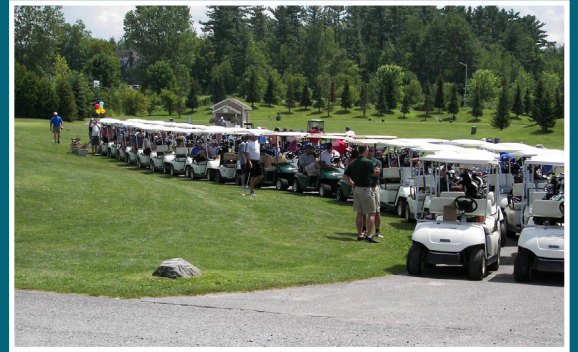




Town of Essex, Vermont

*Parks and Recreation Department
Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan
Executive Summary*

February 2012



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Table of Contents

I. Executive Summary.....	1
A. Findings and Analysis.....	1
B. Key Findings and Needs Assessment Survey Highlights	3
C. Overview of Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives.....	3
II. Summary Overall Analysis and Key Focus Areas	7
A. Key Focus Areas.....	7
III. Recommendations and Action Plan	11
A. Goals, Objectives, and Key Actions	11

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I. Executive Summary

The Town of Essex, Vermont is a thriving community with a rural character, offering a wide range of opportunities for outdoor recreation and active partnerships to serve a variety of indoor recreational needs. Managed growth has facilitated the acquisition of conservation and natural resource properties for recreational uses, and long range planning practices for operations and facility improvements are well established. The Town is in the geographic center of Chittenden County and is within easy access of employment centers and cultural, recreational, and social activities of the Champlain Valley.



The Town contracted with GreenPlay LLC in 2011 to develop a **Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan** for the Essex Parks and Recreation Department. The strategic planning process sought to identify key focus areas for improvement and development of goals for the immediate future, short-term goals within 1-2 years, and long-term goals within the next 5-10 years. Through a community engagement process and a high level analysis of parks, facilities, and department operations, this plan provides prioritized recommendations to serve the current and future recreational needs of the residents of the Town of Essex, including the Village of Essex Junction – whose residents contribute to the Town budget and are eligible to participate in Town recreation programs.

In addition to the goal of establishing a strategic direction for the delivery of the Department’s vision of “best in class” parks and recreation services, the Essex Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan is intended to achieve the following objectives:

- A Town-wide vision for parks and recreation services
- Strategic goals, objectives, and action plans for achieving the vision
- Identification of the values, satisfaction levels, and priorities of community residents
- A comprehensive review of the existing inventory of land, recreation facilities, programs, and services, including maintenance standards
- A review and analysis of existing plans, trends, and demographics
- Updated maps of parks, facilities, and trails

A. Findings and Analysis

Existing conditions, findings, and analysis of facilities, parks, departmental operations, and services were compiled through a detailed process involving the following methods:

- Public meetings, focus groups, and stakeholder and staff interviews
- Review of existing Town and regional plans
- A statistically-valid survey sent randomly to 2,000 homes
- Analysis of demographics and trends
- A complete inventory of all parks, open space, facilities, programs, services, partners, and alternative providers
- SWOT analysis
- GRASP® Analysis of current and future Levels of Service for the parks and facilities, and their components

Trends/Community Profile

Local, state, and national trends that could potentially impact the Essex Parks and Recreation Department Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan were reviewed at a Strategic Plan Retreat with staff and board representatives. The highlights include:

Local and State Trends

Vermont is experiencing slow growth statewide, and Essex is viewed as a desirable retirement destination. Access to quality education, health care, arts and cultural events, and natural resources all contribute to this trend.

- The population is aging, and Essex has an active senior community.
- Assisted living is not currently planned, and seniors prefer independent living.
- Senior transportation is offered and is necessary to this community.
- Vermont ranks 1st in the United Health Foundation 2010 *State Health Rankings*.
- Traditional planning and economic development versus no-growth sentiments may contribute to compromises in quality of life infrastructure investments.
- Residential development is continuing in the rural areas of Essex.

National Trends

As the population ages and Baby Boomers choose to maintain active and healthy lifestyles, the following trends are emerging:

- Indoor leisure, therapeutic pools, and spray pads
- Exercise walking, swimming, exercising with equipment, camping, and bicycle riding
- Special events, fitness programs, and environmental education
- Trails, parks, and playgrounds considered when selecting a home
- More partnerships and contractual agreements to support specialized services
- Addition of playgrounds, restrooms, picnic shelters, and open space

Community Profile Summary

Using data from ESRI (Environmental Systems Research Institute), as well as the 2010 *Essex Economic Development Plan*, the following trends are observed:

- From 2000-2009, population growth in Essex was higher (.5%) than Vermont as a whole.
- Demographic projections through 2014 suggest that the number of children and teenagers is decreasing, while the 55 and older age group shows an increase.
- Median household income (approximately \$77,083) is higher in Essex than in Chittenden County and statewide.



B. Key Findings and Needs Assessment Survey Highlights

Areas of focus that emerged during the survey, findings, and analysis process helped guide the development of Strategic Plan goals and objectives. These include:

- A majority of households in Essex visit Parks and Recreation facilities and have registered with the Department.
- The Essex community places a high value on healthy and active lifestyles, programs for youth, community connectivity, and access to alternative transportation.
- The need for dog parks; maps of parks, trails, and recreation areas; and better distribution of available information about parks and recreation facilities, programs, and services was noted.
- The Parks and Recreation Department staff is well-respected, responsive to community needs, and “lives the mission.”
- Quality of life objectives appear in most chapters of the 2011 *Essex Town Plan*.
- The community has a desire to maintain and improve current parks, facilities, trails, and open space.
- According to Department data, user fees accounted for 47% of the Parks and Recreation Department revenue in 2010.
- The GRASP® Level of Service Analysis shows that the Town of Essex has an adequate number of parks and facilities. Survey respondents preferred to maintain existing parks and facilities before acquiring new properties, but supported purchasing additional natural resources and conservation lands.
- Adding bicycle and pedestrian trails and greenways to improve community connectivity is a citizen priority, and is noted in the *Essex Town Plan*, the *Essex Economic Development Vision and Plan*, the *Essex Open Space Plan/Scenic Protection Manual*, the *Chittenden County Regional Plan Draft*, and the *Winooski Valley Park District Plan*.
- Promoting healthy, active lifestyles is a top community issue. An indoor aquatic facility, more open space, a dog park, and community gardens were cited as important facility improvements.
- Desired service additions include pickup games, adult athletic leagues, computer/technology, 55+, environmental, cultural/arts, and fitness/wellness programs.
- There is a strong willingness on the part of Town and Village residents to pay additional property tax to increase recreational opportunities and to improve parks and facilities.

C. Overview of Strategic Plan Goals and Objectives

Nationwide, the trend among Town, City, and County administrators is to look toward parks and recreation departments to take the lead in creating healthy communities that support an active lifestyle. In a 2007 survey, the International City/County Management Association cited that over half believe the highest priority for their communities is a cohesive system of parks, trails, and accessible neighborhood parks, and 84 percent supported recreation programs that encourage active living.

In 2011, the American Planning Association’s Planning and Community Health Research Center conducted a survey of community planners and found that recreation was the #1 most cited public health topic in comprehensive plans, as noted in **Table 1**.

Table 1: Top Ten Most Cited Public Health Topics in Comprehensive Plans

Topic	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
Recreation	183	75.3%
Public Safety	168	69.1%
Clean Water	165	67.9%
Active Transportation	161	66.3%
Clean Air	140	57.6%
Emergency Preparedness	111	45.7%
Active Living	107	44.0%
Physical Activity	104	42.8%
Environmental Health	95	39.1%
Aging	82	33.7%

Source: American Planning Association, 2011

Parks and recreation services are seen as investments in the long-term vitality and economic sustainability of vibrant and attractive communities that serve residents, community service agencies, and businesses.

The following goals and objectives were developed considering the needs and desires of the citizens of the Town of Essex, the Village of Essex Junction, Town staff, and through an analysis and inventory of programs, facilities, planning systems, and departmental operations.

Goal 1: Reposition Essex Parks and Recreation as a Contributor to Public Health and Economic Catalyst

Objective 1 – Reframe existing programs and market with a fitness and wellness focus.

Objective 2 – Enhance existing program offerings to fulfill unmet needs.

Objective 3 – Utilize the resources and role of the Town’s Wellness committee as a broad-based, employer wellness program facilitator and connector.

Objective 4 –With the Town Administration and Selectboard, explore the concept of developing the eco-tourism market and recognizing the economic impact of such a focus.

Goal 2: Create a Master Plan for Indian Brook Reservoir

Objective 1 – Use benchmarks, including comprehensive water quality testing, pass sales, and actual user counts to monitor capacity.

Objective 2 – Develop a plan for what happens when the capacity is reached.

Goal 3: Develop an Active Recreation/Transportation/Trails and Greenways Master Plan

Objective 1 – Convene an internal working group with representation from the public works, parks and recreation, and planning departments, along with the trails, economic development, and conservation committees.

Objective 2 – Explore a capital approach to funding pathways, greenways, and trails as a parks and recreation facility.

Objective 3 – Create an integrated and looped trail system between Sand Hill Park and Foster Park.

Objective 4 – Utilize the right-of-way for the Circumferential Highway as a corridor for trails and community connectivity.

Goal 4: Conduct a Community/Aquatics Center Feasibility Study

Objective 1 – Secure funding for the feasibility study.

Objective 2 – Develop a Request for Proposals and Scope of Work; advertise, interview, and select consultant team.

Goal 5: Develop Sustainability Programs and Practices (financial, social, and environmental)

Objective 1 – Gather information pertaining to personal sustainability that is available within the community, and share it through public information channels.

Objective 2 – Evaluate internal energy and water conservation practices to generate cost savings, and lead by example.

Objective 3 – Identify and convene collaborators and partners.

Goal 6: Develop Program Pricing and Cost Recovery Strategies

Objective 1 – Shift service subsidy/tax funding to other priorities that benefit the community as a whole. Increase the cost recovery goals for services that benefit individuals more than the community.

Objective 2 – Align cost recovery and pricing strategies with values, vision, and mission, and market position.

Goal 7: Conduct a Comprehensive Service Assessment

Objective 1 – Determine the relevance of each service in meeting the Department's values and vision.

Objective 2 – Evaluate the Department's market position in the community relative to other service providers.

Objective 3 – Identify economic viability of programs, services, facilities, and land assets.

Goal 8: Maintain and Improve Existing Facilities, Parks, Trails, and Open Space Assets

Objective 1 – Utilize GRASP® Level of Service Analysis as an internal benchmarking system over time to maintain current Level of Service as changes occur.

Goal 9: Develop Master Plans for Myers Park, Pearl Street Park and the Tree Farm

Objective 1 – Conduct a public engagement process to determine the best and most appropriate uses of each park and whether they should be repurposed or reconfigured to maximize their service to the community.



II. Summary Overall Analysis and Key Focus Areas

An overall analysis of the public and staff input process, random survey results, and GRASP® Level of Service Analysis yields the following highlights:

- A review of the findings from all of the public input sessions consistently identified an appreciation for Department leadership and staff, existing parks and facilities, and programs in Essex.
- The need for more bicycle paths and trails was clearly identified as a priority. Cooperation among the Town, the Village of Essex Junction, and the Essex School District in developing community connectivity, sharing of facilities, and program collaboration was reported as an ongoing need.
- The variety of recreation program providers, especially for youth, is important to the community. During the busy spring sports season, conflicts can occur among youth sports organizations.
- The Parks and Recreation Department receives positive support from the Town Administration, the Selectboard, community organizations, and the citizens.
- As compared to expenses, cost recovery and non-tax revenues are above 50 percent and are likely to continue to increase.
- Staffing levels need to be increased to reduce the burden on the four full-time employees dedicated to parks and recreation. New staff resources dedicated to active lifestyle programming, trails/pathways coordination, and natural resource management are needed.
- Recommended expenditures for capital improvements will focus on upgrading existing parks and older park amenities that are in need of repair and/or replacement such as trails, playgrounds, large group picnic shelters, and Memorial Hall.
- The need for an indoor aquatic facility, trails/pathways, and open space land acquisitions is evident. Lack of programmable indoor space limits the creation and/or expansion of Town recreation programs. Every effort should be made to meet the recreational demands of the Essex and Essex Junction communities through the identification of alternative providers and partners.

A. Key Focus Areas

Reposition Essex Parks and Recreation as a Contributor to Public Health and Economic Catalyst

A recent nationwide trend has emerged in which parks and recreation agencies are actively engaged in promoting active lifestyles along with the public health benefits of parks and recreation facilities and services. The Town of Essex is known for forging strong partnerships to benefit the community. Reaching out to local and regional health agencies and measuring the economic impact of parks and recreation services is a logical development for Essex.

Create a Master Plan for Indian Brook Reservoir

Following an extensive effort to acquire the Indian Brook Reservoir as a valuable public asset, the Town of Essex has dedicated considerable resources to its maintenance, management, and stewardship. Building upon the existing natural resource inventory and trails master plan, development of a full site plan, including a carrying capacity analysis (possibly in collaboration with the University of Vermont) is an important step in the continued responsible management of the property.

Develop an Active Recreation/Transportation/Trails and Greenways Master Plan

With the alarming national trends in childhood obesity and reduced access to nature and the outdoors, trails and greenways are increasingly recognized as vital infrastructure components of an active transportation and parks and recreation facility system. Essex is well positioned to create a system of connected pathways and trails to support the community's active lifestyle priorities, which will also provide social, environmental, and financial benefits.

By connecting existing trails and pathways, it is possible to create a network of trails that link together (in clockwise order) Essex Founders School, Essex Middle School Hill Park, returning to Essex Founders School by way of the existing trail along the NE side of Sand Hill Road. By branching out from this loop, other properties that could be connected together include Saxon Hollow Park and Forestdale Natural Area. If a suitable crossing of the Circumferential Highway can be found, then the network could readily be expanded to include Pinewood Manor, Lang Farm South, and Myers Park. With proper street crossings, other public parcels could be connected to the network as well. Ultimately, this network of trails and pathways would provide a unique recreational transportation system for year-round use by Essex residents and guests.

Conduct a Community/Aquatics Center Feasibility Study

Swimming and aquatic activities are extremely popular in Essex, ranking among the top three most desired program areas, and in the top ten nationwide of programs most commonly offered. Sand Hill Pool serves the needs of the community adequately in the summer months, but the Town needs to respond to the unmet need of aquatics activities in the off season. Whether this is through partnerships with existing aquatics facilities such as the YMCA or The Edge, or building a new facility which combines aquatics with a community center (also an expressed need), can effectively be determined by a professionally conducted feasibility study and market analysis.



Develop Sustainability Programs and Practices

"Sustainability" has many definitions, and it can be challenging to understand the most effective way to implement sustainability programs and practices. Using a "triple bottom line" approach, and recognizing the value of addressing social, economic, and environmental conditions, Essex Parks and Recreation can realize extensive cost savings and initiate community education in a variety of ways. From promoting farmers' markets and buying local campaigns to recycling and energy reduction efforts, the Essex Parks and Recreation Department can become a community leader in promoting energy conservation and modeling practices of progressive parks and recreation agencies nationwide.

Develop Program Pricing and Cost Recovery Strategies

Establishing a pricing methodology that reflects community values while generating adequate revenues will help sustain parks, trails, open space, facilities, programs, and services in Essex. The Department's current methodology has proven effective in this regard, delivering an impressive 51 percent cost recovery rate. As part of the Strategic Plan Retreat, staff has been introduced to the Pyramid Methodology concepts and potential implementation strategies. An overview of the Pyramid Methodology is found in **Appendix H**.

Conduct a Comprehensive Service Assessment

An intensive review of organizational services including activities, facilities, and parklands indicate whether the service is "core to the organization's values and vision," and provides strategies to enhance or reduce services, expand collaborations, and advance or affirm market position. The methodology for conducting a Comprehensive Service Assessment is contained in **Appendix I**, and Department staff have been introduced to the process. Funders and customers are beginning to demand more accountability; both traditional (taxes and mandatory fees) and alternative funding (grants and contributions) are getting harder to come by, even as need and demand increase. Assessing the economic viability of parks and recreation services helps ensure that available resources are being used to the greatest community benefit.

Maintain and Improve Existing Parks, Trails, Facilities, and Open Space Assets

A coordinated plan for the upkeep and replacement of recreation facilities, parks, trails, and open space is extremely important in maintaining credibility and a high level of service for the community. As a result of intentional planning, the Essex Parks and Recreation Department has achieved relatively high levels of satisfaction by the community for asset management.

The GRASP® Level of Service Analysis provides a benchmarking process for maintaining and improving parks and facility amenities for sustained community benefit. Amenities such as benches, information kiosks at trailheads, and other comfort and convenience features enhance the value of the visitor experience. A potential funding mechanism is a park amenity donation program to facilitate the addition of memorial benches, commemorative trees and other contributions to the overall park system. In considering a land acquisition plan, a combined parks/trails and conservation approach to acquisitions and/or the purchase of easements and lease arrangements as opposed to outright purchase might have greater support than conservation only and fee-simple approaches.

Develop Master Plans for Myers Park, Pearl Street Park and the Tree Farm

During the GRASP® Level of Service Analysis, these parks emerged as top priorities for further evaluation through a community engagement process, a consultant's review, or an internal department master planning process. Addressing the issues of parking, access, and determining the best and most appropriate use of the properties is recommended.

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III. Recommendations and Action Plan

An outline of goals and objectives was created during the Strategic Plan Retreat, and cost estimates, potential funding mechanisms, partnerships, and responsible parties were identified.

Considering the needs and desires of the citizens of the Town of Essex (including the Village of Essex Junction) and Town staff, along with an analysis and inventory of programs, facilities, planning systems, and departmental operations, a comprehensive list of recommendations has been created that will enable the Town to better meet community needs, including:

- Acquisition and development of parkland, facilities, and trails, with a list of prioritized improvements that can be included in the Capital Improvement Program over the next five to ten years
- Programming, maintenance, and operations improvements
- Key partnership opportunities

Community policy makers and leaders increasingly recognize that public parks and recreation services are integral to creating communities where people want to live, work, and play. Parks and recreation amenities are seen as investments in the long-term vitality and economic sustainability of any vibrant and attractive community. The Town of Essex recognizes these factors and seeks to continue to make improvements to its parks, open space, recreation, and trails system, enhancing healthy living opportunities for citizens and guests for years to come.

A. Goals, Objectives, and Key Actions

This **Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan** is designed to serve as a decision-making tool for the Town of Essex that helps set priorities and action steps for implementation. The following chart summarizes goals, objectives, and actions, and identifies priority, implementation responsibility, financial impact, and timing, where appropriate. This plan is intended to be a five-year plan, with a focus on immediate and short-term priorities and a vision for the future. Funding availability, Town Plan priorities, and political and community support will play significant roles in the implementation process of this plan.

Action Steps are based on the following time frame definitions:

- Immediate priority – Actions that need to be taken in order to implement any short, mid, and long-term objectives
- Short-term priority – Some action should be taken within the next 1 to 2 years
- Mid-term priority – Some action should be taken within the next 3 to 5 years
- Long-term priority – Some action should be taken at 5 years or beyond
- Ongoing – This action is already taking place or should be put into place immediately, and should continue

It is important to note that while an objective may be a high priority for the community, Town resources, planning requirements, and implementation logistics may require implementation in the mid to long-term time frame.

Goal 1: Reposition Essex Parks and Recreation As A Contributor to Public Health and Economic Catalyst

Objective 1.1 Reframe existing programs and market with a fitness and wellness focus.

Actions	Primary Responsibility/Support	Resource Impact/Budget Requirement	Time Frame to Complete
Action 1.1.a – Organize fitness and wellness programs into one section in the program brochure.	Parks and Recreation	Staff Time	Immediate/Ongoing
Action 1.1.b – Provide a link to “A Walker’s Guide to Essex Junction, VT” prominently displayed on the Town website, and promote seasonally on Facebook.	Parks and Recreation/GIS Coordinator	Staff Time	Immediate/Ongoing
Action 1.1.c – Include seasonally focused fitness and wellness tips on Facebook, in the program brochure, and on the Town website.	Parks and Recreation	Staff Time	Immediate/Ongoing

Objective 1.2 – Enhance existing program offerings to fulfill unmet needs.

Actions	Primary Responsibility/Support	Resource Impact/Budget Requirement	Time Frame to Complete
Action 1.2.a – Identify partnership and resource sharing opportunities with other providers of fitness and wellness services, including Fletcher Allen Healthcare Community Improvement, Blue Cross/Blue Shield of VT, Essex Community Historical Society, IBM, Burlington YMCA, and independent youth sports leagues. Formalize partnerships with written agreements.	Parks and Recreation/ Town Manager	Staff Time	Immediate
Action 1.2.b – Collaborate with the Town of Essex School District, Blue Cross/Blue Shield of VT, and the Trails Committee to develop “A Walker’s Guide to Essex, VT.”	Parks and Recreation/ Town Manager	Staff Time	Short-Term
Action 1.2.c – Explore developing partnerships with alternative providers to offer “pickup game” activities, adult athletic leagues, computer/technology, 55+, environmental, cultural/arts, and fitness and wellness programs.	Parks and Recreation	Staff Time Ongoing Budget Allocation	Immediate/Ongoing
Action 1.2.d – Conduct regular focus groups and continue user surveys to understand ongoing community recreation needs.	Parks and Recreation	Staff Time	Ongoing

Objective 1.3 – Utilize the resources and role of the Town’s Wellness committee as a broad-based, employer wellness program facilitator and connector.

Actions	Primary Responsibility/ Support	Resource Impact/Budget Requirement	Time Frame to Complete
Action 1.3.a – Access resources, program leaders, and health improvement materials available through the Town’s insurance provider.	Parks and Recreation/ Wellness Committee	Staff Time	Immediate/ Ongoing

Objective 1.4 – Explore the concept of developing the eco-tourism market in Essex and recognizing the economic impact of such a focus with the Town Administration and Selectboard.

Actions	Primary Responsibility/ Support	Resource Impact/Budget Requirement	Time Frame to Complete
Action 1.4.a – Consider membership in, and utilizing the resources of, the International Eco-Tourism Society.	Parks and Recreation	Staff Time \$350	Short-Term/ Ongoing
Action 1.4.b – Research municipal eco-tourism programs in Vermont and nationwide for model programs.	Parks and Recreation	Staff Time	Short-Term/ Ongoing
Action 1.4.c – Collaborate with Vermont Department of Tourism and Vermont Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation to evaluate potential eco-tours in the Essex area.	Parks and Recreation/VT Dept. of Tourism	Staff Time	Short-Term

Goal 2: Create A Master Plan for Indian Brook Reservoir

Objective 1 – Use benchmarks, including comprehensive water quality testing, pass sales, and actual user counts to monitor capacity.

Actions	Primary Responsibility/ Support	Resource Impact/Budget Requirement	Time Frame to Complete
Action 2.1.a – Work with Vermont Agency of Natural Resources to evaluate results of water quality testing.	Parks and Recreation/VT Agency of Natural Resources	Staff Time	Ongoing
Action 2.1.b – Collaborate with UVM or other academic institutions to conduct user surveys to determine visitor perceptions of overcrowding and user conflicts.	Parks and Recreation/ UVM or other	Staff Time	Short-Term
Action 2.1.c – Utilize research conducted on carrying capacity by UVM School of Natural Resources faculty provided as a staff resource document. Develop management actions and indicators for measuring changes to environmental and social conditions.	Parks and Recreation/ UVM	Staff Time	Immediate

Objective 2 – Develop a plan for what happens when capacity is reached.

Actions	Primary Responsibility/ Support	Resource Impact/Budget Requirement	Time Frame to Complete
Action 2.2.a – Develop a new master plan for Indian Brook Reservoir that establishes carrying capacity and clear objectives for use, addresses functional issues and conservation needs, and evaluates its relationship to adjacent lands. Build on existing recommendations in Indian Brook Management and Trail Plans.	Parks and Recreation/ Consultant	Staff Time/ Consultant Fee \$30,000 – \$50,000	Mid-Term
Action 2.2.b – Develop educational materials and signage to distribute to users and the general public.	Parks and Recreation	Staff Time Printing & Signage Costs	Mid-Term
Action 2.2.c – Collaborate with Winooski Valley Park District for an agreed upon access to Colchester Pond from Indian Brook Reservoir.	Parks and Recreation/ Winooski Valley Park District	Staff Time Cost TBD	Mid-Term/ Long-Term
Action 2.2.d – Address the issue of a separate shooting range to respond to safety concerns at Indian Brook expressed by residents.	Parks and Recreation/ Winooski Valley Park District	Staff Time	Immediate
Action 2.2.e – Assess management practices and adjust as needed to preserve natural resources and user experience.	Parks and Recreation	Staff Time	Mid-Term

Goal #3 – Develop An Active Recreation/Transportation/Trails And Greenways Master Plan

Objective 1 – Convene an internal working group with representation from public works, health improvement professionals, parks and recreation, and planning departments, and the trails, economic development, and conservation committees to develop a long term plan to improve access to active transportation and recreation options.

Actions	Primary Responsibility/ Support	Resource Impact/Budget Requirement	Time Frame to Complete
Action 3.1.a – Invite local, regional, and state trails and bicycle advocacy groups, user groups, school officials, health care professionals, active transportation and recreation planners, and Complete Streets design professionals to share their views.	Parks and Recreation	Staff Time	Immediate
Action 3.1.b – Adopt design and construction standards, using Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards and the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) guide for paved, natural surface, and mountain bike trails.	Parks and Recreation/ Public Works	Staff Time	Mid-Term

Actions	Primary Responsibility/ Support	Resource Impact/Budget Requirement	Time Frame to Complete
Action 3.1.c – Assess and improve Level of Service at trailheads with consistent signage/kiosks, benches, and wayfinding markers for important community destinations.	Parks and Recreation	Staff Time Costs TBD as priorities emerge	Immediate
Action 3.1.d – Identify trails and pathways provided for all non-motorized uses within Essex and Essex Junction and combine into a single map for public distribution on the Town website and through schools, health care agencies, libraries, fitness centers, chambers of commerce, and businesses.	Parks and Recreation/ Planning/ Trails Committee	Staff Time \$5,000 - \$10,000 for design and printing costs	Short-Term
Action 3.1.e – Explore the principles and resources of Safe Routes To School, Safe Routes To Play, VT Safe Streets Collaborative, Complete Streets, walkability assessments (<i>Appendices K, L</i>) and bicycle friendly designations. Designate staff to attend educational workshops in these areas.	Planning/Parks and Recreation	Staff Time	Mid-Term
Action 3.1.f – Adopt a leadership approach to trail and pathways improvements with the Trails Committee, Public Works Department, Winooski Valley Park District, Essex Junction Recreation and Parks Department, school districts, and Town, Village, and regional and state planners.	Parks and Recreation	Staff Time	Immediate
Objective 2 – Explore a capital project and park asset replacement approach to funding pathways, greenways, and trails as a parks and recreation facility.			
Actions	Primary Responsibility/ Support	Resource Impact/Budget Requirement	Time Frame to Complete
Action 3.2.a – Explore a separated pathway along Route 15 between Essex and Essex Junction as a first priority for capital expenditure toward community connectivity. Include design and engineering in next budget cycle.	Parks and Recreation/ Public Works	Staff Time	Immediate/ Short-Term
Action 3.2.b – Evaluate existing trails and pathway priorities, utilizing lists from 2004 <i>Recreation Needs Assessment</i> and 2011 <i>Essex Town Plan</i> and revise as necessary.	Parks and Recreation/ Public Works/ Planning	Staff Time	Immediate
Action 3.2.c – Increase parks maintenance training budget to include trails and pathways construction and maintenance workshops.	Parks and Recreation	\$500	Short-Term/ Ongoing
Action 3.2.f – Seek additional tax dollars and CIP funding to assist in the implementation of existing trail/pathway priorities in the 2011 <i>Essex Town Plan</i> .	Parks and Recreation	Cost TBD using updated Town Plan estimates	Mid-Term/ Long-Term

Objective 3 – Create an integrated and looped trail system between Sand Hill Park and Foster Park and adjacent public properties.

Actions	Primary Responsibility/Support	Resource Impact/Budget Requirement	Time Frame to Complete
Action 3.3.a – Connect existing trails with land acquisition or easement arrangements with landowners.	Parks and Recreation/ Public Works	Staff Time Costs TBD	Short-Term
Action 3.3.b – Link together Founders Memorial School, Essex Middle School, Prairie Fields to create a loop, utilizing the existing trail along Sand Hill Road.	Parks and Recreation/ Public Works	Staff Time Costs TBD	Short-Term
Action 3.3.c – Explore connections between Saxon Hollow Park and Forestdale Natural Area and the Sand Hill Park/Foster Park Loop.	Parks and Recreation/ Public Works	Staff Time Costs TBD	Mid-Term

Objective 4 – Utilize the Right-of-way for the Circumferential Highway as a Corridor for Trails

Actions	Primary Responsibility/Support	Resource Impact/Budget Requirement	Time Frame to Complete
Action 3.4.a – Evaluate a suitable crossing of the Circumferential Highway to expand the network to Pinewood Manor, Lang Farm South, and Myers Park.	Parks and Recreation/ Public Works/ Community Development	Staff Time Construction Costs TBD	Short-Term

Goal 4: Conduct A Community/Aquatics Center Feasibility Study

Objective 1 – Secure funding for the feasibility study.

Actions	Primary Responsibility/Support	Resource Impact/Budget Requirement	Time Frame to Complete
Action 4.1.a – Continue to utilize impact fees and other available funds to conduct short and long-term planning initiatives.	Parks and Recreation	Impact Fees/CIP Program	Ongoing

Objective 2 – Develop a Request for Proposals and Scope of Work, advertise, interview, and select consultant team.

Actions	Primary Responsibility/Support	Resource Impact/Budget Requirement	Time Frame to Complete
Action 4.2.a – Work with local, regional, or national consultants to develop a Feasibility Study Request for Proposals and Scope of Work.	Parks and Recreation/ Consultants	Staff Time	Short-Term

Goal 5: Develop Sustainability Programs and Practices (financial, social, and environmental)**Objective 1 – Gather information pertaining to personal sustainability that is available within the community and share it through public information channels.**

Actions	Primary Responsibility/Support	Resource Impact/Budget Requirement	Time Frame to Complete
Action 5.1.a – Explore resources such as rain barrel and recycling bin programs, VT Department of Public Service, Buy Local campaigns, yousustain.com , and the Vermont Earth Institute (Appendix M).	Parks and Recreation	Staff Time	Immediate/Short-Term

Objective 2 – Evaluate internal energy and water conservation practices to generate cost savings, and lead by example.

Actions	Primary Responsibility/Support	Resource Impact/Budget Requirement	Time Frame to Complete
Action 5.2.a – Utilize resources such as the Essex Energy Committee and Vermont Energy and Climate Action Network to assess Department-wide resource use and make recommendations for cost savings measures.	Parks and Recreation	Staff Time Cost TBD by Town Energy Plan	Short-Term following adoption of Town Energy Plan
Action 5.2.b – Consider having Department leadership attend NRPA's Green School.	Parks and Recreation	Staff Time Registration/Travel \$1,200	Short-Term

Objective 3 – Identify and convene collaborators and partners.

Actions	Primary Responsibility/Support	Resource Impact/Budget Requirement	Time Frame to Complete
Action 5.3.a – Explore a public/private partnership with The Essex Resort & Spa to establish community gardens and related healthy eating education programs.	Parks and Recreation	Staff Time	Short-Term
Action 5.3.a – Utilize the Burlington, Vermont Climate Action Plan as a resource for potential local, regional, and state partners.	Parks and Recreation	Staff Time	Short-Term

Goal 6: Develop Program Pricing and Cost Recovery Strategies

Objective 1 – Shift service subsidy/tax funding to priorities that benefit the community as a whole. Increase the cost recovery goals for services that benefit individuals more than the community.

Actions	Primary Responsibility/Support	Resource Impact/Budget Requirement	Time Frame to Complete
6.1.a – Review current revenue streams and their sustainability, including fees for parks, open space, trails, programs, and indoor recreation facilities.	Parks and Recreation	Staff Time	Immediate/ On-Going
6.1.b – Determine and define direct and indirect costs and develop a cost recovery philosophy for the Department through a public participation process to educate the citizens and obtain buy in.	Parks and Recreation	Staff Time Consultant \$20-\$35,000	Short-Term

Objective 2 – Align cost recovery and pricing strategies with values, vision, and mission and market position.

Actions	Primary Responsibility/Support	Resource Impact/Budget Requirement	Time Frame to Complete
Action 6.2.a – Review and formally adopt Department vision statement: <i>“Essex Parks and Recreation creates and sustains a thriving community environment for residents while promoting a more physically and socially connected, and healthy community through a well-maintained parks system and diverse programming.”</i>	Parks and Recreation	Staff Time	Immediate
Action 6.2.b – Convene staff and community focus group to review and formally adopt department values based on values identified in various chapters in 2011 <i>Essex Town Plan: Open Space, Cultural Facilities, Parks and Institutions, Community Infrastructure, Housing, Economic Development.</i>	Parks and Recreation	Staff Time	Immediate

Goal 7: Conduct A Comprehensive Service Assessment			
Objective 1 – Determine the relevance of each service in meeting the Department’s values and vision.			
Actions	Primary Responsibility/ Support	Resource Impact/Budget Requirement	Time Frame to Complete
Action 7.1.a - Conduct a services assessment to identify those services that are core to the department, those that advance or affirm market position, and those that may be duplicative or weak in market position, and then identify alternative provision strategies.	Parks and Recreation	Staff Time/ Consultant \$20,000- \$25,000	Short-Term
Objective 2 – Evaluate the market position of each service in the service's target market area.			
Actions	Primary Responsibility/ Support	Resource Impact/Budget Requirement	Time Frame to Complete
Action 7.2.a – Determine if marketing efforts and resources are effective in reaching and engaging target markets.	Parks and Recreation	Staff Time	Short-Term
Action 7.2.b – Evaluate parks and recreation services based on community, individual, environmental, and/or economic benefits realized by providing the service.	Parks and Recreation	Staff Time	Short-Term
Objective 3 – Identify the financial capacity of each service.			
Actions	Primary Responsibility/ Support	Resource Impact/Budget Requirement	Time Frame to Complete
Action 7.3.a – Evaluate alternative funding sources such as donations, sponsorships, grants, and/or volunteer contributions to support parks and recreation services.	Parks and Recreation	Staff Time	Short-Term

Goal 8: Maintain and Improve Existing Facilities, Parks, Trails, and Open Space Assets.

Objective 1 - Utilize GRASP® Level of Service Analysis as an internal benchmarking system to maintain a pro-active approach to park system asset management.

Actions	Primary Responsibility/ Support	Resource Impact/Budget Requirement	Time Frame to Complete
Action 8.1.a – Track labor hours and equipment use for facilities, parks, trails, open space, and athletic field maintenance using existing MainTrac Software (Vermont Systems) and Department task scheduling forms.	Parks and Recreation	Staff Time	Short-Term
Action 8.1.b – Review the list of components that were found during the inventory process to be functioning below expectations and adopt a strategy to repair, replace, repurpose, or remove them. See Appendix J for a list of low-functioning components and discussion.	Parks and Recreation	Staff Time, Cost TBD	Immediate
Action 8.1.c – Continue and increase annual Park Asset Replacement and Capital Park Equipment Replacement funding allocations.	Parks and Recreation	Staff Time/ CIP Funding	Short-term/ Ongoing
Action 8.1.d – Include trails and greenways in the Park Asset Replacement Plan for lifecycle replacement.	Parks and Recreation	Staff Time/ CIP Funding	Immediate/ Ongoing
Action 8.1.e – Perform an ADA access audit and develop a transition plan by March 15, 2012 as specified in the 2010 ADA standards and requirements. Actual improvements must be completed by March 2015. Evaluate existing ADA accessibility at all parks, open space, trail, and recreation facilities and programs.	Parks and Recreation/ Planning	Staff Time/ CIP Funding	Short-Term/ Mid-Term/ Long-Term
Action 8.1.f – Continue to evaluate the need for a community dog park, and address related issues of user conflict with dogs at Indian Brook Reservoir.	Parks and Recreation	Staff Time	Immediate
Action 8.1.g – Establish a park amenity donation program to add memorial benches, trailhead information kiosks, commemorative trees, and other comfort and convenience enhancements.	Parks and Recreation	Staff Time Cost TBD	Mid-Term

Actions	Primary Responsibility/Support	Resource Impact/Budget Requirement	Time Frame to Complete
Action 8.1.h – Expand winter recreation facilities by adding a sledding hill and expanding the outdoor ice rink.	Parks and Recreation	Staff Time Cost TBD	Mid-Term to Long-Term
Action 8.1.i – Support the efforts of Essex Junction Recreation and Parks Department in developing the Maple Street Bike Park.	Parks and Recreation	Staff Time	Mid-Term
Action 8.1.j – Evaluate construction of a large pavilion/shelter (30-50 person capacity) at FEA Parade Grounds. This location has good access, mature trees, historic flavor, and a sense of place that lends itself to special events.	Parks and Recreation	Staff Time \$50K & Up	Mid-Term
Action 8.1.k – Address opportunities to expand Mathieu Town Forest and Saxon Hill Forest, and include recommendations in Park Asset Replacement Plan and Capital Improvement process. Consider Level of Service projection to add 30 acres of open space, and one mile of trail by 2015.	Parks and Recreation	Staff Time	Short-Term
Action 8.1.l – Expand access to the Winooski River for canoes, kayaks, and shoreline-based activities in partnership with IBM (existing launch) and the Winooski River Park District (driveway extension, parking on the west side).	Parks and Recreation	Staff Time	Mid-Term

Goal 9: Develop Master Plans for Myers Park, Pearl Street Park, and the Tree Farm

Objective 1 – Conduct a public engagement process to determine the best and most appropriate uses of each park, and whether they should be repurposed or reconfigured to maximize their service to the community.

Actions	Primary Responsibility/Support	Resource Impact/Budget Requirement	Time Frame to Complete
Action 9.1.a – Consult the 2008 <i>Essex Open Space Plan</i> for guidance on development vs. preservation and recreation vs. conservation uses.	Parks and Recreation	Staff Time/ Consultants \$40,000 & Up	Mid-Term to Long-Term