



City of Saratoga Springs

RECREATION COMMISSION

15 Vanderbilt Avenue, Saratoga Springs, New York 12866

518-587-3550 x2300 Fax 518-584-1748

www.SaratogaRec.com

Derrick LeGall
Recreation Commission Chair
Alphonse Lambert
Amy Smith
Robert Manasier
Cheryl Smith
John Dowd
Michelle Merola

Saratoga Springs Recreation Commission

Public Meeting

Tuesday, October 4, 2018

6:30 pm

Minutes

Adirondack Trust Company Mabee Building,

2nd Floor Community Room

31 Church Street, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866

Attendance – Derrick Legall, Amy Smith, Robert Manasier, Cheryl Smith, John Dowd, Adam Bossi, GreenPlay LLC, Don McPherson, LA Group, Bob Kernan, LA Group, John Hirliman, Debbie Rehm, Mike Sharp, Andrew Bobbitt, YMCA, Cherie Grey, Colin Klepetar, CSAB, Sustainable Saratoga, Bike Saratoga, & John Witt, Witt Construction

Public Comment – There was no public comment.

Recreation Master Plan – Presentation and Recommendations – Adam Bossi, GreenPlay LLC presented the purpose of the plan, the Master Plan Process, demographic trends, inventory of facilities & levels of Service Assessment, Program Summary, Community Input Summary, Key Findings and Preliminary Recommendations.

Adam Bossi requested the public to ask questions throughout the presentation. The purpose of the Recreation Master Plan is it's a road map for improving the City's provision of parks and recreation facilities and services for residents and visitors, inventories existing public parks and recreation assets, reviews current conditions impacting recreation in Saratoga Springs, demographics, community input, local and national recreation trends, identifies residents' wants, needs, and level of satisfaction with current recreation opportunities; as well as ideas for improvement, and provides goals and prioritized action plan for improving existing and future recreation opportunities. They are looking making our space a better place for recreation.



The Master Plan Process includes information gathering & analysis, findings & visioning, Goals & Recommendations to present and refine preliminary goals and the Draft and Final Plans.

The company will present a summary of the Key Findings including Focus Group & Staff Input, Citywide Survey Results, Inventory and Level of Service, Existing programs and operations and Overall Key Issues.

Adam Bossi went through the City demographics: 27,447 total population, 39.9 years is the median age, 53% are well education (adults with Bachelor's Degree or higher), more are homeowners vs renters, and \$73,661 is the median household income, steady population growth (29,027 in 2030), earning more per households than statewide & nationally, younger population declining, senior population increasing and 15-24 age cohort is the most populous.



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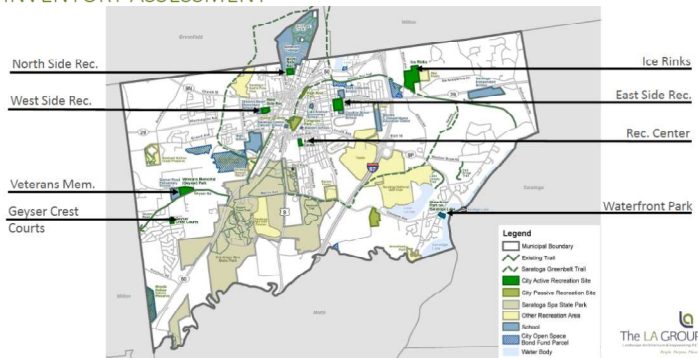
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Bob Kernan, LA Group, reported that the City of Saratoga Springs has 8 Parks/Facilities, 122 acres, 104,000 sf of Indoor Recreation Space, 21 Athletic Fields, 13 Tennis Courts, 7 Full and 2 Half Courts Basketball Courts, 4 Splash Pads, and 5 Playgrounds. The facilities are frequently used by multiple user groups, strong connection to the community and collectively the Parks offer a wide variety of events.

INVENTORY ASSESSMENT



INVENTORY ASSESSMENT



Saratoga Springs Recreation Department

Methodology: Perform multiple site visits.

Multiple meetings with Administrative Director of Recreation.

Generation of inventory and assessment documents for each park/facility.

Overview:

Athletic fields are in fair to good condition but are in need of general upkeep and maintenance.

Playgrounds are in good condition.

Parks lack identification and way finding signs.

Parks lack consistent landscape amenities (bike racks, signs, lights, benches, trash and recycling receptacles, etc.).

Mike Sharp asked if there were specific facilities/programs identified that were unique to Saratoga Springs, for example, two ice rinks. Communities around us do not have two municipal ice rinks. Adam Bossi explained that the City has many amenities.

Bob Kearn spoke about the Great Outdoors project. There will be improvements to the East and West Side Recreation Complexes including redoing the tennis, basketball courts and additional lighting. The LA Group is working with both projects.

Cheryl Grey asked to have North Side Rec. be more identifiable. People think it is part of Skidmore.

Colin Klepetar asked about the East Side Parking. There are cars that park on the grass around the park. He felt it is dangerous for cyclists. Mayor Meg Kelly explained that the City is having a study to review bike lanes in Saratoga Springs.



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Adam Bossi presented:

CITY RECREATION PROGRAMS

Seasonal Recreation Program Brochure/Catalog – Core Annual Activities:

- Youth Sports – soccer, basketball, field hockey, volleyball, boxing, ice skating, baseball, softball, tennis, volleyball, Camp Saradac
- All Ages / Adults: pickleball, running, hockey, Zumba
- Drop in programs/open use time at the Recreation Center and Ice Rinks

Other local organizations offering sports/recreation:

- School District, YMCA, local sports leagues and community organizations, private facilities/clubs

Special Events – at the ice rinks, fields and Recreation Center; supplemented by many more events hosted downtown by local business and civic organizations. *Strong interest and participation reported in diverse recreation activities and programs*

Adam Bossi explained that based on the 2017 annual report, the Recreation Department has 6 full time staff, 165 part time staff, and 223 volunteer coaches.

Cherie Grey asked if the number of staff listed referees. John Hirliman explained that it did not include referees who were independent contractors but did include the referees who are on payroll. Cherie Grey asked if they could include all referees.

Public Works

10 parks maintenance staff and 1 seasonal maintenance employee

2017 Expenses: \$2,224,310

2017 Revenues: \$1,140,176

Cost Recovery: 49%

City funding through annual General Fund appropriations

Mike Sharp asked if the company had checked with local communities to on how they supported Recreation. Adam Bossi explained they had not looked at the financials locally but used the National Parks and Recreation Survey and the average cost recovery for a municipality with 20,000 – 40,000 was 30-33%. The City of Saratoga Springs was in the median.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

Focus Group Meetings

Interviews with City Officials

Recreation Staff Focus Group

Public Works Staff Interviews

Public Presentation with the Recreation Commission

Citywide Survey

Statistically-Valid Survey (random sample)

Open Public Survey (online, self-selected)



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FOCUS GROUP MEETINGS & STAFF INPUT

- Focus Group Meetings (Feb. 2018)
- 60+ participants representing diverse community groups and interests
- Interviews with City Officials
- Recreation Staff Focus Group
- Public Works Staff Interviews
- Public Meeting with the Recreation Commission

Received direct feedback from different perspectives
Discussed diverse concerns and ideas

Identified recurring themes and shared topics of interest

Results of the citywide survey validate the community-wide significance of many of these recurring themes.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT – REOCCURRING THEMES



The some of the focus groups members wanted: enhancing facilities, walking and biking, more space and young or young adult programs.

The Survey respondents include:

2018-10-04 Special - Recreation Master Plan Public Meeting



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INVITATION SAMPLE

Randomly invited to participate

3,500 invitations sent

441 completed responses

+/-4.1% margin of error

Representative of the City's overall population / demographic character

Mix of users/non-users of parks and recreation amenities and services

1/4th of respondents lived in the city less than 5 years, 1/3rd for over 20 years

OPEN LINK SAMPLE

Self-selected participation

Representative of participants in recreation / users of local parks

411 respondents provided input

2/3rds of respondents were couples, age 35-54 with children at home

29% of respondents resided outside of city limits

According to Adam Bossi, the Open Link sample was more critical and some were from user groups.

Citywide Survey - Respondents

Most respondents were also: • Caucasian • Slight majority female • Mix of new and long time residents

Citywide Survey – Current Usage

Open link respondents use more facilities and programs

more often Parks/trails are most utilized by all

Adam Bossi explained that over 50% uses the Parks.

Citywide Survey – Satisfaction

Moderate to high levels of satisfaction with current offerings.

Open link respondents were less satisfied, especially with maintenance of existing facilities

Citywide Survey – Importance of Existing Facilities

Trails and parks = most important

Open link respondents find more facilities of higher importance than invitation sample

Citywide Survey – Needs Met by Existing Facilities

Most facilities are meeting existing needs.

Moderate needs met by Waterfront Park and Skateboard Park for Open Link respondents



CITYWIDE SURVEY – IMPORTANCE / PERFORMANCE MATRIX

**High Importance/
 Low Needs Met**

These are key areas for potential improvements. Improving these facilities would likely positively affect the degree to which community needs are met overall.

**High Importance/
 High Needs Met**

These amenities are important to most respondents and should be maintained in the future, but are less of a priority for improvements as needs are currently being adequately met.

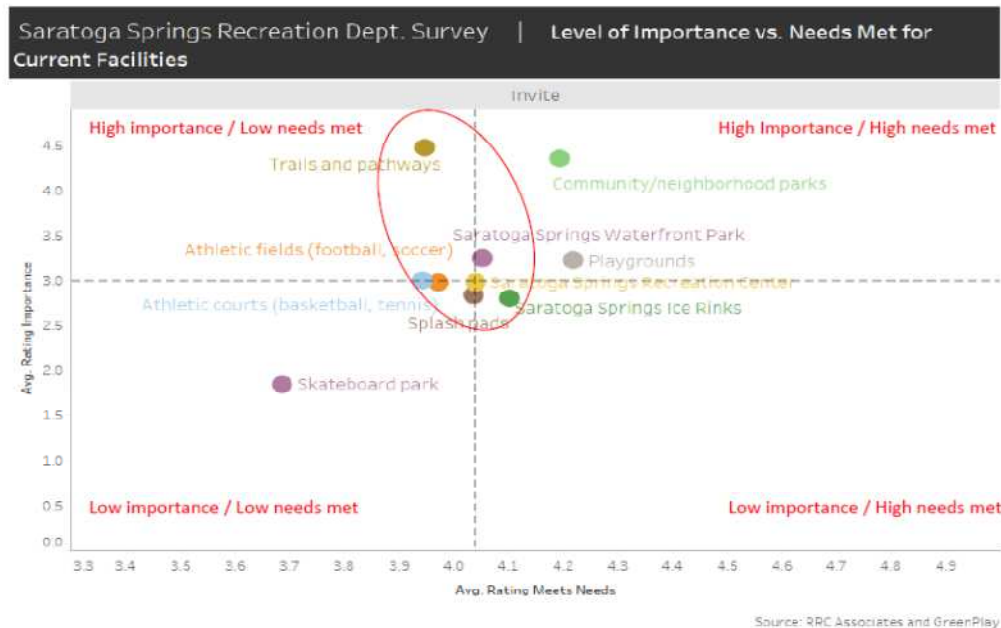
These “niche” facilities have a small but passionate following, so measuring participation when planning for future improvements may prove to be valuable.

Current levels of support appear to be adequate. Future discussions evaluating whether the resources supporting these facilities outweigh the benefits may be constructive.

**Low Importance/
 Low Needs Met**

**Low Importance/
 High Needs Met**

CITYWIDE SURVEY – FACILITIES MATRIX



Invitation Sample

Adam Bossi explained how many of the facilities were around the middle matrix. 88% said they do not use the Skate Park but those who use it use the facility more often.

Cheryl Grey stated that the information gathered is based on the responses. Many responses are from East Side/West Side (62%/45%) that may not use South Side/Rec. Center. There were low responses from the South Side (8%/3%). Cheryl Grey said they did not get responses from the areas that identify as low. Open Link sample had 29% respondents who resided outside the City. Cheryl Grey wanted to make sure that he knew that the Recreation Center is a great place. DPW staff was good. He would always take care of the fields for us. It's sad he retired. People will take the survey results as how the City feels overall. The information is based on who responded. Adam Bossi said to take the information with a grain of salt.



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Adam Bossi said the City is doing a good job meeting the needs. Trails are highly important. Recreation Center meets the needs. Open Link - Skate Park/Ice Rink close to meets needs better.

Citywide Survey – Importance of Existing Programs

Adult programs were more important to invitation respondents

Open Link respondents noted youth programs, especially youth sports were of high importance

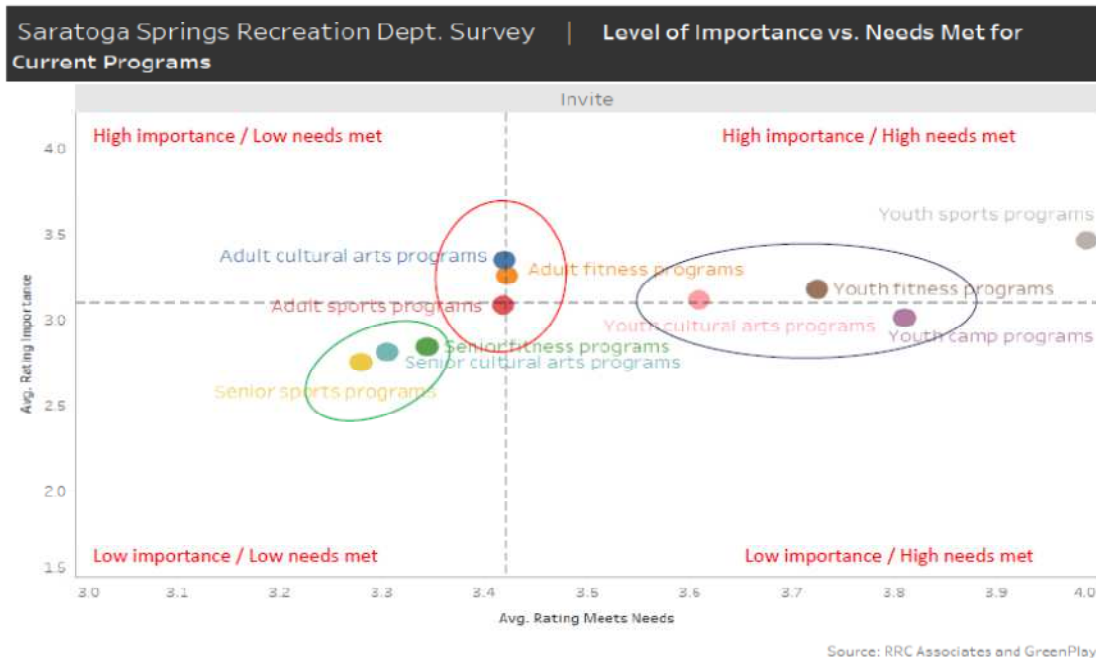
Citywide Survey – Needs Met by Existing Programs

Open Link respondents indicated their needs met to a lesser extent in all categories

Open Link= more experience w/ programs; have more critical viewpoint

Invitation sample

CITYWIDE SURVEY – PROGRAM MATRIX



Citywide Survey – Top Priorities to Add, Expand, or Improve

Majority of all respondents prioritized improving trail and path connectivity

Moderate consistency in priorities – Invite v. Open Link

1/3rd Open Link prioritized athletic field improvements

Citywide Survey – Lower Priorities to Add, Expand, or Improve

Open link respondents place higher priorities on most amenities and services, especially those geared toward children and teens.

Citywide Survey – Factors to Increase Usage

Invite and Open Link respondent pools are most different in Top 3 factors

Strong consistency in importance of influencing factors overall.

Adam Bossi said that there are factors to increase usage. He was going over the factors with the committee.



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Citywide Survey – Awareness/Communication efforts

Website, emails, social networking and program flyers appear to be strong tools for reaching the public with parks and recreation information

Citywide Survey – Effectiveness of Communication Efforts

Current communication is effective (rated 4 or 5): 24% Invitation; 40% Open Link

Ineffective communication (rated 1 or 2): 47% Invitation; 33% Open Link

Adam Bossi explained what the best way to communicate is. He included electronic, social media, flyers, website. There needs to be a multifaceted approach and recommendations will be made.

Citywide Survey – Financial Support for Improvements

What mechanisms would you support to fund future improvements to parks, recreation amenities, programs and services? 88% of the Invitation sample would (neutral-definitely) support a private foundation dedicated to the parks while 59% would (neutral-definitely) support increased user fees.

7:45pm

Broad Key Findings of All Analysis:

Connecting and expanding public trails, bike paths and associated infrastructure throughout the city is important to everyone.

Improving the quality and utility of existing city parks and recreation infrastructure is necessary; through both improved maintenance and capital investment.

Additional programmable indoor recreation space and outdoor sports fields to utilize for local recreation games, practices, programs and activities is needed.

Marketing, outreach and sharing of information about city recreation opportunities must become more effective.

Internal and external partnerships should be strengthened and leveraged to foster improvement of existing recreation opportunities for residents and visitors.

Organizational Enhancement Preliminary Recommendations

1. Establish a recreation and parks working group of city staff, leadership and relevant local organizations to guide implementation of this plan, and to proactively manage future challenges and opportunities.
2. Ensure adequate staff, training and resources are available for meeting operational, maintenance, and service delivery expectations. Evaluate needs annually.
3. Continue to explore and establish partnerships with local organizations to make more diverse or improved recreation opportunities available for residents; especially in areas of known need. (examples: athletic fields, indoor recreation space, adult programs, aquatic activities, etc.)

Adam Bossi explained that the plan will need to be implemented and want to be on task.



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Programs and Service Delivery Preliminary Recommendations

1. Continue to provide high-quality recreation, fitness and sports programs for all ages and abilities.
2. Marketing of city recreation and park opportunities and communication with residents and users requires significant improvement.
3. Explore the potential to offer more neighborhood level special events at level community parks.
4. Develop a cost recovery philosophy for recreation programs, user fees and facility rentals.
5. Consider creating a non-profit organization to support the mission of the Recreation Commission and Recreation Department.

Facilities and Amenities Preliminary Recommendations

1. Develop implementable and measurable park maintenance standards and schedules for regular, reoccurring tasks and basic repairs.
Focus on high-use amenities including athletic fields.
2. Continue to develop and connect trails and infrastructure for walking and biking throughout the city.
3. Add comfort features, signage and other basic amenities at parks and recreation areas to increase site utility and improve the user experience. (Examples: restrooms, way finding signage, benches, etc.)

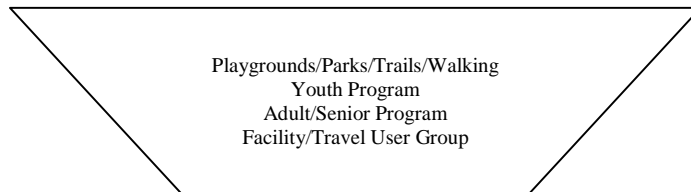
Adam Bossi explained to the group about the pyramid method.

More overall public benefit

Specific & smaller benefit

Should pay more

i.e. golf user fees are higher, charge full price, than a fee for playing on the playground.



Adam Bossi spoke about having a nonprofit organization to support the mission.

Next Steps:

1. Project team visioning session will meet tomorrow: hone recommendations and develop priority actions.
2. Prepare draft plan
3. Draft plan presentation and review
4. Final plan presentation
5. Implementation

Mike Sharp said we should focus on what we do that others nearby do not. Saratoga Springs has a great history. It was suggested to bring a brand to the parks. Adam Bossi said that there is a great strong core system.

Eric Heidelmark mentioned that at the last Sports Tournament at East Side Rec. the bathrooms backed up. This was a State Tournament. The concession stand had to be shut down as the bathrooms are connected. We have great fields. Adam Bossi mentioned that they just need a little polish. The cost recovery factor was discussed. Benj Gleeksman spoke about the Skate Park. The Skate Park is used. Adam Bossi spoke about Greenbelt, Maryland. They spend \$5M/year in Recreation.



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Cheryl Grey recommended speaking with NYRA about having trails/connectivity through NYRA.

John Witt, spoke about tourism, and the unique springs/trails. The City has done a great job over the years working on abandon trail. There is a long way to go. RR/Spring Run Trail there are ways to connect. He cycles around in the City. It is not safe getting around. Developer/Rec. Fees should be earmarked towards projects instead of the General/Capital fund. He mentioned Excelsior Park with 20 acre preserve. He recommended having extra exercise/Healthy City stations.

Colin Klepetar spoke about connectivity on North Broadway to connect to Maple Avenue. He is part of Bike A Toga. He recommended Movies in the Park.

Bryant Park in NYC was mentioned and they have tables and a café. It has a stage for yoga and adult fitness. Younger kids as well as older kids use the park. There is a huge population near Loughberry Lake near Fresh Market.

It was mentioned that there are YMCA trails with modified and full intervals. Bob Kearns mentioned that the Great Outdoors project included trails in the parks.

Adam Bossi said that nationally the public wants a Recreation Experience. They want comfort features. Pulling bars and fitness equipment helps with the experience. Amy Smith said people had asked if they are recommending the City to brand or subcontract. Adam Bossi said no. The City and the School District work together with an agreement. Public Works does the work. It's better to have specific and measurable tasks and the City have control over Public Works. Adam Bossi did not recommend sub contracting. There is no control. In the long run, the City will be better. Facilities and programs will be better. He also recommended getting the information from those who have worked in Public Works. The information can be passed to others for consistent maintenance. Adam Bossi recommended having a game plan and play book. Staffing levels may have to be looked at.

Derrick Legall explained that there was a charter review. The next meeting will be October 23, 2018 at the Library.

Andrew Bobbitt, YMCA, Wilton Resident. He said he is new and it seems that there is a disconnect with the services between the City and the School District. The YMCA does not have that. They collect 100% for their services. Mayor Meg Kelly explained that the City and the School are in a good place. Members of the School District are here tonight. The City and the School are working together. It is going in the right direction.

Branding and Marketing was discussed. Derrick Legall thanked everyone for their input. John Hirliman thanked everyone for coming. The final plan will be going to the City Council.

The meeting ended at 8:35pm. The Next Meeting will be Tuesday, October 30, 2018 at 6:30 pm. The other meetings are on the November 27, 2018 and December 11, 2018.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathleen Lanfear



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Tuesday, October 4, 2018

6:30 pm

Agenda

Adirondack Trust Company Mabee Building,

2nd Floor Community Room

31 Church Street, Saratoga Springs, NY 12866

Attendance

Public Comment

Recreation Master Plan – Presentation and Recommendations

Adjournment - Next Meeting – Tuesday, October 30, 2018- 6:30 pm.
The November 27, 2018 and December 11, 2018 Saratoga Springs Recreation
Commission Meeting will be at 6:30pm.