

FACILITIES DEFICITS

Hudson County has an impressive array of recreational facilities in its county and municipal parks. The Hudson County Park and Recreation Plan Master Plan of 1998 made recommendations for facilities improvements at eight county facilities and these have been actively pursued. The remarkable results are obvious to anyone visiting the parks lately. Facilities have been updated, restored and resurfaced and the effects are impressive. However, there is plenty of room for improvement. There are certain types of facilities that are not as well represented in the County as others.

Dog Runs

There are five dog runs currently listed in the recreation inventory for the county.



James J. Braddock North Hudson Park and 46th Street Park in North Bergen, Dennis Collins Park in Bayonne, Church Square Park in Hoboken, and Verrazano/ Auf Derheide Park in West New York. There are

no dog runs in Harrison, Kearny, Secaucus, Jersey City, Union City, Weehawken, East Newark or Guttenberg.

Dog runs or dog play areas are very popular among residents. They were the most requested facility type in the citizen survey. They are often very low cost facility areas, often consisting only of fencing, gates and wood chips. They provide pet owners and pets relaxation and exercise.

Pools

There are only three public swimming pools listed in the County recreation inventory. Two pools are listed in 16th Street/G. Thomas DiDomenico Park in Bayonne and one in Pershing Field in Jersey City. There are no public pools listed in North Bergen, Hoboken, Harrison, Kearny, Secaucus, West New York, Union City, Weehawken, East Newark or Guttenberg. There are, however, spray pools at twelve parks in the county but none of these are in East Newark, Guttenberg, Harrison, Kearny, Weehawken or West New York.

Swimming pools and sprinklers were the second most requested facility in the citizen survey. Given the fact that all three major rivers surrounding the County are classified as SE3 waters, more pools are necessary for public swimming. The designated recreation use for this SE3 classification is secondary contact recreation, which includes recreational activities where the probability of water ingestion is minimal, such as boating and fishing, not swimming.

Golf

There are no public golf courses in the County at this time. There are two courses proposed for the County, Bayonne Golf Course in Bayonne and Resort Recreation Community Golf Course in Kearny, but no facilities exist at this time. The County needs to ensure that these projects are completed so Hudson County golf enthusiasts have links of their own. There is one driving range in Lincoln Park East in Jersey City and there is only one putting green at Mill Ridge Fields in Secaucus.

Several respondents to the citizen survey mentioned golf courses and their suggestions also included small golf courses such as pitch and puts, driving ranges, and even miniature golf courses.



The new golf courses should incorporate more of these types of golf related facilities. Pitch and put and miniature golf are uses that can fit on relatively small parcels of land, as small as one or two acres.

Gardens and Greenspaces

There is only one formal garden listed in James J. Braddock North Hudson Park in North Bergen. Formal gardens offer a unique passive recreation experience. Formal gardens, decorative water fountains, butterfly gardens, bird sanctuaries and sheltered areas were all suggestions from the citizen survey. Permanent beds offer citizens a chance to observe how the change of seasons can affect plantings, while constantly changing seasonal displays lead to new experiences on each visit.

There are no community gardens listed. Community gardens are an excellent use of vacant lands and underused areas. Community gardens not only provide food and recreation, but they can bring a community together. Gardens give youth a productive outlet throughout the summer while providing training in small-scale agriculture and in running a small business. Community gardens also provide much-needed greenspace in urban neighborhoods. They can also engender a sense of self-reliance when neighbors produce some of their own foods.

According to the Rutgers University New Jersey Urban Ecology Program, a well-managed 100 square foot plot can yield 250 pounds of produce, which is nearly an extra serving per day for each of a family of four, for a whole year. The Hudson County Cooperative Extension office of Rutgers University can be a useful resource for community gardens development, as well as the Rutgers University New Jersey

Urban Ecology Program and the American Community Gardening Association.



Waterways Access

The only public marina listed on the recreation inventory is Frank Vincent Marina at Riverbank Park in Kearny. There are numerous private marinas throughout the county, such as, Passaic River Yacht Club, Robbins Reef Yacht Club, Atlas Yacht Club, Port Liberte, Liberty Harbor, Newport, Lincoln Harbor, Port Imperial and Harmon Cove. Since Hudson County is defined by it's waterfront, it is imperative that the public have access to the waterways with the proper facilities for full enjoyment.

Laurel Hill Park in Secaucus and Frank Sinatra Park in Hoboken offer canoe rentals to the public. Canoeing offers a very low cost introduction to boating to the public and the more opportunities that are available, the better for the recreating public. Closer boat launches, rowboat rentals, canoe and kayak launching and fishing/ crabbing piers were identified in the citizen survey are requested facilities.

The Hackensack Riverkeeper has run The Canoe Project since 1999 at Laurel Hill Park. They have since added single and tandem kayaks to their program, the only canoe livery on the Hackensack River. The boat launch is directly across the river from the

Sawmill Creek Wildlife Management Area and offers chances for exploration and wildlife viewing

The canoes are available for \$15 per paddler and the kayaks for \$20 per paddler. Guided tours are also available to the public. The Riverkeeper provides a two-hour paddle through the marshes of the Sawmill Creek Wildlife Management Area with an experienced guide. In addition to sightseeing and wildlife watching, participants learn about the natural and human history that has shaped the New Jersey Meadowlands. The guided tours are available for \$20 per paddler and the kayaks for \$25 per paddler. This type of program should be expanded to

explore other areas of the Hudson County waterfront.

There are three public boat launches in the County; Laurel Hill Park in Secaucus, 16th Street/G. Thomas DiDomenico Park in Bayonne and Frank Vincent Marina at Riverbank Park in Kearny and provide access to the Hackensack River, Passaic River and Newark Bay. There is no public boat access to the Hudson River.

Cycling

There are only five total miles of bikeways in the County as listed in the recreation facilities inventory, four miles in Stephen R. Gregg/Bayonne County Park and one mile 16th Street/G. Thomas DiDomenico Park. Yet the Hudson County Green Map lists Stephen R. Gregg/Bayonne County Park in Bayonne, Liberty State Park and Lincoln Park in Jersey City, West Hudson County Park in Harrison and Kearny, Laurel Hill County Park in Secaucus, Pier A Park in Hoboken, and James J. Braddock North Hudson Park in North Bergen as having



bike facilities. Each of these parks has trails identified as walkways/bikeways, yet it is unclear if these are for mixed use or exclusively for pedestrian or bicycle use.

In any case, the County should continue to create new bikeways along new and proposed routes to better link existing and proposed open space and historic resources and improve signage along established bikeways. Bicycle paths can also be considered multiple use paths for rollerbladers and runners.

Running, Hiking and Exercising

There are no jogging trails currently identified in the County at this time. There are is one mile of cross country trail identified at Stephen R. Gregg/Bayonne County Park in Bayonne and three miles of interpretive trail in three parks, Lincoln Park East in Jersey City and North Forty Park and Don Ahern Park in Bayonne.

Given the urban landscape and surface transportation of Hudson County it is imperative that more facilities be available for running and jogging. There is no reason why many of the existing trails can be designated multiple use and used for walking, jogging and cycling. Hiking trails and interpretive walks were other facilities requested in the citizen survey.

Specialty Facilities

There are many specialty activities that only have one or two facilities throughout the



county and there is a definite need for more of these recreational opportunities. There is one archery range at Riverbank Park in Kearny and there is only one park, Stephen R. Gregg/Bayonne County Park in Bayonne that has horseshoe pitches. Shuffleboard courts are limited to Buchmuller Park in Secaucus and racquetball courts are not available at any facility. There are three ice rinks throughout the county, 16th Street/G. Thomas DiDomenico Park in Bayonne, Pershing Field in Jersey City and Buchmuller Park in Secaucus.

The citizens who participated in the recreation survey requested these recreation facilities. The most frequently requested facilities were volleyball courts and skating rinks. (Number of times)



- Volleyball Courts (8)
- Roller/Ice-Skating Rink (7)
- Shuffleboard Courts (2)
- Health Club/Gymnasium (2)
- Picnic Areas (2)
- Chess/ Game Tables (2)
- Skate Parks (2)
- Barbeque Areas
- Cross-Country Ski Trails
- Cricket Grounds
- Horseshoe Pitches
- Rifle Range
- Racquetball Courts
- Handball Courts



Fields

Sports fields are fairly well represented in the recreation inventory, with numerous baseball/ softball diamonds and soccer fields throughout the county. There are seven football fields and four oval running tracks.

The citizen survey group advocated more multi-purpose fields, while also advocating for separate and distinct fields for soccer and football play. There was a specific request for soccer fields in North Hudson Park in North Bergen, but the inventory already identifies two such fields in the park. Other respondents felt that there was a need for more spectator seating at some of the field facilities and a need for more parking availability when there is league play.



Amphitheatre & Amusements

There are four concert areas identified in the recreation inventory. North Forty Park in Bayonne, 16th Street/G. Thomas DiDomenico Park in Bayonne and both Pier A and Frank Sinatra Park (naturally) in Hoboken have areas specifically designed for performance space. There are concession stands in fourteen parks throughout the county.

However, the citizen survey revealed a strong desire for more band shells or Amphitheatres throughout the park systems for evening concerts and other types of performing arts. There was also a request for food courts in the recreation areas. Other suggestions include adding petting zoos and train rides for children.

Accessibility

It is imperative that any facilities upgrades at existing recreation areas or new facilities be compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act guidelines for accessibility. Wheelchair accessible areas should be provided in all active recreation sites and even natural areas can be modified to accommodate ADA accessibility compliant trails and pathways. Facilities improvements should also include ADA accessibility compliant parking spaces and picnic areas.



Hudson County should examine the inventory of their own parks and encourage its municipalities to do the same to see if there are areas that meet accessibility needs. There should be a goal of providing accessible active and passive recreation areas in each of the County parks and in the municipalities, including established and developing waterfront walkways. If it is found that there are areas, either within County parks or within municipalities, that have no provisions for ADA accessibility, a remediation plan should be developed to ensure that any new parks developed are accessible and/or existing parks are modified to provide accessibility where it is needed.

Furthermore, any new parks or changes to existing parks completed with State funding must comply with ADA regulations. Currently, the State provides assistance in this area through its Recreation Opportunities for Individuals with Disabilities Program within the Department of Community Affairs' Division of Housing and Community Resources. The program provides funding assistance to local and county governments for short-term and special events and continuous recreational services for individuals with disabilities.

