



Parks and Recreation Master Plan

2023



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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1

Executive Summary

1.1. Background

This Master Plan is an update to a Comprehensive plan that was prepared in 2013 for the City of New London Department of Recreation. The purpose of the 2013 plan was to review the Department's facilities, services, programs and financial investments and provide recommendations as to how facilities and services could best be enhanced, promoted and delivered for New London residents.

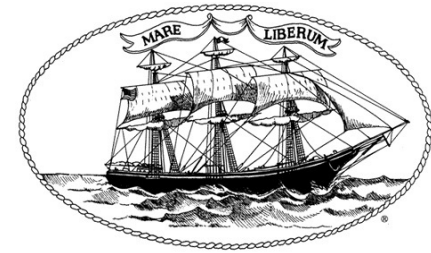
The 2013 plan was developed in line with the accreditation requirements of the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) Commission for Accreditation of Parks and Recreation Associations (CAPRA). In 2013 the New London Department of Parks and Recreation applied for CAPRA accreditation and then became the first Parks and Recreation agency in Connecticut to attain this national accreditation.

The purpose of this plan update is the same as that of the 2013 plan. Our project team has reviewed Department of Recreation facilities, services, programs and financial investments and is providing recommendations as to how facilities and services can continue to be enhanced, promoted and delivered for New London residents.

This Parks and Recreation Master Plan is meant to serve as a guide for meeting the City's future recreational and leisure demands and needs, for improving facilities and programs and for enhancing staff and financial resources.

1.2. The City of New London

New London is located near the mouth of the Thames River in southeastern Connecticut. It is known as the "Whaling City" due to its long-standing relationship with the whaling industry. New London is one of Connecticut's smallest cities comprising 6.54 square miles. The City has over 25 recreational facilities ranging in size from over 95 acres at Bates Woods to 0.35 acres at McDonald Park. New London's extensive coastline along Long Island Sound and the Thames River provides its residents with waterfront access as well as waterfront recreational opportunities such as a saltwater beachfront and boardwalk facilities at Ocean Beach Park.



Based on the 2021 census, New London's population is 27,293. The percentage of persons over age 65 or living with a disability is 12 percent. Some of the population is comprised of seasonal student residents as the city is home to three private higher educational institutions, Connecticut College and Mitchell College as well as the United States Coast Guard Academy. 85 percent of the population is considered people of color (Hispanic, African-American, Asian) and 18.4 percent of the population is listed as foreign born persons.

New London has many organizations that contribute to the city's quality of life. Some of the active nonprofits and charities that assist New London residents include Ledge Light Health District, the Hispanic Alliance, the Drop-in Learning Center, Homeless Hospitality Center, Fresh New London and the New London Public Library. There are also several historic and cultural organizations whose mission is to preserve and enhance New London's historic character. These organizations include New London Landmarks, the New London County Historical Society, Hempstead Houses, and the New London Maritime Society.

The New London Department of Recreation interfaces with many of these community organizations. There are other volunteer organizations that also play an active role in assisting the Department of Recreation with their community outreach efforts. These organizations include the Parks and Recreation Commission, the New London Public Schools, Lighthouse, New London Trees, Babe Ruth Little League, New London Youth Football and Church of the City.

In addition, there are several social and human services organizations such as Thames Valley Council for Community Action (TVCAA) and Ledge Light Health that provide services which interface with New London's Department of Recreation programs focusing on community health.

Over the past few years numerous plans, including The New London Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD), various Strategic Planning documents issued from the Department of Planning, and the Department of Recreation Strategic Plan 2023-2026 have addressed components of the Department of Recreation's goals to better serve the New London community.

The City of New London Office of Economic Development works closely with private developers and in 2021 Business Insider listed New London as one of the top 25 cities in the nation where waterfront property was affordable. Recent community development projects within the last 10 years have included the Coast Guard Museum project, a 100-room hotel in Fort Trumbull, a 100-unit apartment complex adjacent to the hotel and three other apartment complexes in and around downtown. This added housing is bringing additional residents to the city and these residents will be interested in community parks and recreational facilities.



**Thames Valley Council
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The City of New London has recognized the need for additional community services and facilities because of the growing population. Thus, services are also provided at facilities at New London Schools and the BP Mission. In addition, residents will be enjoying a new 62,000 square foot Community Center by the end of 2025. This Community Center will house a two-court gymnasium, an 8-lane swimming pool, a fitness center, multi-purpose rooms, a community room and a kitchen.

1.3. The New London Recreation Department

The Recreation Department offers a wide range of programs and services for youths and adults. The Department maintains a web page that provides information as well as program registration at <http://www.newlondonrec.com>. The New London Recreation Department offers the following services:

- Operations and programs at all park and some indoor facilities.
- Recreation programs and services.
- Community services for youths and adults.
- Administrative support, marketing and asset management.

These services are currently delivered by 8 full-time staff and approximately 60 seasonal staff employees who work tirelessly to provide the best possible services and facilities for their community. This report provides a detailed analysis of current programs and facilities and outlines strategic goals and objectives for the Department of Recreation over the next ten years as part of their 2023-2026 Strategic Plan.

The new Community Center, currently in design, will provide the Recreation Department with a centrally located facility that has space for indoor services and programs in addition to the outdoor recreational activities provided at the various parks and fields and city schools located throughout the city.

1.4. The Recreation Department Vision and Goals

The Mission and Vision Statements for the New London Recreation Department are outlined in their 2023-2026 Strategic Plan. The current mission of the Department of Recreation of the City of New London, Connecticut is:

"To connect the community with resources that will enrich and enhance the quality of life of all individuals through healthy lifestyle initiatives, inclusive prevention services, and programs that encourage civic involvement and community partnerships. Safety of participants and staff is our number one priority."

The following Vision Statements are listed in the 2023-2026 Strategic Plan.

- All children and adults will have the opportunity and education to lead healthy lives and make positive decisions.
- Our community will seek the knowledge and enrichment benefits of a healthy environment.
- All youth and families will be able to meet their basic health and human service needs by access to related resources, services, and items.

New London's latest Plan of Conservation and Development was prepared in 2017. A Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) is a comprehensive master plan that every municipality in Connecticut develops at 10-year intervals. The 2017 POCD addresses the many elements that comprise planning, conservation, and development for municipalities.



The following is the 2017 POCD goal for parks and recreation which aligns with the vision statement for the Recreation Department.

“Encourage the improved utilization, maintenance and rehabilitation of the diverse parks, recreation and open space facilities and programs adequate in extent, strategic in location and equitable in distribution to serve the unique active and passive recreation needs of the City’s population, particularly those who are most dependent upon the system for recreation.”

The combined goals of the Department of Planning and The Department of Recreation look to address the following strategic concerns regarding recreation programs and facilities in New London.

1. Health, Safety and Wellness: Compliance with the City of New London Preventative Maintenance Plan and the Risk Management Operations Manual and Plan is a mandate so that the health, safety, and wellness needs of the community are met.
2. Universal Accessibility: Compliance with the most current American with Disabilities Act guidelines at all recreation facilities has been a Department of Recreation goal for many years and is an ongoing focus of the department.
3. Funding: Funding sources are a challenge as they are continually changing and with continued population growth, the Department needs to rely more on grants to supplement already stretched resources.

4. Organizational Culture and Partnerships: The Department of Recreation is undertaking this Master Plan to continue to align itself with the most recent City planning initiatives. In addition, the Department of Recreation continues to maintain and strengthen partnerships with allied organizations and nearby communities. The Department continues to maintain partnerships with the New London Board of Education as well as many other local organizations.
5. Infrastructure Needs: The Department recognizes the need to continue to update existing facilities coupled with a regular re-assessment of resource allocation so that all parks and recreational facilities are maintained to meet current ADA and safety standards. To meet these goals, the Department has completed a parks and recreation facilities audit in conjunction with the New London Department of Public Works and the Parks and Recreation Commission.

1.5. The Process for this Comprehensive Recreation Plan

This Master Plan was developed through research and review of numerous existing reports which are outlined in *Chapter 9: Bibliography and List of Resources*. The process also included on-site evaluations of all existing park facilities, meetings and discussions with the Department of Recreation staff and other city staff, and a review of prior community input methods which included focus groups, public forums, interviews, and citizen surveys.

This Master Plan provides a holistic approach for addressing the recreational and leisure needs of the City of New London. It reviews current facilities, services, programs and financial investments and recommends how both facilities and services can be enhanced, promoted and delivered.

The key elements of this plan include:

- Park and Facilities Resources
- Recreation Program & Services
- Community Input
- Trends Analysis
- Operational Assessment and Financials
- Recommended Initiatives and Strategic Objectives

The findings and recommendations are presented in a format that provides the Department of Recreation staff with a working document that can readily be utilized as programs, services and facilities are enhanced, improved and promoted in future years. This Master Plan has been developed in line with the accreditation requirements of the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) Commission for Accreditation of Parks and Recreation Associations (CAPRA).

1.6. Recommended Initiatives and Strategic Objectives

This Comprehensive Recreation Plan presents a detailed analysis of the following key initiatives that the Recreation Department will focus on for the next 10 years.

Parks and Recreation Facilities

Chapter 3 of this report provides a detailed view of each of the city's parks and open space facilities including a chart of facilities and mapping.

Recreation Programs and Services

Chapter 4 reviews the many programs and services offered through the New London Department of Recreation. These programs include offerings for adults and youths.

Community Input and the Community Center

Chapter 5 reviews and analyzes prior community input undertaken by the Department of Recreation. The Department conducted meetings, and solicited online surveys for their strategic planning.

Trends Research

Chapter 6 examines the trends affecting Parks and Recreation agencies throughout the country and applies those trends to the New London Department of Recreation.

Operational Assessment and Financial Structure

Chapter 7 analyzes the Department of Recreation Budget and Capital Improvement Plan and recommends various funding mechanisms commonly used by municipal Department of Recreations as well as recommends development of other funding sources to reduce the reliance on general fund tax dollars.

Initiatives and Strategic Objectives

Chapter 8 presents an overview of the Recreation Department's Initiatives and Strategic Objectives referencing the vision statements and goals outlined in the department's 2023-2026 Strategic Plan.





2

New London Municipal Planning

2.1. Overview

Via Connecticut State statute (Chapter 136, Section 8-23), every community in Connecticut must prepare and adopt a comprehensive municipal plan or Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) every ten years. New London completed their most recent comprehensive plan in 2017. The statute establishes the general components of the comprehensive plan and provides recommendations for optional components. The following elements which play a role in the economic and physical development of the City are addressed in the New London comprehensive municipal plan or POCD.

To promote strategic growth by

- Reinforcing Community Structure
- Promoting Economic Development
- Guiding Housing Development
- Managing Utility Structure

To promote livability by

- Enhancing the Character and Spirit of the City
- Providing for Community Facilities
- Enhancing Open Space and Greenways
- Addressing Transportation and Mobility Needs

To leverage assets by

- Capitalizing on historic assets
- Protecting natural resources
- Protecting coastal resources
- Promoting sustainability

The POCD for the City of New London consists of a “Strategic Element” and an “Implementation Element”. The Strategic Element provides the overall strategic directions that are important for the City of New London as it promotes and pursues initiatives to preserve and enhance those things considered to be integral to growth, livability, asset management and

enhancement of the overall quality of life in the city. The Implementation Element outlines detailed tasks and programs that will be needed to accomplish the overall strategies. This element outlines tasks, responsible parties, and anticipated timeline for completion of the task.

2.2. Plan of Conservation and Development: Parks and Recreation Facilities

New London has a variety of public parks and recreational facilities as well as private and quasi-private recreational facilities all of which provide a wide variety of recreational opportunities for visitors as well as residents. The majority of the recreational facilities in New London are zoned as Open Space, comprising 5.6% of New London’s total land area. The total land area for the City’s public recreational facilities is 292 acres distributed over 28 sites which range in size from .35 acres to 95 acres. As New London has a small land mass (6.54 square miles) and a compact development pattern as well as available bus transit, most of the parks and recreational facilities are easily accessible to all residents.

Among the sites which comprise New London’s park and recreation system are a wide range of facilities that include:

- One regional park at Ocean Beach Park which draws visitors from around New London County, and which is operated through a for-profit organization under a lease agreement.
- Three major parks that include Bates Woods (95 acres), Riverside Park (18.64 acres), and Calkins Park (12.87 acres).
- One free city-operated beach facility at Greens Harbor Beach.
- Three historic sites that include Old Town Mill, Williams Memorial Park, and Ye Antientist Burial Ground.

- Eighteen neighborhood parks and playgrounds which are distributed around the City and offer a wide variety of facilities.
- Three piers at City Pier area
- Two passive sitting and strolling parks.
- One major Sports Complex which includes two synthetic turf athletic fields, six tennis courts, and a stadium with a track.

This wide range of facilities provides users with the following recreational opportunities.

- Beachfront activities
- Football
- Soccer
- Baseball
- Softball
- Basketball
- Volleyball
- Lacrosse
- Passive sitting and strolling
- Playground activities
- Boating
- Trail walking
- Picnicking
- Tennis
- Track and field sports
- Pickleball courts
- Handball
- Swimming

There are also private and quasi-public recreational facilities which are not always available to residents, but which reduce the recreational demand placed on some of the City facilities. The facilities that are most utilized by City residents include Mitchell Woods Park at Mitchell College, The Connecticut College Arboretum, private marinas, a yacht club, Fort Trumbull State Park and State Boat Launch and some privately owned beaches and beach clubs.

2.3. Plan of Conservation and Development: Parks and Recreation Recommendations and Initiatives

The Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) Chapter “Enhancing Open Space and Greenways” provides strategies and recommendations for recreation in New London. The chapter recognizes that open spaces and greenways are elements that enhance and maintain community character. The Strategic Plan for enhancing open space and greenways provides the following recommended strategies.

1. Maintain and improve existing open spaces and parks.
2. Expand existing parks and open spaces such as Bates Woods and Riverside Park, as the opportunities arise.
3. Update the parks Master Plan that inventories parks, open space areas, and amenities and assesses the current and future infrastructure needs at these facilities. (This Master Plan provides the latest 2023 update).
4. Explore grant opportunities in existing parks for design and construction of walking trails and exercise paths; interpretive signage; and educational purposes.
5. Create a neighborhood park program to develop open greenspace and recreational spaces in the dense/urban parts of the City where such spaces are currently lacking.
6. Create a city plan to address invasive plant infestations.

The 2017 POCD Implementation Tables provide an outline for addressing the six strategies outlined above.

In the section relating to “Reinforcing Community Structure, initiatives B and C address awareness and enhancement of open space and greenspace. The tables on page 11 provide additional information from the POCD relating to Recreation.

Several volunteer committees and organizations assist the Department of Recreation with guidance and initiatives relating to parks and recreation facilities. The two most active groups are the Community Center Task Force and the Parks and Recreation Commission.

- **The Community Center Task Force** was formed to review designs for the new Community Center proposed for the Fort Trumbull area of New London. This Community Center will be a 58,00 square foot facility with a swimming pool, basketball courts, rooms for community events and early childhood education and workout facilities. The construction broke ground in 2023.
- **The Parks and Recreation Commission** serves as a review board for recreational facility improvements, scheduling and programs in New London. They have identified and implemented directional signage at all facilities and have spearheaded the development of an overall Maintenance and Enhancement Plan for the City's parks and recreation facilities. This work has been completed. Other resulting efforts from this committee have included:
- **The New London Parks Conservancy.** This group was formed shortly after the 1999 Park and Recreation Master Plan was completed. The Conservancy had focused their efforts on two historic parks in the City. This group is no longer operational.

2.4. Summary

The 2017 Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD) provided the City of New London with a comprehensive master plan for the City's future development. The POCD Chapter on Open Space and Greenways interfaces with prior New London Park and Recreation Master Plans and promotes the concept of connecting parks and open spaces via walking paths and greenways. The Recreation Department and the City have already initiated some of these recommendations from the 2017 POCD.

The 2017 POCD recommends continued rehabilitation and maintenance of existing park facilities to maximize their use and potential but also recommends expanding some facilities. These recommendations align directly with the Recreation Department's 2023-2026 Strategic Plan.

Overall, the recommendations made in the POCD for New London's parks and recreation facilities focus on creating an open space system via the following strategies.

1. Create and overall interconnected city-wide open space/ trail network with "greenways" on land and "blue ways" on water.
2. Create a municipal land acquisition fund to support future purchase, enhancement or expansion of open spaces.
3. Expand existing parks and open spaces such as Bates Woods, as opportunities arise.
4. Seek federal and state programs to assist the City to purchase, enhance or acquire future open space.
5. Partner with other municipalities to create programs that link the communities with open space, greenways or blueways.
6. Encourage neighborhood programs so that residents can adopt a neighborhood park.

The National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) standards recommend that every city offer a minimum of 6.25 acres of developed open space for every 1,000 people. Despite the small total land mass in New London, the City has been able to meet this standard and with the current POCD initiatives, will continue to do so. The following tables from the POCD illustrate this.

The Housing Development Table of the POCD Implementation plan looks to encourage the creation and preservation of open space areas in neighborhoods.

B. Guide Housing Development						
Priority/Status	Description	Date Added	Target Date	Percent Complete	Leader	Partners
A	Maintain existing open space as recreation areas neighborhoods.	TBD	TBD	N/A	DPW	DPW Rec Staff

The Implementation plan also calls for coordination with the Recreation Department staff in maintaining community facilities. Note that the new Community Center supercedes the need for facilities at the Martin Center.

A. Maintain Adequate Community Facilities						
Priority/Status	Description	Date Added	Target Date	Percent Complete	Leader	Partners
A	Continue to provide and maintain community facilities and programs such as the Martin Center, Senior Center, Boys and Girls Club and New London Recreation Programs.	TBD	TBD	N/A	DPW	CC DPW Rec Staff

One of the key elements of the POCD that focuses on recreational improvements addresses strategies for open space and greenway enhancements and calls for the creation of an open space system.

A. Maintain Existing Open Spaces						
Priority/Status	Description	Date Added	Target Date	Percent Complete	Leader	Partners
A	Maintain and improve existing open spaces and parks.	TBD	TBD	N/A	DPW	DPW Rec CC
B	Expand existing parks and open spaces (such as Bates Woods, Riverside Park) as opportunities arise.	TBD	TBD	N/A	CC	DPW Rec CC
C	Develop a "Master Parks Plan" that inventories parks, open space areas, and amenities. Assess current and future infrastructure needs.	TBD	TBD	N/A	DPW	DPW Rec CC
B	Explore grant opportunities in existing parks for walking trails and exercise paths, interpretive signage and educational purposes.	TBD	TBD	N/A	Staff	IWCC Staff CD DPW Rec CC
C	Create a neighborhood park program to develop open greenspace and recreational spaces in the downtown and dense/urban parts of the City that presently lack this space.	TBD	TBD	N/A	DPW	IWCC Staff CD DPW Rec CC NE
C	Focusing on City-owned property primarily, the City should also offer tax incentives to property owners to create park space on underdeveloped lots in the City. Identify properties for which such treatment would be appropriate.	TBD	TBD	N/A	CC	CC Mayor Staff
C	Create a City plan to address the menace of invasive plants.	TBD	TBD	N/A	IWC	IWC DPW Others Staff

B. Create An Open Space System

Enhance Open Space/Greenways

Priority/Status	Description	Date Added	Target Date	Percent Complete	Leader	Partners
A	Create an overall interconnected city wide open space/trail network with "greenways" on land and "blueways" on water.	TBD	TBD	N/A	Staff	HMC, Staff, DPW, IWC
B	Create a municipal land acquisition fund to support future purchase, enhancement or expansion of open spaces.	TBD	TBD	N/A	CC	CC Mayor
C	Expand existing parks and open spaces (such as Bates Woods, Riverside Park) as opportunities arise.	TBD	TBD	N/A	Staff	CC Staff DPW
B	Seek federal and state programs to assist the City to purchase, enhance or acquire future open space.	TBD	TBD	N/A	Staff	DPW Staff CD
C	Partner with other municipalities to create programs that link the communities with open space, greenways or blueways.	TBD	TBD	N/A	CC	CC IWCC Staff DPW Others
C	Encourage neighborhood programs so that residents can adopt a neighborhood park.	TBD	TBD	N/A	CD	CD NE Staff Others Res

Another more indirect means of providing recreation for New London residents is outlined in the Transportation section of the Implementation Element. One of the tables outlines strategies for increased pedestrian and bicycle routes.

C. Enhance Provision For Pedestrians and Bicycles

Address Transportation/Mobility Needs

Priority/Status	Description	Date Added	Target Date	Percent Complete	Leader	Partners
A	Increase opportunities for walking and bicycling and promote these as viable transportation choices.	TBD	TBD	N/A	DPW	CC DPW Staff
B	Identify areas in the City that could safely and effectively support bike lanes and create a program to fund and implement the desired improvements.	TBD	TBD	N/A	Staff	CC DPW Staff
A	Identify priority areas in the City for sidewalk and curb repairs. Create a program to fund and implement the desired improvements.	TBD	TBD	N/A	DPW	CC DPW Staff
B	Identify areas in the City lacking in safe bike lanes and mean by which they may be installed (narrowing roadways).	TBD	TBD	N/A	DPW	CC DPW Staff
C	Incorporate safe crosswalks citywide.	TBD	TBD	N/A	DPW	CC DPW Staff



3

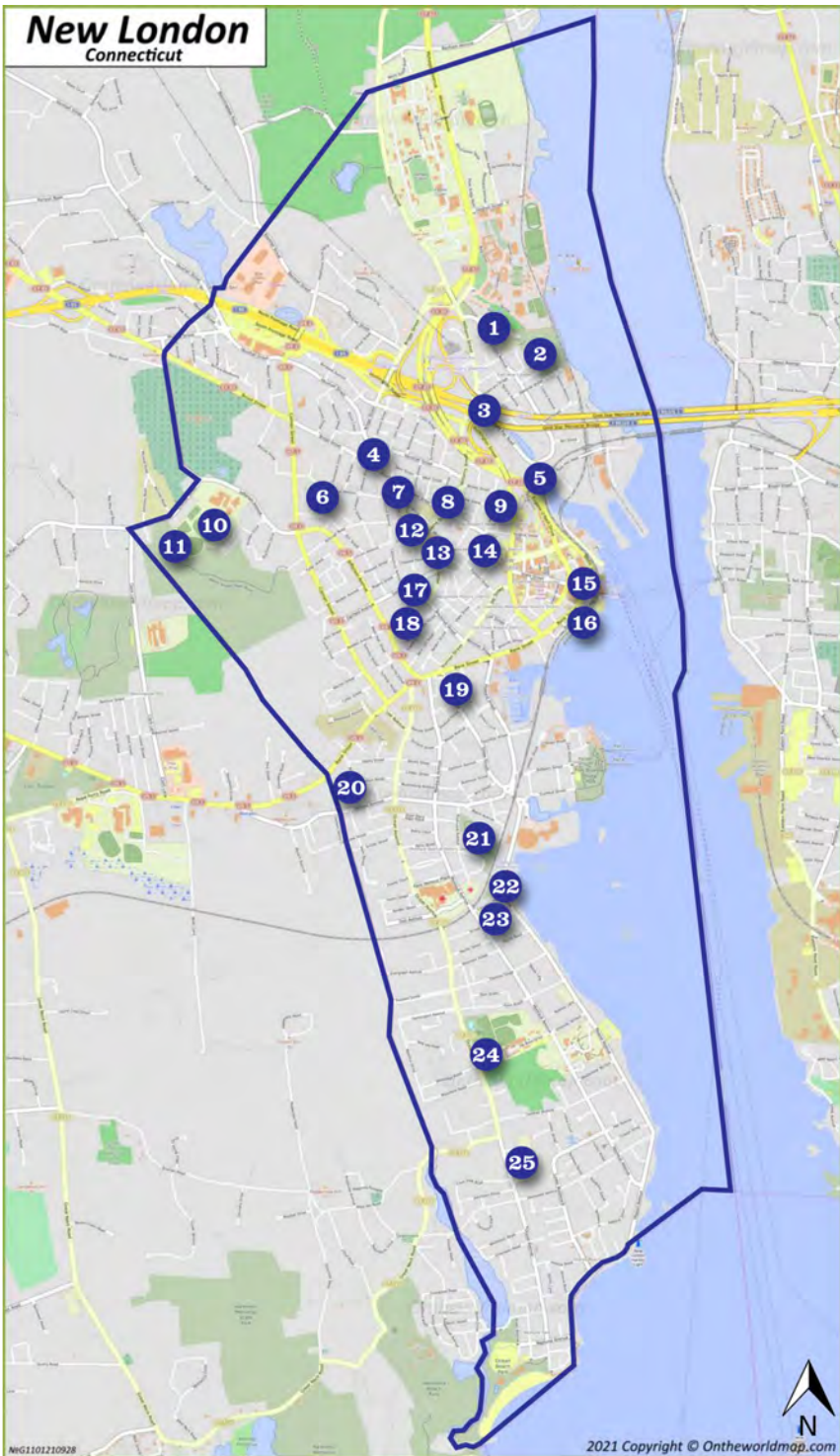
Park & Facilities Resources

3.1. Overview

The City of New London currently owns and operates over 250 acres of parks and recreational facilities that range from large parks to historical sites, to public school sites to small neighborhood parks. They vary in size, shape, type, location, topography, recreational amenities, and park attractions.

In this section, our focus is on the City of New London's existing park system inventory, identifying the existing conditions of their parks and recreation facilities that will establish a framework to identify current and future park system needs. On the following page is a map of the City's parks that were reviewed.





City of New London Parks System

LEGEND

- 1 Winthrop STEM Elementary Magnet School
- 2 Riverside Park
- 3 Old Town Mill
- 4 Mahan Park
- 5 Fulton Park
- 6 Veterans Memorial Park
- 7 Bartlett Park
- 8 Williams Park
- 9 Ye Old Ancient Burial Ground
- 10 Sports Complex
- 11 Bates Woods Park
- 12 BDJ Multi-Magnet Middle School Campus
- 13 CB Jennings International Elementary Magnet
- 14 Williams Memorial Park
- 15 Parade Plaza
- 16 Waterfront Park
- 17 Garfield Park
- 18 McDonald Park
- 19 BP Learned Mission
- 20 Mercer Park/Field
- 21 Calkins Park
- 22 Green Harbor Beach and Park
- 23 Harbor Elementary School
- 24 Toby May Park
- 25 Nathan Hale Arts Magnet School



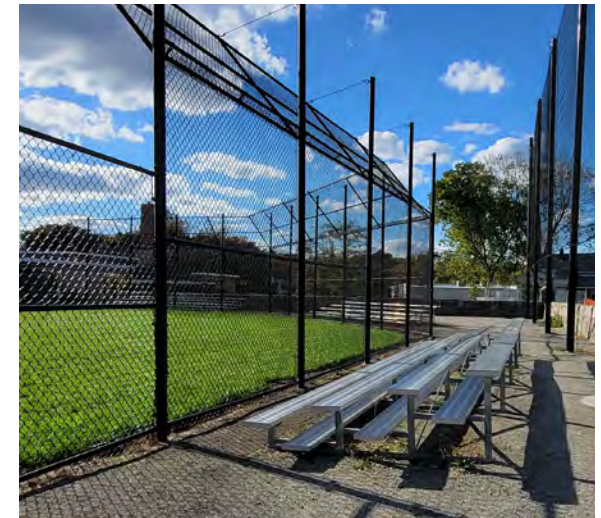
3.2. Park Assessment Methodology

A critical step in the master planning process is identifying how much parkland exists, where parks are located, what facilities and amenities parks provide and what condition parks are in. Park assessments identify the strengths and weaknesses of a park system by revealing areas or activities that are underserved by the system, as well as overall improvements that need to be made.

In Fall 2022, park assessments were conducted for twenty-five (25) parks in New London. Each assessment established a baseline understanding and a snapshot of the existing conditions of the park and amenities within the park system. In addition, the assessment supports the foundation, or reference point, from which recommendations of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan were developed.

Each park assessment consists of an analysis presented in written or table form of the park and condition of its assets. For the larger parks, a map noting the amenities within the park is included. Park assets are defined as developed amenities within parks that enhance the recreational experience of users. Specific examples include athletic fields, sports courts, aquatic facilities, playgrounds, picnic areas, shelters or pavilions, restrooms/concession, etc. The analysis also evaluates the condition of pavements, parking, circulation, lighting, site furnishings, signage, vegetation, fencing, and stormwater management. Park and asset conditions were also rated using a scale of good, fair or poor using the following methodology:

GOOD CONDITION: Park/amenities are in good condition and feature only minor or no maintenance problems.



FAIR CONDITION: Park/amenities are in fair condition and indicate ongoing maintenance problems.



POOR CONDITION: Park/amenities are in poor condition and clearly show ongoing maintenance problems or pose safety concerns that ultimately may result in suspended use for repair/replacement.



3.3. Park Assessments

Winthrop STEM Elementary Magnet School



Winthrop STEM Elementary Magnet School

This school recreational parcel is 1.6 acres and located at 74 Grove Street, in the north end of the city. Serving the needs of children in grades K-5 at Winthrop Elementary Magnet School, this facility provides two play environments, two half basketball courts, four square, shade sail picnic area, additional picnic tables on hillside, walking track around perimeter, funnel ball hoop area and other game spaces, and raised garden planters.

- Play equipment is located in resilient safety surfacing; all equipment is accessible. Condition: GOOD
- Basketball court surface is striped but does not have surface coating. Condition: GOOD
- Existing mature vegetation is located at the perimeter with new tree plantings located within the play area and evergreen trees for screening of adjacent property owner. Condition: GOOD
- Some cracks noted at corners of pavement and low areas where water may be collecting. Condition: GOOD
- Other Observations: Entire play area is fenced and gated, paved and accessible for children of all abilities. No unpaved open space due to site constraints. Condition: GOOD



Riverside Park



Thames River



Riverside Park - Site and Facilities Assessment

Description	GOOD	FAIR	POOR	Comments
Riverside Promenade, Amphitheater and Stage	●			Site improvements (2019+) consist of the addition of (3) off-the-grid street lights powered by solar panels and small wind turbines (includes cell phone charging stations), fencing, concrete stage, block wall, ADA ramp, patio area with tables. Project improvements are still in process.
Basketball Court		●		Surface coating vandalized; hoops need replacement; no accessible walk to court
Emilie Parker Playground	●			Equipment in good condition and accessible; some holes/cracks noted in resilient surfacing; accessible walk and ramp at entrance, but no accessible route to entrance due to steep/sloped site. There is sidewalk along one side.
Pavilion / Picnic Area (3)	●			Ample seating and tables provided at each location
Restroom	●			
Pavements		●		Many large cracks noted in bituminous concrete pavement (drives and parking areas), no striping in parking lots; new concrete walks noted at pavilion, playground, riverside promenade, at Adelaide Street parking lot, and up hill to Winthrop Elementary School
Parking	●			Six lots provide adequate parking throughout the park, however no HCP spaces are designated; two lots are gravel; one accessible curb ramp at riverside promenade provides access to seating area and stage
Vegetation	●			Mostly mature with some new plantings
Site Furniture	●			Most site furnishings have been replaced and are installed on concrete pads; some remaining outdated, wooden benches should also be replaced to match the rest of the park, with consideration for accessibility to the amenities
Lighting	●			New lighting installed along riverside promenade; cobra head lighting at parking areas and at riverside promenade
Signage	●			New park sign located at entrance drive; one large park map located at central parking lot; no signs posted designating HCP spaces in any lots
Circulation	●			Vehicular and pedestrian circulation is good; ADA accessible routes are lacking
Stormwater Management		●		Natural methods of stormwater management; recent installation of rain garden with interpretative signage at main entrance on Adelaide Street. Needs improvement.
Other Observations	●			More park improvements planned in 2023+: enhancements to riverside promenade/parking, and bike racks at strategic locations

Old Town Mill



Old Town Mill

This recreational site is home to New London's first industrial mill. Built in 1650 by John Winthrop, Jr., this site is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and sits on 1.15 acres located on Mill Street, just north of downtown. The site features a mill building with a water wheel powered by water from Briggs Brook delivered by a 200 ft elevated wooden penstock, a picnic area with tables, and a pollinator garden which borders the property with flowers and shrubs.

- Overall condition of the site. Condition: GOOD
- Other Observations: Location of this historic gem is under the Gold Star Memorial Bridge with overhead traffic noise from I-95, and bordering commercial area. Street parking and temporary construction in the area make this site difficult to access and visit. Condition: FAIR



Mahan Park



Mahan Park

This park parcel is 0.73 acres and encompasses an entire city block located at Broad, Parker, Ledyard and Vauxhall Streets, just north of the city's downtown. The park underwent upgrades that include a new play environment, designated ADA parking, concrete walks and a wooden guardrail at the northeast corner of the park.

- Play equipment is located in a mulch bed and is accessible by a concrete walk. Two funnel hoops near play area are old and outdated, and should be replaced. Condition: GOOD
- New concrete pavement throughout the park enhance the pedestrian experience. Condition: GOOD
- Existing mature vegetation are present throughout this recreational area, as well as new tree plantings. Condition: GOOD
- Park signage is located along Broad Street only, and a Black Heritage Trail sign was noted on Vauxhall Street. Condition: GOOD
- Street parking and ADA parking is adequate on secondary side streets. Condition: GOOD
- Other Observations: Site lighting needs to be replaced. A large expanse of open space is present at the south end of the park that could be earmarked for future development. Condition: GOOD
- Recommend another playscape for older children and possible picnic tables and grills.
- Improvements or renovations to perimeter signs are need per facilities report of 2022-2023.



Fulton Park



Fulton Park - Site and Facilities Assessment

Description	GOOD	FAIR	POOR	Comments
Picnic Area with Mural		●		Recently upgraded with mural; bituminous concrete pavement but no site furnishings for sitting or gathering; no ADA access from within park
Skate Park			●	In need of upgrades; fencing missing/broken; many skate features are broken
Basketball Courts (2)	●			Recently upgraded
Playground		●		Many worn areas with holes/cracking/patching in resilient surfacing, as well as wet areas indicating a potential drainage issue; graffiti noted on play equipment; missing ADA swing at swing set; no ADA accessible walk to play area
Pavements			●	Bituminous concrete paths are uneven, cracked with overgrown turf, and in need of replacement, including steps and railing; accessible walks are needed to and between park amenities
Parking		●		No onsite parking except gravel lot off Water Street. Paved parking only on street; no designated ADA spaces;
Vegetation			●	Very mature and in need of pruning; extensive pruning needed along perimeter fencing, Briggs Brook and along the stairs and railing on the south side of the brook along Crystal Ave
Site Furniture			●	Old, outdated and should be replaced at all park amenity locations
Lighting		●		One location near basketball courts
Signage		●		Small park sign located on fence at entrance on Water Street; very hard to see; graffiti noted; No signage on State Pier Road or Crystal Avenue
Circulation		●		No vehicular circulation at park, only pedestrian; access via walkway overpass from Winthrop Square Apartments across Eugene O'Neill Dr/Water St or surrounding apartment complexes located on multiple 4 lane roads; inside pedestrian circulation is awkward due to layout of park with no ADA accessible routes to park amenities
Stormwater Management	●			Sheet flow over land
Other Observations	●			Planned improvements include parking lot at playground area with ADA spaces and accessible route to proposed bridge over Briggs Brook with benches located on north and south sides, clearing of vegetation around brook, consider composting restroom facilities; consider adding lighting at proposed parking lot, adding a pavilion between skate park and basketball court, and creating additional access points

Veterans Memorial Park



Veterans Memorial Park - Site and Facilities Assessment

Description	GOOD	FAIR	POOR	Comments
Baseball Field	●			Regulation size baseball field complete with backstop, fencing, dugouts, netting added to prevent balls from going into the street, electronic scoreboard, metal stands on concrete pads, irrigation; no field lights or site lighting in parking lot, foul poles, old style player benches and worn, no scorer's table
Soccer Field	●			Added during park renovation, includes goals and three sets of stands for spectators; no player benches
Walking Trail	●			Added during park renovation
Restroom	●			Added during park renovation; accessible route to building
Pavements	●			Parking lot replaced during park renovation, striping faded and worn; stone dust walking trail, stone dust eroding at section by HCP spaces and spilling into spaces, consider paving material for the walk at this area
Parking	●			On site parking with two ADA spaces that provides access to the park
Vegetation	●			New trees planted during park renovation
Site Furniture	●			Sufficient at fields
Lighting			●	None
Signage	●			New park sign at pedestrian entrance; no sign at parking lot entrance. The "Park Rules" sign is missing.
Circulation	●			Vehicular and pedestrian circulation is good
Stormwater Management	●			Pavement runoff is captured by a catch basin in parking lot; sheet flow over land
Other Observations	●			Park reopened in May 2019 after an extensive renovation; consider adding playground and other amenities for young children. The wall is in poor condition and falling into the back side of the walk. Consideration should be given for future Capital Improvements funding.

Bartlett Park



Bartlett Park

This park parcel is 1.38 acres and located at 240 Broad Street, in the center of the city. The park underwent upgrades in 2019 that included two new basketball courts, player benches, court lighting, and a large picnic area. The park does not have bathrooms. Park shares property with New London Fire Department Station 2 which is separated by chain-link fencing.

- Park can be accessed at Broad Street and Waller Street. Condition: GOOD
- Park signage is located at Broad Street only. Condition: GOOD
- Basketball court surface coating is holding up although there are signs it is being driven on. Some damage noted at padding around the basketball hoop poles and some of the player benches. Courts are lit. Condition: GOOD
- Existing mature vegetation borders the perimeter of the park, with new tree plantings at the Broad Street entrance. Condition: GOOD
- On street parking is available. Condition: GOOD
- Other Observations: A large expanse of open space is present at the south end of the park that could be earmarked for future development. Consider the addition of a restroom. Condition: GOOD



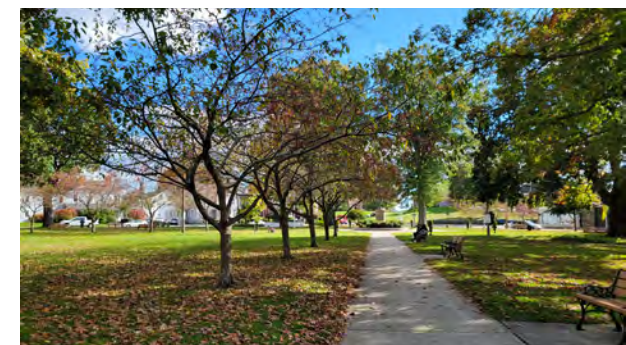
Williams Park



Williams Park

This park parcel is 1.73 acres and encompasses an entire city block located at Broad, Channing, Granite and Williams Streets, in the heart of the City's center. This park pays tribute to Nathan Hale and war veterans with a trio of monuments. A series of walkways from the corners of the park terminate at the Nathan Hale monument near the center of the park. In the middle of the southwest side of the park along Broad Street features a monument dedicated to New London's WWII, Korea and Vietnam veterans. At the southeast side of the park along Williams Street, a third monument honors veterans and was dedicated in 1961 by the Jewish War Veterans.

- Internal concrete walks in good condition, although some cracking was noted. Some perimeter concrete walks need to be replaced especially on southeast side. Condition: GOOD/FAIR
- Park signage is located at Broad Street only. Park map of historic elements located at corner of Broad and Williams Streets. Condition: GOOD
- On street parking is available. Condition: GOOD
- Accessible curb ramps located at all corners of the park. Condition: GOOD
- Nice compliment of existing mature and ornamental trees on perimeter and along interior walks. Condition: GOOD
- Other Observations: This is a well-loved park with plenty of benches for resting and contemplation. Monuments are well kept. Condition: GOOD. Recommendations: Consider adding an irrigation system and lighting.



Ye Old Ancient Burial Ground



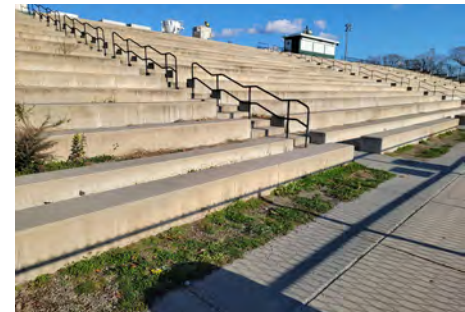
Ye Old Ancient Burial Ground

Ye Antientist Burial Ground is the oldest colonial cemetery in New London. The parcel is 1.5 acres, and is bounded by Hempstead Street on the west and Huntington Street on the east, running from Granite Street to approximately Bristol Street. Many prominent and notable figures were buried here.

- Parcel is not ADA accessible. Condition: POOR
- Many headstones are in need of repair and/or restoration. Condition: POOR
- Park signage is located at cemetery entrance on Hempstead Street, as well as a Black Heritage Trail sign. Condition: GOOD
- On street parking is adequate on Hempstead Street. Condition: GOOD
- Existing vegetation is very mature and many trees need to be pruned and/or removed for public safety. Condition: POOR
- Other Observations: Nice view of the Thames River. Condition: GOOD



Sports Complex



Sports Complex - Site and Facilities Assessment

Description	GOOD	FAIR	POOR	Comments
Stadium Football Field & Track	●			Track has been upgraded but turf field is 13 years old and needs replacement. Budget for turf replacement has been approved.
Soccer Field	●			Recently upgraded field. (2) sets of bleacher; no player benches
Tennis Courts (6)			●	Pavement is in rough shape: major cracking, grass growing in cracks, surface coating is very worn and peeling; nets are ripped and sagging; fencing is in good condition; no player benches, one picnic table in poor condition outside court
Spectator Stands at Stadium Field		●		Lots of grass and weeds growing in gravel; gravel not contained, found on all concrete surfaces, and also needs to be replenished; concrete amphitheater seating needs cleaning; ADA seating available; railings in good condition;
Concession / Restroom	●			Recently upgraded. in good condition
Pavements	●			Recently upgraded; some areas of cracking noted; accessible bituminous concrete walk to west entrance to stadium seating is cracked, uneven and not flush at concrete edge
Parking	●			Parking available at high school; five HCP spaces by soccer fields (signs missing) provides accessible route between fields
Vegetation		●		Mostly mature around perimeter; new tree plantings may be included in school renovation
Site Furniture		●		Minimal except at Stadium Track & Football Field
Lighting		●		Sufficient lighting at fields and in parking areas
Signage		●		No park sign at any entrances; missing ADA signs on posts at HCP spaces; field signs noted on scoreboards but none at tennis courts; sports complex name located on southeast side of stadium seating (near concession stand)
Circulation	●			Vehicular and pedestrian circulation is good
Stormwater Management	●			Pavement runoff is captured by trench drain at track entrance; natural sheet flow over land
Other Observations	●			Well used complex; unable to review practice football field due to construction and unable to determine if ADA access still exists at top of stadium seating

Bates Woods Park



Bates Woods Park - Site and Facilities Assessment

Description	GOOD	FAIR	POOR	Comments
Athletic Fields - Softball (1)/ Baseball (2)		●		Turf and field renovations needed; irrigation provided, noted broken valve box near concession stand; rusted fencing noted; netting needed between fields and to protect spectators and players; wooden dugouts need to be upgraded; field maintenance needed at batting cages and pitching mounds
Concessions / Restroom (2)	●			Restroom building near the playground is open to the public. The concession has a separate restroom which is open to the public Only during baseball games.
Playground	●			Play equipment is located in resilient safety surfacing; many worn areas with holes/cracking/patching in resilient surfacing; swing set missing ADA swing seat
Pavilion / Picnic Areas (3)	●			Aged wooden pavilion structures with creosote-treated wood power poles as posts that are bleeding onto concrete pads; many sources state this is unsafe; ample tables and grills provided at each location; accessible walks to each; ash from grills needs to be cleaned up
Pavements		●		Large parking lot in good condition with some minor cracking noted; concrete walk pavement in good condition; bituminous paths need replacement as large cracks, uneven surfaces and weeds growing in cracks were noted in many locations; some edge transitions where different pavement types meet were not flush
Parking	●			Large parking lot provides adequate parking, including HCP spaces near athletic fields and play equipment with accessible curb ramps for access to the park and amenities; also service vehicle access to fields provided from parking lot; no HCP signs at spaces, striping and symbols only
Vegetation	●			Mostly mature and in need of pruning, with new tree plantings in parking lot and near animal control; one dead tree noted at entrance to animal control
Site Furniture		●		Old, outdated and in need of replacement, Recommend new picnic tables and grills.
Lighting	●			Adequate lighting at parking lot and at fields; softball and baseball field lighting may need upgrade due to rusted posts and aged lighting; recent upgrades at upper field and in parking lot
Signage	●			Nice gateway entrance and sign on Chester Street; directional signage provided in parking lot once inside park
Circulation	●			Vehicular and pedestrian circulation is good; accessible route to upper field may need railings if slope is greater than 5%
Stormwater Management	●			Pavement runoff is captured by catch basins; sheet flow over land
Other Observations	●			Park offers many opportunities for passive and active recreation; bike rack located at concession building and bike markings noted on pavement; park provides accessibility for children and adults with disabilities; trail system past Animal Control through woods.

BDJ Multi-Magnet Middle School Campus



BDJ Multi-Magnet Middle School Campus

This middle school parcel is 5.65 acres and is located at 36 Waller Street, in the heart of the City of New London. The parcel is currently undergoing major renovations to create a 21st century learning environment for thematic magnet programming (STEM and International Education). An enlarged interior courtyard is envisioned to allow for enhanced outdoor programming and educational opportunities. When complete (anticipated Fall 2023), this education institution will serve approximately 750 students in grades 6-8.

- At the time of the site visit, school renovations are still on-going and the General Contractor's storage containers remain on site, therefore no assessment was performed.



CB Jennings International Elementary Magnet



CB Jennings International Elementary Magnet

This school parcel is 2 acres and located at 50 Mercer Street, in the center of the city. Serving the needs of children in grades K-5 at C.B. Jennings International Elementary Magnet School, this facility provides two play environments, a swing set, one basketball court, four square game area, and picnic tables, and walking track around perimeter.

- Play equipment is located in resilient safety surfacing; all equipment is accessible. Surfacing needs to be replaced. Play equipment is aging and worn. No ADA swing at swing set. Condition: FAIR
- Basketball court surface is striped but does not contact surface coating. Condition: GOOD
- Minimal existing mature vegetation is located at the perimeter. The large paved play area could benefit significantly from additional tree plantings. Condition: GOOD
- Pavement runoff is being directed to catch basins. Condition: GOOD
- Other Observations: Pavement has deep cracks and holes, uneven surfaces and transitions to other surface materials, and patched areas; grass growing through cracks. No unpaved open space areas. Condition: FAIR



Williams Memorial Park



Williams Memorial Park

This 19th century historic park site is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and serves as the focal point of the Williams Memorial Park Historic District. The 2.21 acres park is designed for passive recreation, with large expanses of lawn interspersed with granite outcroppings and paths that meander down the hill from Hempstead Street to Broad Street. A large granite obelisk sits at the northern tip of the park and was erected by the State of Connecticut to honor the Civil War 21st Regiment, Connecticut Volunteer Infantry.

- Although the park does have walks, the grades do not qualify as ADA accessible. Condition: FAIR
- Concrete walks are in need of repair or replacement. Most have very large cracks and pose public safety concerns. Condition: POOR
- Park signage is located at the northeast corner of Broad Street only. A placard near the obelisk provides an historical account of the significance of the park and Charles Augustus Williams. Condition: GOOD
- Existing mature vegetation is located throughout the recreational area; some new trees planted. Condition: GOOD
- Other Observations: Existing cobra lights should be replaced with ornamental site lighting to compliment the historic park. One bench was found at the top of the hill, but more are needed throughout the walking paths. Condition: POOR. Recommend consideration for art events in this park as it is a passive walking/strolling park.



Parade Plaza



Parade Plaza

The park plaza is 0.41 acres located at the corner of State Street and Water Street, and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as part of the Downtown New London Historic District. The redesign of Parade Plaza completed in Spring 2010. Improvements included plaza upgrades, reconfiguration of traffic lanes, new intermodal transportation connections, new pedestrian crosswalks, ramps, stairs, amphitheater seating, benches, whale tail fountain and pergola structures, new lighting and signage to encourage pedestrian traffic and provide greater public safety around New London's busy transportation center. The renovation also included relocation of the historic Nathan Hale School House and preservation and stabilization of the Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument which is dedicated to the city's Civil War veterans. The allegorical figure atop the monument represents Peace.

- Multiple accessible entry points to the plaza are present. Condition: GOOD
- Parking is provided in the parking garage on Water Street. Condition: GOOD
- All walking surfaces are constructed with pavers. Some uneven surfaces and cracking/holes noted. Condition: GOOD/FAIR
- Multi-uses of the plaza - festivals, farmers market, etc. Condition: GOOD
- Other Observations: Well designed plaza, historical plaques located throughout, although no vegetation was considered in the design. In 2013, Travel and Leisure magazine recognized Parade Plaza in downtown New London in their list of "America's Most Beautiful Town Squares." Condition: GOOD



Waterfront Park



Waterfront Park

This waterfront park parcel is 3.62 acres and is located on the east side of South Water Street and the rail line. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as part of the Downtown New London Historic District. Located in the heart of New London, this recreational waterfront park includes a 1/2 half mile improved promenade with concrete walks, benches, site lighting, and fantastic views of the Thames River. It features piers, public art displays and hosts many cultural and arts events throughout the summer.

- On site parking can be accessed from Bank Street Connector and South Water Street, and includes ADA parking. Additional parking located at the Water Street Garage. Condition: GOOD
- Public restrooms. Condition: GOOD
- Passive recreation - walking, jogging, wildlife observation, picnicking, and photography. Dogs are welcome. Condition: GOOD
- No park signage at either entrance. History and education placard signage throughout the park. Condition: POOR/GOOD
- Other Observations: This waterfront recreational amenity is fully accessible and appeals to people of all ages with a variety of piers - Amistad Pier, Children's Discover Pier, and fishing pier. There are many opportunities to learn about New London's waterfront from the interpretative signage, and offers picturesque views of the town, harbor, and passing ships. Condition: GOOD



Garfield Park



Garfield Park

This park parcel is 0.35 acres and located at the corner of Garfield Avenue and Blackhall Street, just south of Downtown. The park is situated on a steep slope with meandering bituminous concrete paths and two play structures for young children. Play areas are set on terraces framed by retaining walls and chain-link fencing.

- On street parking; no designated ADA parking space. Condition: FAIR
- Both play structures are located in mulch beds which need to be replenished; all equipment is accessible once inside the play area. Condition: GOOD
- Bituminous concrete paved paths are not ADA compliant as they are narrow, slopes are steep and roots from mature trees are creating uneven, cracked and unstable walking surfaces. Condition: POOR
- There is no park signage in this park. New park sign is planned for Summer 2023. Condition: FAIR
- Existing mature vegetation is located throughout the park providing shade, but they do require pruning. Condition: FAIR
- Other Observations: Park is difficult to access for children and adults with disabilities due to the steep slopes and uneven walking surfaces, and is need of an accessible walk system to all levels. There are numerous benches throughout. Condition: POOR



McDonald Park



McDonald Park

This park parcel is 0.23 acres and located at the corner of McDonald Street and Connecticut Avenue, just south of Downtown. In 2017, this former vacant lot was transformed into a city park that now features fruit trees, berry bushes, community garden beds and a play area. The community gardens are managed and operated by a local non-profit, FRESH (Food: Resources, Education, Security, Health) New London which creates opportunities for people of all ages and circumstances to connect with their community and grow food to dismantle systemic oppression and build food sovereignty.

- Safe play area designated for young children. Picnic tables nearby. Condition: GOOD
- Inconspicuous small handmade, painted park sign mounted to wood fence on west side of park bearing the park name; trail head type sign located on corner populated with FRESH flyers and information with no mention of park name. Condition: FAIR
- Rented and staff community garden beds are fenced and gated; unfenced snack beds offer free food to the community. Staked and mounted FRESH signs provide guidance on how to use the garden space. Condition: GOOD
- Concrete walks in Right-of-Way are heaved creating unstable walking surfaces. Condition: FAIR
- On-street parking available. Condition: GOOD
- Some vegetation appears overgrown and should be pruned. Condition: GOOD
- Other Observations: This is a wonderful addition to the New London park system. It's a bright, colorful and engaging space. Condition: GOOD





BP Learned Mission

This Early Childhood Resource Mission is 1.87 acres and located at 40 Shaw Street, in the south central section of the city, serving the community with programs for children provided after school and on weekends. This facility provides two play environments, and a very large expanse of outdoor open space that contains two soccer goals and baseball backstop fencing.

- Play environments are located in mulch with accessibility to play equipment as well as a rubber surface play area. Condition: GOOD
- Small parking lot for staff and visitors, includes one HCP space. Condition: GOOD
- Water was noted along perimeter of building indicating a potential drainage issue. Condition: FAIR
- No vegetation on site except for existing mature street trees on Shaw Street and Shaw's Cove. Condition: GOOD
- Other Observations: Entire play area is fenced and gated. Condition: GOOD

The Recreation Department uses this facility daily from 4-8pm for programming for all age groups, and on weekends when the school is not being used for early childhood development. Additionally, the facility is also used for summer camps when the school is not in session.



Mercer Park



Mercer Park

This park parcel is 4.35 acres and located between Boston Post Road and Willets Avenue, on the west end of the city. This park features a 2-12 year play environment with swing set and recently renovated basketball court accessed from Willets Avenue, and a regulation size baseball field accessed from Boston Post Road and Beckwith Street. Half of the baseball field is located in the Town of Waterford but owned by the City of New London.

- Play equipment is located in resilient safety surfacing and is fenced and gated; all equipment is accessible once inside the play area. There is no paved walk to the playground. Many small cracks noted in the surfacing. Condition: FAIR (ADA walk and picnic tables coming Spring 2023)
- Basketball court surface coating is holding up although there are signs it is being driven on. One hoop net needs to be rehung or replaced. Picnic table located by court but no player benches. Condition: GOOD
- Old and rusted chain-link fencing separates the basketball court and play area from baseball field. Condition: POOR
- On-street parking available on Willets Avenue and grass parking at baseball field. No ADA parking at either location. Condition: FAIR
- Baseball field has dugouts, scorer's table, irrigation, electronic scoreboard, concessions, restroom, one set of metal stands on a concrete pad, new backstop fencing was recently added, and field is well maintained. No field lights, fencing should be added along first and third base sides with netting added for protection. Concrete walks are in need of repair or replacement. Large cracks were noted created uneven walking surfaces. Condition: FAIR
- Existing mature vegetation is located at the perimeter of the recreational area and requires pruning. No new trees planted. Condition: FAIR
- Park amenity may appear to belong to the apartment building instead of the community. Small park sign at entrance to ball field on Boston Post Road and field sign at dead end of Groton Street. No consistency in appearance, size or format. Condition: FAIR
- Other Observations: The baseball field could be transformed into a premier field with some improvements such as fencing around the perimeter, foul poles, netting, batting cages, practice pitching mound, additional stands, and building upgrades. Condition: FAIR



Calkins Park



Calkins Park - Site and Facilities Assessment

Description	GOOD	FAIR	POOR	Comments
Soccer Fields (4)	●			Field upgrades in 2013
Baseball Field	●			Field upgraded in 2013
Basketball Court	●			Surface coating very worn; hoops replaced; minimal surface cracking noted; no ADA route to court
Playground	●			Surface recently updated with interlocking perforated rubber mats (tiles) - surface seems uneven; accessible walk added from field but not parking lot; equipment in good condition; missing swings, including ADA swing
Community Gardens	●			Fenced
Restrooms (2)	●			Restrooms in building were part of 2013 upgrades to the fields.
Pavements		●		Large cracks noted in parking lots, striping faded and worn; 1/2 mile walking trail in good condition - added in 2013 upgrades
Parking	●			Two lots provide adequate parking, including HCP spaces, to amenities and courts; accessible route from HCP spaces (lot near field) provides access to the park
Vegetation		●		Mostly mature along perimeter; some new trees planted along Crescent (10 years ago); prune back vegetation and remove invasives from rain gardens
Site Furniture		●		No benches at playground; no player benches at basketball court or soccer fields; no bike racks
Lighting		●		One cobra light affixed to small restroom building located at south end of park
Signage		●		Large granite park sign located on Riverview Avenue near pedestrian entrance; no park sign at Crescent Street entrance; broken wooden sign on Community Garden fence
Circulation	●			Vehicular and pedestrian circulation is good, including 1/2 mile walking trail
Stormwater Management	●			Parking lot runoff is directed to catch basin on Crescent Street; area drains capture sheet flow from field runoff
Other Observations	●			Mostly an active recreation park, but some passive recreation is available; this park could benefit with the addition of a picnic area/pavilion, site furniture and bike racks.

Green Harbor Beach and Park



Green Harbor Beach and Park

This park parcel is 3.6 acres and located along Pequot Avenue, in the southern end of the city. The park underwent upgrades in 2018 and more recent renovations to the existing parking lot, including adding ADA parking spaces, concrete walk to playscape and swings, picnic tables on concrete pads, and ornamental fencing along Pequot Avenue. New trees were planted in the park in 2021 thanks in part to a grassroots citizens' group called New London Trees. In addition, drainage improvements were incorporated to the beach. Drainage improvements were done between 2019 and 2021.

- Park signage is located on the park side of Pequot Avenue but no sign at the beach. Condition: GOOD
- The play environment and swings are located in resilient safety surfacing; all equipment is accessible except for a broken component that needs repair. It is boarded up and marked with a cone for safety. Some small holes noted in surfacing. Condition: GOOD
- New concrete walks provide an accessible route to the playground from the parking lot. Curb ramps and crosswalks provide an accessible route to the pier and beach area. Condition: GOOD
- Renovated parking lot provides two ADA parking spaces and on-street parking is also available. Condition: GOOD
- There is a nice mix of existing mature vegetation and newly planted trees throughout the recreation area. Turf area near the parking lot and concrete walk is in need of renovation. Condition: GOOD
- Other Observations: This is a nice recreational amenity for the community. Park improvements have made a significant impact for children and adults with disabilities. Condition: GOOD



Harbor Elementary School



Harbor Elementary School

This school parcel is 3.03 acres and located at 432 Montauk Avenue, in the southern end of the city. Serving the needs of children in grades K-5 at Harbor Elementary School, this facility provides a new large play area with two playgrounds and rocking elements, basketball court, a swing set, a baseball field, separate picnic area with tables, and several benches on a terraced area along the parking lot at field level.

- Play equipment is located in resilient safety surfacing; all equipment is accessible once inside the play area. Condition: GOOD
- Baseball field has overgrown vegetation on fencing and is all turf. Condition: FAIR
- Existing mature vegetation is located at the perimeter of the recreational area. Condition: GOOD
- More mulch is needed in the swing set to provide adequate depth of safe play and to prevent weeds from growing into the area. Condition: FAIR (Swing replacement scheduled for Fall 2023)
- Other Observations: Entire play area is fenced and gated. Steep slopes inhibit the ability to provide accessible routes to the amenities, therefore, it is not ADA accessible. Access to all play areas is via uneven wooden/asphalt stairs. Site furnishings are old and outdated. Ground surface of picnic area is rocky and uneven/not stable. Condition: FAIR



Toby May Park



Toby May Park - Site and Facilities Assessment

Description	GOOD	FAIR	POOR	Comments
Softball Fields (2)	●			North field does not contain an outfield fence; raised wood curbing around batting cage poses a potential safety concern for athletes; turf and field renovations needed at both fields
Tennis / Pickleball Courts	●			Recently upgraded; one tennis court doubles as (2) pickleball courts
Handball Court	●			Recently upgraded; some pavement cracking noted around handball wall
James Johnson Basketball Courts (2)	●			Recently upgraded
Playground	●			Renovation planned for Spring 2023; swing set new (more mulch needed)
Pavilion / Picnic Area	●			Renovation planned
Restroom	●			Renovation planned for Spring 2023
Pavements		●		Large Parking Lot: many large cracks noted, striping faded and worn; Pavement Transitions: some edge conditions where different pavement types meet were not flush; Walks: bituminous concrete paths are uneven, cracked with overgrown turf
Parking	●			Two lots provide adequate parking, including HCP spaces, to amenities and courts; accessible curb ramp at HCP spaces provides access to the park
Vegetation		●		Mostly mature
Site Furniture		●		Old, outdated; will be replaced during Spring 2023 renovation
Lighting		●		New lighting in basketball and tennis court areas; none at parking lots or at fields
Signage		●		Very small, channel post park sign located at drive entrance but only visible to northbound side traffic; city park sign set off street and hidden by overgrown evergreen shrubs; more directional traffic signs needed in large parking lot; no signs posted at HCP spaces in large lot
Circulation	●			Vehicular and pedestrian circulation is good
Stormwater Management	●			Pavement runoff is captured by catch basins; sheet flow over land
Other Observations	●			Well designed park with good circulation system and accessible access to the amenities; large expanse of bituminous pavement in playground area. Future planned site improvements include complete playground renovation, new fitness equipment for all ages, and restrooms.

Nathan Hale Arts Magnet School



Nathan Hale Arts Magnet School

This school parcel is 8.26 acres and located at 37 Beech Drive, in the southernmost end of the city. Serving the needs of children in grades K-5 at Nathan Hale Arts Magnet School, this facility provides two separated play environments, two basketball courts, picnic tables and benches, a baseball field, and several raised garden planters.

- The baseball field looks unused with vegetation growing on the backstop. Condition: FAIR
- Both play environments are located in resilient safety surfacing; all equipment is accessible. Some cracking/holes noted in small playground. Condition: GOOD
- No surface coating on basketball courts, line striping is worn, and some visible cracks noted. Condition: GOOD
- Existing mature vegetation is located at the perimeter of the recreational area; new trees planted near small playground. Condition: GOOD
- Other Observations: Entire play area is fenced and gated. Some site furnishings are worn and should be replaced. A large expanse of open space is present at the south end of the school parcel that could be earmarked for future development. Condition: GOOD



3.4. Summary, Key Findings and Recommendations

The City of New London possesses a rich diversity of parks, recreation and open space facilities that form the public park system, each with its own distinct character. This network provides numerous and different recreational opportunities and benefits to residents throughout the city. Several signature sites such as Old Town Mill, Ye Old Ancient Burial Ground, Williams Memorial Park, Parade Plaza, and Waterfront Park possess unique features and celebrate the history and culture of the New London community. Other parks within the system are heavily focused on sports and active play, while some display opportunities for passive recreation.



3.4.1 Key Park Findings and Recommendations

- Bartlett Park and Veterans Memorial Field are the newest park upgrades in the city. Bates Woods, Sports Complex and Calkins Park contain the city's premiere baseball, softball, and little league fields, as well as soccer and football fields.
- In general, park facilities are in good working order because the city has consistently maintained them.
- Consistent signage is needed at all parks. Park signs should be added at vehicular and pedestrian entrances where none currently exist. Wayfinding signage is needed at larger parks to identify and direct users to attractions and trails. Interpretive signage should be provided at locations of natural, cultural and historic resources in parks and along trails to provide educational opportunities. This effort will bring a cohesive vision to the whole of New London's parks.
- Some of New London's parkland is designated in historic districts and/or listed on the National Register of Historic Places, but may not be known to the general public. These parks serve a unique role in understanding the values and stories that underpin the community and should be promoted in programmed historic interpretation and on the city's website. Preservation of the park's historical character, monuments, memorials and materials is essential in any future park improvements.
- More amenities are needed to allow for casual hang-out and socializing.
- Site furnishings such as benches, picnic tables, game tables, and bike racks are minimal or non-existent at numerous parks. Some existing site furnishings are aged and not of a consistent vernacular throughout the parks.
- More restroom facilities and drinking fountains are needed.
- Improvements to entry drives, parking lots, walks, sport courts are needed in many of the parks to address drainage and safety concerns.
- The parks currently contain many disparate path types, widths, and materials. The Master Plan recommends unifying the pedestrian circulation through the use of consistent materials.

- Playground surfacing at many of the city’s parks is in need of repair or replacement which may indicate an underlying product, installation, or drainage issue. Installing concrete curbing around resilient playground surfacing will prevent shifting and may enhance the longevity of the play environment.
- Add and/or upgrade site lighting across all parks to improve safety.
- Increasing the tree canopy in all parks will grow the urban forest and provide much needed environmental, health, economic and social benefits to the community. The use of native and other drought tolerant vegetation can enhance park design and support the ecological systems unique to the region. Existing, mature vegetation should be evaluated by a certified Arborist, pruned as needed, and any exotic/ invasive understory plants and trees should be removed.
- Establish strong connections and access to trails and other amenities (parks, municipal, medical, school, etc.) as important links of the park system.

3.5. Park Design Guidelines

When developing design principles for parks, it is important that each park be programmed, planned, and designed for use and facilities to meet the needs of its service area within the overall park and recreation system. The following park design guidelines provide baseline standards to ensure that existing and future parks are designed in a way that promotes enjoyment, safety, accessibility, comfort, and sustainability.

3.5.1 Signage

Signage at parks provides opportunities to make a first impression and can assist in promoting the image of the City of New London. To improve user experiences throughout the park system, a comprehensive, cohesive signage system should be developed that uses consistent design standards for gateway, regulatory, wayfinding, and educational/historical/environmental signs, branding elements, and inclusion of multiple languages. Design standards should also consider modularity of signs (the ability to update signage over time), security and vandal-resistance, illumination and visibility, scale and intended audience, and installation costs.

3.5.2 Lighting

To improve safety, energy efficiency, and aesthetic character of the parks, standardized site lighting shall include:

- LED light fixtures, full cutoff, dark sky friendly
- Standard neutral white (3000K)
- Post top mounted
- Architectural grade fixtures and poles, black powder coated with textured finish

3.5.3 Site Furnishings

The selection of site furnishings should be based on an established city standard. Benches, tables, water fountains, trash/recycle receptacles, shade structures, and bike racks used in the parks should be consistent with those used in urban environments. Consistency in site furnishings will help establish an identifiable city image, through the use of repeatable aesthetic elements, for New London and the park system as a whole. These furnishings should offer comfort, aesthetic beauty, and be of formidable stature to prevent vandalism.

- Benches and Tables – Seating should be made from a material that is comfortable both in winter and the heat of summer while being able to withstand vandalism. Benches and tables should be provided to offer places of rest, opportunities to experience views, and offer social gathering spaces.
- Water Fountains – Drinking fountains should be available at a ratio of 1 per acre with the exception of small parks (typically smaller than 1-acre), which should have one. Drinking fountains should be complementary to other site furnishings, such as benches and tables.
- Shade – Many park visitors have a desire for more shade at parks. Accordingly, shade should be provided in the form of trees and structures throughout New London parks adjacent to facilities such as seating areas and playgrounds. Wherever possible, shade should be provided through the addition of trees; however, fabric structures will be necessary in many areas.
- Trash/Recycle Receptacles – Just like people judge a book by its cover, they also judge a community by its appearance. There is a major difference between a city/town whose streets are lined with flowers and one lined with debris. An adequate supply of commercial receptacles is critical to provide people opportunities to dispose of their trash in an acceptable manner. Keep America Beautiful,

an organization that has dedicated the last 60 years to organizing volunteers to clean up litter, has a very useful Community Appearance Index. Whether you are a city planner, park manager, business owner, or concerned community member, it's essential to put in the extra effort to keep your community pristine. Keep America Beautiful found that a strong contributor to littering behavior is the existence of litter; therefore, the first step in prevention is to find and add an adequate number of quality commercial receptacles. Placement is critical to help your park and recreation facility prevent litter and boost cleanliness.

- Bike Racks – When setting out to create spaces intended for bike parking, the key outcome should be an area that allows cyclists to easily park their bikes with a reasonable expectation of security and protection for the short term. The primary feature of a bike parking rack is that it should allow both the frame and at least one wheel to be secured to the rack using a u-style lock. U-racks and Post and Ring bike racks are commonly used in these applications. Grid racks and others that only hold the wheel leave bikes susceptible to theft as the frame can easily be removed from the wheel.



3.5.4 Restrooms

Restrooms are an important public amenity and, in particular, help to extend park visits, and they should be a priority at the largest and most-used parks. The components, design, and placement of restrooms structures are important decisions to consider when specifying facilities. Restroom facilities should be safe, easy to maintain, and consistent for the park system.

- For permanent restrooms, an architect should be consulted for design.
- Portable toilets can be used in smaller park settings.
- Composting toilet systems are an environmentally sound, practical alternative to flush, vault, and portable facilities. There's no water wasted for flushing, pollution caused by sewers and septic systems is reduced, and composting toilet systems allow nutrients back where they belong.





4

Recreation Programs & Services

4.1. Overview

The City of New London provides descriptions and registration for its many recreational opportunities via mailings, a newsletter, and the Recreation Department website (www.newlondonrec.com). Recreational programs are offered in the following general categories:

- Adult/Teen Activities
- Swimming
- Youth Activities
- Camp
- Summer School Enrichment
- Basketball
- Before and After School Childcare

The Recreation Department's programs have been typically categorized as self-directed opportunities, facilitated activities, and leader directed opportunities.

This chapter's review of programs and services provide the Recreation Departments goals and vision for those programs and services that will best address the current and future recreational needs of New London's residents.

4.2. The Recreation Department Strategic Plan 2023-2026

Service and programming needs have been identified by the Recreation Department in their 2023-2026 Strategic Plan, the full version of which is located in the Appendices section supporting this document.

The 2023-2026 Strategic Plan cites the following standards that follow the latest CAPRA Accreditation guidelines.

- Standard 1.4 Mission Standard: There shall be an established mission statement that defines the direction and purpose of the agency. The agency mission is the purposed or reason for the existing of the agency and establishes the long-term direction for the agency services and activities.
- Standard 1.4.1 -Agency Goals and Objectives Standard: There shall be established measurable goals and objectives for the agency and for each organizational component within the agency. Such goals and objectives shall be directed towards accomplishing the agency mission, be reviewed periodically, and distributed to all appropriate personnel.
- Standard 1.5 – Vision Standard: The agency shall provide and doted Vision Statement that is aspirational, far reaching and states where the agency is going. It should be available to the approving authority, staff and participants.

New London's 2023-26 Strategic Plan outlines both short term and long-term goals that follow the CAPRA guidelines and which include the following.

Short Term goals

1. **Improved visibility in the Community. There are five strategies listed under this goal. They include:**

- 1.1. Follow a monthly schedule for the RecMobile.
- 1.2. Procure new shirts for staff recognition and have new swag and new logo visible at all events
- 1.3. Increase video and pictures of programs and events.
- 1.4. Put a Youth Affairs Marketing Plan into action.
- 1.5. Begin Registering events in the community

The goal of these strategies is to develop a counting tool to see if visibility increases each year.

2. **Increase programming for 11-14 ages. The strategies for this goal include:**

- 2.1. Bring back summer camp for 11-14 ages

- 2.2. Offer positions for Jr. counselor and Jr. Lifeguards
- 2.3. Consider Teen links for girls circles, boys community service, mentoring youth, etc.

The goal of these strategies is to increase 5 teen programs for the 11-14 age group.

3. Joint Marketing between Youth Affairs and Recreation. The strategies for this goal are:

- 3.1. Link registration systems
- 3.2. Advertise scholarships

The goal of these strategies is to increase the number of visitors to the website; clicks, saves, likes, comments, by 20%.

4. Increase Staffing The strategies include:

- 4.1. Advertise for new instructors and contractors via emails, Facebook, etc.
- 4.2. Use new partnerships to help spread the word.

The strategies for this goal look to increase instructors by 6 classes in FY 2024 and by 10 classes by FY 2025.

5. Facility Improvement. The strategies for this goal include:

- 5.1. Continue to help facilitate the new community center.
- 5.2. Continue to work together to meet office needs as they evolve.

Long Term goals

Long Term goals focus on the following:

1. Improved Facility and Program Plan to be completed for the new Community Center/ Wellness Hub. The strategy for this will focus on continuing development of participation.

2. Continue accreditation with all staff involvement. The strategies for this include:

- 2.1. Power DMS training

- 2.2. Regular staff meetings to include Accreditation discussions and regular updates.

3. Increase the Connections with the City. The strategies for this goal include:

- 3.1. Development of a team or subcommittee to recommend ideas as to how to develop more engagement with other departments
- 3.2. Departmental competitions or challenges.

4. Develop 501c3 Status. The strategy for this goal is to work with the accounting department in the City.

4.3. The Community Center: A Central Location for Programs and Services

One of the main goals from prior Strategic Plans was to assist in the development of a new Community Center that could meet many of the Recreation Department’s indoor programming and facility needs in a central location. Currently, programs and services are provided at various city-owned buildings including the library and some school facilities.

The Recreation Department and the City of New London have contracted with Brailsford & Dunleavy to serve as owner's representative for project management. The architect of record is Silver Petrucelli, a Connecticut-based architectural firm. The new Community Center will be located in the Fort Trumbull section of the city at the corner of Walbach Street, Chelsea Street and East Street. The center will now allow the Recreation Department to provide services, programs and facilities in a central location. Some featured facilities include an indoor pool, two basketball courts, classrooms, and a community kitchen. The project will be completed in three phases and is scheduled to open in 2025. The Cost of the project is \$40 million.



4.4. Other Agency Programs and Services

The Recreation Department continues to coordinate their work with numerous community, non-profit, and local businesses, in New London who have played an important role in offering programs for families.

The following are a list of programs that are offered through agencies and organizations outside of the Recreation Department.

- Hiking trails, tennis courts, a playground, and two little league ball fields at Mitchell Woods which is a 36-acre parcel of land owned by Mitchell College and operated by the Alfred Mitchell Woods Park Association.
- Bicycle lanes along Ocean Avenue leading to Ocean Beach Park.
- A one-mile river walk and passive park along the west side of the Thames River between Fort Trumbull State Park and Crocker's Boatyard.
- Historic Fort Trumbull State Park and the state piers near Fort Trumbull State Park.
- Festivals, special events and passive recreation at the downtown waterfront park.
- Cultural events such as farmer's markets, and luncheon music events at the downtown Parade Plaza.
- Arboretum tours and walks at Connecticut College Arboretum and the Carolina Black Gardens.
- Boating at private marinas and yacht clubs
- Special recreational and cultural events at Ocean Beach Park.

In their 2023-2026 Strategic Plan, the Recreation Department looks to continue collaborating and coordinating with these agencies and organizations to maximize resources of staffing and funding.

4.5. Current Programs Offered

The following programs are currently offered by the Department of Recreation and descriptions are provided on their website at <https://newlondonrec.com>.

1. YOUTH

- Dance – Contemporary/Lyrical, Rhythm & Sync Tap Dance, Break dancing and Tutting
- Sports – T-ball, soccer, basketball,
- Swimming Lessons and Aquatics – offered at pools and at the beaches.
- Enrichment Programs
- Exercise- Nutrition and Fitness Classes including Zumba and indoor pickleball
- Special Events
- Nonprofit Organizations Sport Leagues
- Early Childhood Family programs including year-round after and before school programs and summer playground programs
- School Readiness, and Service Connections
- Teen academic support,
- Community service,
- Employability,
- Career development
- Prevention of teen substance abuse,
- Juvenile delinquency,
- Risky behavior support programs for parents
- Parent leadership development training
- Literacy development opportunities

2. ADULTS

- Field and Pavilion Rentals
- Parks – available for both passive and active recreational use
- Sports including those offered for teens and youths
- Swimming- Aquatics/Beach
- Exercise- Nutrition and Fitness Classes
- Special Events
- Nonprofit Organizations Sport Leagues
- Health and Wellness Programs

4.6. Program Participation

A listing of individual programs conducted and associated revenue for the past three years can be found in the Appendices Section of this document. A summary of this information is listed below:

<u>Fiscal Year 2019- 2020:</u>	Registrations, 3856. Associated Revenue, \$87,166
<u>Fiscal Year 2020-2021:</u>	Registrations, 3897. Associated Revenue, \$124,351
<u>Fiscal Year 2021-2022:</u>	Registrations, 3354. Associated Revenue, \$123,366

(Note: grants and donations are not included in the above revenues)

Through the use of customer surveys and I-Dashboard statistics the Recreation Department will continue to obtain participation information for various programs.

4.7. Recommended Core Programs

Core programs are those programs that have been sustained for a long period of time, have a wide community appeal, are offered multiple times during the year, require full time staff to manage, have multiple levels of skill development and have a strong social value to the community.

New programs and services must be carefully evaluated with respect to funding availability and how they rank with other department priorities. The following suggested program areas are commonly found in most community recreation programs throughout the country.

- Sports Programs
- Youth Programs
- Aquatic Programs
- Recreation Center Programs
- Active Adult Programs
- Therapeutic Recreation Programs
- Fitness and Wellness Programs
- Outdoor, Nature, and Environmental Green Programs
- Neighborhood /Community Special Events

The New London Recreation Department successfully runs programs in all of the above listed areas; however, they would like to expand their programs in aquatics, sports and therapeutic recreation but have been limited by facilities and staff. The completion of the new Community Center will provide more recreational facilities to meet the needs of the residents. And included in the Recreation Department's 2023-2026 goals are an increase in staff.

4.8. Summary

Based on community input, the New London Department of Recreation successfully addresses a variety of program and service areas. Funding concerns and city budget constraints are challenges that sometimes limit the Department's services and programs. However, the Recreation Department continues to play a leading role in bringing community groups together. The Recreation Department's goals for 2023-2026 are to continue partnering with outside agencies in an effort to offer the very best for the residents of the city.





Rendering of the New London Community Center Designed by Silver Petrucelli Architects.
The new Community Center will provide enhanced facilities for the New London Recreation Department.



5

Community Input

5.1. Overview

Recreation Departments rely on annual input and feedback from members of the community who utilize the recreational facilities, programs and services. The New London Recreation Department has initiated several studies and surveys to obtain community input regarding the programs, services and facilities offered through their department.

Many of these surveys have been done annually as part of the Department's Strategic Planning initiative. Some of these surveys were completed as components of specific studies.

Over the past 20 years, these studies and surveys have included the following:

- The New London Community Center Feasibility Study completed by Ballard*King & Associates in 2010,
- Online surveys completed by the Recreation Department as part of their annual strategic planning, and
- Focus groups completed by the Recreation Department as part of their annual strategic planning.
- 2023 -2024 Community Assessment which included 25 partner organizations and focus groups reviewing and commenting on the design for the community center.

5.2. The New London Community Center

5.2.1 The Community Center 2010 Feasibility Study

Ballard*King Associates did a Feasibility Study in 2010 to ascertain the viability of a New London Community Center that would provide one location for all of the City's recreational programs and services offered by the Recreation Department.

The study obtained community input and survey information through a demographic analysis, alternative service provider inventory, stakeholder meetings, public forums, and an online survey.

The demographic analysis relied on a variety of sources for data, and it examined two service areas which included the City of New London proper and a 5-mile radius surrounding the City.

This demographic analysis revealed the following information about the City's population.

- New London city proper has a very young community with a great deal of ethnic and racial diversity,
- New London's residents have a median household income that is significantly lower than state and national numbers,
- The 5-mile radius area shows a population that is younger than the national average but not as diverse as the City proper, and
- The median household income increases slightly within the 5-mile radius area but is still lower than the state and national median household income average.

The demographic analysis for the Community Center Feasibility Study indicated that there was sufficient total population between the two demographic areas to yield sufficient memberships to sustain a community center facility. This demographic analysis helped Ballard*King with their community input models.

The Ballard*King team conducted several stakeholder meetings and public forums to obtain information on community needs for recreation. They also conducted several focus groups during a concentrated period in Spring-Summer 2010. Through these meetings, focus groups and public forums, Ballard*King obtained the following information from the community:

1. All groups recognized the need for a community center that provided recreational resources to fit the needs of the community. The following items were listed as desired elements:
 - Weights and Cardio training areas
 - Gym
 - Indoor Pool
 - Indoor walking/jogging track

- Arts and crafts
- English as a second language courses
- Community enrichment courses

2. All groups indicated a need for minimal fees so as to allow maximum participation by residents.

The focus groups included the following partners who provided a diverse representation of the City's population:

- High School Students
- Youth Voices
- Seniors
- Chamber of Commerce Business Leaders
- African American and Hispanic Leaders
- Recreation/Youth Sports
- YMCA
- Elected Officials
- Non-Profit and Area Funders

After the 3-day focus groups, two public meetings were held where attendees were asked to develop a list of facility components that they would like to see at the community center and then were asked to vote for the elements that they felt were most needed. The complete list of elements is provided in the Community Center Feasibility Study, which is provided in the appendices, however, those receiving the most votes were:

- Gymnasium
- Leisure Pool
- Café
- Auditorium
- Recording Studio
- Pottery Studio
- Kitchen for cooking classes
- Resource Center
- Indoor Walking/Jogging Track
- Nurses Station
- Library

- Multi-purpose room

Finally, the Ballard*King Feasibility Study conducted an online survey using Survey Monkey. Over a period of 2 months, 663 surveys were completed (582 in English and 81 in Spanish). The information was downloaded and then analyzed using a statistical analysis software package.

The survey asked questions about types of facilities that users would like to see within the community center, how often they would use the various facilities and what fees they would be willing to pay. The results of this online survey supported the information and community input that was obtained at the focus groups and public meetings.

5.2.2 The Community Recreation Center Design Process

From the start of the design process, the Community Center Project has had monthly Task Force meetings. The Task Force has overseen the progress of the work done by the design Project Team. The Project Team has met with the New London Taskforce and subcommittee groups and during the monthly taskforce meetings has provided updates to the community members. Subcommittee groups of the Task Force have also met to review design & construction, business, and marketing & fundraising goals.

The Community Center Design is meeting the goals and needs for increased indoor recreational programs and services at one location. The Community Recreation Center is approximately 57,000 square feet of office space, meeting and multipurpose rooms, fitness, aquatics, gym, classrooms, instructional kitchen, and associated support spaces.

5.3 Strategic Planning Surveys and Focus Groups

Each year for the past 20 years, the New London Recreation Department has conducted focus group surveys and online surveys from the community to obtain an understanding of how well the Department is doing with their programs and services. The focus groups have included:

- Seniors
- Youth groups
- Adults

The questions in the surveys ask participants to rate the following:

- Accessibility Programs, services & facilities
- Communication by the Department of Recreation
- Program areas, Services and facilities that are lacking
- Current programs, services or policies that are not working
- Areas of growth for services and programs
- Overall perception of programs and activities
- Cost of programs and activities
- Overall opinion of the Department of Recreation

As a result of their annual surveys, the Department of Recreation has prepared Marketing Plans, Program Plans and Action Plans for each calendar year. The responses to the online and focus group surveys are provided in the appendix and provide details for these community surveys done by the Department of Recreation.

5.4 Recommendations for Future Community Input

With the understanding that the Department of Recreation has a limited budget and staff, the following recommendations are suggested relating to future community input.

1. Surveys should continue to be completed by participants at the end of each program. Continue to include all user groups in surveys.
2. Continue online surveys through Survey Monkey or another online format that allows downloading and statistical analysis of data.
3. Continue to maintain consistent records. Perform an annual evaluation of the current database to determine if this is the best method.
4. Continue to evaluate short-term and long-term goals of the department based on responses from surveys.

With respect to Online Surveys, continue to evaluate:

1. How surveys are prepared and implemented.
2. How often during the year surveys should be performed.
3. How participants are selected and whether the demographic is representative of all possible users.

With respect to focus group surveys, continue to evaluate:

1. When they are scheduled, and whether surveys should be done more than once a year.
2. Whether focus group surveys adequately cover a diverse group of users.
3. The format for data entry .



6

Parks and Recreation Trends Research

6.1. Overview

Parks and Recreation agencies across the country play an important role addressing the needs of local communities by providing a link to facilities, programs, and services that help to improve and address quality of life issues. Numerous studies have shown the health benefits of parks on communities. A February 2022 research report prepared by the Urban Institute and funded by the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) presented evidence that parks and green spaces have three values that make them essential services to communities.

1. Economic value
2. Health and Environmental Benefits
3. Social importance

The City of New London provides residents with a wide range of quality parks and recreation services. In reviewing the direction of future trends, the New London Department of Recreation has been able to adjust its services to the types and kinds of programs and facilities likely to be used by the residents as well as funded through available grants and revenue resources.

Recent reviews of trends in parks and recreation indicate that the primary challenge for parks and recreation departments will continue to be balancing existing resources and programs with new and changing community needs. Recreational behavior reflects societal influences. Thus, future trends provide insight into the future demand for parks and recreational services.

6.2. Top Future Trends in Parks and Recreation

6.2.1. Parks as Infrastructure

In their 2021 report, the American Society of Civil Engineers states that parks support economic prosperity, prevent damage from

stormwater and build healthy communities. But despite this fact and the increased popularity of parks, studies indicate that there continues to be a deferred maintenance backlog of \$60 billion in local park improvements.

Currently funding is available through the 2020 Great American Outdoors Act that permanently funds the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act at \$900 million annually. There is also funding available through the recent passage of INVEST in America Act which provides billions of dollars for land acquisition, parks and recreation planning and infrastructure maintenance, repair and development. Funding from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) of 2021 is also available for infrastructure related projects. ARPA available funding allows infrastructure monies to be used for parks and recreation projects.

The Public Works Department of New London submitted a grant request to the City of New London Finance Department for \$6.5 million of ARPA funds for improvements to various city parks and recreation fields as well as improvements to Recreation Department buildings.

6.2.2. Parks and the Environment

Starting with Frederick Law Olmsted, Landscape Architects have understood the value of parks and open spaces in helping to mitigate climate in urban areas. Parks and green spaces are among the most effective tools for combating the effects of urban heat islands and urban hot zones. The concentration of waste energy, air pollution and limited tree canopy magnify the negative health impacts in urban areas and affect vulnerable, low-income populations the most.

Parks and Recreation agencies should play a leading role in protecting our environment. Facilities under their jurisdiction provide green spaces, open playfields and trails as well as waterfront/riverfront lands that help to mitigate the heat island effect in urban areas, help to promote clean water and provide

lands for conservation. All of this comes under the umbrella of Environmental Stewardship.

Environmental Stewardship has become everyone's responsibility. Communities across the country are making efforts to educate the public regarding Environmental Stewardship, through groups that assist with park maintenance, park, and open space improvement projects and through efforts to sustain natural resources. Programs that involve water conservation, recycling and composting, energy efficiency and best maintenance practices, are becoming common among Parks and Recreation departments.

In 2013, the City of New London through the Mayor's Office prepared a report titled Environmental Sustainability Policies and Procedures. This report outlines the following in-place resources and initiatives within New London that address Environmental Sustainability. Based on the most recent Plan of Conservation and Development, these resources and initiatives are still a focus of New London's environmental planning efforts.

1. The Plan of Conservation and Development, Standard 7.9 which outlines New London's efforts to become an Environmentally Sustainable community.
2. Approved policies on recycling, water conservation, energy conservation, Environmentally preferred purchasing, Sustainable Construction/Design, Community Gardens, Wetland Protections, and the work of the Inland Wetlands & Conservation Commission.
3. City Statutes relating to Harbor Improvement, the New London Port Authority and Boats, Docks, and Waterways.
4. City Statutes relating to Parks and Recreation.
5. City Statutes relating to Health and Sanitation.
6. Relevant information regarding Economic Development, Fort Trumbull Municipal Development and the New London Sustainability Committee.

6.2.3 Health and Wellness

The National Parks and Recreation Association (NRPA) provides information on the role of Parks and Recreation in Health and Wellness. NRPA recognizes that public parks and recreation agencies are leaders in improving the health and wellness of the nation. NRPA's website states:

Public park and recreation agencies create healthy communities and play a fundamental role in enhancing the physical environments in which we live. Through facilities, outdoor settings, and services provided, they support good health for people of all abilities, ages, socio-economic backgrounds, and ethnicities. They foster change through collaborative programs and policies that reach a vast population to:

- Help reduce obesity and incidence of chronic disease by providing opportunities to increase rigorous physical activity in a variety of forms;
- Provide a connection to nature which studies demonstrate relieves stress levels, tightens interpersonal relationships, and improves mental health;
- Aid in reducing hunger in America and increasing access to nutritious food options; and
- Foster overall wellness and healthful habits, such as becoming tobacco-free and engaging in enrichment opportunities that add balance to life.

Since 2000, a new phase of physical activity research referred to as active living research has also been promoted. Examples of active living include walking up the stairs instead of taking an elevator, going for a walk at lunch, biking to work, and playing a sport. Family and senior-based initiatives to increase physical activity are being promoted both nationally and locally through new community design ideas, public policies, and public communications campaigns such as Healthy Places by Design/Active Living by Design. (<https://healthyplacesbydesign>).

[org/project/robert-wood-johnson-foundation-active-living-by-design/](https://www.projectplay.org/project/robert-wood-johnson-foundation-active-living-by-design/)).

Some programs and partnership efforts include nutrition and healthy eating programs, social marketing and public service campaigns, the promotion of active transportation, and multipurpose trail and greenway development in an effort to create activity-friendly communities that make it easier for people to choose to be active. Additionally, there is an increased awareness of the relationship between physical activity and long-term health care.

Current statistics show that one in three American children and teens are overweight or obese, nearly triple the rate of 1963. According to the American Heart Association, childhood obesity has become the number one concern among parents in the United States. Childhood obesity today is causing a broad range of health problems that previously were not seen until adulthood, such as high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, and elevated cholesterol levels. Obese children are also prone to psychological problems such as low self-esteem, negative body image, and depression. (American Heart Association, Understanding Child Obesity).

New London's Department of Recreation looks to foster healthy lifestyles through a number of its programs and continues to develop programs and investigate funding resources to address issues such as childhood obesity such as through the award-winning MYFI program.

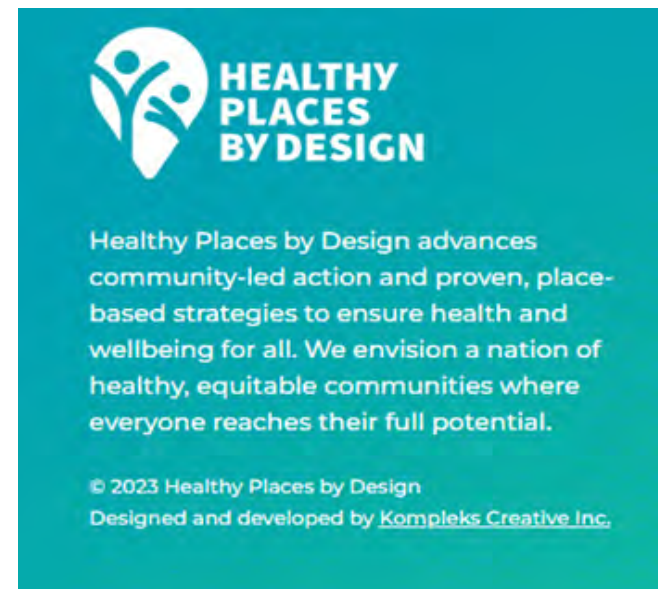
6.2.4 Decline in Youth Sports Participation

Multiple studies have shown that there is a sharp and continuing decline in youth sports participation along with a steady decline in physical activity by youth. The Aspen Institute's Project Play was launched in 2013 as the nation's first cross-sector effort to build healthy communities through sports.

They hold an annual summer event and in 2021 their State of Play report showed that before pandemic restrictions, participation in youth sports has declined from 45 percent in 2008 to 38 percent in 2018. " Most kids ages 6 to 12 playing a team sport quit by age 11, and since the pandemic, three in 10 kids who previously played say they are no longer interested in playing again."

The May 2023 Project Play summit will mark the 10th anniversary of Project Play. This year's summit looks to address a number of topics including "Why Sports Matters Now" by examining how the pandemic, social unrest, and rapid advance of technology have shifted the value proposition for why all children should have an opportunity to play, and develop as people, through sports.

One way that some agencies are addressing these issues is via "sports sampling" programs whereby specifically design programs are held over a day or a weekend during which sports trainers, players and leaders provide kids with the opportunity to try different sports for an hour or two and then have them move on to another sport.



Some agencies are also looking at promoting “non-traditional” sports such as mountain biking, pump tracks, hiking, and pop-up parks. The pop up parks are set up in neighborhood parks and agency staff host mini-golf days, family game nights and other recreational activities that many children have never experienced.

With the many online websites available, parks and recreation agencies can research a variety of resources to help them promote their programs and services and reach a broader spectrum of their population.

6.2.5 Aging Population

The twenty-first century will be marked by three significant demographic changes; changing family compositions, increases in immigrant populations, and the aging of baby boomers.

One decade from now America’s demographic, political, social, and technological environment will be considerably different. Factors such as the aging of the baby boomers, the decline of civic engagement, the increasing reliance on technology, the increasing desire to live a healthy lifestyle, the rising cost of municipal services, and the changing needs of residents will radically reshape life over the first three decades of the twenty-first century (Sente, Revenue Development, Swift).

An increase in later-life marriages, dual-income earners, women delaying or forgoing childbirth, divorce rates, and non-traditional families has resulted in smaller family sizes and more hectic family schedules (Revenue Development, Swift, Trendscan). These demographic trends, and a greater number of healthy senior residents, will increase the important role parks and recreation departments play in bringing various cohort groups of community members together.

The youth percentage (those between the ages of 1-17) of the U.S. population peaked during the baby boom era in 1964 at

36%, decreased to 25% in 2003, and is expected to remain steady through 2020 (Trendscan,).

Over the next decade baby boomers will establish a new concept of aging as they begin to join the ranks of the American elderly. The sheer number of boomers and their distinct attitudes toward exercise and health will create new trends and opportunities in the field of municipal recreation. While boomers will be motivated to live healthier lifestyles, retirees will play a more active role in community life than any past generation has. It is expected that boomers will desire non-traditional senior center programs, thus recreation departments must develop new and flexible ways to attract the boomers, who have the potential to become an enormous social resource.

By August 2022 one-half of all boomers will reach retirement age (Leisure Lifestyle Consulting). With the aging of the baby boomer population, the nation will experience an unprecedented growth among its senior citizen population. In 1900, 13% of the total U.S. population was over the age of 50, yet in 2000 this population soared to 27%, and in 2020 this population is expected to increase to over 35% (Novelli). The greatest population growth is among those 75 and older (Revenue Development). Currently, Connecticut is one of the states with the highest percentage of residents over the age of 65 (14.2%), while 10% of New London residents are 65 and over. Over the next decade through 2025 it is estimated that the US populations for ages 65 and over will increase by 36%, according to the US Census Bureau, Population Division. (Released by the US Census Bureau, 2012).

A larger senior population living healthier, longer, more self-indulgent lives will have a very dramatic influence upon future services for senior center recreational and leisure programs. Many studies are showing a growing tendency toward delayed retirement (Wiatrowski, Burtless & Quinn; Buford). Today, 25% of males and 15% of females between the ages of 65 and

69 are still working (Munroe). These percentages are likely to increase given that roughly 80% of baby boomers expect to work past traditional retirement age (Novelli). In the past, older adults joined senior centers out of a need for companionship, however seniors of the future will be working longer, be more capable of getting things done by themselves, and have stronger social networks with more people their age, thus decreasing their reliance on senior center memberships (*Ohio Department on Aging*).

In addition, the interests of the older adult population are expected to change due to increased health, energy, and education levels. ***It is imperative that senior centers understand that traditional offerings will not appeal to this new generation of seniors; in order to survive, centers must become more entrepreneurial, dynamic, and innovative*** (*Van Ryzin*).

It will be important for recreation providers to offer programs that address seniors' high capacity for intellectual and emotional development and to recognize seniors' limited resources. The most popular social events among older adults are those that focus on intimate relationships and programs that emphasize goal selection and optimization (*Burnett-Wolle, & Godbey*). With this in mind, we see the rise of a niche recreational sport, Pickleball, that started in 1965 and has now become the fastest growing sport in America (*The Economist*). Pickleball is estimated to have more the 4 million people playing on an annual basis. Pickleball is a universal sport that all ages can enjoy. It can be played indoors and outdoors at parks, recreation centers and schools.

Note: All of the above listed interests for older adults are provided through current New London Recreation Department programs.

6.2.6 Special Populations

Therapeutic recreation is also expected to be a growing trend that will surge with the aging of the baby-boomer

generation (*The Future's So Bright; Babcock Graduate School of Management*).

Title IX, which requires schools receiving federal funding to provide equal athletic opportunities for both males and females, has had a profound impact on the composition of sports participants and enthusiasts. The trend of women participating in traditionally male dominated sports is expected to remain steady in the future (*Babcock Graduate School of Management; TrendsCan*).

Similar advances in equity policies have provided the disabled with increased access to recreational programs (*Babcock Graduate School of Management*). With George H. W. Bush's signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act into law in 1990, congress intended to set a national goal of guaranteeing people with disabilities equal access to government services, public accommodations, employment, transportation, and telecommunications (*McGovern*). The national trend municipal parks and recreation departments have set in satisfying this goal has been towards inclusive recreation with separate and specialized programs offered as an option to mainstream integration. The importance of creating opportunities for people with disabilities to participate in community recreation programs has been well established; the chance to develop social skills, a sense of belonging, a positive self-concept, and friendships are some of the benefits that result from participation in community activities (*Hannon; Connolly & Law*). These benefits are well understood among recreation administrators. In a 2001 study conducted by ICMA, 54% of all municipalities participating in the study indicated that their parks and recreation department offered special programs for people with disabilities. Challenges lay in the rising costs of services, increasing enrollments, more diverse needs of clientele, budget constraints, and an increasing demand for more varied programs.

6.2.7 Technology

The expansion of home entertainment sources will continue to serve as competing factors for municipal recreation services. Examples include fantasy sports play, home fitness videos and equipment, innovative pocket-sized video games, handheld wireless Internet devices, and video-on-demand, video home delivery, and Internet movie access. Youth, in particular, are spending a growing number of hours in front of computer screens, supplementing face-to-face interactions with Text Messaging, email, and live-time computer game interactions.

Homes of the twenty-first century will not only provide refuge for relaxation and entertainment, but they will also be a place where people will obtain a wide array of services ranging from educational to financial investment services (*Munroe; Babcock Graduate School of Management*). The pervasiveness of technology will result in a tendency to participate in passive forms of recreation and to overwork, providing less time for family connections and active recreation, thus creating an increasing sense of isolation and loneliness (*Munroe; Babcock Graduate School of Management*).

Recreation facilities will need to respond to untraditional work schedules by offering seven-days-a-week programming and longer hours of operation (*Munroe; The Future's So Bright*). Furthermore, recreational services will need to support those adults unable to balance work, family, and leisure by providing less-structured family recreational opportunities (*Munroe; Babcock Graduate School of Management*).

6.2.8 Economics and Financing Trends

Over the past thirty years market principals have been introduced to the field of recreational services in an effort to make programs self-supporting (*Lahey*). Traditional financing methods for the operation and capital development of parks include general obligation bonds, revenue bonds, federal and

state grants, general tax appropriations, special tax levies, donations and gifts, and special tax proceeds.

However, in response to fiscal pressures, municipal recreation departments have implemented user and rental fees, formed public-private partnerships, looked for additional grant dollars from nonprofits and sports associations, formed enterprise funds, developed friends organizations and foundations, increased the use of volunteers, contracted out facilities, reduced hours of operation, and sold off services. Tactics to reduce general fund support have prompted concern that the efforts implemented in an attempt to keep public recreation affordable will ultimately compromise two similarly important roles of public recreational services: (1) parks serve as areas of refuge from the commercialization of private enterprise, and (2) public recreation services need to be accessible by every member of the community, regardless of one's ability to pay.

Another factor influencing economics in parks and recreation has been caused by a loss of workforce due to the pandemic. The National Parks and Recreation Association says that "Parks and recreation is facing the same pressures that retailers, service industries and other employers are in finding qualified workers". The lack of a qualified workforce will affect the services and programs being offered by parks and recreation departments.

Competition from the private sector also plays a role in parks and recreation services. With an increasing rate of memberships in gyms and health clubs, companies are constantly seeking to add excitement to their programs through Extreme Sports opportunities. The inherent liability concerns of providing extreme activities presented challenges for recreation departments to compete with private entertainment sources (*The Future's So Bright*). However, Sporting Goods Manufacturing Association study results (as cited in *Trendscan*), indicate that extreme activities that are increasing in popularity are, in fact, not that extreme anymore. The top ten most popular extreme sports in order of popularity are in-line skating, skateboarding,

paint-balling, artificial wall climbing, trail running, mountain biking, BMX bicycling, and rock/mountain climbing (Trendscan). In 2004 there were a reported 10.6 million skateboarders in the United States, one million more participants than baseball (SGMA).

6.2.9 Innovative Trends

Some innovations are also contributing to new trends in parks and recreation. **Dog parks** are becoming increasingly popular as dog owners look for enrichment activities for their dogs. 38 percent of people now travel with their dog and 68 percent of people say that pet-friendly communities and policies influence their decisions on where to buy a home.

Glow in the dark plants are being developed by chemical engineers at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology as a means of providing lighting for trails and greenways. This work is still in the research stages but it could lead to chemical-luminescent plants that light landscape trails and park pathways without the need for costly electrical work.



Roof gardens and rooftop recreational facilities are becoming more the norm with new large-scale apartment and condominium buildings in urban areas. More and more we are seeing new municipal recreational facilities that have rooftop swimming pools, tennis courts and pickleball courts

6.3. Summary

The New London Department of Recreation will be confronted with a challenge to maintain quality services while adjusting to the aging baby boomer population, continued population growth, and a more racially diverse community among a myriad of other changing demographics. In response to that challenge, the Department of Recreation plans to use this document as a framework for making policy decisions regarding the future direction of the New London recreation.

In Chapter Eight of this report, initiatives and objectives are set forth to guide policymaking, public investments, and City management of public recreation resources during the next five years and beyond. These initiatives and objectives are designed to provide direction in helping the New London Department of Recreation develop specific strategies to proactively address the future parks and recreation needs of the city.

Despite the important role of Parks and Recreation Departments in meeting community services and providing lifestyle benefits, trends indicate that areas such as Public Works, Public Health, Social Services, and Parks and Recreation will unfortunately continue to work with insufficient funding.



7

Operational Assessment & Financials

7.1. Overview

Budget constraints in cities, especially cities with high demands for disadvantaged low-income populations, continue to be a challenge for many communities. The amount of funding available for recreational services, improvements and maintenance affects the Recreation Department services and programs. Communities require access to nearby parks, open spaces and recreational facilities and programs so that there continue to be opportunities for physical activity and social programs.

The New London Recreation Department has developed a budget to meet the demands for programs, services, and park improvements for the next five years. Some of these funding sources include federal grants such as the American Rescue Plan

Act 2023 (ARPA 2023) monies. Federal funding sources/grants will reduce the reliance on general fund tax dollars.

7.2. Department Budget and Financials

The following information is a compilation of the New London Recreation Department Operating Budget and Capital Improvement Plan. This information was obtained from a review of current and proposed budget and Capital Improvement Plans for the City of New London. The following tables provide operating budget information for the Recreation Department. Budgets show projected expenses for future improvements to parks and recreation areas.

Figure 7.1 – Operating Budget for Recreation Department and Public Works

BUDGETS FOR STAFF AND STAFF OPERATING EXPENSES	FY 2019 ACTUAL	FY 2020 ACTUAL	FY 2021 ACTUAL	FY 2022 ACTUAL	FY 2023 ACTUAL THRU 12/31	FY 2024 MAYORS BUDGET
DEPARTMENT OF RECREATION						
RECREATION DIVISION PROGRAMS	\$ 170,031.00	\$ 160,655.00	\$209,810.00	\$ 313,787.00	\$ 179,590.00	\$ 439,984.00
RECREATION ADMINISTRATION			\$191,254.00	\$ 225,173.00	\$ 97,158.00	\$ 243,240.00
YOUTH AFFAIRS DIVISION	\$ 119,544.50	\$ 124,933.00	\$140,025.00	\$ 378,722.00	\$ 194,595.00	\$ 406,225.00
SUBTOTALS	\$ 289,575.50	\$ 285,588.00	\$541,089.00	\$ 917,682.00	\$ 471,343.00	\$1,089,449.00
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS - RECREATION RELATED BUDGET						
PARKS AND GROUNDS MAINTENANCE DIVISION*	\$ 778,832.00	\$ 705,511.00	\$762,736.00	\$ 926,109.00	\$ 415,826.00	\$ 911,136.00

*Includes expenses for payroll, benefits, training, supplies, equipments, rentals and leases, repairs and maintenance.

Figure 7.2 shows proposed capital improvements to address immediate needs and improvements at Department of Recreation facilities. These proposed capital improvements do not factor in funding for possible emergency repairs or any current deferred maintenance at parks and recreational facilities, nor does this capital improvement plan provide for any necessary improvements relating to ADA upgrades.

Figure 7.2 Proposed Capital Improvement Plan: FY 2021-2025

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN AS OF JANUARY 25, 2021	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025
BOND OFFERINGS FOR BUILDINGS AND PARKS	\$4,011,000.00	\$421,000.00	\$1,866,000.00	\$0.00	\$1,100,000.00

FUNDING ALLOCATION FROM CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025
RENOVATE SAL ALMONTE FIELD	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$1,000,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
RENOVATE SPORTS COMPLEX FIELDS	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$1,100,000.00
NEW PLAYSCAPE AND RECREATION AT TOPY MAY PARK	\$600,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
GREENS HARBOR BOAT RAMP REPLACEMENT	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$60,000.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
TOTALS	\$600,000.00	\$0.00	\$1,060,000.00	\$0.00	\$1,100,000.00

7.3. Funding, and Revenue Options

The New London Recreation Department works closely with the City's Parks and Recreation Commission to review policies and proposed improvements and to develop recommendations for long range planning. A number of the following organizational structures provide options for future revenue and funding for programs and services.

A. User Fees

In some communities, implementation of user fees has been met with resistance based on the belief that public recreation is primarily for the benefit of lower socioeconomic residents and that charging for services would essentially deprive these groups from participating (Rea). This attitude is now widely obsolete. Studies on consumer reaction to the implementation of user fees found that, in general, residents are willing to pay a modest fee to keep services open (Lahey).

Advocates of user fees argue that fees increase economic efficiency, promote equity by placing the burden of expenses on users, and generate revenue (More). However, in response to concerns, many Departments of Recreation have established scholarship programs to ensure that low-income members of the community are not adversely affected by program fees.

The key to successful fee-supported parks is in finding a service-mix that includes services that generate a significant profit, services that can be expected to generate only a moderate profit, and services that will not cover operating expenses but will broaden the recreational experience (Rea).

Parking meters and garages, golf courses, indoor tennis facilities, boat marinas, and special event venues (particularly wedding ceremony or reception areas) have been proven to be profitable ventures for many municipalities.

Less lucrative facilities include swimming pools, ice-skating rinks, ball fields, playgrounds, and walking trails (*The Trust for Public Land, Revenue Development*). In addition to a profitable service-mix ratio, good programming is essential to maximize participation and generate revenue (*Revenue Development*).

The New London Recreation Department has kept a record of their revenues from user registrations for various programs and services. Graphs showing this record of revenues are provided at the end of this chapter. The graphs show the Revenues by Registration Date for the Fiscal Years 2019 through 2023. The lowest revenues since 2019 occurred during the height of the COVID pandemic between 2020-2021.

B. Sponsorships

The private sector is becoming increasingly aware of the worth of associating a product with the positive values that parks and recreation services offer to local families (*The Trust for Public Land*). Corporate sponsors are attracted to the naming rights and ad space connected to large annual events, ongoing concerts, movie series, team sport leagues, and outdoor park and field areas. While the donation of money, goods, and services can be of significant value to a Department of Recreation, naming rights are not always favored by public constituents (Mowen).

When adopting formal guidelines for donor and corporate sponsorship recognition it is recommended that Departments of Recreation follow three guidelines in an effort to preserve the natural ambiance of parks and avoid public backlash: (1) use naming rights sparingly, (2) select an appropriate location for recognizing sponsors and donors, and (3) establish size and content restrictions (Mowen).

Accepting corporate donations in exchange for naming rights brings up a question of equity. While corporate donors provide additional revenue for a recreation department, the specific park that the money would be sponsoring is likely to be a high profile, well-maintained facility. A smaller park in a less affluent neighborhood is much less likely to receive sponsorship attention. To eliminate equity issues, parks and recreation departments typically earmark a percentage of all donations to the entire park system. Parks and Recreation Department's must also have a plan in the event of a private corporation pulling out of a sponsorship agreement; otherwise, it may be a struggle for a city to restore former levels of public funding for the previously sponsored facility (Schwartz).

C. Partnerships

Municipal recreation departments are realizing the importance of forming partnerships and alliances with individuals, nonprofits, businesses, local communities, and other government departments (Babcock Graduate School of Management; Brandes).

One Illinois study, in which 141 randomly selected recreation departments and park districts were surveyed, found that 99% of respondents reported that partnerships will be either

important or extremely important to the success of local recreation services agencies over the next decade (Yoder). When forming partnerships, it is important that parks and recreation departments consider organizations in the sectors of health care, public health, public safety, higher and continuing education, and economics.(Godbey). By co-sponsoring events and co-purchasing equipment, partnerships can help merge resources to avoid the costs associated with adding staffing or extending hours.

A study done by Dustin, Hibbler, McKenney, & Blitzer was published in the January 2004 Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance. The study highlighted the under-utilization of K-12 school buildings by pointing out that school buildings normally operate at 18% of their capacity (180 nine-hour days versus 365 twenty-four-hour days). The study proposes the following.

"It is time to place park and recreation professionals in K-12 schools-not only as after-school caregivers, teacher aides, and ancillaries to the educational enterprise, but as full-fledged partners in the educational process. This proposal is based on the following six facts: (1) public school facilities are grossly underutilized; (2) most of a child's life takes place outside of the classroom; (3) park and recreation programs effectively hook and hold children's attention for educational purposes; (4) park and recreation professionals have substantial teaching and' counseling experience; (5) park and recreation professionals understand the importance of educating the whole child; and (6) the synergistic possibilities are extensive."

While school buildings are under-utilized during after school hours and the summer, recreation facilities are often under-utilized during school hours. The joint use of a school facility by teachers and parks and recreation staff has become more complicated since issues of school security have been more of a concern since 2004. However, after-school programming located in schools eliminates the problem of transporting children to after-school activities.

D. Foundations

Park and Recreation foundations can provide departments with a number of services. According to the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA), the top five benefits that park and recreation leaders seek from foundations are:

- Extra fundraising capacity
- Ability to serve beyond the scope of a traditional park and recreation agency
- Advocacy for parks and recreation
- Expertise and skills that complement agency staff
- Flexibility as foundations are not government agencies

In order to better understand the partnering relationships between Park and Recreation Agencies and Foundations, the NRPA commissioned a study in 2020 led by Dr. Nicholas Pitas at the State University of New York- Brockport. The study reviewed evidence-based practices that can maximize the benefits of agency-foundation relationships.

The key findings from this study are:

1. Park and Recreation leaders see foundations supporting their agencies in a variety of capacities, not just fundraising.
2. Most Park and Recreation leaders describe their current relationships with foundations as “extremely” or “very” strong, close, and effective.

3. Strong interpersonal relationships matter but are not enough by themselves.
4. There is no “one-size fits all” solution or Agency-Foundation relationships.
5. Agencies and Foundations must coordinate efforts to maximize success and limit competition for resources.
6. “Missed opportunities” exist within agency-foundations relationships with equity remaining a largely unresolved challenge for most Agency-Foundation relationships.
7. Foundations can do more to advocate for Parks and Related causes in their communities.

With this last item, ***Foundations can provide these departments with the additional capacity to seek and solicit funds for specific projects, capital expenses, programming costs, and certain operating expenses from donors that would otherwise not provide support to public agencies.*** These monies may be solicited through a foundation membership fee, individual gifts, grants from other foundations, long-term endowments, and a land trust (Crompton). Secondly, foundations have access to people with specific expertise that can act as an extension of limited in-house staff capability (National Park Service).

Foundations have access to people with specific expertise that can act as an extension of limited in-house staff capability.

Additionally, foundations are better able to accept risk and controversy over specific issues that municipalities seek to avoid, they are better able to operate across jurisdictional boundaries, and they can involve the community in a very active way through the recruitment and management of volunteers. Furthermore, an additional advisory board may present continuity when transitions within the department occur, supply long-range vision, and provide a forum for public discussion.

Park and recreation foundations can serve a park system or individual park or a specific program and can provide parks and recreation departments with a wider range of services and

additional volunteer staffing. Special interest or friends groups may take on the form of user-group organizations in support of a specific facet of a parks and recreation department such as an adopt-a-park, adopt-a-trail, or youth sports foundation.

Additionally, while government is organized by service function; library, recreation, health services – residents may show more enthusiasm for supporting their community through a “friends” group to connect these services towards building a stronger community (Project for Public Spaces).

E. Other Non-Profit Advocacy Groups

In addition to Foundations, there are four other types of common nonprofit advocacy groups.

Friends Groups

These groups can assist, support, or act as public advocates and are a common type of partner relationship. Staffed by volunteers, these organizations usually act as public interest groups working on behalf of residents. Friends Groups are organizations that typically have small operating budgets and do not have any responsibility for a facility or a program. They work with municipal departments to help rally a constituency for a park or a program and in many cases, to raise outside funds.

While these groups are not seen as peers by their public sector partners, they do help considerably, providing additional labor, assisting in community outreach, and organizing parks and recreation programs. They typically define their role as establishing public stewardship by organizing volunteers to assist in activities, such as clean-up days, and providing information to the public.

Groups may also involve themselves heavily in fundraising, advocating for park improvements and expansion, public education, and recreational programming. Many times, these groups advocate for issues and needs that cannot be addressed by the department. In some cases, these groups get involved

in facilitating community and political awareness meetings and workshops.

The Department of Recreation would like to establish a 501C3 foundation such as the Friends of New London Recreation. The non-profit status of this foundation would increase opportunities for grants and funding from a broader pool of resources. A “Friends of New London Recreation” organization might be comprised of community members from the following groups:

- Parks and Recreation Commission
- Representatives from New London Public Schools
- New London Parks Conservancy
- Representatives from the various colleges in New London
- Representatives from various downtown organizations
- Representatives from various health and social services agencies

Currently the following “friends” organizations operate in New London and help to manage and enhance their respective park facilities.

- Friends of Fort Trumbull State Park
- Thames River Heritage Park
- Riverside Park Conservancy

Catalysts

Catalysts are nonprofits that work to generate a vision and initiate and facilitate a process that will bring that ‘vision to the point of implementation.

Catalyst organizations can play a critical role in raising awareness, building community and political support, locating start-up funding, and orchestrating new partnerships among key players within a community. Since they are organized to advocate for a specific facility or program, they tend to be transitional in nature. Once they complete their original mission, they must redefine their role in relation to the public sector and with the project that they have seen to fruition.

Catalyst organizations have been formed to create anything from regional greenway systems to small memorial groves to initiating fundraising for specific program needs. In some cases, these organizations have been formed by citizens driven by a vision, while in other cases they have been formed by the public sector to raise funds.

Co-managers (Conservancies)

These nonprofits collaborate with their city partners by working together for the planning, design, and implementation of capital projects. They abide by policies set by their public sector co-managers and responsibilities for the project are shared. While all of these types of nonprofit organizations work closely with their partners, the roles and responsibilities differ, as do the ways in which the nonprofits are funded.

Sometimes the collaborative working relationship is cemented by a joint position shared between the nonprofit and the parks department, simplifying the coordination of planning and staff resources. In some of these cases, the nonprofit organization and the parks department share the salary attached to the joint position.

New London has two conservancies. The Riverside Park Conservancy, which was established in 2011 after the voters of New London rejected a proposal to sell a portion of Riverside Park to the federal government, is an historic 18-acre park located along the Thames River.

Sole managers

Although most cities retain control over the policy making and maintenance functions of their parks and recreational facilities, a few give away nearly all the authority and responsibility to a nonprofit. These almost fully autonomous organizations have the main responsibility for managing and maintaining individual park facilities and act with only limited involvement of parks departments. What really separates them from other organizations is that they are granted the power to develop and change policies related to the parks or greenways for which they are responsible. They are by definition heavily involved in maintenance and operations. **Relationships with sole managers must be carefully monitored by the municipality with carefully prepared contractual agreements.**



8

Initiatives & Strategic Objectives

8.1. Initiatives

In providing a document for the New London Recreation Department to utilize as it looks toward the next ten years of enhancing its facilities and enriching its programs and services, the following outline of initiatives and strategic objectives is presented. The department's most recent 2023-2026 Strategic Plan is the guide for their initiatives and strategic objectives.

To connect the community with resources that will enrich and enhance the quality of life of all individuals through healthy lifestyle initiatives, inclusive prevention services, and programs that encourage civic involvement and community partnerships. Safety of participants and staff is our number one priority."

The following initiatives are the department's focus for the future.

1. Continue to refine Department Core Values.
2. Continue to work on addressing strategic objectives for the Department.
3. Continue ongoing prioritization of facilities and program needs in conjunction with partner agencies and the New London Department Of Public Works. (Capital Improvement Plan).
4. Provide inter-generational programming.
5. Provide quality programs for all residents at the new Community Center.
6. Provide greater visibility in neighborhoods and communities.
7. Support strong inter-city collaborations
8. Provide a strong office culture that is supportive for staff and offers feedback and dialogue at all levels.

The New London Recreation Department is dedicated to providing quality services, as established by City policy makers, in a responsive and cost-effective manner. This commitment to quality depends on a dedicated partnership between residents, elected officials and the employees of the Department and the City. Certain expectations and values are shared by all staff to ensure organizational excellence and service quality. They are:

Responding to Our Community

We encourage and promote communications between City residents and all employees by ensuring friendly, courteous, and responsive customer services.

Enhancing Our Public Image

We are committed to upholding the highest ideals of professionalism and integrity in performing our responsibilities. We will strive to promote an awareness and understanding of City programs and services to our diverse population of residents, our professional peers, and other communities. Safety of participants and staff is our number one priority.

Providing Services to Everyone

We are committed to providing quality programs that offer healthy lifestyle options, enrich the lives of participants/ families, and offer prevention alternatives to all residents wishing to take part in our programs. Persons with all abilities are welcome and encouraged to participate in all of the programs that are offered. The Recreation Department looks to services lesser served populations of all racial and economic backgrounds and sexual orientations. The department strives to accommodate everyone .

Improving Employee Relations

We are committed to promoting the well-being of employees through professional development, skill building programs, open lines of communication, and encouraging organizational participation and teamwork.

Improving and Staying Current With Technology Advancements

We recognize that in order to remain competent and to be leaders in our areas of specialty, we must be committed to incorporating appropriate technological advancements into our delivery of services.

Committing to Long Range Planning

We are committed to a proactive approach to the issues and challenges confronting the city. We will utilize a wide range of evaluation models and tools to help ensure that the Department will anticipate events and make informed decisions that will help shape the future.

8.2. Strategic Objectives

In addition, the following Strategic Objectives should serve as a guide for the Department of Recreation as well as other City agencies to utilize together in their future planning efforts. The three pillars of the Recreation Department's strategic objectives are:

- I. Health and Wellness
- II. Equity
- III. Conservation

Their key service areas include:

A. Health and Safety

1. Ensure that all facilities and programs are accessible to all segments of the population.
2. Coordinate with Police department to improve safety at all parks and recreation facilities and programs.
3. Improve Wellness Opportunities- Programs, both Passive and Active.
4. Work with appropriate Personnel to update and maintain the Risk Management Operations Manual.

B. Community Involvement

1. Enhance community enrichment through cultural events, which encourage civic engagement opportunities. Ethnic and cultural events will bring together diverse groups of residents. Support local organizations interested in creating community special events.
2. Align programs with community needs through enhanced community survey procedures. Continue to foster partnerships with local organizations for better community data.
3. Enhance existing recreation volunteer programs by creating partnerships with non-profit and business organizations.
4. Enhance current ongoing partnerships throughout the city. (Examples of these agreements are included in the appendix.)

C. Facilities

1. Improve Infrastructure, by systematically restoring neighborhood Parks and continue to meet ADA standards.
2. Continue to re-define and update the Parks and Recreation Capital Improvement Program for each facility with the assistance of the Department of Public Works staff.
3. Enhance Stewardship of Natural Resources.
4. Consider the addition of a Spray Park at two of New London's more active neighborhood parks.
5. Consider and research the possibility of creating a citywide Dog Park in New London. Currently there are off-leash parks in nearby communities.

D. Operations and Maintenance

1. Continue to strive for Operational Excellence.
2. Continue to improve Employee Training Opportunities.
3. Continue to utilize Recreation Management software configured to provide the capability to manage and account for

Program and class registrations, point of sale, memberships, and Data Base of users.

4. Update management software that effectively manages park operations and maintenance of facilities.
5. Maintain updated inventory of all physical assets under the jurisdiction of the Recreation Department and include all amenities.
6. Continue annual inventory with the Department of Public Works to update and revise, where necessary, the cyclical maintenance schedule of all city Parks.

E. Funding and Financial Strategies

1. Create stable funding sources.
2. Adopt a new fee and pricing policy that will help to fund future programs and facility maintenance.
3. Enhance current grants programs.
4. Consider an “Adopt a Park” program.
5. Organize a “Friends of New London Recreation” group.

F. Recreation Program Strategies

1. Continue to provide Recreation Program Information in Spanish and other languages, where needed.
2. Continue to update the annual marketing strategy and community relationship plan. The primary focus should be on outcomes that are important to the community and general public as well as meet the Department’s core values.
3. Continue to update the Strategic Plan every 3 years.
4. Continue to emphasize quality customer service among all staff.
5. Ensure that all program offerings are consistent with the latest Recreation Department mission statement.

G. Evaluation Strategy

1. Continue efforts to solicit ongoing community input.
2. Continue to improve Evaluation Observation process twice per session.
3. Work with the staff of the Department of Public Works to annually update a joint Capital Improvement Program. (An example of the New London Recreation Department’s collaborative effort with the Department of Public Works is the completion of the Lower Promenade in Riverside Park.)
4. Review and update the Parks and Recreation Master Plan to assure that all of the requirements of the Commission

for Accreditation of Park and Recreation Agencies, (CAPRA), are being met.

8.3. Summary

The City of New London, Recreation Department has the responsibility to efficiently manage public resources, to provide opportunities for residents to participate in recreation and park activities, and to preserve and enhance the aesthetic value of recreational and leisure opportunities within the City. As the Department looks towards its future, it will utilize this Comprehensive Plan as a guide towards

- Enhancing current programs and services,
- Implementing new programs and services to meet changing trends and demographics,
- Updating facilities to meet future demands and needs, and
- Fostering healthy lifestyles for the residents of New London.

The New London Recreation Department seeks to follow the goals of its new mission statement and bring the best possible recreation services to the City of New London.



STANDARD: 1.4

1.4 - Mission

Standard: There shall be an established mission statement that defines the direction and purpose of the agency. The agency mission is the purpose or reason for the existence of the agency and establishes the long-term direction for the agency services and activities.

STANDARD 1.4.1

1.4.1 - Agency Goals and Objectives

Standard: There shall be established, measurable goals and objectives for the agency and for each organizational component within the agency. Such goals and objectives shall be directed toward accomplishing the agency mission, be reviewed periodically, and distributed to all appropriate personnel.

STANDARD 1.5

1.5 - Vision

Standard: The agency shall provide an adopted Vision Statement that is aspirational, far reaching, and states where the agency is going. It should be available to the approving authority, staff, and participants.



9

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9.2. List of References

The following list of resources were used in the preparation of this Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Plan. Some of these



APPENDICES ARE PROVIDED IN A SEPARATE REPORT VOLUME

A. Sample Mutual Order of Understanding with Recreation Partners

B. New London Recreation Department Strategic Plan 2020-2023