

H. Recommendations

Throughout the plan development process, community members have expressed the need for more variety focusing on programming opportunities for youth and older adults, exercise, health and ways to experience nature. Based on these needs, new and existing parks should be designed to offer recreation variety, creating experiences with wide-ranging benefits. Improved facilities should include both traditional facilities such as play areas, and sports fields, as well as alternative options such as nature play, community gardens, and splash pads.



Summary

Expand places for children to play

- Add new and varied play areas and equipment. As part of a capital plan DPR should plan to replace at least one playground every four years and anticipate a lifecycle of 10-15 years. New and rebuilt play areas should be distinct from nearby play areas, and should offer more active play and seating areas for caregivers. Where two play areas are in close proximity, consider varying equipment offerings to diversify types of play. More types of equipment, including climbers, spinners, and disk swings, and ADA accessible structure and surfaces should be incorporated.
- Add nature play elements into existing parks or town owned natural areas. The town should consider nature play in addition to or as an alternative to traditional playground equipment in neighborhood parks throughout the Town. Consider testing out a nature play area within Fairbanks park as a pilot project in connection with providing access to Wigwam Pond. This would be a lower maintenance and more context sensitive solution than placing manufactured equipment in the greenway setting.
- Develop a destination play area. Consider developing at least one destination play area. Destination play areas are designed around a common theme, usually inspired by the location, providing play opportunities that are hands-on, physically challenging and/or educational.
- Destination play areas should be located in the signature park. In this case The Dolan Center makes a lot of sense, it provides a needed amenity to that part of the community. A destination playground at the Dolan Center also brings people to the flagship park of Dedham where there is the greatest opportunity to disseminate information and establish a brand for DPR.

Improve opportunities to experience nature

- Integrate natural processes. Reveal and enhance nature and natural processes through the use of native plantings and green infrastructure as aesthetic park features.

- Add natural play elements-Develop natural play areas where appropriate to protection of the resource and allowing children can interact with nature.
- Provide interpretive signage. Provide signage consistent with brand and marketing message to support environmental education and interpretation. Including wildlife with parks and natural areas, points of interest, plants, history and waterfront areas.
- Increase Access. Build paths and trails with existing parks and natural areas to increase access and interaction. Connect internal park trails with larger plans for greenways, rail trail, neighborhood trails and connections to commercial areas.

Develop new outdoor facilities

- Manor Park has already gone through the process of design and permitting and because much of the amenities within the plans are identified as community needs within this Recreation Master Plan, Manor Park should be a high priority for implementation for DPR. Manor Park is a large project with budget impacts not only upon implementation but also in future maintenance. Consideration should be given to organizing and developing planning and implementation strategies associated with “GOAL 2: Preservation, Growth and Management” prior to implementing Manor Park.
- Identify locations to add community gardens. Identify opportunities to add community gardens within park sites and in partnership with neighborhood organizations. Sites should have minimum six hours of sunlight, a water service and maintenance access. Programming offered could expand on Dedham Grows with partner Green City Growers and add additional programming like environmental, agricultural and nutritional education for youth.
- Add a skate park. Consider adding an active recreation program to the parks system other than organized sports. A skate park offers a new active recreation component and equipment. This may be able to pair with a more permanent outdoor or winter skate rink.
- Add a Spray Ground or Splash Pad. Less maintenance intense than an outdoor pool, splash pads can have a relatively small footprint and can be designed to be sustainable and eco-friendly with recirculation and capture and re-purpose water management systems. Dedham currently does not maintain any outdoor aquatic facilities.
- Add a neighborhood park or pocket park to the Dedham Village/Common area. This area of Dedham is relatively under served by neighborhood or community parks and amenities.
- Previous plans for the former landfill are dated and no longer meet the future needs of the community. A new park master plan should be developed that considers the need for an additional full size baseball field, general open space and trails, and new and potential new amenities such as playgrounds, sport courts, small skate parks or splash pads, see Figure H2 Concept plan for former Dedham landfill.

Consider New Indoor Facilities

- Consider a completing a feasibility study for an indoor community center. As part of the needs assessment it was determined that the community and local organizations are in need of additional indoor space. A feasibility study specific to an indoor community center should be completed to verify these findings. The community center should look to offset indoor programs offered at the Dolan Recreation Center and include at a minimum a full size gym space. Consideration should be given to expanding or renovating the Mucciaccio Pool in combination with a community center.

Develop a Greenway Linkages Plan or Trail Connectivity Plan

When developed, the future trail system should meet the need for nearly all areas of the Town. Though the plan may not be the single answer to creating or improving greenways, it provides important guidance for creating a more robust system. Using the plan as a model, the Town would have the ability to leverage an interconnected trail and greenway system as a major attraction, a recreation resource and a transportation asset.

- Identify utility corridors for greenway and trail expansion. Dedham has several public utility or transit corridors that can double as public trail corridors and improve connections, as suggested in previous planning efforts. The Town should carefully examine these corridors and consider the potential of a trail project to provide connections while improving the aesthetics of the corridor. The Town should work with neighbors early in the process to uncover potential issues and opportunities along these corridors.
- Collaborate with other departments. Development of the trail and greenway system will require close collaboration with other departments including those managing State and Federal lands. Parks, transportation, and public works representatives, as well as utility providers and other agency staff, should work closely to identify a process for moving a trails plan forward.
- Identify a wayfinding system. In conjunction with development of a trails plan a comprehensive wayfinding system should be developed that is recognizable and understandable to all users. The system of signs should indicate where greenways and trailheads are located, distances between destinations, and safety and educational information. It should include a consistent design theme and call for signs that are durable and easy to maintain.
- Identify potential for primary and secondary trailheads. Trailheads should be added throughout the trail network to provide access points and encourage use of the trail system. Both primary and secondary trailheads should be provided and should conform to a consistent design theme. Primary trailheads function as the main entrance for a trail and include restrooms and designated parking. Secondary trailheads provide additional access to trails and do not include restrooms. Trailheads should be incorporated into existing and proposed parks and added as standalone facilities where trail access is needed.

Recommendations for Existing Parks

The condition of the Town's existing parks is important to residents. To further the vision, the Town will need to invest in upgrades to many parks.

Replace playgrounds

Most of the Town's existing playgrounds are composed of a typical post and deck system which does not challenge older youth and does not contribute to park identity. Playgrounds require periodic replacement and have a life cycle of about 12 -15 years, as they age as and as new safety requirements are put in place. The playgrounds listed below should be replaced within the next 12 years. As the Town replaces these playgrounds, the elements should be diversified to include swings, net climbers, spinners, and other more varied manufactured play equipment. Nature play and other types of play experiences should also be incorporated.

- Paul Park
- Barnes Memorial Park
- Churchill Park
- Condon Park

Continue to work on partnering with schools to utilize the properties as surrogate parks in off hours of school day. Use parks expertise to help schools replace playgrounds and include ADA-accessible surfacing.

- Fairbanks Park
- Dolan Center
- Manor Park

Resurface existing sports courts

Dedham has sports courts available for basketball and tennis. To be in playable condition, court surfaces should be smooth without cracks and painted lines should be clearly visible. DPR plans to consider lighting of highly used court facilities with the replacement of each court at the end of its current lifecycle. Court resurfacing should be conducted at the following parks.

- Dedham High School (Tennis) part of MOU
- Churchill Park (Basketball)
- Consider the addition of another Tennis Facility (Dedham is underserved compared to national standards)

Add Shelters

The approach to shelters should fall in line with the community’s identified interest in a higher design quality and in having accessible places to gather. Shelters should be designed based on individual park or neighborhood character and preferences and should fit the scale of the parks in which they are located. Larger structures with greater design detail and features should be provided in larger community parks, while shelters in smaller parks can be smaller and more basic in design. Shelters should be added in the following parks:

- Barnes Memorial Parks
- Churchill Park
- Condon Park
- Fairbanks Park
- Paul Park

Add Restrooms

Parks that attract a high level of community use or attract users for extended time should have restrooms. This was one of the largest categories of feedback that we received input on in the community survey. Restrooms should be added to the following parks:

- Paul Park
- Condon Park
- Dolan Recreation Center (separate from existing building)

Improve existing park entrances and access

Park entrances are important elements of site design, providing a gateway and creating identity. Formal entrances also discourage traffic where it is undesirable, reducing impacts on landscaping and adjacent neighbors. Landscaping, lighting, and park entrance signs are all effective ways to formalize entrances and establish identity. Parks should have clear and accessible entrances from a public street, pathway and/or off-street parking areas. In most cases, entrances must be suitable for maintenance and emergency vehicles. Improved entrances and access should be provided for the following parks.

- Barnes Memorial Park
- Condon Park
- Fairbanks Park
- Church Hill Park
- Dolan Recreation Center

ADA Transition Plan

Most parks have recreation facilities with numerous accessibility barriers (see ADA Access Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan in the appendix of the Open Space and Recreation Plan). Improvements include providing an accessible path of travel through each site and to each facility, linking all facilities; adding accessible amenities such as picnic tables, water fountains, restrooms and benches; and ensuring that accessible safety surfacing is provided at all renovated play areas. In addition, ADA guidelines should be considered in all park planning efforts.

Recommendations for Athletic Fields

As identified in the Needs Assessment, Dedham has a need for a mix of formal and informal fields for soccer and other sports requiring rectangular field space. However, many existing parks have spatial constraints that cannot accommodate large field sizes, making the addition of new athletic fields challenging.

Relieving capacity needs will require new facilities as well as changes to existing facilities in order to increase the quantity, quality and availability of field space. The recommended improvements should be phased in over time and addressed from highest priority to lowest priority. Recommended improvements include increasing maintenance on existing athletic fields, replacing existing natural athletic turf fields, re-orienting existing fields, and constructing new fields in town-owned properties.

Core Recommendations

- Establish policies for field usage for leagues and organizations based on a defined number of games and practices for each team.
- Update maintenance standards on all fields as outlined in the maintenance section of this

report (Chapter I).

- Evaluate policies related to fees on scheduled fields.
- Establish a life cycle maintenance and renewal/replacement program for all athletic fields to extend the life of fields and have the ability to replace or renovate fields once they have reached their useful lives.

Athletic Field Capital Improvement Plan

Establish a phased Athletic Field Capital Improvements Plan focusing on the following: Address high priority needs within five years beginning with redevelopment of school yards to allow current usage to shift to those fields while funding and development of new takes place. Address medium and low priority needs within five to 15 years while considering the overall effectiveness of the high priority improvements and any shifts in demand that might occur during this period.

Additional improvements that should be included in all redevelopment and new development projects including field amenities such as restrooms, subsurface drainage, irrigation, scoreboards, bleachers, and storage facilities.

High Priority

Implement proposed plans for Manor Park. This project is well supported by the public. The plans have a number of benefits beyond athletic recreation space including new playgrounds, tennis courts a permanent dog park and a large system of trails. The proposed synthetic turf fields will alleviate some pressures on the system for more athletic recreation space and lighting of the fields will dramatically extend their use, however without rehabilitation of the school yards into safer multi-use open space, Dedham will still have a lack of athletic space to support its youth organizations.

Medium Priority

Plan and implement a new Park Master Plan for Fairbanks Park. Fairbanks park currently serves as a special use park with three youth baseball fields and Frietas Soccer Field. Major improvements are needed to replace the contaminated irrigation system and the fields are extremely close to one another creating unsafe playing conditions when fields are being concurrently used. Once Manor Park (as planned) is constructed Frietas field will no longer be needed for soccer capacity and the park should be re-planned to serve as community park. The plan should include a tournament level youth baseball/softball complex with three fields properly spaced apart and oriented. The plan should also accommodate a system of trails that provides access to Wigwam Pond, a natural playground or splash pad and outdoor fitness stations.

Low Priority

DPR should strongly consider partnering with the Dedham School District to create new site master plans that address the following concerns:

- Updating of the open space within the school yards reduces the amount of intense maintenance required by baseball/softball fields. Fields that are engineered and irrigated can withstand a more intense amount of use which will have a positive effect on the capacity of athletic recreation space. Natural turf fields need to be rested and steps should be taken to ensure that the number of events that occur on each field are regulated by a field policy in order to help maintain a healthy playing surface.
- Plan and Implement a new park master plan for Barnes Memorial Park.
- Barnes Memorial Park is the largest park in the park system. It is also the most heavily used for athletic recreation purposes. The fields receive an unsustainable amount of use by baseball, softball, soccer, and football. Lighting is outdated and needs to be replaced, and only portions of the site are irrigated. With pressure relief from school yards and the proposed Manor Park, Barnes Memorial should be re-planned. Davis field should become a dedicated baseball field with updated fences including the outfield, new dugouts, a score board, and new lighting. Heaphy Field and the softball field should updated but remain primary fields with secondary overlays. The park edges could be softened with developed plantings and gardens to support adult and environmental programming and internal trails system linking spaces and the new Gonzalez Field.

School	Planning Recommendations
Capen School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove baseball/softball fields. • Re-purpose area to be general open space that accommodates practice and low level soccer. • Relocate the basketball court to the upper part of the site and combine with a new playground.
Greenlodge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove the south west facing baseball/softball field. • Re-grade the entire area. • Provide subsurface drainage and irrigation throughout the open space. • Replace playground. • Provide pathways for better accessibility to the athletic open space and playground.
Loewen Field (Middle School)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide accessible pathways to the dugouts and field. • Install new irrigation system.
Oakdale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove softball fields. • Re-grade the open space to accommodate a single large multi-use field with maximum 2% slope. • Install irrigation and subsurface drainage. • Replace playground.
Riverdale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update irrigation and provide subsurface drainage. • Provide accessible pathways to the dugouts. • Renovate and replace infield. • Replace playground in future project.

Figure 27. Example of Concept Master Plan for Former Dedham Landfill

