

TOWN OF MONTAGUE, MASSACHUSETTS

**PARKS & RECREATION
DEPARTMENT**

***STRATEGIC PLAN
FISCAL YEAR 2018***



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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 FY17 are to be carried over into FY18.

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 four *Areas of Service*; Administration, Programs, Special Events, and Parks & Facilities. We have developed goals and objectives within each of these areas from data collected from the Town's current *Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP)*. 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 within our department, and from that a Strategic Plan is created. The goals and objectives from the OSRP (as they relate to the Parks & Recreation Department) are defined by residents who were surveyed during the needs assessment phase of that plan, and 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.*

These directives are broad in nature, but we use the two plans, **and** our annual departmental financial study, as evaluation and planning tools for our department. In the following pages, we hope that we have fully illustrated not only what we plan on doing, but also, what we have accomplished.

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

"Playful City USA" Community

At the time of formulating this plan, Montague was awarded as being a 2017 *Playful City USA* Community. This is the fourth time Montague has been awarded such designation. *Playful City USA*, funded by National non-profit KaBOOM!, honors cities and towns across the country for "*putting the needs of families first so kids can learn, grow and develop important life skills. These communities are transforming ordinary places into playful spaces and using play as a solution to the challenges facing their residents.*" Approximately 258 communities from across the country make it "as easy as possible for kids to play". In total, these communities feature more than 14,000 safe and engaging playspaces that serve more than 4 million kids.

MPRD applies for this designation on-behalf of the town, and often illustrates the efforts of a myriad of different organizations, agencies and individuals who've contributed to the *playability* and character of the community. Aside from MPRD's programs and initiatives, in this year's application we also included the efforts of Montague Catholic Social Ministries and Turners Falls Riverculture as implementing unique programs and events that benefitted numerous groups within Montague.

MPRD applies for Playful City USA designation on an annual basis, and through this distinction, grant funding opportunities are available for playspace development. We are confident that Montague will continue to exhibit the characteristics noted above to remain a "playful" community.



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. The department has also developed a concussion policy where staff and volunteer coaches are required to take the Center for Disease Control's on-line "*Heads-Up*" concussion management course.

The most significant program change, however, is in regards to our Summer Playground Program. In the spring of 2017, we have made efforts for this program to be recognized by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health as a "Licensed Day Camp". This licensure will further ensure that certain health and safety protocols are met. It should be noted that there have never been significant issues or concerns regarding the health or well-being of campers in this program. The State has established new standards that must be met by all entities that offer day programs 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. In the summer of 2016, we were fortunate to host the first River Valley Ice Cream ride at Unity Park and they plan on returning in 2017. We are also partnering with Hillcrest Elementary School to bring a youth-based special event for the spring of 2018, and utilize it as a joint fundraiser for both entities.

III: PARKS & FACILITIES

MPRD will continue to utilize every financial outlet available to help cover the cost (or a portion thereof) of each project. These outlets range from the Recreation Revolving Fund, Capital Improvement Projects, fundraising campaigns, partnerships, or State, Federal and private grants. Some projects may even require a combination of more than one financial source. As always, we encourage and invite any Montague resident to provide us with their input to help make the goals in this plan a reality. Almost every project is difficult to accomplish alone, so when we work together the benefits are endless.

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, picnic area, and a 7,200 square foot skatepark. Unity Park is used for both organized and non-organized leisure pursuits. The majority of organized programs and events 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, Scarecrow Stuffing Party, 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, continue:

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.

Five Year Plan:

FY18 (To be completed by June 30, 2018)

- **Re-paint/re-seal Playground Area Walkways** - Original plans called for funding this item through our Revolving Account. However, this project proved to be more expensive than anticipated, and has become a capital expenditure for FY18. We hope to complete this project before winter of 2017.
- **Continue to Explore Sustainability Efforts for the Fieldhouse** - We're in the process of working with Eversource in hopes of installing more energy efficient lighting in the fieldhouse and hope to complete this process in FY18.
- **Complete landscaping around Skatepark** - MPRD is currently coordinating with the Franklin County Tech School's Landscaping Department to develop a plan for the hillside facing the main parking lot. We hope to fund these efforts through the Skatepark Account.
- **Needs Assessment in Converting Garage Area into Programming Space** - This is a project the department has wanted to implement for a few years. We hope to continue to make strides in converting the garage area into a space for programming at a low cost. The lighting upgrade noted above is a step in that direction. We also must consider potential heat and ventilation issues, insulation, a second mode of egress, and building a wall to separate program and maintenance areas.

FY19 (To be completed by June 30, 2019)

- Replenish infield mix on both ballfields
- 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)

- Re-paint/re-seal basketball court
- Replenish Sand Volleyball Court surfacing (scheduled maintenance, if not done in FY19)

FY21 (To be completed by June 30, 2021)

- **No plans at this time**

FY22 (To be completed by June 30, 2022)

- Re-paint/re-seal Playground Area Walkways (scheduled maintenance)

Ten Year Plan: To be completed by June 30, 2028

- Evaluate integrity of playground structures for possible replacement

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 our Girls Softball Program (which now plays in the *Greenfield Girls Softball League*), and Youth Soccer. The

Highland Park, continue:

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 in the last ten to twelve years, with the installation of a slide, climbing structure, merry-go-round, and swingsets. There has also been a great surge in using the park for adult soccer.

Currently, the shed is used for the girls softball teams, Youth Soccer, and for restroom use for various programs and events.

Five Year Plan:

FY18 (To be completed by June 30, 2018)

- **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. The accessibility of the entire facility must also be re-evaluated. 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.

FY19 (To be completed by June 30, 2019)

- Plans dependent upon status of master plan

FY20 (To be completed by June 30, 2020)

- Dependent upon the completion of a master plan, move into a design phase for improvements.

FY21 (To be completed by June 30, 2021)

- Dependent upon the successful completion of a design phase, move into construction.

FY22 (To be completed by June 30, 2022)

- No plans at this time

Ten Year Plan: To be completed by June 30, 2028

- 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 other 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

Montague Center Park, continue:

improvements to the playground and ballfield, in addition to looking at better parking and accessibility. In the summer of 2018, we plan on scheduling a public hearing to begin the improvement process.

Five Year Plan:

FY18 (To be completed by June 30, 2018)

- **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. Grant funds may be limited due to the higher income level of residents in this village.

FY19 (To be completed by June 30, 2019)

- Develop design plans for park-wide improvement project (dependent upon the status of the master plan)

FY20 (To be completed by June 30, 2020)

- Construction (dependent upon the status of the design plan)

FY21 (To be completed by June 30, 2021)

- No plans at this time

FY22 (To be completed by June 30, 2022)

- No plans at this time

Ten Year Plan: To be completed by June 30, 2028

- No plans at this time

Lake Pleasant:

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.

In 2016, MPRD in partnership with the Franklin County Housing & Rehabilitation Authority (FCHRA), developed a five member Park Improvement Committee and began the Master Plan process for Rutter's Park. GZA Geoenvironmental Inc. out of Springfield, Massachusetts was hired as the design firm and facilitated approximately five public hearings from the summer through the fall of the same year. From information gathered during this process, a master plan for park improvements was completed, and an application for design was submitted to the State by the FCHRA. We should know the status of this application around the beginning of summer 2017. If funding is approved for a formal design phase, we hope to start that process by the end of summer 2017, with application for construction soon thereafter.

Five Year Plan:

FY18 (To be completed by June 30, 2018)

- **Depending on CDBG funding, begin and complete the formal design phase for park-wide improvements**

FY19 (To be completed by June 30, 2019)

- Depending on CDBG funding, begin and complete new park construction

Rutter's Park, continue:

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

FY22 (To be completed by June 30, 2022)

- No plans at this time

Ten Year Plan: To be completed by June 30, 2028

- Make moderate park improvements where needed

NORMA'S PARK – Lake Pleasant Road

Current Status –

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. The Town of Montague currently leases the ballfield adjacent to Norma's Park from Eversource. Neither area is actively used by the Parks & Recreation Department for programs or events.

Five Year Plan:

FY18 (To be completed by June 30, 2018)

- Re-explore opportunities of leasing the ballfield from Eversource.

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

FY22 (To be completed by June 30, 2022)

- No plans at this time

Ten Year Plan: To be completed by June 30, 2028

- 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. However, from data collected through the town's Open Space & Recreation Plan surveys, Montague residents have prioritized the improvement of current playspaces and parks as opposed to developing new recreation areas. Nevertheless, MPRD hopes to pursue the idea of having a "presence" in Montague City, which is the only village in Montague without a park.

Montague City Property, continue:

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

FY22 (To be completed by June 30, 2012)

- Depending on the status of other park improvement projects, pursue the development of a playspace in Montague City.

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 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:

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

FY22 (To be completed by June 30, 2022)

- No plans at this time

Ten Year Plan: To be completed by June 30, 2028

- 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

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*
- ***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 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 (FY18 Capital Project)*
- *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.*

***Strategic Plan for FY18**

Items slated for completion by June 30, 2018

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 offerings*
 - *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 –

- *Re-paint/re-seal Playground Area Walkways*
- *Continue to Explore Sustainability Efforts for the Fieldhouse*
- *Complete landscaping around Skatepark*
- *Needs Assessment in Converting Garage Area into Programming Space*

Rutter's Park, Lake Pleasant -

- *Depending on Community Development Block Grant funding, begin and complete the design phase for the park's improvement project.*

Montague Center Park –

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

Highland Park –

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

Norma's Park -

- *Re-explore Opportunities for Improvement through Eversource*

IV. ADMINISTRATION –

- *Be awarded and maintain “Playful City USA” designation through 2018*
- *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.*