

Sunapee Recreation
Strategic Planning Report and Recommendations



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Sunapee Recreation Committee

The Sunapee Recreation Committee was integral to the success of this project which spanned the term of two different Chairs. The author wishes to thank the Chairs and membership for their time, effort, and dedication to the strategic planning process.

Charleen Osborne, Previous Chair
Nicholas Grant, Chair
Daniel Whitmoyer, Vice Chair
Ian Kirk

Chapter 1: Process

This strategic planning process was completed by engaging a range of stakeholders to identify the following:

- The recreational wants and needs of Sunapee residents.
- How well the current facilities, programs, and services offered through Sunapee Recreation are filling those needs.
- What new recreation programs, services, and facilities the residents of Sunapee identify as most desirable or important.

The first step of data collection and analysis was to launch an online needs assessment survey (Appendix A). The survey was made available using an anonymous link to maximize access. The link was shared by the town through various online and social media tools.

The survey launched in late September, and responses were collected up until the creation of this report in late February of 2024. There was a total of 367 surveys completed, although not every question was answered by every respondent. Assuming a population of 3400, this sample is large enough to paint an accurate picture of the wants and needs of Sunapee residents within a 5% margin of error. However, the sample should not be construed to be completely generalizable due to some anomalies in the demographics of the self-selected sample. For example, among those who chose to answer the question asking for gender, survey respondents were much more likely to be female, by a 2:1 ratio. Additionally, those who responded to the survey were more likely to have children in the home than the average Sunapee household (Sample = 44% with children whereas the Sunapee population has only 25% of households with children). Although weighted toward those who identify as female and households with children, the important demographic characteristic of age lined up well with the overall makeup of the town. There was a range of ages responding, with a median respondent age of 53 compared with a median Sunapee resident age of 52.

At the conclusion of data collection via the online survey, an open forum was held to discuss the questions being examined in this project. Some initial data from the survey were shared, and participants were asked to expand on some of the initial findings with more depth of information than we can gather in a survey. A description of the open forum and the themes that were extracted from it can be found on page 14 of this report.

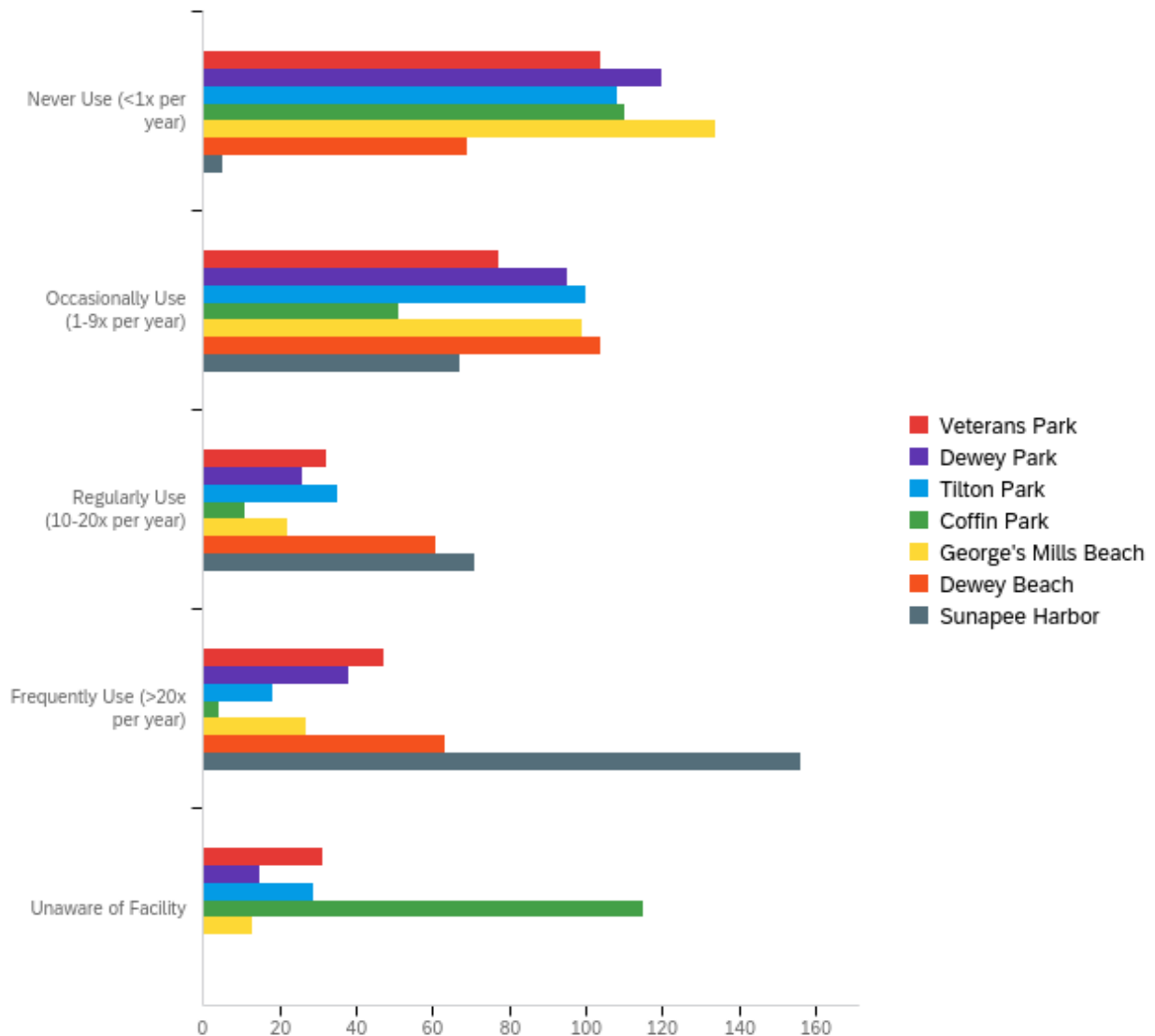
Concurrently to the community data collection process, meetings were held both online and in person with the Recreation Director, Town Administrator, and members of the Recreation Committee. These meetings were intended to not only ensure that appropriate data were being collected, but also to ensure that the priorities of the professional staff and town officials who are most primarily connected to recreation were understood.

Chapter 2: Survey Findings

Facility Use

Part I of the online survey asked about frequency of use, and overall quality of municipally recreation facilities in Sunapee. Figure 1 shows the use of the seven properties identified by Sunapee. A longer horizontal bar equates to more people reporting a particular level of use at that facility. A shorter bar represents fewer people reporting a particular level of use at a facility.

Figure 1: Facility Use by Location



The facilities reporting the highest levels of frequent or regular use are Sunapee Harbor (75.9%), Dewey Beach (41.7%), and Veterans Park (27.2%). Surprisingly, Veterans Park also showed a greater than 10% of respondents who were unaware of the facility. However, it is

likely that residents are unaware of the name as opposed to the actual facility given its central location and visibility from the road.

The facilities with the lowest overall use (Never and occasional use combined) are George’s Mills Beach (79%), Dewey Park (73.1%), and Tilton Park (71.7%). However, as seen in Table 1, some of these same facilities have a significant number of regular or frequent users.

Table 1: Facility Use by Location

Facility	Never Use (<1x per year)	Occasionally Use (1-9x per year)	Regularly Use (10-20x per year)	Frequently Use (>20x per year)	Unaware of Facility
Veterans Park	35.74%	26.46%	11.00%	16.15%	10.65%
Dewey Park	40.82%	32.31%	8.84%	12.93%	5.10%
Tilton Park	37.24%	34.48%	12.07%	6.21%	10.00%
Coffin Park	37.80%	17.53%	3.78%	1.37%	39.52%
George's Mills Beach	45.42%	33.56%	7.46%	9.15%	4.41%
Dewey Beach	23.23%	35.02%	20.54%	21.21%	0.00%
Sunapee Harbor	1.67%	22.41%	23.75%	52.17%	0.00%

Coffin Park stands out as a facility that appears to be underutilized, with just over 4% of respondents reporting high-level use, 55.13% reporting low-level use, and 39.52% reporting that they are unaware of the facility. However, as seen in Table 2, a significant majority of those who do use the facility consider it to be average, above average, or excellent.

Facility Quality

Figure 2 shows a visual representation of the perceived quality of the seven listed recreation facilities in Sunapee. When judged by those who use the facilities, the majority of respondents consider Sunapee’s parks and recreation facilities to be average, above average, or excellent. The locations with significant percentages of respondents who considered the site to be below average or poor were Veterans Park (14.19%) and George’s Mills Beach (13.88%), but these percentages are from totals including those who do not use the facility. When those responses are removed, the percentage that consider Veterans to be below average or poor increases to 23.64% and 22.67%% for George’s Mills Beach.

The highest rated facilities were Sunapee Harbor with 64.89% of respondents rating the facility as above average or excellent, Dewey Beach (53.73%), and Tilton Park (30.21%).

Figure 2: Perceived Facility Quality by Location

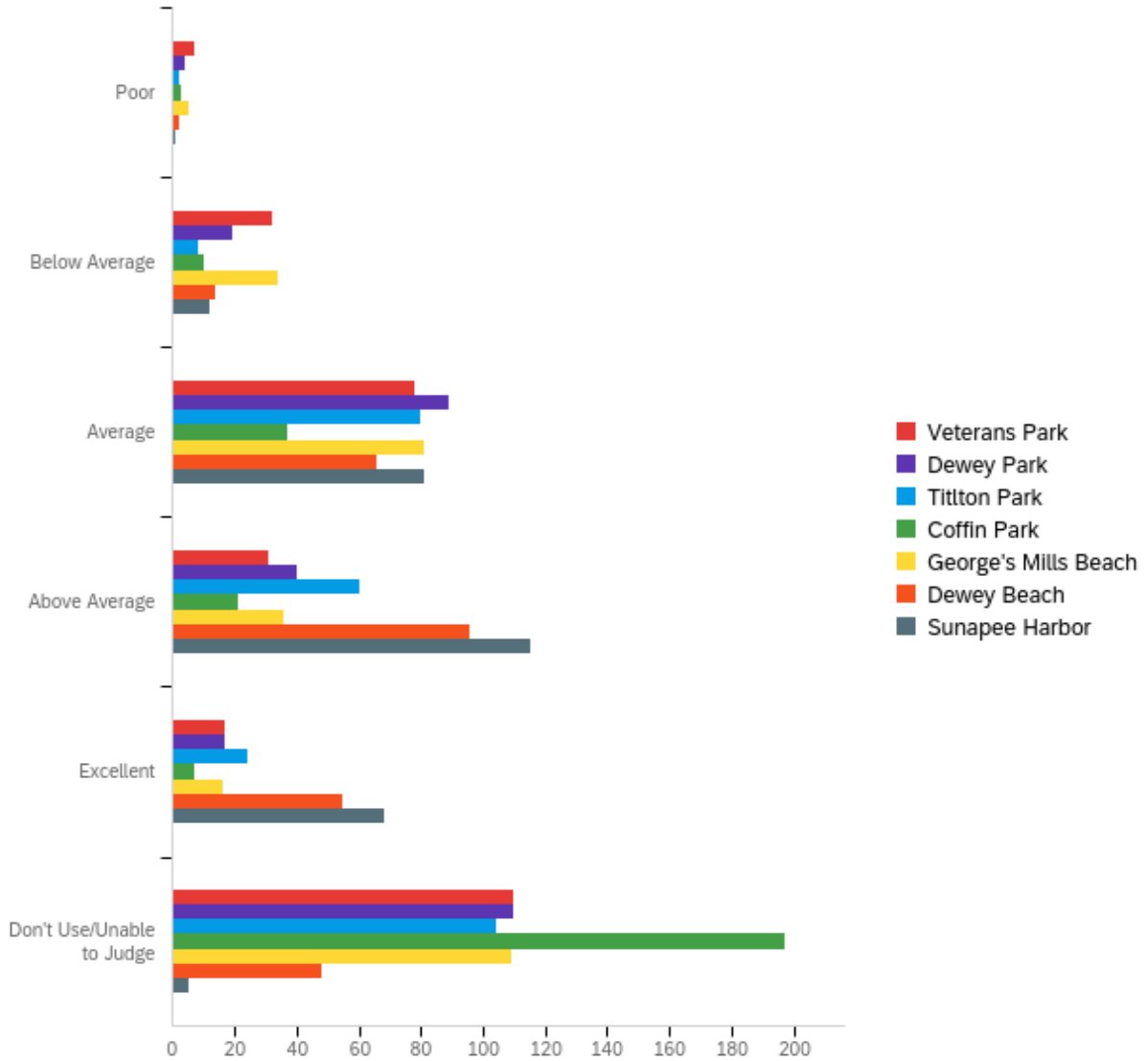


Table 2: perceived Facility Quality by Location

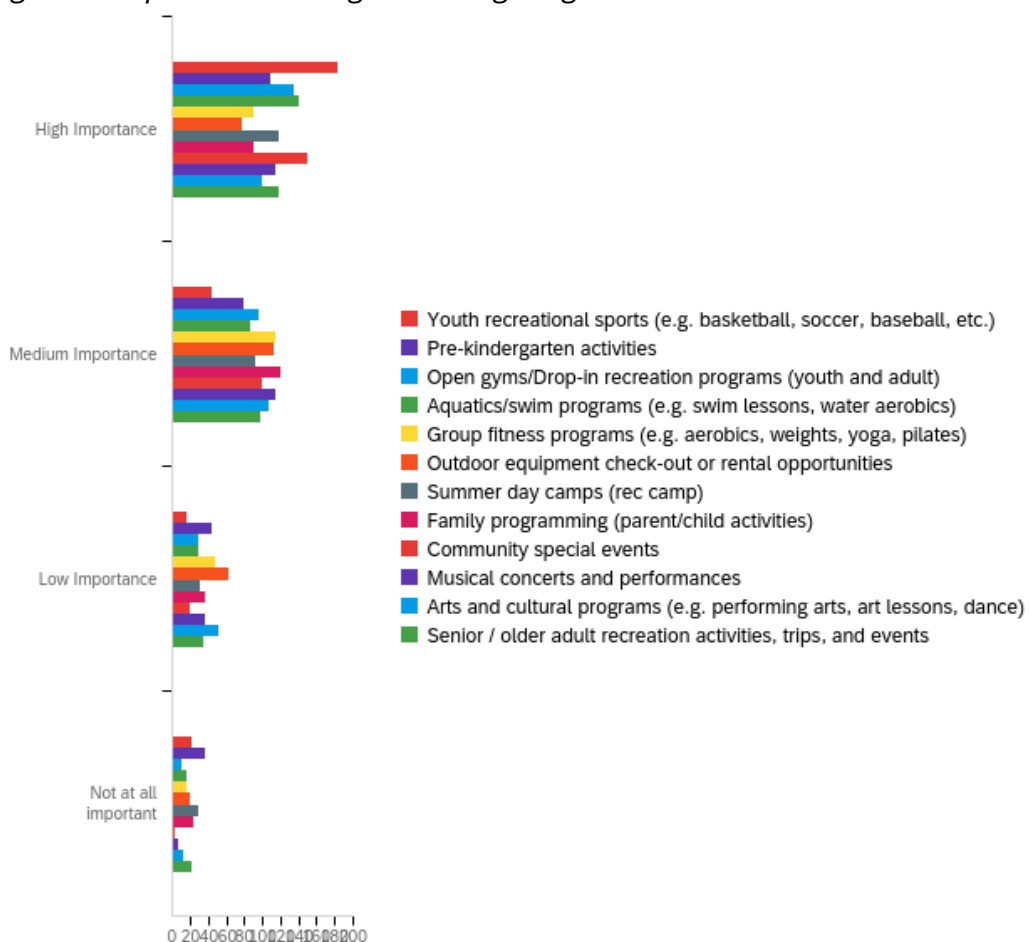
Facility	Poor	Below Average	Average	Above Average	Excellent	Don't Use/Unable to Judge
Veterans Park	2.55%	11.64%	28.36%	11.27%	6.18%	40.00%
Dewey Park	1.43%	6.81%	31.90%	14.34%	6.09%	39.43%
Tilton Park	0.72%	2.88%	28.78%	21.58%	8.63%	37.41%

Facility	Poor	Below Average	Average	Above Average	Excellent	Don't Use/Unable to Judge
Coffin Park	1.09%	3.64%	13.45%	7.64%	2.55%	71.64%
George's Mills Beach	1.78%	12.10%	28.83%	12.81%	5.69%	38.79%
Dewey Beach	0.71%	4.98%	23.49%	34.16%	19.57%	17.08%
Sunapee Harbor	0.35%	4.26%	28.72%	40.78%	24.11%	1.77%

Importance

The online survey asked about the relative importance of the programs currently offered through Sunapee Recreation. As shown in both Figure 3 and Table 3, respondents were more likely to rate all existing programs at high or medium importance as opposed to low importance or not at all important.

Figure 3: Importance Rating of Existing Programs



The programs that respondents rated as highly important are youth recreational sport (69.17%), special events (55.15%), aquatics programs (52.03%), and open gym (50.18%). Only two programs were identified by greater than 10% of respondents as being “not at all important.” Pre-kindergarten activities were identified as not at all important by 13.81% of respondents and Summer Day Camps were listed as not at all important by 10.37%. However, those numbers are contradicted by a relatively high importance rating for each as seen in Table 3.

Table 3: Importance Rating of Existing Programs

Existing Program	High Importance	Medium Importance	Low Importance	Not at all important
Youth recreational sports (e.g. basketball, soccer, baseball, etc.)	69.17%	16.54%	6.02%	8.27%
Pre-kindergarten activities	40.67%	29.48%	16.04%	13.81%
Open gyms/Drop-in recreation programs (youth and adult)	50.18%	35.42%	10.33%	4.06%
Aquatics/swim programs (e.g. swim lessons, water aerobics)	52.03%	31.73%	10.33%	5.90%
Group fitness programs (e.g. aerobics, weights, yoga, pilates)	33.71%	43.07%	17.60%	5.62%
Outdoor equipment check-out or rental opportunities	28.31%	41.54%	23.16%	6.99%
Summer day camps (rec camp)	43.70%	34.44%	11.48%	10.37%
Family programming (parent/child activities)	33.33%	44.81%	13.33%	8.52%
Community special events	55.15%	36.76%	6.99%	1.10%
Musical concerts and performances	42.07%	42.44%	13.28%	2.21%
Arts and cultural programs (e.g. performing arts, art lessons, dance)	37.04%	39.63%	18.89%	4.44%
Senior / older adult recreation activities, trips, and events	43.91%	35.79%	12.55%	7.75%

Performance

Satisfaction with current programs was measured in the online survey, but due to high levels of respondents reporting “no opinion” ostensibly due to a lack of experience with the program in question, the results are somewhat ungeneralizable. Program satisfaction should be measured through program evaluations and proxy measures such as enrollment trends.

With that acknowledgement, most programs show a generally high level of satisfaction in the survey data. For those reporting an opinion, youth rec sport, pre-K programs, aquatics programs, summer day camp, family programs, special events, performances, and art & cultural programs all received over 65% reporting being highly or somewhat satisfied. The programs that rated as unsatisfactory at significant rates are equipment rental (45.16%), group fitness (48.78%), and senior programs (58.49%). Table 4 shows the breakdown of satisfaction by program.

Table 4: Satisfaction with Existing Programs Excluding Those with No Opinion

Program	Very Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Somewhat Unsatisfied	Very Unsatisfied
Youth Rec Sport	40.31% (52)	44.96% (58)	13.95% (18)	<1% (1)
Pre-K Programs	33.33% (24)	44.44% (32)	16.67% (12)	5.56% (4)
Open Gym	21.05% (20)	42.10% (40)	30.53% (29)	6.32% (6)
Aquatics	28% (28)	41% (41)	25% (25)	6% (6)
Group Fitness	15.85% (13)	35.36% (29)	36.59% (30)	12.2% (10)
Equipment Rental	18.27% (17)	36.55% (34)	39.78% (37)	5.38% (5)
Summer day Camp	25.55% (23)	43.33% (39)	24.44% (22)	6.67% (6)
Family Programs	11.62% (10)	59.30% (51)	23.26% (20)	5.81% (5)
Special Events	25.24% (51)	57.42% (116)	13.86% (28)	3.47% (7)
Performances	25.78% (49)	61.57% (117)	10% (19)	2.63% (5)
Art and Cultural Progs.	18.25% (23)	57.93% (73)	18.25% (23)	5.56% (7)
Senior Progs	8.49% (9)	33.01% (35)	38.68% (41)	19.81% (21)

In addition to program satisfaction, a question was asked about the overall quality of programs, special events, and activities over the past 12 months. Table 5 shows the breakdown of responses to this question, but the perception of overall quality appears to be high for the programs, services, and events held by Sunapee recreation.

Table 5: Overall Quality

Overall Quality	Frequency	Valid percentage
Poor	5	2.90%
Below Average	6	3.50%
Average	62	35.80%
Above Average	66	38.20%
Excellent	34	19.70%

A question was also asked about the overall rating of the performance of the Sunapee Recreation Department. Overall ratings were positive, with a median response of Average. Results can be seen in Table 6 and Figure 4.

Figure 4: Overall Rating of Sunapee Recreation

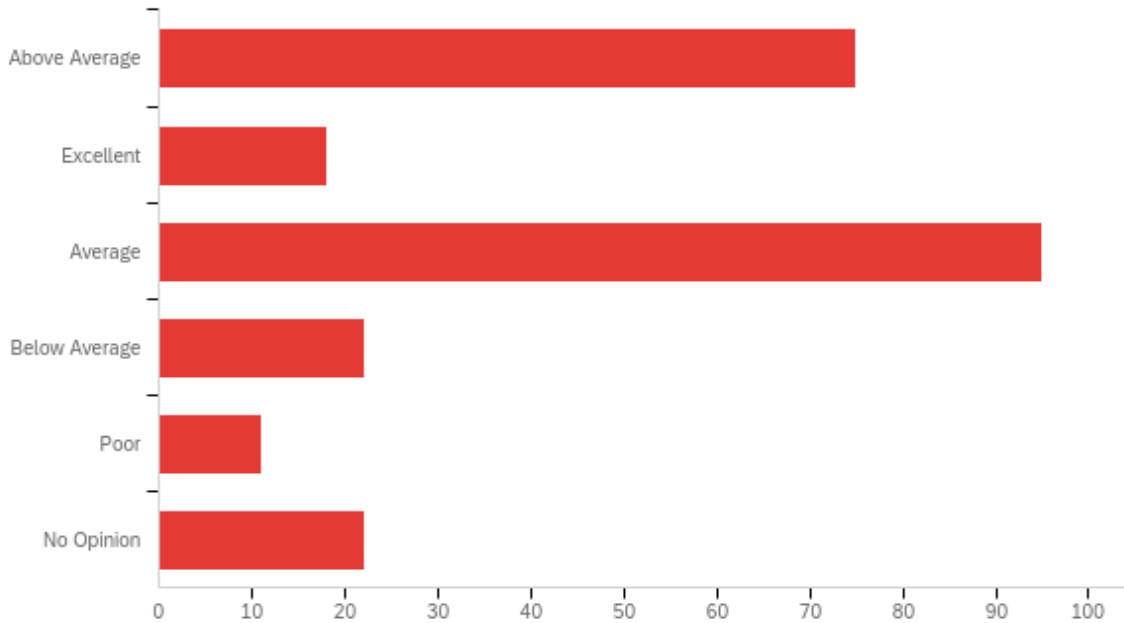


Table 6: Overall Rating of Sunapee Recreation

Answer	%	Count
Excellent	7.41%	18
Above Average	30.86%	75
Average	39.09%	95
Below Average	9.05%	22
Poor	4.53%	11
No Opinion	9.05%	22
Total	100%	243

Program Development

Survey respondents were asked to prioritize possible new program development by identifying the relative importance of the following programs:

- After School Programs for Elementary School Children
- After School Program for Teens
- Summer Specialty Camps (sports, art, STEM, etc.)
- Adult Recreational Sport
- Sport Lessons or Instruction
- Nature or Environmental Education Programs

- Non-Sport Teen Programs (games, social, drama, etc.)
- Recreation Programs for Individuals with Disabilities
- Non-Sport Adult Activities (cards, games, social programs, etc.)

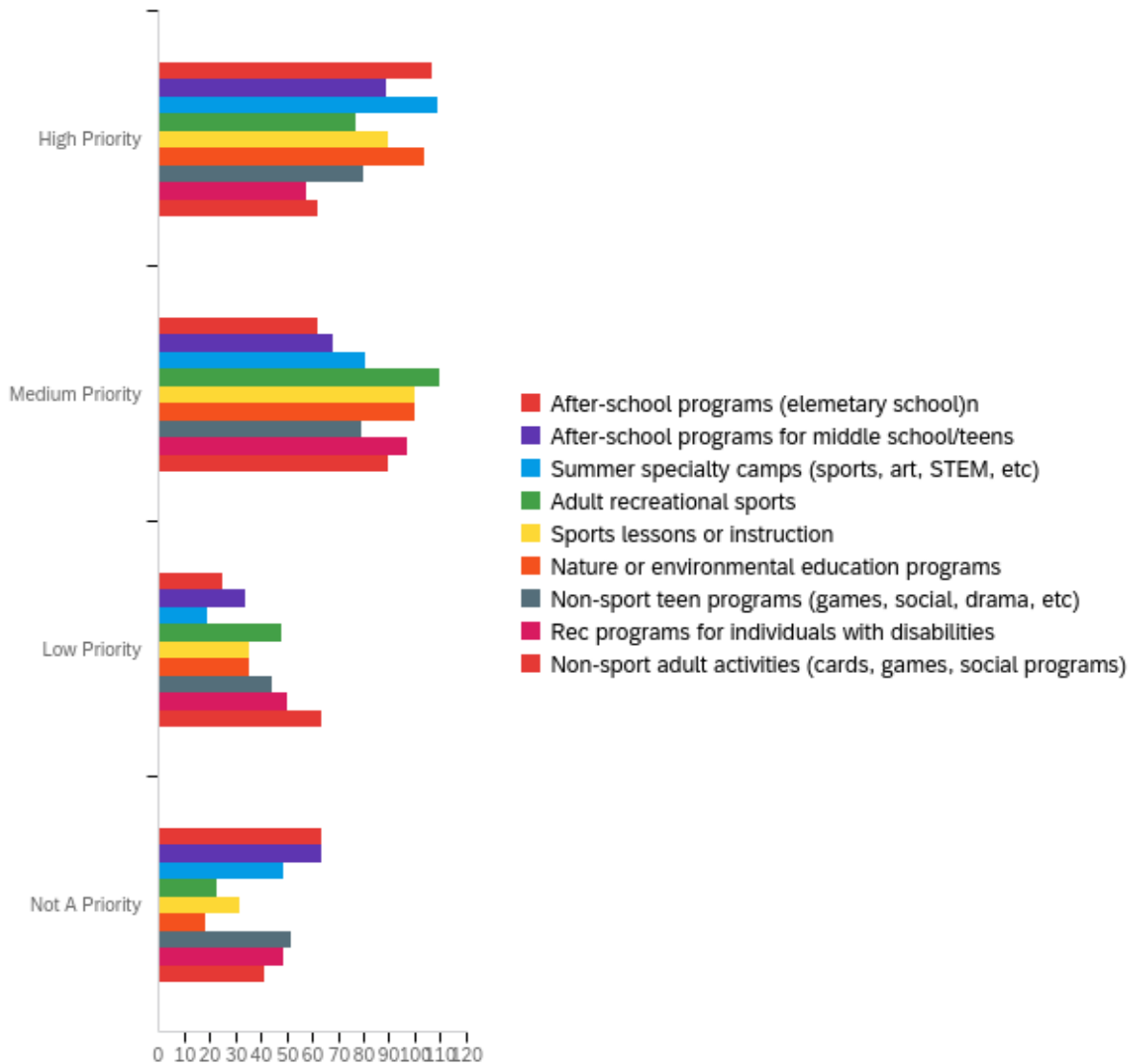
Every program development idea was rated as a medium or high priority by greater than half of those responding, but four possibilities were rated significantly higher than the others. Adult recreational sport (72.48%), summer specialty camps (73.65%), sport lessons or instruction (73.93%), and nature and environmental education programs were viewed as the greatest priorities for new program development.

Non-sport adult activities, programs for individuals with disabilities, teen after school programs, and non-sport teen programs were seen as the lowest priorities. Table 6 shows the priority rankings of suggested new program development.

Table 7: Prioritization of New Program Development

New Program	High Priority	Medium Priority	Low Priority	Not A Priority
After-school programs (elementary school)	41.47% (107)	24.03% (62)	9.69% (25)	24.81% (64)
After-school programs for middle school/teens	34.90% (89)	26.67% (68)	13.33% (34)	25.10% (64)
Summer specialty camps (sports, art, STEM, etc.)	42.25% (109)	31.40% (81)	7.36% (19)	18.99% (49)
Adult recreational sports	29.84% (77)	42.64% (110)	18.60% (48)	8.91% (23)
Sports lessons or instruction	35.02% (90)	38.91% (100)	13.62% (35)	12.45% (32)
Nature or environmental education programs	40.47% (104)	38.91% (100)	13.62% (35)	7.00% (18)
Non-sport teen programs (games, social, drama, etc.)	31.37% (80)	30.98% (79)	17.25% (44)	20.39% (52)
Rec programs for individuals with disabilities	22.83% (58)	38.19% (97)	19.69% (50)	19.29% (49)
Non-sport adult activities (cards, games, social programs)	24.12% (62)	35.02% (90)	24.90% (64)	15.95% (41)

Figure 5: Prioritization of New Programs



Benefits of Parks and Recreation

As is typical in these types of community needs assessment, respondents identified recreation programs and facilities as contributing positively to their own lives, the lives of their families, and the community at large. Of particular note is the statement “The community benefits from town-supported parks and recreation programs and facilities in Sunapee.” 87.5% of respondents indicated that they agree or strongly agree with the statement. This is a significant percentage, suggesting survey respondents understand parks and recreation to play a significant role in public health, wellbeing, and community development. Table 8 breaks down the responses to the benefits questions further.

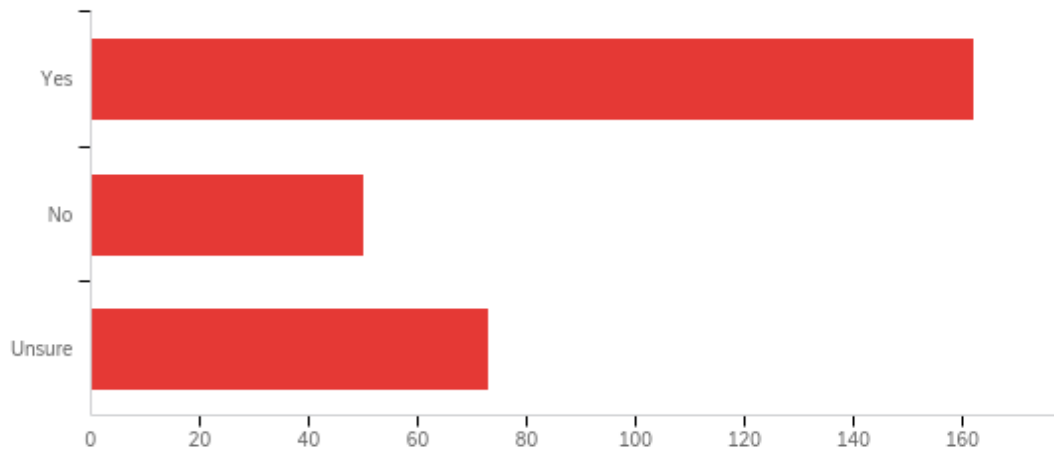
Table 8: Perceived Benefits of Public Recreation

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I personally benefit from town-supported parks and recreation programs and facilities in Sunapee.	7.53% (18)	9.62% (23)	23.43% (56)	27.20% (65)	32.22% (77)
My family/household benefits from town-supported parks and recreation programs and facilities in Sunapee.	7.14% (17)	9.66% (23)	15.97% (38)	31.09% (74)	36.13% (86)
The community benefits from town-supported parks and recreation programs and facilities in Sunapee.	2.50% (6)	1.67% (4)	8.33% (20)	32.08% (77)	55.42% (133)

Staffing and Willingness to Pay

Several survey questions were related to the funding of parks and recreation operations. In general, respondents were supportive of the idea that facility maintenance, facility development, and community events should be funded in part through taxation. 56.8% of respondents were in favor of the development of an indoor recreation facility, with 59.7% agreeing or strongly agreeing that some portion of a resident’s property tax should be used to offset the costs associated with the construction and maintenance of such a facility.

Figure 6: Would You Be Likely to Support the Development of an Indoor Recreation Facility in Sunapee?



In another question, residents were asked how much of their annual property taxes should be allotted to Parks and Recreation. The mean response was 5.87%. Using the 2023 tax commitment of \$20,692,664, that would equal an annual department budget of \$1,034,633 as compared to \$208,512 which is the requested department budget for 2024. This means that the actual percentage of property taxes that gets spent on Parks and Recreation in Sunapee is 1%.

Table 9: Percentage of Property Tax That Should Be Allotted to Recreation

Field	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation	Variance	Count
Percentage of total property tax	0.00	25.00	5.87	4.95	24.50	219

Table 10: Funding

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I would be willing to pay a fee to participate in town sponsored recreation programs and activities.	1.6% (4)	5.7% (14)	12.7% (31)	51.4% (126)	28.6% (70)
I believe that some portion of a resident's property tax should be used to offset the costs to build and maintain indoor recreation facilities in Sunapee.	15% (37)	11.4% (28)	13.8% (34)	33.7% (83)	26% (64)
I believe that some portion of a resident's property tax should be used to offset the costs to run recreation programs and activities in Sunapee.	10.6% (26)	8.9% (22)	11.8% (29)	41.9% (103)	26.8% (66)
I would be willing to pay a fee for the use of town-owned outdoor recreation facilities.	10.2% (30)	20.3% (50)	16.7% (41)	34.6% (85)	18.3% (45)
I believe that some portion of a resident's property tax should be used to offset the costs to build and maintain outdoor recreation facilities in Sunapee	12.4% (30)	5.4% (13)	12.4% (30)	40.7% (98)	29% (70)

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I believe that it is a good idea for the town of Sunapee to partner with other organization and agencies to deliver recreation service.	3.7% (9)	3.7% (9)	15.6% (38)	41.4% (101)	35.7% (87)
I believe that a full-time Recreation Director should be hired and partially paid for out of the town operating budget.	13% (32)	7.7% (19)	22% (54)	21.1% (52)	36.2% (89)
I believe that a full-time Recreation Director should be hired and partially paid for out of recreation revenue (program fees, sponsorships, etc.)	14.3% (35)	9.4% (23)	21.6% (53)	31% (76)	23.7% (58)

Chapter 3: Town Forum Themes

Sunapee Recreation
Community Needs Assessment
Community Forum
Feb. 20, 2024
Sunapee Middle High School Gymnasium
6:00 – 8:00 PM

The community forum was held on Feb. 20, 2024 with moderate to low turnout, but there was representation from community members of various ages, interests, and backgrounds.

Upon entry, participants were asked to engage in a “Dotocracy” exercise using the following prompt:

Posted around the room you will find several posters with possible ways to expend resources to improve the facilities, programs, and services overseen by Sunapee Recreation Department. Imagine each of your stickers as a unit of resources including financial, time, space, or effort resources. You may expend your resources on whatever you think are the best use of those resources. You may spread your stickers out or put them all on a single idea.

The available posters were:

1. Revitalization of existing recreation facilities including minor renovations or improvements at one or more sites.
2. Development of new recreation facilities. (Specific facilities will be discussed later during the public forum).
3. Development of new recreation programs utilizing current facilities. (Specific programs will be discussed later during the public forum.)
4. Improvement of current recreation programs.
5. Increase number of person-hours dedicated to recreation either through the creation of a full-time recreation director, or the hiring of additional part-time staff.
6. The recreation facilities, programs, and staffing in Sunapee do not currently require any improvements.

While intended to be a discussion starter, and not a data point, it is worth mentioning that the posters receiving the most votes were related to increasing staffing and development of new facilities.

Discussion was facilitated across each of the topic areas presented above, with opportunities for anyone in attendance to share thoughts and ideas. The following are the four major themes that emerged from the discussion.

Theme 1: Improvement of existing facilities

Participants had several suggestions for the improvement of existing facilities, but many of the suggested improvements centered around the following wants and needs:

- Improved drainage and turf quality
- Improved parking
- Improved amenities including bathroom facilities, water fountains, and seating.

Several comments were made about the possibility of expanding the footprint of certain parks such as Tilton Park. There were also several comments about increasing activity-specific equipment and amenities such as a rope tow for a sledding and tubing hill, pickleball courts, or picnic pavilions.

There was a significant amount of discussion about the ice rink at Veterans Field, including the following:

- Lack of clarity around control or management of the facility
- A current lack of volunteers to maintain the ice surface.

Theme 2: New Facility Development

Significant discussion was held regarding the development of new recreation facilities in Sunapee. There was some concern about exactly where new facilities could be developed as several would require land acquisition and development.

The following were suggested as potential new facilities in town:

- An indoor recreation or community center
 - Possibly housing all community services including senior services and welfare.
 - Significant discussion was held regarding the lack of indoor space in Sunapee for group activities, meetings, or sports.
 - The Sherburne Gym is used a lot and in high demand.
 - Several participants stated that locals are forced to travel significant distances for indoor facilities (especially sport facilities).
- Running Track
 - Residents are typically using Newport or the track at Colby-Sawyer College
- Dog Park
 - Would likely require land acquisition.
 - Ideally situated near trail system.
- Rebuild the Ski Jump
 - Ski jump could be a regional attraction.
 - Combine with an amphitheater for outdoor performances.
- New trail development
 - There is interest in improving trail connectivity between trail networks as well as a travel corridor.

Theme 3: New Program Development

Much of the conversation about facility development hangs naturally with discussions of program development. For example, if the town were to rebuild a ski jump, we can assume there would be ski jumping programs, lessons, competitions, etc.

Additional programs in which focus group participants stated an interest include the following:

- Sailing
- Intergenerational Programs
 - Seniors and children co-participating in programs or one group teaching the other.
 - High Schoolers mentoring younger children.
 - The lack of a high school community service requirement was mentioned as a possible barrier to this.
- Fitness Programs
- Dance
 - Line Dancing, Square Dancing, Zumba, etc.
- Senior Technology Programs
- Guided Walks
 - For fitness
 - For education
 - For social opportunity

Theme 4: Increase the number of hours for rec staff.

- Create a full-time Recreation Director position.
 - This question will be on the March 2024 town warrant.
 - More hours will allow for the completion of upgrades, program development, and facility development.
 - Salary could be offset by user fees.
 - Create jobs for recreation coordinators and programmers.
 - Seasonal as well as part-time year round
 - Improve communication between rec department and community members.

Chapter 4: Recreation Committee Priorities

Through multiple meetings and conversations with Recreation Committee Members as well as the Town Manager and the Recreation Coordinator, the following priority areas have been expressed:

- A desire for increased programming to meet the needs of a diverse population. This includes expanded programs for adults and older adults as well as an ongoing process of Quality Improvement (QI) in youth programs and special events.
- A desire for a full-time recreation director position to be approved by the voters. The question is on the 2024 Town Meeting Warrant and reads as follows:

Article 22 Full-Time Recreation Director: “Shall the town vote to appropriate the sum of \$58,000 to increase the Recreation Director's role from part-time to full-time to enhance our community's services for all members of the community to include more programming to bolster the health and wellness of Adults and Seniors within the town as well as increased economic opportunities This initiative will expand the position from 34 to 40 hours per week to allow the Recreation Director to manage the planned improvements and increase low-investment programming. This budget covers nine months of wages and benefits. If passed, this change will become a permanent part of our operating budget, ensuring ongoing improvement in our recreational offerings.”

- A desire to make continuous improvements at existing recreation facilities including the upgrading of amenities, parking, and field surfacing.
- A desire for the development of new recreation facilities to more adequately meet the needs of Sunapee recreationists across a wide array of ages, interests, and abilities.
- A desire to create self-supporting recreation programs that can simultaneously:
 - Provide work opportunities for Sunapee teens and adults.
 - Provide new recreational opportunities including to those who have been underserved in the current programming model.
 - Remain cost-neutral or revenue positive to the taxpayers.

Chapter 5: Recommendations

Long-Range Strategic Priority 1

Begin planning for a possible indoor recreation facility. Current indoor space is near capacity, and New England does not lend itself to outdoor programming 12 months out of the year. A recreation facility should be conceptualized as a multi-generational facility that meets the needs of children through seniors, and includes space for active recreation, fitness activities, passive recreation, and social / educational programs including the creative arts. Such a facility can also be used as meeting space for municipal board and committees, non-profit organizations, and civic organizations. It could also be envisioned as a central human services hub, housing recreation, senior services, and the welfare department.

Long-Range Strategic Priority 2

Begin planning for new outdoor recreation facilities to meet the changing needs of Sunapee's population. There appears to be a significant need for increased adult recreation programming. Many programs of interest to adults are facility-dependent such as pickleball or other racquet sports, adult softball, bocce, horseshoes, or volleyball. New facilities may be utilized for these and other revenue-generating programs including sport instruction, specialty camps, and festivals or large events that can bring people to Sunapee.

Specialty facilities such as dog parks, a ski jump, skate park, tubing hill, pump track, splash pad, etc. should be kept in mind as new facilities are being developed.

Mid-Range Strategic Priority 1

Create, fund, and engage in an ongoing recreation facility improvement process. Similar in nature to a road surface management plan, this process should prioritize facility maintenance and renovation of municipal recreation facilities. As the budget allows, the plan should be implemented, with ongoing maintenance funded annually through the recreation department budget or the creation and funding of a recreation facility maintenance expendable fund. Judicious use of the Recreation Revolving Fund for facility maintenance should also be considered in cases where the facility improvements are tied closely to the source of revolving fund revenue. Recommended order of prioritization for the facilities listed in this project are as follows from most immediate to least:

1. Dewey Park
2. George's Mills Beach
3. Veterans Park
4. Dewey Beach
5. Coffin Park
6. Sunapee Harbor
7. Tilton Park

Ongoing facility improvement should address issues such as turf quality, parking, lighting, drainage, signage, scoreboards, fencing, disability access, improved amenities (bathroom facilities, water filling stations, etc.), and trail connectivity. As we move into the future, the simultaneous integration of technology and celebration of the facility's history should be attended to as well.

It is important for any plan addressing ongoing quality improvement to be reviewed annually to gauge progress as well as to make changes to the plan to more effectively meet the needs of residents. It is equally important that the facility improvement plan (once adopted) be consulted and heeded when decisions are being made regarding how the town of Sunapee will expend resources to maintain and upgrade public spaces.

Although listed as a lower priority, Coffin Park stands out as a candidate for a large-scale renovation that should consider funding through the Land Water Conservation Fund or a similar mechanism.

Specialty facilities such as dog parks, a ski jump, skate park, running/walking track, tubing hill, pump track, splash pad, etc. should be kept in mind as facilities are being renovated.

Mid-Range Strategic Priority 3

Improve communication strategies with residents across ages and levels of participation. Veterans Park, Tilton Park, and Coffin Park all had greater than 10% of respondents who were unaware of the facility. Coffin Park appears to be greatly underutilized with nearly 40% of respondents unaware of the park's existence. Improved signage, diversification of communication channels, and purposeful programming at the parks can increase awareness and utilization of these resources. The same can be said for the marketing of programs, events, and services. As the department continues to engage a range of ages, interests, and abilities, identifying the best way to promote programs to residents must remain an ongoing discussion.

Short-Range Strategic Priority 1

Increase the number of available person-hours available to the recreation department. This could be accomplished through the funding of a full-time position, the hiring of part-time staff, or increasing volunteer opportunities. The current programming is a significant load for a part-time staff member. The ability to engage in community engagement, program evaluation, program development, or other administrative activities is limited by the lack of available hours.

Short-Range Strategic priority 2

Budget for and engage in a project to ameliorate the drainage issues at Veterans Park. This facility has already undergone significant renovations over the past several years, but the turf quality and drainage issues continue to devalue the resource. Additionally, a moderate investment in improving the infield and upgrading the amenities including seating and parking could turn this field into Sunapee's destination location for outdoor recreation.

Additionally, the successful “completion” of one project tends to gather public support for future improvements.

A Note

Not listed as a strategic priority, but integral to the mission of Sunapee recreation is the ongoing planning, facilitation, and evaluation of current and new programs.

Public wants and needs should be consistently gauged via the Recreation Committee as well as regular surveys, listening sessions, or focus groups when developing new programs. Special care should be given to meeting the needs of traditionally underserved populations including older adults, individuals with disabilities, and low-income families.

In this attempt to serve the entire community, it is important to maintain a diverse membership on the Recreation Committee by recruiting new members that fill gaps in the current membership’s interests, experiences, and demographics.

Program evaluation should be considered a regular part of the programming cycle, utilizing RecDesk or any other Content Management System to send out post-program surveys that gather information regarding:

- Overall satisfaction with the program
- Acquisition of Programmatic Goals
- Quality of Staff
- Appropriateness of Location
- Perception of Value
- Intent to Return
- Suggestions for Improvements

At the completion of each program evaluation, decisions must be purposefully made to continue the program without modification, modify the program to better meet participant needs, or to terminate the program.

Finally, it is important for the recreation committee, recreation staff, and town manager to treat the strategic plan as a living document that must be consulted when making decisions and regularly considered for modification. Strategic planning should occur in three-to-five-year intervals, with ongoing data collection as described above feeding that process. However, once adopted, the strategic plan should drive decision making about expenditures, program development, staffing, and facility management.

Appendix A: Survey

A PDF of the Sunapee Recreation Needs Assessment survey can be found at:

<https://bit.ly/SunapeeRecSurvey>

If you are unable to access the PDF, please contact Matt Frye at Matt.Frye@Unh.Edu or 603-862-6173.