



**Field Assessment
from
Master Plan Update**
by Ballard King & Associates, Ltd
Executive Summary

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Executive Summary: Fields

Ballard*King & Associates was retained by the Town of Pittsford to provide an update to the Parks & Recreation Master Plan. This executive summary looks to summarize findings of the report in respect of allocation of playing fields.

Master Plan Update: From the demographics obtained in Section I of this report it should be remembered that the make-up of the service areas along with median income and current rates of spending are such that they do support strong levels of youth sports programming within the Town of Pittsford. When you overlay this demographic information with the National Sporting Goods Association 2011 Survey and combine that with participation numbers provided by the youth sports groups it indicates that many of the field use activities that take place in the Town have reached a point of saturation with the exception being the sport of Lacrosse.

It should be noted that when the Recreation Department first began to operate from the Spiegel Community Center they were providing many youth sports activities. As time passed the Recreation Department began transitioning from the provider of these activities to working with local coaches to assist them with obtaining insurance and running the programs. That has further evolved to the point where the Recreation Department runs very few youth sports activities and has become a provider of space in conjunction with the Town Parks Department.

The most significant role that the Recreation Department plays with regards to youth sports is the allocation of field space for games. In allocating said field space, the Recreation Department works with the School District so that the entire field inventory within the Town is allocated as one community asset. Because of the amount of use by School District programs and youth sports programs the School District has investigated developing 3 turf fields on school property. The Town has subsequently offered a 4th option to the School District which would locate one of the turf fields at TFP-1. It should be noted that neither the Recreation Department or School District permit practice space, that is allocated on a first come first serve basis.

In a series of stakeholder meetings, B*K and representatives from the Town met with youth sports organizations that accounted for baseball, softball, lacrosse and football. A common theme amongst those meetings was the feeling that the field resources in the combined inventory of the Town and School District are inadequate. Leaders of these youth sport organizations were concerned that their participants were not getting the same facility experience that they received in other communities. In addressing that question in particular the Town has begun to identify some of these communities and determine how their field projects are funded.

If you look at the information collected through SCORP standards, the number of field use hours and the collective inventory of rectangles and triangles it would lead one to the conclusion that approximately 30% of the total available field hours from May through October are being used, minus practices. This would also lead one to believe that the available field space is more than adequate. However, what must be taken into account is the concentration of use in the months of May, June and early July. At that time of the year the demand is so great for field space that any disruption in the availability of fields due to weather or maintenance creates a significant shortage of fields available for games.

The results of this inability to take fields off line during prime growing seasons is that both Town and School District fields, rectangles and diamonds are not getting the quantity of maintenance and/or attention that they deserve in order to keep them in optimal condition. The addition of three turf fields to the collective inventory would allow for the season to begin as early as March and end as late as Thanksgiving, weather permitting. This would in effect allow for a more collective effort between the Town and School District for continued field maintenance and upkeep.

In looking at the Town inventory proper, the 2 primary locations that B*K feels should consider significant change to the configuration are Thornell Farm Park and Great Embankment Park.

- The addition of a turf field at Thornell Farm Park would be an asset to the community as a whole and the Town will need to work to further underscore their scheduling control of that piece of property. In adding that space to Thornell Farm Park the Town may also want to look at Master Planning that property to ensure that the most efficient use of space is being achieved. Moving the remaining rectangles and diamonds to more of an enhanced playing surface or an additional turf field that could be used as a rectangle or 2 diamonds should be considered. Given the dollars that the youth sports groups are currently spending to rent facilities in off-seasons the Town may also want to investigate “doming” the field at Thornell Farm Park for off-season use.
- The upper fields at Great Embankment Park need to be reconsidered given the lack of use at this time. It is the opinion of B*K that GEP D-2 should be removed and that the entire upper area be graded so that an additional rectangle can be accommodated on the upper level. This grading of the upper level would accommodate at least 1 full-size rectangle or 2 non-regulation size rectangle which allow for additional flexibility with maintenance. GEP D-1 should remain a diamond but should be converted so that it can be used as either a 60-40 or 70-50 field.

B*K would recommend the following with regards to updating the field allocation within the Town:

- The Town and School District should continue to move forward with the development of the designated turf fields at Sutherland, Mendon and Thornell Farm Park.
 - The Town should move forward with a reconfiguration of Great Embankment Park to provide additional flexibility to accommodate field maintenance for rectangles.
 - The Town and School District need to formalize their cooperative agreement of facilities and spell out priorities of use and shared maintenance costs.
 - The Town Parks Department should sit down with the School District Facilities Department and develop a 5, 10 and 15-year plan for the fields specifically. Outlined within those plans should be annual maintenance required of each space, a minimum standard and a capital improvement plan that accounts for taking fields off-line on an annual basis so as to provide them opportunity to regenerate. In order for the maintenance to be successful it must be a combined effort between the Town and School District.
 - With the additional dollars that should be invested in maintaining the fields the Town and School District should look at implementing a field rental fee that is consistent between both organizations.
 - An additional investment that both the Town and School District should consider is staffing levels that would allow for monitoring of spaces to ensure that they are being used appropriately.
 - As the Town and School District fields are being looked at as community assets there should be consideration given to implementing a process and appropriate technology where there is a 1-stop clearing house for all field reservations. In other words a combined scheduling system specific to field reservations.
 - With the Town and School District fields being community assets priority of reservations for games should be given to organizations whose membership is primarily Town residents. To that end rosters, to include coaches should be provided with addresses and telephone numbers at the time field requests are made.
 - Any future additional field space that is required should be looked at a cooperative venture between the Town/School District and the youth sports organizations themselves. Additionally, if there is a higher level of maintenance that the youth sports groups require beyond the standard set by the Town and School District the youth sports groups should bear that cost.
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