry In.”**

### 🎯 Objective 2.11

Install lighting with timer on tracks in Jean Cochran Park to enable recreational activities in winter hours.

### 🎯 Objective 2.12

Increase law enforcement patrols to improve the quality of public beaches through elimination of illegal parking, camping, littering, and fishing practices.

### 🎯 Objective 2.13

Develop document for public distribution and for the Town's website that illustrates the existing inventory of parks and recreation facilities (active and passive.)

### 🎯 Objective 2.14

Develop recreational offerings devoted to seasonal outdoor activities such as bird watching, cross-country skiing, paddle tennis, fishing, and deer hunting.

### 🎯 Objective 2.15

Provide an ice-skating alternative to using local ponds by creating a safe, lighted ice-skating rink in winter.

### 🎯 Objective 2.16

Continue to maintain the sledding hill at Marratooka Lake Preserve.

### 🎯 Objective 2.17

Utilize volunteers and community groups for clean-up of beaches and trails.

### 🎯 Objective 2.18

Develop community gardens with vegetables and flowers within designated Town facilities.

### 🎯 Objective 2.19

Create an exercise trail with exercise stations.

### 🎯 Objective 2.20

Establish greenways in hamlet centers.

### 🎯 Objective 2.21

Connect the west end bike path to the east end recreational trail on Fishers Island.

### 🎯 Objective 2.22

Increase the usefulness of the Town park at Silversmith's Corner by including a few small permanent tables for picnics and scheduling more activities in the park.

- **Responsible Parties:** Southold Recreation Department, Department of Public Works, Land Preservation Committee, Southold Police Department, Fishers Island Community Board, parks districts, school districts
- **Possible Partnerships:** Suffolk County Department of Parks and Recreation, Peconic Land Trust, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, Village of Greenport, youth service groups (Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, etc.), The Nature Conservancy, Southold Garden Club, Cornell Cooperative Education, New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, Chambers of Commerce, local civic associations

## 🎯 Goal 3: Create New Recreational Opportunities and Facilities

### 🎯 Objective 3.1

Obtain additional land for recreational purposes where feasible and necessary.

### 🎯 Objective 3.2

Enhance communication and coordination with the Parks, Beaches and Recreation Committee and the Land Preservation Committee to cultivate opportunities to purchase land with Community Preservation Funding that will provide scenic benefits to residents and visitors as well as provide needed recreational activities. Trail systems should be designed, developed, and maintained to provide passive recreational activities for hiking and biking.

### 🎯 Objective 3.3

Enhance existing trails or create new hiking trails through the subdivision process by having them dedicated to the Town without spending Community Preservation Funds.

### Objective 3.4

**Conduct a feasibility study that would include researching the availability of funding (public and private), operation (public and private) and suggested location of a year-round gymnasium and swimming pool facility.**

The proposed multi-purpose complex may include an extensive gymnasium with exercise equipment, weights, indoor heated swimming pool to permit lap swimming, indoor basketball court, bowling lanes, and lockers, etc. The feasibility study will include the possibility of creating collaborations between for-profit and non-profit partnerships that could make the creation and operation of the proposed multi-purpose complex financially viable.

### Objective 3.5

**Provide a separate or integrated youth center containing ping-pong, pool tables, foosball, entertainment lounge, and snack bar, while providing rooms suitable for counseling, career development, and additional recreation programs.**

### Objective 3.6

**Add an indoor swimming pool to the Community Center on Fishers Island, if feasible and funding is available.**

### Objective 3.7

**Acquire two additional playing fields.**

The recreation director reports that there is an overuse of fields in town; specifically, the department receives many requests to use Strawberry Fields for soccer, baseball, and lacrosse. It would be prudent to acquire two additional fields of approximately 15 acres (each) to support additional recreational activities (fields) and parking.

### Objective 3.8

**Within existing recreational sites, develop a supervised skate park that requires participants to wear appropriate gear to promote safety, have parental permission, and release the Town from liability, etc.**

### Objective 3.9

**Work with the Peconic Estuary Program to design and construct a Blueway trail system throughout the Peconic Estuary.**

### Objective 3.10

**Explore locations for a village green in Mattituck hamlet center.**

➤ **Responsible Parties:** Southold Parks & Recreation Committee, Southold Land Preservation Committee, Southold Town Board, Department of Public Works, Southold Youth Bureau, Fishers Island Community Center

➤ **Possible Partnerships:** Peconic Estuary Program, YMCA, Chambers of Commerce, local civic associations, other non-profit or private entities

## Goal 4: Ensure Access to Recreation Opportunities

**Ensure access to beaches, parks, and recreational facilities and participation in recreational programs by residents and visitors.**



*Goldsmith Inlet in Peconic*

In the past the Town's recreational needs were primarily met by school districts and autonomous park districts that did not afford access to all residents of the Town. In recent years the Town has taken a more proactive stance and has sought to increase its land holdings and the recreational facilities that are available to all residents and visitors. Waterside access is provided by way of public beaches, public road ends, private association beaches, public and private boat ramps, marinas, and moorings.

Most recreational facilities and programs have been offered at no charge or priced where revenues offset expenses.

Access to Town beaches and boat ramps is provided by purchase of passes and stickers at the office of the Town Clerk. The fees are set by the Town Board.

The Recreation Department provides the use of Town fields and facilities at no charge for non-profits, local schools, charitable groups, little leagues, etc. Other user groups are charged a fee to use the fields.

#### **Objective 4.1**

**Provide recreational opportunities to residents that are centrally located as well as geographically tailored for all 10 hamlets.**

#### **Objective 4.2**

**Partner with existing sites and facilities (i.e., Peconic Landing in Greenport West hamlet, Human Resource Center in Mattituck) to offer programs in different geographical areas in town for residents who do not want to travel to Peconic.**

#### **Objective 4.3**

**Utilize Parks and Recreation fees to ensure that recreational facilities comply with the Americans for Disabilities Act.**

#### **Objective 4.4**

**Deliver programs and activities that are reasonably priced so that most households are able to participate.**

#### **Objective 4.5**

**Promote discussion with parks districts to enable all Town residents the ability to access park districts; this access could be in the form of a Town-wide “beach pass” that residents purchase.**

#### **Objective 4.6**

**Engage the residents of Fishers Island (via surveys, focus groups, etc.) to convey their needs in order to develop appropriate activities and programs to be offered on Fishers Island.**

#### **Objective 4.7**

**Enhance the promotion of recreational activities through continued advertising in local papers as well as email notification, social media, and website postings.**

#### **Objective 4.8**

**Create a central database of recreational offerings that include activities not sponsored by the Town and post on the Town’s website.**

➤ **Responsible Parties:** Recreation Department, Southold Town Board, Town Clerk, Peconic Landing, Human Resource Center, parks districts

### **Goal 5: Promote Health and Wellness**

**Initiate a Town-wide wellness campaign to improve physical and mental health.**

As the Southold Parks and Recreation Department evolves into providing greater educational opportunities for the public, opportunities exist to introduce people to many ways to optimize healthy lifestyles.

#### **Objective 5.1**

**Work with school districts to develop a “fit pass” allowing residents the opportunity to use school facilities (playground, gymnasium) during evening hours.**

#### **Objective 5.2**

**Offer educational classes throughout Town with topics relating to stress management, obesity, smoking, depression, etc.**

#### **Objective 5.3**

**Provide recreational activities in conjunction with classes to maximize the ability to promote better health.**

This could include posters, information packets, and resources.

#### **Objective 5.4**

**Work with schools and human service providers to tailor more programs that support a lifestyle absent of alcohol, tobacco, and drugs to local youth and tweens.**

**🎯 Objective 5.5**

**Work with the Human Resource Center to tailor programs toward seniors.**

**🎯 Objective 5.6**

**Sponsor monthly contests and activities that will offer prizes for changing behaviors to more healthy lifestyles.**

- **Responsible Parties:** Recreation Department, Suffolk County Department of Health, Southold Youth Bureau, Schools, Human Resource Center
- **Possible Partnerships:** Stony Brook Eastern Long Island Hospital, Southampton Hospital, Peconic Bay Medical Center, Stony Brook Hospital, Cornell Cooperative Extension, Suffolk County Department of Health, New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services, Suffolk County Prevention Resource Center, school districts





Figure 13.1 Public Parks, Preserves, and Bike Routes in Southold Town

