

5. Community Outreach

The feedback received at the workshops, along with the information garnered through the resident survey, stakeholder interviews, and steering committee meetings, forms the foundation of this Park and Recreation Plan’s goals and objectives.

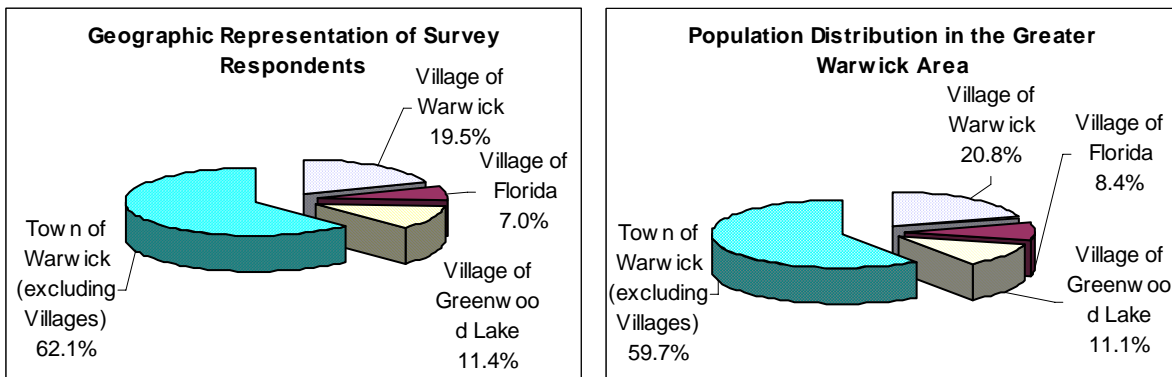
5.1 Resident Survey

As part of the public outreach process, an Online Resident Survey was developed. Greater Warwick residents were invited to complete the survey via the internet or they could request a paper copy of the survey. Approximately 544 households completed a version of the survey, representing 1,214 residents (average household size of 2.2 persons).

A more detailed summary of the survey results is included in Appendix F, Public Outreach. The following pages will include a broad overview of the survey results.

5.1.1 Survey Respondent Residency

Respondents were asked to indicate where in the Town of Warwick they lived. Options included each of the three Villages, the Town west of NYS Route 94 and the Town east of Route 94. Most respondents (62%) indicated that they live in the Town of Warwick (excluding all three Villages). About 19.5% of respondents reside in the Village of Warwick, while 11.4% live in the Village of Greenwood Lake, and about 7% live in the Village of Florida. This breakdown closely corresponds to the population distribution ratio of the Town and its three villages. See charts below.



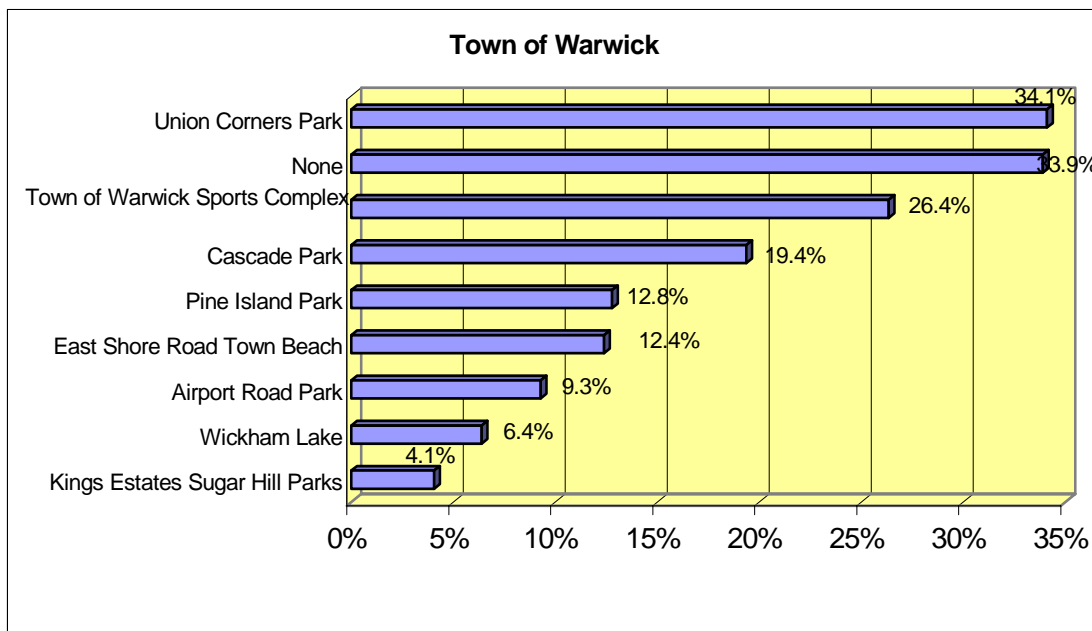
5.1.2 Age Range of Park Users

Respondents were asked to identify the members of their household by age range. According to the responses received, the largest group of park users identified through the survey is those between the ages of 41 and 60, which together represent approximately 36% of all park users.

Another 20% of park users are between age 21 and 40. Children and young adults (under the age 20) represent more than one - third (33.5%) of park users. See Appendix F for chart and more detailed information.

5.1.3 Residents’ Preferred Parks

Respondents were asked to identify which parks or recreational facilities located in the Town of Warwick, they or any member of their household used. Of the residents surveyed, roughly one-third of all respondents (34.1%) indicated that they use Union Corners Park. Another 26.4% respondents use Town of Warwick Sports Complex, while 19.4% use Cascade Park. The least used park, with only 4.1% respondents vote, is (KESH) Kings Estates Sugar Hill Parks.⁶ About one-third (33.9%) of all respondents indicated that they use “none of the above.”



The most used park in the Village of Warwick is Veterans Memorial Park, which is used by 54.8% of survey respondents. The preferred park in the Village of Greenwood Lake is the Greenwood Lake Public Beach, which 26.0% of survey respondents visit. Lastly, the most often used park in the Village of Florida is the new Village of Florida Park at Glenmere Lake, which 10.8% of survey respondents visit.

Many survey respondents indicated they use many of the non-municipal parks located within the Town. About 44% use the Appalachian Trail while 37% visit Sterling Forest State Park. More than one-third of all respondents (33.8%) use Orange County Park (Hickory Hill), while another 30% use Warwick Valley School District resources.

⁶ It should be noted that the KESH parks are not part of the Town park system, as funding for equipment and maintenance for those parks is collected through a special park district in the Kings Estates Sugar Hills neighborhoods.

5.1.4 Overall Quality of Parks

Survey respondents were asked to rate the different aspects of local parks and recreational facilities such as the overall quality of parks, accessibility, park safety, condition/maintenance, available resources and various programs associated with the local park system. The only park system that garnered a higher number of “unsatisfactory” votes than “satisfactory” votes was the Village of Greenwood Lake.

5.1.5 Future Parks

When asked as to whether or not they feel there is a need for additional parks or active recreational facilities within the Town of Warwick or within any of the Village park systems, 2/3 of survey respondents (67%) indicated they **would** like to see additional parks or active recreational facilities, while 33% said they would not.

Respondents were asked if they thought there was a need for additional open space or passive recreation areas within the Town of Warwick or within any of the Village park systems. Nearly ¾ of survey respondents (72%) said that they **would** like to see additional open space or passive recreation areas within the Town of Warwick, while a quarter, about 28%, indicated that they would not.

5.2 Stakeholder Questionnaires

Identified stakeholder groups were invited to provide their ideas on what park, recreation, and open space resources they felt were needed in the Town via questionnaires. In general, the comments can be broken down into four classifications: (1) New resources; (2) Enhancements to existing resources; (3) Administrative improvements; and (4) Financial considerations. Brief summaries of each topic are provided.

Many stakeholders expressed a need for more field space, citing existing capacity problems.



These problems include Little League teams not being able to play the recommended number of weekly games, or being forced to play more evening games. Additionally, the local Little League is losing players to other nearby leagues, such as the Town of Monroe. Most importantly, some games are being played in unsafe conditions, such as the girls’ softball games held at the American Legion’s driveway-abutting field.

Other new resources people would like to see in the Town include more opportunities for cycling and walking to parks, for swimming, and for golf. Respondents indicated a need for more age-specific recreational facilities and organized activities, such as a “vita trail” for adult use. New parks, both active recreational sites and passive open space areas are needed within the Town.

Enhancements residents would like to see at Warwick's parks include improved parking, clean and secure restrooms, upgraded amenities and facilities, and conveniently placed trash receptacles. Improved internal circulation to make maneuvering around the parks easier is also desired. More thought should be given to modifying the parks to address seasonal needs, such as adding shading around play structures and more water-play features for summertime use and flooding parks for winter ice skating.

The top administrative priority appears to be the need for the Town to "reclaim" ownership of its local parks. There is an existing perception among some users that user groups have co-opted several of the facilities, taking a proprietary stance over resources and disregarding posted regulations (e.g., "Do Not Park on Grass.") Some hold the opinion that having a centralized recreation department to oversee and monitor usage at all Town and Village parks would result in a better system. Alternatively, a shared recreation program (with both Town and Villages participating) could be established whereby maintenance is a joint effort by all local governments. Stakeholders identified a need for improved communication among user groups and balance among group needs. Finally, some stakeholders indicated their opinion that between the Town, the Villages, and the local school districts, there is adequate field space to meet local needs.

The three major financial concerns identified via the stakeholder questionnaires included the role of user fees, achieving Village/Town equity, and the need for an appropriate cost/benefit analysis to be conducted prior to large-scale recreation investments. While it was viewed as untenable to institute user fees for routine field use, implementing such fees for clean up following large events might be more acceptable. Some Village residents identified the existing distribution formula used for recreation funds in the Town as insufficient. Lastly, there was an expressed need for project-specific review procedures that weigh costs and benefits—including capital expenditure and yearly maintenance, operations, and replacement costs—for all community residents, not just special interest groups.

5.3 Public Visioning Open House

A Public Visioning Open House was held on November 30, 2005 to obtain feedback from the residents of Greater Warwick, including the Town and the Villages of Warwick, Greenwood Lake, and Florida. A park specific wish list was developed from the feedback and was used in developing the recommendations included in Section 6.



In addition to the park-specific improvements residents would like to see, there were several general improvements or new resources residents indicated as desirable. Desired improvements had mostly to do with the operations of the

Recreation Department, existing recreational programming available to Town (and Village) residents, and existing budgetary allocations.

Many indicated a need for a Town-wide Recreation Department with a Director to oversee all the Town's resources and ensure all resources are being allocated fairly and every effort is being made to schedule resources to meet all resident needs. Pooling resources between the Town and Villages might also result in improved maintenance. On the other hand, "top down" management is also viewed as posing other potential problems.

Open House attendees indicated a need for improved recreational programming in the Town and Villages. Residents would like to see additional recreational opportunities including both adult and teen programs, and summer and after-school programs. Some would like to see the Town concentrate on providing Town-sponsored recreation for children whose parents cannot afford existing leagues.

Several Village residents expressed the opinion that existing Town park and recreation budget allocations should be revised to account for Town resident use of Village parks and facilities in specific areas of Town that lack Town parks and recreational facilities. Many residents, regardless of where in the Town they live, would like the Town and Villages to secure grant monies to help fund not just capital improvements but also operations and maintenance.

In addition to more fields for Little League, football, and multi-purpose use, open house attendees would like to see a skateboard park and a dog park. For summertime fun, they would like a beach, a swimming pool, and sprinklers. An outdoor theater for holding concerts was also mentioned. A community center—with indoor basketball, racquetball, and volleyball courts for year-round use—was also identified as a desired amenity. Residents would also like to see the development of an interconnected biking/hiking trail network throughout the Town.