

Concord Recreation Department & Commission Consolidated Input

To the Concord Long Range Planning Effort

Healthy Community

BP 5.4 Plan for physical activity and healthy lifestyles

Strengths

- Recreation Facilities Strategic Plan inclusive of long-term goals through 2018+ (incorporated by reference)
- Large ratio of open space : population
- Access to a track that is not on a public school's grounds which creates more self-directed and public use opportunities

Weaknesses

- Need for more inclusive and accessible recreation spaces that are accessible beyond basic ADA design
- Lack of braille signage, large print text, and other languages at parks and in Recreation facilities/brochures
- No master plan for park spaces
- Lack of group exercise space at Beede Center
- Current lack of communication and collaboration amongst public and private entities in Concord in scheduling the use of indoor and outdoor recreation facilities
- Lack of indoor and outdoor special event space(s) ie., amp theater, large presentation spaces, etc.
- Current overlap of out of school hour programming by multiple entities (Concord Libraries, Umbrella Arts, Schools, Recreation Department, Community Ed, Private Sector, etc.)

Opportunity

- Self-guided walking tours at visitor center with audio and maps
- Bike share program at visitor center
- Create self-directed fitness circuits at parks and throughout town
- Healthy Concord initiative makes recommendations for more stress reduction programs for youth and adults
- Combining the Parks Department with the Recreation Department for more fluid programming and facility management
- Transition the Beede Center to a Revolving Account instead of an Enterprise Account to provide better administrative support

Threats

- Limited General Fund support for Recreation Department programs as compared to the national average. 5.9% of the General Fund budget comes from taxes, as compared to the typical Department receiving 70- 75% of expenses from taxes.
- There is 1 picnic pavilion throughout the town system. The recommended standard is one pavilion per 5,000 population (Concord would therefore need 4)
- Comparative data shows a need for 2.9 additional playgrounds for the current population

Responsible Regionalism

BP 6.5 Promote regional cooperation and sharing of resources

Strengths

Weaknesses

Opportunity

- Create a Concord/Lexington Tourism Council inclusive of the Concord Visitor Center, Minuteman National Park, Lexington Visitor Center, DCR, local museums for better service to tourists and guests
- Creating a community event signage space that is organized and coordinated by a Town entity to better communicate events in Concord

Threats

- Over signage of events run by municipal, federal, state, private and state run programs

Responsible Regionalism

BP 6.6 Enhance connections between local activity centers and regional destinations

Strengths

Weaknesses

- Lack of signage or maps directly off of the local transportation centers in Concord and West Concord

Opportunity

- Bike share program at visitor center (in works with Concord Visitor Center and Lexington Visitor Center)

Threats

- Limitations involved with partnering and planning for improvements that deal with state run features such as a flyover bike path at route 2 or doing anything with the MBTA.

General Comments

- Lack of commitment to tourism from the community as a whole. For a very historic town, there is little for visitors (transportation services and otherwise)
 - Traffic congestion deters participation in programs based on location. Re-designate certain roads as one way only, restrict specific roads to drive-through during certain hours only. Set goal to reduce the amounts of traffic lights in Concord by 30%
- Need for dog parks so there is less use of sport fields by animals and pet owners (health and safety reasons)
- Overall lack of an established “community center” that would allow for more impromptu recreation
- Lack of a coordinated Capital Improvements Plan
- Need to establish long term plans for school buildings that may be retired from the school system
- Lack of cell phone service throughout the Town
- Lack of free wifi throughout the Town
- Lack of parking around parks, specifically Emerson Park area
- * Lack of remaining home inventory for down sizing empty nesters.
 - *Over development of large multi-unit "affordable condos/apts. Recreation/Open Space
 - *Continue Concord's "right to first refusal" purchase of any farm land that comes on the market.
 - * Expand Beede footprint to provide full service fitness needs under one roof; swim, cardio, weight training & group fitness programs.

- * Approve a limited number of Open Space/Conservation Lands in Concord as dog accessible.
- * Public Schools
- * Consider Consolidation of 1 new Middle School
- * Culture/Historic
- * Maintain character and historic importance of Concord.

What are the pressing issues for your commission?

- a) Receiving more concise and accurate accounting data from Town Finance department. Work in process.
- b) Understanding why the Town of Concord does not provide a higher % of tax Dollars to Concord Recreation (noted above)
- c) Beede not paid "User Fees" by CCHS Swim Team (eg; CCHS Hockey pays \$35k in User Fees annually to The Edge in Bedford for ice time.
- d) Lack of membership support from Concord community and why.
- e) The Beede Center's operations and budget are pressing issues. The lack of response to advertising is alarming; presumably the age of the average member is rising, so how best to reach the next generation of members? Traditional advertising unlikely to be the best route. Also, how to get Beede paid by the schools for the services it provides is critical.
- f) Maintaining/increasing participation in the recreation programs. It seems like summer camp is stable, but how best to increase participation and visibility of programs beyond young kids? Also, how to best deal with the encroachment of club sports (e.g., girls basketball).
- g) How to balance the need for stable/increased revenues with the need for providing affordable services to the town (I think summer camp is a good example of how this can be well done) but rates for other programs such as after-school care seem high. There was a mandate to cut prices for summer camp; how or why was this mandate not extended to all programs?

Where are the tensions/conflicts in your work?

- a) Lack of specific updated monthly information from Beede ie; (work in process)
 1. Number of new memberships sold – 10 days pass, 3 month, 1 year
 2. Total monthly revenue sold
 3. Membership monthly sales YOY
 4. 4. Monthly revenue YOY
 5. 3-6 Month Marketing Plan

Is there a particular project or goal your board is proud to have accomplished in the past year?

- a) Rideout Park
- b) Ripley Play P
- c) working on the Beede's revised pricing and billing structure was a solid accomplishment. Offering members other ways to join (10 visit passes) and pay (monthly vs. annual renewals) will, ultimately, serve to bring in more revenue after an adjustment period from members. It also more aligns the Beede with current health club offerings