

CHAPTER 9 – RECREATION AND PARK RESOURCES

The Town of Williston provides a variety of recreational opportunities that range from a diverse program offering to active and passive recreational facilities. Williston’s park network includes both public and private facilities that are managed and maintained according to ownership. This section includes the five-year plan for recreation programming and town-owned facilities.

Recreation Programming

- Recreation programming is fundamental to the quality of life for the community. The mission statement of the Recreation and Parks Department reflects this: “To enhance the lives of our citizens and visitors, by providing a variety of leisure opportunities that are safe and enjoyable, and in maintaining the parks so they are safe and physically attractive, while preserving and enhancing the natural resources”.
- The current offering of recreation programs range in age from pre-school to seniors. Currently over 150 programs are offered annually, in the areas of preschool, youth and teen programs, family programs, adult programs, senior programs, camps and special events.
- In addition, the town works with area community groups, nonprofits, businesses, and the school district to enhance the program offerings.

Recreational Facilities

- **Publicly-owned Recreational Facilities** include; **Community Parks**; Brennan Park, Rossignol Park, Williston Community Park and Allen Brook Park; **Country Parks**; Five Tree Hill, Mud Pond and Sucker Brook Hollow, and finally Williston’s **Primitive Trail Network**; Allen Brook Nature Trail and Oak View Hill Trail. While not entirely owned by the Town of Williston, the **Lake Iroquois Recreation District** also provides an important recreational opportunity for residents and therefore is included in this section.
- **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 13 – Open Space and Working Landscapes. Recreation areas and natural space in communities are linked to a greater sense of well-being and social interconnectedness of residents.
- **Neighborhood and Urban Parks** are privately-owned parks. Urban Parks include 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. Access to green space helps people manage depression, anxiety and stress better. The town 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** - People are more likely to walk or bike when communities have well-maintained networks of sidewalks and bike lanes. Though sidewalks and paths are used recreationally they are primarily designed for transportation purposes. Sidewalks are typically constructed as 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 walking, jogging and biking. Information about Williston’s sidewalks and paths is found in Chapter 6 – Transportation.

Objectives:

This plan identifies six objectives to provide a policy basis for the management and maintenance of Williston’s recreation and parks resources.

9.1 – Recreation Programming - This objective supports and plans for recreation programming to serve the community needs.

9.2 – Recreational Facilities – This objective supports the maintenance and improvements of current recreational facilities and identifies the need for future indoor and outdoor recreation facilities.

9.3- Community Parks – This objective supports the maintenance and improvement of the current community parks and identifies future needs. These town-owned public parks provide active and passive recreation opportunities for the community.

9.4 - 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.

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

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

Objective 9.1 – Recreation Programming - The town will continue to support and plan for recreation programs that benefit the community.

The Recreation and Parks Department strives to offer a diverse offering of programs, to include; sports, fitness, the arts, camps and educational programs. In 2015 more than 150 programs were offered to the community of Williston and surrounding towns.

The Recreation Committee works with the department to identify new recreation programs and indoor and outdoor recreational needs.

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

9.1.2 Foster Volunteer Opportunities. The town will continue to recruit and maintain volunteer networks to assist with the various recreation programs and special events.

Objective - 9.2 - Recreational Facilities – The town will continue to support and plan for indoor and outdoor recreational facilities that benefit the community

While the town now has a variety of outdoor recreational facilities including, ball fields and sports courts, there remains a need for additional playing fields. The increase of youth and adult leagues has placed a huge demand on field spaces. In addition, many are used for multi-sports events, not allowing for proper maintenance and rehabilitation time.

The town currently does not own any indoor recreation facilities. The department is largely dependent on the availability of space within the schools. It receives second priority for use, next to school activities. While this partnership is successful, there is the lack of availability, control in scheduling, and the time of a regular school day, prohibits providing programs for preschoolers and seniors, both significant needs that currently exist. Indoor space to provide these types of programs and others is essential.

A taskforce was appointed by the Selectboard 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.

9.2.1 Identify Recreation Facility Needs. A process should be developed to assess the current recreational facilities and identify future needs and target those areas where the town is falling short. The process should be developed to reflect the National Recreation and Parks Association Level of Service Standards (LOS), and create sufficient active recreation fields to enable restoration and maintenance.

9.2.2 Meet the Need for Indoor Recreation Facilities. Plans for accomplishing the taskforce’s recommendations regarding indoor recreation space and a potential community center 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. The town should consider completing a feasibility study for a potential community center, analyzing estimated costs and possible funding mechanisms.

Objective 9.3 - Community Parks - The town will continue to maintain and enhance the existing community parks. The town will also seek land and funding for additional community park development.

Community parks are public open spaces. They are developed for intensive recreational uses that serve the entire town. They include: playgrounds, tennis and basketball courts, soccer/multi-use fields, baseball/softball diamonds, sand volleyball courts and skating rink/skate park. Support facilities may include benches, picnic tables, water fountains, emergency phones, outdoor lighting, equipment storage, picnic shelters, public restrooms, and paved parking lots.

Williston’s existing community parks are described in Table 9.A and shown on Map 17. The parks are managed and maintained by the Recreation & Parks Department. With exception, as described in section 9.6, 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 9.A: Existing Community Parks

Park Name	Location	Acres	Recreational Uses/Facilities	Pedestrian Access
Rossignol Park	Industrial Ave and North Brownell Rd	9	2 tennis courts, 1 little league baseball field, basketball court, playground	5' sidewalk
Brennan Park	Brennan Woods Dr. off Mt. View Rd	5	3 little league baseball/softball fields, toddler playground, community gardens	5' sidewalk
Williston Community Park	Williston Road, in the Village, behind Williston Central School	21	2 full-size multi-use fields, 3 small soccer fields, 1 full-size baseball field, 1 little league baseball field, 1 softball field, basketball court, 2 tennis courts, 4 volleyball courts, a multi-use skating rink/skate park, 12-hole disc golf course, multi-age and toddler playground, public bathrooms w/concession area and warming hut. Allen Brook Nature Trail (0.5 mi), Village Bike Path (1.3 mi)	10' bike path, 2' primitive nature trail, 5' concrete sidewalk on Rte. 2
Allen Brook Park	Talcott Drive off Rte. 2	2	2 full size irrigated multi-use fields	10' asphalt bike path, 5' concrete sidewalks
Lake Iroquois Recreational District	Beebe Lane off Oak Hill Rd	1	playground, beach, swimming, snack bar and changing building, primitive hiking loop (1.5 mi)	none

9.3.1 Maintain Existing Community Parks. The Town of Williston will continue to maintain and improve on the existing recreational facilities in the community parks to provide safe and enjoyable play spaces for all ages.

9.3.2 Meet the Need for Additional Park Development. Williston’s community parks include approximately 38 acres that are developed for recreational use (see Table 9.A above). To meet Level of Service Standards, the town will need to pursue an additional 25-30 acres of parkland to fully accommodate the current need and future population growth. The National Recreation & Parks Association LOS Standards for developed recreation land is 7.5 acres per 1,000 persons.

9.3.3 Consider the Distribution of Park Space. Map 3 shows the approximate service areas of Williston’s existing 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:

1. 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. This future park has been proposed to be named the “Timothy Bradish Memorial Recreation Center,” in memory of a local ski jumper and the historic ski jump at this location.
2. The town should seek other sites in the northwestern part of town, 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.

Objective 9.4 – Country Parks - The Town of Williston, under the Conservation Commission, 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 256 acres of designated country park land. Access to bodies of water such as ponds and streams (aka blue space) and green space has positive effects on health and perception of health. As indicated in Section 9.4.2, the town also owns a 107-acre parcel that is planned for a future country park.

9.4.1 Maintain Existing Country Parks. Williston’s developed country parks are described in Table 8.A and shown in Map 18. The Conservation Commission has developed management plans that establish the levels of recreational use and development appropriate for the Sucker Brook Hollow, Five Tree Hill and Mud Pond Country Parks.

9.4.2 Develop Additional Country Parks. Williston acquired 20 acres of the former Hill property, located east of Route 2A along the Sucker Brook, in 2004. In 2013 the town completed a parking area at the site of the former farmhouse, a pedestrian bridge across the Sucker Brook and a primitive trail to the Five Tree Hill lookout. The town also acquired 42 acres from the former Pine Ridge School property as part of the specific plan for the New England Theological Seminary (NETS) in 2016.

The town owns the summit and north side of Brownell Mountain. A natural resource inventory of this property was completed in 1995. This property currently functions as a conservation area, with some informal trails. The Conservation Commission is currently drafting a management plan and taking steps to develop this area as a country park, with a small parking area for automobiles and bicycles on South Brownell Road and a formal trail to the summit. Selective clearing near the summit is being considered to create a west-facing scenic overlook with a sitting bench. The town is also in the process of considering acquiring a significant portion of the Catamount Family Outdoor Center property for possible use as a community forest.

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.

9.4.3 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 (see Map 17). 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 with accommodation for automobiles and bicycles 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.

9.4.4 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.

Objective 9.5 – 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.

9.5.1 Maintain Existing Trails. With the help of the Winooski Valley Park District, the Fellowship of the Wheel, and other volunteers, Williston Conservation Commission staff spends the summer months maintaining the existing trail system. As shown on Map 17, the town currently maintains about twelve 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 Sucker Brook Hollow country park to the Five Tree Hill look-out.

9.5.2 Expand the Trail System. Existing and proposed trails are shown on Map 17. The town currently holds public trail easements on the following parcels identified as priorities for primitive trail development: those in and around the Village; 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.

9.5.3 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.

Objective 9.6 - 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 12 for more information about Lake Iroquois.

Continue to Encourage Volunteer Involvement in Enhancing and Maintaining Recreational Facilities. The town should continue to encourage volunteer involvement in park (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, 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).