

TOWN OF MONTAGUE, MASSACHUSETTS

**PARKS & RECREATION
DEPARTMENT**

***STRATEGIC PLAN
FISCAL YEAR 2017***



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INTRODUCTION

Dear Reader,

The Montague Parks & Recreation Department and Parks & Recreation Commission are proud to offer you this valuable community resource that helps define the direction of the Parks & Recreation Department. The Strategic Plan is a dynamic tool, which provides an active strategy for addressing long and short term program and facility goals (1, 5, & 10 years), and is an evaluation of how successful the department has been in accomplishing those goals. The plan is reviewed, evaluated, and revised (if applicable) on an annual, fiscal year basis (July 1 - June 30). For example, any goals not completed in FY16 are to be carried over into FY17.

As you will observe in these next few pages, much of our focus has been devoted to facility improvements as they require significantly more planning and resources than programs. While the Town of Montague is very fortunate to have approximately 20 acres of parkland, it proves to be a considerable challenge for the department to maintain these parks and their respective amenities.

MPRD has established four *Areas of Service*; Administration, Programs, Special Events, and Parks & Facilities. The Strategic Plan has developed goals and objectives within the context of these areas through the town's current *Open Space and Recreation Plan* (OSRP) and the department's annual Financial Study. The OSRP (organized and administered through the Town's Planning & Conservation Department) is a seven-year action plan that is a "comprehensive inventory of the Town's natural, agricultural and recreational resources and a plan for their stewardship and protection. It contains an analysis of the Town's needs and goals and objectives designed to guide important decisions about the use, conservation and development of the town's land and resources." The Parks & Recreation Department utilizes the Open Space & Recreation Plan as a general framework to develop its own *specific* goals and objectives relative to our Strategic Plan. Goals and objectives, as they relate to the Parks & Recreation Department, defined by residents who were surveyed through the OSRP are as follows;

- Maintain existing facilities and programs and the accessibility of these programs and facilities to all residents (noted as the Town's highest recreation priority)
- Develop new parks and programs
- Improve opportunities for aquatic recreation

The OSRP, with our Strategic Plan and our departmental financial study help provide an overall evaluation tool relative to our progress.

As always, MPRD will continue to utilize every outlet possible to help cover the cost, or a portion of costs, in relation to each project. We will look to support these projects either through the Recreation Revolving Fund, Capital Improvement Projects, fundraising campaigns, partnerships, or State and Federal Grants. Some items may even require a combination of more than one source. As always, we encourage and invite any Montague resident to provide us with their input or time to help make many of the goals in this plan a reality. Almost every project is difficult to accomplish alone, but when we work together, the benefits are endless.....

Sincerely,

Parks & Recreation Staff

Jonathan J. Dobosz, CPRP, CPO
Director of Parks & Recreation
Jennifer L. Peterson, Clerk/Bookkeeper

Parks & Recreation Commission

Dennis Grader, Chairperson
Barbara Kuklewicz, Vice Chairperson
Albert Cummings, Secretary

Mission Statement

The Montague Parks and Recreation Department is dedicated to enhancing the quality of life and the sense of community to the residents of the Town of Montague through the delivery of safe, healthy, diverse, accessible, quality, year-round leisure-time experiences, in addition to maintaining and preserving its parks and resources.

Vision Statement -

We will enrich the lives of our constituents and contribute to the cultural and economic fabric of our community through the combined efforts of programs, special events, parks and facilities, and effective administration (*Areas of Service*);

.....**PROGRAMS** – we will offer creative, accessible, and well-structured programs where community members will be able to experience physical, mental, and social benefits

.....**SPECIAL EVENTS** – we will help build a sense of community with events that attract and encourage social bonding amongst citizens of various backgrounds. These events will also provide a positive revenue source for our scholarship program.

.....**PARKS & FACILITIES** – we will provide clean, accessible, and safe parks and facilities which will be a source of pride for community members

.....**ADMINISTRATION** – we will display a high level of customer service, where administration will strive for continued efficiency in various organizational duties, in addition to properly training all staff and volunteers in departmental standards and practices

AREAS OF SERVICE

I: PROGRAMS

In the spring of 2016, MPRD became a chapter of the National Youth Sports Association. This will allow the department to provide enhanced training opportunities for volunteer coaches, in addition to, ensuring a more positive and safe sports experience for children.

II: SPECIAL EVENTS

Either through a partnership, or as a self sponsored event, MPRD is always looking for new and larger scale opportunities to the community. This year, we were fortunate to host the first River Valley Ice Cream ride at Unity Park. We hope this will become a long-running tradition in Montague.

III: PARKS & FACILITIES

UNITY PARK:

Current Status –

Unity Park is the most widely utilized outdoor recreation facility within the jurisdiction of the Parks & Recreation Department, and *may* be the most widely used outdoor recreation facility in the entire town of Montague. Unity Park is made up of the Skrzypek Fieldhouse, two ballfields (Unity 1 & Unity 2), a playground, rain garden, basketball court, sand volleyball court, and a picnic area. Unity Park is used for both organized and non-organized leisure pursuits. The majority of organized programs and events

Unity Park, continue:

are sponsored, organized and funded through the Parks & Recreation Department. These programs and events include; the Summer Playground Program, Youth Soccer, Peter Cottontail's EGGstravaganza, Family Fall Fun Day, Tee Ball, Rookie Baseball & Softball, the Adult Co-Ed Softball League, and numerous program related meetings. Unity Park, as with all other town owned parks, is maintained by the Highway Department, which works on field maintenance, mowing, playground repairs, building repairs, and other duties.

Unity Park has regional appeal. We see many people who do not reside in Montague enjoying the park. The ability of Unity Park to attract individuals beyond the boundaries of Montague provides a very strong revenue generator for businesses and other attractions in downtown Turners Falls, which in turn, benefits the town as a whole.

This past year we continued to see substantial changes to Unity Park, as we finally completed the Unity Park Improvement Project with the construction of the Skatepark! Grindline Skatepark, Inc. started construction in late September of last year, and completed the project in late January. It is a truly amazing facility, with all of its 7,200 square feet completely skate-able. The park has already proven to be a major attraction, and will certainly be a mainstay in Montague for years. The final construction cost was approximately \$395,000, with the Parkland Acquisition & Renovations for Communities (PARC) Grant funding \$263,000. Funding was also provided by The Tony Hawk Foundation (\$5,000), the b Good Foundation (\$5,000), fundraising by the Skatepark Committee (\$40,000), and the Town of Montague making up the difference (\$80,000). We're planning to finish up the landscaping around the park in the fall of 2016.

Five Year Plan:

FY17 (To be completed by June 30, 2017)

- **Complete landscaping around Skatepark** - MPRD will be working with the Skatepark Committee to develop a landscaping design that addresses safety concerns and is also low-maintenance. We plan on funding these efforts through the Skatepark Account.
- **Convert Garage Area into Programming Space** - This is a project the department has wanted to implement for a few years, but waited until the Unity Park Improvement Project (the Skatepark Project) was complete. We hope to develop the garage area into a space for programming at a low cost, with funding coming through our Revolving Fund.
- **Continue to Explore Sustainability Efforts for the Fieldhouse** - Energy conservation is paramount to MPRD, and we're always looking at areas to improve efficiency and sustainability. We met with the Montague Energy Commission in the Fall of 2015, and hope to work with Eversource and/or MassSave to implement heat and electricity conservation practices.
- **Re-paint/re-seal Playground Area Walkways** - This is a project that needs to be done every five years, or so, to maintain the aesthetics of the playground area. Dependent upon budgetary flexibility, our intent is to pay for this out of Revolving. However, funding through Capital Improvements may be more realistic.
- **Replenish Infield Mix on Field #1** - The replenishment of the infield mix at Unity is also a scheduled item every 3-4 years. Again, the intent will be to look at Revolving first, with Capital Improvements possibly being a more viable option.

FY18 (To be completed by June 30, 2018)

- Replenish infield mix on Field #2

Unity Park, continue:

- Replenish Sand Volleyball Court surfacing (scheduled maintenance - To Be Determined)

FY19 (To be completed by June 30, 2019)

- Re-paint/re-seal basketball court
- Replenish wood fiber surfacing to playground (scheduled maintenance)
- Replenish Sand Volleyball Court surfacing (scheduled maintenance - To Be Determined)

FY20 (To be completed by June 30, 2020)

- No plans at this time

FY21 (To be completed by June 30, 2021)

Ten Year Plan: To be completed by June 30, 2026

- No plans at this time

HIGHLAND PARK:

Current Status -

Highland Park is the second most widely utilized park under the Parks & Recreation Department's authority. The facility currently includes a softball field (soccer in the fall), playground area, picnic area, park shed, and a parking area with a basketball hoop. The park is currently used by the Senior

Girls Softball Program (which now plays in the *Greenfield Girls Softball League*), and Youth Soccer. The Gill-Montague Regional School District also brought their Summer Free Lunch Program to Highland Park, and has proven successful in its first year.

The playground has seen considerable improvements these last few years, with the installation of a new slide, climbing structure, merry-go-round, and protective surfacing. In September of 2014, the Franklin County Football Team assisted the department with the installation of two new swing sets; one for children ages 5 - 12, the other for tots.

Currently, the shed is used for the Girls Senior League Softball teams, Youth Soccer, and for restroom use for various programs and events.

Five Year Plan:

FY17 (To be completed by June 30, 2017)

- **Pursue the Development of a Master Plan for Highland Park** - The most significant item that needs improvement at Highland Park is the shed. It is not only used for storage, but for restroom use during programs. The relocation of the shed should also be considered, as its current location creates a visual blindspot for people walking in and out of the playground area. As always, grant funding would be a welcome financial source for any such improvement. At the moment, the ballfield and playground area seem to be in acceptable condition where total refurbishment is not needed at this time. That being said, a master plan would help define any other deficiencies more clearly.

FY18 (To be completed by June 30, 2018)

- Plans dependent upon status of master plan

FY19 (To be completed by June 30, 2019)

- No plans at this time

Highland Park, continued;

FY20 (To be completed by June 30, 2020)

- No plans at this time

FY21 (To be completed by June 30, 2021)

- No plans at this time

Ten Year Plan: To be completed by June 30, 2026

- No plans at this time

MONTAGUE CENTER PARK:

Current Status -

In the spring of 2015, the department was able to bring back adult softball league games to Montague Center Park. The increased popularity of the league allowed us to schedule games on the ballfield after a seven year hiatus. The park's most popular events revolve around the annual Independence Day Bonfire (sponsored by the Montague Center Volunteer Firemen's Association), and event space for Montague's Annual Old Home Days.

In the spring of 2015, the department was able to successfully remove the large climbing structure at the old Montague Center School with the help of village residents and the Mohawk Ramblers. The structure is temporarily stored in the old blacksmith shop, adjacent to the park, in hopes of installing it in the playground in the very near future. Before we do so, however, the department needs to develop a master plan to address facility-wide shortcomings and concerns. The master plan could include improvements to the playground and ballfield, in addition to looking at better parking and accessibility.

Five Year Plan:

FY17 (To be completed by June 30, 2017)

- **Pursue the Development of a Master Plan for Montague Center Park** - Montague Center Park's most obvious deficiency is in the area of accessibility. It is not only difficult accessing the park itself, but also to the various program areas *within* the park. Unfortunately, Community Development Block Grant funding is not possible due to the relatively higher income level of residents in this village. Other grant opportunities are limited, but will need to be exercised. Town funding through Capital Improvements will most definitely need to be considered.

FY18 (To be completed by June 30, 2018)

- Plans dependent upon the status of the master plan

FY19 (To be completed by June 30, 2019)

- No plans at this time

FY20 (To be completed by June 30, 2020)

- No plans at this time

FY21 (To be completed by June 30, 2021)

Ten Year Plan: To be completed by June 30, 2026

- No plans at this time

Lake Pleasant:

NORMA’S PARK – Lake Pleasant Road

Current Status –

The Town of Montague leases Norma’s Park and the adjoining ballfield from Eversource. Neither area is actively used by the Parks & Recreation Department for programs or events.

Norma’s Park is primarily a playground with a couple of picnic tables, swing set, and climbing structure. In the fall of 2008, we installed a new bench swing, and the First Calvary Church of Turners Falls donated and planted numerous flower bulbs, and installed flower beds along the fence which has greatly beautified the park. In the fall of 2010, we held a re-dedication ceremony attended by Norma’s relatives and Montague officials.

Recently, the Lake Pleasant Village Association (LPVA) expressed desire to replace dated playground equipment (most preferably the swingset), and wood chip surfacing at Norma’s Park. In FY15, MPRD and the LPVA worked with the Franklin County Housing & Redevelopment Authority in applying for Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding to develop a Master Plan for both Norma's & Rutter's Park. Unfortunately, due to the fact that this area (as well as the ballfield) are not formally owned by the Town and a short-term lease exists, eligibility for CDBG funding is not possible. MPRD will continue to re-explore opportunities for improvement through Eversource.

Five Year Plan:

FY17 (To be completed by June 30, 2017)

- **Re-explore Opportunities for Improvement through Eversource** - It is not known at this time what Eversource's long-term plan is for this space. A dialogue will be established with Eversource to develop a planning model.

FY18 (To be completed by June 30, 2018)

- No plans at this time

FY19 (To be completed by June 30, 2019)

- No plans at this time

FY20 (To be completed by June 30, 2020)

- No plans at this time

FY21 (To be completed by June 30, 2021)

Ten Year Plan: To be completed by June 30, 2026

- No plans at this time

RUTTER’S PARK – Montague Street

Current Status -

Rutter’s Park is a relatively new playground that includes a metal slide, tot-sized double slide, teeter totter, and a three-bay swing set. As with Norma’s Park, MPRD does not currently hold any programs or events at this park. Due to a successful capital campaign, protective wood chip surfacing was installed in the fall of 2006.

Rutter's Park, continued;

In 2016 MPRD, in partnership with the Franklin County Housing & Rehabilitation Authority, developed a five member Park Improvement Committee and began the Master Plan process for Rutter's Park. GZA Geoenvironmental Inc. out of Springfield, Massachusetts has been hired as the design firm to work with all parties, and public hearings are planned through the Fall of 2016 with completion by early winter of the same year.

Five Year Plan:

FY17 (To be completed by June 30, 2017)

- **Complete the Master Plan process for Rutter's Park and apply for CDBG funding for Construction** - As noted above, the department and planning committee will be sponsoring a number of public hearings to discuss improvements to the park.

FY18 (To be completed by June 30, 2018)

- Depending on CDBG funding, begin park refurbishment

FY19 (To be completed by June 30, 2019)

- No plans at this time

FY20 (To be completed by June 30, 2020)

- No plans at this time

FY21 (To be completed by June 30, 2021)

- No plans at this time

Ten Year Plan: To be completed by June 30, 2026

- No plans at this time

MONTAGUE CITY PROPERTY:

Current Status -

The Parks & Recreation Department has obtained a parcel of land at the corner of Masonic Ave. and Rod Shop Rd. in Montague City. The department will take a better part of a year to study the feasibility of developing that property into park space. The total parcel is approximately 100' x 135' (13,500 sq. ft.). The department hosted a public hearing to discuss possibilities and general interest of developing this parcel in July of 2009. MPRD has long desired a "presence" in Montague City, which is the only village in Montague without a park.

FY17 (To be completed by June 30, 2017)

- No plans at this time

MONTAGUE CENTER TOWN HALL GYM:

Current Status –

The MCTH Gymnasium is located on the second floor of the town hall building. The gym includes a mini multi-use court that is 43' x 40' (a total of 1,720 square feet), two basketball hoops, a stage (15'x43'; 645 sq. ft.), and balcony seating above the gym floor. The MCTH Gym is the only indoor space under the jurisdiction of the Parks & Recreation Department, and unfortunately, it cannot adequately support many programs or events due to its small size and lack of accessibility for those with

Montague Ctr. Town Hall Gym;

mobility issues. This past winter the department's girls softball team (The Diamond Dusters), utilized this space for pitching and catching practice before the fields were usable. Other than that, the gym is primarily used for storage of Sawmill River 10k supplies and equipment.

Five Year Plan:

FY17 (To be completed by June 30, 2017)

- No plans at this time

FY18 (To be completed by June 30, 2018)

- No plans at this time

FY19 (To be completed by June 30, 2019)

- No plans at this time

FY20 (To be completed by June 30, 2020)

- No plans at this time

FY21 (To be completed by June 30, 2021)

- No plans at this time

Ten Year Plan: To be completed by June 30, 2026

- No plans at this time

HILLCREST GRAMMAR SCHOOL – OLD PLAY AREA

Current status -

New swings and safety surfacing were purchased and installed in FY10, and the unit was re-painted by employees from Greenfield Savings Bank with volunteer assistance.

IV: ADMINISTRATION

We are currently overdue with our Master Plan, and anticipate completing the final items by the end of this fiscal year.

SWOT Analysis: SWOT Analysis is the process of defining an agency's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats. The items are typically defined, or revised, on an annual basis. Our intent is to cultivate and take advantage of our Strengths and Opportunities, while at the same time, mitigating and addressing Weaknesses and Threats. Below are those specific items that have either a positive or negative affect on MPRD services.

- **Strengths –**
 - *Town Support*
 - *Staff*
 - *Commission*
 - *Partnerships*
 - *Unity Park*
- **Weaknesses –**
 - *Limited, consistent, financial resources*
 - *Limited availability of Volunteer candidates*

SWOT Analysis, continued;

- **Opportunities –**
 - *Alternative funding sources; Grants, Fundraising, Concessions*
 - *Outsourcing (Contractual Services) – an outside contractor performing organizational functions and services, for example; adult fitness instruction, swim team coaching, single event/activity instruction, etc.*
- **Threats –**
 - *Economy/Local aid*
 - *Increasing fixed costs*
 - *Diverse Competition*
 - *Local school district enrollment*
 - *Co-Sponsorship/Corporate Donations*

***Strategic Plan for FY16**

Items that were slated for completion by June 30, 2016

√ = **Task Completed**

I. PROGRAMS -

- Integrate “The 40 Developmental Assets” into all departmental programs and services.
- On-going -
 - √ Continue to develop partnerships with local schools, non-profits, local businesses and other town departments to diversify and strengthen current programs and develop new programs
 - √ Research and apply to grants that enhance current programs and services
 - √ Continue to improve training for program volunteers - *In the spring of 2016, MPRD became a chapter of the National Youth Sports Association.*

II. SPECIAL EVENTS –

- Develop new special events which will broaden financial resources to support our Sponsor-A-Child Scholarship Program

III. PARKS & FACILITIES -

Unity Park –

- √ Begin & Complete construction of the Unity Skate Park
- √ Replenish wood fiber surfacing on playground (scheduled maintenance)

Highland Park –

- Pursue the development of a master plan for the park.

Norma's Park & Rutter's Park, Lake Pleasant -

- √ Dependent upon CDBG funding, begin the Master Plan process to address facility improvements.

Montague Center Park –

- Pursue the development of a master plan for the park.

IV. ADMINISTRATIVE –

- Revise Departmental Master Plan
- √ Be awarded and maintain “Playful City USA” designation through 2016

***Strategic Plan for FY17**

Items slated for completion by June 30, 2017

I. PROGRAMS -

- *On-going -*
 - *Continue to develop partnerships with local schools, non-profits, local businesses and other town departments to diversify and strengthen current programs and develop new programs*
 - *Research and apply to grants that enhance current programs and services*
 - *Continue to improve training for program volunteers*

II. SPECIAL EVENTS –

- *Develop new special events which will broaden financial resources to support our Sponsor-A-Child Scholarship Program*

III. PARKS & FACILITIES -

Unity Park –

- *Complete Landscaping around Skatepark*
- *Convert garage area into Programming Space*
- *Continue to Explore Sustainability Efforts for the Fieldhouse*
- *Re-paint/re-seal Playground Area Walkways*
- *Replenish Infield Mix on Field #1*

Highland Park –

- *Pursue the Development of a Master Plan for the Park.*

Rutter’s Park, Lake Pleasant -

- *Complete the Master Plan and pursue Continued Funding for Construction.*

Norma's Park -

- *Re-explore Opportunities for Improvement through Eversource*

Montague Center Park –

- *Pursue the Development of a Master Plan for the Park.*

IV. ADMINISTRATION –

- *Revise Departmental Master Plan*
- *Be awarded and maintain “Playful City USA” designation through 2017*
- *Hillcrest Elementary School Playground - In the spring of 2016, we met with the Hillcrest Elementary School Administration and Parent/Teacher Group to initiate an improvement project for the school's playground. Partial funding for said improvements could be provided by Playful City USA grants, and may be a few years in the making.*

**Priorities and projects may change due to unforeseen circumstances.*