

## CHAPTER 8 – PARKS AND RECREATION

Williston provides a variety of recreational opportunities that range from busy ball fields to secluded country parks. Williston's recreational network includes both public and private facilities that are managed and maintained according to ownership. This section includes the five-year plan for Town-owned facilities that specifically serve a recreational function.

- Publicly-owned recreational facilities in Williston include **Community Parks**, such as Brennan Park, Rossignol Park, the WCS Community Park behind the Williston Central School, and Allen Brook Park; **Country Parks**, such as Five Tree Hill and the Mud Pond Country Park; and finally Williston's primitive **Trail** network, which allows the public to explore Williston's rural landscape. While not entirely owned by the Town of Williston, the **Lake Iroquois Natural Area** also provides an important recreational opportunity for residents and therefore is included in this section.
- **Urban Parks** are privately-owned parks including plazas, greens, and other spaces that provide shoppers and workers an opportunity to enjoy the outdoors in commercial areas. **Neighborhood Parks** are privately-owned parks that provide outdoor recreation in residential neighborhoods. The Town of Williston encourages and, in some cases, requires the provision of urban parks and neighborhood parks in new residential, commercial, and mixed-use developments. Information about Williston's privately-owned urban parks and neighborhood parks is found in Chapter 4 – Community Design.
- **Sidewalks and Paths** are used recreationally but are primarily designed for transportation purposes. Sidewalks are typically constructed as a part of neighborhoods and are designed for pedestrian uses such as walking and jogging. Paths link neighborhoods and are designed to accommodate a broad range of non-motorized uses such as biking and rollerblading. Information about Williston's sidewalks and paths is found in Chapter 6 – Transportation.
- **Conservation Areas**, such as Brownell Mountain and the Mud Pond Conservation Area, are publicly-owned open space landscapes that are used recreationally, but are primarily managed to conserve the natural ecosystem. Information about Williston's Conservation Areas is found in Chapter 11 – Open Space and Working Landscapes.

This plan identifies five objectives to provide a policy basis for the management and maintenance of Williston's recreational programs and Town-owned facilities:

**8.1 – Recreation** - This objective supports the Town's recreation programs and identifies the need for indoor and outdoor recreation facilities.

**8.2 – Indoor Recreation** – This objective aims to meet the need for indoor recreation facilities.

**8.3- Community Parks** – These Town-owned public parks provide playing fields, tennis courts, and similar facilities for the entire community.

**8.4 - Country Parks** – These Town-owned public parks offer access to the rural landscape. Recreational activities in the country parks include hiking and cross-country skiing.

**8.5 – Trails** – This low-maintenance primitive trail network provides hiking, skiing, and where appropriate, mountain biking opportunities in Williston's rural landscape.

**8.6 - Lake Iroquois Natural Area** – This objective supports Williston’s role as a stakeholder in the Lake Iroquois Recreation District.

**8.1 – Recreation - The Town will continue to support and plan for recreational programs and facilities that benefit the community.**

The Williston Parks and Recreation Department works with the Parks and Recreation Committee to manage Williston’s recreational programs and identify indoor and outdoor recreational needs. A summary of Williston’s recreational programs is provided in Table 8.A below.

**Table 8.A: Williston Recreation Programs**

| <b>Program</b>                      | <b>Participation</b>                          |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Classes, workshops, specialty camps | 500+ throughout the year                      |
| After school activities             | 150 participants in over 30 different classes |
| Summer day camp                     | serves 150 families, June to August           |
| Soccer                              | 450 participants, September to October        |
| Basketball                          | 350 participants, November to February        |
| Lacrosse                            | 100 participants, March to June               |
| Ski program                         | 300 participants, January to March            |
| Drivers education                   | 50 participants, June to August               |
| Senior drop-in center               | 50 participants, year-round                   |

**8.1.1 Develop a Process to Bring Stakeholders Together to Identify, Prioritize, and Implement Recreational Needs.** While Williston’s Parks and Recreation Committee sets priorities for recreational programs and facilities in Williston, a process must be developed where Williston’s other stakeholders, such as the teen and elderly community and the Williston Conservation Commission, are involved in the ongoing planning process. The outcome of this process should inform discussions of future recreational needs.

**8.1.2 Identify Recreation Facility Needs.** The Williston Parks and Recreation Committee has developed a ranking system to help identify where the community’s recreation facility needs are being met or falling short. This ranking system is based on national standards and account for Williston’s existing recreational resources, including privately-owned neighborhood parks, the areas available for passive recreation in the Town’s country parks, the growing system of paths and trails, and privately-owned recreation facilities. As guided by 8.1.1 above the Williston Parks and Recreation Committee should update and revise the ranking system to accurately project recreation facility needs and target those areas where the Town is falling short.

**8.1.3 Update the Recreation Impact Fee.** Williston has collected more than \$690,000 in recreation impact fees since 1988. These revenues have supported various improvements within Williston’s park system. The Town currently charges a parks impact fee of \$826.64 for new single-family dwellings and \$657.18 for multi-family dwellings. The current impact fee study was valid through 2007. The impact fee for recreation should be studied and adjusted accordingly. The list of recreation projects eligible to receive funds generated from the impact fee should be updated.

**8.1.4 Continue to Encourage Volunteer Involvement in Enhancing and Maintaining Recreational Programs and Facilities.** The Town should continue to encourage volunteer

involvement in park (community parks, country parks, and conservation areas) and trail development and maintenance through an Adopt-A-Park or Adopt-A-Trail program. Potential volunteer groups would include local churches, schools, neighboring property owners, scouts, service clubs, and recreational organizations such as the Fellowship of the Wheel (a regional mountain bike group), the Winooski Valley Park District, and the Williston Hill Hawks (the local chapter of the Vermont Association of Snow Travelers). The Town should also continue to recruit and maintain volunteer networks to assist with the various recreational programs.

**8.2 Indoor Recreation Facilities**

The Town does not own any indoor recreation facilities and is therefore not meeting demands for this recreational need. Indoor recreation programs are currently run out of the local schools.

**8.2.1 Meet the Need for Indoor Recreation Facilities.** One of the needs clearly identified in the recreational need ranking system developed by the Williston Parks and Recreation Committee is an indoor recreation facility to accommodate three key population groups in Williston; seniors, teens, and preschoolers. A taskforce was appointed by the Select Board in 2007 to study the need for a community center. That taskforce reported in October of 2007 that there would definitely be a need for an indoor recreation facility within 5 – 10 years. Beyond accommodating recreation activities for senior citizens, teens, and preschoolers the taskforce found that a facility was needed for other indoor structured recreation programs and cultural events. The taskforce report can be found in Appendix G.

Plans for accomplishing the taskforce’s recommendations regarding indoor recreation space should be developed. All strategies to provide indoor recreation space for Williston residents should be considered, including but not limited to: acquiring or building a community center, partnering with private entities, and working to include an indoor community space in new development proposals.

**8.3- Community Parks - The Town of Williston will maintain and enhance the existing community parks. The Town will also seek land and funding for additional community park development, the need for which is documented here.**

Community parks are public open spaces. They are developed for intensive recreational uses that serve the entire town, including playgrounds, tennis and basketball courts, soccer fields, baseball diamonds, and skating rinks. Support facilities may include benches, water fountains, emergency or pay phones, outdoor lighting, equipment storage, picnic shelters, public restrooms, and paved parking lots.

**8.3.1 Maintain Existing Community Parks.** Williston’s existing community parks are described in Table 8.B and shown on Map 18. With the exception of the Lake Iroquois Beach, these parks are managed and maintained by the Public Works Department. As described in section 8.6, the Lake Iroquois Beach is managed by the Lake Iroquois Recreational District, which includes representatives of the Towns of Williston, Richmond, Hinesburg, and St. George.

**Table 8.B: Existing Community Parks**

| <b>Park Name</b> | <b>Location</b>                | <b>Acres</b> | <b>Recreational Uses/Facilities</b>   | <b>Pedestrian Access</b> |
|------------------|--------------------------------|--------------|---|--------------------------|
| Rossignol Park   | N. Brownell and Industrial Ave | 9            | 2 tennis courts, 1 little league size baseball field, basketball court, play area | 5’ sidewalk              |

|                    |                             |    |   |   |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|----|---|---|
|                    |                             |    | & swing set   |   |
| Brennan Park       | Mt. View Rd                 | 5  | 1 little league baseball field, 2 T-ball fields, toddler playground, community gardens  | 5' sidewalk   |
| WCS Community Park | North of Central School     | 21 | 4 full-size multi-use recreation fields, 3 small soccer fields, 1 full-size baseball field, 1 little league size baseball field, 2 softball fields, 2 volleyball courts, 2 horseshoe pits, a multi-use skating rink, multi-age playground, Allen Brook Nature Trail for walking & skiing (0.5 mi), Williston Village Bike Path (1.3 mi) | 10' bike path, 2' primitive nature trail, 5' concrete sidewalk on Rte 2 |
| Allen Brook School | Talcott Drive, off Rte 2    | 2  | playground, swings, open lawn/grass, fitness trail  | 10' asphalt bike path, 5' concrete sidewalks                            |
| Lake Iroquois      | Beebe Lane, off Oak Hill Rd | 1  | playground, swimming, snack bar and changing building, primitive hiking loop (1.5 mi)   | none  |

**8.3.2 Meet the Need for Additional Park Development.** Williston’s community parks include approximately 38 acres that are developed for recreational use (see Table 8.B above). To meet national standards, the Town will need to pursue an additional 15 – 47 acres of parkland to fully accommodate the Williston population.

How Much Park Space is Enough? The National Recreation and Park Association publishes general guidelines for the amount and type of developed recreation land on an "acres per 1,000 persons" basis. For local parks, the suggested ratio is between 6.25 and 10.5 acres per 1,000 persons.

**8.3.3 Consider the Distribution of Park Space.** Map 3 shows the approximate service areas of Williston’s existing community parks. While there is room for many of the new facilities listed in 8.3.2, above at the Allen Brook, Brennan, Rossignol and the WSC Community parks, the Town should explore ways to add community parks that are easily accessible for all residents. Possible locations for new community parks include:

- The Chittenden Solid Waste District landfill on Redmond Road, when reclaimed. A portion of landfill tipping fees should be earmarked for the development and maintenance of a park when the site is reclaimed. This future park will be named the “Timothy Bradish Memorial Recreation Center,” in memory of a local ski jumper and the historic ski jump at this location.

- The ski hill on Chapman Lane, which could be acquired for a sledding or ski hill.

Most other locations that have been discussed for this purpose are in well-served areas. The Town should seek other sites in northwestern Williston and other underserved areas, such as the residential community along Old Creamery Road. In addition, the Town is anticipating a significant amount of growth in Williston's designated growth center where few recreational facilities exist today.

**8.4 - Country Parks - The Town of Williston will continue to maintain its existing country parks, as directed by management plans that establish appropriate levels of development. The Town will add country parks both by developing suitable properties it already owns and, if resources permit, acquisition.**

Country parks provide public access to natural areas. They offer Williston residents opportunities for a hike in the woods, a quiet snowshoe walk, or a few minutes enjoying a scenic view. There are currently about 236 acres of designated country park land. As indicated in Section 8.4.2, the Town also owns two parcels totaling 127 acres that may be suitable for new country parks.

**8.4.1 Maintain Existing Country Parks.** Williston's developed country parks are described in Table 8.B and shown in Map 18. The Conservation Commission has developed management plans that establish the levels of recreational use and development appropriate for the Five Tree Hill and Mud Pond parks.

**8.4.2 Develop Additional Country Parks.** Williston owns two undeveloped parcels that will become country parks.

- The Town owns the summit and north side of **Brownell Mountain**. A natural resource inventory of this property was completed in 1995. This property will also function as a conservation area. The Conservation Commission is currently drafting a management plan. While there are informal trails, no formal trails or trailheads have been established to-date. Funding for a small parking area on South Brownell Road is included in the capital budget. A west-facing scenic overlook near the summit should be created by selective clearing and a sitting bench installed.
- Williston acquired 20 acres of the former **Hill property**, located east of Route 2A along the Sucker Brook, in 2004. This property will function as both a country park and a conservation area. Planned facilities include a parking area at the site of the former farmhouse and a primitive trail to the Five Tree Hill lookout. Funding to build the trail and construct the parking area is secured but grant funds to construct the Sucker Brook footbridge are pending approval. The Town should also seek grant funding to build an interpretive trail for the Sucker Brook stream restoration project, which was completed in 2008.

In addition to Town-owned sites, Williston holds a temporary easement for a public boat access and parking area adjacent to the North Williston Road Bridge over the Winooski River. Other potential country parks might include: Indian Lookout, a scenic east-facing overlook located on Governor Chittenden Road; Knoll Overlook off Coyote Run; Goose Hill; the slope behind Martell Hill; Square Woods; the park by the landfill; and a corridor along the Winooski River that might include boat access areas off River Cove and Governor Chittenden Roads.

**8.4.3 Prepare Management Plans for Country Parks.** The Conservation Commission will continue to develop and update management plans for the country parks. The goal of these plans will be to strike a balance between recreational use and conservation values.

- Forests should be managed to promote healthy stands and wildlife habitat, including diverse vertical structure. Selective logging may be appropriate in some places. Mowing may be required where a country park includes an open scenic vista.
- Wherever possible, country parks should be linked into the Town's system of paths and trails. Trails should be sited, designed, and built to minimize erosion. Trail networks should also minimize conflict among users and with adjoining properties. Permitted activities – hiking, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, horseback riding, mountain biking, snowmobiling – will vary with the terrain and surrounding land uses. Separate trails may be needed for different uses. Trails may be closed seasonally to prevent erosion, avoid flooding, or prevent user conflict with wildlife.
- Small gravel parking areas and informational kiosks may be provided at country park trailheads. At scenic overlooks, the installation of benches and picnic tables, and limited selective clearing may be acceptable. All facilities should be sited and designed to visually blend into the natural environment.
- A country park, or greenway, along the Winooski River would have to be sited so as to minimize conflict with farming operations and accommodate seasonal flooding. Boat access should minimize disturbance to the river bank, floodplain forests, wetlands, and other wildlife habitat.

**8.4.4 Consider Country Parks in Development Review.** Williston's Open Space regulations require that subdivisions including more than 10 acres maintain 75% of the original parcel in open space. This gives developers whose land adjoins country parks an incentive to dedicate a portion of their open space to the Town, expanding park acreage. For more on this approach see Policy 3.2.1 of the Comprehensive Plan.

## **8.5 – Trails - The Town of Williston will continue to maintain and expand its network of trails.**

The Town currently maintains over twelve miles of unpaved primitive trails. These trails are used primarily for recreational activities such as hiking, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing, and in some cases, mountain biking or horseback riding. Over sixteen additional primitive trail easements exist through private properties in Williston, but have yet to be built. Information about Williston's sidewalks and paths, which are designed primarily for transportation purposes, is found in Chapter 6 – Transportation.

**8.5.1 Maintain Existing Trails.** With the help of the Winooski Valley Park District, the Fellowship of the Wheel, and other volunteers, Williston Conservation Commission staff spend the summer months maintaining the existing trail system. As shown on Map 10, the Town currently maintains about eight miles of primitive trails, including:

- the Allen Brook Nature Trail, located behind the Williston Central School on Route 2 in the Village Center;

- a trail between the Five Tree Hill and Mud Pond Country Parks;
- trails within existing country parks, including Five Tree Hill, Mud Pond, and the Lake Iroquois Uplands;
- a primitive trail loop at the Isham Farm, located on Oak Hill Road north of Lake Iroquois; and
- the trail through the Boomhower wood-lot that begins at the former Hill property and O'Brien properties along Route 2A and terminates at the Five Tree Hill look-out.

**8.5.2 Expand the Trail System.** Proposed trails are shown on Map 4. The Town currently holds public trail easements on the following parcels identified as priorities for primitive trail development: those in and around the Village; from Five Tree Hill to Route 2A; along the Allen Brook paralleling South Road; along the ridgeline between Route 2A and Bradley Lane; and on the Town property on Brownell Mountain. The exact location of these trails and permitted uses will be determined by the terrain, proximity to water features, and surrounding land uses. The impact on natural resources and adjoining land uses, particularly agriculture, should be minimized. The Town should adopt the Greenway Acquisition Policy, which was revised by the Conservation Commission in 2009, or a similar tool to consistently obtain these links from private landowners.

**8.5.3 Require Dedication and Construction of Proposed Trails in New Developments.** Where development will benefit from access to trails, dedication of the necessary rights-of-way will be required. The Town may also require construction of the portion of a proposed trail that serves a project, depending on how much demand for trails that development will generate. The Town will develop standards and guidelines to help determine project-specific requirements for trail easement dedication and trail construction. Where proposed trails pass through developed areas or through rural lands, the Town will work with landowners, including homeowner's associations, to encourage the voluntary donation of easements for proposed paths and trails. Developers who include the dedication of trails in their proposals will receive incentive points through the Town's growth management system.

## **8.6 - Lake Iroquois Natural Area**

Lake Iroquois (formerly known as Hinesburg Pond) is a small lake located in the towns of Williston, St. George, Richmond, and Hinesburg. These four towns jointly manage the beach, trail system, and recreation facilities as the Lake Iroquois Recreation District (LIRD). The State of Vermont owns the public fishing access on the northwest shore of the lake. Volunteers and paid staff managed by the Lake Iroquois Association act as greeters at the access. The Town will continue to play an active role in the management of recreational facilities along the lake. See Chapter 10 for more information about Lake Iroquois.