

BENSON VILLAGE CENTER RECREATION PLAN



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MARCH 2008

Prepared for: Benson Recreation Committee

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Background

Following the successful revision and adoption of the Benson Town Plan in 2004, the Planning Commission began implementing its objectives. One of those was the preparation of a Recreation Plan to include development of recreation facilities in proximity to Benson's village center.

The Planning Commission sought public input in a survey distributed in the town newsletter and during Benson Family Day. Seventy-two percent of those responding thought that the town needed a community park or recreation facility in or adjacent to the village. Popular facilities included a softball field, ice skating rink, walking and biking paths and horseshoes.

A Recreation Committee was formed and funding obtained to prepare this plan.

Purpose

This planning project has inventoried Benson's existing recreation facilities, identified expansion possibilities, evaluated new locations, and researched facilities in towns similar to Benson.

Public input has been sought throughout the process including distribution of community and student surveys. Efforts have been made to coordinate with other local organizations, including the Youth League and the school district.

A strategy for providing enhanced recreation facilities has been developed including costs, potential funding sources, and operation and maintenance information.

Reading the Plan

Following this introduction is an inventory of Benson's existing recreation facilities and lands. The results of the household and student surveys are presented in Section C. The recreation facilities and programs of the towns of Pittsford and Wallingford are summarized in Section D.

Section E presents the recommended priorities and strategies for recreation facilities within or adjacent to Benson's village center. Section F includes cost estimates and outlines funding opportunities for implementing the plan's recommendations.

Summary

While initial input from Benson residents suggested support for development of a new community park, after more in-depth research and discussion it became clear that there would likely be more public support for projects that would improve or expand upon existing facilities or community lands. If existing facilities and lands were fully utilized and well managed, there may be support for acquisition of additional lands for public recreation in the future.

Additionally, the survey sent to all Benson households as part of this project indicated a stronger interest in passive recreation activities than anticipated. Walking was the single most popular recreational activity by far among all age groups and many commented on the lack of places to safely walk in town.

Survey comments also indicated that many residents would like a park that could host large family or community gatherings such as picnics, reunions, receptions, barbecues or concerts. Some suggested that the Town Office property could be used for this purpose.

Discussions with school officials and the Youth League were fruitful. There is a desire among all parties to maximize use of the school property for recreation and a recognized need for a second ball field and more parking on the property. It was felt that a second field at the school would be more convenient for parents than the addition of another field elsewhere in town. The presence of a Class Three wetland on the undeveloped school property will need to be considered in any plans for recreational use of those lands.

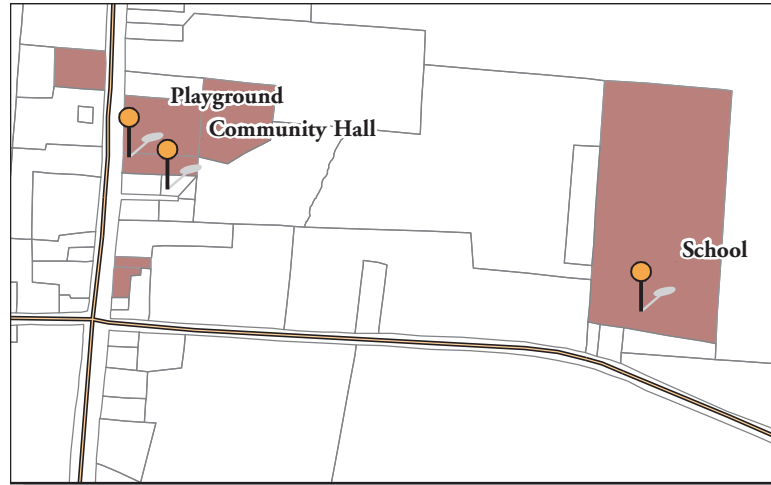
Based on these findings, the Recreation Committee recommends the following strategy to the Benson Selectboard, school board and residents:

SHORT-TERM

1. Fully utilize school and existing town-owned lands / facilities
2. Link school and town office / community building via trail or path

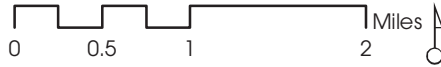
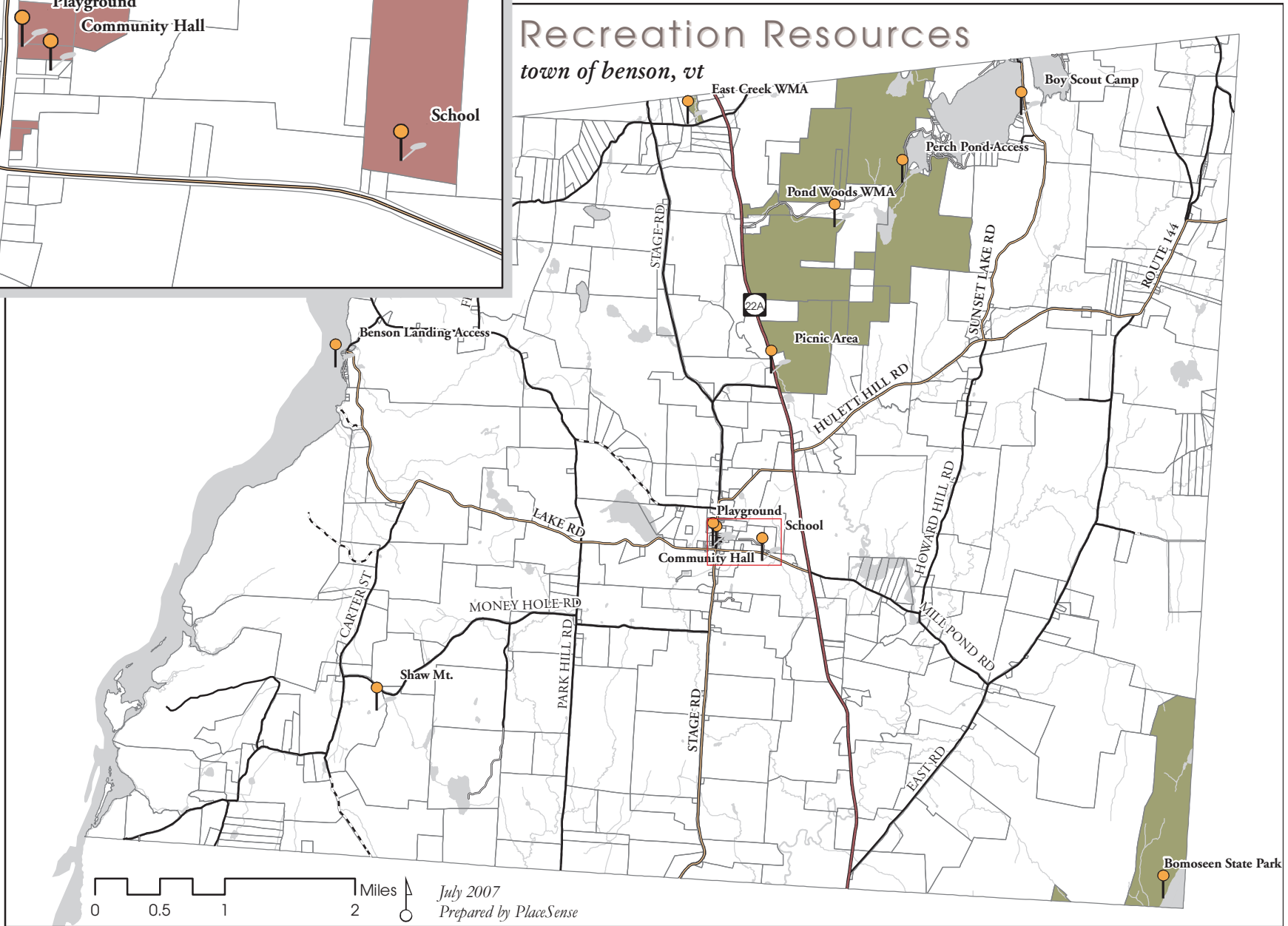
LONG-TERM

3. Seek to acquire and develop land within 1/2-mile of village center for use as town park



Recreation Resources

town of benson, vt



July 2007
Prepared by PlaceSense

B. INVENTORY & ANALYSIS

Town Office and Community Hall



Description

The Town Office, the former village school, is located on a 1.5-acre parcel in Benson's village center. The adjacent Community Hall sits on a 0.5-acre parcel. A 2-acre cemetery is located east of the Town Office parcel.

The Town Office parcel includes a playground located in the southwestern corner of the lot, which takes up 12,000 square feet. The playground includes a wooden jungle gym, swings, monkey bars, teeter-totter, balance beam and merry-go-round. There is a concrete pad, with several picnic tables located on it, dividing the property. The northwestern corner of the lot is developed as a small park with a war memorial. The rear (eastern side) of the property is an open grassy area, which is 30,000 square feet in size.

The Community Hall currently provides opportunities for indoor recreation including a gymnasium. The relatively small lot does not offer much potential for outdoor uses, although there is a small basketball court and open land to the rear of the building that is contiguous with the open space behind the Town Office.

The wide right-of-way along Stage Road offers ample opportunity for parking and streetscape improvements including restoration of the village center sidewalk network and street tree planting. There is currently a perpendicular parking lot with a gravel surface in front of the Town Office. There is also parking to the rear of the Town Office and alongside the Community Hall.



PHOTOS 1, 2 & 3: THE PLAYGROUND AT THE TOWN OFFICE
PHOTO 4: THE CONCRETE PAD TO THE SOUTH OF THE TOWN OFFICE
PHOTO 5: LAND BEHIND THE TOWN OFFICE



Benson Village School

Description

The Benson Village School is located on an 11-acre piece of property located 1/3 mile to the east of the village center. The school includes a gymnasium. The building, drive and parking area consume 4 acres. The remaining land includes a baseball field, playgrounds, courts and open lands.

The school's outdoor recreation facilities include an enclosed tot-lot playground. The playground for school-age children has swings, a slide, and climbing apparatus. There is also a basketball court and a Little League-sized ball field. There is an identified need for additional practice space and efforts are underway to construct a second ball field on the property.

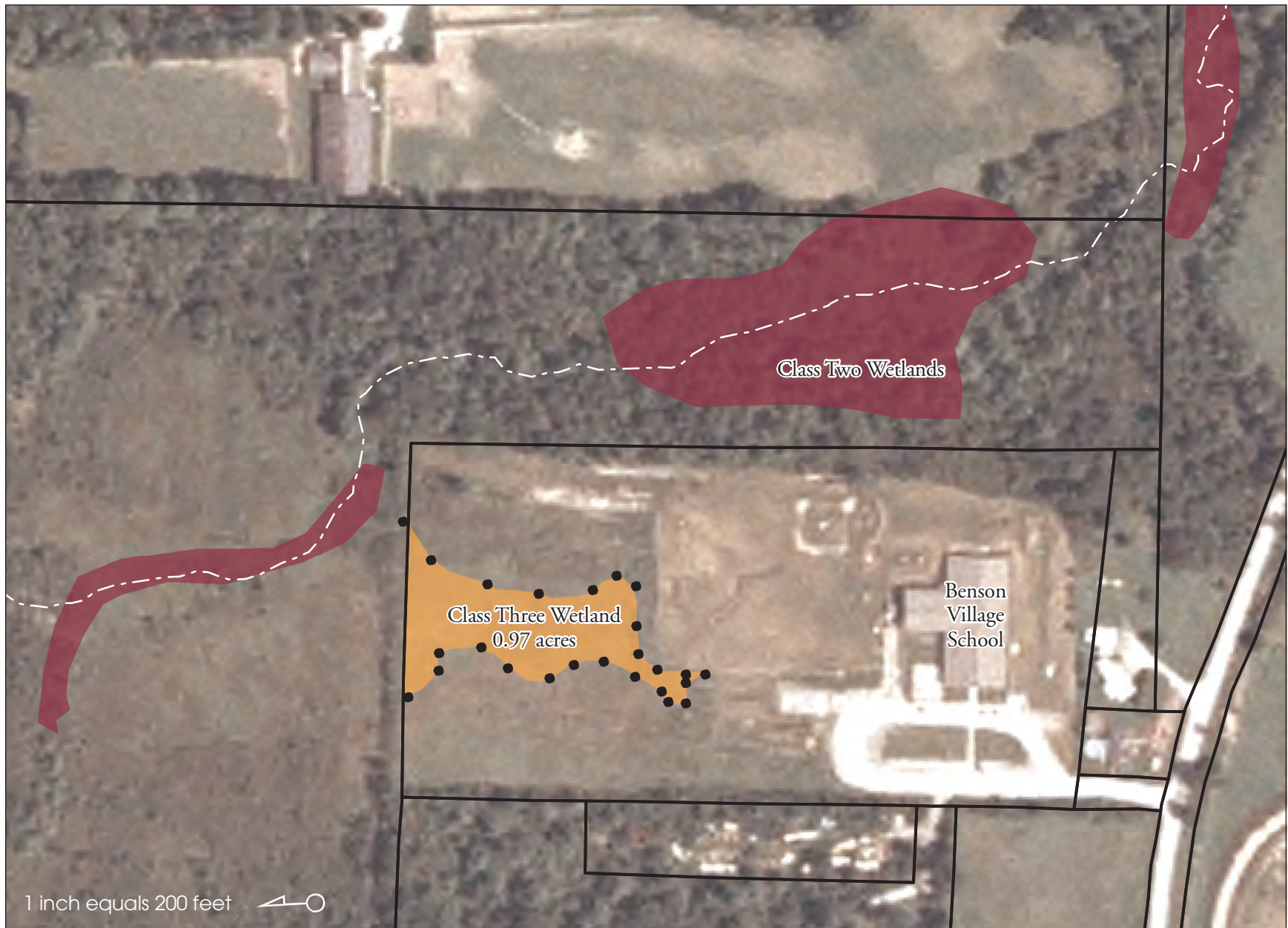
There is no pedestrian access to the school lands from the village center other than walking alongside the road, which is not a safe alternative for children. There are no shoulders along this segment of Lake Road.

There appears to be a perception among some town residents that the school's recreation facilities are not available for general public use during non-school hours. The school's current policy allows for informal use of the recreation facilities by residents, although a formal request is required for organized activities or events.

There is an open meadow at the northern end (rear) of the property, which is more than adequate size for a second ball field. There is an approximately one-acre, Class III wetland running east-west across the middle of the school parcel, which was delineated and assessed as part of this project.

PHOTO 1: SCHOOL BALL FIELD
PHOTOS 2 AND 3: SCHOOL PLAYGROUND AND
OUTDOOR BASKETBALL COURT
PHOTO 4: SCHOOL GYMNASIUM
PHOTO 5: SCHOOL TOT LOT





Wetland Assessment

On September 19, 2007, Wheeler Environmental Services (WES) completed a wetland delineation at the Benson Village School. The purpose of the delineation was to determine the extent of the wetlands within an area immediately north of the school, which is being considered for future use as athletic fields.

WES identified a wetland area that occupies the middle portion of the field behind the school. The wetland is a wet meadow wetland with surface drainage to the north. It appears that in the

past this field was used for hay production. It has not been mowed for hay for a number of years.

Wetland functions provided by this wet meadow wetland likely include habitat for birds and small mammals; protection and enhancement of surface water and groundwater; and opportunities for education and research (due to the fact that the wetland is owned by a public school). WES did not complete a formal wetland functional evaluation as part of the delineation.

WES was able to identify an upland separation between the wetland on school property and a

Class Two wetland that is located on the parcel to the north of the school. Therefore, the wetland on the school property is a Class Three wetland.

In Vermont, the proposed placement of fill material into Class Three wetlands is regulated by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps). The Corps' Vermont General Permit allows for the filling of up to 3,000 square feet of wetland without notification to the Corps, provided that the fill placement has been avoided and minimized to the greatest degree possible.

If more than 3,000 square feet of fill is proposed, notification to the Corps is required. Based on the Corps' review of the proposal, the fill may be allowed under the Vermont General Permit or the applicant may be required to apply for an Individual Permit for the project. If filling more than one acre of wetland is proposed, an Individual Permit is required.

Since the wetland is not a Class One or Two wetland, the Vermont Wetland Rules do not apply. No Conditional Use Determination (CUD) will be required for activities in or near this wetland. School officials received a letter in June 2007 from the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources' District Wetland Ecologist, Mic Metz, confirming that the wetland is a Class Three and that no CUD would be required.



PHOTOS: OPEN LANDS AT THE NORTH END OF THE SCHOOL PARCEL

The Recreation Committee met with Michael Adams, Permit Project Manager for the Army Corps of Engineers at the school in December 2007 where he conducted a site visit. He confirmed the information provided by WES regarding the permitting process. The following information about the options for recreational use of the field and the process of obtaining Corps' approval for filling wetlands was gathered from that meeting.

In order to place fill in the wetland, the school would need to submit a request to the Corps for approval. The request would need to include a vicinity map, a plan view and a section view showing the proposed grading. There is a permit application on the Corps' website, which details the required submissions.

In addition, alternatives for the same recreational use at some other location must be addressed in order to compare wetland impacts. Benson would need to justify using this site. Some legitimate reasons might be that there is no other school or town property available, or that a site away from the school would require transportation and there is not enough time during the normal recreation period for this. Any development of recreational facilities would need to be designed to minimize the wetland impact to the greatest extent feasible.

There are no regulations prohibiting construction of a drainage ditch down the center of the wetlands site or around the perimeter of the site to minimize the amount of moisture reaching the wetland. If a ditch were to be constructed in the wetland, all of the excavated soil would need to

be moved out of the wetland area. Fill cannot be placed in the wetland. A ditch constructed around the perimeter outside the wetland boundary would not require moving the excavated material.

With improved drainage on the site to direct stormwater run-off away from the site, the extent of the wetland may change over time. If the drainage appeared to change the plant characteristics, the wetland could be delineated again and a new assessment of whether there would be impacts requiring a permit from the Corps could be made.

The next step would be to prepare a topographic map of the area behind the school in order to determine the exact location and amount of fill needed to create a level area suitable for recreational use. The School Board will need to decide what action to take - seek a permit, attempt to drain the site or abandon plans for improving the land behind the school for recreational use.



PHOTOS: EXISTING DRAINAGE FOR SURFACE RUN-OFF FROM THE SCHOOL BUILDING AND PARKING LOT



Picnic Area

This 6-acre piece of property off Route 22A has been developed by the state as a picnic area. The property also provides a trail access point into the Pond Woods Wildlife Management Area. The site contains around a half-dozen picnic tables with fire rings (photo above).

Pond Woods WMA

This 2,100-acre natural area is managed by the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife. The parcel can be accessed from several points, including the east side of Route 22A, Perch Pond Road, Bishop Hill Road, and the west side of Pond Woods Road. The wooded area includes several small ponds and swamps. Pond Woods WMA is open to regulated hunting, trapping, fishing, hiking and wildlife viewing. Within the WMA is a fishing access on Perch Pond.

Camp Sunrise Scout Camp

This facility located at Sunrise Lake is operated as a summer camp for Cub Scouts. The owners may allow Benson residents to access Sunrise Lake from this property for special functions.



Benson Landing Access

This state-owned access point on Lake Champlain is located off Lake Road. There is a 1-acre parcel used primarily as a parking lot. Benson Landing provides access for small craft (photo above).

Shaw Mt. Natural Area

The Shaw Mountain Natural Area is owned by the Nature Conservancy. This area, located in the southwestern part of town, includes a marked trail network that is accessible from Money Hill Road.

Other Resources

Bomoseen State Park

A small portion of Bomoseen State Park is located in Benson (most of the park is in Castleton). There is no direct access to the park from Benson.

East Creek WMA

A small portion of the East Creek WMA is located in Benson (most of this area is located in the Town of Orwell to the north of Benson). There is no direct access to the WMA from Benson.



Sunset Lake Road

Approximately 1,200 feet of Sunset Lake shoreline is located within the right-of-way of Sunset Lake Road. While parking is currently a problem, this provides an opportunity for access to the lake. The town's Traffic Ordinance allows for parking a limited number of vehicles on the road when authorized by the Selectboard and posted (photo above).

VAST Trails

The Vermont Association of Snow Travelers trail network includes many miles of winter trails in Benson. These trails are available solely for winter use by club members or those who have purchased a permit.

ATV Club Trails

A local ATV club has a small network of private trails in Benson available for use by club members. The town traffic ordinance allows ATV use on town gravel roads and some sections of paved roads when properly posted.

Summary of Results

The survey sent to Benson households as part of this project indicates a stronger interest in passive recreation activities than anticipated. Walking was the single most popular recreational activity by far and many commented on the lack of places to safely walk in town. Water-based recreation (boating and swimming) were also very popular among respondents of all ages.

Most respondents had not used any of the existing recreation facilities in the town during the past year. The Lake Champlain Fishing Access was the most used facility in town based on survey responses and the school's fields and play areas were the mostly commonly used facilities by students.

Just over one-quarter of students surveyed replied that they did not spend any time playing outdoors during the summer. Around 65% of the students (6th-8th grade) participated in team sports during the school year.

While initial input from Benson residents expressed interest in development of a new community park, survey comments suggest that there would be more public support for projects that would improve or expand upon existing facilities or community lands. Survey comments also indicate that many residents would like a park that could host large family or community gatherings such as picnics, reunions, receptions, barbecues or concerts. Some suggested that the Town Office property could be used for this purpose.

The Recreational Committee used the response to Question 10 on the household survey to prioritize the types of recreation facilities residents would most want to see in town. In descending order, the most desired facilities were picnic tables, walking or biking trails, open grassy parkland, picnic shelter, gazebo or bandstand, athletic fields, skating rink, sports courts, and skateboard park. The activities students were interested in (in descending order) were playing sports, bicycling, hanging out with friends, playing on a playground, sledding, informal games, hiking, skateboarding, roller blading, and ice skating.

Household Survey

146 surveys returned out of 343 distributed.

1. How many people in your household?

| | |
|-----|---------|
| 2.7 | Average |
| 393 | Total |

2. How many children age 14 or younger?

| | |
|----------|---------------------------------------|
| 76 | Children under age 14 |
| 41 (28%) | Households with children under age 14 |

3. How many people age 55 or older?

| | |
|----------|--|
| 118 | People age 55 or older |
| 76 (52%) | Households with people age 55 or older |

4. How many years have you lived in Benson?

| | |
|----------|----------------|
| 24 | Average |
| 19 (14%) | <5 years |
| 16 (11%) | 5 to 9 years |
| 14 (10%) | 10 to 14 years |
| 14 (10%) | 15 to 19 years |
| 77 (55%) | 20+ years |

5. How many members of your family exercise or workout at least once a week on average?

| | |
|-----------|--|
| 187 (48%) | People |
| 99 (68%) | Households with at least 1 member exercising |

6. How many members of your family have a gym or fitness center membership?

| | |
|----------|--------------------------------------|
| 25 (6%) | People |
| 20 (14%) | Household with at least 1 gym member |

7. How important is the availability of public recreation opportunities in Benson to you and your family?

| | |
|----------|--------------------|
| 31 (23%) | Very important |
| 33 (24%) | Important |
| 44 (32%) | Somewhat important |
| 29 (21%) | Not important |

8. Did you or members of your family use any of the following recreation facilities in Benson during 2006?

| | |
|----------|---|
| 56 (38%) | Lake Champlain fishing access |
| 39 (27%) | playground at town office |
| 37 (25%) | Benson Village School sports fields/courts (outside school hours) |
| 24 (16%) | Benson Village School gymnasium (outside school hours) |
| 22 (15%) | ATV Club trails |
| 19 (13%) | VAST snowmobile trails |
| 15 (10%) | Shaw Mountain trails |
| 14 (10%) | Fish and Game Club skeet range |
| 11 (8%) | Community Hall gymnasium |
| 10 (7%) | Route 22A picnic area |
| 6 (4%) | Benson Village School nature trail |

9. What recreational activities do members of your household participate in four or more times in an average year? Who participates (children, adults, both)?

| Total | Only Children | Only Adults | Activity |
|-----------|---------------|-------------|------------------------|
| 101 (69%) | 0 | 59 | Walking |
| 81 (55%) | 1 | 52 | Wildlife viewing |
| 80 (55%) | 1 | 31 | Swimming |
| 78 (53%) | 6 | 36 | Fishing |
| 69 (47%) | 2 | 45 | Hunting |
| 69 (47%) | 0 | 36 | Boating |
| 63 (43%) | 0 | 32 | Hiking |
| 61 (42%) | 1 | 31 | Dog walking or playing |
| 54 (37%) | 11 | 9 | Sledding |

| Total | Only Children | Only Adults | Activity |
|----------|---------------|-------------|----------------------------------|
| 54 (37%) | 0 | 22 | Picnicking |
| 52 (36%) | 7 | 17 | Bicycling |
| 51 (35%) | 1 | 14 | Camping |
| 47 (32%) | 1 | 23 | ATV or motor bike riding |
| 44 (30%) | 7 | 24 | Snowshoeing |
| 41 (28%) | 5 | 18 | Dancing |
| 39 (27%) | 0 | 24 | Target shooting |
| 38 (26%) | 4 | 8 | Unstructured games or play |
| 34 (23%) | 16 | 2 | Playground use |
| 33 (23%) | 0 | 25 | Horseshoes |
| 32 (22%) | 15 | 1 | Basketball |
| 32 (22%) | 5 | 17 | Weight lifting/strength training |
| 30 (21%) | 13 | 2 | Baseball or softball |
| 27 (18%) | 18 | 2 | Organized sports team |
| 26 (18%) | 0 | 5 | Snowmobiling |
| 26 (18%) | 3 | 18 | Fitness classes or training |
| 25 (17%) | 4 | 11 | Running or jogging |
| 25 (17%) | 6 | 11 | Horseback riding |
| 25 (17%) | 5 | 4 | Ice skating |
| 23 (16%) | 14 | 1 | Soccer |
| 22 (15%) | 0 | 14 | Cross-country skiing |
| 22 (15%) | 18 | 0 | After school program |
| 20 (14%) | 2 | 8 | Golf |
| 19 (13%) | 1 | 0 | Frisbee |
| 19 (13%) | 17 | 1 | Summer camp/rec program |
| 18 (12%) | 5 | 2 | Alpine skiing/snowboarding |
| 15 (10%) | 12 | 1 | Football |
| 11 (8%) | 0 | 3 | Volleyball |
| 11 (8%) | 9 | 1 | Skateboarding |
| 7 (5%) | 1 | 6 | Other |
| 5 (3%) | 1 | 5 | Tennis |
| 4 (3%) | 1 | 0 | Hockey |

10. If you were planning a new park in Benson, which of the following would you include?

| | |
|----------|--|
| 88 (60%) | Picnic table |
| 84 (58%) | Walking or biking trails |
| 69 (47%) | Open grassy area |
| 69 (47%) | Picnic shelter |
| 62 (42%) | Gazebo or bandstand |
| 61 (42%) | Sports fields (baseball, football, soccer, etc.) |
| 60 (41%) | Skating rink |
| 55 (38%) | Sports courts (basketball, tennis, etc.) |
| 21 (14%) | Skateboard park |
| 12 (8%) | Other |

Student Survey

43 surveys returned from grades 6-8 at the Benson Community School.

1. How many times do you use a playground or a park in a typical week during the SCHOOL YEAR but not during the school day?

| | |
|-----|---------|
| 2 | Average |
| 58% | None |
| 5% | >5 |

2. How many times do you practice or play team/organized sports in a typical week during the SCHOOL YEAR but not during the school day?

| | |
|-----|---------|
| 3 | Average |
| 35% | None |
| 9% | >5 |

3. How many hours do you spend outdoors on your own or with friends/family in a typical week during the SCHOOL YEAR but not during the school day?

| | |
|-----|---------|
| 9 | Average |
| 18% | None |
| 26% | >7 |

4. How many times do you use a playground or a park in a typical week during the SUMMER?

| | |
|-----|---------|
| 3 | Average |
| 30% | None |
| 14% | >5 |

5. How many times do you practice or play team/organized sports in a typical week during the SUMMER?

| | |
|-----|---------|
| 2 | Average |
| 44% | None |
| 7% | >5 |

6. How many hours do you spend outdoors on your own or with friends/family in a typical week during the SUMMER?

| | |
|-----|---------|
| 16 | Average |
| 26% | None |
| 44% | >5 |

7. Did you go to or use any of the following last year?

| | |
|----------|---|
| 30 (70%) | Benson Village School sports fields/courts (outside school hours) |
| 24 (56%) | Playground at town office |
| 22 (51%) | Benson Village School gymnasium (outside school hours) |
| 22 (51%) | Lake Champlain fishing access |
| 14 (33%) | VAST snowmobile trails |
| 13 (30%) | Community Hall gymnasium |
| 9 (21%) | Benson Village School nature trail |
| 9 (21%) | ATV Club trails |
| 2 (5%) | Shaw Mountain trails |
| 1 (2%) | Route 22A picnic area |

8. What recreational activities do you do 4 or more times in an average year?

| | |
|----------|-----------------------------------|
| 39 (91%) | Swimming |
| 37 (86%) | Walking |
| 35 (81%) | Hanging out with friends |
| 32 (74%) | Bicycling |
| 32 (74%) | Sledding |
| 30 (70%) | Fishing |
| 29 (67%) | Playing games (unstructured) |
| 27 (63%) | Running or jogging |
| 26 (60%) | Basketball |
| 26 (60%) | Soccer |
| 26 (60%) | Camping |
| 25 (58%) | Baseball or softball |
| 24 (56%) | Hiking |
| 22 (51%) | Dog walking/playing |
| 20 (47%) | Snowmobiling |
| 20 (47%) | ATV/motor biking |
| 20 (47%) | Summer camp or recreation program |
| 19 (44%) | Hunting |
| 18 (42%) | Boating |
| 18 (42%) | Playground use |
| 18 (42%) | Organized sports team |
| 17 (40%) | After school program |
| 15 (35%) | Football |
| 14 (33%) | Frisbee |
| 14 (33%) | Snowshoeing |
| 12 (28%) | Dancing |
| 12 (28%) | Other |
| 11 (26%) | Alpine skiing or snowboarding |
| 9 (21%) | Golfing |
| 9 (21%) | Horseback riding |
| 9 (21%) | Paint ball |

| | |
|---------|----------------------|
| 8 (19%) | Volleyball |
| 6 (14%) | Ice skating |
| 4 (9%) | Hockey |
| 4 (9%) | Lacrosse |
| 4 (9%) | Tennis |
| 4 (9%) | Skateboarding |
| 4 (9%) | Cross-country skiing |

9. Did you participate in an organized recreation program or go to camp last summer?

| | |
|----|-----|
| 20 | Yes |
| 23 | No |

10. Are you planning on participating in an organized recreation program or going to camp this coming summer?

| | |
|----|-----|
| 26 | Yes |
| 17 | No |

11. If you could build a new park in Benson, which of the activities below would you want to do be able to do there?

| | |
|----------|---|
| 35 (81%) | Play field sports (baseball, football, soccer, etc.) |
| 32 (74%) | Ride a bike |
| 32 (74%) | Hang out with friends |
| 31 (72%) | Play on playground equipment (swings, slides, jungle gym, etc.) |
| 30 (70%) | Play court games (basketball, tennis, etc.) |
| 28 (65%) | Go sledding |
| 26 (60%) | Play games or run around in a large grassy area |
| 26 (60%) | Walk on trails |
| 22 (51%) | Skateboard |
| 20 (47%) | Roller blade |
| 16 (37%) | Ice skate |
| 14 (33%) | Other |

D. RECREATION RESEARCH & RESOURCES



Town of Pittsford Recreation Area and Department

Recreation Area

The Town of Pittsford has a 200-acre Recreation Area that features a full-size basketball court, two tennis courts, two baseball fields, a softball field, picnic pavilion and tables, barbecue grills, playground equipment, swim area, rest rooms, sand volleyball court and trail network. The Recreation Area gate is open from mid-April through October from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. There is no fee for general use of the grounds outside the swimming area and the tennis courts. Group reservations of the picnic pavilion are available for a fee.

The Recreation Area came into existence in the 1960s with programs for youth baseball and swimming. The land had been in state ownership and was part of the Vermont Tuberculosis Sanatorium; 32 acres were acquired at that time. Over 30 years, the town has acquired additional lands.



Trail Network

The Town of Pittsford has more than 12 miles of trails throughout the community including trails connecting the Recreation Area to the town center. While some of the trails are on town-owned property, others are on private property. Multiple use of the trails by mountain bikers and horseback riders is allowed. Motorized use is not permitted. A group of volunteers maintains the trails and there is a town Trail Committee.

Recreation Department

The Town of Pittsford began with a volunteer Recreation Committee in the 1960s. In the 1980s, a part-time Recreation Director was hired. Since the mid-1990s, the Recreation Director has been a full-time position. The town currently employs 9 lifeguards and 4 staff people for their summer day camp. There are around 10 volunteers coaching youth sports teams. There is also a part-time maintenance person who cares for the Recreation Area.

In addition to the sports and recreation programs offered at the Recreation Area, the Recreation Department offers a wide range of activities and programs year-round such as yoga, arts and crafts, first aid and driver safety classes, etc. The program has a history of being kid-focused. Pittsford remains a community that attracts families with children, however the town is considering expanding their offerings for retired and senior residents. The Recreation Department uses facilities throughout town including the library and school gymnasium.

Over the years, the number of problems with neighbors, littering, inappropriate behavior, etc. have been few. The high level of maintenance and improvements to the Recreation Area in recent years have created a sense of pride among residents and increased facility usage and program participation levels. Alcohol is allowed at the picnic pavilion only when beverages are provided by a caterer on-site that holds a Vermont liquor license and when a constable is hired to be on duty during the event.

Funding

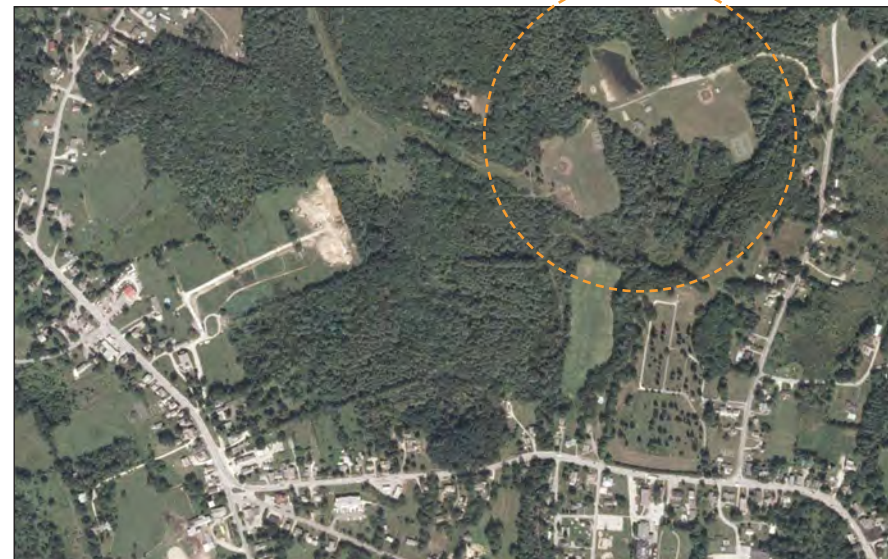
The Town of Pittsford Recreation Department has a total budget of approximately \$110,000 annually with around \$33,000 in revenues from fees

and passes. Staff, including the Recreation Director and summer lifeguards, account for around half of the budget.

Several thousand dollars are set aside annually in a capital improvement fund. These monies are primarily used as matching funds for grants. Most of the major improvements have multiple funding sources including grants, town funds and donations.

The pavilion is rented nearly every weekend throughout the summer. Rates range from \$20 to \$140+ depending on the number of people. Summer season swimming area passes are \$30 for residents and \$50 for non-residents.

Pittsford Recreation Area





Town of Wallingford Recreation Area and Elfin Lake Beach



Recreation Area and Beach

The 45-acre Recreation Area and Beach on Elfin Lake were donated to the Town of Wallingford. Current facilities include three baseball fields, tennis and basketball courts, a skate area, playground and the beach. Efforts are underway to develop a trail system including a footbridge across Otter Creek, which divides the recreation area from the beach.

Younger children may attend if accompanied by an adult. As it is held entirely outdoors, the program is not held on rainy days.

A part-time coordinator manages the program and hires teenagers as lifeguards and staff. The



Summer Recreation Program

Wallingford offers a summer recreation program, which consists of two sessions - the morning at the recreation area and the afternoon at the beach. The summer recreation program runs approximately six weeks, Monday through Friday, and is open to all children ages 5 to 16 living in town.



recreation program has been operating since the mid-1980s. A youth soccer program is separately run by volunteers.

Funding

The Wallingford recreation program and town beach has an annual budget of approximately \$30,000 with revenues of around \$16,000. Salaries account for approximately half the annual budget.

Fees for the summer recreation program include a \$2 one-time registration fee, a \$2 daily snack fee for morning session, and \$1.50 per child or \$2.50 per adult for afternoon session at the beach.

Elfin Lake is open daily during the summer from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Season passes are available at rates of \$55 for town residents and \$65 for non-residents. Kayaks can be rented at the beach at a rate of \$2 per half hour.

Vermont Recreation & Parks Association

The Vermont Recreation and Parks Association (VRPA) is a non-profit organization dedicated to the promotion, development, and improvement of all recreation and park services within the State of Vermont.

VRPA maintains a library of more than 300 recreation-related resource sheets and manuals, many of which may be useful as Benson continues with implementation of this plan. These publications can be requested for a nominal fee. Specific publications recommended include:

- Initiating Municipal Recreation Programs
- Summer Recreation Programs
- Municipal-School Cooperation for Recreation
- Athletic Fields: Construction and Maintenance
- Steps Leading to Development of Additional Recreation at a Community, School or Neighborhood Recreation Area
- State and Federal Financial Resources for Parks and Recreation
- Methods of Acquiring Community Park and Recreation Land in Vermont
- Playground Planning Guide

The complete list of resources and information about other types of support offered by VRPA is available online at <http://www.vrpa.org>.



E. PRIORITIES AND STRATEGIES

Overview

While initial input from Benson residents suggested support for development of a new community park, after more in-depth research and discussion it became clear that there would likely be more public support for projects that would improve or expand upon existing facilities or com-

munity lands. If existing facilities and lands were fully utilized and well managed, there may be support for acquisition of additional lands for public recreation in the future.

Additionally, the survey sent to all Benson households as part of this project indicates a stronger

interest in passive recreation activities than anticipated. Walking was the single most popular recreational activity by far among all age groups and many commented on the lack of places to safely walk in town. Survey comments also indicated that many residents would like a park that could host large family or community gatherings such as picnics, reunions, receptions, barbecues or concerts. Some suggested that the Town Office property could be used for this purpose.

Discussions with school officials and the Youth League were fruitful. There was a desire among all parties to maximize use of the school property for recreation and a recognized need for a second ball field and more parking on the property. It was felt that a second field at the school would be more convenient for parents than the addition of another field elsewhere in town. The presence of a Class Three wetland on the undeveloped school property will need to be considered in any plans for recreational use of those lands.

Based on these findings, the Recreation Committee recommends the following strategy to the Benson Selectboard, school board and residents:



SHORT-TERM

1. Fully utilize school and existing town-owned lands / facilities
2. Link school and town office / community hall via trail or path

LONG-TERM

3. Seek to acquire and develop land within 1/2-mile of village center for use as town park

Benson Village School

As described in previously, the Benson Village School is located on an 11-acre piece of property, which measures 500 feet across and 966 feet in depth. The building and parking lot are situated on 4 acres (the full width of the property and 365 feet of its depth). Another two acres is currently developed with a Little League size ball field, a basketball court and playground.

The remaining five acres (an area 425 feet by 500 feet) at the north end of the property is undeveloped open space consisting primarily of a wet meadow with a small area of ledge along the eastern upland side. The Recreation Committee, in coordination with school officials and the Youth League, assessed the potential of using the undeveloped lands for recreation.

Multi-Use Ball Field

The school and Youth League, prior to this planning project, had identified a need for a full-sized, multi-use softball/baseball field at the school. They reported to the Recreation Committee that currently the small field adjacent to the school cannot be used for the seventh and eighth grade teams. This age group currently uses facilities in neighboring towns. Older children and adults can hit the ball out of the field into the adjacent playground or parking lot.

In addition, since there are both baseball and softball teams for various age groups, scheduling enough practice time for everyone at the current field is challenging. A second field would allow

at least two teams to practice simultaneously. Depending on the age groups, the youngest may be able to use the outfield of one of the fields further increasing the numbers that could practice at one time. The new field would need to be constructed and managed to allow use by different age groups up to adult baseball or softball. There is also a youth soccer league that uses the outfield for practice as well. Adult baseball and softball teams cannot use the existing small field for practice or games.

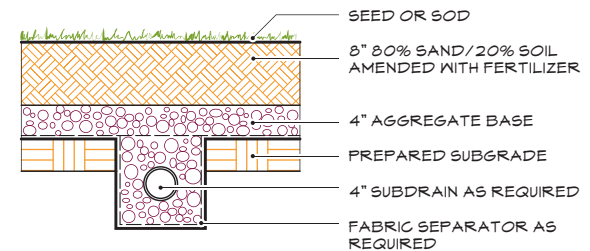
A second multi-use ball field at the school would be preferable to a field located on another property in town. A field located off school grounds would not be accessible for physical education classes or

recreation breaks during the school day. Locating two fields at the school would also be more convenient for parents who may have to transport more than one child to practices or games. In addition, the school playground provides opportunities for siblings who are not playing on a team to recreate safely and within view while parents watch a game or practice.

Finally, Benson wants to provide recreational facilities that are within walking distance (not more than 1/2 mile) of the village center. Recreation has been identified as an activity that would bring people into the village center and enhance its vitality. This goal is expressed in the town plan and is supported by residents as evidenced by comments



1. DIMENSIONS OF A FULL-SIZE BASEBALL FIELD

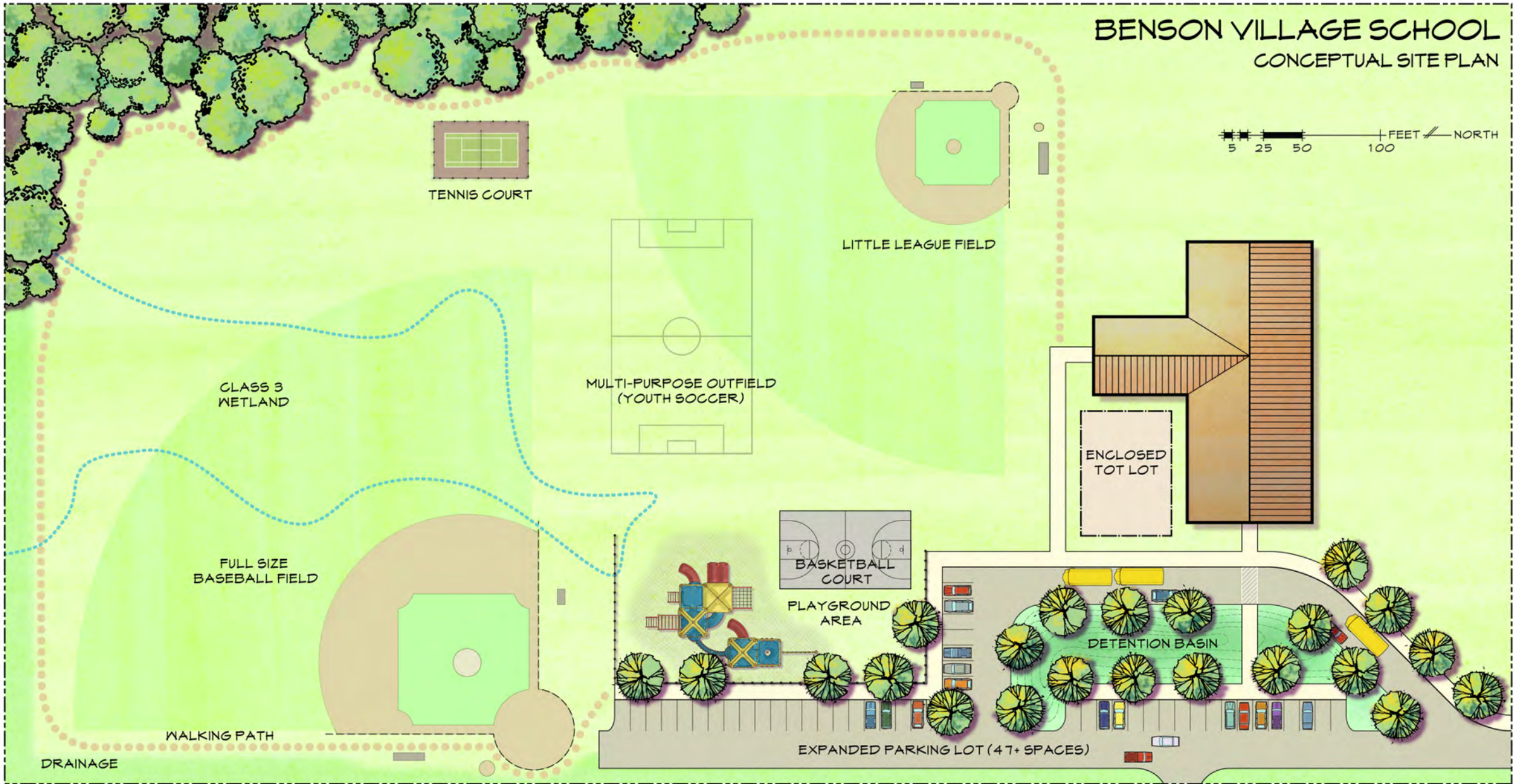


2. ATHLETIC FIELD CONSTRUCTION DETAIL

This detail is typical of school and public park athletic fields and is designed to accommodate clay soils.

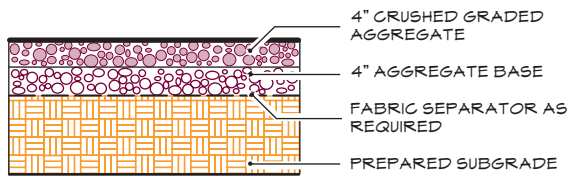
The crushed stone aggregate base is placed on a fabric separator to screen infiltration water as it enters the subdrainage system. Subdrain spacing is determined by rainfall levels and soil texture. Placement of drains below frost line is preferable.

The surface may require irrigation and aeration.



at public meetings and on surveys. A location further outside the center would require everyone to drive in order to recreate. While it currently is not very accessible for pedestrians or bicyclists, the school is 1/3 of a mile from the village center.

A full-size ball field requires approximately three acres of land or 350 by 350 feet. There is adequate space at the rear of the school to locate a full-size field. Due to the terrain, to create a level field some grading would be required. The new field would have to be at a lower elevation than the current field and playground. Site elevations are needed to determine the extent of cut and fill needed to create the field shown on the conceptual plan. That earthwork, which would have some impact on the delineated Class 3 wetland, could not be done



3. GRAVEL PATH CONSTRUCTION DETAIL

This detail is typical of a compacted gravel paving surface for walks and light uses.

Fabric may be used to bind the base and contain edges in clay soils. Aggregate pavements may require a secure edge containment to prevent migration and ease maintenance.

While gravel is a low cost paving alternative, it may require moderate maintenance. Crushed stone may require periodic re-grading. Fabric, chemical or manual methods may be needed to remove unwanted vegetative growth from the paved surface.



4. GRAVEL-SURFACE WALKING PATHS



without a permit from the Army Corps of Engineers as outlined on pages 6-7. The exact amount of fill and extents of any wetland impacts would need to be calculated before applying for a permit from the Corps.

Walking Path

The conceptual site plan also shows a walking path around the perimeter of the school property. That path is 1,500 feet in length and would connect to the school sidewalk system. The recreation survey indicated that a number of town residents would like a safe, off-road location to walk for exercise. One loop around the path and sidewalk would be 2,000 feet or a little more than 1/3 of a mile.

The walking path is envisioned to have a surface of compacted crushed stone or gravel. While there is a grade change from the school to the rear property line, the slope is not steep and it should be possible to construct an accessible walking path. To meet accessibility standards, no segment of the path should exceed a five percent grade and the width should be five feet. Compacted crushed stone or gravel can meet accessibility standards if the material's diameter is less than 3/8 inch. Loose gravel can pose problems for people using wheelchairs or walking aids.

For several years, a nature trail was maintained on the school property and allowing the undeveloped school lands to serve as an outdoor classroom. The walking path could also serve an educational purpose by posting informational signage and/or placards identifying plant species along the route.

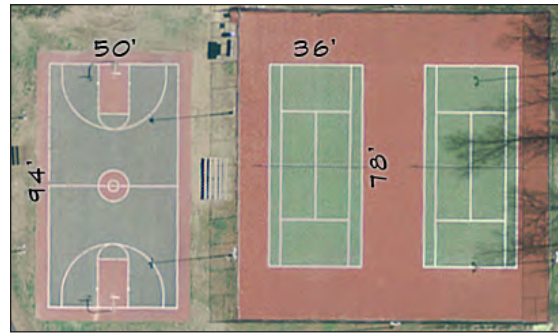
Other Recreation Enhancements

Other recreational enhancements of the school property could include refurbishing and/or expanding the existing playground for school-age children; the tot lot is a relatively new addition and remains in excellent condition. In addition, the upland area in the northeast corner of the school property could be suited for a tennis court, skating area or second basketball court. The presence of ledge is more conducive to a use requiring a hard surface rather than a grass surface. Open lands could be used for other high-priority items. For example, the ball field could be the site for an ice rink in winter.

Parking

In addition to the recreation facilities, the conceptual site plan shows a more formalized parking lot similar in extent to the existing parking, which is not fully paved or delineated. This would increase the number of vehicles that could be parked, and improve safety and traffic flow. Despite its location in proximity to the village center, enhanced recreational facilities will likely lead to greater demand for parking at the school and there is currently overflow parking on Lake Road during heavily attended school events.

The current parking lot could be further expanded to the north along the western boundary of the school. Again, site elevations would need to be taken to determine how deep the new parking lot could extend without requiring significant fill. Improved stormwater management would need to be included in any project to pave or extend the parking area.



5. DIMENSIONS OF BASKETBALL & TENNIS COURTS

Town Office & Community Hall

The Town Office, the former village school, is located on a 1.5-acre parcel in Benson's village center. The adjacent Community Hall sits on a 0.5-acre parcel.

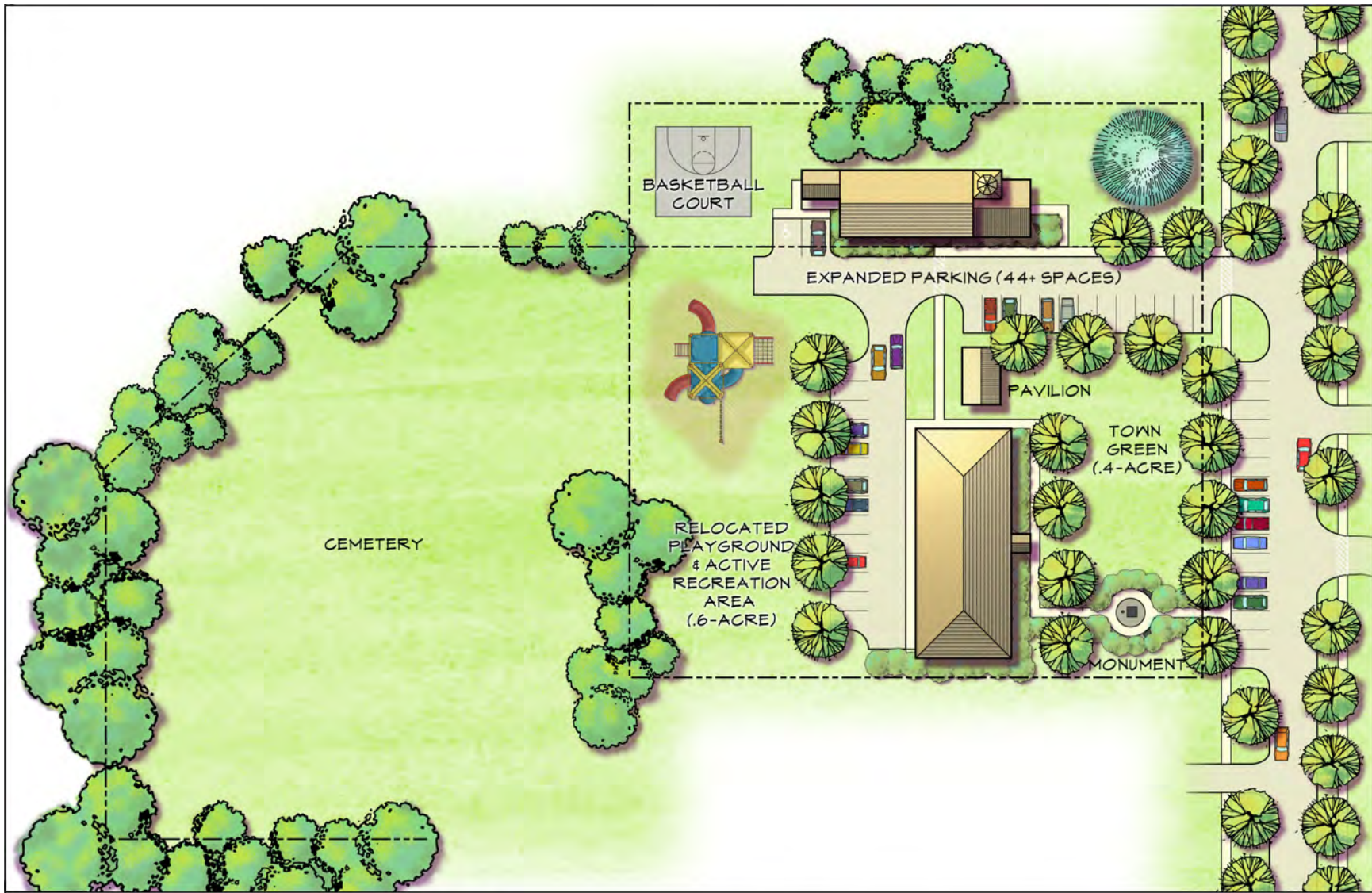
After consideration of the survey results and comments, the Recreation Committee determined that recreational use of the Town Office and Community Hall properties could be enhanced through the following: (1) improving the existing playground; (2) providing an outdoor venue for community and/or private gatherings; and (3) increasing the amount of parking to accommodate the number of people likely to attend events in the village center. Three alternative conceptual site plans have been developed to address these needs.

Alternative 1

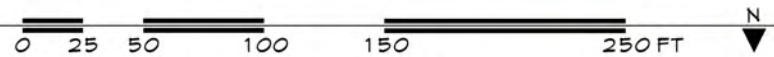
The first conceptual site plan for the Town Office and Community Hall properties shows a town green and picnic grounds in front of the Town Of-



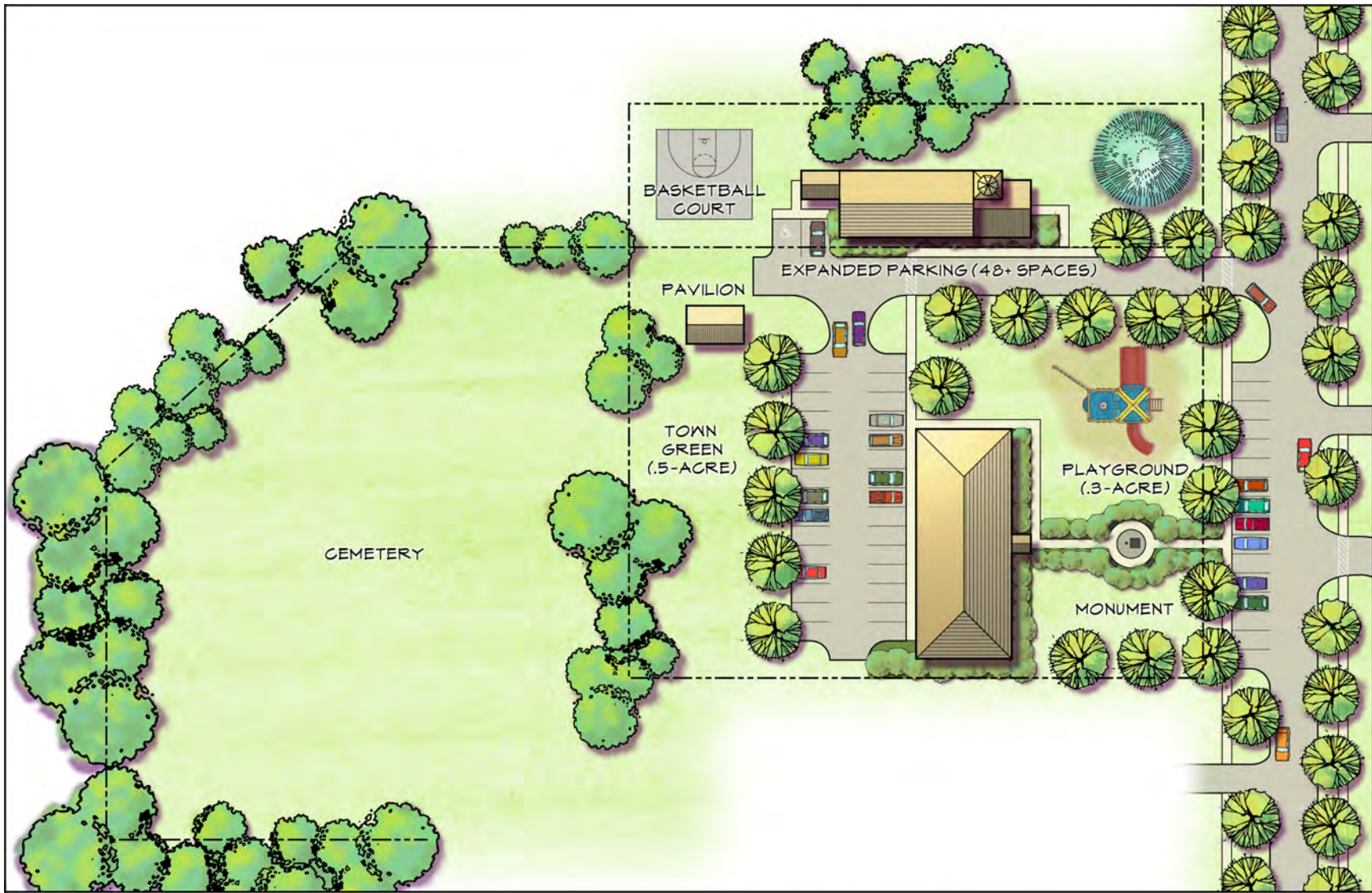
6. EXAMPLES OF PICNIC PAVILIONS



**TOWN OFFICE: ALTERNATIVE 1
CONCEPTUAL SITE PLAN**



PREPARED BY PLACESENSE, NOV 2007
NOT FOR CONSTRUCTION



**TOWN OFFICE: ALTERNATIVE 2
CONCEPTUAL SITE PLAN**



PREPARED BY PLACESENSE, NOV 2007
NOT FOR CONSTRUCTION



**TOWN OFFICE: ALTERNATIVE 3
CONCEPTUAL SITE PLAN**



PREPARED BY PLACESENSE, NOV 2007
NOT FOR CONSTRUCTION

ficie. A picnic pavilion is proposed for the current site of the concrete pad to the south of the Town Office. In addition to picnic tables, a single, large barbecue pit, which could be used for community events, or several smaller picnic grills, which could be used for smaller gatherings, could be placed near the pavilion. The pavilion could also serve as a bandstand for outdoor concerts.

The existing monument and flag pole have been reconfigured in more formal arrangement with small shrubs or flower beds defining a small “memorial park” within the larger space. Benches could be placed along the sidewalk. A regular pattern of tree planting around the property will define the space, in addition to shading parking areas and sidewalks. One of the goals of this plan is to change the look and feel of the land in front

of the Town Office from former schoolyard to a more traditional town green.

To further support that goal, the plan relocates the playground to the rear of the Town Office. In addition to playground equipment, there would be an open grassy area, which could be used for a variety of recreational activities such as volley ball or horseshoes.

The conceptual site plan includes additional parking to the rear of the Town Office and adjacent to the Community Building. A system of sidewalks would connect the buildings and uses on the property. All three plans envision the revitalization of the historic village center sidewalk system, which currently exists only in remnants. The sidewalk network will support the vitality of the village center and encourage those within walking distance to travel on foot rather than automobile to use the facilities at the Town Office / Community Hall properties.

Alternative 2

The second conceptual site plan for the Town Office and Community Hall properties keeps the playground at the front of the Town Office. The “memorial park” has been relocated to align with the front door of the Town Office to establish a formal entrance. This also provides seating with a direct view of the playground, to facilitate supervision of children using the equipment.

The picnic grounds are located to the rear of the Town Office. The level, grassy site could host a

7. PHOTOS OF THE REMNANTS OF THE VILLAGE SIDEWALK SYSTEM



variety of informal recreational uses, in addition to lawn games such as horseshoes or volley ball.

A large parking lot is proposed behind the Town Office. There is no parking adjacent to the Community Hall, except for the existing handicap spaces near the ramp at the back of the building. During large events, it would be possible to parallel park along one side of the access drive.

Alternative 3

The final conceptual site plan illustrates a more traditional New England town green. Instead of a picnic pavilion, the plan includes a smaller bandstand, which is placed at the lower southwest corner of the site. The sloping terrain would provide a natural seating area for performances. Benches could be built into the bandstand, making it a pleasant place to gather or rest while on a walk. The bandstand is aligned with the monument in the formal “memorial park.”

As in Alternative 1, the playground is relocated to the rear of the Town Office. A smaller parking area is proposed, which is entirely hidden behind the Town Office looking from Stage Road. Planting trees along the parking areas, drives and street, as shown in all three plans, will lessen the visual impact of those asphalt surfaces and screen parked vehicles.



8. EXAMPLES OF SITE FURNISHINGS AND PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT

Town Office to School Trail

As part of this project, the Recreation Committee began planning for an off-road trail linking the Town Office to Benson School. At this time, potential alignments have been identified. However, the process of seeking landowner permission and/or easements for the trail has not yet begun.

Additional site investigation and public involvement would need to be completed to determine the preferred alignment. In selecting a preferred alternative, a number of factors would need to be considered including: length of the trail (a distance of 1/2 mile or less should be the goal); physical features to be avoided (wet and steep areas) and those that would make trail construction more difficult such as dense underbrush; and safety, since many trail users would likely be children.

Decisions would also need to be made regarding the surface and width of a potential trail. Options include a narrower, single-use walking trail that might have a softer surface such as wood chips, or a wider, multi-use trail that would have a surface appropriate for bicycling such as compacted gravel or even asphalt. This report recommends that the town and school work cooperatively to seek funding for a trail feasibility study, which would address these issues and result in a trail plan ready for easement acquisition and then construction.

There are a number of alternatives that could be explored to link the Town Office property to the Village School via an off-road trail. The alignment requiring the least amount of trail construction

would be a connection between Kent Lane and the internal access drive of the Bowen mobile home park. The distance between these two existing roads is 900 feet. While this route is shorter, it does not connect directly to the Town Office / Community Hall properties. An additional con-



9. TRADITIONAL TOWN GREEN BANDSTANDS



nection between the residences on Kent Lane would be required for a completely off-road trail.

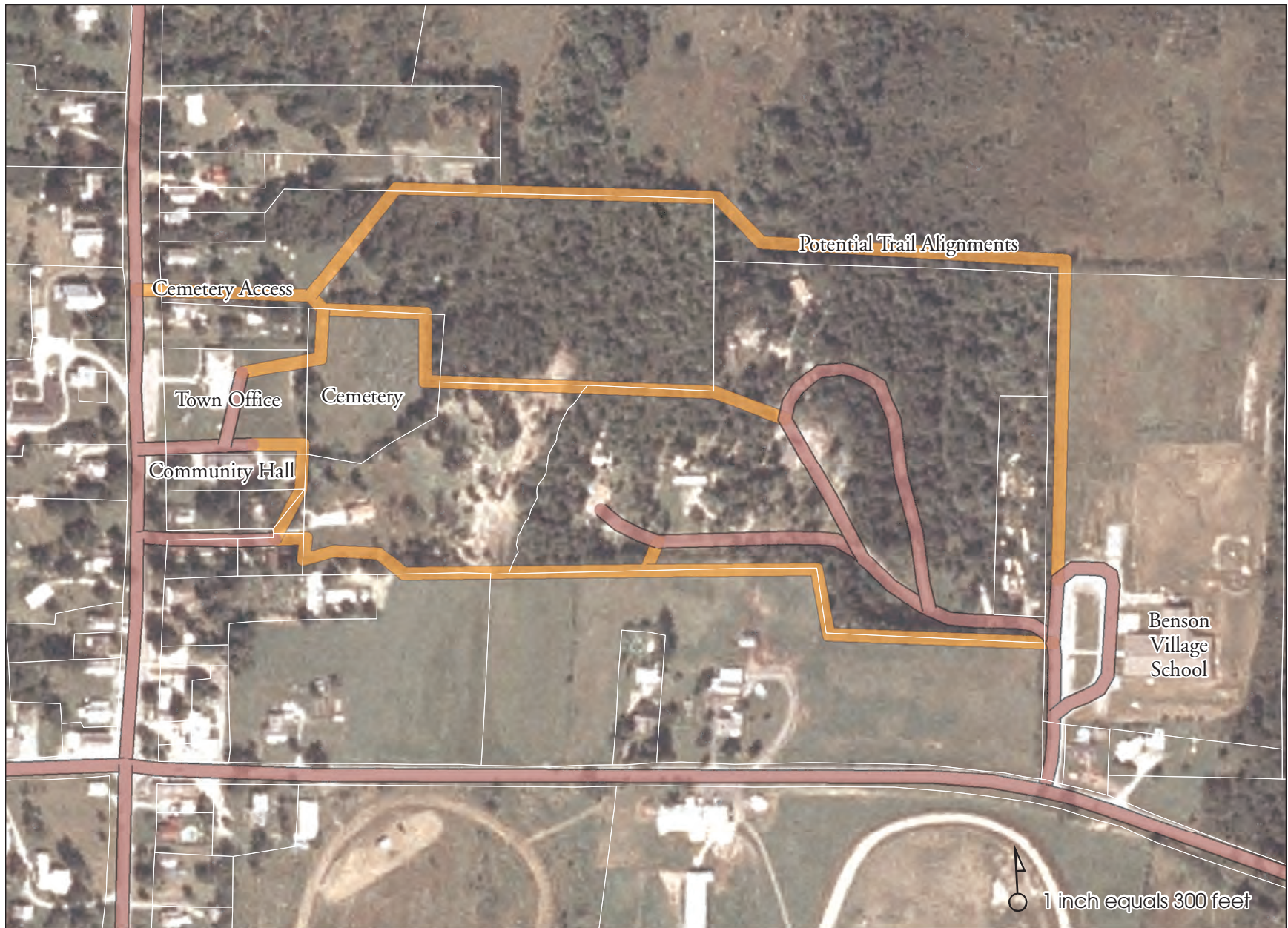
Another potential alignment would follow along the edge of the cemetery behind the Town Office, eventually linking to the access road in the mobile home park adjacent to the school. An existing right-of-way provides access to the cemetery and another option would be to follow that right-of-way towards the farmlands to the north of the school property.

Future Town Park

Over the long-term, this plan recommends that Benson seek to acquire 15 to 30 acres of land within a half mile of the village center to use as a town park and recreation area. While there are a number of large landholdings that meet those basic criteria, no comprehensive analysis of the suitability of those lands for the proposed use has been completed.

The Recreation Committee explored the potential of the Stechel property (the parcel to the southeast of the Lake Road and Stage Road intersection) to a limited degree and determined that it held potential for use as a public park. An attempt to acquire the property when it was for sale in 2007 was not successful. However, acquisition of property is a long-term goal that the town should consider if any of the lands identified become available.

10. POTENTIAL TRAIL ALIGNMENTS BETWEEN THE SCHOOL AND TOWN PROPERTIES



1 1. UNDEVELOPED LANDS WITHIN A HALF-MILE OF THE VILLAGE CENTER



F. IMPLEMENTATION

Space and Facility Needs

Benson should monitor the need for additional or improved recreational facilities as its population changes and grows over time. Figure 12 presents recommendations for recreation facilities and parkland from the National Recreation and Park Association based on population. The space required for various recreational uses is listed in Figure 13.

Standards like these may not be as applicable in a rural town like Benson with a small population. Given the distance residents would need to travel

to utilize facilities in nearby communities, where the standards recommend less than one of a given facility, those figures should be rounded up.

The need for a full-size ball field has been well-documented by the school and Youth League. Based on the recreation standards, the town should be considering acquisition of land for a town park, creation of a group picnic area, installation of a tennis court, and construction of trails and/or paths. These projected needs align with the priority list developed by the Recreation Committee based on survey results.

1 2. RECREATION FACILITY DEMAND RATIOS

| Facility | Existing | NRPA Standards (per 1,000 residents) | Current Need | Projected Need (2020) |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|-----------------|--------------------------|
| Ball Field | 1 (little league sized) | 0.61 | 0.63 | 0.92 |
| Soccer / Multi-Use Field | 1 (in baseball outfield) | 0.95 | 0.99 | 1.43 |
| Basketball Court | 4 (2 indoor, 2 outdoor) | 0.91 | 0.95 | 1.37 |
| Tennis Court | none | 0.97 | 1.00 | 1.46 |
| Volleyball Court | none | 0.13 | 0.14 | 0.20 |
| Skateboard Park | none | 0.16 | 0.17 | 0.24 |
| Family Picnic Area | Route 22A picnic area | 6.25 | 6.49 | 9.38 |
| Group Picnic Area | 0 | 0.63 | 0.65 | 0.95 |
| School-Age Playground | 2 | 1.0 | 1.04 | 1.50 |
| Hiking Trails | Shaw Mt. | 0.84 miles | 0.87 | 1.26 |
| Unpaved Multi-Use Path | none | 2.33 miles | 2.42 | 3.50 |
| Paved Multi-Use Path | none | 1.04 miles | 1.08 | 1.50 |
| Snow / Motorized Trails | VAST, ATV club | 0.84 miles | 0.87 | 1.26 |
| Town Park | | 5 acres | 5.20 | 7.5 |

NRPA - National Recreation and Parks Association. Current population 1,039 (2000 Census). Projected need based on RRPC population projection for Benson of 1,500 residents by 2020.

1 3. SIZE REQUIREMENTS FOR RECREATION USES

| Sport/Facility | Dimensions | Acres |
|------------------------|---------------------------------|------------|
| Little League Baseball | 200 ft radial arc from backstop | 0.75 |
| Adult Baseball | 350 ft radial arc from backstop | 3.0 |
| Softball | 325 ft radial arc from backstop | 2.0 |
| Soccer | 100+ yds by 60+ yds | 1.0 to 2.0 |
| Basketball | 50 ft by 94 ft | 0.1 |
| Tennis | 36 ft by 78 ft | 0.06 |
| Volleyball | 29.5 ft by 59 ft | 0.05 |
| Horseshoes | 6 ft by 48 ft | 0.007 |
| Skating/Hockey Rink | 100 ft by 200 ft | 0.46 |
| Skateboard Park | | 0.23+ |
| Driving Range | 240 yds by 300 yds | 15.0 |
| Golf Course (18-Holes) | | 140+ |
| Dance Floor | 50 ft by 100 ft | 0.11 |
| Tot Lot Playground | | 0.06+ |
| School-Age Playground | | 2.5+ |

The acreage requirements above do not include the space need for supporting features such as parking, bathrooms, storage facilities, spectator areas, buffers, etc.

14. CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE COST ESTIMATES

| Facility | Construction Cost | Annual Maintenance |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Baseball Field | \$25,000 to \$200,000 | \$200 to \$600 |
| Soccer Field | \$15,000 to \$75,000 | \$150 to \$450 |
| Basketball Court | \$25,000 to \$50,000 | \$500 to \$1,000 |
| Tennis Court | \$25,000 to \$50,000 | \$500 to \$1,000 |
| Volleyball Court | \$500 to \$10,000 | \$15 to \$300 |
| Horseshoe Court | \$1,000 to \$1,500 | \$25 to \$50 |
| Skateboard Park | \$50,000 to \$250,000 | \$500 to \$2,500 |
| Open Space / Undeveloped Parkland | | \$75 to \$300 per acre |
| Picnic Shelter / Pavilion / Bandstand | \$10,000 to \$200,000 | \$250 to \$5,000 |
| Picnic Tables / Park Benches | \$250 to \$1,000 each | \$10 to \$25 |
| School-Age Playground | \$50,000 to \$200,000 | \$500 to \$3,000 |
| 5' Gravel Trail / Path | \$5 to \$10 per linear foot | \$0.25 to \$0.30 per foot |
| 10' Gravel Trail / Path | \$10 to \$20 per linear foot | \$0.25 to \$0.30 per foot |
| 10' Asphalt Trail / Path | \$20 to \$30 per linear foot | \$0.25 to \$0.30 per foot |
| Sidewalks | \$15 to \$200 per linear foot | \$0.25 to \$0.30 per foot |
| Trees | \$150 to \$300 each | \$5 to \$25 per tree |

The cost estimates above are based on national averages. Site specific estimates for construction and maintenance of any proposed facility would need to be developed in conjunction with construction plans. Annual maintenance includes setting aside funds for major renovations or replacements. Costs can vary widely for some facilities depending on their design (ex. will lights or drainage be incorporated into sports fields or courts) and the amount of site preparation required.

Construction and Operating Costs

Estimating average construction costs for various recreational facilities is challenging as costs can vary widely depending on construction specifications, as well as site acquisition and preparation costs. Figure 14 presents some general construction estimates based on a review of capital budgets for similar recreation facilities throughout the country.

Detailed construction costs can not be accurately estimated without a specific site and plan. For example, a sports field or court in one location may require extensive earthwork or a costly drainage system, while in another location the same field or court may not. Simple playgrounds can be built on modest budgets, while elaborate designs can be very costly. Lighting may be desired for some fields and not needed for others. Sidewalks can be

quite inexpensive to build when a road is initially constructed and can be very expensive to install later.

Recreation projects offer many opportunities for in-kind labor and materials. These can significantly lower construction costs. Construction of sports fields and trails are commonly completed with the help of volunteers. Town highway equipment and staff may also be able to assist with construction.

A rule of thumb for the maintenance and operation of public recreation facilities is to budget three to five percent of the replacement cost annually for operation and maintenance. This includes setting aside funds for larger rehabilitation or replacement projects.

These costs do not include any staffing of recreation facilities or the offering of recreation programs. The investigation into the recreation programs of nearby communities shows that when staffing or programs are offered, a large portion of the budget will be spent on personnel.

Funding Sources

There are a number of funding sources that support the public improvements proposed in this plan, which are described in detail on the pages that follow. One of the purposes of this plan to provide a foundation for seeking outside funding and enhance the town's ability to compete successfully for funding.

In addition to grants, donated land, access rights, materials, equipment, labor and technical expertise are important components for implementation of recreation projects.

In-Kind Labor and Materials

For many recreation projects, in-kind labor and materials are essential. Often the materials needed, such as mulch or crushed stone, are available locally. The equipment needed to construct a trail or sports field will also likely be available locally. Additionally, much of the expense of constructing

recreation facilities is in labor, so a team of volunteers can provide a significant amount of matching funds with a day's work.

Vermont Youth Conservation Corps

The Vermont Youth Conservation Corps (VYCC) is a non-profit, statewide youth service organization. Under experienced adult leadership, small teams work on conservation projects such as trail construction. The VYCC provides work crews on a weekly or monthly basis. The sponsoring agency will provide a funding match to support a portion of the crew costs for the project based on the length of the program. The Vermont Youth Conservation Corps can also assist local communities with the design and implementation of conservation projects such as trail development.

National Park Service

The National Park Service's Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program provides technical and planning assistance to communities and organizations with trail and greenway projects. RTCA staff provide technical assistance to community groups and local, state, and federal government agencies so they can conserve rivers, preserve open space, and develop trails and greenways. There is no monetary component of this program. More information is available from NPS Vermont office at (802) 457-3368 or online at www.nps.gov/nrcr/programs/rtca.

Boy Scouts' Good Turn for America

Good Turn for America builds on the Boy Scouts' service efforts through partnerships with other community service organizations. These partnerships provide additional avenues for scouts to provide community service in their neighborhoods. Given the location of a regional scout camp in Benson, this program could provide another source of in-kind labor for implementing the projects outlined in this plan. Information is available at <http://www.scoutingvermont.org/index.htm>.

Private Foundations

Funds may be available from private foundations, which either support projects in the town's geographic area or support recreation-related activities. Foundations can be researched online. The Vermont Directory of Foundations, which can be searched online at <http://fdovermont.foundationcenter.org>, is a good starting point. While many of these sources may only grant small dollar amounts, private foundation funding can often be used to meet local cash-match requirements for larger grants.

Local Fund-Raising

To implement a recreation project, local funding will be needed. The town and/or school could ask residents to support the project with tax monies. Traditional fund-raising such as asking for donations from area residents and holding events like a community supper or auction can also be used to build support for the project in addition to raising needed dollars.

Land and Water Conservation Fund

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Contact: | Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, Forest, Parks and Recreation Department (www.vtfpr.org) Pat Peterson, 802-241-3653, pat.peterson@state.vt.us |
| Application Date: | Annually, late winter. |
| Eligible Applicants: | Municipalities (includes towns, cities, regional park districts, school districts and state agencies). |
| Funding Amount: | No maximum grant request. Approximately \$125,000 has been available statewide in recent years. |
| Match Requirement: | 50%. Donation of land, and in-kind labor and materials can be used as match. |
| Eligible Activities: | Funds are available for the acquisition of lands and waters or for the development and enhancement of public outdoor recreation facilities that are consistent with the outdoor recreation goals and objectives highlighted in the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) and recreation elements of local plans. Because of reduced federal funding levels in recent years, acquisition projects are uncommon; redevelopment of existing facilities has become more the norm. |
| Comments: | This is a pass through of federal funding to the state. Municipalities must agree to dedicate the park or area where the project is located for public outdoor recreational use in perpetuity. LWCF regulations do not permit funding for projects on leased land of any kind. In addition, the grantee must also agree to develop, operate and maintain the development to acceptable National Park Service (NPS) standards for public outdoor recreation. Use of federal money for playground equipment requires meeting national safety standards, which are described in the "Handbook for Public Playground Safety" available from VTFPR. |

Recreation Trails Program Grants

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| Contact: | Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, Forest, Parks and Recreation Department (www.vtfpr.org) Sherry Smecker Winnie, 802-241-3690, sherry.winnie@state.vt.us |
| Application Date: | Annually, mid-winter. |
| Eligible Applicants: | Municipalities and non-profit organizations. |
| Funding Amount: | Grant awards are limited to \$20,000. Approximately \$450,000 has been available statewide for competitive grants in recent years. Program also includes mini-grants of up to \$500. |
| Match Requirement: | 20%. In-kind labor and materials can be used as match. |
| Eligible Activities: | Construction, re-construction of trails; Development and rehabilitation of trailside amenities and trailhead facilities; Maintenance and restoration of existing trails; Bank stabilization, revegetation, and erosion control; Construction of small bridges, railings, ramps, and retaining structures; Operation of educational programs to promote safety and responsible use, environmental protection related to trail use; Trail assessment for accessibility and sustainability and Universal Trail Assessment Process for trail design and implementation; Acquisition of easements and fee simple title to property for recreation trails or trail corridors. Mini-grants can be used for : Construction of trailhead shelters, signs and kiosks; Purchase and installation of trail markers; Purchase of hand tools and small equipment for trail maintenance; Purchase or construction and installation of trailside amenities; National Trails Day celebration activities; Professional training to trail crews about recreation trail maintenance. |
| Comments: | This is a pass through of federal funding to the state. Applicants are encouraged to consider use of youth conservation crews or student service corps. Written permission for trails crossing private land is required in order to be eligible for funding. The program primarily supports development of unpaved walking or hiking trails. |

Trees For Local Communities Cost-Share Grant Program

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| Contact: | Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, Forest, Parks and Recreation Department, Urban and Community Forestry Program (www.vtfpr.org) Danielle Fitzko, (802) 241-3673, danielle.fitzko@state.vt.us |
| Application Date: | Annually, late winter. |
| Eligible Applicants: | Municipalities, community tree boards, local volunteer organizations, educational institutions, civic groups and approved nonprofit organizations. |
| Funding Amount: | Maximum request \$4,000 (\$200 for mini-grants). Approximately \$30,000 has been available statewide in recent years. |
| Match Requirement: | 50% (no match requirement for mini-grants). In-kind labor and materials can be used as match. |
| Eligible Activities: | <p>Program has five grant types.</p> <p>Planning grants can be used for urban forestry master plans, shade tree inventories, streetscape designs, forest resource planning, or management plans for town forests. They encourage all first time grant applicants to begin with a planning grant.</p> <p>Education grants can be used to develop educational programs or materials, provide information or training, or promote public awareness of urban forestry.</p> <p>Planting grants are for communities with on-going urban and community forestry programs and a site-specific planting plan, or those who are attempting to follow-up on a previous planning grant are eligible. Funds can be used for the purchase and planting of trees. All trees will require a three-year maintenance guarantee on survival.</p> <p>Maintenance grants are for communities with on-going urban and community forestry programs. Funds can be used for pruning, cabling, fertilizing, etc. Tree removal is not eligible.</p> <p>Mini-grants are seed money for communities and organizations for training, reference material, single tree purchases and Arbor Day activities.</p> |

Bicycle and Pedestrian Grant Program

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| Contact: | Vermont Agency of Transportation (www.aot.state.vt.us) Jon Kaplan, (802) 828-0059, jon.kaplan@state.vt.us |
| Comments: | There is currently a moratorium on funding for competitive projects under this program. Program formerly funded feasibility studies for potential bicycle and pedestrian projects or for bike/ped master planning for municipalities. Alternative years the program provided funding for the construction of projects. |

Transportation Enhancement Grants

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| Contact: | Vermont Agency of Transportation (www.aot.state.vt.us) Curtis Johnson, (802) 828-0583, curtis.johnson@state.vt.us |
| Application Date: | Annually, later summer. |
| Eligible Applicants: | Municipalities, state agencies, not-for-profit organizations, and federal agencies. |
| Funding Amount: | \$10,000 (minimum) to \$300,000 (maximum). Approximately \$3 million has been available statewide in recent years. |
| Match Requirement: | 20% total. Half of the required match must be cash; the remaining portion may be in-kind labor or materials. |
| Eligible Activities: | There are twelve categories of projects funded under the program including: Provision of Facilities for Pedestrians and Bicycles; Provision of Safety and Educational Activities for Pedestrians and Bicyclists; Acquisition of Scenic Easements and Scenic or Historic Sites; Scenic or Historic Highway Programs (including the provision of Tourist and Welcome Center facilities); Landscaping and Other Scenic Beautification; Historic Preservation; Archaeological Planning and Research; Environmental Mitigation of Highway Runoff and Vehicle-caused Wildlife Mortality. Within each category, funds can be used for planning, feasibility studies, preliminary engineering, property acquisition, staff time, and construction. Within the Provision of Safety and Educational Activities for Pedestrians and Bicyclists category funds can also be used for educational and promotional activities. |
| Comments: | To be eligible for funding, applicants must submit a letter of intent and attend mandatory training workshop. This program is best suited for larger projects and is not recommended for projects with budgets of less than \$30,000. Benson may be able to use this funding source to support improvements to the village center streetscape, sidewalk network and on-street parking near the Town Office. |

Safe Routes to Schools Grant Program

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| Contact: | Vermont Agency of Transportation (www.aot.state.vt.us) Jon Kaplan, (802) 828-0059, jon.kaplan@state.vt.us |
| Application Date: | Annually, late winter. |
| Eligible Applicants: | The SRTS program is intended for students in grades K-8. Both public and private schools are eligible to apply, and schools that include other grades (e.g. a 7-12 school) are eligible provided the focus is on the students in the eligible grades. School districts or groups of schools may apply as one entity, provided that the SRTS initiatives will be available in all schools within the group. Based on the federal guidelines for this program, state, local and regional levels of schools, and local government and nonprofit organizations, are also eligible recipients of SRTS funding. To encourage creative approaches to implementing this program, schools may choose to develop partnerships with other schools or regional/statewide non-profit organizations. Non-profit organizations that represent a school or group of schools are also eligible to apply. |
| Funding Amount: | \$10,000 per school. |
| Match Requirement: | None. |
| Eligible Activities: | The program has a Phase 1 and Phase 2. Under Phase 1 eligible activities include public awareness campaigns and outreach to press and community leaders; traffic education and enforcement in the vicinity of schools; student sessions on bicycle and pedestrian safety, health and environment; training, volunteers and managers of SRTS programs. Once a school has participated in Phase 1, they will be eligible to apply for Phase 2 funding that could be used for actual infrastructure changes such as building sidewalks or paths, improving crossings and installing signs and pavement markings. |
| Comments: | Applicant schools agree to: develop a school travel plan; conduct before and after surveys of students and parents; identify a ped/bike safety educator; conduct two events/year. Preference will be given to applications that include schools that have not previously received funding through the program. Grant funds may be available to pursue development of a trail between the school and village center as a component of a larger strategy for achieving program goals. |

Municipal Park-and-Ride Grant Program

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| Contact: | Vermont Agency of Transportation (www.aot.state.vt.us) Wayne Davis, (802) 828-5609, wayne.davis@state.vt.us |
| Application Date: | Annually, mid-summer. |
| Eligible Applicants: | Municipalities. |
| Funding Amount: | No maximum grant request. Approximately \$200,000 has been available statewide in recent years. |
| Match Requirement: | None. |
| Eligible Activities: | The development of small municipally-owned and -maintained park-and-ride facilities The grant funding is available for engineering and construction activities. |
| Comments: | In order to be eligible for this grant, the proposed facility must be located on town- or state-owned land, near a state highway, available to commuters on a daily basis year round, provide parking for a minimum of ten vehicles, and owned and maintained by the local municipality. In addition to providing a service to commuters, if properly located, a park-and-ride lot may also provide needed public parking such as at a recreation facility. This program might be able to fund expanded parking on the school property or at another municipally-owned location convenient to Route 22A. |

Building Communities Grants - Recreation and Education Facilities

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| Contact: | Vermont Department of Buildings & General Services (www.bgs.state.vt.us) Diane Nealy, (802) 828-3519, diane.nealy@state.vt.us |
| Application Date: | Annually, fall. |
| Eligible Applicants: | Municipalities and non-profit organizations that provide services to youth or adults in either an individual community or recognized community service area. |
| Funding Amount: | Maximum request \$25,000. Approximately \$200,000 has been available statewide in recent years. |
| Match Requirement: | 75% cash match required. In-kind labor or materials are not eligible. |
| Eligible Activities: | The goal of the program is to provide competitive grants to municipalities and non-profit organizations to stimulate the creation and development of recreational and educational opportunities in Vermont communities. A facility-based project that provides or coordinates or organizes recreation programs for youth or adults within a community is eligible for funding. |
| Comments: | Funds are allocated through the state's Capital Bill on an annual basis. Project must be ready to construct or under construction. Concepts or ideas will not be funded. Grants will not be awarded as "seed" money. Preference will be given to projects that serve youth and/or elderly populations. |

Building Communities Grants - Cultural Facilities

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| Contact: | The Vermont Arts Council (www.vermontartscouncil.org) Chris Hadsel, (802) 863-4938, chris.hadsel@gmail.com |
| Application Date: | Annually, fall. |
| Eligible Applicants: | Municipalities and nonprofit organizations. |
| Funding Amount: | Maximum request \$20,000. |
| Match Requirement: | 50%. The match must be 75% cash. |
| Eligible Activities: | The purpose of this grant program is to enhance, create or expand the capacity of an existing building to provide cultural activities for the public. |
| Comments: | Work undertaken on historic buildings must meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Historic Preservation Projects. Eligible activities include new ramps or stairways, code improvement or utility systems work. |

Building Communities Grants - Historic Preservation

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| Contact: | Vermont Division for Historic Preservation Debra Sayers, (802) 828-3213, debra.sayers@state.vt.us |
| Application Date: | Annually, fall. |
| Eligible Applicants: | Municipalities and nonprofit organizations. |
| Funding Amount: | Maximum request \$15,000. Approximately \$180,000 has been available statewide in recent years. |
| Match Requirement: | 50% cash match required. |
| Eligible Activities: | The purpose of this grant program is to preserve and repair buildings that will promote the public's awareness and appreciation of Vermont's cultural heritage. Town halls, municipal buildings, churches, historical societies, granges and many other kinds of buildings have been funded. Eligible work includes restoration and repair of roofs, structural elements, windows, foundations and other important components of historic buildings. |
| Comments: | Work undertaken on historic buildings must meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Historic Preservation Projects. Planning projects are ineligible. Planning includes architectural design, plans/specifications, and engineering design/evaluations. New construction work, additions, new ramps or stairways, code improvement or utility systems work are not eligible for grant funding under this program. |

VHCB Local Conservation Grant Program

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| Contact: | Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (www.vhcb.org) (802) 828-3250, info@vhcb.org |
| Application Date: | Open application period. Awards are made twice a year. |
| Eligible Applicants: | Municipalities and nonprofit organizations. |
| Funding Amount: | Maximum request \$150,000. |
| Match Requirement: | 33%. Match may include cash, in-kind services, and donations of land and easements. |
| Eligible Activities: | Funding may be used for acquisition costs and for associated projects costs such as appraisals, options, or closing costs. Projects funded under this program might include: land acquisition to provide access to water for swimming or boating, biking and hiking trails, greenways, or conservation or expansion of town parks, forests and natural areas or acquisition of important historic sites for public use. Funding is not available for the construction or rehabilitation of buildings or the construction of recreational facilities. |
| Comments: | VHCB also has a grant program to fund conservation projects of statewide significance (as determined by the VHCB using input from the Natural Heritage Program, Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation, the Division for Historic Preservation and others). These projects are not required to provide local matching funds and are not limited to \$150,000. Conservation projects eligible for VHCB funding include acquisition of natural areas that provide habitat for rare or endangered species, acquisition of lands to provide public access to trails or water, greenways, or acquisition of important historic sites for public use. These applications are considered five times a year. |

Municipal Planning Grants

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| Contact: | Vermont Department of Housing and Community Affairs (www.dhca.state.vt.us) Wendy Tudor, (802) 828-5249, wendy.tudor@state.vt.us |
| Application Date: | Annually, fall. |
| Eligible Applicants: | Municipalities with current, regionally-approved town plans. |
| Funding Amount: | Maximum request \$15,000. |
| Match Requirement: | None. |
| Eligible Activities: | Beyond the usual town planning and zoning related project, the program can be used to fund acquisition of development rights, easements and properties for housing and conservation purposes. |

Community Development Program Implementation Grants

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| Contact: | Vermont Community Development Program (www.dhca.state.vt.us) Lisa Ryan, (802) 828-1256, lisa.ryan@state.vt.us |
| Application Date: | Series of deadlines on an annual cycle. |
| Eligible Applicants: | Municipalities and partnerships that include a lead municipality. |
| Funding Amount: | \$50,000 (minimum) to \$200,000 (maximum) |
| Match Requirement: | Varies based on activity category. |
| Eligible Activities: | Provides funding for economic development, housing, public facilities, and public services, in support of economic development or housing that will result in direct benefit to persons of low- and moderate-income. This includes the rehabilitation or acquisition of public facilities and the provision of elder or child care. |
| Comments: | Planning grants are also available for amounts between \$3,000 to \$30,000 with a 25% match requirement. Accessibility Modification grants are available for projects to make public buildings accessible on a first-come first-serve basis out of an annual set-aside (\$200,000) |