

*Per Steve Mountain:
Report Dated
Winter 2009/2010*

FINAL WORKING DRAFT

A FOUR TOWNS RECREATION PLAN

Prepared with supervision by the Four Towns Steering Committee
and

Under the auspices of The Mayors and Councils of
Chester Borough
Chester Township
Mendham Borough
Mendham Township

Funded by a Grant from the State of New Jersey

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INTRODUCTION TO THE DRAFT

The following document is a final draft iteration of the Four Towns Recreation Plan. It has been issued in this form to facilitate access to the Plan and its contents in their entirety, to inform those interested residents of its particulars. The Plan has been submitted to the municipal representatives of the Mendhams and Chesters for review, previous to this issue, for consideration by the general public.

It is available in this form in recognition of its size and with the knowledge that fully informing the public of the scope of the Plan is not a reasonable expectation, during the typical time frame available, during the public presentations soon to be announced. The Steering Committee, after dedication of long hours of study and discussion of the many topics addressed within this Plan, are intent that any public interest and all residents of the Four Towns have an opportunity to consider the entire document, to inform opinions which they may then relate during the public hearings.

The Steering Committee of the Four Towns Recreation Plan has arranged to offer the Plan document in PDF form on the municipal websites and to submit Plan copies to local news agencies together with notices of upcoming public meetings. These are anticipated to occur in mid to late October and will be scheduled in community facilities, also to be announced.

The Steering Committee invites all interested residents of the Mendhams and Chesters to take advantage of the opportunity to understand more concerning a hopeful future of recreation planning within the Four Towns. This Plan is a unified proposal describing a framework for coordinated recreation system planning and resource sharing. It is based on recognition of the tradition of cooperation that has long been the foundation of youth sports and civic associations in the Four Towns and presents opportunities for residents to further their unmet preferences for diverse outdoor pursuits by unifying access to the remarkable assets of the combined systems.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

FINAL WORKING DRAFT	2
A FOUR TOWNS RECREATION PLAN	2
INTRODUCTION TO THE DRAFT	2
THE FOUR TOWNS RECREATION PLAN MISSION STATEMENT	7
BACKGROUND	7
INCENTIVES	7
MISSION STATEMENT	8
PREFACE – THE FOUR TOWNS RECREATION PLAN	9
INTRODUCTION – AREA CONTEXT	10
CHESTER BOROUGH IN OVERVIEW	12
CHESTER TOWNSHIP IN OVERVIEW	13
MENDHAM BOROUGH IN OVERVIEW	15
MENDHAM TOWNSHIP IN OVERVIEW	17
PURPOSE AND PROCESS OF A FOUR TOWNS PLAN	20
FOUR TOWNS DEMOGRAPHICS	25
POPULATION DISTRIBUTION	27
EVALUATION OF FACILITIES	27
FACILITY EVALUATION SYSTEM	29
PARK RECREATION LANDS MAP	31
PARKS LOCATION MAP	32
EVALUATIONS: CHESTER BOROUGH PARKS	33
A. GROVE STREET PARK	33
GROVE STREET PARK MAP	34
EVALUATION SHEET - GROVE STREET PARK	35
B. MEMORIAL PARK	36
MEMORIAL PARK MAP	37
EVALUATION SHEET - MEMORIAL PARK	38
C. COLLIS PARK	39
COLLIS PARK MAP	40
D. CHESTER POOL	42
EVALUATIONS: CHESTER TOWNSHIP PARKS	43
A. CHUBB PARK	43
CHUBB PARK MAP	44
EVALUATION SHEET – CHUBB PARK	45
B. BLACK RIVER FIELDS	46
BLACK RIVER FIELDS MAP	48
EVALUATION SHEET – BLACK RIVER FIELDS	49
C. HIGHLANDS RIDGE PARK	50
HIGHLANDS RIDGE PARK MAP	51
EVALUATION SHEET – HIGHLAND RIDGE PARK	52
D. PARKER ROAD RECREATION SITE	53
EVALUATIONS: MENDHAM BOROUGH PARKS	54
A. BOROUGH PARK	54
BOROUGH PARK MAP	55
EVALUATION SHEET – BOROUGH PARK	56
B. WEST FIELD	57
WEST FIELD MAP	58
EVALUATION SHEET – WEST FIELD	59

C.	PASTIME FIELD	60
	PASTIME FIELD MAP	61
	EVALUATION SHEET – PASTIME FIELD.....	62
D.	GARABRANT CENTER	63
E.	FRANKLIN ROAD	64
	FRANKLIN ROAD MAP	65
	EVALUATION SHEET – FRANKLIN ROAD TRACT	66
F.	MOUNTAIN VALLEY PARK	67
	MOUNTAIN VALLEY PARK MAP	68
G.	HILLTOP SCHOOL – MENDHAM BOROUGH	69
	HILLTOP SCHOOL – MENDHAM BOROUGH MAP	70
	EVALUATION SHEET – HILLTOP SCHOOL SITE	71
H.	THE COSMA TRACT – MENDHAM BOROUGH.....	72
	THE COSMA TRACT – MENDHAM BOROUGH MAP	73
	SITE EVALUATIONS: MENDHAM TOWNSHIP PARKS	74
A.	MEADOWWOOD PARK	74
	MEADOWWOOD PARK MAP	75
B.	RALSTON FIELD	76
	RALSTON FIELD MAP	77
	EVALUATION SHEET – RALSTON FIELD	78
C.	WYSONG PARK.....	79
	WYSONG PARK MAP.....	80
	EVALUATION SHEET – WYSONG PARK.....	81
D.	BROOKSIDE BEACH	82
	BROOKSIDE BEACH MAP	83
E.	BROOKSIDE COMMUNITY CENTER	84
	BROOKSIDE COMMUNITY CENTER MAP	85
	EVALUATION SHEET – BROOKSIDE COMMUNITY CENTER.....	86
F.	MT. PLEASANT ROAD – ACTIVITY CENTER	87
	MT. PLEASANT ROAD – ACTIVITY CENTER MAP	88
	EVALUATION SHEET – MT. PLEASANT ROAD	89
G.	MENDHAM TOWNSHIP ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	90
H.	MENDHAM TOWNSHIP MIDDLE SCHOOL	91
	MENDHAM TOWNSHIP MIDDLE SCHOOL MAP.....	92
	EVALUATION SHEET – MENDHAM TOWNSHIP MIDDLE SCHOOL.....	93
I.	INDIA BROOK PARK – SEEING EYE PARCEL	94
	INDIA BROOK PARK MAP	95
J.	ST. JOHN’S ACADEMY	96
	ST. JOHN’S ACADEMY MAP	97
	EVALUATION SHEET – ST. JOHN’S ACADEMY	98
	EVALUATIONS: CHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION.....	99
A.	BRAGG/DICKERSON SCHOOL COMPLEX.....	99
	BRAGG/DICKERSON SCHOOL COMPLEX MAP	100
B.	BLACK RIVER MIDDLE SCHOOL.....	101
	BLACK RIVER MIDDLE SCHOOL MAP.....	102
C.	WEST MORRIS MENDHAM HIGH SCHOOL.....	103
	WEST MORRIS MENDHAM HIGH SCHOOL MAP.....	104
	EVALUATION SHEET – MENDHAM HIGH SCHOOL	105
	OPEN SPACE RESOURCES IN THE FOUR TOWNS.....	106

RESOURCE CHARACTERISTICS	108
1. Mini-Parks/Pocket Parks	108
2. Neighborhood Parks	109
3. Community Parks	110
4. Athletic Fields	111
5. Natural Resource Areas	111
FACILITY AND ACTIVITY RESOURCE CHARACTERISTICS	112
COURT SPORTS	112
1. Tennis	112
2. Basketball	113
3. Handball, Squash, Racquetball	114
4. Minor Court Facilities	114
OTHER MAINSTREAM RECREATIONS:	115
SWIMMING	115
BICYCLING	117
ROLLER SKATING/BLADING AND SKATE BOARDING	119
ICE SKATING	120
PLAYGROUNDS	120
CULTURAL FACILITIES	121
LANDSCAPING, ENTRIES, AMENITIES, GARDENS	122
(AESTHETIC CONDITIONS)	122
RESOURCE IMPROVEMENT POTENTIALS	123
FACILITY LIGHTING	123
SYNTHETIC SURFACES VS NATURAL TURF	125
INDOOR RECREATION FEATURES	126
INDOOR FACILITIES - RESTROOMS	128
THE FOUR TOWNS SPORT ASSOCIATIONS	128
BASEBALL ASSOCIATIONS – CHESTER LITTLE LEAGUE	131
COMPARISON OF FACILITIES TO PROGRAMS	133
CHESTER LITTLE LEAGUE	133
BALANCE IN CHESTER LITTLE LEAGUE SOFTBALL	134
MENDHAM LITTLE LEAGUE	134
MENDHAM WOMEN’S SOFTBALL	137
WEST MORRIS SOCCER CLUB	138
BALANCE OF FACILITIES TO PROGRAM – WEST MORRIS SOCCER	139
CHESTER/MENDHAM LACROSSE	141
SYSTEM NEED AND CAPABILITY	142
TWIN BORO BEARS	143
CHEERLEADING	146
CHESTER TRACK AND CROSS COUNTRY	146
MENDHAM TRACK AND CROSS COUNTRY	148
CHESTER OUTDOOR BASKETBALL LEAGUE	149
EVALUATION OF THE ENTIRE FOUR TOWNS SYSTEM	150
ELEMENTS OF A FOUR TOWNS PROCESS	155
CONSTITUTION AND PROCESS OF A FOUR TOWNS PLAN	159
PRIORITY ORGANIZATIONAL TASKS OF THE FOUR TOWNS PARTNERSHIP	164
Task #1- Outreach	164
Task #2 – Resource Inventory	164
Task #3 – Education	165

CREATION OF A SUPPORT STRUCTURE	165
REPRESENTING JUSTIFIABLE PURPOSE	166
INITIAL PLANNING PROJECTS	167
INITIAL COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS	168
• Playfield Spatial Characteristics	169
• Compliance Characteristics	170
• Turf and Playfield Surfaces	170
INITIATION OF A SYSTEMWIDE PREFERENCE SURVEY	175
LONG TERM PLANNING PROJECTS	178
A REGIONAL PARK MASTER PLAN	178
AN INDOOR SPORTS COMPLEX	180
RECOMMENDATIONS	181
TOPICS CONCERNING THE ENTIRE SYSTEM	181
EXECUTIVE ACTIONS	181
ADDITIONAL FACILITIES	183
RECREATION ACTIVITY SUPPORT	184
AESTHETIC CHARACTERISTICS	184
UTILITY SYSTEMS	185
MANAGEMENT PERSONNEL TRAINING	185
UNDERSTANDING WHOLE SERVICE SYSTEM NEEDS	185
FUNDING FUTURE RECREATION SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS	185
ENABLING	186
APPENDIX 1	187
RESPONSE CITATIONS FROM CHESTER LITTLE LEAGUE	187
RESPONSE CITATIONS FROM MENDHAM LITTLE LEAGUE	189

THE FOUR TOWNS RECREATION PLAN MISSION STATEMENT

BACKGROUND

The Steering Committee for the Four Towns Recreation Plan is established by agreement of Chester Borough, Chester Township, Mendham Borough, and Mendham Township. Its purpose is to create a planning framework to redirect the administration, management, programming, service, and improvement of elements of the recreation system commonly utilized by residents of the Four Towns.

Similar revenue, manpower and service resources are committed annually by each community for operation of active sports facilities. These are programmed by local sports associations for use by teams drawn from the Four Towns.

The underlying premise of this proposal is; that each community and all participants in organized programs can benefit by a single, shared management system. Just as the communities are integrated socially by common schools, churches, associations and activities of daily life, it is proposed that a unified recreation system can enable and sustain active use facility initiatives more efficiently than by single purpose.

Shared manpower, equipment and materials resources, applied according to a systematized plan for renovations and new facility development will reduce local impacts and improve political viability within each partner Town. The ability to close facilities for repair, by shifting load to neighbor systems will assure adequate time for redevelopment and more economical construction sequences. Unified planning will present continuous channels for communication, enabling each administration to select options for future development that are most appropriate to their unique capability and to negotiate for the increase of other, less suitable features in neighboring locations.

INCENTIVES

The Committee proposes that sharing resources and partnering with aligned interests to respond to stressed infrastructure and diverse recreation demands will be enhanced in a variety of ways. These include:

- Economies in purchase of equipment and materials.
- Reduction of excess duplicate facilities.
- Options for balancing changing program participation
- Ease of providing for new sports.
- Collaboration on best management practices for facility maintenance.
- Flexibility to "rest" fields or to perform major renovations.
- Increased visibility and participation by aligned interests in sharing system goals.
- Enhanced political access and potential to broadly encourage popular support.
- Increased potential to find accommodations for "special interests" activities.
- Dramatically increased leverage with County, State, and sponsor opportunities for funding and partnering.
- A broad base and unified purpose to solicit private contribution of time, work, and funding.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Mission of the Four Towns Steering Committee is: To create a framework enabling cooperation and a unified planning process shared by the communities of Chester Borough, Chester Township, Mendham Borough, and Mendham Township, for the purposes of promoting, improving and sustaining recreation systems of those communities.

Goals of this mission include:

- 1) Improving service characteristics of the combined recreation system by enhancing access, safety, convenience, accommodation, and aesthetic qualities of all facilities.
- 2) Balancing service shortfalls by exploitation of resources available in any partner Town.
- 3) Economizing maintenance operations through joint planning/sharing of materials, manpower, and equipment.
- 4) Response to new facility initiatives by sharing space potentials, funding promotion, and political endorsements.
- 5) Establishment of an open, integrated communication system between recreation, public works, and administrative components of all partner towns.
- 6) Identification of reasonable, equitable forms of participation and proportioning of the commitment of each community.
- 7) Conduct of an open process, committed to sharing its deliberations with any interested party and open to consideration of comments, proposals, or ambitions of any representative of a local purpose.
- 8) Identification of external fund sources and opportunities to partner with agencies or interests outside the Four Towns.

PREFACE – THE FOUR TOWNS RECREATION PLAN

The following recreation plan has been prepared to assist a systematic approach to planning for future improvement and management of recreation sites and facilities within the Four Towns (Chester Borough, Chester Township, Mendham Borough, and Mendham Township).

This plan deliberately focuses upon outdoor recreation systems and developed facilities regularly programmed for the benefit of area residents. It is purposefully exclusive of indoor activities and does not evaluate characteristics of the many existing programs sponsored by the recreation agencies operating in the four municipalities. Open space resources and trailway systems are not evaluated in depth except as their presence or connectivity has a particular direct influence upon the service characteristics of a particular site or activity type.

It is based in general upon inventory, observation and assessment of existing sites, constructed features and program delivery systems operating today within the Four Towns as derived from field observations and as reported in a series of interviews with Township citizens, representatives of sports associations and representatives of the Four Towns.

Objectively, this plan seeks to identify a sequence of practical responses to physical conditions, organizational characteristics, or service deficiencies that exist now or will likely emerge as the Four Towns continue to grow, diversify, and respond to recreation opportunities.

This plan represents in part an intention by the Four Towns to adapt, as practically possible, to the current status of management of recreation infrastructure and delivery systems and to begin to implement a philosophical and statutory framework capable of anticipation of and planned responses to recreation system challenges and opportunities.

A variety of opportunities and several substantial issues will confront the Four Towns as actions are considered for priority. In aggregate the four systems and their citizen's organizations present excellent resources and an unusually large array of options for modification of its recreation system. Presuming that a reasonable balance between cost, opportunity and motivation exists, enabling shared planning and capitalization of future recreation objectives, the Four Towns working in a concerted, cooperative effort hope to achieve system goals more efficiently than by acting alone.

Traditional and accustomed formats for site utilization and operational circumstances may require deliberate and substantial reorganization to better distribute or organize service support systems or change current local land use.

To this end it will be incumbent upon the four administrations to define, from among many possibilities, a philosophical model and commitment that shall be directed toward the sharing of these services. Recreation is and will remain a uniquely subjective and discretionary option of municipal leaders. No legal mandate exists defining or enforcing the supply of recreation systems. Scope and character of these is based chiefly on the will of administrative agencies according to their appreciation of their constituents' needs and in context of the political realities in current time.

The Four Towns Plan is intended to identify strategies for advancement of shared recreation objectives and to forward informed, balanced proposals to exploit the aggregate of human and physical resources across the entire Four Town service area.

INTRODUCTION – AREA CONTEXT

The Four Towns study area is a section of western Morris County of approximately fifty five square miles encompassing Chester Borough, Chester Township, Mendham Borough, and Mendham Township. Its physical characteristics are predominated by rolling, forested hillsides composed of variously stony soils deposited by glaciations. Two town centers (Mendham and Chester) are the historic and present commercial and civic nuclei for surrounding suburban and rural neighborhoods constructed in the Townships largely after their political separation from the Boroughs.

The Area's historic rural character began to change radically in the mid 20th century as the New York metropolitan area flourished and as many of the white collar workers employed there sought the country life or access to large tracts as locations for construction of their stately homes. As a result of this new influx of people, area population has doubled since 1960. The influence of this dramatic increase has been felt primarily in the Townships as large, vacant land areas there enabled subdivisions of farms and estate lands into numerous, high end single family residences.

Predictably and as is uniformly the case in towns with such rapid expansion, local recreation development initiatives lagged well behind the increase of population. Facilities that had traditionally been adequate to support a slowly growing population were swamped by a doubling of new residents and a massive influx of children. Urgent necessity to expand schools, construct roadway and utility infrastructure, redistrict and lure ratable enterprises and increase all aspects of public service cast recreation and parkland development into a comparatively low placement among more pressing requirements for commitment of available financial resources.

The Four Town's traditional recreation systems were organized around existing athletic fields constructed in few town parks and in conjunction with the needs of community schools. School situated venues sustained the bulk of active use programming but were lost to expansion of school buildings and parking lots as additions were quickly placed to meet burgeoning demand. These additions eliminated or reduced former lawns and ball fields utilized as school and community recreation space, placing greater emphasis on area recreation sites.

As the Township continued to grow in population, it changed in character as well and in the preferences and disposition of new residents toward the type, scope and delivery of major sports programs (baseball, football and soccer). Recreation organized to supply services, facilities, administration and maintenance consistent with the expectations of exurbanites is different from the Township's historic model in three essential characteristics. First and most important is service itself. Recreation facilities and programs are identified as factors that represent the perception of quality of a community and are, like utilities, viewed by some as an entitlement of residency. The second is availability of services similar and equivalent to previous experiences from diverse other municipalities. The third is quality and context. Compared to older, more urbanized communities where recreation has grown and diversified in the past, the experience of adapted, makeshift multi-use facilities, as were constructed by local labor in the Four Towns, were not uniformly regarded as ideal, in comparison to facilities remembered from experience in former home towns.

In great measure, the very cumbersome task of wholly shifting administrative experience to new and more responsive models for the scope of services and the character of facilities, appropriate

to changing expectations, has lagged well behind area growth and variety in the popular expectations for recreation programs and their supporting facilities.

A reflexive philosophy is possible in a community of 2,000 like-minded citizens when a new ball field is needed, but not necessarily useful in a circumstance where many different interests compete for more, better or different facilities. As rural communities grow and diversify in experience and preference for a host of "new" activities, a planning mechanism that anticipates expansion and determines a strategy for response to changing options should be in place. Where forward looking planning for recreation does not occur or where system expansion is not a practical fiscal option, reliance upon citizens to achieve their own, best possible circumstances, simply continues. A piece by piece aggregation of facilities placed wherever opportunity enables, grows in response to momentary expedience, irrespective of adequate support or considerations or whole community need. In general, the recent past of the Four Towns has been characterized by this sort of reflexive policy with respect to recreation. It has produced a fairly large opportunity for those activities popularized by tradition, and cultural importance, such as baseball, football and soccer but has failed to create sufficient opportunity to engage preferences for individual pastimes and the preferences of the old, very young and to a large extent, the average working adult.

Physical open space and opportunities within available land dedicated to recreation is today, exhausted in the Boroughs but abundant in the Townships. State and County owned parks, open space parcels and game lands have been set aside for public utilization within the Four Towns municipal limits. In addition, several large land tracts now dedicated to recreation have recently been acquired by both Townships, adding to an already impressive inventory of properties excluded from future residential or commercial use. Watershed associations, land conservancies, local landowners, and others have similarly collaborated with Township, County, and State agencies to secure yet other land tracts as open space. In aggregate, the enormous land resource set aside and the confluence of recently adopted regional land use restrictions, which will act to limit future subdivision, have contributed to assurance of a Four Towns future with more than ample open space and opportunity to elaborate outdoor nature related activities.

The inventory of new sites capable of supporting programmed recreation activities, particularly those able to support organized group activities, have also been increased very significantly, particularly by the acquisition of The Parker Road tract and Highlands Ridge Park in Chester Township and St. John's and The Seeing Eye tracts in Mendham Township. The bulk of future, development of constructed recreation features will occur on or in association with these parcels as they each represent very adaptable physical characteristics or proximity to already developed facilities with the sensible potential to expand current community features into parks with regional utility.

Programmed use of the Four Towns traditional recreation sites has increased dramatically, driven by the ambitions of well organized, determined groups of baseball, soccer, lacrosse and football enthusiasts. Today, available developed space is saturated with programs and is chronically stressed to the point of beginning to degrade under the combination of too much use and too little maintenance.

Expansion of other forms of local recreation to meet passive, outdoor, educational, cultural, social and spontaneous use needs has not grown or been diversified in measure equivalent to the doubling of the resident population or to changing trends in outdoor recreation or to the

satisfaction of those residents, less intrigued by sporting events and inclined to court sports, a quiet read, pleasant gardens or simply watching others at play.

As the Townships have demonstrated their purpose to respond to Four Town's recreation future by important acquisitions of land, and the Boroughs have constructed new facilities or renovated existing venues, subsequent actions would logically seem to be expected to include a focus shift, creating new opportunities in day use facilities, in spontaneous individual activities, in social support features, convenience facilities, aesthetic character or simply, to increase passive opportunities. The stage is set for such additions, but is immediately complicated by acute need for active use fields and facilities supporting the several large and influential organized sports associations as well as a growing demand for synthetic fields, lighting systems and other very costly alternatives to undertaking ever more difficult to manage scheduling issues created as most sports spill over their traditional season limits and squeeze already full system utilization even more.

In recognition of the fact that the Borough and Township administrations must proportion funds, employees, and equipment for recreation relative to all other municipal needs and that significant work remains simply to remediate important system deficiencies, this report evaluates prospects for shared service, planning and development strategy proposals that appear practical, reasonable and possible within the current political/administrative context of the Four Towns.

CHESTER BOROUGH IN OVERVIEW

Chester Borough is the smallest of the four subject towns in size, population and in remaining opportunity for expansion of its outdoor recreation inventory. Its outdoor system is fundamentally unchanged since the construction of Collis Park. Three sites comprise the system; Memorial Park, Collis Park and Grove Street Park. These total approximately 5 acres of developed space and are usefully diverse in opportunity. Two baseball fields, two tennis courts, two playgrounds, a basketball, and volleyball court are the principal structured recreation features. Memorial Park includes a rare and valuable feature in its band shell.

Grove Street Park is one of only two parks within the four towns that now qualifies as a community park. Additional of a restroom and an activity/meeting rooms is underway here, coincident with a variety of other site work renovations. This building is an important commitment to the quality of Borough recreation.

All of Chester Borough's park sites are excellently situated to enable a real potential for pedestrian and bicycle access for adjacent neighborhoods. All are well maintained and attractive despite minimal landscaping and site amenities. Given their age and their intimate relationship to the retail and residential sections of the Borough, the rudimentary character of development of these public assets attests to the municipalities' policy relationship to public recreation. Important opportunities to enhance the aesthetic of the Borough center while diversifying a fairly limited compliment of family and day use leisure pursuits have not been capitalized.

Chester Borough relies exclusively on exterior opportunities for access to hiking, picnicking and activities in natural circumstances. Fortunately, these activities are numerous and excellent in public parklands surrounding the Borough. Chubb Park, Black River Park, Hackelbarney Park,

Bamboo Brook, Highlands Ridge, Turkey Brook Park, and a shot of other excellent undeveloped and reservation type opportunities actually surround the Borough.

Organized sports are an important cultural theme in the Borough and the legacy of durable civic service ambition of citizens associations today represented by Chester PAA, the Pastime Club, Chester Little League, West Morris Soccer, Twin Borough Bears, Chester Track and Cross County, and Mendham/Chester Lacrosse are prominent among these.

The Borough is capable of complimenting and supporting local baseball activities and in fact, provides two of the best constructed and supported fields available to Chester Little League teams. It is incapable of offering substantial opportunity in support of soccer, lacrosse, football, track or other of the predominant recreation forms. Spatial characteristics of current site and limited availability of expansion sites within the Borough will likely perpetuate this circumstance. Consequently, Borough youth and their participating parents are reliant upon facilities of Chester Borough, Mendham Township, Mendham Borough and the school systems for sports venues and upon the various sports associations for programming other than in baseball.

TWP.

Chester Borough presents an interesting and potentially exceptional relationship to the objectives of this study. It represents less than ten percent of the aggregate of population and is the least well provisioned with developed outdoor recreation facilities of the four participating communities. In addition, it is heavily dependent upon exterior resources to meet its citizen's preferences for organized activities. With the exception of two baseball fields, the Borough's available facilities are useful primarily to adjacent neighbors.

As a joint planning and management system for the Four Towns is conceived, it will be essential to separate the Borough's local recreation planning initiatives from proposals negotiated for the benefit of the combined interests of the Four Towns. Minority representation by population and little capability for significant improvement of shared programming within exiting public space will tend to minimize the Borough's influence on issues selected by proportional representation. Commitment to proposed creative alternative modes of responsibility for joining resources to improve both physical and management systems, involving the Four Towns, will be prerequisite to enabling satisfactory inclusion of the Borough's cooperation.

CHESTER TOWNSHIP IN OVERVIEW

Chester Township shares the same recreation history and present as Chester Township but has fashioned its system according to opportunities derived from a generous gift from the Chubb family to the Township. Chubb Park has until recent time been the sole expression of the Township's purpose to support outdoor recreation. Fields at that site have been increased in approximate balance with growth of the locally run baseball and later, soccer programs. Its utility as a significant fairground has been maintained consistently and annually host^d carnivals, 4 H fairs, horse and dog shows and a variety of large scale events benefiting various organizations. It is an accustomed and important destination for area residents and as it is the most prominent fairground remaining in western Morris County.

- Boro?

Piecemeal expansion of athletic fields, courts, a skating area, and play areas at Chubb Park has been advanced at a leisurely pace throughout the last decades of the twentieth century, creating a

somewhat diverse opportunity for active recreation types. Later enhancement of the site by linkage to State and County owned parklands and recent additional of a pedestrian path encircling the skating pond has significantly expanded the sites day use attraction.

Conditions of the land gift to the Township restrict the capability to expand facilities by additional of structures and rudimentary utility service extensions into the site have imposed discouraging cost aspects to development of restroom facilities, irrigation system and lighting infrastructure.

The majority of facility development at Chubb Park has been constructed by local resources in a sequence of minor expansions along a bisecting driveway corridor. Meadow areas have been regraded and reclaimed as baseball and soccer fields as opportunity and available resources allowed. Consequently, facilities are arranged in a long series and proximity relationships between play fields and play grounds, entry and destination are less than ideal. Notwithstanding, such inconveniences, this is the mainstay site today for both Chester's organized sports.

Black River Fields are the next most important developed recreation facility in the Township inventory. Two full sized soccer fields and a youth baseball field are supported by parking and a restroom in along narrow strip. This park was created in the late 90's to meet the rapidly increasing needs of the West Morris Soccer Club. This site is flanked by the Chester Pool (a public, member supported utility) and a large undeveloped field areas owned by the West Morris Regional High School Board of Education. The Black River Middle School abuts the pool site and provides a rudimentary baseball field, a steeply sloping meadow and two basketball courts. Relationship of the school site to the park is blocked by the pool, restricting the utility of one to the other.

The combined utilization of Black River Fields and the adjacent lawns of the Board of Education constitute the best and most programmable situation of fields supporting soccer and lacrosse. The potential for development of this site pair into a first rate practice and game venue is limited only by its ownership by the School Board, which constrains the prospects of development.

A portion of Highlands Ridge Park adjacent to the Black River Fields, a recent acquisition by Chester Township, is undergoing a partial development to create a new youth baseball field, multi-purpose field, parking and a substrate for a future baseball field. When completed (2009) these two additional fields will balance the Township's current need for athletic fields and will create a complimentary adjunct to existing programming.

The project is conjoined effort of the Chester Board of Education and the Township, the former providing funding, the latter land.

The Township undertook an aggressive campaign of land acquisition in the 90's and has secured an enormous resource in new park land and open space. Addition of Highlands Ridge Park, Tiger Brook Park, the Evan's preserve, The MacGregor preserve, and the Allen and Knight tracts, has multiplied the Township's public land hold many times and preserved natural land resources for nature study, hiking, camping, and unstructured outdoor recreation, beyond foreseeable need. Excepting Tiger Brook and the Evan's preserve where path system, parking and entry improvements have been placed, the lands are largely unmarked and undisturbed. Continuing planning to increase trailway linkages to County and State lands will someday yield a

remarkable pedestrian, bike and equestrian trail system throughout the Township and may facilitate a degree of alternative transportation opportunity.

Historically the Township has relied upon the resources and initiatives of its sports associations, service societies and externally motivated interests for the delivery of the most prominent forms of organized recreation. It has provided and shared in preparation of lands, fields and infrastructure improvements to sustain these and provides public works services for routine aspects of maintenance and repairs. A consequence of this relationship is a tradition of reactionary supplementation of needs expressed by large, well organized groups but a fairly comprehensive neglect of opportunities for individual purposes and spontaneous day use activities. Play areas, courts, assembly areas, civic spaces, shelters, pavilions, picnic areas, gardens, special purpose developments and assemblies of diverse family oriented day uses do not exist in significant quantity. Restrooms and drinking fountains occur in only one location for minor day uses. As initiatives supported by substantial popular demand will likely never present them in a fashion that meets the Township's threshold level to trigger their development. If a system balance is to be achieved, the philosophy and practice of recreation planning as currently practiced will need to evolve.

Chester Borough represents a historical and practical significance to the Township that has and will continue to link the two despite their political separation. The Borough serves as the community center and central business district for both municipalities. Shopping, dining, entertainment and service businesses attract residents of the surrounding Township in daily commerce. In a real sense, the Borough provides cultural and social opportunities that simply do not exist in the Township. As future recreation schemes emerge, this relationship should be exploited as the vitality of the townscape is a character not otherwise available in the Township's more common rural situation.

The Chester's remain much more consistently aligned socially than their political realities and cooperation in expansion of recreation opportunities suggests. Youth of both jurisdictions grow through the same primary and secondary system and schools, participate in the same leagues and teams, ride the same buses, shop in the same stores and meet in the same churches. Their interrelationship is parallel at the individual and family level to the extent that coaches and sports organizations can not readily identify their player's by community.

MENDHAM BOROUGH IN OVERVIEW

Among the four subject towns Mendham Borough exhibits the greatest diversity of outdoor recreation features as well as the most complete community park in the entire system at Borough Park. In addition to its own municipal resources, the Borough is immediately adjacent to the newest and best of the Township's recreation features, as well as the High School site. Its recreation history is analogous to that of the Chester's, as the Borough and Township were formerly part of a single entity.

As important as any other vestige of that circumstance is the fact that Mendham Borough became the default winner of the Pastime Club, which is undoubtedly the most durable, and influential champion of recreation in the Four Towns region. Its tradition of sponsoring and funding athletic interests of all forms, within the Mendham's and its annual Labor Day carnival

and fireworks have established a comprehensive form of recreation system support that clearly has a durable character which may serve as a model for this study.

Mendham Borough's best developed outdoor recreation sites are Borough Park and West Field. Borough Park is an ideal community park as it features a variety of active, cultural and day use features, is completely supported with utility infrastructure, includes a restroom and has pedestrian linkage to residential areas, the business district, schools and the Community Center. It includes three baseball fields, four tennis courts, basketball courts, play areas, sitting areas, spectator provisions, dugouts, irrigation systems, court lighting on site and adjacent on street parking, is supported by sidewalks on all sides and is adjacent to a day care center. It is unusual to find such a comprehensive park site in exactly the correct relationship to its community.

West Field was created on a very uncooperative land parcel to supplement the Borough's accommodations for soccer. Though it usefully accommodates an activity group not well supported otherwise in the system, West Field is limited to rectangular field sports and of little general recreation utility otherwise.

In addition to achieving a substantial balance of a variety of active and organized recreational activities relative to its resident population, the Borough has capitalized the stream basin of India Brook in a series of parcels that provide continuous pedestrian and bicycle activity through natural lands that traverse the entire Borough. Borough lands terminate at the Township's India Brook Park enabling a truly diverse pedestrian use opportunity, nature study substrate and seasonally great trout fishing.

More recent achievements include the assembly of a loop trail, which enables walkers to complete a circuit generally around the Mendham Village, along the courses of several pathways, easements and a former roadbed.

Mendham Borough is the hub of the Mendham's. It is home for the shops, churches, schools, restaurants, and the base location for civic and social activities. Unlike Chester Borough, Mendham Borough is not closely bounded about its village center. Its boundaries extend north and south to enclose large area of gracious private estates and newer suburban subdivisions as well as farmland parcels and parting of two stream corridors.

Compared to the other three municipalities, Mendham Borough is the most complete in terms of system diversity, the number of facilities developed in the Borough and in balance of activities within system recreation sites. Standing alone, its needs and facilities would be in approximate balance. In fact, it does not stand alone, its sports programs are linked with shared delivery systems in all major sports and is completely reliant upon those organizations for delivery of spring and fall activities for hundreds of its children.

Issues facing the Boroughs sports fields occur in two primary categories. The first can be characterized as ageing issues, which are represented by deterioration of field surfaces from chronic heavy use and inadequacy of equipment (fences, backstops, utility sport). Recent growth of area sports particularly in soccer and lacrosse has focused even greater demand upon all contributing resources, simultaneously increasing their need for repair. The second is simply one of limited space for additional development within the Borough. The last easily convertible space occurs at the Cosma Tract, which the Borough has attempted to advance to development in previous administrations but without sufficient support to initiate any modifications.

The most probable opportunities for future expansion occur on tracts in surrounding Township lands. These potentials and the partnering of motives considered in the Four Towns Plan is an apparent expedient to accomplishing future growth.

MENDHAM TOWNSHIP IN OVERVIEW

Mendham Township wraps around Mendham Borough on all but the south side, encapsulating the traditional "Town Center" with a comfortable buffer of suburban homes and estates. Mendham Township residents relate similarly to their Borough as do their counterparts in the Chesters; dining, shopping and socializing in the commercial establishments clustered there. Two small residual community hubs persist in Brookside and Ralston sections of the Township but these are more traditionally than economically important. Population of the Township is fairly uniformly dispersed across its area with the greatest density occurring east of Mendham Borough along the Rt. 24 corridor and lowest occurring in the southwestern arm of the Township's horseshoe shape. Like Chester Township, large open space land tracts of privately, municipally, Federally, County and agency owned properties surround and protrude into the Township body. These include: Lewis Morris Park, Clyde Potts Reservoir and Dismal Harmony Reservation, India Brook and Buttermilk Falls, The Schiff reservation and lands of Jockey Hollow Park. Until quite recently The Townships recreation facilities were scattered at two schools, Brookside Community Park or at fields located in the Borough. Creation of Wysong Park and Ralston Field began a continuing process of supplying more Township facilities. This commitment has recently added important land acquisitions of India Brook Park, St. Johns Academy and reinforced by privately sponsored acquisition of a parcel increasing the Schiff reservation. Almost all of the Township's recreation sites are challenged by topography, wetlands influences or existing adjacent development, rendering most aspects of new playfield and constructed support system placement costly and spatially restricted. The St. John's site and Middle School site are notable exceptions to this characteristic and these now constitute the best opportunities within existing land stocks to increase ball fields or large scale facilities.

The Township's recreation system is fairly unbalanced without resources of the Borough and adjacent public recreation lands to draw upon. Important shortfalls occur in courts, playgrounds day use facilities and support systems and in general reflect the circumstance that very little development of public recreation facilities has occurred in the Township. The most recently developed sites (Wysong and Ralston) have exhausted their large available spaces and are already functioning at capacity. A new field at India Brook is coming on line for play but is of unknown capability or popularity and St. John's fairly large and convenient potential requires a public access road improvement prior to being available. The administration is moving toward opening of new opportunities as quickly as reasonably possible but for the short term, will do very well just to keep pace with current needs. Like residents in Chester Township, few of Mendham Township's residents live in immediate proximity to the nearest regularly programmed athletic fields and few live in neighborhoods inclusive of parks or playgrounds readily accessible by foot or by bike. This will continue to force reliance upon automobile transport for the majority of public site activities and unfortunately will continue to impose large component cost factors upon new development issues for creation of driveways and parking areas to support visitors.

Other traditional facilities within the Township are emergent as matters for significant modification or reevaluation according to more current motives. These are the facilities at the Brookside Pool and Community Center where some of the most venerable of area traditions still provide regular opportunity. These have become dated according to greatly increased levels of participation and by their own inability to be meaningfully increased to adapt to those programming levels. The Community Pool in particular is in a crisis condition having fallen below registration levels needed to sustain the operation of activities here by fees. The Middle School site may be regarded similarly except that unlike the previous two, its situation is one arisen from genuinely poor and wholly uncreative initial planning and construction. Playfield areas here are among the most useful potentially, of any in the system. Almost all of that potential has been squandered on inefficient design and inappropriate development of margins and entry features. If the school board recognizes this situation and agrees with the Township to recreate the entire space to optimize its utility, several very adaptable fields, with full utility support could be economically developed. The contingency of course, is that adequate availability of scheduling opportunity can be assured for recreation and that a significantly increased shared maintenance responsibility be established. A great deal of work is requires here regardless of ultimate use just to create a compliant public space. As that matter is being addressed in planning, the coincidental creation of a decent master plan vision for the whole site would be a useful consideration. *wow!*

Property acquisitions recently, completed have resulted in addition of significant land and building infrastructure at India Brook Park and St. John's Academy. These sites are not yet programmed for municipal recreation functions and both have significant constructed features, which will require maintenance and management upkeep regardless of use. In the case of the former Seeing Eye facilities at India Brook, several very competent structures are particularly important as they are assets in themselves and should be occupied as quickly as practically possible to convert liabilities into functioning assets. At St. Johns, a new access drive from Township streets is needed to enable programming of fields that are useful and adaptable for a variety of sports in their current condition. This is a straightforward project requiring little initial cost to achieve but must await availability of those resources.

The Township's potential to contribute a variety of novel recreations based on its new sites is potentially more important to a Four Town's collaboration than its ability to balance system playfield needs. Completion of a driveway to provide access to two multi-purpose playfield areas is certainly, timely and exactly responsive to some current system deficiencies, but in the long term, the costly structures at India Brook are a convertible resource capable of providing a broad array of cultural, social and day care/camp recreation types that are responsive to much greater resident service and facility deficiencies.

Mendham Township has a few formidable adjustments to complete relative to its oldest facilities and will experience difficult prioritizing spending commitments while attempting to preserve potential of newly acquired features and simultaneously responding to system sports field demand. Its best options appear to sharing the load of playfield increase with the Four Town participation and focusing local priorities on capitalizing the wonderful opportunities presented by the Seeing Eye and Middle School. The Township has been foresighted in its acquisitions and consequently has secured appropriate space to fulfill all of its recreation needs locally. The expense and timetable involved in that capitalization may not be as attractive as distributing some of its resources as shared commitments under a Four Towns Plan. This should be conditioned by recognition that Mendham Township has the current capability to resolve most of

the system multi-purpose field deficiencies within its inventory of sites. Its internal strategy then should be to first identify specifically which facility types in which sites should be available to Four Towns planning and which, if any reserved for local purposes.

PURPOSE AND PROCESS OF A FOUR TOWNS PLAN

The Four Towns Steering Committee is in agreement that a strategy of proactive planning for future development based on the deficits observed within any component town may be better resolved by examining surpluses or opportunities across all four communities and as possible, balancing entire system need against entire system capability. A goal of the Four Towns enterprise is creating a new and different focus upon whole system objectives for future expansions.

Objectives of the Four Towns Plan are based on the experience of existing recreation conditions in the Four Towns by administrative representatives of each. These observations have yielded an accord that though the Towns are linked: by traditionally similar forms of recreation delivery; by shared educational systems and by residency, each town's recreation system functions independently with respect to administrative and operational tasks. Likewise, each requires resources, manpower and facilities that may duplicate those identically provided, in the neighboring Towns.

As population growth in the Townships and in Mendham Borough has increased to a condition where future population increase will occur slowly, until build-out is reached, all four of the planning partners are now in a similar condition with respect to having met emergent school and public infrastructure demands which have dominated all other fiscal considerations in the past several decades.

As popular involvement with the provision of organized sports has grown dramatically, according to the skillful management of citizen directed programs, need for provision of new fields and recreation sites has proportionately increased. Fiscal limitations to municipal construction of needed facilities and renovation of existing system features, as capital projects undertaken by municipal tax revenues, has typically been supplemented or replaced by fundraising and privately sponsored initiatives of the sports associations. As these associations extend across municipal boundaries to derive membership, they enjoy a traditional capability, greater than competing interests, to target available site space opportunistically rather than in a sensible relationship to community planning objectives. This has manifested itself in regional hubs (Chubb, Black River, Borough Park, Wysong/Ralston) which have been propelled by sports special interests and represent the purposes of organized sports primarily. This custom is supported by the Four Towns as a conventional "bargain" between municipal administrations and their citizen "vendors" but is one fundamentally incapable of response to whole system recreation deficits or to develop new facilities in a complete and sustainable fashion. The legacy of this form of piecemeal improvement has been the predominant model for and design influence now extant in the bulk of developed recreation space within the Four Towns.

The Four Towns Committee has observed that a unified system of communication between the sports associations, recreation and the public works departments has been an overall system deficiency that complicates service operations and scheduling.

Annual allocation of line item budgetary commitments for recreation system maintenance and repair represents the most significant revenue support of area facilities distributed by the Four Towns. These resources are administered through the respective public works departments as an unclassified component of general work items within their annual budgets. These resources are apportioned over the course of the subsequent year according to the Public Works Department's

evaluation of current priorities or, where special circumstances occur, as directed by the Administration. The DPW Departments are not furnished with an annual budget anticipation report, prepared by the Recreation Department, prior to submission of Public Work's annual request. Consequently, particular needs for field, equipment or support system renovation, special requirements for maintenance, mowing or material supply or task man hour estimates for anticipated construction are not clearly communicated or are left to evolve according to circumstances as they arise daily. As the Recreation Departments have no budget allocation for capital projects under their own jurisdiction, the capability to initiate purchase of a new piece of equipment to replace a system failure can be undertaken only if the DPW can juggle budgets to enable the work. Similarly, scheduling of games for the many sports being programmed in the Four Towns is variously communicated to the DPW by Recreation, by an association member, by individual contact or not at all. As all sports programs are frequently influenced by weather or unexpected other scheduling changes, preparation for timely mowing, line striping, cleanup or other routine tasks is absolutely dependent on a measure of lead time being possible.

A means of constant update is necessary to achieve quick response. The sports associations that accomplish this best get the best results. A uniform response system is not in place in the Four Towns and as various sports play in various locations at some or all of the town's sites, inadequate communication of work that is needed, frequently in the same day, can result in frayed tempers and impaired inclination to cooperate.

Creation of a form of master scheduling and coordinated networking between those groups is seen as essential to produce a shared appreciation of task timing and to balance the capabilities of maintenance manpower with varying seasonal service requirements.

The Four Towns Committee has observed that more efficient subdivision of responsibility based on the geographic characteristics of the service area is likely to be a more common sense response to many repetitive maintenance operations than is the current practice.

The Four Towns Committee believes that a unified system of best practice maintenance procedures applied to all system fields in a similar fashion and timetable will produce optimum conditions for play and enable sharing of management continuity regardless of which department performs required tasks.

Physical relationship of recreation site locations to Public Works Department locations varies significantly as a function of the doughnut and horseshoe shapes of Chester and Mendham Townships relative to their respective Boroughs. Consequently, many recreation sites are physically closer to the DPW of a neighboring town than to the home town. The service of these has always been attended by the respective municipalities despite the fact that a great deal of identical routine maintenance is performed in support of sports associations utilizing facilities in all four jurisdictions. Nonetheless, a variety of different service relationships between the municipalities and the sports associations have evolved.

For example, Chester Township has acquired a new grooming machine to better support the management of infields. The Mendham Little League has remarked specifically about the vast improvement this equipment has brought to its fields. In a circumstance where this type of equipment could be shared by the partner communities similar improvement could certainly be anticipated and uniformity of the entire system, simultaneously improved.

Other maintenance regimes followed by public works in support of association programmed facilities, are likewise dissimilar from town to town, varying by service level as well as by applied practices. These vary from full responsibility (Mendham's) to almost none (Black River practice fields), despite the fact that they are seasonally managed for the purposes of the same sports.

Surely, a unified practice of maintenance for facilities of the same type is more appropriate to creating an equitable expectation for whole system facility conditions than the various circumstances that now occur. Creating mutually understood maintenance criteria, regardless of agency performing the work, is fundamental to this purpose.

The Four Towns Committee observes that a more representative process of selection of priorities for future system expansion should replace the reactive planning model traditionally followed. Establishment of a Four Towns inventory, representing all resources and needs for facility types as well as creation of a priority of system specific objectives, according to greatest popular significance, is considered an essential purpose of the Four Towns process.

Conventionally, new capital improvements supported by tax revenues have been placed according to the initiatives of special interests within the Four Towns. Each municipality has responded at some level to organized popular support for a particular type of facility or to increase facilities for ongoing programs. Consequently, constructed features across the system are not particularly diverse except with respect to organized sports.

Members of the Four Towns Committee have considered the disparity between sports facilities and all other forms of conventional outdoor recreation opportunity within the service area. It has been observed that significant deficiencies do exist, particularly within the Townships as a consequence of more recent development in response to sports field needs and separation from the Boroughs (where facility balance is much better).

As a response to this imbalance future recreation improvements should seek to prioritize underserved recreation forms or at least, to incorporate appropriate ancillary features into mainstream active use development proposals. Enabling such a process requires an informed understanding of recreation features most useful to the general public to; support spontaneous individual purposes, family activities, fitness and exercise, children's play, group events, cultural programs, day camping and passive uses. Determination of which of those alternative activities, will be most appropriate according to the ambitions of area residents, will be best informed by creation of a definitive survey system and a workable feedback mechanism that enables assembly of an updateable data base to compile and evaluate public opinion of existing features as well as preferences for future opportunities.

Capability to represent underserved elements of the population across all four communities and draw upon the aligned support of similar interests, will reinforce their influence in planning, enabling a more balanced facility priority selection in future decision making.

A purpose of the Four Towns Plan is examination of system deficiencies, in a unified planning context, with elected representatives of all of the partner towns to determine if, by a shared commitment of resources, ambitions larger in scope than may have reasonably been undertaken by any single community could be accomplished together.

The Four Towns Steering Committee consists primarily of elected municipal representatives, administrators and recreation directors. Within the tenure of their service and according to their involvement with community recreation and issues encountered in recent years, each has developed a perspective relative to commonly observed, unmet recreation opportunities or of repetitive issues brought to their attention by area residents.

Committee members recognize the potential synergy of municipal partnerships, with each other, as well as with agency and private interests. Similarly, the competitive advantage gained by partnering positions combined initiatives far above independent applications for Federal, State and County level agency support for grant and assistance programs. *(This plan document is exemplary of a current program of grant support offered by the State of New Jersey to communities that have agreed to collaborate by joint planning in response to service infrastructure needs and to program development initiatives by resource sharing. By entering an accord to study and document system partnership opportunities, the Four Towns have qualified for a \$30,000.00 grant to enable preparation of this plan.)* As this technique will be emphasized by County and State agencies as a preferred technique for small communities to economize municipal service cost, those that elect to establish unified planning will continue to compete more favorably for development funding than communities acting singly.

The Four Towns Committee observes that large indoor facilities may be beyond the reach even of the combined support of the partner communities but believes that if private partnerships can be secured, that high quality, well run, diverse indoor opportunities may be delivered at reasonable expense.

The Four Towns Committee has discussed a preliminary list of facility types reported to be commonly requested by area residents or those that have been explored in past attempts to introduce more diverse services to their communities. Typically these have not been advanced to development as a consequence of their scale, cost, timeliness or ability to engage adequate political support in the context of prevailing fiscal conditions. The anticipation that some among these ambitions may be realized by directing a unified, coordinated effort and the aggregate resource potential of the Four Towns, the Committee has undertaken further examination of potentials for elaboration of the most prominent of these, as topics within this plan. The topics considered most reliably representative of frequently expressed recreation system need are these: Indoor facilities to provide individual health and fitness training; Community day care, day camp and summer camp opportunities; cultural programs, fine and performing arts programs; indoor swimming, swim lessons, exercise swimming and water sports; outdoor "blue water" pool, swim training; indoor sports courts and training field spaces; lighted sports venues; synthetic surfaced field spaces; multi-sport camps; bicycling and dirt biking opportunities; skateboard, rollerblade, roller device opportunities (skate park); hockey (roller, street and ice); fitness/ running track; lighted tennis, basketball courts; children's play equipment areas and uniformly across the entire system, restrooms. Many among these facilities can be adapted to existing park settings but others; particularly the large scale indoor facilities are single concept considerations as they are dependent on available site space and utility infrastructure and very broad support among the resident population base or regional participation, as by membership.

The Four Towns Plan process is envisioned as a separately evolving support resource, acting in cooperation with the duly constituted, elected representatives of the partner communities, one without statutory authority, operating in an advisory capacity to the four local governments.

The Four Towns Plan is conceived as a mechanism for increasing options, expanding opportunities and multiplying leverage for all four of the partnered communities. It is intended to facilitate support for initiatives raised in any one town as well as those proposed for benefit of the whole service area by: representing residents of the entire service area to define future plans for the recreation system; sharing spatial resources; redistributing programming to relieve scheduling stress; planning new facilities to meet area needs and eliminate duplication of facilities; realigning maintenance service operations to enable more efficient distribution of work; systematize procedures, equipment and manpower to increase efficiency and economize material purchase agreements; improve communication between sports associations, public works departments and the municipalities by engagement of the three in regular dialogue to balance service system capabilities with task parameters that are commonly understood and shared.

Its primary activities are anticipated to address recreation systems alone, engaging in a continuing process of identifying system deficiencies and unmet opportunities and in preparation of strategies to resolve or meet them. Mechanisms of resolution of system issues will be advanced by preparation of considered, evaluations of cited need, in the context of whole system priority for response. Where legitimate need is found and direct responses occur within the existing physical and service capability of the four towns, these shall be represented to municipal governments in a clear statement of purpose and with a complete description of consequent system influences, with a recommendation for official support. Where substantial capital projects are considered, the Four Towns Committee will function to build support among area residents through preparation of case statements and conduct of presentations detailing purpose, strategy and anticipated funding sources. It will simultaneously conduct outreach to potential partners in the public or private sector by leveraging the combined influence of the Four Towns to gain advantage under available assistance programs and by solicitation through the auspices of the many influential area residents.

The Four Towns Committee recognizes that the citizens of the Mendham's and Chester's constitute a regionally influential presence consistent with their position in area business and social communities. It recognizes as well, that in aggregate, thousands of the same area residents are directly linked to their communities by participation in sports, service and social associations. These residents are seen to represent a large, capable and involved resource, one not yet aligned by purpose to apply their influence toward achievement of common objectives. The Committee is aware that the greatest impediment to accomplishment of the fundamental goals of a vital Four Towns Plan will be the task of overcoming the universal human resistance to change. Aware, that sports associations have traditionally exerted their efforts irrespective of local political preferences and that the greatest service accommodations in all of the towns derive from the conjoined influences of those associations, The Committee believes that it is a small but difficult extension of policy needed to shift the entire planning philosophy toward continuity with that experience

In a large part, this plan is predicated on the belief that common recreation objectives can be prioritized by importance, presented as justified, balanced proposals and by virtue of being popularly understood, will be broadly supported within the Four Towns.

Ultimately, recreation issues and initiatives will grow in comparative importance in the Four Towns as is consistent with maturing communities. Enabling this process requires nurture of a

popular culture supportive of new recreation initiatives, which in turn empowers local representatives to comfortably represent previously low priority issues.

The Four Towns Committee has dedicated a concerted effort to prepare a plan process that is based on unbiased evaluation of existing administrative, programmatic, operational and physical characteristics of recreation systems across the Four Towns. It has considered many of the jurisdictional, logistic and financial challenges that are predictable in response to proposals that seek to reorder traditional modes and expectations for recreation delivery. It has assembled an informed anticipation of the nature of popular unmet system demands and compiled an assessment of deficiencies observed within existing sites and constructed facilities. It recognizes and has considered at length potential methods to empower those groups currently engaged in recreation service and to elicit support of those whose preferences have not yet been satisfied.

The proposed approach to this process is envisioned as follows. A case statement representing purpose and means relative to particular issues will be prepared. Recommendations for system reorganization to be undertaken sequentially and generally parallel to and independent of the conventional responsibilities of existing local government systems will be developed. When these have been prioritized and can be described as clear and complete actions, they will be presented to elected officials of the Four Towns for consideration and if acceptable, recast for incorporation into municipal recreation policy.

FOUR TOWNS DEMOGRAPHICS - *Based on 2006 figures (probably)*

The Four Towns are culturally and compositionally very similar in terms of racial character, educational background, occupational types and family composition. They differ only in terms of density and total population. General demographic characteristics of the Four Towns are as follows:

	Chester Borough	Chester Township	Mendham Borough	Mendham Township
Total Population	1651	7890	5176	5596
% under 18 years	24.8% (409)	30.5% (2406)	26.8% (1387)	32% (1790)
# Households	609	3323	1781	1788
With children < 18	34%	46%	36.6%	47%
Median age	39	40	42	40
Average family size	3.15	3.29	3.13	3.27

The Four Towns are comparatively similar in terms of income and are among the wealthiest communities in the county and state. Median family income statistics are as follows:

	New Jersey	Morris County	Chester Borough	Chester Township	Mendham Borough	Mendham Township
Median family Income	\$67,035	\$94,684	\$106,260	\$133,586	\$129,812	\$146,254

Children of families in the Four Towns attend area public school systems primarily although many attend private schools in the region, particularly in older grade levels. Three primary school systems operate in the Four Towns, they are the Chester Board of Education, the Mendham Borough Board of Education, and the Mendham Township Board of Education.

Secondary schooling for these three districts is conducted at the West Morris Mendham High School.

Enrollment in these schools is approximately as follows by grade groups:

Chester Schools

K-2 (Dickerson School)	469
3-5 (Bragg School)	463
6-8 (Black River Middle)	445

=====
1377

Mendham Borough Schools

K-4 (Hilltop Elementary)	361
5-8 (Mountainview Middle)	289

=====
650

Mendham Township Schools

K-4 (MT Elementary)	518
5-8 (MT Middle)	476

=====
994

West Morris Mendham High School 1313

Generally, both Borough's are dissimilar from both Townships as each Borough has fewer at home children (35%) compared to 45% for the Townships and a slightly larger percentage of population (15% vs. 10%) over 65 years old. Average family size is uniform at approximately 3.2.

Population growth in the Four Towns service area has slowed to an annual rate less than one percent and the growth rate within the two Boroughs is now a function of the change in new incoming family size compared to the family size characteristics of those moving out. In general the population of residents in the 0-5 year old subdivision is declined slightly but has fluctuated near 7% over the past decade suggesting that school populations will vary up or down according to variations in annual group sizes, rather than by increasing or decreasing overall trends.

Demographic characteristics indicate that the Four Towns are nearing a build out condition and that area population will increase at slower rates until that condition is reached. Consequently, area recreation system futures will be influenced more as a function of diversification and introduction of recreation modes or types not now existing and less by growth of existing programs except where current physical or operational characteristics may be limiting growth potential. For example, where field space availability is too small, team size grows as a response and more players, play less, resulting in retirement of some usually the least proficient) from the program in subsequent years.

The Four Towns area will be dealing as much with facility quality issues as quantity shortfalls within the next five years assuming current needs are met and somewhat exceeded. This may be

seen as good or bad news. As many of the older facilities, that have traditionally founded the system, are compared to newer facilities, constructed to meet more rigorous standards, the former will decrease in attraction and utility until they are renovated or replaced.

Community demographics will be most significant in the influence of change, as incoming residents replace those that have lived in and represented the communities formerly. Gradually, changing expectations of more recent and more numerous residents from other communities will move agendas for recreation service and facility preferences toward the character of those previously experienced, elsewhere.

POPULATION DISTRIBUTION

Population distribution in the Four Towns area results as a consequence of the historic land use of the region. Greatest concentrations of current residential development occur within and immediately surrounding the two Boroughs. Areas between the Boroughs along Routes 24 and 519 are of moderate density consisting of newer homes constructed in subdivisions of former farmland tracts. The Township perimeter lands are least developed in density, particularly in Chester Township west of Route 206 and north of route 519. These lands are those occupied by preserved lands, farms and estates.

Developed recreation features in the area occur relatively near the Boroughs in almost all cases enabling fairly ready access to those locations for the bulk of residents. Those areas least conveniently related to developed recreation sites are those located in the southwest corner of Mendham Township and those separated by The Black River Wildlife Management area from the bulk of the Township. Generally however access from any area imposes a maximum drive of approximately six miles. This distance may be deceptively long in terms of time as the bulk of area secondary roads are narrow winding and posted at very low speed limits. Consequently, a six mile ride might easily consume 15 minutes. This factor will remain inequitable for some and will likely not influence the future placement of facilities particularly as the bulk of available opportunity for development occurs adjacent to the Boroughs.

Population distribution will always tend to frustrate ideal recreation planning as the prospect of neighborhood parks or pocket parks fails to be useful in most of the low density neighborhoods of the Four Towns (where pedestrian or bicycle access is reasonable). In addition, the tradition of recreation complexes (Chubb and Borough Park) is accustomed as the preferred format for delivery of sports programming and is emerging in newest iteration at the Black River Fields complex. Consequent of these two factors, the probability that local neighborhood recreation will evolve to provide system balance is small.

The accompanying map illustrates the density of regions of the Four Towns by utilizing a common symbol representing the location of existing homes.

EVALUATION OF FACILITIES

Evaluation of facilities is an essential part of this process but one that is extremely subjective. Such subjectivity is uniformly at the heart of representations of the nature of recreation systems resources and needs. Frequently, these results in "counting" a space utilized for a given purpose

as a "field, court, or park" regardless of its appropriateness for that purpose. Within the Four Towns, such spaces exist. Some have evolved into more complete facilities by subsequent addition of conventional accessory elements and some remain spaces with names preserved as a traditional appellation.

System baseball fields are a useful example of this circumstance. Many are constructed within the Four Towns and they vary remarkably in size, equipment, surface condition and support. Each so called "field" is quantitatively equal to the other in statistical value though it may differ radically in utility or quality. In almost all such instances, the resident baseball associations have adapted to conform to field shortcomings by trying to pair more capable fields with more capable players. While a practical and workable approach the resulting experience for young athletes learning the sport is characterized by playing on small, poorly equipped, marginally surfaced fields, presumably, waiting in their turn for the big leagues. If this is an accustomed experienced, it remains a poor experience, on which can be rather directly corrected, given the incentive and capital resources.

Regardless of quality, size or character, an outdoor public space is named according to accustomed use or according to conformance with definitions prescribes by policy of that municipality. As none of the four subject towns represent any objective criteria for recreation venue types accustomed purposes and activities occurring on those spaces are uniformly "counted" as some character of field, regardless of their degree of competence to sustain that activity in a wholly satisfactory manner.

Subjectivity of perspective is exactly analogous to the variety of characterizations that may occur for a single physical reality. In deliberations of recreation ambitions this influence is an impediment uniformly presented as persuasive or dissuasive arguments. For example: respondents to this study have cited the desire to have facilities "as good as" (name nearby town); others observe "ours are the worst in the system." As counterpoint example, some interviewed with respect to municipal responsibility have observed; "this field was good enough for my kids" and "those people are never satisfied." How strongly such views are asserted, none has any objective utility and neither will advance an agenda or resolve a dispute.

Sound familiar?

The influence of very subjectively informed relationships between administrative policy and popular interests in the Four Towns has been propagated by a uniform tradition of local administrations providing space and varying degrees of maintenance and improvement to sports organizations in exchange for comprehensive management of program. Thus, without a consistent model for facility characteristics, support or management, a variety of itinerant solutions to momentary needs have been created.

Coincident with this philosophy, interests that aligned around baseball, football, soccer or followed well established traditions of resident service groups (PAA, Pastime Club, Brookside Community Club) have flourished to varying degrees and represent the default model for administrative consideration of the recreation systems. As a consequence, today's facility profile and planning agenda is dramatically lopsided in bias towards organized recreation delivered on home made substrates by resident organizations.

When recreation need is perceived by proportionately small, but well organized groups of residents very intent advancement of their special interest, their prospect of success increases in direct proportion to their commitment.

An unfortunate planning mismatch of this arrangement is that the organized sports interests are linear and seek continuous improvement or independence to produce their own, while administrations are periodic and variously inclined to completion of optional recreation service balance. If a shared vision for the quality of experience to be created for area residents can be characterized, a sequential process for accomplishment of objectives contributing to those characteristics is most likely to emerge. If such a baseline is not examined, quantified, and understood by the authors of policy in the same terms as their constituents, systematic improvement will always lag behind response to special interests.

In subsequent pages some of the significant developed recreation sites and their attributes are depicted, described and evaluated. Evaluation terms and the system utilized to establish a comparative basis are determined by the author and are presented to illustrate or sustain observations presented in discussion in following text of this report.

Determinations represented for system elements are based on plan study, field observations, reported conditions and representations of use, programming and management history. Determinations are comparative across all four jurisdictions and may be qualified by discussion of circumstances, which may underlay the cause, or method of the subject facilities development.

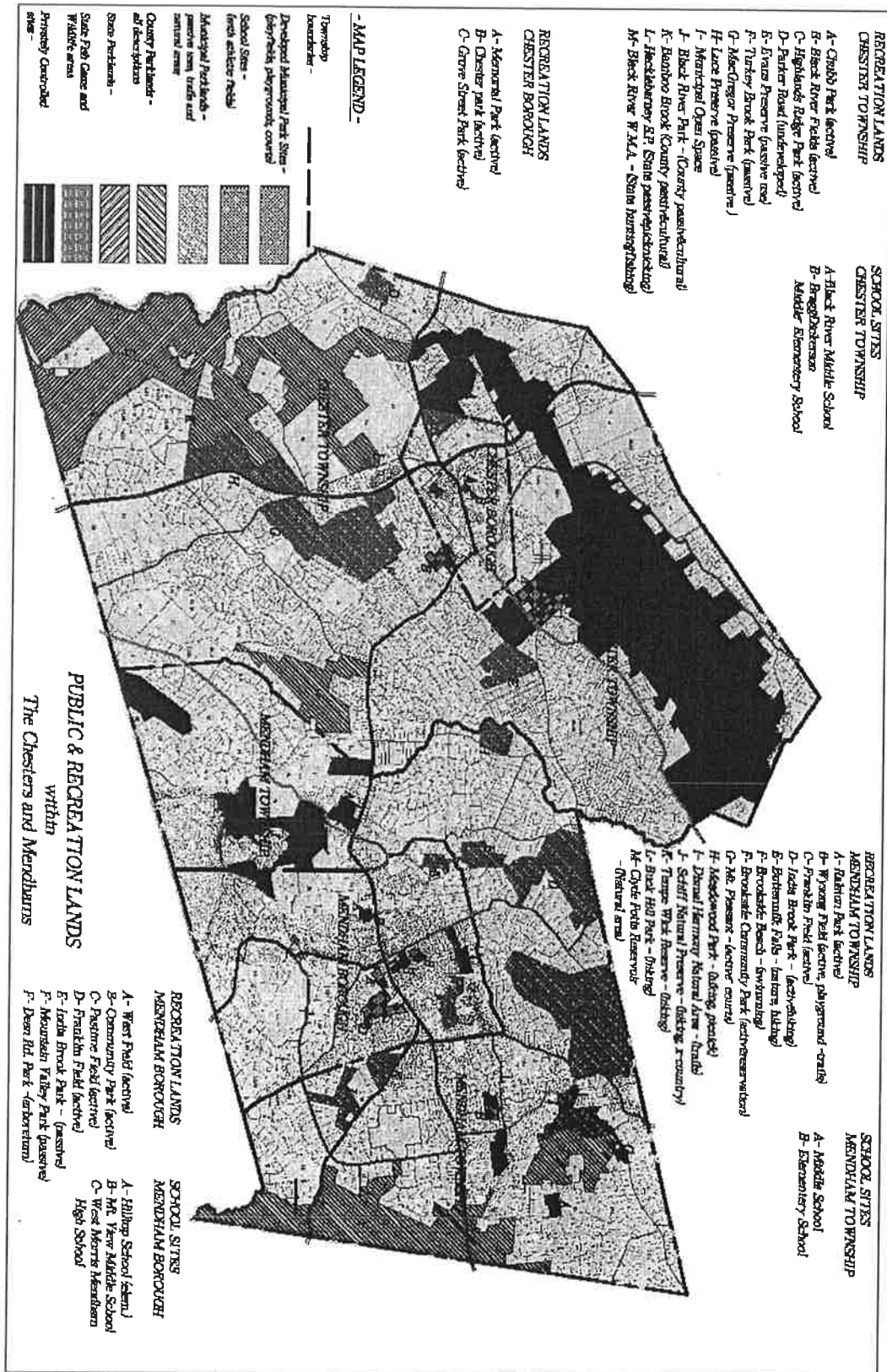
FACILITY EVALUATION SYSTEM

Terms of this system include:

Description:	common name for activity
Size:	appropriate for design use
Space:	adequate to minimize interference with adjacent uses minimize risk during intended utilization
Perimeter:	Adequate to enable access, adjacent movement and spectator accommodation comfortably
Access:	direct, continuous recognizable, barrier free
Safety:	reliable separation from vehicle movements hazardous site surfaces, adjacent coincident activities
Compliance:	meets recommended minimums for activity type as stipulated by applicable standard
Surfaces:	smooth, regular, uniform across play area
Equipment:	backstops, goals, barriers, fences
Accessories:	bleachers, team areas
Support features:	restrooms, drinking fountains, circulation routes, shelter, shade
Context:	relationship to complimentary activities, play areas, sitting areas, parking areas
Aesthetic:	attractive, comfortable, accommodating
Other:	various according to situation
Maintenance:	general condition
Utilities:	Infrastructure – lights, irrigation, electric
Site Selection:	utility of site to purpose
Site Development:	effective development for purpose
N.A.	Not applicable

N.C. Not considered
Ratings are the following numerical system
0 – Poor
1 – Substandard
2 – Adequate
3 – Good
4 – Ideal

PARK RECREATION LANDS MAP



[illegible]

EVALUATIONS: CHESTER BOROUGH PARKS

A. GROVE STREET PARK

Chester Borough's Grove Street Park is one of only two very complete neighborhood parks in the Four Towns. When pending construction of restroom facilities and a new park center building are complete, this will join Borough Park in Mendham as the sole representatives of such completeness.

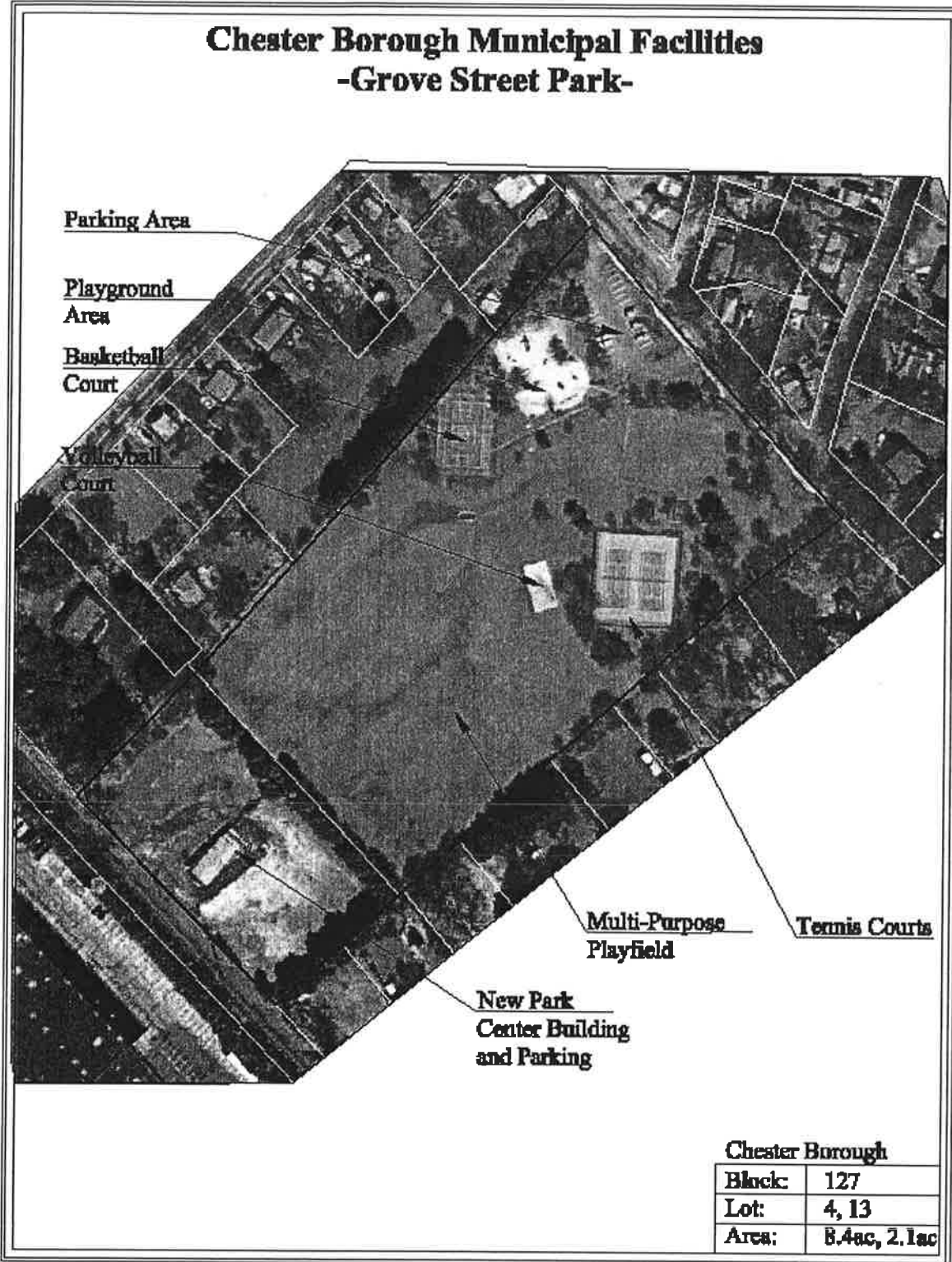
The park includes a small parking area, tennis courts, a basketball court, a multi-sectioned play equipment area, a few benches, a volleyball court and a too steep but pleasant play field. A path recently constructed across this field has unfortunately further diminished its utility but has provided connection to the park center area.

Grove Street Park is a great concept for service to its neighborhood but doesn't adapt altogether well with its steep site. Barrier free issues occur between adjacent streets and activities and separation between play areas and the new park center are not ideal. Notwithstanding, these minor defects, the park is an excellent model for repetition.

The park center building, now under construction represents an important step forward in the Borough's recreation resource inventory. It includes large programmable indoor space, which presumably will be available to host meetings, parties, and program support for day camping, crafts, and special recreation programs.

The basketball court at Grove Street Park is programmed by Chester Summer Basketball as one of three outdoor court spaces scheduled for play in their outdoor youth league. It is marginal in surface condition and equipment but apparently useful in this application.

GROVE STREET PARK MAP



EVALUATION SHEET - GROVE STREET PARK

EVALUATION SHEET - GROVE STREET PARK - CHESTER BOROUGH

DESCRIPTION																
	SIZE	SPACE	PERIMETER	ACCESS	SAFETY	COMPLIANCE	SURFACES	ACCESSORIES	EQUIPMENT	SUPPORT	CONTEXT	AESTHETIC	MAINTENANCE	UTILITIES	SITE SELECTION	TOTAL
GROVE STREET PARK																
TENNIS COURTS	2	2	1	2	2	1	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	2	31
BASKETBALL COURT	2	2	2	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	30
VOLLEY BALL COURT	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	28
PLAY AREA	2	3	2	1	2	1	2	3	2	3	2	2	2	2	2	32
PARK CENTER	This is an excellent large and attractive structure still under construction. It is a substrate capable of becoming a vital element of the Borough's recreation pictures presuming program support is a complete as the building.															0

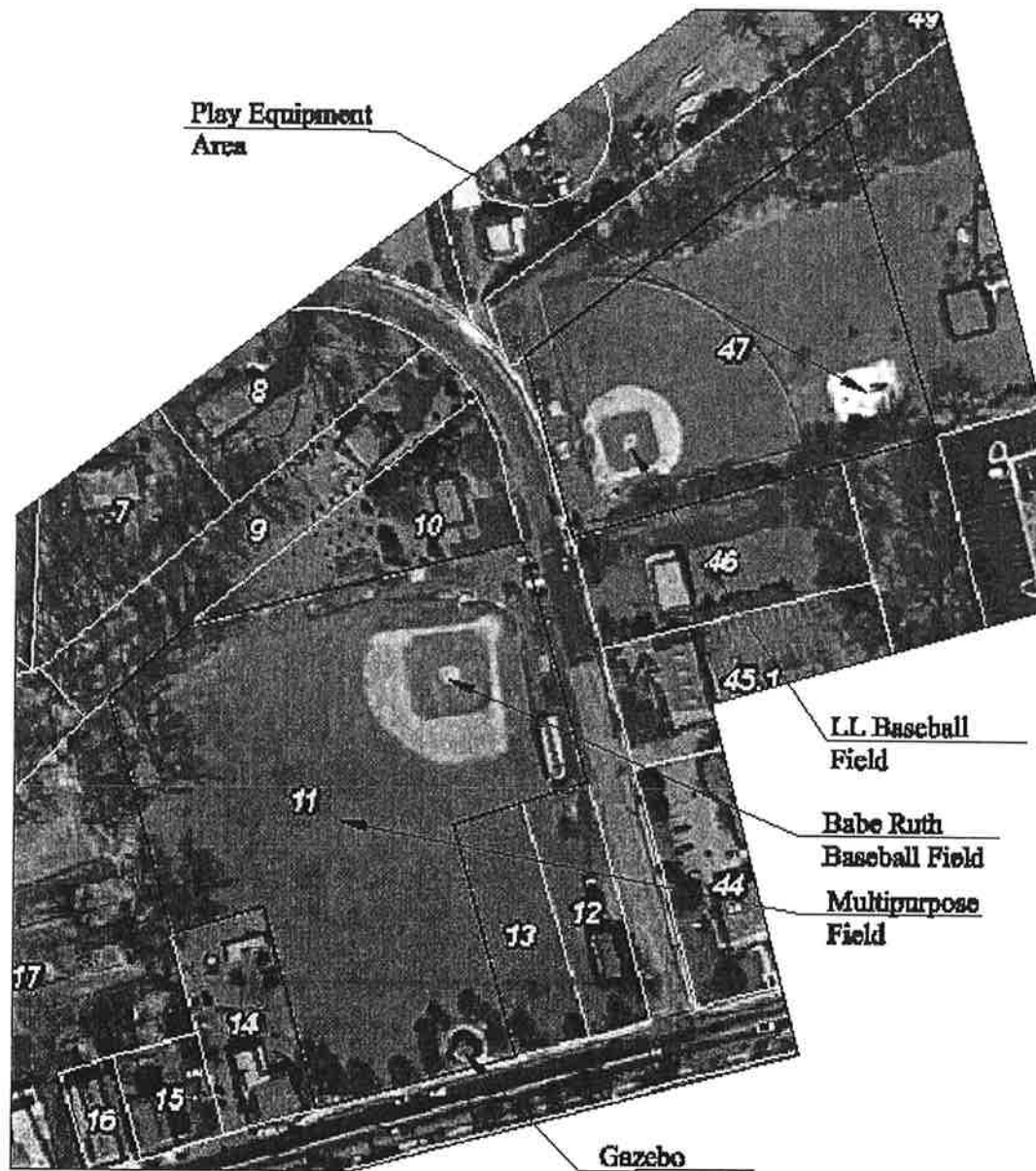
B. MEMORIAL PARK

Memorial is a uniquely visible open space element in the townscape of Chester Borough. It is well known to area residents as the site of arts and crafts shows, antique shows and other annual celebrations held along the village streets. It is familiar as well to past and current recreation programs as a multi-purpose field and a preferred location for baseball. Its field is one of the oldest, best prepared and supported of baseball fields in the Four Towns. It has been managed and improved over decades by the Chester Little League including construction of a restroom/concession/storage building, which has distinguished this field from all others until very recently. The site is well maintained and comparatively lightly utilized as it is formatted for baseball primarily.

Memorial Park has a valuable visual significance to the Borough but is only moderately exploited. The gazebo is a familiar and popular venue for musical presentations and as an event control feature. Its architectural charm and context would benefit by some elaborations of adjacent spectator accommodations, garden borders or distinctive landscaping elements that increase its utility to welcome shoppers to a pleasant sitting experience or social space. Similarly, a perimeter pathway punctuated with benches or small garden features would provide an excellent and attractive opportunity for exercise, walking, dog walking or strolling with a child or companion in the context of a shopping visit to the Town. Memorial Park is an example illustrating the typical municipal reference to parks in general. It is a perfect opportunity to create a beautiful contribution to the town center aesthetic and to create complimentary use spaces, sitting areas, historical references, gardens or a significant memorial area to attract and sustain visiting shoppers. The fact that it has not been accomplished is a statement reflecting the town's sense of place.

MEMORIAL PARK MAP

Chester Borough Municipal Facilities - Memorial Park and Collis Park-



Chester Borough

Block:	107, 110
Lot:	11, 47
Area:	4.1ac, 2.2ac

EVALUATION SHEET - MEMORIAL PARK

EVALUATION SHEET - MEMORIAL PARK - CHESTER BOROUGH																		
MEMORIAL PARK	DESCRIPTION	SIZE	SPACE	PERIMETER	ACCESS	SAFETY	COMPLIANCE	SURFACES	ACCESSORIES	EQUIPMENT	SUPPORT	CONTEXT	AESTHETIC	MAINTENANCE	UTILITIES	SITE SELECTION	SITE DEVELOPMENT	TOTAL
BALLFIELD		2	2	2	3	3	3	4	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	45
GAZEBO		2	2	2	3	3	NA	3	2	NA	2	3	3	3	3	3	2	36

C. COLLIS PARK

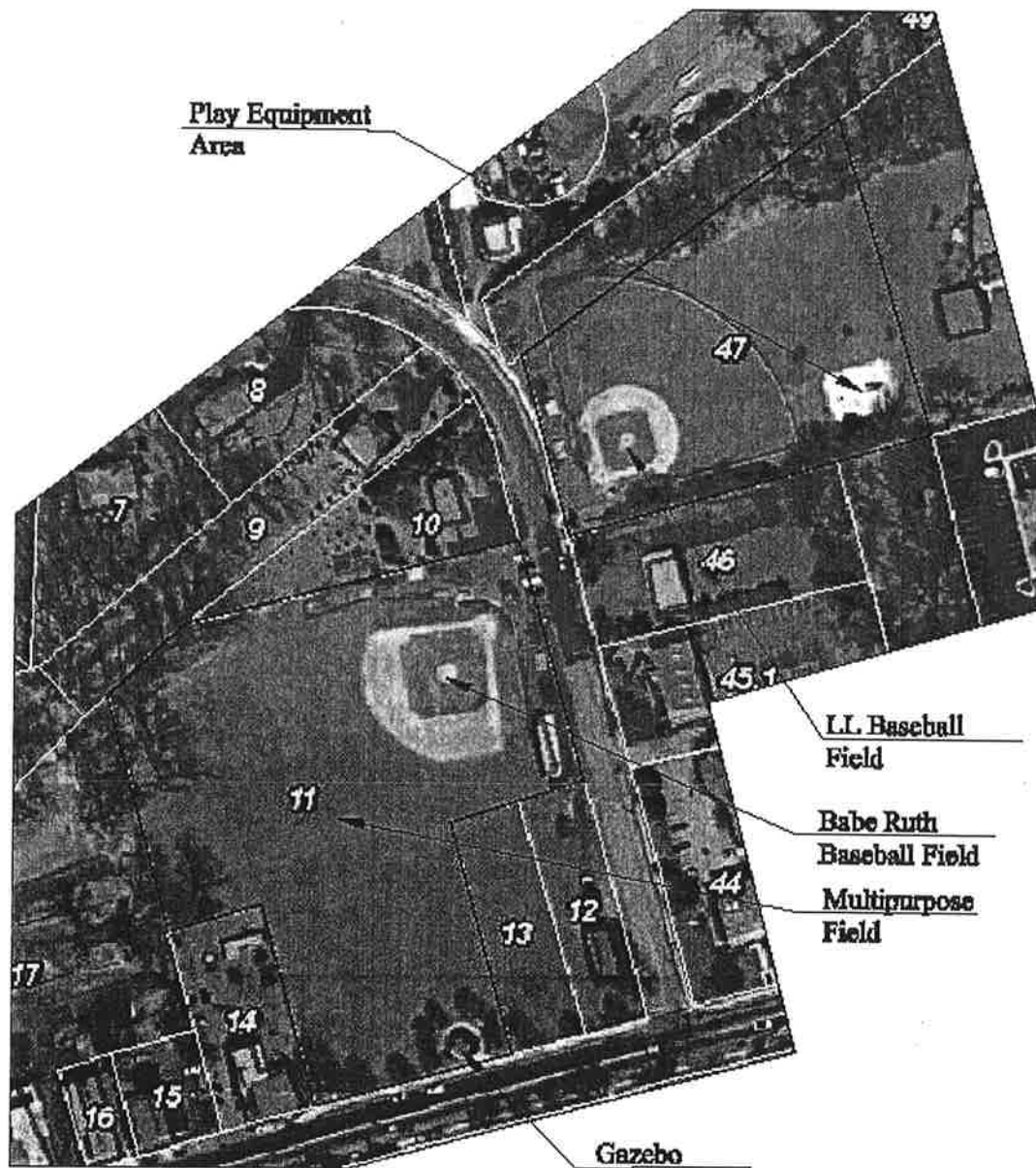
Collis Park is a small site nearly adjoining Memorial Park that provides two nicely prepared facilities. The first, a relatively new and very completely appointed youth ballfield, is the most technically conforming field in the Four Towns inventory. Consequently, it is also the most well regarded of small fields by Chester Little league users. The other significant feature is a small, somewhat exposed play equipment area occurring beyond the outfield fence of the ballfield.

Parking availability may be an inconvenience when both fields are in use, but available restrooms and a food service feature at Memorial yield a potential for a comfortable experience here.

Collis Park would benefit extremely by introduction of landscaping and a pathway system as complete as is the ballfield, otherwise it is a very competent small facility. Collis Lane is a noteworthy consideration in the context of the two adjacent athletic fields. Though a quiet, low volume street it is a through road and a potential bypass for the Town center. This roadway should be modified to incorporate several quelling devices to reduce traffic speed and to alert drivers. The risk potential of the existing condition is very high and the context of closely related functions on opposite sides of the street, inherently worsen the proximity problem.

COLLIS PARK MAP

Chester Borough Municipal Facilities - Memorial Park and Collis Park -



Chester Borough

Block:	107, 110
Lot:	11, 47
Area:	4.1ac, 2.2ac

EVALUATION SHEET – COLLIS PARK

EVALUATION SHEET - COLLIS PARK - CHESTER BOROUGH																		
DESCRIPTION		COLLIS PARK																
		SIZE	SPACE	PERIMETER	ACCESS	SAFETY	COMPLIANCE	SURFACES	ACCESSORIES	EQUIPMENT	SUPPORT	CONTEXT	AESTHETIC	MAINTENANCE	UTILITIES	SITE SELECTION	SITE DEVELOPMENT	TOTAL
YOUTH BASEBALL FIELD		4	3	1	3	1	2	3	3	3	3	2	2	3	3	2	3	41
PLAYGROUND		3	2	1	2	2	2	3	2	3	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	35

D. CHESTER POOL

The Chester Pool development is the sole modern concession to outdoor swimming in the Four Towns areas. A conventionally configured 25' x 50' meter tank in a rectangular deck constitutes the primary feature of the complex. It is supported by restroom and concession areas, a small control office, a wading pool, play area, and lawn areas the facility is designed in a traditional manner as a swimming and competition pool with limited utility in the main tanks for small children and non-swimmers. A small wading pool feature is available to accommodate this group. The site occurs at the top of to the local landform and consequently, is fully exposed to wind and sun. A few trees and a number of fabric shade structures have been erected to provide some relief from the sun. A sand volleyball court and several other small courts have been created in an adjacent lawn panel on the western side of the complex and a fairly large lawn, sunbathing area occurs on the south end of the site.

The entire complex is surrounded by chain link fence, which effectively restricts circulation around the site where the Middle School fields and Black River Fields border the facility. Its site choice reflects an odd planning decision as the pool occupies a position in the center of a variety of related general public uses but is not integrated with those and actually impairs improvement of their use relationship.

The pool operates as a public utility supported by membership fees. It is available to residents of the Chester's but interestingly, is managed by personnel in the employ of the YMCA.

The Chester Pool is a notable example of the potential of popular influence to achieve creation of the recreation resources by persistent, well organized political pressure and some good fortune. It is reported that a gift of an area resident to the municipality, one designated for purposes of creating a pool, was leveraged by organized residents to influence the Borough's administration to authorize creation of a membership supported utility. This sort of situation is likely a model for future, large scale, large budget additions to the recreation systems at the Four Towns area. It illustrates the power of collective influence of citizen's groups as well as the practical facility of merging aligned interest of adjacent communities to support systems beyond their independent capability. Facilities of the Chester Pool are not rated.

EVALUATIONS: CHESTER TOWNSHIP PARKS

A. CHUBB PARK

Chubb Park is the largest developed park area in the Township system is the most diverse and preserves important future opportunity for expansion. Curiously this park also exemplifies characteristics that occur throughout the Four Towns system and which demonstrate some of the pitfalls of reactive development process.

Chubb Park is regionally significant resource that annually hosts fairs, shows and holiday events each with thousands of visitors. It includes six baseball fields, three soccer fields, a skating area, tennis courts, a play area, an exercise loop path, parking for hundreds of cars and linkage to adjacent County and State owned open space reservations and park lands.

Chubb Park has traditionally supported the Chester Little League and West Morris Soccer Club on its fields, annually providing space for the bulk of the baseball program and game fields for soccer. The Chester cross-country program practices weekly here in the fall on existing trails and open field spaces.

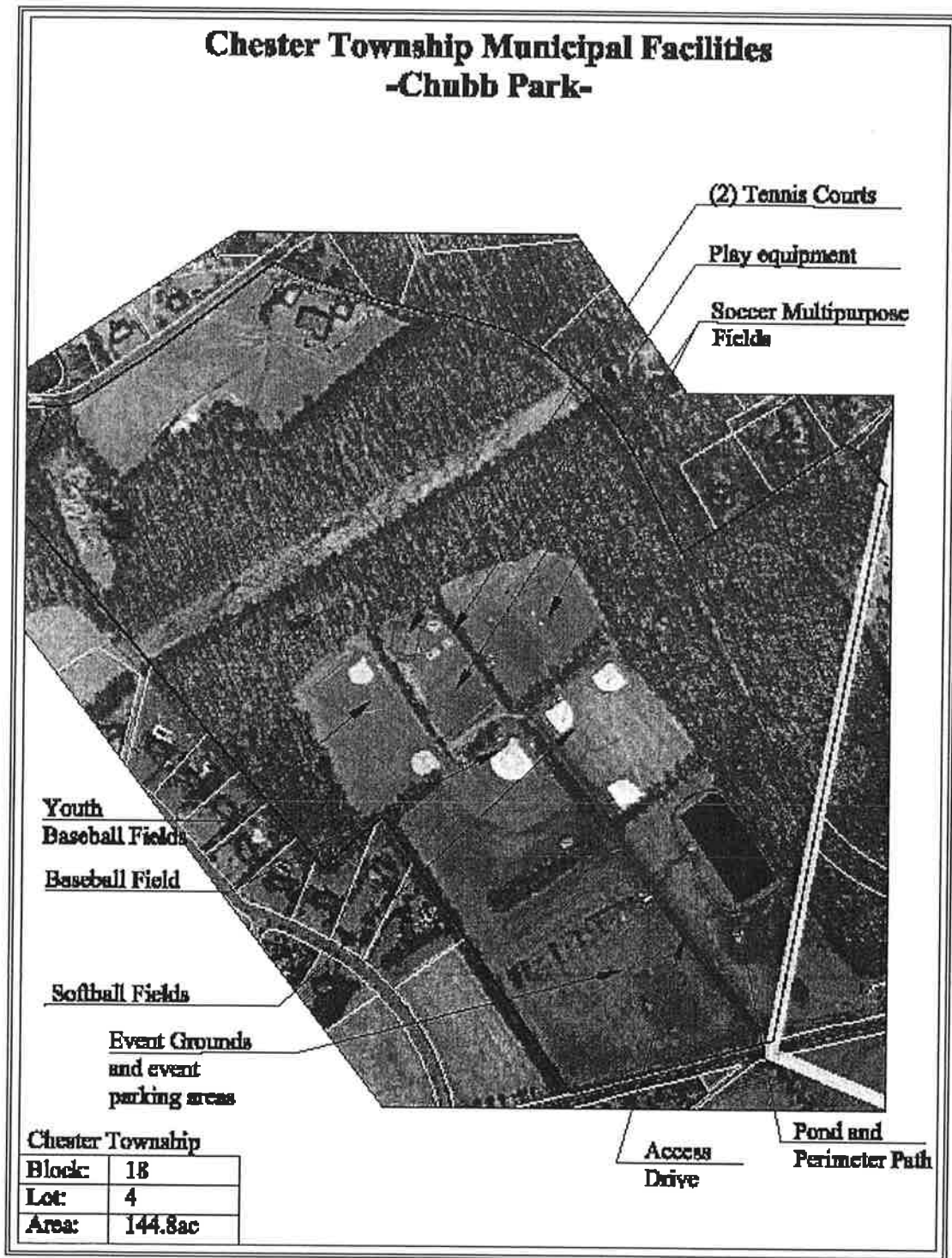
Despite its traditional and enormous utility, Chubb Park is grossly deficient in utility infrastructure and in appropriate accessory structures. A large restroom is the most singular of these deficiencies but pavilion structures, an indoor activity/meeting facility and some permanent facility to support group food service opportunities are similarly prominent omissions.

Rarely occupied fairgrounds and the skating pond occupy the frontal aspect of Chub Park while community use features occur out of view from the park entry in field areas in the "back yard" of the site. If this assures seclusion, it certainly also discourages visitors to the play areas and tennis courts at the extreme end of developed space.

Chubb Park is a wonderful substrate, capable of sustaining a large day use attendance in diverse activities. Shortfalls in personal support, utility infrastructure, and inappropriate relationship of activities limit this opportunity.

Future potentials for increasing Chubb Park's service utility include: restroom, shelter structures, expansion of the pathway system, and renovation and elaboration of utility systems. Creation of an additional play equipment area in conjunction with a sitting area located in a position near the skating facility will amplify the attraction of both.

CHUBB PARK MAP



EVALUATION SHEET - CHUBB PARK

EVALUATION SHEET - CHUBB PARK - CHESTER TOWNSHIP

DESCRIPTION	CHUBB PARK FACILITIES																
	SIZE	SPACE	PERIMETER	ACCESS	SAFETY	COMPLIANCE	SURFACES	ACCESSORIES	EQUIPMENT	SUPPORT	CONTEXT	AESTHETIC	MAINTENANCE	UTILITIES	SITE SELECTION	SITE DEVELOPMENT	TOTAL
SENIOR FIELD	2	3	3	1	2	2	3	3	2	3	2	3	1	1	2		35
FIREMAN'S FIELD	2	2	3	2	3	1	1	2	1	2	3	2	2	1	1	2	30
LITTLE LEAGUE FIELD	3	3	3	1	2	1	3	3	1	3	3	2	1	2	3		37
SOFTBALL #1	2	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	2	2	3	2	2	1	3	1	24
SOFTBALL #2	2	2	1	3	3	1	1	1	2	2	3	2	2	1	0	1	27
SOFTBALL #3	2	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	2	1	2	2	2	0	0	1	17
SOCCER (SMALL)	2	3	2	2	1	2	2	1	1	3	3	2	2	1	1	2	30
SOCCER UPPER	2	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	3	3	2	2	2	2	1	28
SOCCER LOWER	2	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	3	2	2	2	3	1	27
FAIRGROUND	This facility is not rated. It deserves more utility support, a restroom and a large shelter but remains the most useful in the region.																
SKATING POND	Not rated. No useful comparison exists. This facility is excellent and rare. Huge plus for the system.																
WALKING PATH (AT SKATING)	A great small facility except not barrier free. Alternate access should be added and entire pathway extended to loop through frontal region of park site.																
TENNIS COURTS	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	2	2	1	2	2	40
PLAY AREA	2	3	2	1	2	2	1	3	2	3	2	2	2	1	3	2	33

B. BLACK RIVER FIELDS

The Black River Fields are the best sports venues for their purposes within the Chester Township System. Two full sized soccer fields and a "little League" standard baseball field are supported by a restroom building and are all adjacent to a large parking area. The soccer fields are two of the soccer system mainstay fields as they are large, uniform, properly graded and drained and comparatively well supported. The restroom/concession stand distinguishes this from all other system complexes and communicates a sense of purpose and permanence not found elsewhere.

All three of the playing fields here are among those best reviewed and most sought for soccer, lacrosse and baseball play by area associations.

As the Black River Field complex is viewed from the road, it appears that the complex is very large. In fact, only those developed field spaces and parking areas on the western side of the site are a part of the Township owned Facility. The remaining area of mowed grass meadow is a site space owned by the West Morris Regional High School District and is an area, which has been leased and utilized by the Chester PAA and subsequently the Township as multi-purpose practice space. It remains in an unimproved state due to the circumstance that neither the Township nor area sports associations are willing to invest in improvements without assurance of long term control of the site. It is important to understand the interrelationship of these two parcels as they are wholly interdependent functionally but separately owned.

The recently constructed Black River fields are reliant upon adjacent undifferentiated turf space for versatility beyond their own capability. A large meadow parcel (owned by the West Morris Regional Board of Education) lies east of the new fields and provides limitless variations for set up of soccer and lacrosse's practice. Though little developed, this is one of the most useful sites in the Four Towns. As no permanent feature has been created here, the field is versatile, enabling very quick reorganization suited to play or practice for a variety of age levels in either soccer or lacrosse.

This practice field is an extremely valuable resource and should be secured from the Board of Education for conversion to developed fields. It is sufficiently large to create up to four multi-purpose fields adaptable to any purpose and still reserve sufficient useful space for parking and baseball field construction, court development or numerous smaller day use features. It has the capability to establish a complex of facilities that will absorb the current demand for soccer, across and football and will provide full sized, regularly configured fields at reasonable cost.

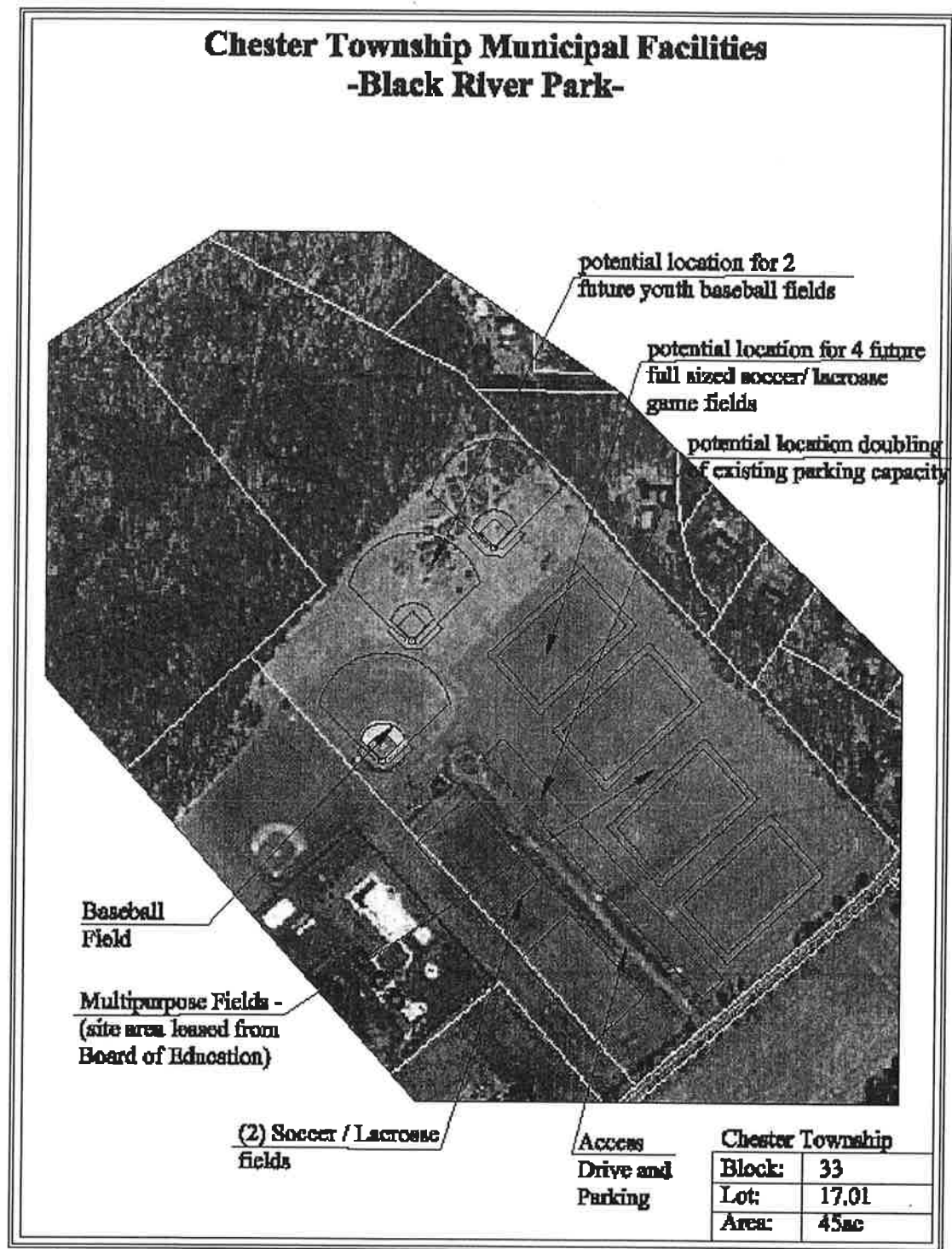
Lands and facilities of the Chester Middle School abut the Black River Fields on the west. These include a baseball field and a steeply sloping open field area that may be used for practicing. Neither of these offer important utility as the baseball field is deficient in construction and poorly sited and the open field is not needed for current programming or apparently, useful for spontaneous purposes.

Support of adjacent sports activities can be importantly improved by creation of a substantial shelter and sitting area and a play equipment area in available space near the restroom. Compliments that increase spectator comfort provide some shelter and occupy younger siblings in attendance of the primary sports events will dramatically improve the

fields family support capability and will add a real element of diversity, beyond sports purposes.

NOTE: The practice field areas adjacent to Black River Park are worthy of special attention in the present context of sports field issues that influence the baseball, soccer and lacrosse programs serving youth of the Four Towns. This is noted here, out of sequence with subsequent text sections, to alert the reader of this site's unique significance and to inform that its potential is viewed to have the most influential capability as a response to a variety of "deficiencies" later described. The site, considered in combination with lands of the Black River Fields, Black River Middle School, and Highlands Ridge Park has the potential to accommodate all of the Four Town's current playfields needs projected into the immediate future. The possibilities that may be created here are; consistent with the preference for large centralized complexes of facilities represented by the sports associations; well centralized within the service area; well connected to all remaining regions of the Four Towns by arterial roadways and atypically, economical to construct as a consequence of the large gradually sloping open field space existing here. The Black River practice field presents a keystone element enabling sensible response to all major athletic field issues. As it is owned by the Regional High School Board of Education, it seems to present an ideal Four Towns planning collaboration target as currently, it is not controlled by any single Town but is important to all four.

BLACK RIVER FIELDS MAP



EVALUATION SHEET – BLACK RIVER FIELDS

EVALUATION SHEET - BLACK RIVER FIELDS		DESCRIPTION															
		SIZE	SPACE	PERIMETER	ACCESS	SAFETY	COMPLIANCE	SURFACES	ACCESSORIES	EQUIPMENT	SUPPORT	CONTEXT	AESTHETIC	MAINTENANCE	UTILITIES	SITE SELECTION	SITE DEVELOPMENT
BLACK RIVER FIELDS																	
SOCER SOUTH		3	2	2	3	2	2	3	2	2	3	2	3	3	2	2	39
SOCER NORTH		3	2	2	3	2	2	3	2	2	3	2	3	3	2	2	39
BASEBALL FIELD		3	3	3	2	2	2	3	2	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	43
PRACTICE MEADOW		4	4	3	2	2	1	2	1	1	4	2	2	1	2	4	36
MS BASEBALL		3	2	1	1	1	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	1	26
PARKING AREA	The parking area and driveway constitute a standing hazard to pedestrian crossing and a nuisance when the lot is full. Barriers and crossing should be added to increase safety.																0

C. HIGHLANDS RIDGE PARK

Highland Ridge Park is a recently acquired site formerly occupied as a field testing facility and research center by Bell Labs/Telechordia. It is distinctive due to the presence of an entire network of roadways that subdivide the site. These enable pedestrian exploration of the varied terrain and natural communities of the meadows, wetland and forested hillside areas that predominate on the site.

Currently, the Park is not developed except for picnicking, pedestrian uses and sledding on adaptable portions of the site. The Township however is engaged in a construction project here to install a new full sized baseball field, a new youth baseball field and a multi-purpose field. These are anticipated to be available for use in 2009.

Highlands Ridge Park is ideally suited for spontaneous day uses, for hiking, nature study, picnicking and sunbathing. The network of roadways sustains these generously. Its hilliness and numerous wetlands leave few site areas large and flat enough for active use development but many opportunities for courts, passive use spaces, play grounds or group gathering features remain.

Highlands Ridge Park is physically adjacent to and soon to be integrated with Black River Middle School, Black River Fields, and already joins the Evans Preserve. As it is considered in the context of a sequence of related activity spaces, Highlands Ridge becomes the likely focus of interest for future indoor development (the barn structure), court sports or special activities venues. Its utility for active uses as athletic fields will be exhausted by current development.

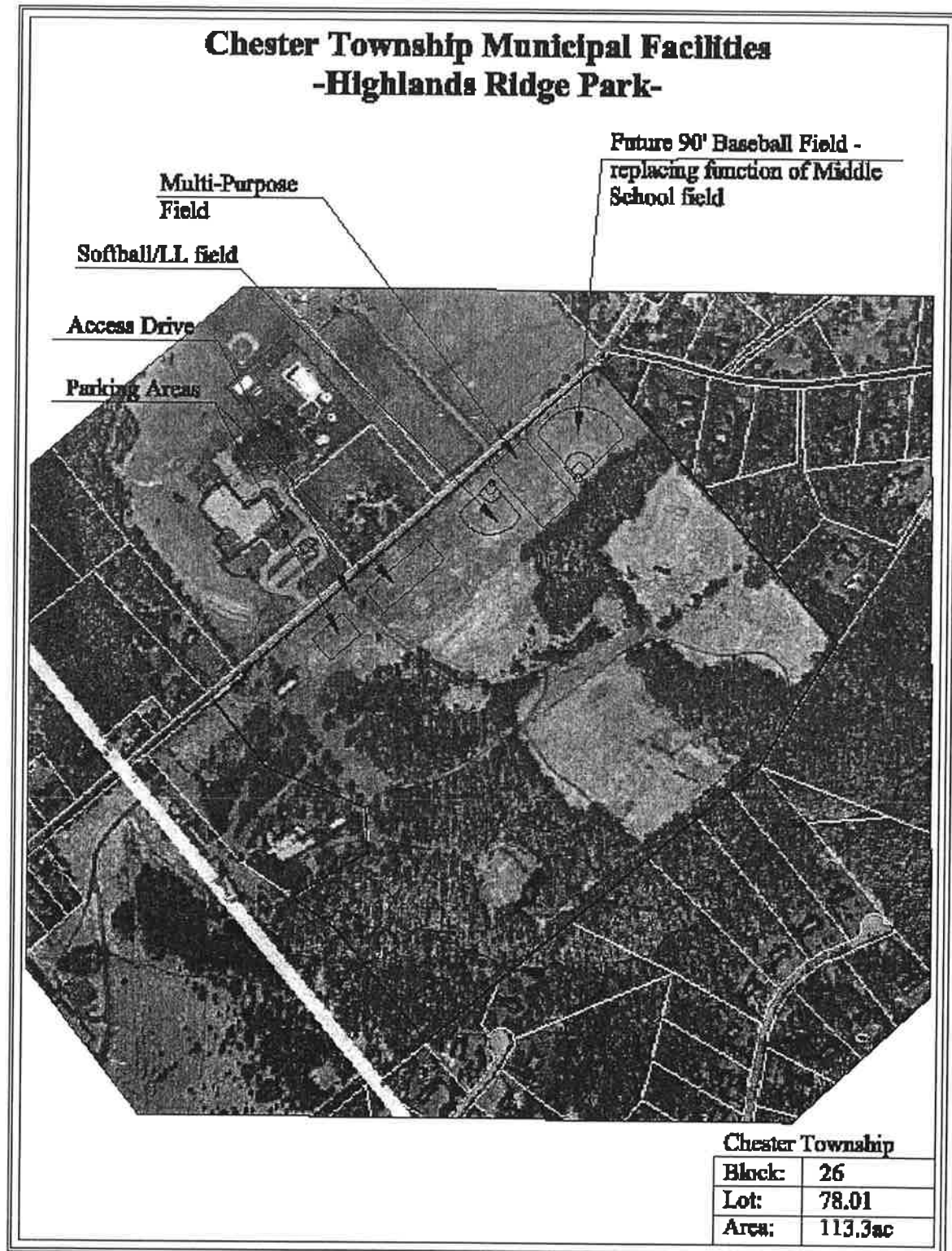
Highlands Ridge Park has a unique existing potential to satisfy needs of both cross country programs for a local training and competition course. Currently, both programs compete at Brundage Park in Randolph and the Mendham Club trains in less than satisfactory circumstances along the rail bed sections of the Patriots Path system.

Minor improvements of the existing roadway system within Highlands Ridge by route marking and minor staging area improvement near the parking lot will create a venue where athletes can train along a course that loops and is visible from central viewing points, enabling timing and supervision of runners.

In the event that adjacent lands of the Lucent tract become available as recreation land (awaiting Chester Borough's acquisition), the combined parcels will yield a host of new potentials including existing structures and the capability to support a YMCA facility.

Playfields at this site are not yet developed sufficiently to warrant rating

HIGHLANDS RIDGE PARK MAP



EVALUATION SHEET – HIGHLAND RIDGE PARK

EVALUATION SHEET - HIGHLAND RIDGE PARK - CHESTER TOWNSHIP																																																										
DESCRIPTION	SIZE		SPACE		PERIMETER		ACCESS		SAFETY		COMPLIANCE		SURFACES		ACCESSORIES		EQUIPMENT		SUPPORT		CONTEXT		AESTHETIC		MAINTENANCE		UTILITIES		SITE SELECTION		SITE DEVELOPMENT		TOTAL																									
HIGHLAND RIDGE PARK																																																										
SLEDDING HILL	2	2	2	2	3	2	NA	3	1	NA	1	3	3	NA	1	3	NA	1	3	NA														26																								
PEDESTRIAN SYSTEM	3	3	3	3	1	NA	NR	2	1	1	1	3	4	2	NA	NA	NA	NA																24																								
NEW FIELD SPACES	Are not yet evaluated. They are under construction however, their should used potential and physical proximity to the Black River Fields is complimentary and will reinforce the utility of both.																																																									0

D. PARKER ROAD RECREATION SITE

The Parker Road site is discussed here even though it is only nominally developed and currently not programmable for any particular activity. This is because the site is currently being considered actively by Chester Little League as a potential recipient of its interest and funding support for the purposes of expansion of baseball fields.

This site is the location of a failed subdivision subsequently purchased by the Township as a recreation site. To date its development consists of an entrance drive, a small parking area, a gate and an entrance sign and information board. Otherwise, the site is predominately forested and has a pair of overgrown field areas on the eastern end. A disturbed earth area apparently formed as an access driveway bisects the site, approximately following the toe of slope of a rocky, wooded hillside. The natural surface condition of wooded areas is discouraging to development being very rocky. Northern portions of the tract are comparatively low in the landform, exhibiting wetlands and dense vegetation.

This is not a prime land development site and will be costly to prepare for sports fields, as topography, stony soils and surface water will require significant work and site grading to prepare for nearly level field substrates. Nonetheless, this site can be developed in part at reasonably moderate cost. It should not be considered an optimal location for general park development but will sustain picnic sites, small play areas, courts and pathway systems. These features if carefully placed, working with the landform will certainly produce a secluded, well shaded and buffered park site.

Part of the motive to examine Parker Road as a location for ball field expansion is the notion that adequate seclusion is possible here to enable placement of lighting systems. This prospect is reasonable but will influence the nearest three or four residences on the eastern side of the site. They are adequately well separated from the best field construction site areas but will likely not be perceived as that. Additional buffering will likely be necessary to reinforce the screen effect produced by hedgerows separating the park from residential rear yards.

EVALUATIONS: MENDHAM BOROUGH PARKS

A. BOROUGH PARK

Borough Park is the rare example of a home grown recreation site that has matured usefully as a modern park facility. It is nearly ideal in its location, site, adjacent development and diversity of available features.

It is additionally distinctive as its landscape is mature and provides a sense of unity and integration with the enclosing, streetscapes, and neighborhoods. Its accessibility for pedestrians and bicyclists from adjacent neighborhoods is safe, attractive, and pleasant.

Borough Park is significant regionally owing to its long tradition as host of the Labor Day carnival and fireworks, and significant locally as long time home to baseball and football organizations and location of some of the few public tennis courts available in the vicinity.

The park offers a mix of activity types including: baseball (3 fields), a multipurpose soccer/football field, and two groups of tennis courts, basketball courts, play and sitting areas, a volleyball court and gazebo. These facilities are supported by food service and restroom accommodations within a relocated, renovated residence. The site is accessible from three vehicle access points and can be reached from all sides on foot. Adjacent uses include a day care center and firehouse, enabling use and programming of daily or special events.

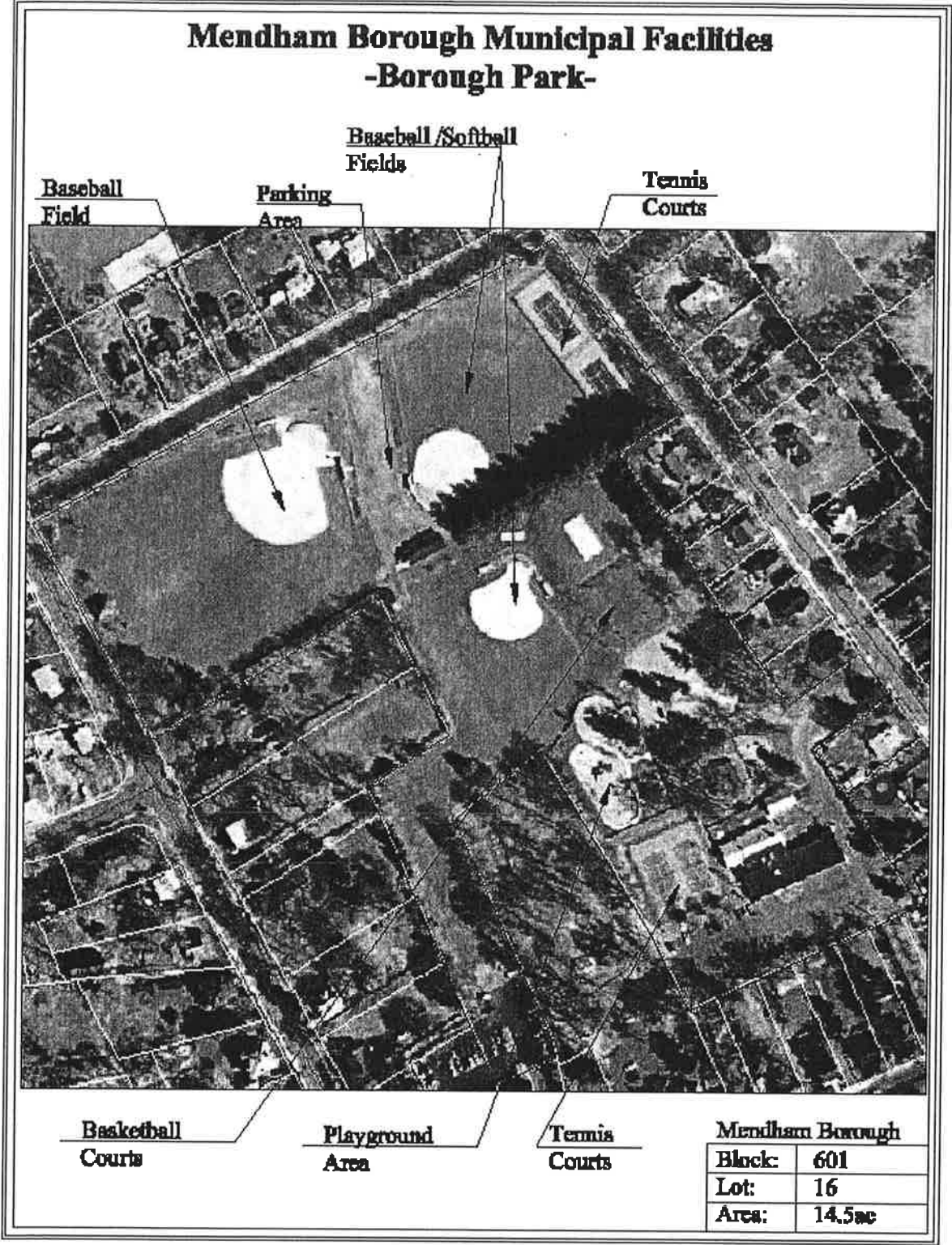
Borough Park has a variety of age and development related issues (proximity to parking, seasonal surface water at infields) and various accessory systems repairs (fencing, backstops at lower field) but is managed in good overall condition. Its upper field is among those most preferred by the Mendham Little League and its tennis courts are without equal with respect to appropriate context and support.

The two youth baseball fields are reported to present chronic programming issues due to seasonal wetness and the lower field fencing and backstop deserve replacement as a priority.

A football overlay field has been a much needed resource for support of the Twin Boro Bears football program but reportedly has not recently been utilized to sustain their beleaguered program. Restoration of this function would materially improve very difficult programming issues facing that program.

Like Memorial Park in Chester, Borough Park is too little decorated and offers too few beautifully landscaped passive or social spaces. Perhaps this circumstance could be improved by adoption of projects by a joined effort of the Historical Society, Garden Club and Shade Tree committee with town service groups to create significant spaces celebrating area character, pride or community involvement.

BOROUGH PARK MAP



EVALUATION SHEET – BOROUGH PARK

EVALUATION SHEET - BOROUGH PARK - MENDHAM BOROUGH																
DESCRIPTION																
	SIZE	SPACE	PERIMETER	ACCESS	SAFETY	COMPLIANCE	SURFACES	ACCESSORIES	EQUIPMENT	SUPPORT	CONTEXT	AESTHETIC	MAINTENANCE	UTILITIES	SITE SELECTION	SITE DEVELOPMENT
BOROUGH PARK																
90' BASEBALL	2	2	1	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	40
UPPER 60' BASEBALL	2	2	1	2	2	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	3	2	2	37
LOWER 60' BASEBALL	2	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	3	3	2	3	3	2	2	32
UPPER TENNIS COURT	2	2	2	1	2	2	3	2	3	2	2	2	2	1	2	32
LOWER TENNIS COURT	2	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	3	2	3	43
BASKETBALL	3	3	2	3	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	3	2	37
VOLLEYBALL	2	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	3	3	2	2	3	2	2	37
PLAY AREA	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	3	3	3	2	3	47
PARK CENTER	3	3	2	3	2	3	2	3	4	4	3	3	4	3	2	47
TOTAL																

B. WEST FIELD

West Field is a specialty field created to meet local demand for soccer venues. Two playfield areas and a parking lot have been produced on a very challenging site here but this has been and remains among the most sought and utilized fields in the soccer system.

The upper field is a very small soccer practice/play venue but one well suited to the younger divisions of play. The lower field provides space for generously sized regulation (360' x 225') field or for two cramped small sided fields. Steep slopes falling away from this field on two sides yield routine ball chasing opportunities, but this is a very desirable venue according to West Morris Soccer.

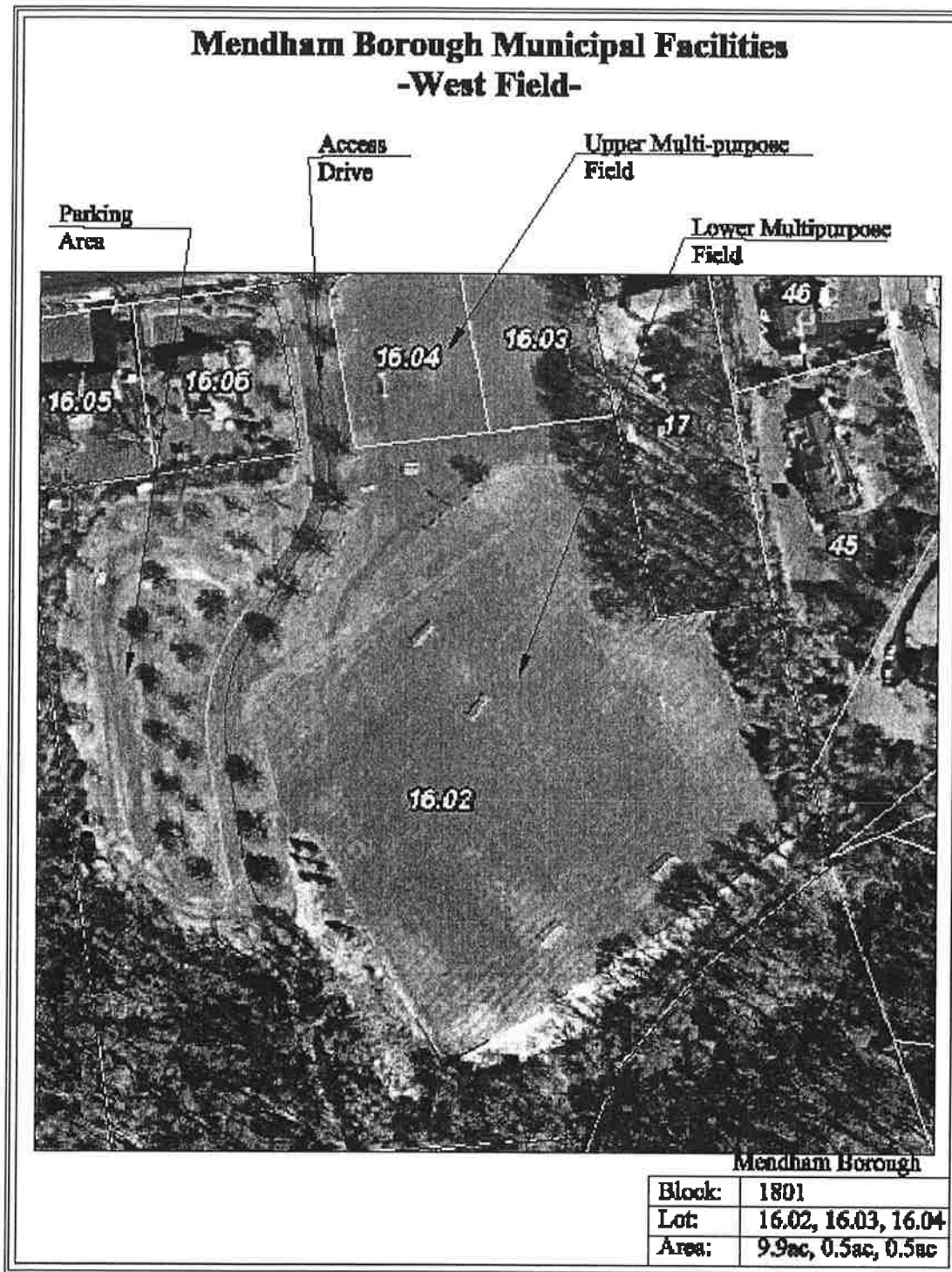
Despite non-compliant barrier free characteristics and steeper than optimal crossing slopes, this site is very attractive, settled comfortably into the landform and thus, sheltered somewhat from the elements. It is accessed by a winding, tree lined driveway and a parking area that in part overlooks the lower field. This enables escape to a warm car on brisk fall days.

A porta-john is available but this is the sole concession to spectator support or comfort on the site.

West Field is very well liked by soccer and lacrosse associations but is represented to be overused and periodically damaged. A recently completed renovation sequence may restore field surfaces to a satisfactory condition but its fundamental soil characteristics will continue to be impacted by normal utilization and if not regularly and thoroughly aerated, will soon degrade again.

As in instances, which occur throughout the Four Towns, West Field would improve immeasurably by addition of a restroom, drinking fountain, small shelter and a tiny play area and some benches. Its future uses will be conditioned by a restrictive covenant of transfer required by the former land owner. This limitation apparently applies to the type of activities that may be developed or programmed within the site and is sufficiently restrictive to remove West Field from consideration as a viable prospect for alternative uses.

WEST FIELD MAP



EVALUATION SHEET – WEST FIELD

EVALUATION SHEET - WEST FIELD - MENDHAM BOROUGH																		
	DESCRIPTION																	
		SIZE	SPACE	PERIMETER	ACCESS	SAFETY	COMPLIANCE	SURFACES	ACCESSORIES	EQUIPMENT	SUPPORT	CONTEXT	AESTHETIC	MAINTENANCE	UTILITIES	SITE SELECTION	SITE DEVELOPMENT	TOTAL
WEST FIELD																		
UPPER FIELD		2	2	2	1	2	1	3	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	1	2	31
LOWER FIELD		3	3	2	1	2	1	3	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	1	1	32

C. PASTIME FIELD

The Pastime Field is a unique expression of the Pastime Clubs sustaining interested in and commitment to recreation in the Borough and in the Four Towns area. It is a single full size baseball field in a larger turf substrate supported by an aggregate parking area. This field is "home" to the Pastime Athletics a semi-pro baseball team reported to be the longest established in Morris County.

Its location at the end of Valley Way terminates a long entrance drive into the sense of a much older and more rural experience of baseball than is commonly offered.

This affect and the social motive that initially produced the field and sustains it now are exemplary of what has been and what may be achieved by persistent support of a public purpose.

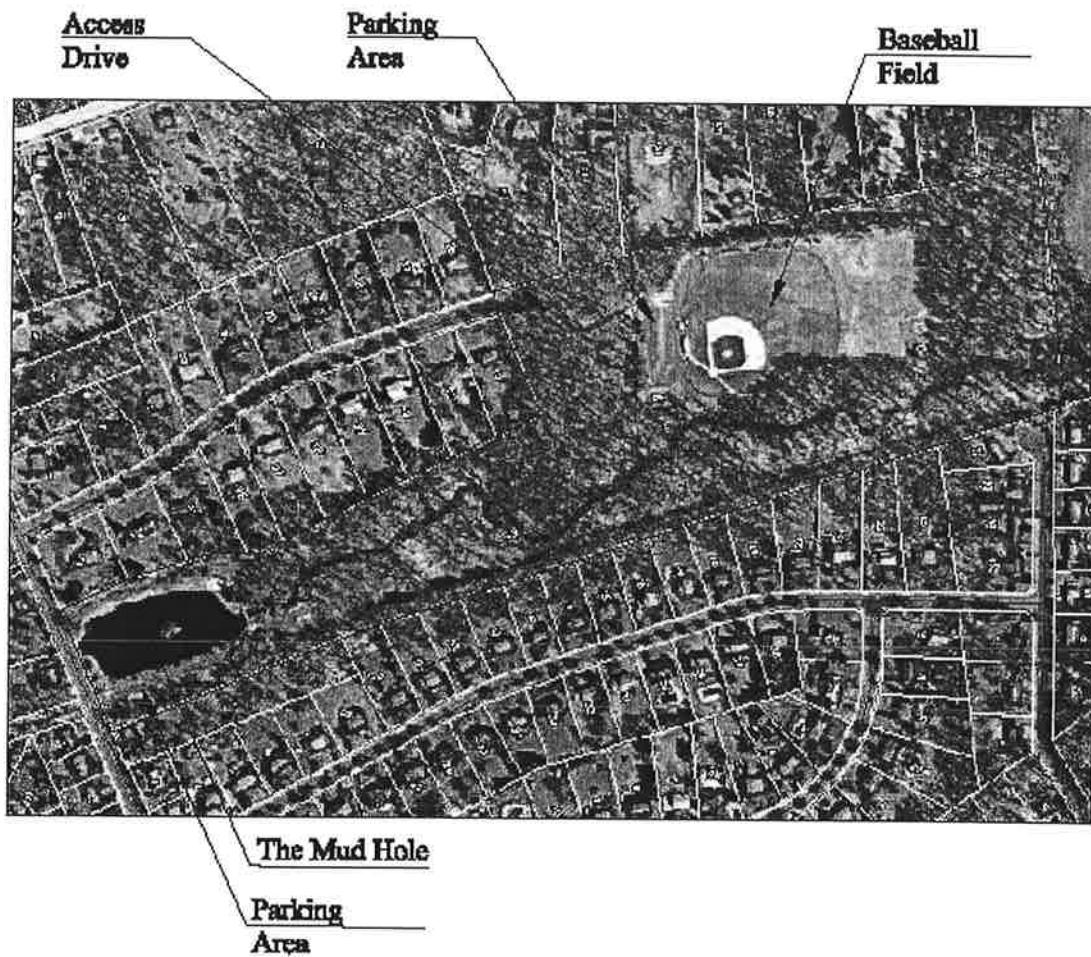
The field itself is recently improved and well maintained despite its location on a very low lying and water sensitive site. The influence of high water table and surface runoff poses distinct issues in the spring or other protracted rainfall events but as the bulk of this fields intended function occurs in late spring and summer, it typically provides a reliable substrate.

The Pastime Field is one where additional development or expansion is unwarranted and likely not possible regardless, due to the influence of wetlands, flood plains and seasonable water table.

Its continuing programming in support of the Babe Ruth and Athletics scheduling is a reasonable level of occupation for this field as its capability to sustain very heavy use in any form of saturated condition will quickly damage the soft soils and the turf.

PASTIME FIELD MAP

Mendham Borough Municipal Facilities -Pastime Field and Mountain Valley Park-



Mendham Borough

Block:	501
Lot:	43
Area:	33.1ac

EVALUATION SHEET - PASTIME FIELD - MENDHAM BOROUGH																
PASTIME FIELD	DESCRIPTION															
	SIZE	SPACE	PERIMETER	ACCESS	SAFETY	COMPLIANCE	SURFACES	EQUIPMENT	SUPPORT	CONTEXT	AESTHETIC	MAINTENANCE	UTILITIES	SITE SELECTION	SITE DEVELOPMENT	TOTAL
BASEBALL FIELD	3	2	2	3	2	2	3	2	2	2	3	3	2	2	2	38

D. GARABRANT CENTER

The Garabrant Center is among the best features of Mendham Borough's recreation system as it addresses a very common and important need for programmable indoor space for area social associations as well as the special needs of any resident group. It is a simple, neat and commodious structure with a large assembly room, bathrooms, and complete kitchen. Women's clubs, area seniors, the Garden Club routinely meet here and it is available to any group or association purposes by reservation.

The Garabrant Center is one of two (Brookside Community Club) such opportunities occurring in the Four Towns though a third similar function is under construction at Grove Street Park in Chester Borough. Competent indoor meeting rooms large enough and adequately equipped to host a variety of meeting and event formats, particularly those with food service are an indispensable component of recreation system success. These facilities enable development of durable social connections between similarly inclined residents and demonstrate a tangible intention of the municipality to support its civic structures. As importantly, social activities in a regularly scheduled format foster a culture of service and typically, outreach in responses to perceived needs within the community or in service of greater ambitions in the world community.

The significance of support of this type of activity cannot be overstated as a desirable planning objective within the recreation future of the Four Towns. While local organizations act to deliver recreation programs and to provide manpower and capital resources in maintenance of municipal systems, forums where their issues and accomplishments can be shared with others are vital to continuity. Communication of the mission and ambitions of the many diverse groups serving social and recreational opportunities within the Four Towns is prerequisite to achieving cooperation rather than competition as each interest seeks to improve its circumstances. The Garabrant Center is not illustrated on plan or evaluated by facility.

E. FRANKLIN ROAD

The Franklin Road site also known as Franklin/Coventry is a facility created in site spaces squeezed into the open holes of surrounding subdivision. It is useful for its current purposes, a multi-purpose athletic field but not distinguished by any significant virtue other than proximity to the High School and "pond" skating area.

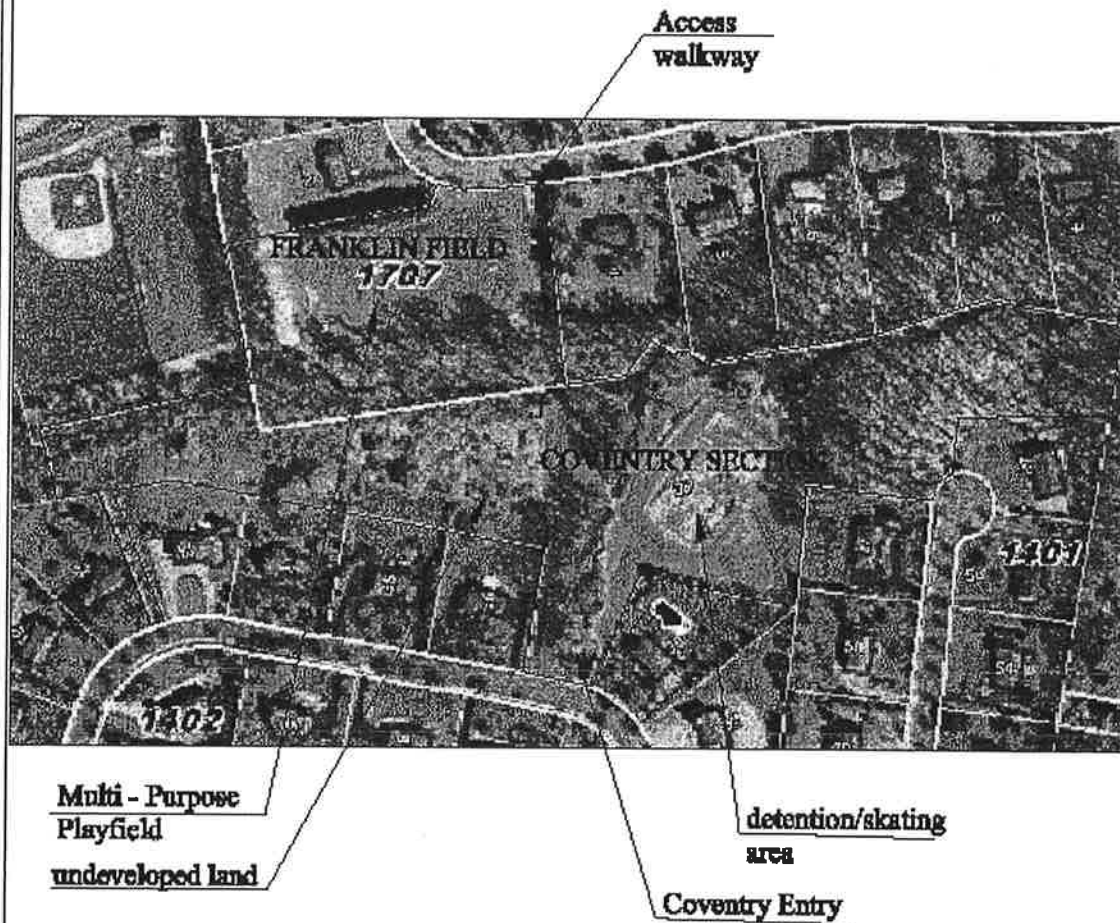
Its athletic field is regularly used for soccer practice by West Morris Soccer and hosts a large number of games. The field is quite typical of system fields being adequate in playing area size, limited in its perimeters and not inviting for spontaneous recreation purposes. It is reported that parking, or more properly, the lack of on-site parking is a distinct limitation and somewhat frequent problem adjacent to the field. When game circumstances occur here, visitors park where possible at curbside on surrounding streets, inconveniencing the residents. This limitation is likely not reversible by parking area construction on-site as space is not available to create a usefully large space without reducing field size.

The other site component (Coventry) is endowed with a pond or a drainage control structure which has an intended utility for ice skating. This element of the site could be developed into a much more diverse and attractive neighborhood park feature by inclusion of a shelter, sitting area and small play area. Its proximity to the athletic field presents an opportunity for this site to perform many more functions then currently available.

In a recreation future where additional space is improved for the joined purposes of soccer and lacrosse (Black River and St. Johns) scheduling of this field could better serve the extraordinary need of the Twin Boro Bears. As both soccer and lacrosse programs are arranged to function more efficiently on paired fields or complexes and as the recreation football program is now reduced to play on a single High School practice field, the opportunities for both may be improved by this measure of reorganization.

FRANKLIN ROAD MAP

Mendham Borough Facilities -Franklin Coventry Site School-



Mendham Borough

Block:	1401-1707
Lot:	3 and 37
Area:	14.45

EVALUATION SHEET – FRANKLIN ROAD TRACT

EVALUATION SHEET - FRANKLIN ROAD TRACT - MENDHAM BOROUGH		DESCRIPTION															
		SIZE	SPACE	PERIMETER	ACCESS	SAFETY	COMPLIANCE	SURFACES	ACCESSORIES	EQUIPMENT	SUPPORT	CONTEXT	AESTHETIC	MAINTENANCE	UTILITIES	SITE SELECTION	TOTAL
FRANKLIN ROAD TRACT																	
MULTI-PURPOSE FIELD	3	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	2	2	2	2	1	29
SKATING POND	3	2	1	2	NR	2	2	2	1	1	2	2	2	1	2	1	26

F. MOUNTAIN VALLEY PARK

Mountain Valley Park is a vestige of a formerly significant recreation element in the Borough. As home to the "Mud Hole" this site likely evokes some fond memories of its past function for older residents. In recent years, this site has been sanitized while an aging dam structure was replaced. It now features a neat, excavated shoreline, a new footbridge, an encircling pathway and sand "beach", volleyball area.

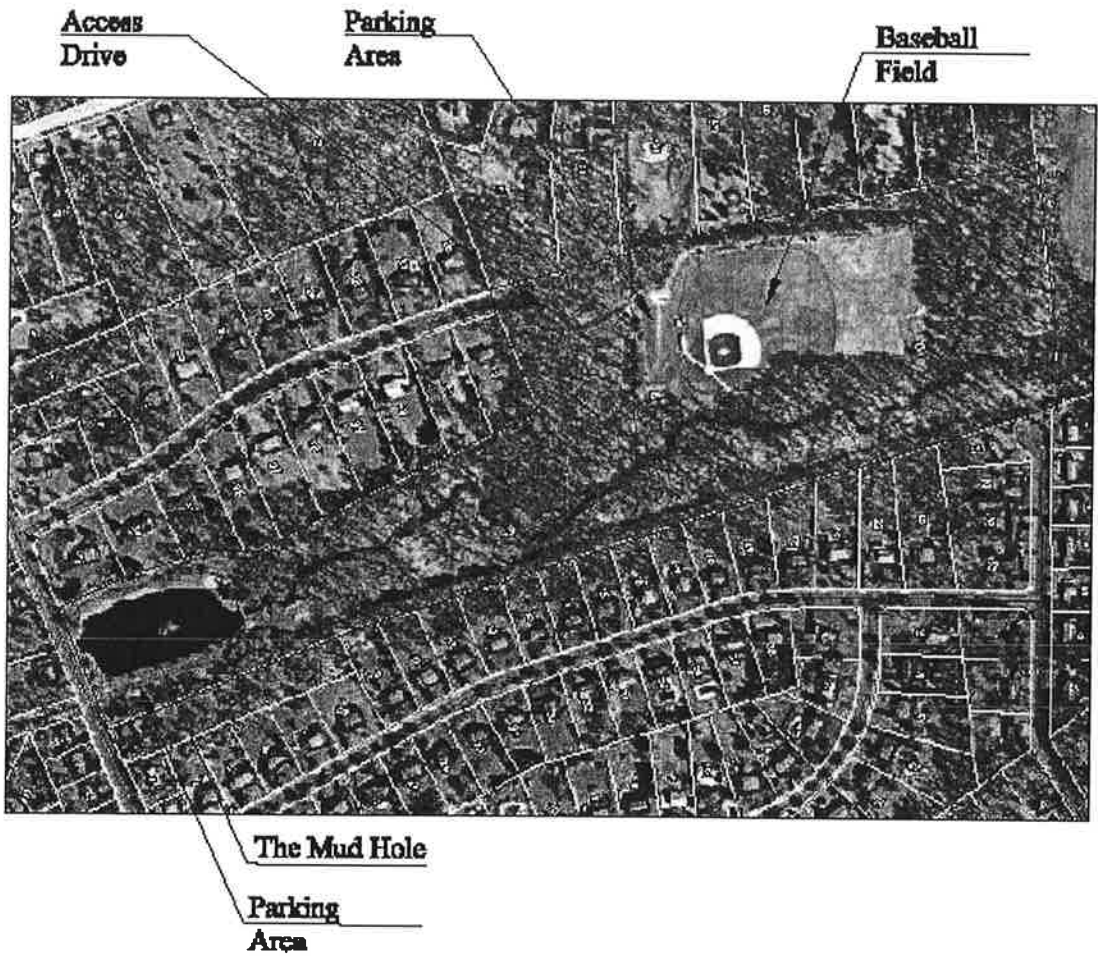
Though constrained on all sides by wetlands and stream encroachment issues, this pond and the passing brook remain as magnetic as ever for passive use and streamside play. The large parking area here, designed to accommodate hikers and bikers on the Patriots Path provides convenient access to the pond shore and provides a great lunch break opportunity or short walk base for area residents. The ponded area is available for skating under satisfactory conditions as posted by the Borough and though infrequently available, is reported to have been opened for use for a protracted time in January of 2009.

Creation of a large shelter structure at the water's edge and extension of a nature trail or boardwalk element through the wetland areas north of the brook would significantly enhance the day use capability of this site. Incorporation of a diverse play equipment area and sitting area behind the former diving wall would complete a small neighborhood park experience in a rare, excellent setting.

Facilities at Mountain Valley Park are not rated.

MOUNTAIN VALLEY PARK MAP

**Mendham Borough Municipal Facilities
-Pastime Field and Mountain Valley Park-**



Mendham Borough

Block:	501
Lot:	43
Area:	33.1ac

G. HILLTOP SCHOOL – MENDHAM BOROUGH

The Hilltop school is aptly named as it occupies a perch thirty feet above its associated playfields. Consequently all forms of access and circulation within this site require ramp, stairs or a lot of energy. Not surprisingly, the athletic field space is not barrier free but as it is not essential to the school objectives, this appears not be an issue.

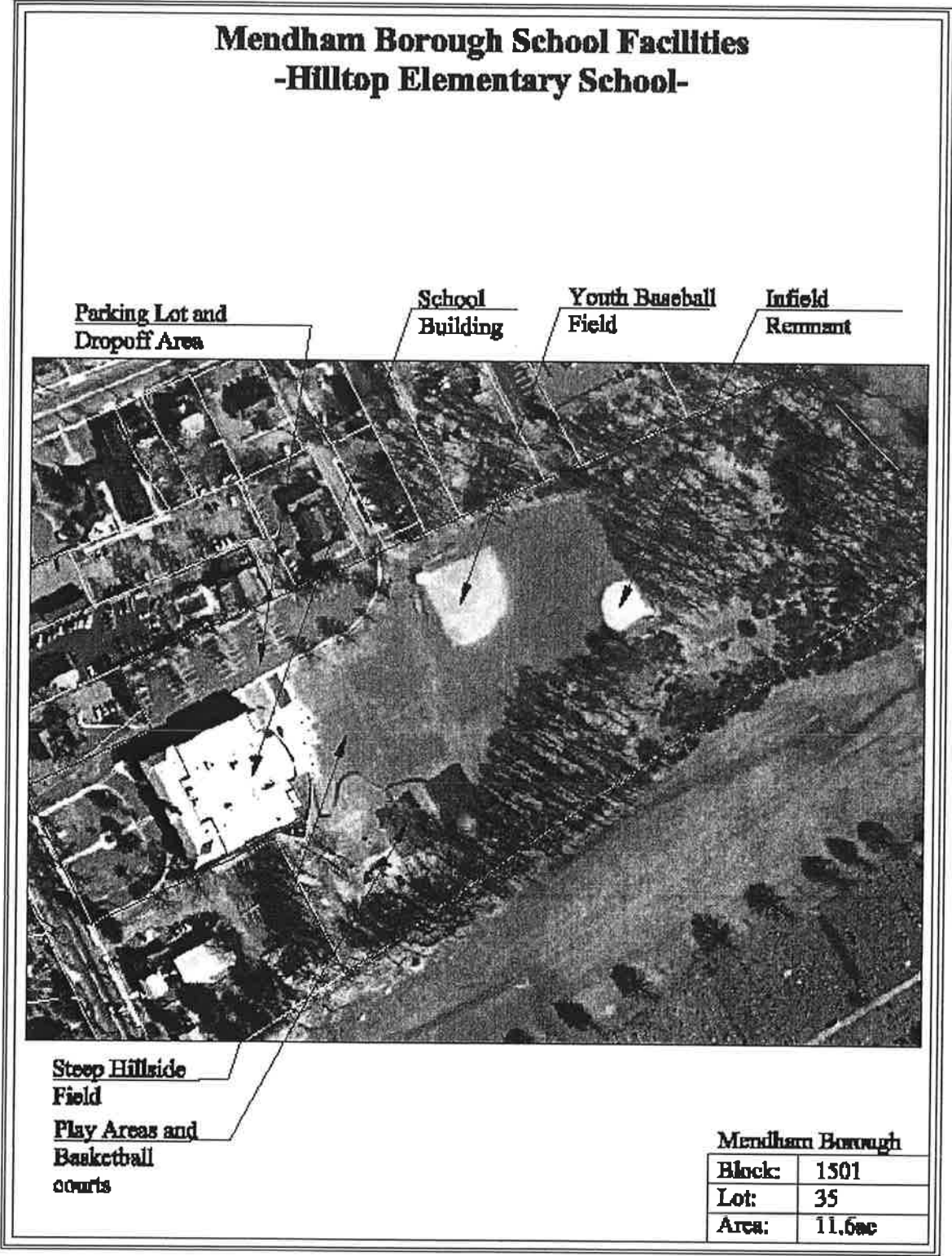
The Hilltop fields are useful recreation resource and amazingly, are well liked by both the youth baseball and adult women's softball programs. That fact is an important observation, as it informs an understanding of the relationship between local sports organizations and their government structures. Private residents are sufficiently flexible in their intention to deliver recreation and apparently so uncritical of their opportunities that almost any space will suffice.

These are two seriously deficient fields and though they occupy a very pleasant little site have few other advantages to recommend them. These are fields just like those that our parents played on as kids, despite the fact that they exist in a real world expected to respond to codified requirements, standards of safety and sometime, minimal expectations of comfort, convenience and support.

Available space here is adequate for a single baseball field, which if properly located on the site and appropriately supported by perimeter improvements and linked to adjacent parking by an accessible route could result in a great single use venue. The site is well sloped, adequately drained and sufficiently large to create a 220' field with proper perimeter space, spectator accommodations and complete utility support. Adjacent forested lands, though restricted by wetlands buffers are useful as a picnic site or location for a sitting area. The school playgrounds and courts enable an element of attraction for non-participants that are so typically absent in the system.

Other potentials for the Hilltop School site include removal of the lower small infield space and nominal surficial regrading and refinishing to produce a short sided soccer or lacrosse field. The high well sloped surface and better than typical soils have a potential to replace the function of improbably poor, small fields at Mountainview and Mendham Township Elementary schools.

HILLTOP SCHOOL – MENDHAM BOROUGH MAP



EVALUATION SHEET – HILLTOP SCHOOL SITE

EVALUATION SHEET - HILLTOP SCHOOL SITE - MENDHAM BOROUGH	
DESCRIPTION	
HILLTOP SCHOOL SITE	
BASEBALL FIELD	
SIZE	2
SPACE	1
PERIMETER	1
ACCESS	1
SAFETY	0
COMPLIANCE	0
SURFACES	2
ACCESSORIES	1
EQUIPMENT	2
SUPPORT	1
CONTEXT	3
AESTHETIC	3
MAINTENANCE	2
UTILITIES	1
SITE SELECTION	2
SITE DEVELOPMENT	1
TOTAL	23

H. THE COSMA TRACT – MENDHAM BOROUGH

The Cosma Tract is a vacant land parcel owned by the Mendham Board of Education acquired to protect space for future school development. Long unutilized except for neighborhood play, this site remains a potentially useful prospect for expansion of recreation facilities in excellent relationship to residentially developed surrounding lands.

The site is surrounded by single family residents on the east, west and south sides and may be accessed from the dead end of Cosma Place or from a preserved access easement on the western site boundary. It is characterized as sloping overgrown meadowlands on the southern half of the tract, flattening to heavily overgrown wetlands and their transition areas across the northern half of the site. These are category 1 wetlands and include a 300' transition area, which limits development potential dramatically.

This influence, coupled with the sensitivities of the surrounding neighbors, likely present a combination of restrictive factors that will preclude extensive development here even though the southern meadow slopes are sufficiently large to accommodate two multi-purpose fields and appropriate parking. As the Four Towns planning process offers far better and less controversial options than development of playfields here, the most appropriate future potential should probably be directed at development of a small neighborhood park including a multi-purpose playfield, courts, picnic areas a shelter and restrooms and a somewhat extensive multi-purpose perimeter lane to enable walking, jogging and exercise related activities. The lower site half will never be elaborately developed but remains an excellent location for nature trails and a link to India Brook.

THE COSMA TRACT – MENDHAM BOROUGH MAP

