

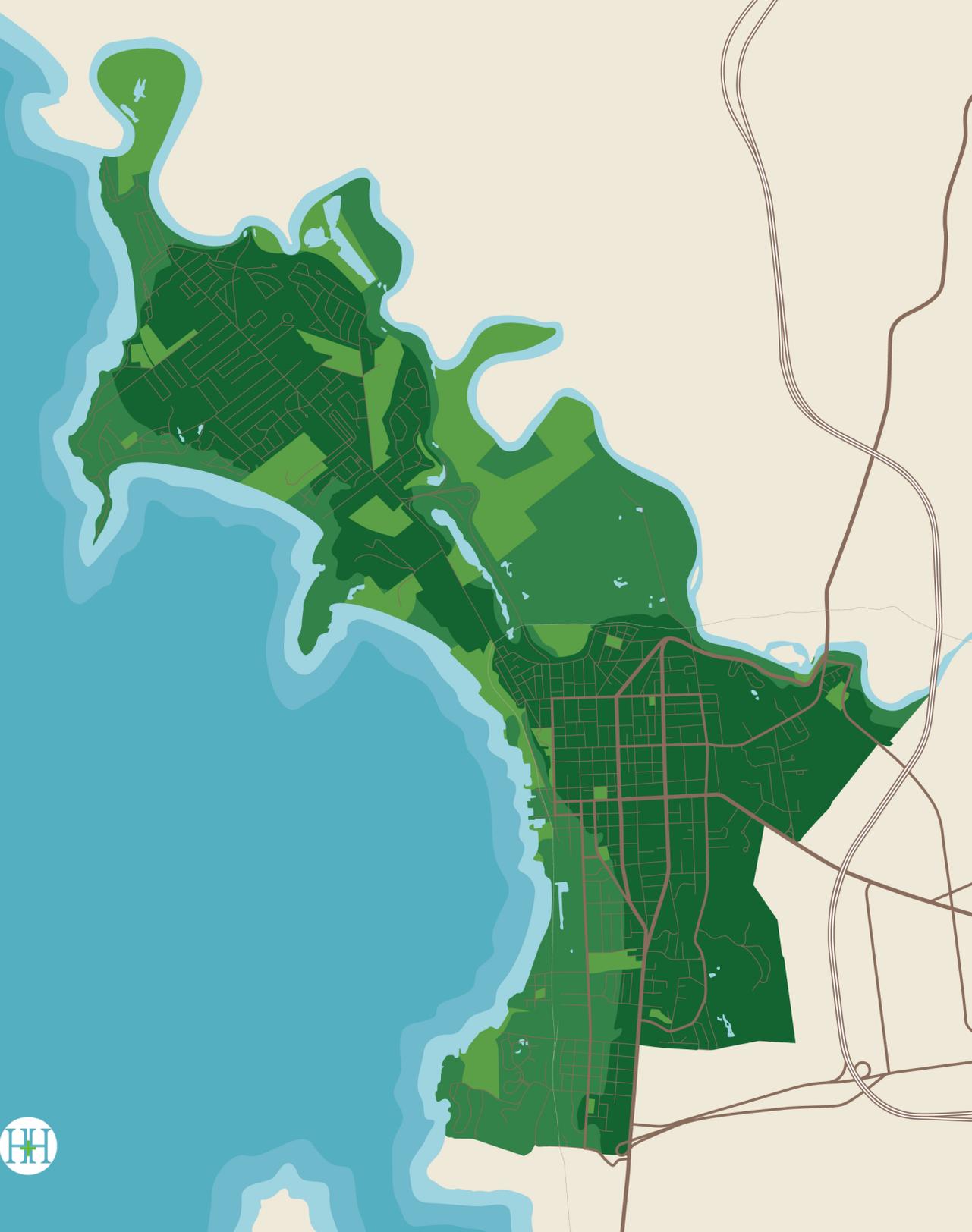
# THE BURLINGTON VERMONT PARKS & RECREATION MASTER PLAN

*full report draft*  
MAY 2014



BURLINGTON  
PARKS  
RECREATION  
WATERFRONT

S A S A K I



## **A Framework for Action**

The 2014 Burlington Parks Master Plan is the initial Master Plan for the Burlington Parks and Recreation Department. The Plan provides a framework for decision making for future service delivery and resource allocation. The Plan process began in May 2013 and concluded in February of 2014. The Plan covers a 10 year period, 2014 through 2024.

The goal of the Plan, as outlined in the initial RFP was to: “Develop a community-supported plan that provides guidance for future development and redevelopment of the City’s parks, recreation programming, waterfront, open space, trails and facilities. The Parks Master Plan will guide policy development, prioritize demands and opportunities, and generate a strategic action plan to be updated every three years. “The Parks Master Plan will be included as part of the current City of Burlington Comprehensive Plan.

In addition to the goal of the development of a community-supported plan that provides guidance for future development, other goals included:

- Integration of core values in the delivery of services
- Strengthening a more regional approach to parks and recreation services
- Aligning services and programs with changing demographics
- Creation of a narrative for the department to better tell its story and building brand and image
- Deploy departmental cultural change with new leadership

### Future Positioning of the Department

The most significant element of the Master Plan is a call to action and future positioning of the department. The Master Plan includes several technical reports and analysis as well as community input. These elements are important in setting the stage for the most important part of the Plan: the Strategic Initiatives. Planning is important, but it’s the implementation of the Plan that is most critical to ensure the department’s success. The Master Plan will assist the department with ensuring resource allocation is determined according to the greatest community needs. It also positions the department to pro-actively make decisions and receive the greatest return on investment of taxpayer dollars. Finally, the Plan will become a major initiative for department employees and will provide them with a sense of direction in their daily work.

## Context for the Plan

The Master Plan process included a review of several other existing or ongoing plans. This included a review of:

- Plan BTV: Downtown and Waterfront Master Plan
- 2004 Open Space Protection Plan and 2013 Update
- 2013 Chittenden County ECOS Plan
- 2012 Burlington Bike Path Feasibility Study and Bike Path Rehabilitation Project
- 2012 Imagine City Hall Park Master Plan
- FY13 and FY14 Penny for Parks Implementation Plan
- FY13 Capital Improvement Plan

Three of these plans, in particular, have relevance to the Parks Master Plan. These include Plan BTV, the 2004 Open Space Protection Plan and 2013 Update, and the 2013 Chittenden County ECOS Plan.

### Plan BTV

BTV addresses comprehensive land use and development plans focused on Burlington's Downtown and Waterfront. The Plan integrated land use, transportation, land development, urban design and public infrastructure into one planning document. The Plan outlined seven themes:

- Vibrant Economy
- Transportation Choice
- Active and Healthy Living
- Access to Nature, Arts, People, Entertainment
- Environmental & Cultural Stewardship

- Sense of Place
- Creativity and Innovation

All of the themes have a relationship to parks and recreation services. In addition, several recommendations included in Plan BTV relate to the Parks and Recreation Department, such as Waterfront, Imagine City Hall Park and Battery Park Master Plans, marina support services, and implementation of recommendations from the Burlington Harbor Management Plan.

### 2013 Open Space Protection Plan Update

The 2013 Open Space Protection Plan (OSPP) update adapts the original vision and goals to reflect progress made on past goals and changes in the public perception of needs for open space. This plan included public input to test current public perception. Subsequently, the open space inventory was updated to reflect the current status and use of open space in the city. Then, community input and geographic information of the updated inventory were developed into a matrix that will be used to guide future open space acquisitions. Finally, policy goals were developed to guide future decisions relating to open space land uses. The list is comprised of both acquisition ideas as well as management recommendations for existing public land.

### 2013 Chittenden County ECOS Plan

The ECOS Plan serves as the combined Chittenden County Regional Plan, Metropolitan Transportation Plan and Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. Goals of the Plan include:

- Natural Systems – Design and maintain a strategically planned and managed green infrastructure network composed of natural lands, working landscapes, and open spaces that conserve ecosystem values and functions, and provide associated benefits to our community.
- Social Community – Promote the skills, resources, and assurances needed for all community members to participate in the workforce and in their family, civic and cultural lives, within and among their neighborhoods, and in the larger community.
- Economic Infrastructure – Build the region's capacity for shared and sustainable improvements in the economic wellbeing of the community through support of both local and globally competitive initiatives.
- Built Environment – Make public and private investments in the built environment to minimize environmental impact, maximize financial efficiency, optimize social equity and benefits, and improve public health.

**Plan Elements**

The overall process of the Master Plan is represented in the image to the right. As evidenced in the process sequences, the Plan reviews the overall system with Values and Themes, supplemented by the specific areas of Department Operations, Parks and Recreation. All of this culminates into a call for action in the Planning for Action section of the Plan. The following section outlines the elements of the Plan and includes a brief description of each section of the report. The Framework for Action section was detailed in the introduction.



## Department Values

As part of the Master Plan process, Departmental values were established. These serve as the guiding principles in the way the Department will provide services. The values are:

- **Accessibility:** Emphasis on universal design principles and financial sensitivity for all parks and recreation programs.
- **Integrity:** Trust developed in doing our work in the public realm.
- **Dependability:** Service-oriented and responsive customer service organization.
- **Health and Wellness:** Focus on active and healthy lifestyles.
- **Teamwork/Partnership:** Confidence in our community and our department.
- **Inclusive:** Fostering cultures of all kinds.
- **Quality:** In everything we do.

## System Themes

The Master Plan process resulted in the development of overall system themes, or key areas of focus and recommendations for the next 10 years. Recommendations and plan deployment will concentrate in these areas. The goal is to develop an overall systems vision for capital expenditures and the creation of funding priorities. The six system themes for Burlington Parks and Recreation include:

**Meeting the Needs:** Both gaps and surpluses were identified in the planning process. Gaps include specific sports facilities, indoor recreation space and participation in recreational programming. This plan identifies strategies to address current need and recommends a future process to adapt to changing demographics.

**Inclusive Social Spaces:** The Parks and Recreation Department has a significant role in creating opportunities for people to gather and interact, an especially important function given the city's role as a regional cultural hub. This is aligned with themes from Plan BTV and the Chittenden ECOS Plan of Sense of Place and Social Community.

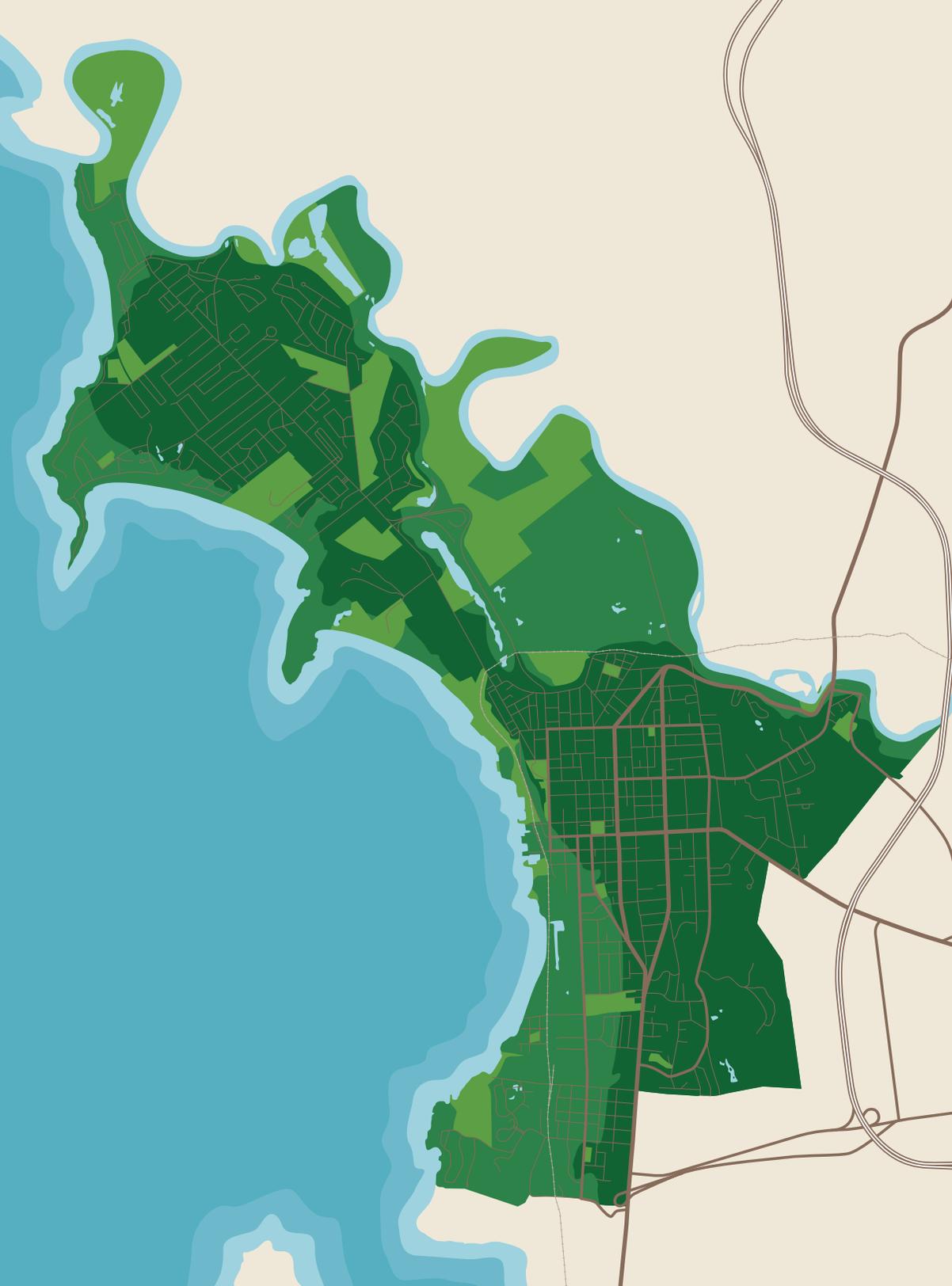
**Connected Parks and Neighborhoods:** Burlington has adequate total park acreage, but not all types or neighborhoods are well served. The majority of the city has access to a park within a 10 minute walk, however there is limited access in wards one and six. This plan seeks to better link parks into the existing trail system and build on the existing trails.

**Programming and Operations:** Burlington is an active community with a robust recreation and programming component, yet participation in available programming lags behind national averages. This plan addresses both the tailoring of programming to community need as well as the need increased visibility, marketing and communications.

**Stewardship and Sustainability:** Urban parks offer more than simply a place to play and relax. As cities grow greener, the study and management of urban ecologies is becoming critical to understanding the way natural systems interact with the built city. This plan addresses stormwater and maintenance practices as critical to the long-term sustainability of the park system.



# ASSESSING THE PARK SYSTEM



# Department Operations

## Financial Review

This review was an in depth analysis of the department of the Parks and Recreation’s finances. It included a benchmark analysis comparing the department to national averages comparing personnel expenses, capital budgets, and organizational assets based on the population size. This tool will allow the department to evaluate resource allocation for the future.

## Financial Benchmark Review

The following information reviews Burlington Parks and Recreation financial information as it relates to staffing and population comparisons (the complete spreadsheet is attached as a separate appendix). This data was derived from the National Recreation and Parks Association, PRORAGIS (Park and Recreation Operating Ratio and GIS) database. Eighty one agencies were selected as benchmark comparatives. All of the comparative agencies have a population of between 25,000 and 75,000, with a median population of approximately 48,000. The agencies are all departments within city governments. The cities are represented in approximately 20 states throughout the United States. It is important to note, very few agencies in the New England region have entered their data on the PRORAGIS site, so this region of the country is under-represented.

The number of full-time Parks and Recreation staff approaches the benchmark comparison of the upper quartile (75%) of 44 full-time staff. For the purposes of comparing park and recreation departments,

Full-Time Park and Recreation Staff	LQ*	Median	UQ*	Burlington
	19	30	44	40

\* LQ=Lower Quartile  
\* UQ=Upper Quartile

Burlington’s number of full-time staff is 40, which excludes six custodial positions servicing City buildings. Additionally, Burlington’s cemetery staff is included in this number; the vast majority of park and recreation agencies do not manage cemeteries.

Total Personnel Expenditures (Dollars)	LQ*	Median	UQ*	Burlington
	1.5M	2.3M	3.4M	3.204M

\* LQ=Lower Quartile  
\* UQ=Upper Quartile

The total Department salary budget is just under the upper quartile by \$200,000. Comparing FTE’s to the populations, there are 359 residents per FTE. This is closer to the lower quartile than the median.

Even with a personnel budget near the upper quartile, the total operating budget of \$5,048,566 is closer to the median than the upper quartile. Sixty three percent of the operating budget is personnel related. The national average of the personnel expense compared to the total operating expense is closer to 50%. These expenses spread over the total population are at the national average at \$119 per capita.

The result of the operation expenses being at or below average is that the revenue per capita and revenue per total operating expense are much higher than the national average. In fact, they are higher than the upper quartile by 19% in revenue per capita and 30% in revenue per total operating expense. The total revenue for the department is \$6,111,485. Of the total revenue, 58% (\$3,564,800) comes from non-tax revenue. This is also 19% higher than the upper quartile.

Burlington has a lower acres/1,000 population than the median city in the random sample, as 12.2 acres. However, acres of parkland maintained per maintenance FTE (full-time equivalent) is significantly higher than other reporting agencies, suggesting the need for more park maintenance staff. While the average city has park maintenance staff maintaining almost 17 acres per FTE, Burlington staff maintain 78% more than the upper quartile of reporting agencies, at almost 40 acres per FTE. It is worth noting, the database does not take into account the amount of mowable acres or undeveloped park acreage. Therefore, there are limitations to the data.

Along with efficiency in park maintenance, the Department also is more productive in generating revenue per capita. Whereas, the median agency produces \$37/capita, Burlington produces \$84.24/capita. Correspondingly, the agency greatly exceeds the percent of revenue per total operating expense of 70.6%. The median agency produces 33.33% of revenue/total operating expense.

As the numbers indicate (diagram lower left), Burlington is under-represented in total capital cost/capita. The lowest reporting agencies have \$4.94/capita of capital dollars, and median agencies have \$14/capita. Burlington spends \$8.27/capita. This is important as this funding assists with infrastructure improvements.

### Organizational and Leadership Assessment

One of the elements included in the scope of the Master Plan was an Organizational and Leadership Review. The full report is not included within the body of the Plan as it serves as an internal document for Departmental Leadership.

The purpose of the Assessment was to review the organization staffing and structure. Organizational and leadership strengths have a significant role in the successful deployment of the Parks Master Plan. A substantial part of the information and recommendations included in the Assessment came from staff input, from three employee focus groups. These groups included Leadership Team, Parks, and Recreation staff, representing a cross section of all divisions and levels of staff within the agency.

The analysis also included a review of the organization chart and review of Departmental culture and change in

	LQ*	Med.	Average	UQ*	BTV
Acres/1,000 population	10.3	14.4	16.7	20.2	12.2
Acres of Parkland Maintained per Maintenance FTE	6.1	12.7	16.9	22.4	39.85
Population per FTE	6.62	1,187		2,224	359
Revenue/Capita	\$15	\$37		\$65	\$84.24
Revenue/Total Operating Expense	22.81	33.33		52.77	70.6%
Total Capital Cost/Capita	\$4.94	\$14		\$40	\$8.27
Tax Cost/Capita	\$16.9	\$39.2		\$61.5	\$60.18

leadership.

The goals of the Assessment included:

- Analysis of the organization structure
- Review of staffing levels
- Employee perspectives of staffing structure, and future human resource requirements

Some consensus information includes:

- Most employees feel the organization structure works well
- Staff generally feel stretched with workload
- Job responsibility organization seems to be an area in need of further clarification and definition
- A lack of marketing support exists, which impacts recreation program registration, community awareness, and a lack of overall brand of the Department
- There are limitations to current technology use, but there are efforts being made to improve in this area
- Parks staff have responsibility beyond typical park maintenance duties as they are also responsible for custodial and building maintenance of City buildings
- A lack of programming support exists at the Miller Center
- Employees appreciate the change in leadership in the Department, and there is a general feeling the Department is moving in the right direction
- Employees have high regard for their ability to partner with other organizations
- Employees feel as though the Department does a good job connecting with residents

## Park Resources

### Park and Facility Assessment, Inventory, and Level of Service Standards

The purpose of this assessment is to provide a detailed synopsis of all parks, waterfront, open space, trails and facilities located within the City of Burlington. The assessment provides a thorough inventory, analysis of forecasted needs, existing gaps in the system, and strategic recommendations. Additionally, the inventory includes an overview of needed renovations, improvements, and system opportunities. This section also includes Level of Service Standards, or information about parkland, facility, and amenity comparisons to other similarly sized cities throughout the United States.

### Mapping

This process includes park mapping by classification and major amenities by facility standards. The Consulting Team utilized GIS to create a service area analysis for specific parks, waterfront, open space, trails and facilities. The mapping process will be used in conjunction with the standards analysis and will form the basis for identifying gaps in service and potential opportunities for future facility development and capital planning.

## Recreation Programs and Services

### Demographics and Trend Report

This report includes data from the Burlington Parks and Recreation Department and supplemental information from census tract demographic data obtained from Environmental Systems Research Institute, Inc. (ESRI),

the largest research and development organization dedicated to Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and specializing in population projections and market trends. For comparison purposes, data was also obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau. This analysis includes information such as household income, ethnicity, gender, age, and other demographic information. Also included is a trends analysis outlining local, regional, and national recreational trends. Key trends are identified and are applied to the department for decision making and future positioning for the Department.

### **Recreation Assessment**

This assessment includes a review of programs and service offerings of the Burlington Parks, Recreation, and Waterfront Department, including core program identification, a current program assessment, marketing approaches and program guide review, recreation programming standards, customer requirements, and measures. The assessment also includes a review of age segment distribution of offerings, program lifecycle analysis and a SWOT analysis for future program direction.

### **Visioning Section**

Visioning included a discussion of the overall findings from all of the technical reports, Community survey, and community input. Discussion occurred during a staff workshop to review the findings and recommendations as well as a brainstorm exercise to prioritize System Themes. Departmental values and were also reviewed. This information then resulted in final Parks Master Plan

recommendations.

### **Strategic Initiatives/Action Plan**

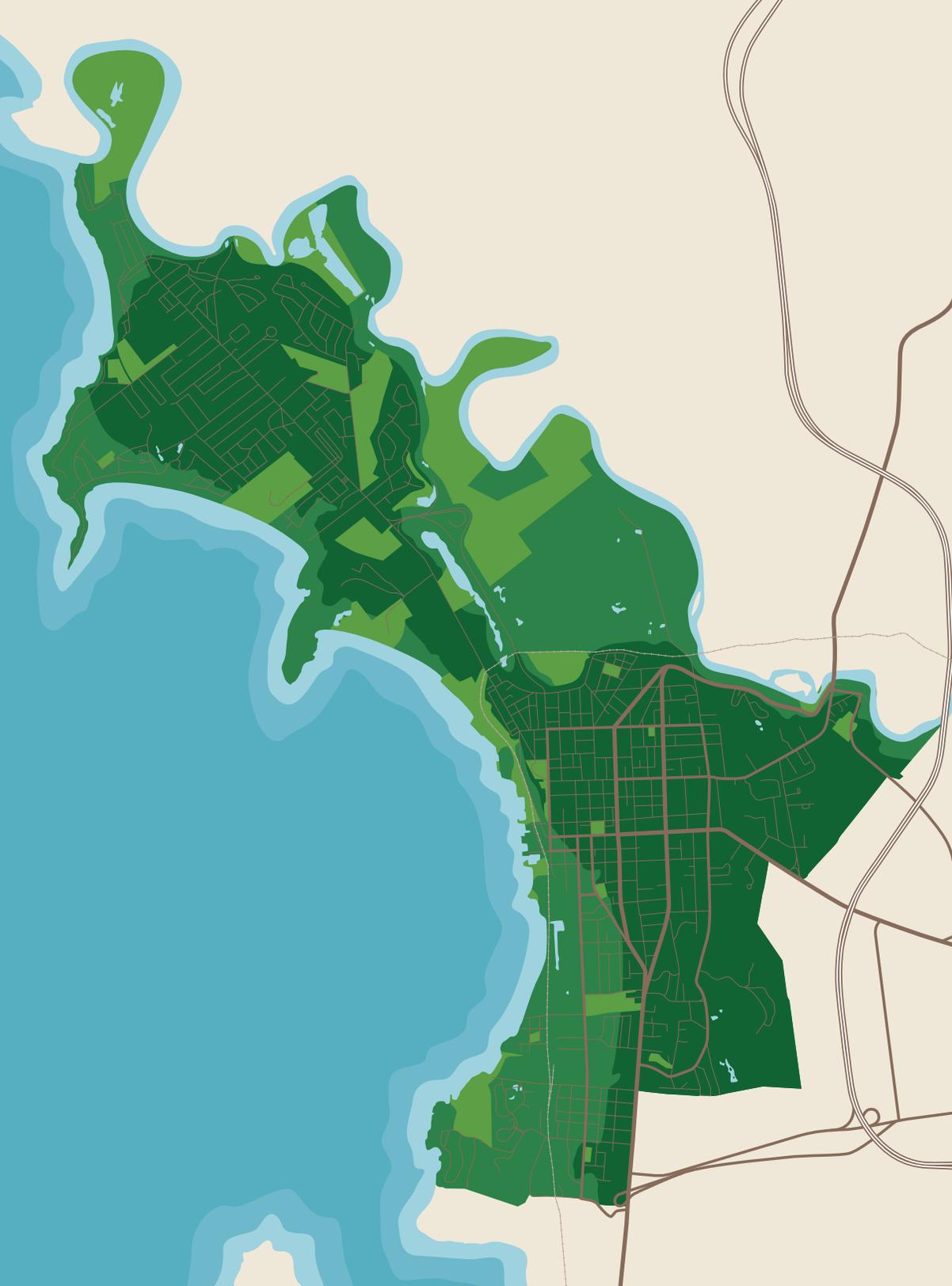
Strategic Initiatives include a listing of recommendations targeted during the next 10 years. The Initiatives are categorized according to short term, midterm and long term timeframes, which provides a review cycle of every three years

### **Implementation Guidelines**

This section lists a series of guidelines for successful implementation including methods of monitoring progress, reporting results, and communication with City leaders, staff members, partners, and the public.



# THE BTV COMMUNITY



## Outreach Efforts

An important element of the Plan included a variety of input processes to ensure resident participation into the future direction of the agency. The input process included public meetings, an open house, a series of focus groups and stakeholder meetings, a statistically valid survey, and online engagement tool.

### Community Survey Results

A statistically valid community survey was administered as part of the project and assessed satisfaction levels, facility use information, program and facility needs, and how well needs are being met. Over 400 households returned the survey, which greatly exceeded the minimum number of surveys required for the analysis. The survey tool is useful in identifying priorities and corresponding resource allocation.

### Online Mapping Tool and Survey

The statistically valid household survey was complemented by the launch of an online mapping tool, which invited community members to weigh in qualitatively on the park system. Community participation in the “MyBurlington” survey remained lower than the household survey, reaching 70 by the end of the project. However, the data received helped to illuminate issues within individual parks and reinforced the strength of the waterfront.

### Focus Groups

Additionally, the Consulting Team met with Burlington staff members in a series of focus groups. The input

and review summary will be useful in determining future programming and facility opportunities, potential partnerships, opportunities for improvement, and challenges the department will face in the next five years.

### Partnerships

This section reviews the department’s significant partners with specific focus on areas needing strengthening. Partnerships are critical to the department’s success. While the department has an excellent reputation for collaboration and partnerships, there is always opportunities for improvement. This is particularly true for ongoing dialogue and relationships with other government providers of parks and recreation in the region.

## Community Input Summary

The Master Plan process included a series of public input methods, including online comments and suggestions by the public, a statistically valid community survey, five focus groups, 12 key leader meetings, community open house, and three public meetings at the start, mid-point and end of the process. In addition, the process included participation in a community bike event as part of the Bike Path Rehabilitation Project and participation in Mornings with Miro meeting, with Mayor Miro Weinberger. The input sessions also included a series of focus groups with Burlington staff members. Furthermore, residents were asked to participate online with comments about the plan.

The following is a summary of all of the feedback generated from the meetings.

### **1. What are examples of organizational strengths that we need to make sure we build on for the development of the Plan?**

Vision – New Departmental leadership is well suited to sustain the organization. Many sessions included consideration of what talents are required in today's environment.

Sensitivity to the diverse needs of Burlington as a community – The citizens of Burlington expressed gratitude for their opportunities (and more than a little frustration at the inability to optimize the assets for everyone's needs).

Good Will and Partnerships with people and (local and regional) organizations – Given the current mood of more demand for services and spending less, the

Department benefits from positive relationship with the community. That said, there is a sense that too much planning and not enough performance is becoming SOP in Burlington.

The local population is passionate about their parks, are active participants in services, and frequent users of the system. Parks and Recreation is in charge of some of Burlington's most iconic and unique features, which are not limited to Oakledge Park, Leddy Beach, North Beach (and Campground), the Burlington Bike Path, Waterfront Park and City Hall Park, but also many other parks as well. The Department offers a diverse set of programs and services attracting all sorts of visitors.

The Department utilizes a collaborative spirit and maintains effective partnerships, which the organization needs to sustain. The reputation also speaks to the community support and behooves the organization to reach back with a robust media presence. There are a number of parks and connecting trails that will need to continue to be maintained due to the walker and cyclist's wear and tear. Funding is the final part of the plan, even though it may or may not be an organizational strength, it needs resolve.

### **2. What do you consider to be the most significant issues facing the Department over the next five years?**

Funding – The best planning in the world will not deliver the resources needed. This topic was discussed in nearly every group.

Priorities – Though many ideas have merit, only a few can be implemented. Transparency (such as Pennies for Parks) is seen as a positive approach to planning what

actions are undertaken.

Effectiveness – Some clear take-aways from the meetings included issues that will impact most of the users of the system such as connecting the bike path north-to-south through downtown including public transportation options to get people to and from resources or resolving issues about how the docks and lake interfaces are managed (some abandoned land issues), etc.

Infrastructure-- Some of the most significant issues mentioned most frequently relate to the inventory of assets, infrastructure of trails and parks, and how to fund improvements. Amenities have been getting a lot of use, a good sign, but need protection and care. Courts and other playing surfaces are also in need of attention and need to be tended properly or updated due to usage.

Diversity--The Department needs to be agile and flexible in being able to plan for increasing diversity of the community. Engaging all aspects of the community may be difficult, but clarity of process within a concrete plan will excite to public.

Other comments include:

- Long-term emphasis on moving in the right direction
- We have orphan parcels that are not managed
- Look outside the city for a more regional approach
- There is no planning process for the urban reserve
- Having an answer for people informing them about when things will happen

**3. What opportunities are there for improvement or areas of weakness the Department needs to strengthen in order to effectively implement the plan in these specific areas?**

Eliminate Analysis Paralysis – Overcome a minor negative reputation of inactivity.

Act Decisively and Communicate Clearly (using means that are convenient for everyone including third-party resources) so that all constituents understand the Department’s priorities.

Continued, Customized Outreach to all parts of the community – Burlington does not see itself as a place that is like other places. The ability to provide feedback that demonstrates sensitivity to this concern would earn many fans and reinforce positive impressions.

What seems to be the motivation for the weaknesses of the Department is congestion, a congestion of people and ideas. Communication then is important with the community, as is the relationship’s with schools and public works.

Accessibility and space have become an issue; if you plan for more parking it takes up space. There is a lack of accessibility for canoes, kayakers, etc. The parks now become crowded which leads to a lot of responses calling for more open spaces – with of course includes the need for reliable accessibility (ADA) and the amenities of maintenance/garbage/safe-signage and ecological protection. The list of parks with the most room for improvement includes: Leddy Park, City Hall Park, bike paths, Waterfront Park, Arms Park, and boat houses. The Moran Plan is a concern. A concert venue would be nice, centrally located and can house the amenities such as restrooms and water fountains.

There must be cost conscious behavior, but ultimately the general idea is getting people to come, stay, and spend money. Possible new ideas include building a year round regional ice rink, accommodating diversity, a pool, and attending to the new Americans – resettling to an American way of life. Other general themes include:

- We try to find the perfect plan and we end up not doing anything
- Repeatedly told things will happen, but they don't
- The Department is too busy, perhaps that is the scope of the operation
- They need to learn how to say no and have a priority list that governs those decisions (responding to squeaky wheels vs. what's good for the whole)
- There are many people who are willing to pitch in. (Local Motion) Harnessing this power is an opportunity

Beyond the major themes of parks, open space, amenities, the waterfront, facilities are more specific weakness to address:

- Pennies for Parks is an indication that projects are appropriately developed based on the needs of the population
- Fuel Depot off Oak Ledge Park creates disjointed green corridor
- Wait list is 10 years for a slip
- Scholarships for up to 50% off, but it's complex and to qualify and register
- World refugee day celebration at Schmanska Park should continue

- Let the market influence what stays on the roster of programs

#### **4. Do you have any suggestions for future programs, facilities, services that currently do not exist?**

Two services that have the most suggestions relate to biking and the waterfront's marina. As trails develop, the public could bike to trails instead of driving and then biking on trails, linking all the parks. Create solutions to reduce parking, as cars take up space. Give that space to the people especially around the water's edge. Establish more bike stations, possibly even a bike valet.

For parks, establish park programming and in case of emergency have a protocol response. Safety is a concern, with suggestions of placing food/water in parks, plus easier accessibility with regards to ADA and trails. Accessibility too is important for the waterfront's marina as respondents wish to attract more boats to the dock.

Also receiving attention are the open spaces. They have both the potential to be a revenue generator (solar field, sledding hill) but could also be a home to 'sketchy' characters. Suggested as well is to create open spaces that are more public with community gardens, a warming shelter and winter village. Better signage and connect with public works for storm water management would be helpful. Think flexibly with regards to the new Americans.

Lastly, new sustainable sources of funding should be explored to ensure the ability to maintain and upgrade infrastructure and amenities in the future. Diversification of revenue streams would help bring

stable funding for year-over-year improvements to Parks and Recreation managed spaces.

- Grilling facilities need upgrading
- Pond hockey tournaments, Broomball, Curling tournament using milk carton, disc golf
- Cyclecross
- Leddy parking lot (a huge underused space in a great location)

**5. Any ideas how the Department can strengthen or build new partnerships within the City or regionally?**

With many ideas for strengthening and building partnerships, schools comes up on top as the one most mentioned as an opportunity be it parks as outdoor labs for scientific study, or creating a student run community or finally, teaming with the YES program. The second most common responses relates to sponsors and commercial ventures, which for some may have an unwelcome influence but some have a 20-year history with certain sponsor/volunteers. Key Bank is also a long-standing sponsor. Continue sharing common vendors.

To maintain and obtain safe, manicured trails/bike paths teaming up with UVM ensures the path's safety. Other partnerships include: InnerVale is a key connector, work alongside private clubs, friends groups, AARP and involvement with a regional health initiative. Here are possible partnerships and other thoughts:

- My relationship (Fish and Wildlife) with the City is good; we want to provide better access; the city is improving this, but we want to focus on North 40 for boat access
- Leave-no-trace sensibility and accountability, public health

community

- Non-profits - Local Motion, Skate companies could give contributions
- Enable access to lake as a "trade" with other regions (you can use our parks, we can use your golf courses?)
- "Velo vert" puts the BVT paths to shame (it is a rails to trails project) Canadian Park System is highly regarded
- Association of Africans living in Vermont, Vermont refugee resettlement program
- Dog walker volunteer brigade
- Agricultural land, Campground and fires
- Licensing for food trucks at Oakledge Park on weekends or concessions at little league games
- Accessibility group looking at issues particularly around parks
- Encourage structured opportunities to ski
- Terrain park in the winter; maybe private partners
- We need more things to do in the winter time
- Sponsor interns working with the department for marketing support

**6. Do you have any ideas for improvement in the Department's environmental stewardship, sustainable practices?**

Create more pocket parks and an emerald necklace; create connectivity for trails, habitats and parks. Find out ways to lessen energy bills-lifecycle of design is important to consider. A great opportunity is composting as a way to deal with waste in parks, but what to do with filter storm water, runoff? Mowing practices and treatment of organic materials are

a concern. Create marketing and public relations strategy to continually put those issues in front. Lastly, as law states, recycling bins must be placed side by side with garbage cans. Other notes:

- Parts of Leddy Park looks like the woods! That is fantastic!
- Access to the rinks could be made more efficient
- One way streets have destroyed how people move around the city
- Parks needs to express better what they do. Pennies for Parks? Why not a dime? Don't they deserve it?
- Straightjacketed by "internal" rules. Paths that are dirt, erosion... paved paths would break "impervious cover" restrictions contribute to the problem
- CIP to identify projects that are cost avoidance or efficiency
- Parks needs a focus...Leddy has so many inefficiencies. We need to look at these issues and should be evaluated
- Better coordination of stewardship program. Groups adopt parks

### **7. How would you assess the Department's efforts in communicating with its residents? Any ideas for improvement? How would you assess the Department's brand and image?**

There appears to be lots of room for improvement with regards to brand and image. Although there is pertinent information on the Website, it may not be easy to find. There needs to be an upgrade and fresher take on communication on the Website. A blog format is recommended allowing for conversation, and survey monkey publicizes progress. The marketing should be inclusive and should solve the ability to reach all parts of the community.

The image has room for improvement. The logo and look appear out of date. As one participant expressed "Graphic design really does matter," so a cohesive signage aesthetic is a specific example of improvement. Because things appear out of date, possibly partner with a marketing firm to freshen up the look of signage/brand/logo. Other notes on communication include:

- Jen Francis wants to reach out to community
- The Department is better at reaching out to the community
- An accessible facility can become obsolete just from steady (not increasing) use
- There should be an online list of amenities and parks
- If neighbors are the volunteers, they have ownership and want to limit use
- Penny for Parks Web page that looks like the bulletin board - show progress, context
- There is no consistency in look between the City and Enjoy Burlington
- People take for granted what they offer, but association isn't always there
- Front Porch Forum is effective
- The marketing (tourism) platforms should be better connected to the larger area - Lake Champlain "Byway"

### **8. One of the hallmarks of a great parks and recreation agencies is their ability to provide access to all. Are there underserved populations we need to make sure we address?**

Remarks regarding the hallmarks of a great park: The more popular and 'must haves' of a great park are the basics such as space, safety, maintenance and

beauty. Expanding on those four hallmarks, the space must be welcoming while not overcrowded with easy accessibility to both community space and private spots. Signage, restrooms and proper infrastructure ensure those safe and welcoming places. Maintenance is important for the health of the ecosystem and botanical diversity of the park. Lastly, beauty is a sought after commodity both in terms of art and architecture and in terms of a sanctuary and mother earth. Most respondents mention walking paths and opportunities for exercise as other hallmarks of a great park system.

An example of the way to go about providing access to all includes a cost model with the two bins being parks and recreation. Also, the organization must protect assets and acquire parkland. More remarks regarding hallmarks and providing access:

- Justification and transparency is critical
- Act 250 is extreme – group is supportive but some language protects residents’ interests over public good (Lake street resident resent Penguin Plunge in their front yards)
- Does the Department/population embrace the entrepreneurial plan to finance programs? Master Plan scares me- start with the customer, consider the assets. How are those two entities brought together?
- Reconsider the marina
- There should be one central park in Burlington – City Hall Park, Waterfront Park

Remarks regarding the under- served populations:

- Some parks are more accessible than others. How can we create strategies that work within the public, including the North End, which has the size of the park serving the right population? Cultural events, schools, and the United Way are all opportunities to serve and include new Americans.

Other respondents include the elderly, public transit users, physically disabled as potentially under-served populations. Also mentioned:

- It is challenging with non-English speakers. The success stories are based on neighborly behavior.
- Those who should be considered may not be in the room. Take the process to “target populations”
- United Way is a good connector
- A possible collaboration right away for plazas, slow streets, etc. (Kids can play in the street.)

**9. Remarks regarding ensuring the plan’s success:**

This is a good time in terms of economy, management, culture shift and opportunity, so the expectations and enthusiasm are high. Due to the excitement for the plan, feedback and an active and transparent plan process are expected for the plan’s success. Parks are for the people; clarity of the to-do list within the concrete plan is owed to them. Also, each park may need mini-neighbor based boards and plans presented park by park. Ultimately, community input is crucial as is the continuous feedback and coordination of funding will ensure the plan’s success. Other comments:

- If the plan is neighborhood-based – do you have special assessments for particular areas?
- All-season parks are needed
- Park issues are their issues, but they are City issues too
- The city has underfunded its building assets
- The arts gets 50% of funding outside of the City
- There will be a number of capital campaigns such as the library

**10. Can you think of any questions I have not covered or any additional information you would like to share?**

- There doesn't seem to be a lot of reaching out to other communities
- Make urban environment cleaner, safer
- Accountability from users – make it your own!
- Run-off is a HUGE problem
- Make the survey methods clear and demonstrate the thought process is right-headed
- Conservation Board does the Open Space Plan – The Master Plan should be more of an action plan to demonstrate priorities for easements, acquisitions, of land for public purpose. (East/West connectivity for example.) Let's see what people want. We have half-cent conservation fund... the city needs to know that the fund is being used in a transparent way. Plan should empower ACTION. There always lots of talk. I want to see stuff happen.
- This Plan is critical to BTV success. I don't hear anything back in terms of keeping the public engaged
- Battery Park is an architectural park
- We are on a long term effort to be more focused on metrics through Citi stats

**Community Survey Results**

Leisure Vision conducted a Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment Survey between August and September of 2013 to help establish usage and satisfaction for current parks and facilities and to determine priorities for the future development of parks and recreation facilities, programs and services within the City of Burlington. The survey was administered by mail and by phone. Leisure Vision worked extensively with City of Burlington staff in the development of the survey

questionnaire. This work allowed the survey to be tailored to issues of strategic importance to effectively plan the future system.

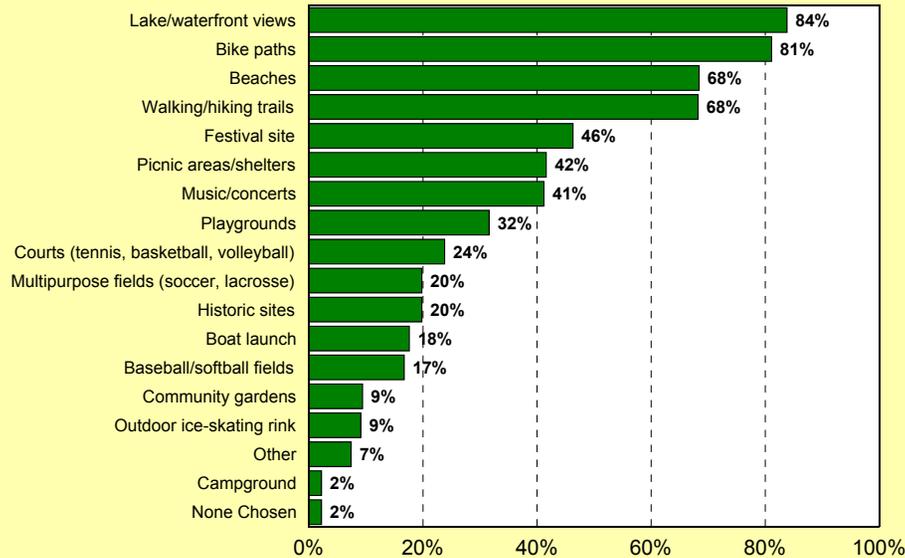
Surveys were mailed to a random sample of 2,000 households in the City of Burlington. The same day the surveys were mailed, each household that was to receive a survey also received an electronic voice message encouraging them to complete the survey. The goal was to obtain a total of at least 400 completed surveys. A total of 551 surveys were completed. The results of the random sample of 551 households have a 95% level of confidence with a precision of at least +/-4.2%. The return rate was 28%. The complete survey results are included in a separate document, complete with all cross tabulation information. The following information includes a brief summary of the results.

According to the survey, households identified Waterfront Park as the most used during the past 12 months at 81%. A close second was Oakledge Park at 69% in which households have used during the past 12 months. Overall, when asked, 83% of respondents rated the physical condition of City of Burlington Parks as either excellent (19%) or good (64%).

A series of questions were asked of Household Respondents regarding programs and services. Based on the sum of respondent's top two choices, the parks and recreation program services that households identified as most important include: times programs are offered (42%), quality of instructors (36%), and location of programs (32%). Of the 23% of households that indicated that they participate in recreation programs, 90% were either very satisfied (42%) or somewhat satisfied (48%) with the location of programs. Eighty-seven percent (87%) were either very

### Q3. Parks and Recreation Facilities of the City of Burlington Respondent Households Have Used Over the Past 12 Months

by percentage of respondents (multiple choices could be made)

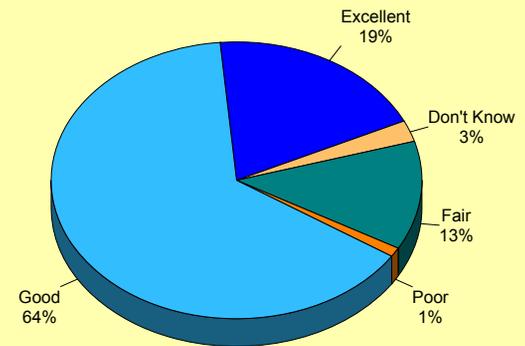


satisfied (44%) or somewhat satisfied (43%) with the safety of programs. Eighty-six percent were either very satisfied (28%) or somewhat satisfied (58%) with the times programs are offered.

When asked about the overall quality of the recreation programs in which households have participated, 32% rated the overall quality as being excellent and 57% rated the quality as good. Households surveyed also identified parks and recreation programs that they have a need for. Sixty-one percent (61%) indicated a need for special events. Other activities included: Outdoor winter recreation (54%), adult fitness and wellness programs (41%), nature programs/environmental education (37%), boating and sailing activities (35%),

### Q3a. How Respondents Rate the Physical Condition of the City of Burlington Parks They Have Visited

by percentage of respondents



and adult continuing education programs (31%).

Special events was also ranked the highest (34%) as a program that respondents participate in the most while outdoor winter recreation (26%) was second and ice-skating/figure skating, boating and sailing activities and youth sports programs were third (11%).

One key to providing quality programming is that it also matches community needs. As part of this survey, citizens were asked how well the facilities and programs meet the community's needs. Facilities play a crucial part in meeting these needs. According to the survey, 88% of households indicated a need for walking and biking trails. Other facilities where there is a significant need indicated were beach areas (75%), large community

parks (68%), and small neighborhood parks (65%). This apparent need is also directly related to the types of facilities that are felt to be the most important to the households surveyed. Of the top four choices, walking and biking trails (54%), beach areas (29%), and small neighborhood parks (26%) were the most important.

Of the programs indicated as meeting the needs, ice skating met the highest percentage of household needs at 75%. Other programs meeting the needs with a high percentage of the community are youth sports (69%), before and after school programs (57%) and youth summer camps (57%). However, unlike the facilities, the programs that are reported to be most important to the households do not correspond with those currently meeting the greatest need. These programs with the greatest “value” are special events (37%), outdoor winter recreation (34%) and adult fitness and wellness (24%).

The overall level of satisfaction of services provided in relation to outdoor facilities was very high. On average, over 78% of the households surveyed were either “very” or “somewhat” satisfied with the number of parks and walking/biking trails along with the maintenance of these parks. When asked for a level of support that respondents would give to improve existing parks and facilities, 87% responded that they would be “very” or “somewhat” supportive. This is not surprising due to the high percentage of satisfaction. There is also a correlation between the level of support to improve the facilities with those facilities that the respondents felt were most important.

Marketing plays an important role in creating awareness of services and amenities. There cannot be an assumption that there is a general knowledge of these

services because they are a part of the community. Sixty-one percent (61%) of the households surveyed indicated they learned about department programs and services from the brochure. Other methods indicated were: word of mouth (52%), newspaper (47%), website (39%) and flyers at facilities (28%). However, when asked what prevents respondents from using department facilities and programs, 29% stated that they do not know what is being offered. Twenty percent (20%) indicated that their particular interest in a program or facility is not offered.

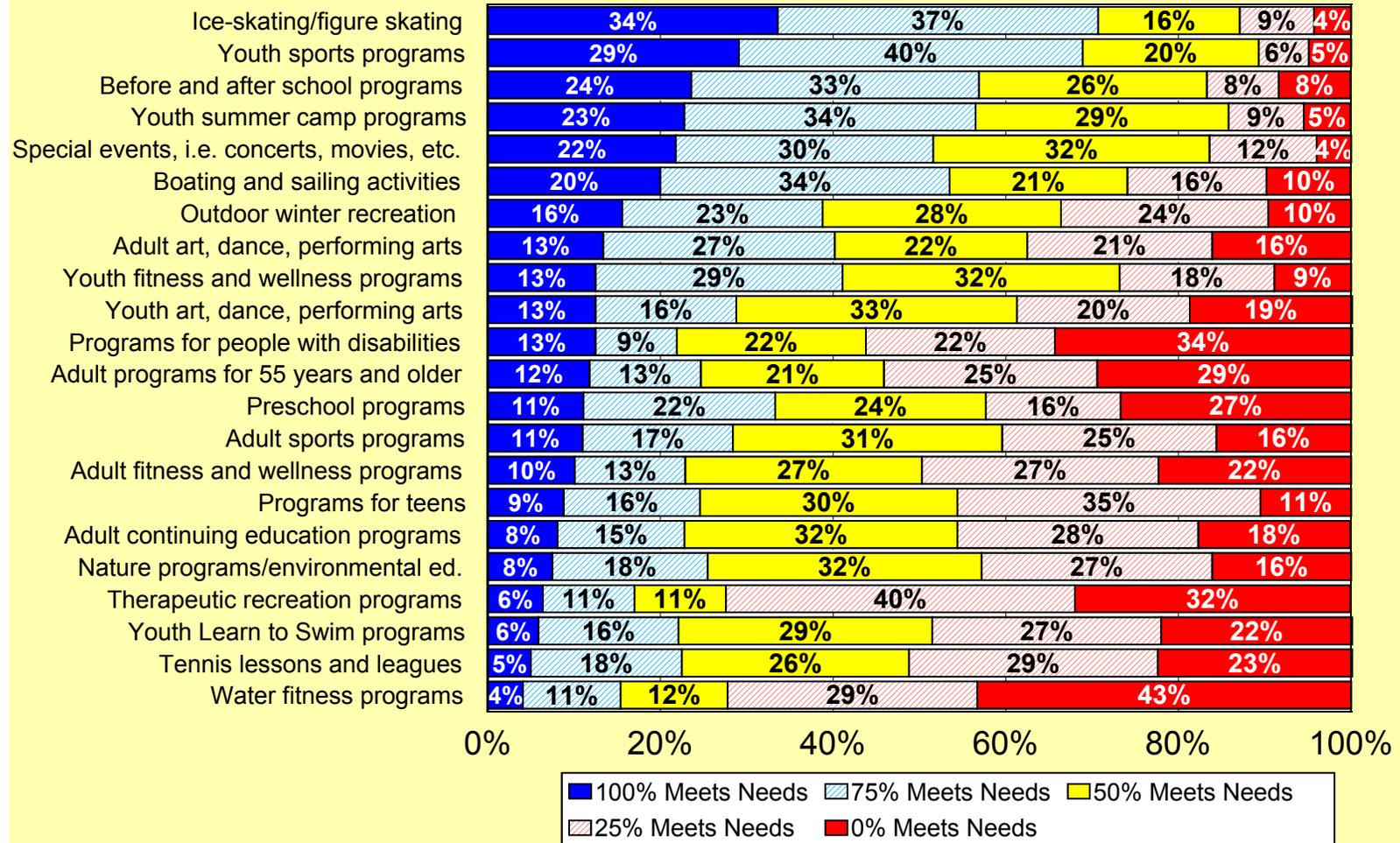
### Partnership Review

One of the elements included in the Master Plan was a review of existing partnerships as well as opportunities for new areas of collaboration. Partnership review included discussion with other City departments, neighboring park and recreation agencies, and the Burlington School District. Beyond discussions of those relationships, the department also has opportunities to pursue public private partnership opportunities as a way of augmenting department resources.

During the public input process, a focus group was held with staff from neighboring parks and recreation agencies to discuss opportunities to working together. Currently, not much collaboration exists, and there is a feeling of duplication of services among agencies. The meeting was attended by staff from the City of Winooski, South Burlington, and the Winooski Valley Park District. The park district includes seven municipalities, including Burlington. At this meeting, the attendees all expressed interest in more fully developing collaborative approaches to the provision of parks and recreation services. They thought a good start would be to simply find out what each agency

# Q9a. How Well Parks and Recreation Programs Offered by the City of Burlington Meet the Needs of Respondent Households

by percentage of respondents (with a need for facilities)



is doing as well as having ongoing group meetings to share program collaboration ideas.

At this time, agencies have a difficult time fielding enough teams for athletic leagues. This was an obvious area for collaboration. Winooski has a need to find basketball courts for youth leagues. There was also discussion about the possibility of teaming together for water based events such as kayaking.

Currently, the department is involved in partnerships with Safe Routes to School, and Local Motion in relation to Go for Gold and Bike Path connections research. These relationships are working well.

The department currently works closely with other City departments, including the Department of Public Works and Burlington Economic Development. Strengthening these relationships may result in greater efficiency and effectiveness as well as improve Parks, Recreation and Waterfront Department's contribution to the City's economic development.

Another significant partnership that exists currently and has potential for further development includes the Burlington School District. The City is currently collaborating on cost control measures, which will include the Parks, Recreation, and Waterfront Department. Indoor recreation space is a need for the community. As a result, there may be opportunities to consider recreation needs in future school renovations. In addition, there may also be opportunities with private schools, colleges, and the University of Vermont for joint approaches to program spaces.

The Burlington Parks, Recreation and Waterfront Department also desires to develop more Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs). These cover the gambit from

"outsourcing", to traditional public-private partnerships, to privatization. In each case, this is a means to apply the resources of the private-sector in meeting the needs of the public.

- Outsourcing is the contracting by a public agency for the completion of government functions by a private-sector organization. The government agency provides payment for services and/or facilities through government funds for the execution of a function that may have previously been done by the agency itself.
- Privatization is the sale of a government owned asset to the private-sector, for private operation of a function that might have previously been done by the public-sector.
- Public-private partnerships are a means of utilizing private-sector resources in a way that is a blend of outsourcing and privatization. PPPs can involve the design, construction, financing, operation and maintenance of public infrastructure or facilities, or the operation of services, to meet public needs. The objective of a PPP is to provide a more efficient and cost effective means of providing the same or better level of service, at a saving to the public.

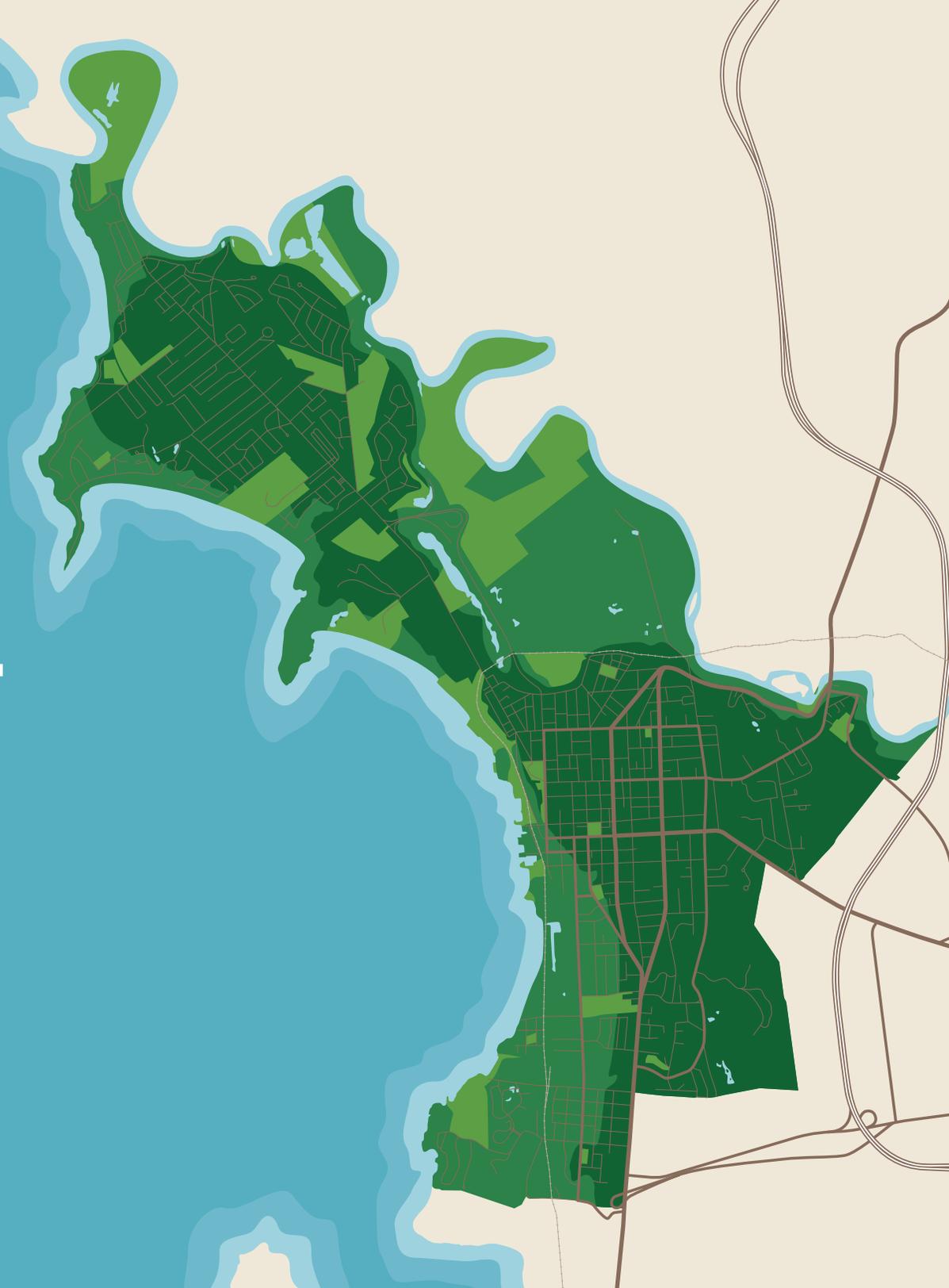
There is tremendous growth in outsourcing, privatization, and PPPs around the country. Today, the average American city contracts out 23 of its 65 basic municipal services to the private-sector.

The department has identified future development that could potentially include public-private partnerships. Possible ideas include City Hall Park, City Hall Park, Blanchard Beach and Blodgett Park.

The department could also create a foundation to augment financial resources. Many agencies use foundations to assist with fund raising for special events, developing capital campaigns for new facilities, or creating scholarship programs for economically underprivileged families.



# DEMOGRAPHIC & TREND REPORT



# Demographics and Trends

The following report is a culmination of information derived from Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI), The Sports and Fitness Industry Association (SFIA) and Physical Activity Council (PAC). This information compiles results for age, gender, race, ethnicity and household income of Burlington residents and compares the data to state and national statistics. Demographic projections from ESRI give an outlook through 2017. Recreational trends are explored at the local and national levels to direct future planning.

## Methodology

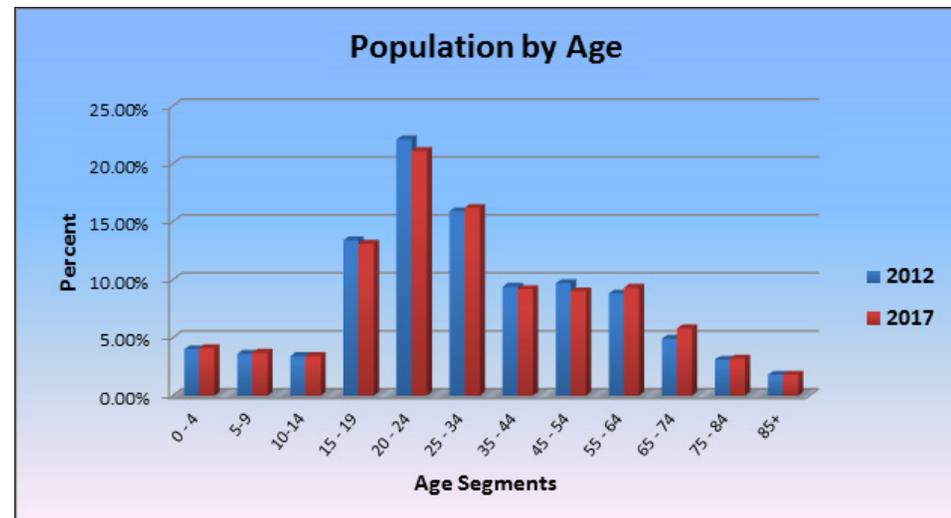
Demographic data used for the analysis was obtained from Environmental Systems Research Institute, Inc. (ESRI), the largest research and development organization dedicated to Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and specializing in population projections and market trends. All data was acquired in October 2013, and reflects actual numbers as reported in the 2010 US Bureau of the Census and demographic projections for 2012 and 2017 as estimated by ESRI. The City of Burlington was utilized as the demographic analysis boundary.

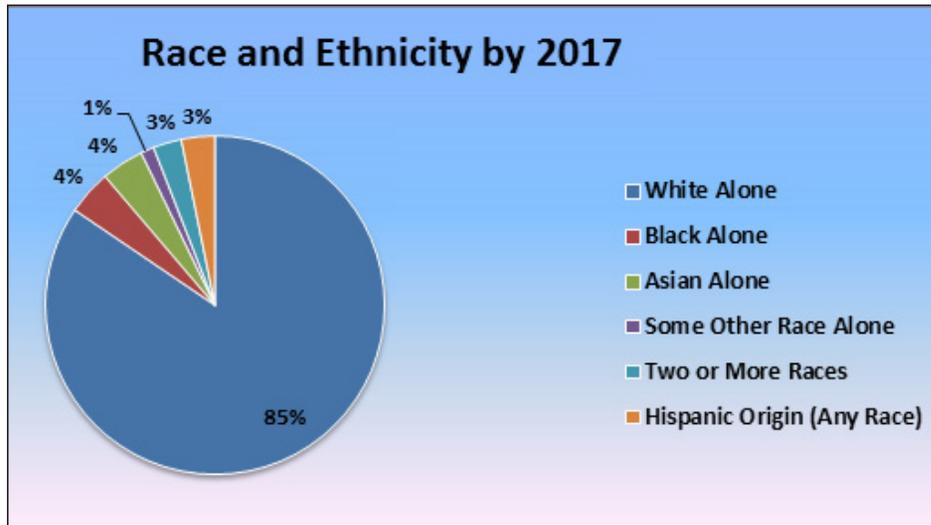
## Age Segment and Gender

Age segments appear to remain relatively constant with a slight decrease in ages 15-24 and 35-44 and the greatest decrease occurring for ages 45-54 by 2017. The greatest increases by 2017 will be ages 65-74, a testament to the aging baby boomer population. From a program and services perspective, this suggests a need to expand services for the active adult population.

Overall, males represent 48.6% of the population and females represent 51.4%. Graph below.

Population by Age	Census 2010		2012		2017	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
0 - 4	1,730	4.1%	1,729	4.0%	1,752	4.1%
5 - 9	1,565	3.7%	1,558	3.6%	1,579	3.7%
10 - 14	1,476	3.5%	1,456	3.4%	1,490	3.4%
15 - 19	5,807	13.7%	5,729	13.4%	5,676	13.1%
20 - 24	9,250	21.8%	9,456	22.1%	9,125	21.1%
25 - 34	6,666	15.7%	6,787	15.9%	7,002	16.2%
35 - 44	4,096	9.7%	4,001	9.4%	3,992	9.2%
45 - 54	4,248	10.0%	4,133	9.7%	3,898	9.0%
55 - 64	3,593	8.5%	3,760	8.8%	3,997	9.3%
65 - 74	1,948	4.6%	2,081	4.9%	2,515	5.8%
75 - 84	1,317	3.1%	1,316	3.1%	1,386	3.2%
85+	721	1.7%	751	1.8%	782	1.8%





Race and Ethnicity	Census 2010		2012		2017	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
White Alone	37,727	88.9%	37,889	88.6%	37,675	87.2%
Black Alone	1,653	3.9%	1,694	4.0%	1,903	4.4%
American Indian Alone	131	0.3%	139	0.3%	171	0.4%
Asian Alone	1,510	3.6%	1,592	3.7%	1,816	4.2%
Pacific Islander Alone	21	0.0%	36	0.1%	62	0.1%
Some Other Race Alone	273	0.6%	288	0.7%	354	0.8%
Two or More Races	1,102	2.6%	1,119	2.6%	1,213	2.8%
Hispanic Origin (Any Race)	1,144	2.7%	1,196	2.8%	1,412	3.3%

## Race and Ethnicity

Race and ethnicity for Burlington according to the Census 2010 is 88.9% of the population being White, 3.9% of the population Black, 3.6% of the population Asian and the rest of residents are some other race. It is projected that Burlington will continue to maintain its current diversity, with 1.7% reduction for the white population by 2017. Additionally, the Black population is expected to increase from 3.9% to 4.4%, the Asian population from 3.6% to 4.2% and the Hispanic population from 2.7% to 3.3% by 2017. Households and Income

Based on the Census 2010, 16,119 households are in Burlington with an average household size of 2.19 persons. The median age is 26.7 aging to 27.4 through 2017. Of these households, 6,561 were identified as families, representing 40.6% of the total households. According to the demographic and income profile, households identified as families will increase slightly by 2017. The median household income is currently estimated as \$37,333 and is projected to increase to \$43,828 by 2017. Area, State and National Comparison

The Burlington, Vermont area rate of population growth is projected to be slightly higher than the state average, but remains significantly lower than national average. The number of households, families and homeowners

**DEMOGRAPHIC AND TREND REPORT**

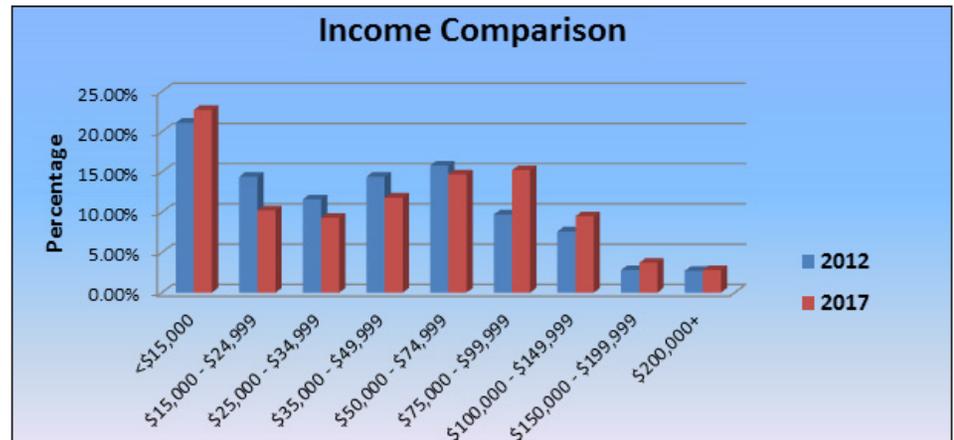
has also increased; however, is still lower than national averages. The median household income is projected to increase greatly in the \$75,000 to \$99,999 segment. Most other income segments will see a slight decline by 2017. Burlington's median household income remains significantly lower than the national and state median. This can be viewed in the chart below.

- Burlington median household income: \$37,333
- National median household income: \$53,058
- Vermont median household income: \$54,804 (2011)  
Recreation Trends

**Local Recreation Trends**

Summary	Census 2010	2012	2017
Population	42,417	42,757	43,194
Households	16,119	16,190	16,608
Families	6,561	6,520	6,538
Average Household Size	2.19	2.20	2.18
Owner Occupied Housing Units	6,553	6,649	6,803
Renter Occupied Housing Units	9,566	9,541	9,805
Median Age	26.7	26.8	27.4

Households by Income	2012		2017	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
<\$15,000	3,417	21.1%	3,765	22.7%
\$15,000 - \$24,999	2,324	14.4%	1,700	10.2%
\$25,000 - \$34,999	1,873	11.6%	1,544	9.3%
\$35,000 - \$49,999	2,325	14.4%	1,965	11.8%
\$50,000 - \$74,999	2,559	15.8%	2,434	14.7%
\$75,000 - \$99,999	1,564	9.7%	2,531	15.2%
\$100,000 - \$149,999	1,228	7.6%	1,584	9.5%
\$150,000 - \$199,999	460	2.8%	613	3.7%
\$200,000+	432	2.7%	464	2.8%



Recreation trends information was also derived from ESRI and is a report entitled Sports and Leisure Market Potential. These data are based upon national propensities to use various products and services, applied to the local demographic composition of the City of Burlington area. Usage data were collected by Growth for Knowledge Mediamark Research and Intelligence,LLC. (GfK MRI) in a nationally representative survey of U.S. households. MPI (Market Potential Index) measures the relative likelihood of the

adults in the specified area to exhibit certain consumer behavior or purchasing patterns compared to the U.S. An MPI of 100 represents the U.S. average.

Based on projected population, the top recreational activities the Burlington residents will participate in (based on percentage of population as well as above the national average with an MPI over 100) include the activities listed in the following two charts:

### National Trends

<b>Product/Consumer Behavior</b>	<b>Expected Number of Adults</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>MPI</b>
Participated in roller skating	722	1.9%	94
Participated in snowboarding	1,695	4.6%	236
Participated in soccer	2,472	6.7%	154
Participated in softball	1,817	4.9%	125
Participated in swimming	6,892	18.6%	96
Participated in target shooting	1,394	3.8%	98
Participated in tennis	1,937	5.2%	122
Participated in volleyball	1,569	4.2%	121
Participated in walking for exercise	9,184	24.8%	83
Participated in weight lifting	5,211	14.0%	119
Participated in yoga	2,329	6.3%	107
Spent on high end sports/recreation equipment/12 mo: <\$250	2,176	5.9%	132
Spent on high end sports/recreation equipment/12 mo: \$250+	1,584	4.3%	110
Attend sports event: auto racing (NASCAR)	2,911	7.8%	108
Attend sports event: auto racing (not NASCAR)	2,433	6.6%	104
Attend sports event: baseball game	5,961	16.1%	109

<b>Product/Consumer Behavior</b>	<b>Expected Number of Adults</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>MPI</b>
Participated in aerobics	4,299	11.6%	116
Participated in archery	1,496	4.0%	155
Participated in backpacking/hiking	4,430	11.9%	126
Participated in baseball	2,718	7.3%	141
Participated in basketball	5,121	13.8%	147
Participated in bicycling (mountain)	1,481	4.0%	108
Participated in bicycling (road)	4,577	12.3%	127
Participated in boating (power)	2,468	6.7%	109
Participated in bowling	5,267	14.2%	122
Participated in canoeing/kayaking	2,054	5.5%	116
Participated in downhill skiing	1,119	3.0%	103
Participated in fishing (fresh water)	4,986	13.4%	104
Participated in fishing (salt water)	1,579	4.3%	93
Participated in football	3,792	10.2%	164
Participated in Frisbee	3,049	8.2%	150
Participated in golf	3,734	10.1%	98
Play golf < once a month	1,709	4.6%	116
Play golf 1+ times a month	1,609	4.3%	81
Participated in horseback riding	1,346	3.6%	119
Participated in hunting with rifle	1,712	4.6%	97
Participated in hunting with shotgun	2,011	5.4%	130
Participated in ice skating	1,210	3.3%	112
Participated in jogging/running	4,883	13.2%	123
Participated in martial arts	1,091	2.9%	209
Participated in motorcycling	1,198	3.2%	89
Participated in Pilates	1,382	3.7%	112

Additional recreational trends were derived from the Sports, Fitness & Recreational Activities Topline Participation Report (2012) developed by The Sports & Fitness Industry Association, a top national researcher in the sports and fitness industry. The data reflecting the national trends stem from a statistically valid survey which over 38,000 online responses were compiled and analyzed. These surveys were then weighted against a total population of 283,753,000 ages 6 and up. The following variables were used: gender, age, income, household size, region, and population density.

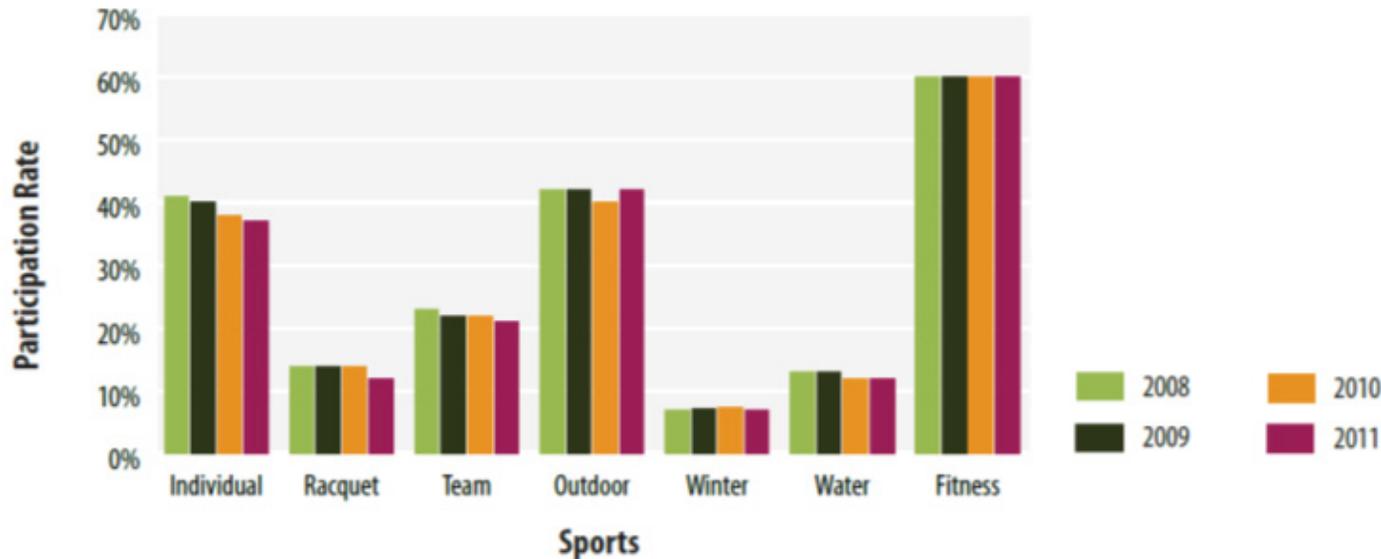
Overall, many activities are experiencing a slow increase and/or decline due to the recent poor economic conditions, including those that have a cyclical pattern. However, a few activities have made a foothold and are increasing in participation. In general, the survey reveals the following:

- Fitness sports remains the most popular physical activity and includes activities such as yoga, boot camp-style training,

and other classes

- Increased participation among a number of key sports and activities
- An expressed desire to increase the amount of travel done for participation in favorite sports and recreational activities
- Aspirational activities show a desire and demand to participate in the coming year
- An expressed desire to participate in favorite sports and recreational activities with some areas showing an increase in spending which is encouraging
- Niche sports such as racquet sports shows a slight increase
- Significant opportunities to engage inactive populations in swimming and working out
- Smart phone apps for fitness and nutrition recording

In particular, the categories of participation include individual sports, racquet sports, team sports, outdoor sports, winter sports, water sports and fitness sports.



## DEMOGRAPHIC AND TREND REPORT

As the chart below reveals, individual, team, and winter sports have slightly decreased while water and fitness sports have held steady.

Other categories despite their slight decrease have remained steady and are expected to gain participation with the economy.

The survey reveals that 76% of Americans have participated in some activity in the last four years; however, the general trend is that Americans have become more inactive with the rate of inactivity increasing from 21.5 percent in 2007 to 23.9 percent in 2011. Inactivity increased among young adults aged 18 to 24 and 35 to 54. Conversely, inactivity rates

fell slightly among children ages 6 to 12 from 16.6 percent in 2010 to 16 percent in 2011. This decrease may be a result of efforts towards the fight against childhood obesity. Additionally, for adolescents ages 13 to 17, inactivity fell from 16.7 percent to 16.4 percent which, although modest, is a positive step in the right direction.

Increased spending areas will likely be seen in lessons, instruction, and camps (24.5 percent); individual sports events (23.1 percent); and team sports at school (22.8 percent).

	<b>Spend More</b>	<b>Spend Same</b>	<b>Spend Less</b>
Team Sports at School	22.8%	64.6%	12.6%
Team Sports Outside of School	21.6%	66.3%	12.4%
Travel for Sports and Rec	22.5%	64.2%	13.3%
Lessons, Instruction and Camps	24.5%	62.9%	12.2%
Gym Membership/Fees	20.7%	67.6%	11.7%
Individual Sports Events	23.1%	65.1%	11.3%
Golf Membership/Fees	15.5%	71.4%	13.7%
Tennis Membership/Fees	9.9%	76.2%	12.9%
Winter Sports	17.6%	66.8%	15.5%
Outdoor Recreation	20.7%	70.1%	9.2%
Sports/Rec Clothing	16.5%	69.2%	14.1%
Sports/Rec Footwear	16.4%	70.4%	13.2%
Sports/Rec Equipment	16.0%	66.7%	17.3%

## How to Increase Participation

The Survey revealed that one of the best ways to increase activity and participation later in life is to encourage casual play at the younger ages and in school through Physical Education. The survey points out that an adult who participated in Physical Education while in school is four times more likely to participate in a racquet sport and about three times more likely to participate in team, outdoor, winter and golf. Through the institution of more opportunities for casual play, there is strong correlation that it translates the casual play into a core activity later in life.

In particular, the survey examined the difference between Generation X and Generation Y population. “Generation Y (born 1980-1999) are twice as likely to take part in team sports than Generation X (born 1965-1979). Although much is explained by the age difference, the psychological tendency of Generation Y is more positively disposed to team sports than their Generation X predecessors who are more individual in nature. Generation Y are also more social in their interactions in terms of:

- The way they play (gravitating towards team sports)
- The way they exercise (including a tendency to participate in group exercise)
- The way they communicate (Social Networking, Facebook, Twitter)

Fitness sports remained the most popular physical activity. The participation rate has held steady at 60% over the last 4 years. There are also opportunities to engage the inactive populations. Swimming ranks as a popular “aspirational sport” for inactive participants ages 6 to 12 and 45 and older. Working out with weights and fitness machines are the top “aspirational

sports” for inactive participants ages 13 to 44.

The economy has also had a slight impact on sports and recreation spending. While many active people are still not spending money on sports and recreation, more people spent the same amount or increased spending, rather than spending less.

In order to increase participation, knowing the trends and what various users groups are interested in participating is crucial. Significant changes in specific activities (both increases and decreases) over the past 2 years are summarized and listed below. This data is extracted directly from the PAC study, 2012, SGMA Participation Topline Report © 2012 SGMA Research.

### Team Sports

Over the last 2 years, there has been a slight rebound in the traditional team sports area. These include decreases in negative growth in baseball (+2%), football (+12%), softball (+31%) and wrestling (+4%). Trending growth in the newer more evolving transplant sports like Lacrosse continue to grow at significant rates.

Baseball. . . . .	-6.0%
Basketball. . . . .	-1.4%
Football. . . . .	-4.0%
Ice Hockey. . . . .	5.6%
Lacrosse. . . . .	29.1%
Roller Hockey. . . . .	-13.3%
Soccer. . . . .	-2.1%
Softball (Fast Pitch). . . . .	-3.1%
Softball (Slow Pitch). . . . .	-14.9%
Wrestling. . . . .	-37.8%

### Fitness

Class based fitness and exercise programs like Zumba continue to drive positive participation performance for these types of fitness activities. Many agencies around the country have moved these classes outside and are using parks as programming space. Several systems have also advertised the availability of park space for contractual instructors to use for various class activities.

Another recent trend includes “functional fitness” as reported in the April 22, 2013 New York Times article Gyms Move from Machines to Fitness Playgrounds. Sandbags, ropes and climbing areas are taking over the floor space as part of a functional fitness movement. Companies such as Lifetime Fitness are removing weight machines and are replacing them with open areas of space for people to use as more natural strength training, rather than being locked in a machine.

“Fun” fitness is a current trend. Exercises like P90x or Insanity has proven that you don’t need a lot of equipment to look and feel good. These types of classes will be growing in popularity at park districts or parks and recreation departments.

Group cycling continues its rapid growth as the younger fitness enthusiasts embrace this high performance group exercise activity as well as program variations to attract the beginner participant are developed. For most age groups, swimming for fitness or weight training are the two most frequently mentioned activities that people indicate they would like to participate in.

While Pilates has shown an incredible 10 year growth trend, the past 2 years have seen a decline in participation. Perhaps participation migrated to Yoga, as participation is up across all levels for the year.

Yoga is more class based while Pilates is more of an individual activity. The Gen Y fitness participants are showing a higher propensity to go with group oriented programs.

Running and Walking for Fitness continue to show strong and consistent growth. Running is up 17% year/year growth.

Aerobics (High Impact).....	23.4%
Aerobics (Low Impact).....	4.1%
Elliptical.....	14.8%
Running/Jogging.....	17.8%
Stationary Cycling (Group).....	29.2%
Treadmill.....	5.7%
Walking for Fitness.....	1.7%
Abdominal Machine.....	-4.9%
Pilates.....	-3.0%
Stretching.....	-4.4%
Free Weights.....	11.3%
Home Gym.....	1.8%
Weight/Resistance Machines.....	1.2%

**Outdoor Sports**

Compared to previous years, outdoors sports have experienced significant increase in participation. BMX has seen the greatest growth with an increase of over 30% in the last two years.

Bicycling - BMX.....	5.4%
Camping.....	-10.1%
Fishing (fresh).....	-4.4%
Target Shooting.....	6.5%

**Individual Sports**

Much like the trends for individual fitness participation, sports are showing significant declines across most levels of participation.

Billiards/Pool.....	20.0%
Golf.....	-5.2%
Martial Arts.....	-24.2%
Roller Skating.....	-18.6%
Scooter Riding.....	-15.7%
Skateboarding.....	-16.7%
Badminton.....	-4.5%
Table Tennis.....	1.7%
Tennis.....	-4.2%

- Thirty-four (34%) of respondents feel walking and biking trails should receive the most attention from the City of Burlington Parks and Recreation Department. This was among the top three choices, lake beaches and areas (41%) and Burlington parks (39%).
- Eighty-six percent (86%) were either “very supportive” (68%) or “somewhat supported” (18%) to develop new walking/biking trails that would connect to existing trails.
- Respondents rated the most important improvement that could be made to the Parks and Recreation System; walking and biking trails (66%).

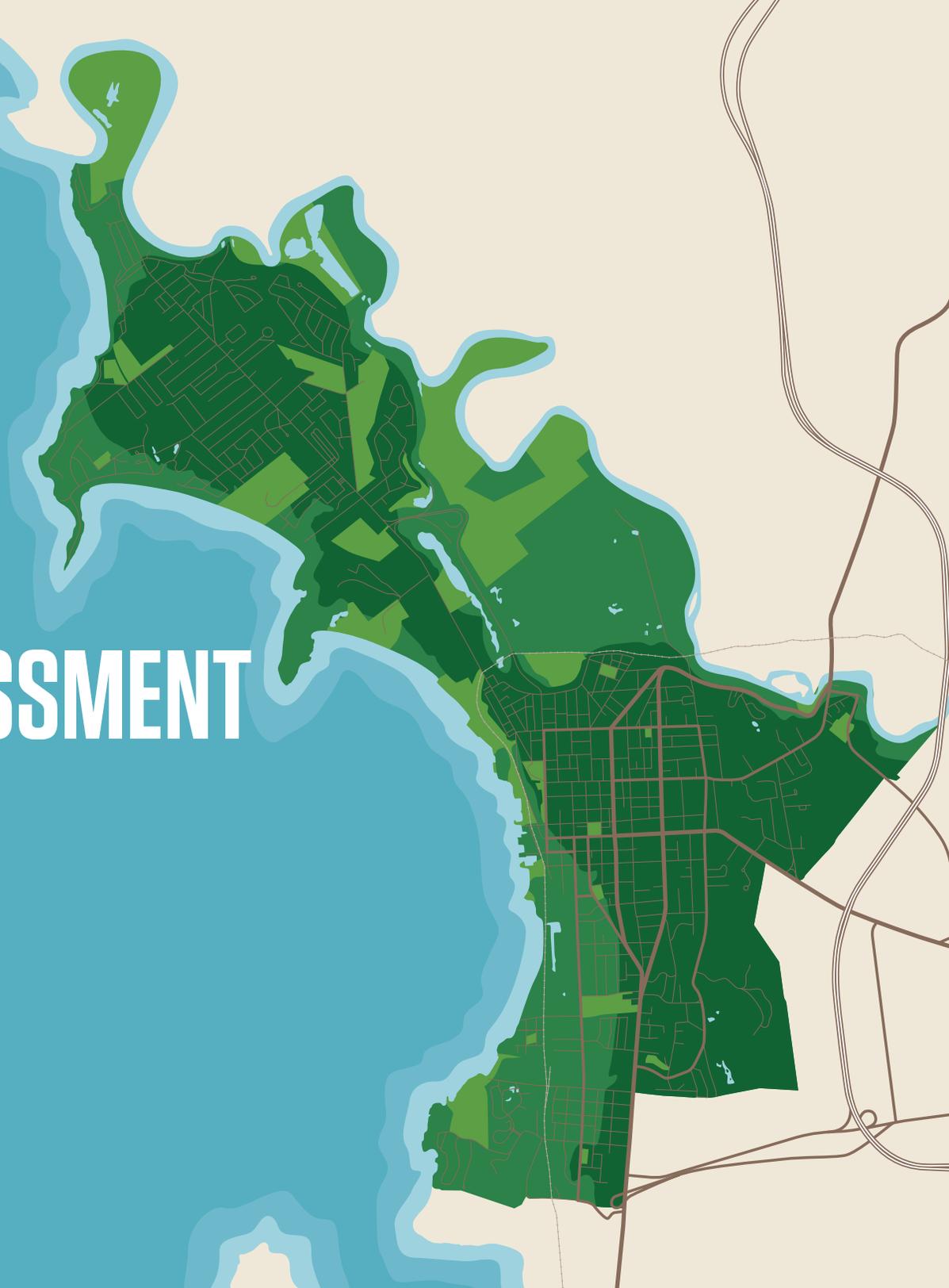
## Survey Results related to Demographic and Trends

A total of 551 surveys were completed for the 2013 Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment Survey. The following questions relate to demographics and trends for the City of Burlington. A number of the questions and respondent answers relate directly to fitness and wellness activities.

- Adult fitness and wellness programs was the number one answer (41%) for recreation programs that respondent households have a need for. This is consistent with local and national trends.
- Staying consistent with local and national trends Adult fitness and wellness programs was rated second (24%) behind Special Events (37%) for recreation programs that the most important to respondent households.
- The most important parks and recreation facility is walking and biking trails.
- Eighty-eight percent (88%) of households indicated a need for walking and biking trails.



# RECREATION PROGRAM ASSESSMENT



## Assessment

This assessment includes an analysis of the Burlington Department of Parks and Recreation’s program and service offerings. The report offers a detailed perspective of recreation programs and events and helps to identify the strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for future program direction. It also assists in identifying core programs, program gaps within the community, and future program offerings for residents based on community input and trends.

Program findings were based on comments from the statistically valid Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment Survey results, public input process, a review of program information, program assessment worksheets completed by staff, and interviews and meetings with the staff. In addition, marketing materials such as the Program Guide and the Website were reviewed.

The content of this section is organized as follows:

- 2013 Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment Survey results relating to programs
- Core Program Identification
- Program Mix
- Program Priority Spreadsheet
- Lifecycle Analysis
- Age Segment Analysis
- Current Program Assessment
- Recreation Best Practices
- Marketing Approaches and Program Guide Review
- Facility Assessment
- Recommendations

### Survey Results for Recreation Programs

A Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment Survey was developed and administered by Leisure Vision during the months of August and September 2013. The survey has significant relevancy to recreation program offerings and future positioning and marketing of programs. Leisure Vision has also compiled a national database of survey results. The database is referenced in several result areas for Burlington. Some of the highlights of the 2013 Survey included:

- The City of Burlington’s Parks and Recreation Department was rated as the number one (68%) provider for parks and recreation programs and facilities. The national average of other communities in the Leisure Vision database is 48% of residents participate/visit programs, services, and/or facilities.
- The satisfaction with overall value offered by the Department of Parks and Recreation (those households expressing somewhat or very satisfied) is 68%. The national average for satisfaction toward value is 61%.
- Twenty-three percent (23%) of households have participated in recreation programs in the last twelve months. The national average is 35%.
- Of the 23% of households that indicated they had participated in recreation programs over the past twelve months, 89% rated the quality of programs as either “excellent” or “good.” The national average is 88%.
- Programs that are most important to households are special events i.e. concerts, movies etc. (37%), outdoor winter recreation (34%), and adult fitness and wellness programs (24%).
- Programs respondent households participate in the most are special events i.e. concerts, movies etc. (34%), outdoor winter recreation (26%), ice skating/figure skating (11%) and youth sports programs (11%).

- In assessing how households find out about programs and facilities, 61% of households learn about programs and activities from the Program Guide, 52% from friends and neighbors and 47% from newspaper articles and advertisements. The national benchmark for awareness in the agency program guides is 54% from a program guide, 41% from friends and neighbors and 39% from newspapers and advertisements.
- In assessing reasons that prevent households from using programs or facilities more often, the top three reasons include: do not know what is being offered (29%), program or facility not offered (20%), and program times are not convenient (19%).

Analyzing these results will help provide suggestions for future programming and/or how to improve upon current program offerings. Realizing who is using services and the reasons why they may not, will also provide invaluable leads to marketing strategies as well as service placement. References to the survey results are noted throughout the following sections of the Recreation Assessment.

### Core Program Identification

The ability to align program offerings according to community need is of vital importance to successfully delivering recreation services. At the same time, it is also important to deliver recreation programs with a consistent level of quality, which results in consistent customer experiences. Core programs are generally offered each year and form the foundation of recreation programs. In assessing the categorization of core programs, many criteria are considered. A list of the criteria includes:

- The program has been provided for a long period of time
- Offered three to four sessions per year or two to three sessions for seasonal programs

- Wide demographic appeal
- Includes 5% or more of recreation budget
- Includes tiered level of skill development
- Requires full-time staff to manage the program area
- Has the ability to help solve a community issue
- High level of customer interface exists
- High partnering capability
- Facilities are designed to support the program
- Evolved as a trend and has resulted in a “must have” program area
- Dominant position in the market place
- Great brand and image of the program, based on the Department’s experience of offering the program over a period of time

Core programs, by definition meet at least the majority of these criteria. The establishment of core programs helps to provide a focus for program offerings. This focus, in turn, creates a sense of discipline for quality control of these program areas and helps to reduce variation of service for the program participants. It must be noted that the designation of non-core programs does not suggest they are unimportant. It just means there may be less focus and fewer programs compared to core programs. A HHC Core Program Assessment is attached as a tool to use in determining future core program areas.

During discussions with staff and reviewing the core programming criteria, the following programs were identified as core program areas:

- Adults/Seniors
- Arena Programs

## RECREATION PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

- Camps at Memorial Auditorium
- Day Camps, Afterschool, Adventure-based
- Events at Memorial
- Special Events
- Youth Athletics and Camps

### Program Mix

The program mix or the distribution of types of programs offered should represent the programming needs of the residents. Therefore, this should be evaluated annually through an assessment process. In addition, the program offerings should include emphasis on the delivery of core programs. In reviewing program offerings listed in the 2013 winter/spring and spring/summer Program Guides, the list of core programs and number of activities offered included:

- Adult/Senior: 50
- Camp: 39 (includes athletic camps)
- Fitness: 15
- Special Events: 17
- Youth Athletics: 12 (does not include athletic camps)
- Youth General: 37 (includes early childhood programs)

### Program Priority Spreadsheet



Program	Q9%	Q9 Rank	Q9a%	Q9a Rank	Q10%	Q10 Rank	Total Rank Score
Adult Fitness and wellness programs	47%	3	76%	7	24%	3	13
Adult continuing education programs	31%	6	78%	3	16%	5	14
Nature programs/environmental ed.	37%	4	75%	9	16%	5	18
Outdoor winter recreation	54%	2	62%	14	34%	2	18
Special events, i.e. concert, movies, etc.	61%	1	48%	17	37%	1	19
Water fitness programs	24%	8	84%	1	8%	13	22
Adult programs for 55 years and older	21%	11	75%	9	12%	7	27
Boating and sailing activities	35%	5	47%	18	18%	4	27
Adult sports programs	24%	8	72%	11	9%	10	29
Tennis lessons and leagues	17%	14	78%	3	7%	15	32
Adult art, dance, performing arts	25%	7	59%	15	9%	10	32
Youth Learn to swim programs	14%	17	78%	3	4%	19	39
Youth sports programs	21%	11	31%	21	12%	7	39
Youth art, dance, performing arts	17%	14	72%	11	7%	15	40
Ice-skating/figure skating	24%	8	29%	22	9%	10	40
Therapeutic recreation programs	13%	18	83%	2	3%	21	41
Youth summer camp programs	19%	13	44%	19	10%	9	41
Programs for teens	12%	19	76%	7	5%	17	43
Programs for people with disabilities	8%	22	77%	6	4%	19	47
Before and after school programs	15%	16	42%	20	8%	13	49
Preschool programs	10%	21	67%	13	5%	17	51
Youth fitness and wellness programs	12%	19	59%	15	3%	21	55

The following chart incorporates survey information into a Program Priority Spreadsheet that identifies program priorities for the Department. Three variables from the Community Survey were used in developing program priorities, as follows:

- Estimated number of households in Burlington that have a need for a recreation program
- Estimated number of households in Burlington whose needs for recreation programs are only being met 50% of less
- Recreation programs and activities that are most important to households

The programs were then ranked according to each of the three variables, and then totaled for a final ranking. The programs are grouped into three categories:

- High priority is represented in green
- Medium priority is yellow
- Low priority is blue

As a result, programming areas such as adult fitness and wellness, adult continuing education, nature and environmental programs, special events, outdoor winter recreation, water fitness programs, and programs for adults 55+ are a high priority for the community. There is significant household need for the program, there is a large percentage of household who feel that need is largely unmet, and the programs were deemed to be either the first, second, third, or fourth most important program.

## Lifecycle Analysis



## RECREATION PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

The program assessment included a lifecycle analysis of the core programs selected for review. This assessment helps to determine if the Burlington Department of Parks and Recreation needs to develop newer and more innovative programs, reposition programs that have been declining, or continue the current mix of lifecycle stages. This assessment was based on staff members' opinions of how their core programs were categorized according to the following areas.

- Introduction Stage (Getting a program off the ground, heavy marketing)
- Growth Stage (Moderate and interested customer base, high demand, not as intense marketing)
- Mature Stage (Steady and reliable performer, but increased competition)
- Decline Stage (Decreased registration)

The percentage distribution of programs according to lifecycle categories includes:

- Introductory programs: 12.9%
- Growth programs: 32.9%
- Mature programs: 44%
- Decline programs: 14.2%

The recommended standard for percentage distribution (according to other agency benchmarks in the Heller & Heller database) is 60% of programs should be in introduction and growth stages, and 40% in the

Program Life Cycle Stages – Adults and Seniors			
<i>Introduction</i>	<i>Growth</i>	<i>Mature</i>	<i>Decline</i>
Getting a program off the ground, heavy marketing	Interested customer base, high demand, not as intense marketing	Steady performer, reliable success	Signs of tailing off, increased competition
<b>Sailing</b>	<b>Senior Mystery Trips</b> <b>Soccer</b> <b>Specialty Classes</b> <b>Tennis &amp; Pickleball</b> <b>Yoga &amp; Fitness</b>	<b>Basketball</b> <b>Table Tennis</b> <b>Volleyball</b> <b>Indoor Soccer</b> <b>American Sign Language</b>	<b>Senior Bus Trips</b>  <b>Golf</b>

Program Life Cycle Stages – Arena Programs			
<i>Introduction</i>	<i>Growth</i>	<i>Mature</i>	<i>Decline</i>
Getting a program off the ground, heavy marketing	Interested customer base, high demand, not as intense marketing	Steady performer, reliable success	Signs of tailing off, increased competition
<b>All Day Specialty Camps</b>		<b>Camps</b> <b>Group Lessons</b> <b>Ice Shows</b>	<b>Competitions</b> <b>Summer Figure Skating School</b>

Program Life Cycle Stages – Camps at Memorial Auditorium			
<i>Introduction</i>	<i>Growth</i>	<i>Mature</i>	<i>Decline</i>
Getting a program off the ground, heavy marketing	Interested customer base, high demand, not as intense marketing	Steady performer, reliable success	Signs of tailing off, increased competition
<b>Future Stars Camp</b>	<b>April Break Camp</b> <b>Afterschool Music Program</b> <b>Circus Camp</b> <b>Summer Rock Camp</b>	<b>Dance Camp</b> <b>February/April Break Camps</b>	

<b>Program Life Cycle Stages – Day Camps, Afterschool, Adventure-based</b>			
<i>Introduction</i>	<i>Growth</i>	<i>Mature</i>	<i>Decline</i>
Getting a program off the ground, heavy marketing	Interested customer base, high demand, not as intense marketing	Steady performer, reliable success	Signs of tailing off, increased competition
<b>Youth Educational Programs</b>  <b>Youth Fitness Programs</b>	<b>Outdoor Adventure Camps</b> <b>Specialty Summer Camps</b>	<b>Champ Camps</b>  <b>Drama Camps</b>  <b>Recreation Nutrition Program</b>  <b>Skiing - Bolton Valley</b>  <b>School Vacation Camps</b>	

<b>Program Life Cycle Stages – Events at Memorial</b>			
<i>Introduction</i>	<i>Growth</i>	<i>Mature</i>	<i>Decline</i>
Getting a program off the ground, heavy marketing	Interested customer base, high demand, not as intense marketing	Steady performer, reliable success	Signs of tailing off, increased competition
<b>7 Days Tech Jam</b>  <b>Annex Art/Work Space</b>  <b>Nightmare Vermont</b>	<b>242 Music Camps</b>  <b>Afterschool Music Programs</b>  <b>Circus Camps</b>  <b>Dance Camps</b>  <b>First Night</b>  <b>Vermont Discover Jazz Fest</b>  <b>Y Camps</b>  <b>Zumbathon</b>	<b>242 Music Events</b>  <b>Basketball Leagues</b>  <b>Large Music Concerts in Main Hall</b>	

**RECREATION PROGRAM ASSESSMENT**

maturity and decline stages. For Burlington, the percentage is 45.8% introduction/growth and 54.2% maturation/decline which are not consistent with the benchmark. As can be seen from the charts above, some program areas such as Arena Programs, Special Events and Youth Athletics and Sports Camps have higher percentages of offerings in the mature and decline stages. The 60/40 split should be reviewed system-wide, but is also a good measure for individual core program areas. According to the results from the 2013 Community Survey, special events programs had a significant household need, yet there were several events designated as mature or declining program.

Program areas in decline should be targeted for repositioning or deletion. Mature programs should be monitored closely in order to prevent decline in registrations. Some agencies, in order to develop accountability for an increased percentage of introductory programs, establish a performance measurement indicating new programs initiated by each staff member. Additionally, it's important to continuously monitor customer expectations and requirements as a way of determining how to reposition programs.

**Age Segment Analysis**

Park and recreation systems should strive for an

<b>Program Life Cycle Stages – Special Events</b>			
<i>Introduction</i>	<i>Growth</i>	<i>Mature</i>	<i>Decline</i>
Getting a program off the ground, heavy marketing	Interested customer base, high demand, not as intense marketing	Steady performer, reliable success	Signs of tailing off, increased competition
	<b>Candy Cane Hunt</b>	<b>Eggstravangaza</b> <b>Kids Day</b> <b>July 3rd Independence Day</b> <b>Pomerleaus Holiday Party</b> <b>Senior Holiday Dinner</b> <b>Senior Picnic</b>	<b>Cardboard Box Parade</b>  <b>Pet Show</b>
<b>Program Life Cycle Stages – Youth Athletics and Sports Camps</b>			
<i>Introduction</i>	<i>Growth</i>	<i>Mature</i>	<i>Decline</i>
Getting a program off the ground, heavy marketing	Interested customer base, high demand, not as intense marketing	Steady performer, reliable success	Signs of tailing off, increased competition
<b>Cheer</b>	<b>Lacrosse</b>  <b>Sailing</b>  <b>Track &amp; Field</b>	<b>Baseball</b>  <b>Basketball</b>  <b>Skateboard</b>  <b>Soccer</b>	<b>Golf</b>  <b>Indoor Soccer</b>  <b>Softball</b>  <b>Tennis</b>

equitable balance of offerings for various age segments, including:

- Youth age 5 and under
- Youth ages 6-12
- Youth ages 13-17
- Adults 18-49
- Adults/Seniors 50 and over

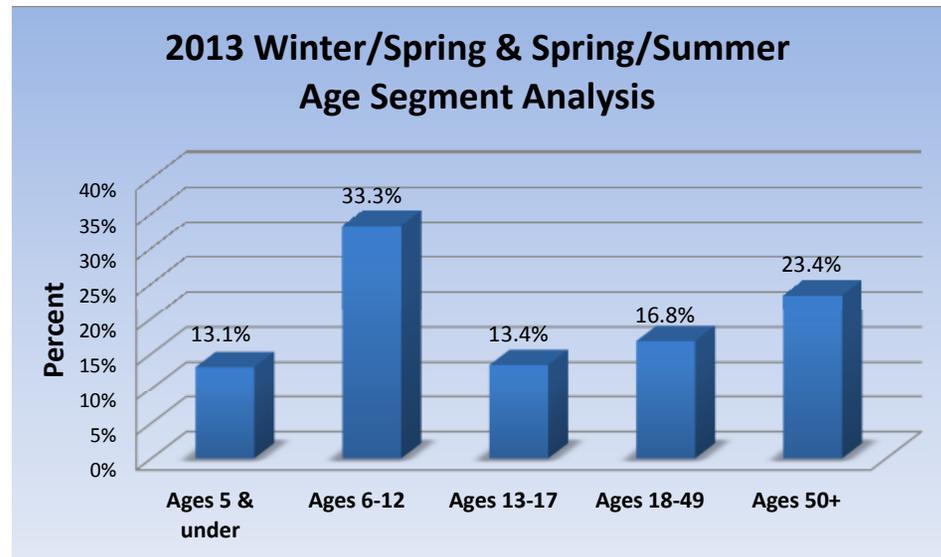
The percentage of program offerings in each age category should closely match community demographics.

The following chart shows the age segment percentages of program offerings. This information was calculated by reviewing the 2013 winter/spring and spring/summer Program Guides and counting the number of programs offered for each segment. Programs and events offered for all ages, such as family special events, were not included in the list. The age distribution of programs is as follows:

- Youth age 5 and under: 38 13.1%
- Youth ages 6-12: 97 33.3%
- Youth ages 13-17: 39 13.4%
- Adults 18-49: 7 16.8%

- Adults/Seniors 50 and over: 68 23.4%

This distribution reflects that programs are most geared toward individuals ages 6-12 with 33.3% of programming in this area. Adding the youth category ages 5 and under increases the total program percentage to 46.4%. Recreation assessments in the Heller and Heller database typically have an average of 70-80% of program offerings geared toward youth 12 and under. Therefore, Burlington has a much better distribution of programs among age groups and should continue to do so.



## Current Program Assessment

### Adults/Seniors

Current national trends show decreasing participation among senior and adult programs. In the last five years, adults are now working longer, spending is more conservative and there are additional less expensive opportunities from competitors for recreation.

A possible solution to increase participation of active adults is to create a task force, or launch group, with residents to help determine program ideas while creating a community connection. Trends and applications in lifestyle programming for active adults include several areas of interest. Findings are categorized in six dimensions of human wellness that influence optimal health, well-being and quality of life. These program areas include: 1) Physical, 2) Social,

3) Intellectual/Creative, 4) Emotional, 5) Vocational and 6) Environmental. Active adults are vitally interested in the social program area, which can include walking and biking clubs. The adult/senior program area already has mostly fitness related programs being offered.

Fitness programs continue to be a nationwide trend. Increasing offerings for fitness programs is recommended due to wellness trends and the ability to reach all age groups. In addition, adult fitness and wellness programs ranked highest in the Program Priority Spreadsheet from the Community Survey. Another growing area for active adults is sports leagues for 45+, 55+ and older. Working cooperatively with surrounding communities can help start up these types of sports leagues. This was mentioned as an opportunity for regional partnership during the input session with neighboring providers of recreation and park services.

A more recent fresh trend is a Website named “meetup.com.” The concept for meetup.com is for individuals to search already formed special-interest groups that “meet up” in the area that is searched. There are currently ninety-six groups within a five-mile radius of the Burlington area. Utilizing this Website may be a tool to build adult programming or increase rental opportunities for Burlington Department of Parks and Recreation.

According to the 2013 Community Survey question that related to parks and recreation programs, specific adult programming or programming that includes adults was listed frequently in the top ten as shown in the graph on the facing page.

### **Fitness**

Fitness and wellness tends to be the most popular type of program across the United States. The age range in fitness programming is 18+. Fitness and wellness programming continue to be a nationwide trend not only for adults, but also children. A wellness program for children is an area for potential growth. There are an increasing number of grant opportunities to assist in programming to help youth become more physically fit.

Increasing offerings in fitness and wellness is recommended due to community need and increased revenue opportunities.

According to the 2013 Community Survey, 38% of households have a need for indoor fitness and exercise facilities. The graph above also shows the importance of fitness activities to Burlington households.

### **Special Events**

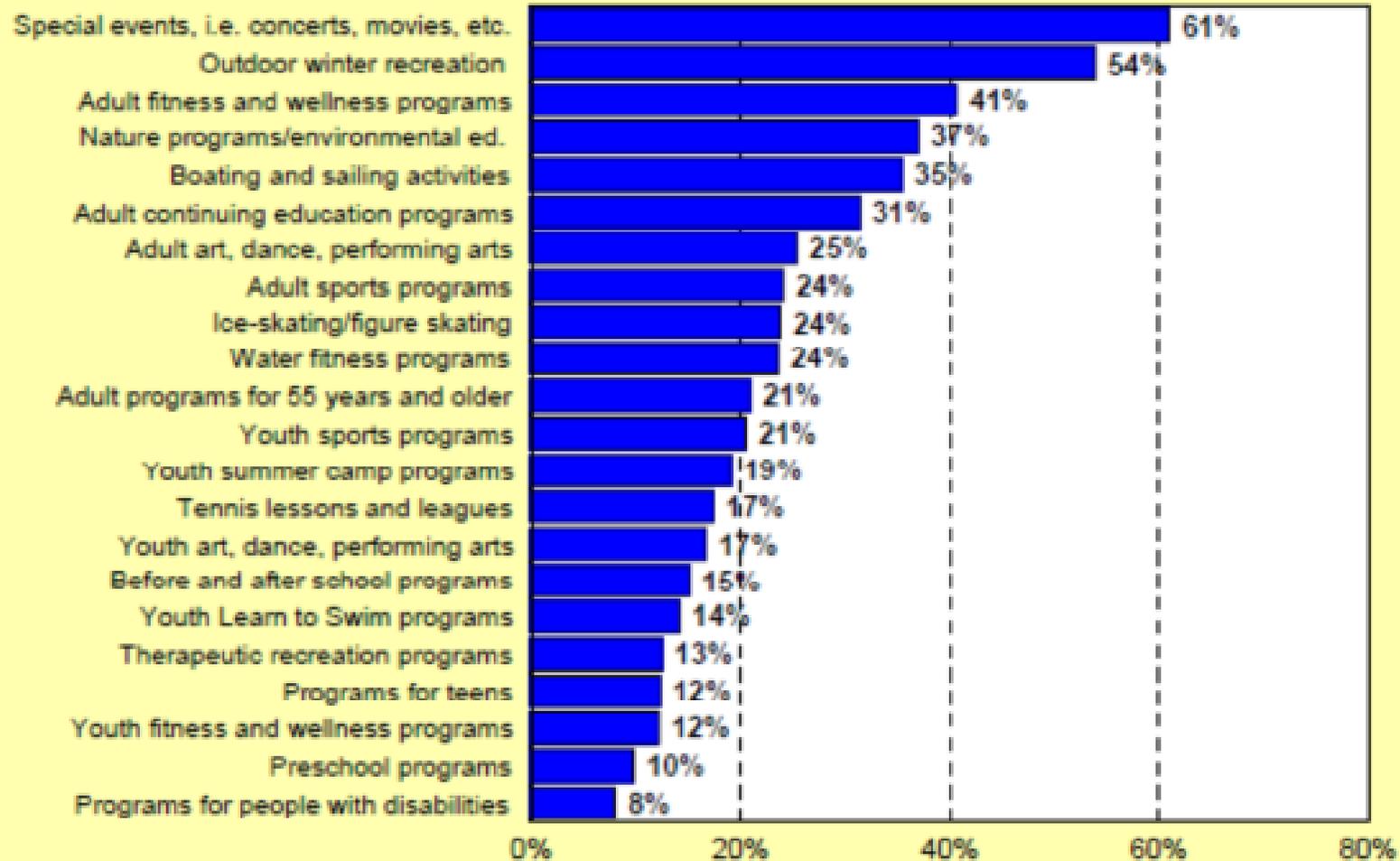
Special events are listed as the number one need among households for parks and programs (graph above). Most of the special events in Burlington were listed as being in the mature or decline stages. Special events are an important offering for the community. Implementing changes and enhancements to events are a way show commitment to a popular service and to build trust from the community. If events are becoming routine and static, forming a task force of residents/staff for community events is a great way to create new ideas.

### **Youth Athletics**

Youth athletic programming is listed as a medium priority in the Program Priority Spreadsheet. Reviewing

## Q9. Respondents Have a Need for the Following Parks and Recreation Programs

by percentage of respondents (multiple choices could be made)



the 2013 winter/spring and spring/summer Program Guides, roughly 7% of programs offered are youth athletics. This figure did not include athletic camps. Eight of the twelve athletic programs listed in the Life Cycle Stages are listed in the mature or decline stages. Any program area in decline should be targeted for repositioning or deletion. Mature programs should be monitored closely in order to prevent decline in registrations. Implementing changes and enhancements to improve this program area is a necessity.

### **Youth General**

Programs in this area reference any program that is not related to athletics, special events or camps for youth. This category represents roughly 21% of programs offered in the 2013 winter/spring and spring/summer Program Guides. Although there is no specific data related to youth general programs as a whole in the 2013 Community Survey, programs listed in various categories in the Program Priority Spreadsheet list this area as a medium or low priority. Examples are before and after school programs, youth art, dance, performing arts, preschool programs and programs for teens.

### **Future programs**

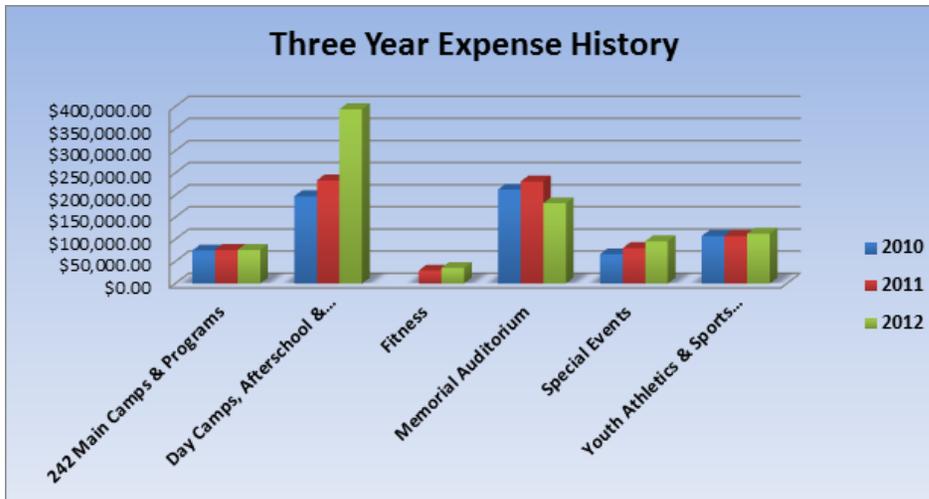
As mentioned earlier in the Program Priority Spreadsheet programming areas such as adult fitness and wellness, adult continuing education, special events, outdoor winter recreation, and nature programming are high priorities for the community. The Department should focus on developing and programming in these key areas. In addition to the importance of special events to the community, these

events experienced an increase in revenue in 2011 and 2012.

Reviewing demographic information, 24.4% of residents are in the age segment 19 and under. This figure is consistent with the need for youth programming in Burlington. Implementing changes and enhancements to current programming are a way show commitment to popular services and to build trust from the community. The need for nature and environmental programs is consistent to findings from other district and department communities who have completed the Leisure Vision Community Survey process. Furthermore, Burlington residents appear to have a heightened interest in sustainable practices and may have an interest in programs that reinforce “going green.”

In reviewing the inventory of program offerings by the Department, there is a need to provide services for persons with disabilities. While this program area did not result in a high need for the program according to the Community Survey, an important need exists for a limited population. In reviewing the inventory of program offerings, there is an absence of programs geared toward individuals with disabilities or mention of inclusion services. There should be a certified individual on staff that oversees this program area. This can be a program area neighboring agencies could share the costs associated with special needs programming in offering programs on a regional basis.

Some trends seen in the region include offering classes outdoors in key park locations. Programs such as yoga are well suited for outdoor locations. Park systems around the country are also experiencing an increase in private contractors using parks for their classes. There



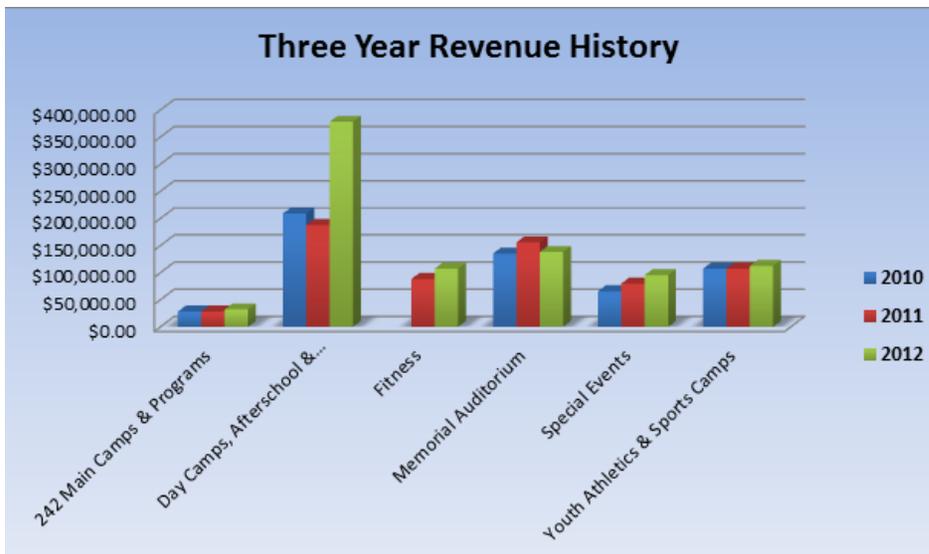
may be opportunities to host these programs in park locations.

Local farming, gardening, and cooking classes are gaining in popularity across the country. Given Burlington's significant interest and long term commitment to local farming, there may also be opportunity for the Department to offer programs related to these areas. Cooking classes are also gaining in popularity around the country.

### Financial Information

To the left are graphs pertaining to three years of financial data given by Burlington Department of Parks and Recreation staff. It was noted that Adult/Senior program financial information are rolled into the budgets of Recreation Coordinators 1 and 2. From the three year revenue history, Day Camps, Afterschool and Adventure-based program revenues have significantly increased from 2011 (101%). Other program areas have either seen a revenue increase or slight decline. From the three year expense history, Day Camps, Afterschool and Adventure-based program expenses have significantly increased from 2011 (69%). Other program areas have either seen an increase in spending or slight decline.

Above is Net Revenue financial informational. Figures in red represent a loss.



## RECREATION PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

	2010	2011	2012
242 Main Camps & Programs	-\$46,233.00	-\$47,486.00	-\$43,700.00
Day Camps, Afterschool & Adventure-based	\$12,000.00	-\$45,000.00	-\$16,000.00
Fitness	n/a	\$58,925.00	\$72,044.00
Memorial Auditorium	-\$77,124.00	-\$74,914.00	-\$43,427.00
Special Events	-\$30,966.00	\$34,550.00	\$45,612.00
Youth Athletics & Sports Camps	-\$37,555.00	-\$40,000.00	-\$42,000.00

### Recreation Program Best Practices

A key to developing consistent services is the use of service and program standards. Several program standards have been put in place, however the majority of these standards deal with the certification of instructors.

Having standards provides a more consistent service environment. As program growth continues, and as staff time permits, additional standards can be put into place throughout the entire recreation program system, such as customer requirements, instructor standards, and program consistency.

In addition to standards, efforts should be made to develop a listing of key customer requirements for core program/membership areas. Key customer requirements are defined as those areas of the program purchasing process that are most important to registrants. For example, an adult softball player's key requirements may include: cost of the league, quality of athletic field maintenance, cleanliness of restrooms, quality of the umpires, game times and location of the facility. Identifying key requirements is vitally important for staff to deliver well in the items most important to the customer.

Key requirements should be identified by customers and can be included as part of an importance/

performance matrix. This determines how important a requirement is to the customer and how the Burlington Department of Parks and Recreation is performing. Examples of standards include:

- The instructor to participant ratios are appropriate for the participant to feel attended to and safely directed
- Instructor must check that all class equipment/supplies are available and room setups are in place prior to start time
- Instructor completes a 30-second site survey to look for potential hazards or safety concerns
- Each instructor will be provided a tool kit or "instructor packet" that includes their class or program roster with phone numbers or email addresses, name tags for participants, customer evaluations to hand out to users, registration forms, a program guide, pertinent park information and emergency phone numbers, thank you cards for the instructor or program supervisor to give to participants at the end of the class, and an introduction sheet of what will be occurring in the program or class, how it will be conducted and what outcomes we hope to achieve. Instructor should also check with participants to make sure roster information is accurate
- Customer feedback methods are in place to seek input from participants on their expectations of the program and the results of their experience. These methods should include pre and/or post evaluations, focus groups, trailer calls, and general program surveys
- Class, program curriculum, or work plans will be prepared

by the instructor before the class or program is to begin and then signed off by the appropriate program supervisor within the recreation division

- A class or program budget will be prepared for each activity and shared with the instructor or supervisor on how class monies are spent. Final budget results will be documented at the end of the program segment and then shared with the supervisor or manager
- The general standard for class cancellation will be three business days before the class begins. This may include class combination
- Holiday hours for facilities must be posted at least eight days ahead

Program registration reports should be reviewed by core program or facility area and set up as cost centers in order to determine overall expense and revenue for the key areas. These reports should be done on a quarterly basis and condensed to a higher level of detail.

Some areas closely track financial performance, while others do not. A robust measurement system generally includes a more comprehensive set of measures, including:

- Program capacity rate (ratio of total maximum enrollments for number of spots filled)
- Number of programs per age segment
- Customer satisfaction toward the registration system
- Facility utilization rate
- Program success rate (or cancellation rate)
- Cost recovery rates by core program area
- Number of new programs offered annually
- Household percentage of program participation

- Percent of programs in introduction and growth stage
- Market penetration by age group
- Customer retention, repurchase intent, and referral

## Marketing Approaches and Program Guide

The Department currently does not have a dedicated person for marketing. It would be helpful for the Department to add resources to have some level of marketing support for the agency. Departments the size of Burlington typically have a full-time dedicated marketing person. Alternatively, there may be an opportunity to utilize interns from the University of Vermont to assist with marketing functions. Ideally, the Department should have an overall marketing plan, along with business plans for major program and facility areas.

### Program Guide

The 2013 winter/spring and 2013 spring/summer Program Guides were reviewed. Below are highlights and suggestions to enhance the most viewed marketing piece the Burlington Parks and Recreation Department uses to communicate services, programs and information to customers. A pdf version is also available on the parks and recreation Website. The current fall/winter Program Guide features one large picturesque photo with three smaller photos on the bottom. This is consistent with the winter/spring and spring/summer guides that were reviewed. The layout of the cover gives the reader a chance to see multiple experiences from users. The cover also includes the parks and recreation department logo and Website address.

Typically the front and back covers are printed in a higher quality paper. These four pages, front, front

inside cover, back inside cover and back, should be utilized to advertise special or community events or important upcoming programs. Currently general information and the scholarship form is featured on the inside covers.

Overall the Program Guide is simple and concise. Changing the font for both the descriptions and headers can be an easy way to add a catchy new look. A fresh look is an enhancement for marketing programs and events. Consolidating and deleting unnecessary white space, can add room for additional photos and information. Cutting down on the number of pages can also save money so the savings can be used to provide a full-color guide.

Program guides are typically the most important marketing technique used by park and recreation agencies. According to national information, 53% of residents in communities across the country find out about programs from their guides. For Burlington residents it is 61%. Creating a virtual or flipbook style guide online, other than the pdf version, would be more visually appealing and easier to read. These types are also more easily available to read on smart phones and tablets. Creating links directly on the virtual style guide where a customer can click and it takes them directly to the online site would help increase online registration.

The Director and Mayor Messages are a great communication channel to highlight upcoming events/ programs and/or summarize the successes of the Parks and Recreation Department and emphasize the benefits of community parks and recreation.

The use of Facebook and Twitter logos let the community know that they can obtain parks and

recreation information via smart phones. This is an important technology tool. The use of UPC code is a nice feature for smart phone users to gain immediate access also.

The strategic placement of information and photos throughout the guide is essential to the overall design. In the winter/spring Program Guide the Burlington Conservation Legacy Program would have fit nicely on the Waterfront, Parks and Facilities page. Promoting opportunities for the community rental facilities is an important revenue source.

Listing the Burlington Festival & Event Schedule is a nice way for the community to plan for upcoming events. An idea would be to include a dashed line around the box and suggest cutting out and placing on a calendar or refrigerator.

The Parks and Facilities Guide is unique. However, the lack of street names may confuse park users and customers.

The spring/summer Program Guide added a modernized font for title headers. Fonts are also an attention-grabber for readers. Changing the font for both the descriptions and headers can be an easy way to add a catchy new look to draw interest. Also in the spring/summer Program Guide, staff relocated code numbers to underneath program titles. The location in the winter/spring guide may have been confusing to customers.

The addition of “new” programs is important for the community and keeps things fresh. Coming up with a catchy logo for “new” programs will help capture the attention of the reader.

The Burlington Bike Path Repair Update is a nice feature. Penny for Parks at Work information is also

great information for residents.

There seems to be plenty of Ice Skating programs to include on its own page. The addition of photos would complement the page.

There is a wide age range for Friday Night Game Nights. This may deter parents from registering. Perhaps split up into separate-aged programs or communicate if ages are broken up.

Below are some additional suggestions to help communicate a consistent message to readers.

- There is no staff directory. Listing staff members provides a sense of open communication and also communicates the appropriate staff members to reach for questions.
- Some resident fees were missing with youth classes. It may be confusing if just one fee is listed.
- Label program locations with headers that read "Offsite Program Locations."
- Using the age segment 18+ to communicate the program age and not 18-99. There were some inconsistencies.
- Include fitness and wellness programs together since they are an active trend locally and nationally.
- Certain classes do not fit the health and wellness category, i.e. Puppy Class, ASL at Miller Center. Make sure classes are placed on appropriate pages.
- Adult and family programs are an odd mixture of programs to be placed together, unless specifically listed in the table of contents.
- Public Skating Sessions and Stick Sessions can be moved to skating page, since they are similar programming.
- In addition to your Photography permission, a suggestion is to also list social media.

- Fees have been added to Robert Miller Page in the spring/summer guide. This provides information so customers are not confused if programs are free.

- In the spring/summer guide on page 18, there is a picture of adults playing tennis on youth page. Age appropriate pictures may help assist in selling a program. A great example is the picture on page 25 of the spring/summer guide for "On Stage Performance." The two patrons look as though they are enjoying the program.

- Create Camp Page (header on page) for all the various camps, not on youth programs, call them cultural arts, athletic, etc.

- Usage of the same photos in each guide should be prevented. An example is the fitness photo on page 22 in the winter/spring guide and page 29 in the spring/summer guide.

- Include the link address with the Facebook icon at least once in the guide.

## Website

Websites are becoming increasingly more important as a marketing tool and identification of brand and image. The 2013 Community Survey reported 39% of households learn about services from the parks and recreation department from the Website. The Program Guide, learning from friends and neighbors and newspaper articles are the three most popular methods of creating awareness.

Opening the Website, the design is simple; however it is crowded with information. The colors used portray an earthy feeling with blues, green and orange. The featured photo with "learn more" is a nice feature. Including scrolling photos would be a great option to promote more parks, facilities and programs.

Along the top are tabs with major categories with

information pertaining to the category when selected. Although the tabs are orange in color, they are on the smaller size to the reader.

A suggestion is to include core program options so the reader does not have to open the pdf Program Guide to view this information. An enhancement for parks and facilities would be to include a “take a tour” video and links to Google maps. Although there currently is a Parks Finder option, users may be more familiar with Google maps.

On the left side in lighter blue are more options for visitors to click on to obtain more information. The current font with white type face is not easily readable. When each individual tab is selected, it takes the reader to a new page with a photo gallery in the middle. This is a great option to give the reader more information through photos. The tabs on the left side remain the same and there are new informational tabs on the right side of the page for readers to select. Navigating through different tabs still keeps the main webpage information available, which offers too much information to the reader.

On the right of the Website is the Calendar. At the time of review the Tracy Lawrence concerts were the only listed events. Utilizing the calendar to its fullest to provide more information will help communication with the community. Listing important program dates, special events, registration dates, etc. are other options.

The mission of the department was on the About Us tab; however, located lower on the page reinforcing the mission is important for the community. Moving the mission up on the page will help.

Although the basic information is presented and

the site user friendly, there are opportunities for improvement. Once the Program Guide has been mailed, the Website another great option as a marketing tool. Technology has given us endless opportunities to promote agencies. A process should be put into place to constantly assess the Website, at least on an annual basis, as this may be the first introduction of Burlington’s Parks and Recreation to new residents and potential users. An assessment should include a review of the following items:

- Accessibility
- Content
- Customer Usage
- Internal Support
- Maintainability

The assessment should also include external customer feedback, commonly through focus groups. In addition to full-time and part-time staff, contractual instructors should review the site and provide feedback and suggestions for areas of improvements.

Over the next few years, the projected number of users using smart phones and tablets to access Websites will increase greatly. In order to maximize outreach to its target market, the development of a WAP (wireless application protocol) enabled Website can be easily viewed by potential users on smart phones or tablets and allow them to make online reservations. The Department has also adapted to the increasing amount of social media sites that are available to all users. All of these allow the community to be more informed and connected to the City. These available opportunities can be a great way to promote and market Burlington Parks and Recreation.

The introduction of all of the social media techniques listed above results in additional staff time required toward marketing

## Facility Assessment

As part of the Recreation Assessment, a Facility Assessment was performed, which includes a listing of indoor programming space. This space includes the Robert Miller Community Center, Memorial Auditorium, the Community Boathouse, and Leddy Ice Arena.

The Robert Miller Community and Recreation Center is a multi-purpose facility that includes:

- Full size gymnasium
- Community room with kitchen
- Conference room
- Kids room
- Art room
- This is the one multi-purpose facility of the Department.

The Center is 22,000 square feet. Of that amount, the Department uses 17,680 square feet as some of the space is leased to other providers of service, including the Sara Holbrook Teen Center.

Previously, the facility included a fitness center, but the school district owned the equipment, which was recently removed from the Center. The fitness room will be converted to a wellness room, which will house programs such as yoga, dance, and other group exercise activities. Additional popular programs and activities of the Center include pickle ball, youth camps, youth gymnastics, youth and adult athletics, and room rentals.

Memorial Auditorium has 22,000 square feet and includes a main floor and stage, a leased basement annex, a loft, and 242 Main. The auditorium has approximately 19,000 square feet of space for the Department as the basement is currently being leased. The Auditorium has been operating since 1928 and offers concerts, dances, exhibitions, banquets, civic engagement meetings, and conventions. 242 Main offers music oriented programs for young adults and teens. This includes programs such as the After School Music Program, Rock Music Camp, and Rock and Roll Vacation. The building is in serious need of improvements. As for future direction of Memorial Auditorium, the Department will need to research the best option for the Auditorium, either leasing, renovating, or selling the building. A partnership opportunity may exist if the decision is made to renovate the building.

The Community Boathouse and Marina operation includes a boathouse facility with a downstairs café and an upstairs primarily used for private rentals such as receptions, meetings, and parties. This is a seasonal facility, operating from mid-May through mid-October. The marina includes boat slips and moorings. Charter boats operate out of the marina.

The Paquette Arena at Leddy Park offers both an Olympic sized and studio sized rinks as well as an upstairs meeting/party room and is 47,000 square feet. The facility offers public skating, skating lessons, private rentals, and hockey. The rink is home to Burlington's Youth hockey organization, Burlington and Colchester boys and girls high school hockey programs, Full stride adult hockey programs and the Champlain Valley Skating Club.

According to the NRPA PRORAGIS database, the average amount of square footage of indoor recreation space is 61,340 square feet for cities of a population of 25,000-75,000 nationwide. This includes multi-purpose space, and not special facilities such as indoor ice. Burlington has about 63% of that amount of indoor multi-purpose space (approximately 39,000 square feet), or a shortage of 22,340 square feet according to the national average. These square footage comparisons do not account for school use by community park and recreation agencies.

Heller and Heller Consulting uses a standard of 2.0 square feet of multi-purpose indoor space for colder climate agencies. According to this standard, Burlington should have 84,694 square feet of space, or an additional 46,000 square feet of indoor space. An additional center could become a regional draw, attracting residents from surrounding towns.

### Recommendations

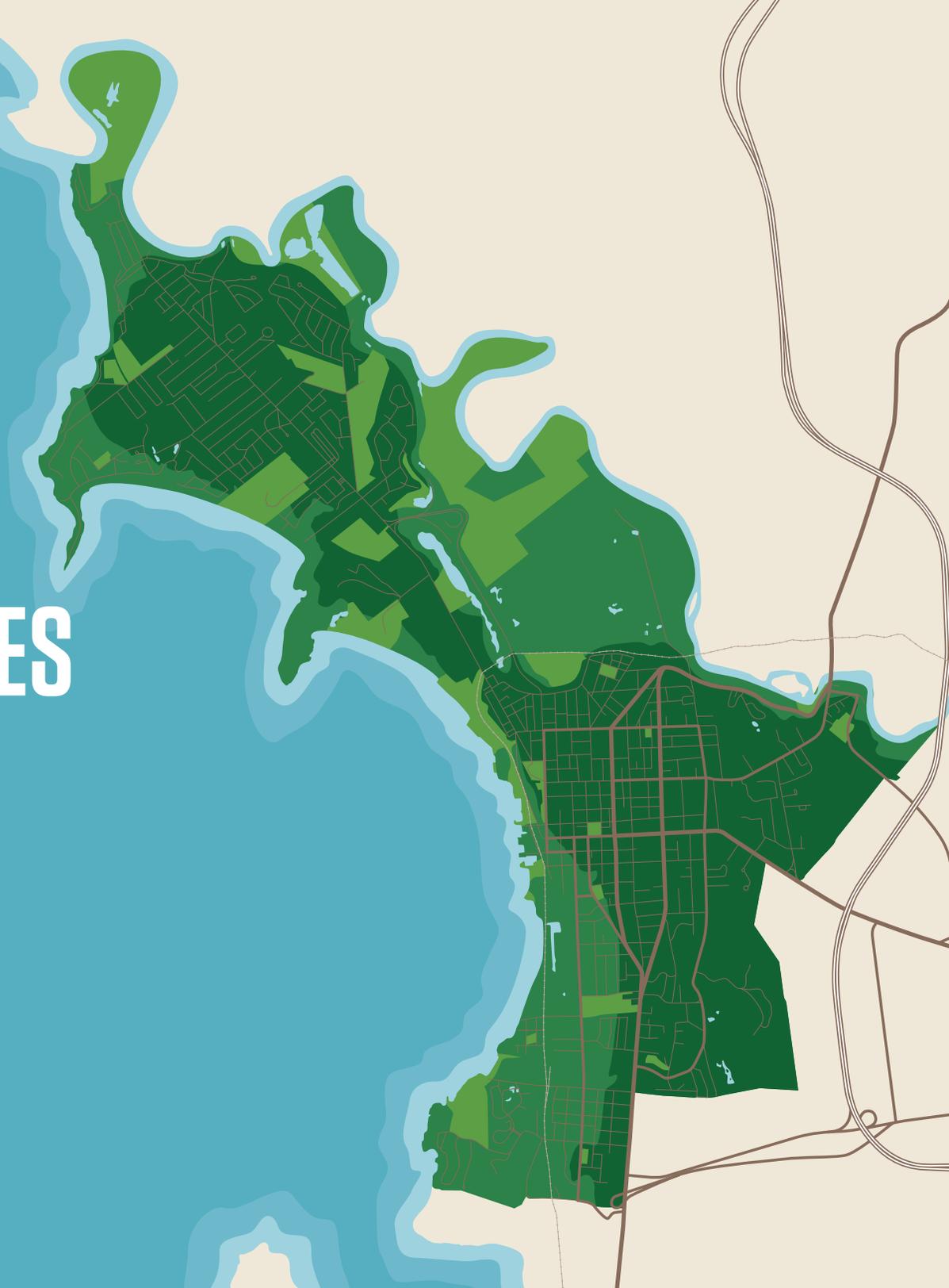
- Review the Program Priority Spreadsheet and prioritize future program offerings accordingly, such as adult fitness and wellness, nature and winter time outdoor programs. Continue to offer programs that may not fit into the high priority category as long as they are continuously successful.
- Develop a Department Marketing Plan, which provides an overview of strategic marketing efforts. This should be supplemented with business plans for individual program and facility areas.
- Review program offerings with neighboring communities on an annual basis to create opportunities for partnerships in program offerings.
- Strengthen marketing by dedicating labor resources to this function. There may be an opportunity to share a marketing person among the various providers of recreation services, as a way of reducing the costs associated with staffing. An alternative is the use of interns.
- A possible solution to increase participation of active adults is to create a task force, or launch group, with residents to help determine program ideas while creating a community connection. Adult programming was listed frequently in the Community Survey (The question: Respondents Have and Need for the Following Parks and Recreation Programs).
- Allocate labor dollars toward special recreation programming, possibly in partnership with other neighboring communities.
- Increasing offerings for fitness programs is recommended due to wellness trends and the ability to reach all age groups. This is also an area that earns revenue for the Department. Another growing area for active adults is sports leagues for 45+, 55+ and older. Working cooperatively with surrounding communities can help start up these types of sports leagues.
- A wellness program for children is an area for potential growth. There are an increasing number of grant opportunities to assist in programming to help youth become more physically fit.
- Special events are an important offering for the community. Implementing changes and enhancements to events are a way show commitment to a popular service and to build trust from the community. If events are becoming routine and static, forming a task force of residents/staff for community events is a great way to create new ideas.
- The front, front inside cover, back inside cover and back page of the Program Guide, should be utilized to advertise special or community events or important upcoming programs since these pages are usually printed in a higher quality paper. Advertisements are more appealing when printed on higher quality paper.
- Creating a virtual or flipbook style program guide online, other than the pdf version, would be more visually appealing and easier to read.
- Creating links directly on the virtual style guide where a

customer can click and it takes them directly to the online site would help increase online registration.

- Including photos for The Howard Chapel, Oakledge Park and North Beach in the Program Guide will help make a first good impression to the potential user. Pictures help sell an experience. Labeling photos as to where it is from can assist in the promotion.
- There is a wide age range for Friday Night Game Nights. This may deter parents from registering. Perhaps split up into separate-aged programs or communicate if ages are broken up.
- Review the Website. Although the basic information is presented and the site user friendly, there are opportunities for improvement. Once the Program Guide has been mailed, the Website another great option as a marketing tool. Technology provides endless opportunities to promote agencies. A process should be put into place to constantly assess the Website, at least on an annual basis, as this may be the first introduction of Burlington's Parks and Recreation to new residents and potential users.
- In order to maximize outreach to its target market, the development of a WAP (wireless application protocol) enabled Website can be easily viewed by potential users on smart phones or tablets and allow them to make online reservations.



# VISIONING THEMES



## Master Plan Vision

In December, 2013, the Consulting Team and Burlington Parks and Recreation Department staff met for a day of visioning to discuss overall Master Plan findings and preliminary discussion of strategic recommendations. The session included:

Review of criteria for great park systems, according to the Trust for Public Land:

- A Clear Expression of Purpose
- Ongoing Planning and Community Involvement
- Sufficient Assets in Land, Staffing, and Equipment to meet the System's Goals
- Equitable Access
- User Satisfaction
- Safety from Physical Hazards and Crime
- Benefits for the City beyond the Boundaries of the Parks

Based on the discussion, strengths of the Burlington system include:

- Quality and size of assets
- Users are satisfied with the system – survey results
- Many visitors and tourists visit the City and Parks and Recreation facilities
- How to measure impact on the region?
- Community involvement
- Staff involvement and commitment to vision

Burlington weaknesses or suggestions for improvement:

- Measure of economic benefit

- Clear exposure of purpose
- Level of service
- Consistency about how things get done, are programmed, are maintained
- Social issues/transient population

The group then discussed major system themes. There was a brainstorm session that resulted in several themes. The themes serve as the over-arching framework for the future vision of the system. These will serve as the major focus areas and positioning of the Department. After discussion and priority ranking, the system themes follow:

- Meeting the Needs
- Inclusive Social Spaces
- Connected Parks and Neighborhoods
- Programming and Operations
- Stewardship and Sustainability

### Meeting the Needs

Burlington is home to approximately 520 acres of City owned and operated parks. This translates to 12.2 acres per thousand residents, which is just above the national standard (12 acres per thousand residents). Most of the City's parkland (55%) is within large regional parks like Oakledge and Leddy. The remaining acreage is in community parks (32%), neighborhood parks (13%) and mini parks (<1%). Ideally, neighborhood parks would represent a larger percentage of the overall parkland (29%), but regional parks like Ethan Allen Park serve double-duty as neighborhood parks by offering amenities like playgrounds. Overall, Burlington has a robust and diverse park system.

Park amenities are the built elements within a park that support various forms of recreation (both active and passive). For many users these are the primary reason they visit parks. It is critical that the parks supply the right number and types of amenities to meet the needs of their users. Additionally, as the demographics of a city change over time (race, age, population, etc) park amenities need to be assessed for their relevance to the changing user groups. Level of Service (LOS) standards provide metrics for this assessment.

The primary gaps in service are in field sports, specifically adult baseball, adult softball and regulation size soccer/football/lacrosse, and indoor recreation such as a fitness center and indoor swimming. Providing additional amenities will require careful planning and design - and should be proactive about anticipating future demographic changes.

There is a deficit of neighborhood park land and a surplus of regional park land. The Open Space Protection Plan suggested the identification of potential pocket parks which provide small shared community spaces that enhance social interaction and create green refuges especially in the Urban Core. There is also a deficit of community parkland.

### Inclusive Social Spaces

The urban park is often seen as a place for residents to step away from city life and reconnect with nature. In Burlington, however, residents have access to a wide range of natural resources surrounding the city. As a result Burlingtonians have a unique relationship to their city parks. Rather than strictly respite from urban life, the parks are also a place to participate in urban life and culture. Among Burlington residents surveyed for this master plan, 64% of respondents requested

additional events like concerts, farmers markets, and festivals. In fact, special events lead the list of park needs among respondents. The City's parks perform a critical role as a social forum for residents. This function should be expanded through careful planning and design to insure that the parks are inclusive to all users.

In order to support additional programming and activity the current and future uses of each park must be understood and vetted with the community. The recent planning for City Hall Park is an excellent example of how a park can be re-envisioned through collaboration and public outreach. A partnership between Burlington City Arts and the Department of Parks and Recreation and Wagner Hodgson Landscape Architecture has generated a vision for the park that foregrounds public art and flexible gathering space. Similar collaborative efforts could help breathe new life into many of the City's underutilized parks.

Among all of Burlington's parks the waterfront parks stand out as the primary social spaces. The waterfront supports large seasonal events, daily tourism, and a great deal of recreational opportunities for both residents and visitors. Among survey respondents, six of the most visited parks were along the lake. Additionally, 41% of respondents felt the beaches and lake areas should receive the most attention.

### Connected Parks and Neighborhoods

As the park needs assessment demonstrated, Burlington has adequate total park acreage, but not all types or neighborhoods are well served. The majority of the city has access to a park within a 10 minute walk, however there is limited access in wards one and six. Moreover, the city's long, linear shape restricts connectivity between the north and south

areas of the city. Both the congestion of downtown and areas of steep topography make connections through downtown difficult. The parks and recreation master plan seeks to better link parks into the existing trail system and build on the existing trails.

The waterfront bike path provides excellent north-south connectivity, connecting into 48 total miles of trails (34 public). During this process, the city was working with VHB Associates on a concurrent study to redesign segments of the waterfront bike trail to improve difficult trail links and amenities. The parks master plan coordinated with this effort, collaborating on a public bike trail ride, "Path to Parks," in October 2013 and studying ways to improve waterfront parks to better link to the bike trail.

### Programming and Operations

Burlington is an active community with a robust recreation and programming component. The city's diversity and changing demographic trends, both locally and nationally should be considered as changes are made to programming and services in coming years.

The household survey demonstrated the importance and success of Burlington's recreation offerings. The City was rated as the number one provider for parks and recreation programs and facilities, with 68% ranking it first (well above the national average of 48%). Additionally, satisfaction is high with 68% of households expressing satisfaction with the offerings and 89% calling them high quality. Given the high use and satisfaction, it is interesting to note, however, that overall participation, at 23%, lags behind the national average. This may demonstrate a possibility to capture greater participation in city recreation programs.

To increase participation and continue satisfaction, the right programs must be tailored to community requests, prioritizing future program offerings accordingly, such as adult fitness and wellness, nature and winter time outdoor programs. Areas such as adult fitness and wellness, adult continuing education, special events, outdoor winter recreation, and nature programming are high priorities for the community. Special events are not only community priorities, but they also experienced an increase in revenue in 2011 and 2012; renovations to the Waterfront Park will increase the efficiency and opportunities to stage large, community events. Detailed recommendations for recreation and programming improvements and priorities are found in the technical report.

Finally, the success of Burlington's recreation or special events program relies on a marketing strategy that ensures people know how to use and attend programs. A new brand has been created for the Parks, Recreation, and Waterfront Department through this process. It should be translated to program guides, and to a better online experience (content, design and mobile devices). Additionally, it is recommended that the department create a marketing plan and dedicate staff resources to this effort.

### Stewardship and Sustainability

Burlington is a city defined by its relationship to water. To the West, Lake Champlain has long been a driver of industry and tourism. To the East, the Winooski River and its floodplain is a rich and productive agricultural and ecological corridor. The city occupies a high ridge line between these two hydrological systems - directing runoff toward both. There are a number of ways a park can help improve the water quality in surrounding

landscapes, including infiltration, retention and purification. Additionally, if there is capacity, parks can intake stormwater from surrounding landscapes. This concept is proposed for as a strategy for downtown Burlington in Plan BTV as the “Green Machine.”

### **City-wide stormwater strategy**

Stormwater management focuses on two metrics: 1) controlling pollutants entering water bodies and groundwater (quality), and 2) controlling the risk of flooding and erosion caused by rapid flow of stormwater through the watershed (quantity). The management priorities for each park will depend on which water body is downstream of the park. The Parks, Recreation and Waterfront Department, in collaboration with the City’s Stormwater Administrator, should develop a map that codes each park based on whether the park is draining to Lake Champlain, the Winooski River, or to a storm sewer.

### **Priorities**

Stormwater management in Parks draining to Lake Champlain should prioritize water quality. The department should work with the City’s Stormwater Administrator to set standards for water quality. Potential water quality measures may include bioswales, erosion control planting, sediment forebays, regrading and in extreme cases some mechanical filters.

Stormwater management in parks draining to the Winooski River or the City’s storm sewer should control for quantity in addition to quality. The department should work with the City’s Stormwater Administrator to set the threshold for allowable stormwater quantity. As an example, Massachusetts regulation requires that

quantity is controlled to pre-development levels for 2, 10, 25 and 100-year design storms. Potential water quantity measures may include reshaping the land to reduce slopes and create retention areas, modifying surface materials to slow overland flow and increase infiltration, reducing catchment area by storing stormwater from building roofs in cisterns or rain barrels, and directing runoff from parking areas toward retention areas.

### **Rethinking lot coverage**

Lot coverage refers the portion of a zoning lot which, when viewed from above, is covered by a building or other impervious surface. Historically, City zoning ordinances have regulated the allowable lot coverage to control the density of development and by default stormwater runoff. In Burlington, parks belong to a zoning district called Recreation/Conservation - Recreation/Greenspace (RCO-RG). Until recently, the maximum lot coverage for this district was 5%, with the intention that parks should not discharge stormwater.

In reality, to provide the basic amenities required of an urban park system, almost all of Burlington’s parks exceed 5% coverage. In January 2014, as proposed by the Department of Parks and Recreation, the City Council Ordinance Committee amended the zoning ordinance for the RCO-RG district effectively increasing the allowable lot coverage for several parks (See table on next page). The parks department is currently conducting a detailed assessment of impervious surface in the City’s parks to help guide future development.

PARK	LOT COVERAGE
Baird Battery Park and Extension Calahan Champlain Street Leddy North Beach and Campground Oakledge Schmanska Smalley Staff Farm	15%
Appletree Lakeside	20%
Waterfront Park	25%
Pomeroy Roosevelt	30%
City Hall Park	35%
Perkins Pier	70%

**Benchmarking lot coverage**

The amended ordinance was based on a benchmarking study of similar parks. The study divided parks by park type:

- Mini parks: These parks serve their immediate neighbors. Each park usually offers a few small amenities such as seating, play equipment and ornamental planting. Lot coverage for similar parks in peer cities range from 25%-75%. Benchmarks include:
  - Pritchard Park 61% 0.4 acres (Asheville, NC)
  - Ira Keller Fountain Park 31% 1 acre (Portland, OR)

- City plazas and squares: These spaces serve a wide constituency. These parks are symbolic centers for the community. They provide seating, flexible gathering spaces, public art, memorials, lighting and infrastructure for performances. Lot coverage for similar parks in peer cities range from 50%-100%. Benchmarks for this park type include:

- City Hall Plaza 98% 8 acres (Boston, MA)
- Santa Fe Plaza 51% 1 acre (Santa Fe, NM)

- Neighborhood parks: These parks provide walkable park amenities for their surrounding neighborhood. These parks typically include lawns, paths, playgrounds, ornamental planting, shade trees, some court sports and occasionally small structures. Lot coverage for similar parks in peer cities range from 10%-50%. Benchmarks included:

- West Austin Park 10% 4 acres (Austin, TX)
- Aston Park 40% 8 acres (Asheville, NC)

- Community parks: These parks provide amenities for multiple neighborhoods. Visitors walk and drive to these parks. Community parks offer parking, lawns, paths, field sports, court sports, special sports facilities, community gardens, performance spaces, a range of natural and ornamental vegetation, pavilions, vending, restrooms and other structures. Lot coverage for similar parks in peer cities range from 15%-30%. Benchmarks included:

- New Haven Green 22% 15 acres (New Haven, CT)
- McKinley Park 16% 28 acres (Sacramento, CA)

- Regional parks: These parks provide amenities for the entire city, surrounding communities and visiting tourists. Parking is available for the many visitors that drive to these parks, but there are often walkable amenities for immediate neighbors. By virtue of their size regional parks provide unique opportunities such as woodlands, trails, natural resource areas, water bodies, major sports complexes, historic sites, beaches and camping. Lot coverage for similar parks in peer cities range from 5%-25%. Benchmarks include:

- Look Park 18% 132 acres (Northampton, MA)
- Deering Oaks Park 27% 54 acres (Portland, ME)
- Stewart Park 23% 41 acres (Ithaca, NY)
- Special use parks: These spaces provide a single amenity that requires specific infrastructure and design. Uses may include: harbors and marinas, golf courses, performance venues, ropes courses, pool facilities, skate parks, historic sites and sports complexes. Lot coverage varies widely (5%-100%) due to varying requirements for parking, buildings and gathering space. Benchmarks included:
  - Northeast Harbor Marina 80% 4 acres (Northeast Harbor, ME)
  - Prescott Park (Waterfront) 40% 10 acres (Portsmouth, NH)

### **But what about stormwater?**

While lot coverage regulation can serve to guide development density, it is actually a blunt instrument for mitigating stormwater runoff. This is because impervious surfaces such as buildings and pavement are only part of a site's 'effective imperviousness.' The subsurface soil conditions must be considered as well. For example, if a park is situated on dense clayey soils the addition of a parking lot will do little to increase the amount of run-off leaving the site. It will, however, increase the speed of runoff. But if designed to retain stormwater, this development will result in a net zero increase in runoff leaving the site.

Site topography is an equally important factor. Consider a bowl shaped park that pools with water during rain storms. No site modification, other than introducing a storm sewer, will direct more water toward the river or lake. That said, if the site's soils allow for infiltration adding impervious surfaces will slow the infiltration

rate, which impacts groundwater recharge. As a result, any site development in parks must begin with analysis of the soils and topography to truly assess the stormwater implications of the design.

### **Improving infiltration**

As described above, the stormwater management priorities for each park should be guided by a city-wide strategy. In addition to these goals, encouraging stormwater to infiltrate back into the water table should be a priority in all parks. This requires the following considerations:

Planning: Designing for infiltration begins with analysis of site topography, soils and existing use.

- Topography: The shape of the land greatly influences the rate of runoff. Water flows quickly across steep slopes, especially when the surface creates minimal friction such as exposed soil. This results in less infiltration because water does not have time to percolate through the soil. Conversely, shallow slopes and depressions minimizes the rate of overland flow. This allows water longer to seep into soil.
- Soils: In the United States soils are divided into four hydrologic soil groups. Hydrologic soil groups are based on estimates of runoff potential. Soils are assigned to one of four groups according to the rate of water infiltration when the soils are not protected by vegetation, are thoroughly wet, and receive precipitation.
- Existing use: The current configuration of amenities and materials on site can greatly impact infiltration - both negatively and positively. Design should respond to these conditions.

Design: With a thorough site analysis in place, design proposals should site amenities where they will make the minimum impact on run-off. Similarly, retention

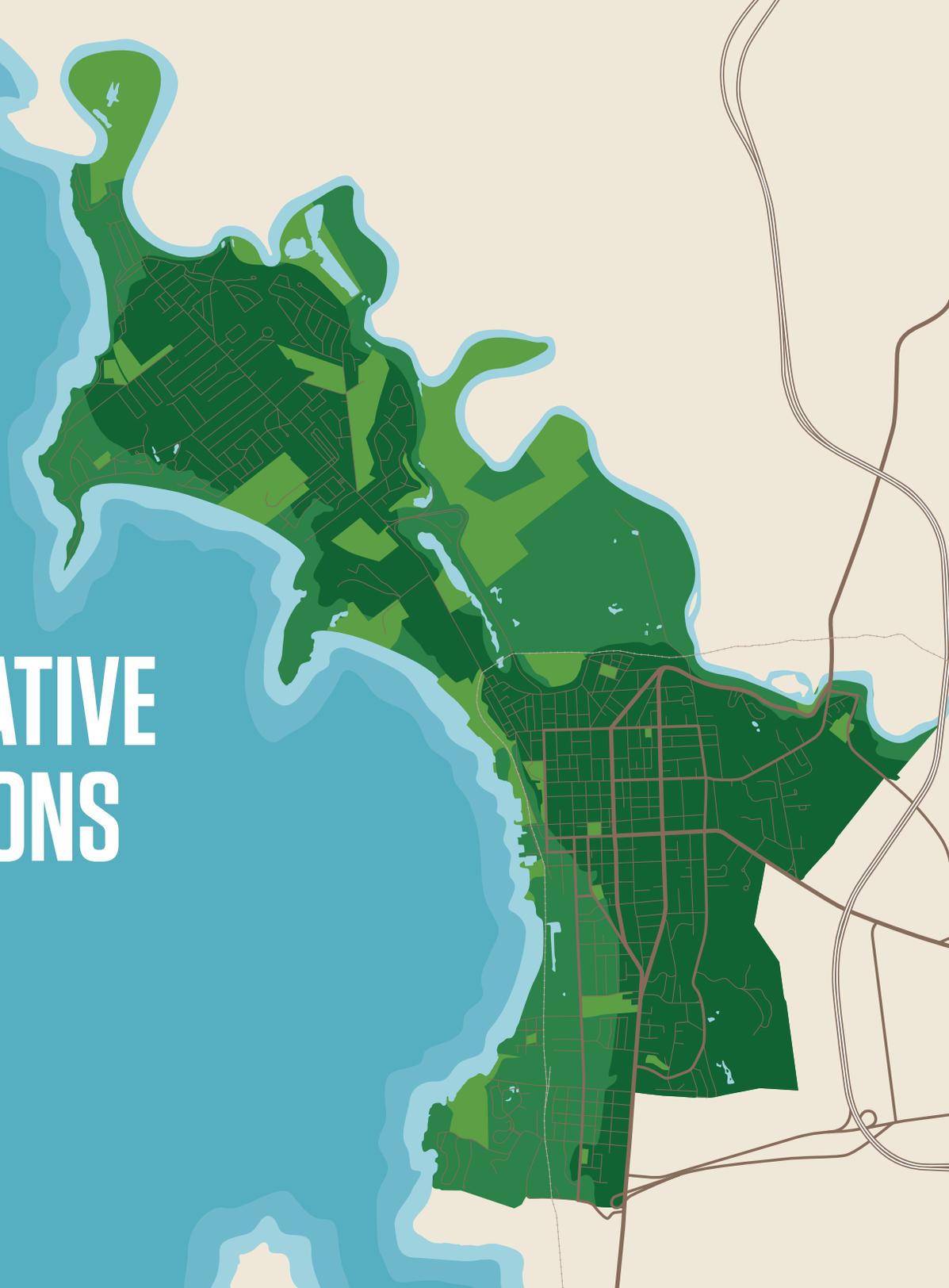
and infiltration features should be sited where they will be most effective. Some additional recommendations include:

- Design gradual slopes and coarse surface materials to slow the rate of surface flow. This will promote percolation where soils permit.
- Locate impervious surfaces in areas with least pervious soil groups to minimize impact to overall effective infiltration rate.
- Locate infiltration features such as bioswales above soils that will promote stormwater recharge. When infiltration is unlikely, focus on retaining water for reuse or aesthetic impact.
- Minimize costs by infiltrating water close to where it hits the ground.
- Pervious surface materials such as porous asphalt, porous pavers, rubber play surfaces and various 'soft' surfaces such as woodchips and gravel can help provide useable space while mitigating the impact on the site's perviousness. However, these materials require maintenance to insure performance. The cost of maintenance should be considered when selecting materials.
- Porous surface materials only reduce imperviousness when used in areas with permeable soils.
- The selection of a porous surface material should be guided by intended use. Given maintenance implications, materials like porous asphalt should only be used when paving must be applied over porous soils.
- Inundated soils can compromise foundations and other construction. As a result, infiltration should account for existing or proposed development.





# STRATEGIC INITIATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS



## Recommendations

The following are Strategic Initiatives for Burlington Parks, Recreation, and Waterfront Department. The Recommendations span a 10 year period from 2014 to 2024. The Recommendations are listed as short term, midterm, or long term priorities. These time frames will provide the department with the opportunity to review the Master Plan at the end of each cycle: short, medium and long.

While the Plan should be reviewed each year in order to accommodate any changes in priorities that occur throughout each year, a more thorough review will be completed at the end of FY16-17 and FY19-20, or after every three years. The three year review will include an update to the Strategic Recommendations, noting work that has been completed and adjusting the Strategic Initiatives to reflect major changes. In addition, the three year review should include an update of demographics and revised inventory of parks and amenities. During the second review cycle following FY19-20, a Community Survey should be completed. It may also be helpful to have public input during these two review cycles to ask for resident response to the Plan's progress.

### Short Term FY14-15 to FY16-17

- Add Burlington Parks and Recreation amenity information in the PRORAGIS database.
- In development of new assets, consider the perceived imbalance between the north and south end of town.
- Increase capital funding: the median of capital spending for the PRORAGIS database is \$640,000. Burlington receives \$350,000 in capital funding annually. This is significantly below what other agencies spend.

- Align a significant portion of Penny for Parks funding for capital priorities developed by the Department, while leaving the remainder of funding for projects suggested by the community. Create a long term Capital Improvement Plan and Replacement Plan with dedicated funding for ongoing replacement of assets. Consider increasing the Penny for Parks funding in order to double the amount of capital dollars.
- Develop a Foundation to augment capital investment into the system. The Foundation could also oversee a scholarship program for financial support for residents with financial need.
- Allocate labor dollars toward marketing support. Agencies the size of Burlington typically have at least one full-time staff member dedicated toward marketing functions. The recommendation is to add a marketing position. At first, this can possibly be a shared position with other agencies in the region to provide a regional approach to parks and recreation service delivery. This position can also include dedicated time toward corporate sponsorships. Supplement with University of Vermont marketing interns.
- Develop design standards for park amenities including elements such as water fountains, fencing, playgrounds, etc. In addition, develop park lighting standards. This is currently being developed for identifying standard fixtures for pedestrian walks, parking, trails, etc.
- Work with the Public Works Department in identifying long term maintenance of park roadways and establish percentage contribution by Public Works and Parks Departments.
- There is a need to increase park maintenance staff as the average acres/FTE is 16.7 in the PRORAGIS database, for Burlington the number is almost 40 acres/ FTE.
- Develop a financial pro forma for Memorial Auditorium building alternatives, including selling, leasing, or renovating the facility.
  - Indoor space; multi-purpose recreation center. The Miller Center only has about 17,680 of programming

- space for the Department. Throughout the overall system, indoor multi-purpose space is below the average agency by 22,340. With the need for indoor activity space in the winter, a multi-purpose recreation center could be located close to the downtown area with easy access to the southern part of the City.
- Determine the success of leasing space in Memorial Auditorium and identify long term recommendations for the building, including selling or renovating the building.
  - Decrease the size of existing dog parks and develop an additional dog park in the southern end of the City.
- Develop a process to implement changes and improvements based on Community Survey results.
    - Implement recommendations in the Recreation Assessment to identify ways of increasing household participation in programs as 23% of households participate. 25% of households go to neighboring communities for recreation.
    - Households were asked what areas should receive the most attention:
      - Quality of lake, beaches and areas
      - Maintenance of Burlington parks
      - Number of walking/biking trails
    - Therefore, funding priorities should be aligned with these assets.
    - Another question addressed level of support for funding, and the two highest rated features include trails and neighborhood parks.
  - Perform a system wide accessibility audit.
  - Implement significant Recreation Recommendations. More tactical recommendations are included in the Recreation Assessment within the body of the Plan.
- The Department should do a cost of service analysis to determine true costs of programs, services, and events. This should also include subsidy level goals for core programs. Community events should also be analyzed for direct and indirect costs.
  - Create a virtual program guide for smart phone registration.
  - Dedicate labor resources to management of a special population's programmer.
  - This potentially could be a shared position with other neighboring agencies.
  - Increase staff programming support for the Miller Center.
  - Facilitate a series of focus groups with immigrant populations to determine their recreation needs and how to best service those needs.
  - One of the significant program priorities is outdoor winter recreation opportunities. Consider the development of an outdoor recreation park with a sled hill and toboggan run, outdoor ice rink with a warming hut.
  - Research the possibility of offering a World Events Day at Waterfront Park.
  - There is a system wide shortage of storage areas. Identify areas to better accommodate Departmental storage needs, which will result in better efficiency. This includes storage for existing and additional equipment and vehicles.
  - Continue to improve technology. This was identified as one of the most significant areas needing improvement in the Department.
  - Brand and image: doing a better job telling the story
  - Create a city-wide map of parks and their associated watersheds. Develop stormwater priorities for parks based on this map.

**Mid Term FY17-18 to FY19-20**

- Develop a plan for connectivity among facilities and parks and include Safe Routes to Schools plans and Local Motion bike path connection identification.
- Develop a marketing plan and business plan for major facilities
- Implement maintenance standards for parks, buildings, and facilities.
- Create a regional recreation roundtable to discuss partnership opportunities and other ways to have a more regional approach to recreation service delivery.
- As part of PRORAGIS, perform a calculation of economic benefits of Department services and events.
- Work with the Community and Economic Development office to develop a tourism plan for parks and recreation services and events.

**Long Term FY20-21 to FY23-24**

- Add an internal staff position to oversee the Department's use of technology as well as overseeing data analytics.
- Consideration for the installation of a spray ground in the downtown area.

**Other Considerations**

- Policy development for Recognition/Memorial Bench Policy
- Off-Leash Policy Recommendations
- Reference Imagine city Hall Park renovation conceptual planning effort
- Incorporate WAN/Skatepark

**Parks Recommendations**

Specific recommendations for parks within the system are included here:

**Regional Parks**

Leddy Park: This park is a beloved feature of the Burlington's New North End neighborhood. This park should be intensified as a focus of recreational activities in the City. Long term recommendations include:

- Expand the existing fields to include another regulation size Soccer/Football/Lacrosse field.
- Consider modifying one of the 60' baseball fields to be a regulation adult softball field.
- Formalize the trail system and strengthen visual connection to bike path. The latter will be addressed within the scope of the bike path redesign.

North Beach: This park recently underwent renovation to upgrade the camp facilities. Future modifications to the site's access are planned as part of the bike path redesign.

Oakledge Park (Blanchard Beach): This historic park offers a wide range of amenities for Burlington's South End residents, as well as city-wide and regional attractions. Recommendations include:

- The creation of an accessible playground in 2015.
- Relocate the existing softball field that suffers from poor siting on a wetland.
- Both projects will require an analysis of stormwater considerations. This analysis should cover the entire park to help guide future projects in the park.

## Community Parks:

Battery Park: This historically significant park serves as an intimate event space and scenic overlook near downtown. Long term considerations include:

- A holistic analysis and redesign are recommended to clarify and highlight the site's historical significance while improving its aesthetic and functional performance. Analysis should incorporate the 2013 Draft of the Archaeological Management Plan by the UVM Consulting Archaeology Program, and the site's historical relevance as part of the war of 1812 and Civil War.
- Redesign should consider future interment of remains within vault, re-organization of the existing memorials, playground renovation, the creation of a spray park, and the potential to reintroduce the historic road as a sunset lookout

Calahan Park: Calahan Park is a true community park, providing a wide range of amenities for the surrounding residents. Recent upgrades have introduced the City's only 90' baseball field.

- Opportunities should be investigated for reducing mowed areas around the park's perimeter. These areas could be converted to low-maintenance native planting.

Starr Farm Park: This park includes active recreation, community gardens and a popular dog park. Long term recommendations include:

- Expansion and formalization of athletic fields. This site could accommodate future youth softball fields.
- Upgrade the existing wooden playground.
- Formalize trail connections between east and west sides of the park.

Waterfront Park and Promenade: This park is incredibly important as the City's premiere performance and event space. It is also a beloved space for passive recreation. The recommendations for this site are

reflected in the Parks and Recreation Department's PIAP proposal. They include:

- Upgrades to electrical, sewer and water utilities.
- Upgrades to the existing boardwalk to stabilize the slope and introduce better public access to the water.
- Incorporating vegetation improvements to serve as stormwater infrastructure.
- Improved signage, wayfinding, lighting and gateways.
- Realignment of the bike path.

## Neighborhood Parks

The following list includes recommendations for neighborhood parks. Any parks not listed should be maintained under the general guidelines set forth in this document.

Appletree Park:

- Remove failing tennis courts and rehabilitate the site's natural wetland functions.

City Hall Park:

- Continue developing plans for "Imagine: City Hall Park" in collaboration with the BCA and local partners.

Northshore Natural Area/City Beach:

- Improve pedestrian access and visibility of the site.

Roosevelt Park: Upgrades in 2014

- Perform upgrades planned for 2014, including renovation with Boys & Girls Club, court renovations, new lighting and new seating.

Schmanska Park:

- Renovation of the barn.
- Remove the existing tennis courts.

Smalley Park:

- Create a new entrance gateway into the park. Remove fencing and replace strategically with low, aesthetically pleasing wood fence

### Mini Parks

Mini parks should be maintained under the general guidelines set forth in this document - and with minimal investment of resources as they do not provide considerable community benefits.

### Implementation Guidelines

The following is a listing of suggestions for successful implementation of the Strategic Recommendations. It represents the commitment and discipline required to integrate the Master Plan implementation process into daily operations.

- The Values and Strategic Recommendations will become the guidepost for the Department. When decisions or responses to the community are needed, the Plan becomes the reference point for decision making and whether or not new issues or responses to the community are of higher importance than what's been established as existing direction.
- This information should be included as part of the new Recreation Commission member and employee orientation programs.
- Post the Executive Summary on the Website and track results on the site as well. It may also be helpful to print a short summary of the progress to distribute to interested partners and community members.
- A staff person or team should have responsibility of being the project manager or "champion" of the Plan's implementation to ensure success. This staff person is

responsible for monitoring the Plan's progress and works with staff to effectively integrate the Plan with operations.

- Each Strategic Recommendation should have a leader assigned to manage the process. Each Recommendation generally requires a cross functional team of employees to work on completing the initiative. A project manager should exist for each Recommendation.
- Regular reporting of the Plan's progress should occur. Break the Plan into separate fiscal years and report one year at a time, as an ongoing annual work plan. Each Recommendation for the year should include a list of tactics that support its completion. The tactics are developed prior to each year for the upcoming list of Recommendations. It is the project leader's responsibility to report on his/her initiative, included in a monthly or quarterly report. A suggestion is to input each year's data on a spreadsheet that lists the Recommendation start and completion dates, and which staff person is responsible for the Recommendation's completion.
- At the end of the year, perform an annual written review and documentation of the Recommendation.
- In addition to an annual review, a more comprehensive three year review will occur at the end of FY16-17 and FY19-20. This will include updating demographic information, updating park and amenity inventory, revising recreation program recommendations, and completing an additional Community Survey at the end of FY19-20.
- Update major stakeholders on the Plan's implementation and results on an annual basis.
- Conduct staff meetings on a regular basis, such as semi-annually to review the Plan's progress and results and report the Plan's progress to the Recreation Commission as well.
- Complete an annual just-in-time review of the next year's Recommendations to determine if priorities have changed. This can be included at an annual retreat in which successive years' Recommendations are discussed as part of the annual budget process. The Recommendations should tie into

the budget process. The Plan's action plan includes three timeframes: FY14-FY17, FY17-FY20, and FY20 to FY24. This schedule provides the opportunity for thorough updates during those timeframes.

- Post a chart of each year's Recommendations on office walls in administrative areas with a check-off column designating completion as part of a visual management program. Staff meetings should regularly include discussion of strategy. This will help to emphasize the Plan's importance and the Department's commitment to execution.
- If there are ideas for new strategies that arise throughout the year, include them on a written "parking lot" and review them as part of the annual just-in-time review to determine if they supplant any existing initiatives.

## Conclusion

Burlington Parks, Recreation, and Waterfront aspires to continue and build upon its legacy of providing excellent services to the community. The Department is poised to develop its brand and image, update its use of marketing and technology, and to further develop the park and recreation system according to the Initiatives of the Master Plan. This will ensure the Department's continued role of importance to the community. The Strategic Initiatives create a sense of direction and focus for the next 10 years. All of these efforts will result in leadership excellence in the provision of services and impactful results that will greatly benefit all of Burlington.