

# REIMAGINING CANTON RECREATION RECOMMENDATIONS

In December 2020, a group of more than 20 enthusiastic Canton residents gathered to begin discussions about “Reimagining Canton Recreation.” Transitions in recent years and the limitations of COVID presented good reference points for examining and assessing the Town and Village’s joint recreation program.

Over the course of two months – five meetings – the group discussed what they and their friends, neighbors, and recreation constituencies are looking for in recreation opportunities in Canton - and what is missing. Existing community plans were shared, budgets were examined, and the group met with staff from other recreation programs in the North Country to hear about their experiences.

The results of these deliberations are the recommendations set forth here. These are general suggestions for the direction, framework, and structure of Canton’s municipal recreation operations. It is the expectation that these recommendations will guide the Recreation Committee, the Town and Village Boards, and other recreation partnerships toward the recreation programs and facilities this group imagines for our community.

## Goals

- Robust, diverse, and consistent year-round programming for all ages
- Attractive, well-maintained, multi-purpose parks, trails, and facilities that are accessible to all, including the elderly and people with disabilities
- Enhanced communications and partner collaboration
- Community engagement in planning, implementing, and fundraising
- Sustainable budget and finances
- Strategic plan for recreation programs and facilities to serve all Town and Village residents

## Challenges

- Limited municipal budgets
- Lack of strategic planning
- Deferred maintenance and aging infrastructure
- Pavilion requires substantial resources - time, staff, money
- Inadequate communication and coordination; limited collaboration among potential recreation partners

- Staffing priorities and expectations

**What is/should be the responsibility of the municipal recreation program?**

- Operation and maintenance of Village and Town facilities, parks, and trails
- Program planning and facilitation/implementation
- Communications and stakeholder coordination, including steering committee
- Strategic and sustainable budgeting and planning
- Staffing decisions and management

**What can/should be done by partners, stakeholders, and community members?**

- Consider avenues for greater involvement in operation, maintenance, and capital improvements of Pavilion
- Community members with expertise and interest offer and implement programs through Recreation Department
- Established groups continue to organize/oversee activities, e.g., Hoopsters, Peewees, Canton Minor Hockey, St. Lawrence Figure Skating Club, pickleball, etc.
- Participate on Recreation Steering Committee
- Organize and maintain community groups for fundraising and stewardship, e.g. proposed Friends of Canton Recreation, community service days
- Explore transportation to parks and facilities; partners could include county public transport network, Canton Central School

**Structure**

*Staffing*

Town and Village to determine personnel required to effectively execute these staffing functions:

- Management and maintenance of Village and Town facilities, parks, and trails
- Department administration, leadership, and supervision
- Budget management and strategic planning
- Program planning and implementation
- Communications and marketing
- Partner development and coordination

*Recreation Advisory Committee*

Formal structure for ongoing community engagement in recreation activities; composition to be determined by Village and Town Boards, to include designated representatives of identified stakeholder groups, with established governance, terms, etc.

- Twelve to 15 members; regular meetings
- Joint Recreation Committee (two Village Board, two Town Council representatives)
- Stakeholder groups, including Canton Central and the universities
- Recreation Department staff, ex officio

### **Facilities**

- Consider alternative Pavilion management models, i.e., ownership/operation/financial support
- Expand shared services among Village, Town, and other partners for facilities maintenance
- Renewed commitment by the Village, Town, and community to update and enhance infrastructure, including parks

### **Funding**

- Village and Town contribute equally per Shared Services Agreement; explore Rensselaer Falls contribution
- Staff to pursue state, federal, and private/foundation funding opportunities, with support from Economic Development Director
- Encourage active involvement and fundraising by community groups
- Establish capital project fund