

BOROUGH OF
NEW PROVIDENCE
SETTLED IN 1720

NEW PROVIDENCE
RECREATION MASTER PLAN

Union County, New Jersey

Prepared By:

New Providence
Recreation Master Plan Committee

New Providence Recreation Master Plan

Acknowledgements

This plan was made possible through the efforts of the New Providence Recreation Master Plan Committee and other valuable resources.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

- I. Background
- II. Goal & Scope – New Providence Recreation Master Plan
- III. Current Situation – Borough of New Providence
 - A. Overview
 - 1. Explosive Growth in Number of School-Age Children
 - 2. Increasing Per Child Demand for Recreation
 - 3. Policy of Accommodation
 - B. Public Input
 - 1. Recreation Survey & Public Open Forum
 - 2. Key Findings
 - 3. Synopsis

PART I: FIELDS ANALYSIS

- I. Executive Summary
- II. Current Situation
 - A. Inventory
 - B. Field Sites vs. Individual Fields
 - C. Turf Conditions
 - D. Hypotheses: Maintenance, Scheduling & Overuse
 - E. Overuse Analysis
 - 1. Ideal Maximum Hours
 - 2. Actual Field Use
 - 3. Approach
 - 4. Findings
 - 5. Summary
 - F. Synopsis
- III. Solutions Explored and Evaluated
 - A. Sharing Field Sites
 - B. Developing New Field Sites
 - C. Synthetic Turf Fields
 - 1. Synthetic Turf Capacity
 - 2. New Providence Synthetic Turf Needs
 - 3. Additional Synthetic Turf Benefits

New Providence Recreation Master Plan

IV. Recommendations

- A. Priority #1
- B. Priority #2
- C. Priority #3
- D. Additional Recommendations

V. Conclusion

VI. APPENDICES

- A. Borough of New Providence Recreation Master Plan Committee – Goals and Objectives
- B. New Providence Athletic Programs
- C. Other New Providence Recreation Programs
- D. Results from June 2005 Recreation Survey
- E. Results from June 2006 Open Forum Survey
- F. Inventory Analysis by Field Site
- G. New Providence Fields Schedule – Fall 2005
- H. New Providence Fields Schedule – Spring 2006
- I. Fields Usage Data

PART II: GYMS ANALYSIS

PART III: OTHER RECREATION FACILITIES & PROGRAMS ANALYSIS

INTRODUCTION

I. Background

In January 2004, Mayor Al Morgan and Borough Council established the Recreation Master Plan Committee (RMPC) to review the recreation plan element of the Comprehensive Master Plan of the Borough of New Providence and to develop a long-range recreation plan for New Providence. Borough Council outlined specific goals and objectives for the RMPC (Appendix A). The last formal recreation plan for the Borough of New Providence was issued by Candeub, Fleissing, and Associates, Planning Consultants, in 1978.

II. Goal and Scope

The goal of the New Providence Recreation Master Plan is to:

Develop a long-range plan to meet the current and future recreational needs of New Providence residents.

This master plan will give the community a clear sense of direction, provide a formal framework for future action, and serve as a guideline for supporting sensible development of park and recreation facilities and services.

Although the RMPC was enlisted by the Borough of New Providence, the committee determined that the plan should be a comprehensive review for the whole town. Consequently, this plan reviews Borough, Board of Education (BOE) and privately-owned recreation facilities. The plan was developed in cooperation with the BOE as the latter is responsible for public school fields. In addition, the Open Space Advisory Board was consulted as needed.

III. Current Situation – Borough of New Providence

A. Overview

Recreation is important to New Providence residents. Not only does it enhance residents' lives by providing the three r's - refreshment, relaxation, and renewal, but it also adds enjoyment and other emotional and physical benefits through opportunities to meet new challenges, to socialize, and in some cases, to exercise. Residents of all ages enjoy outdoor and indoor recreational activities in the town's many parks, playgrounds, playing fields, gymnasiums, and classrooms.

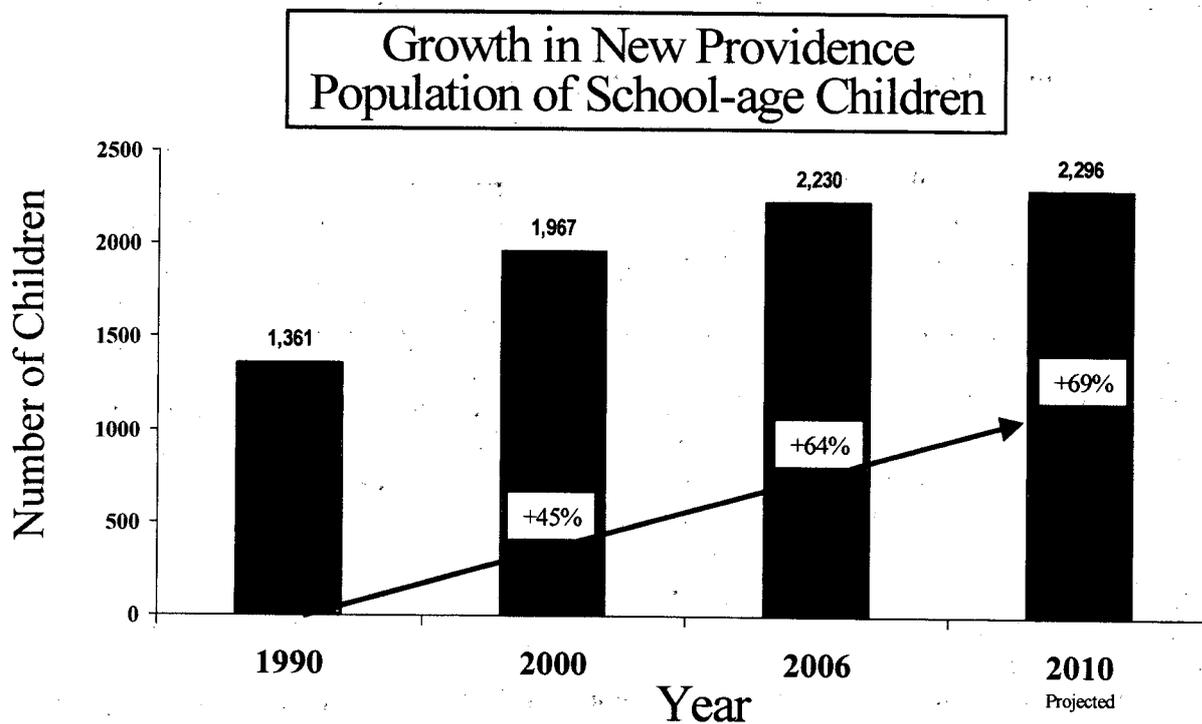
Three key factors have caused the demand for New Providence recreation programs to grow dramatically:

- Explosive growth in the number of school-age children
- Increasing per child demand for recreation
- Sports programs trying to accommodate all interested children.

New Providence Recreation Master Plan

1. Explosive Growth in the Number of School-Age Children

Since 1990 there has been a dramatic shift in the demographic composition of New Providence residents toward school-aged children, a group with particularly high demand for recreation. The Borough of New Providence is a densely populated, fully developed community that is part of the New York-New Jersey urbanized area. The 2006 Borough population of about 12,000 residents is contained within 3.6 square miles. For years, New Providence housing has been near capacity, keeping the annual population growth low—0.4%. Although there was only a net increase of 468 residents between 1990 (11,439) and 2000 (11,907), there was a net increase of 606 school-age children over this time, accounting for more than the entire net increase of population.



The number of school age children is projected to grow to 2,296 by the year 2010, resulting in almost a doubling (69% increase) in the number of school-age children over a 20-year span. Assuming recreational facilities were at capacity in 1990 and stable demand for recreational facilities *per child* over this period (a conservative assumption), relevant New Providence facilities would have had to grow by 69% over this period to meet demand--they did not.

New Providence Recreation Master Plan

2. Increasing Per Child Demand for Recreation

Over time, the per person, and especially per child, demand for formal, organized recreation programs has exploded. Prior to the 1980's, recreation was primarily comprised of spontaneous activities such as pick-up games, "kick the can," bike rides, and at-home arts and crafts. Since the 1980's, however, residents have increasingly sought supervised, organized recreation programs for adults and especially for children. Parents seem to want their children formally introduced to a wide variety of experiences (e.g. theater, art, chess, etc.) at young ages.

Growth in sports participation among children and young adults has been particularly strong due to several factors:

- Sports participation continues to be seen as having many benefits--health and fitness, individual accomplishment, leadership, team commitment, community spirit, etc.
- Children are being exposed to organized sports (both recreational and competitive) at increasingly younger ages
- Girls' sports programs are expanding (fueled initially by Title IX in 1972)
- There is a growing tendency for children to participate in multiple sports during the same season
- Many sports have expanded beyond their traditional season of play. (A traditional season of play is defined as the season in which the high school plays the sport, e.g. football and soccer are fall field sports; lacrosse, softball and baseball are spring field sports; etc.)

3. Sports Programs Trying to Accommodate All Interested Children

Because recreation is valued so highly, the town's organizations attempt to meet *all* the in-town demand for their sports and want to continue this strategy into the future. New Providence Recreation Department sports programs accept all applicants, placing every interested child on a team. The goals of these recreational programs are to expose New Providence children to various sports and to teach them the fundamentals of selected sports in a friendly, supportive environment.

Many children who gain their initial exposure to organized sports through the New Providence Recreation Department move to more intense competition via one or more of the three main private New Providence sports organizations: New Providence Soccer Club (NPSC), New Providence Police Athletic League (NPPAL), and Berkeley Heights/New Providence Lacrosse Clubs (Boys – "Chiefs," Girls – "Rebels"). These organizations hold tryouts to create relatively homogeneous teams and attempt to place all children on teams when possible. The goals of these more competitive sports programs are: (1) to create a healthful, life-long interest in sports and (2) to feed into the competitive high school programs.

The high school attempts to field the most competitive teams possible, yet still has a "no-cut" policy. This allows all interested athletes to practice and to work toward increasing their skill level.

New Providence Recreation Master Plan

In an effort to provide the children in New Providence with a positive and productive sports experience, the Recreation Department, the private organizations, and the BOE have traditionally worked well together. There are numerous examples of this collaboration, for example:

- The high school freshman baseball team practices and plays its games on a Borough field - Oakwood.
- BOE (high school girls and boys tennis teams) utilizes Borough courts.
- BOE fields are used for Recreation Department softball and baseball programs - Roberts and Salt Brook; PAL football – Leider Field; and PAL/Legion baseball – High School Complex.
- BOE and PAL jointly sponsor football and softball clinics.
- County grants given to the Borough have been used for BOE, as well as Borough, fields and facility improvements (e.g. backstops, bleachers, outdoor basketball courts, etc.).
- The high school softball field was a joint effort by the Recreation Department and the BOE, utilizing a Union County grant.

The collaborative efforts of the Borough, BOE, and private organizations will be instrumental in meeting the future recreational needs of New Providence residents.

Appendices B and C list the recreational activities offered by the key New Providence groups.

B. Public Input

As a result of trying to meet the ever-growing demand, some New Providence recreational facilities are severely stressed. At present, many playing fields in town are in substandard condition and need improvement. The needs of some New Providence programs, such as lacrosse, cannot be accommodated in town due to insufficient field availability. Meeting demand for indoor athletic facilities is sometimes challenging. Efforts to meet the needs of specific groups, such as teens, have been partially, but not yet fully addressed.

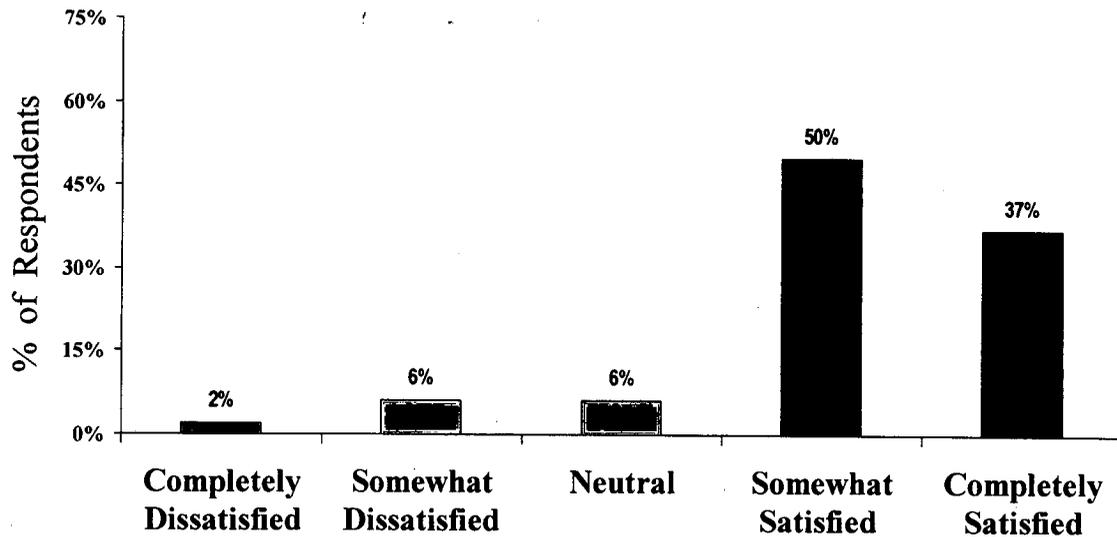
1. Recreation Survey & Public Forum

To assess public satisfaction with recreation options in town, the New Providence Recreation Department surveyed residents in June 2005 and held a public forum in June 2006. The purpose of both feedback mechanisms was to (1) measure satisfaction levels among current users, (2) give NP residents an avenue to voice their opinions, and (3) gain insight as to what the New Providence Recreation Department can do better. A total of 285 residents responded to the 2005 survey and over 50 residents attended the 2006 public forum. A review of survey methods used and detailed findings are appended (Appendices D and E)

2. Key Findings

- a) **Results indicate that, in general, residents are satisfied with New Providence Recreation sports programs (87%), but there is considerable opportunity for improvement. Only 37% of residents are “completely satisfied” and 8% are actively dissatisfied with the recreation sports programs in town.**

2005 Recreational Survey--Overall Satisfaction with Recreation Sports Programs in New Providence

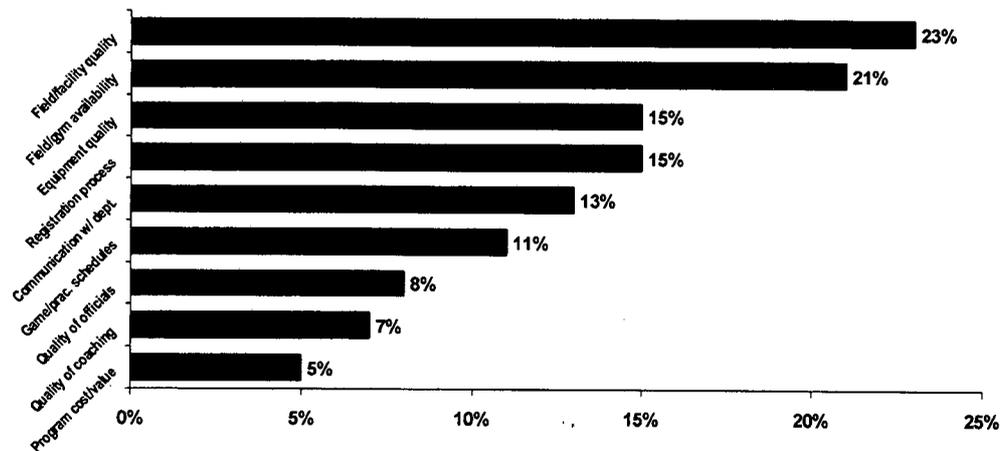


New Providence Recreation Master Plan

- b) **Quality and availability of fields/facilities are the top areas of dissatisfaction, and addressing this need is viewed as a priority.** Of ten areas evaluated, field quality and field availability had the highest dissatisfaction, with over 20% of respondents indicating they were unhappy with at least one of these areas. Comments, such as “compared to other towns...our facilities are awful,” reflect the depth of residents’ concern. Consistent with identifying field quality/availability as a problem, “more athletic fields” is virtually tied for first place on desired new facilities.

2005 Recreational Survey--Key Areas of Dissatisfaction

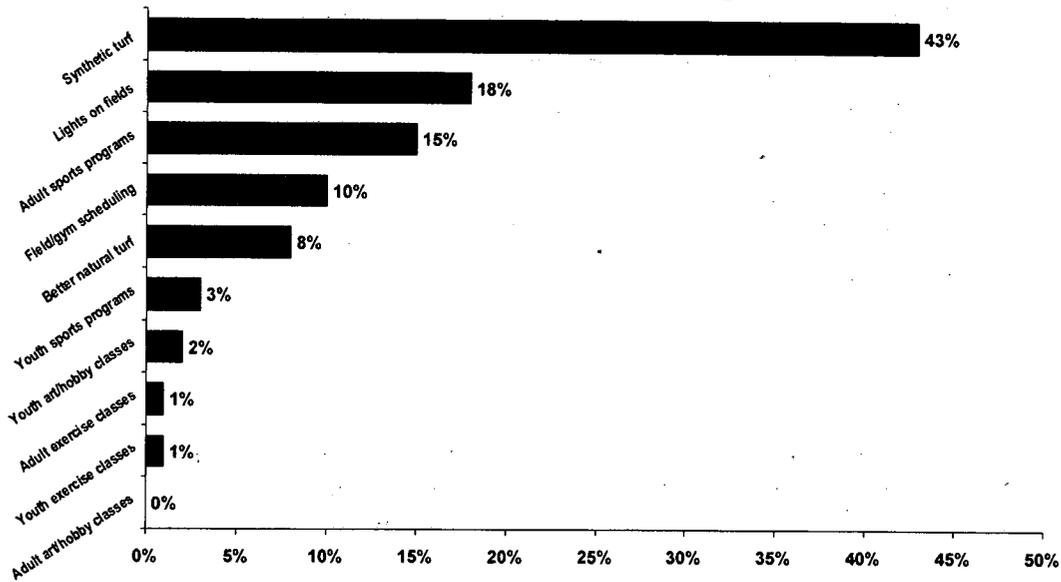
% Dissatisfied With:



- c) **Synthetic turf, lighting, and better scheduling are seen as solutions to the problem with borough fields.** A 2006 public forum on the town's recreational needs was attended by about 50 residents. Some of their priorities were captured by "voting" on ten issues covered in a *closed-ended* recreational needs survey. Each person had three "votes," and 53 people voted. Synthetic turf field(s) overwhelmingly got the most votes--43%, followed by "install lights on Borough field(s)," receiving 18% of votes. Having a clear and equitable process for assigning fields is also viewed as important (i.e., "improved scheduling") receiving 10% of the "votes" in the survey and ranking fourth.

2006 Open Forum Recreational Needs Input

% of Total "Votes" for Given Improvement/Addition*

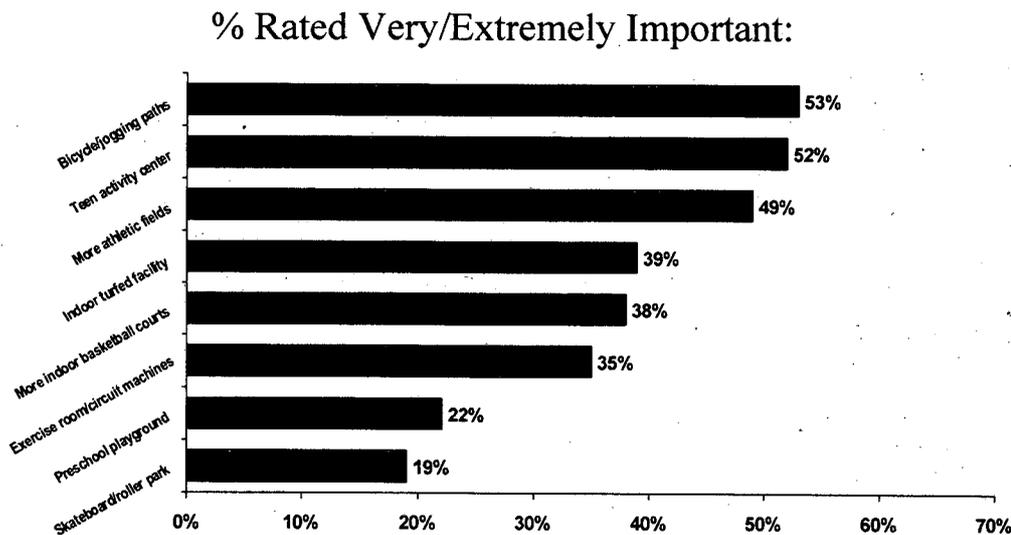


* Each person had three "votes."

New Providence Recreation Master Plan

- d) **Residents have recreational needs not related to quality/availability of athletic fields.** Creating a *teen activity center* and *bicycle/jogging paths* are top priorities, and equally as important as getting *more athletic fields*. About 50% of residents surveyed rated these potential new facilities as “very” or “extremely” important.

2005 Recreational Survey--Top New Facilities Desired



There are other clear opportunity areas for improvements, such as *equipment quality* and the *registration process*, each with 15% dissatisfaction currently. Open-ended feedback (survey verbatims) also point to these significant resident concerns:

- making *fair and balanced teams*,
- placing more emphasis on *skill development*,
- *investigating additional recreational offerings* such as bicycle trips, canoeing, chess classes for stay-at-home moms, fencing, ice/roller hockey, ping-pong, special needs programs, tennis, volleyball, etc.

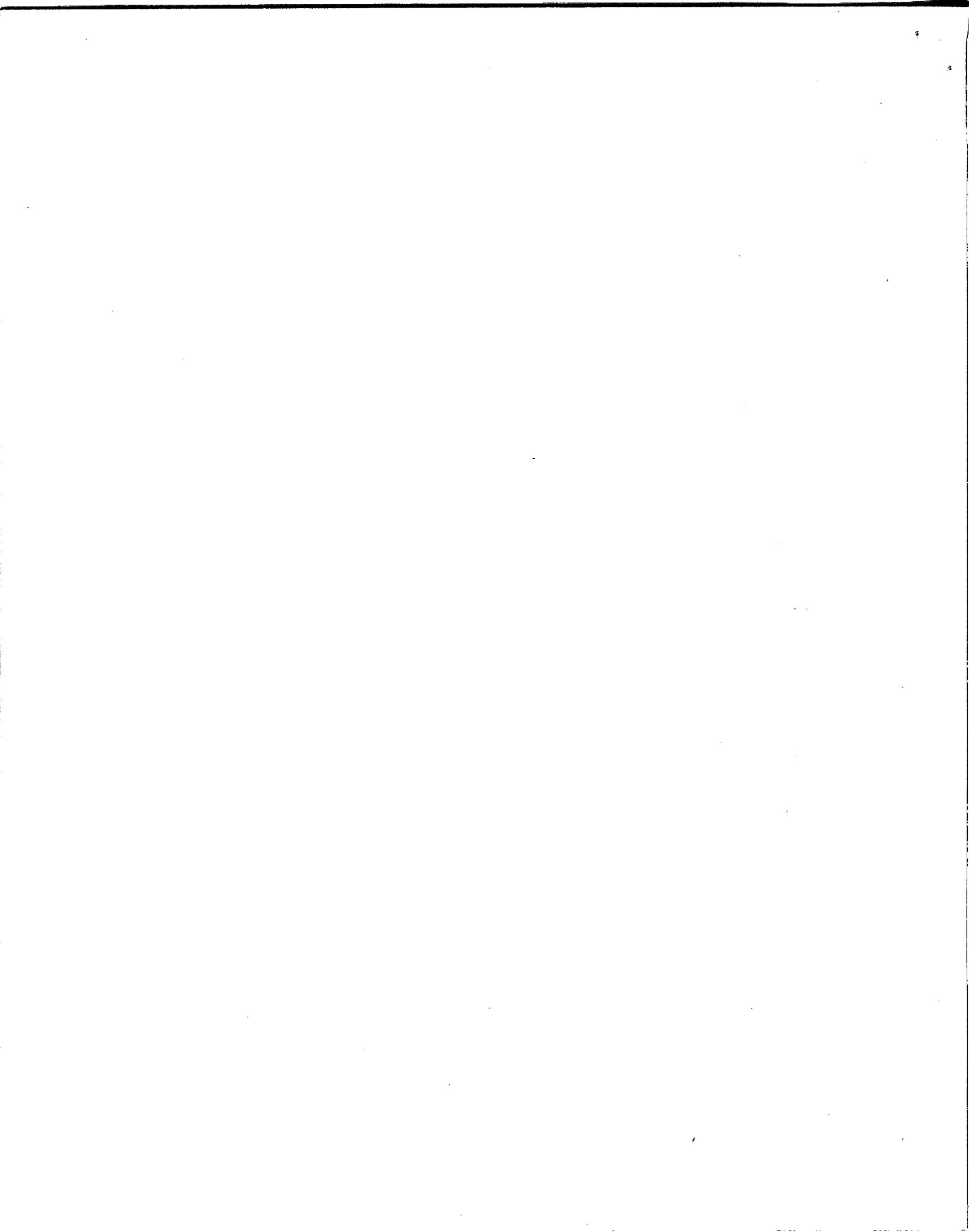
New Providence Recreation Master Plan

3. Synopsis

In light of the high dissatisfaction with the quality and availability of fields, the RMPC decided to address the Borough's field needs first. Next, indoor athletic facilities will be examined. Lastly, other important recreational facilities and programs will be addressed, such as bicycle/jogging paths and a teen activity center.



**NEW PROVIDENCE
RECREATION MASTER PLAN
PART I: FIELDS ANALYSIS**



New Providence Recreation Master Plan
Part I: Fields Analysis

I. Executive Summary for Fields

Current Situation

Recreation is highly valued by town residents. While this is positive, the demand for fields has consistently exceeded supply, resulting in concerns about field conditions in town and forcing some programs, such as club lacrosse, to use out-of-town fields.

Turf conditions were rated as “substandard” at 11 out of 14 field sites. Three possible causes for substandard field conditions were investigated: maintenance, scheduling, and amount of use. In addition, accessible parking and bathroom facilities were lacking at many sites.

Annual usage of all fields in town was compared to a benchmark of ideal maximum hours of use. It was found that rectangular field usage (soccer, football, lacrosse) was 2-3 times the benchmark, while diamond field use (baseball, softball) was within acceptable levels. Although maintenance and scheduling were both deemed problematic, overuse is clearly the root cause of the substandard field conditions.

Conclusions

- Overuse of **rectangular** fields is the primary reason for substandard field conditions in New Providence.
- 19 additional natural **rectangular** turf fields would be needed if New Providence fields were used at appropriate levels and if the lacrosse demand was met in town.
- Any field-by-field, piecemeal approach to resolving field conditions will not be an effective use of funds given the current extreme overuse.
- The over-usage problem can be corrected through the installation of three synthetic turf fields with lights or five synthetic turf fields without lights.
- Once overuse is eliminated, additional maintenance and better scheduling will be needed to keep natural turf fields in acceptable condition.

Key Recommendations

- 1) Install synthetic turf fields with lights at the High School (Leider and West Fields).
- 2) Hire a consulting engineer to advise on possible reconfiguration/upgrading of key sites in town such as Oakwood Park and the High School Complex.
- 3) Improve the conditions of natural turf fields through maintenance and scheduling.

New Providence Recreation Master Plan
Part I: Fields Analysis

II. Current Situation

A. Inventory

An inventory of the 14 existing field sites in New Providence was conducted. They are referred to throughout this plan as:

<u>Field Site Name</u>	<u>Location</u>
<u>Borough:</u>	
Oakwood	Park Place or Rosner Place
Lincoln	Elkwood Avenue
Hillview	Central Avenue
Grove	Grove Terrace
Warner	Warner Place
Lions Park	Livingston Avenue or Constance Road
<u>BOE:</u>	
Leider	High School Stadium
West	High School field to the west
Complex	High School fields to the north
Roberts	A.W. Roberts Elementary School
Salt Brook	Salt Brook Elementary School
<u>Private:</u>	
Aircast	Pioneer Drive
Bard	C.R. Bard, Inc.
OLP	Our Lady of Peace Church/School

In Appendix F, the following information was obtained for each field site:

- Identification by owner, block/lot numbers, location/address, acreage, green acres status, bathroom and parking availability.
- Number and type of fields, plus facilities available
- Natural features, including site boundaries
- Turf conditions
- Field usage (Fall 2005, Spring 2006, and Summer 2006)
- Aerial map for each field/site with boundaries delineated

The pages that follow include:

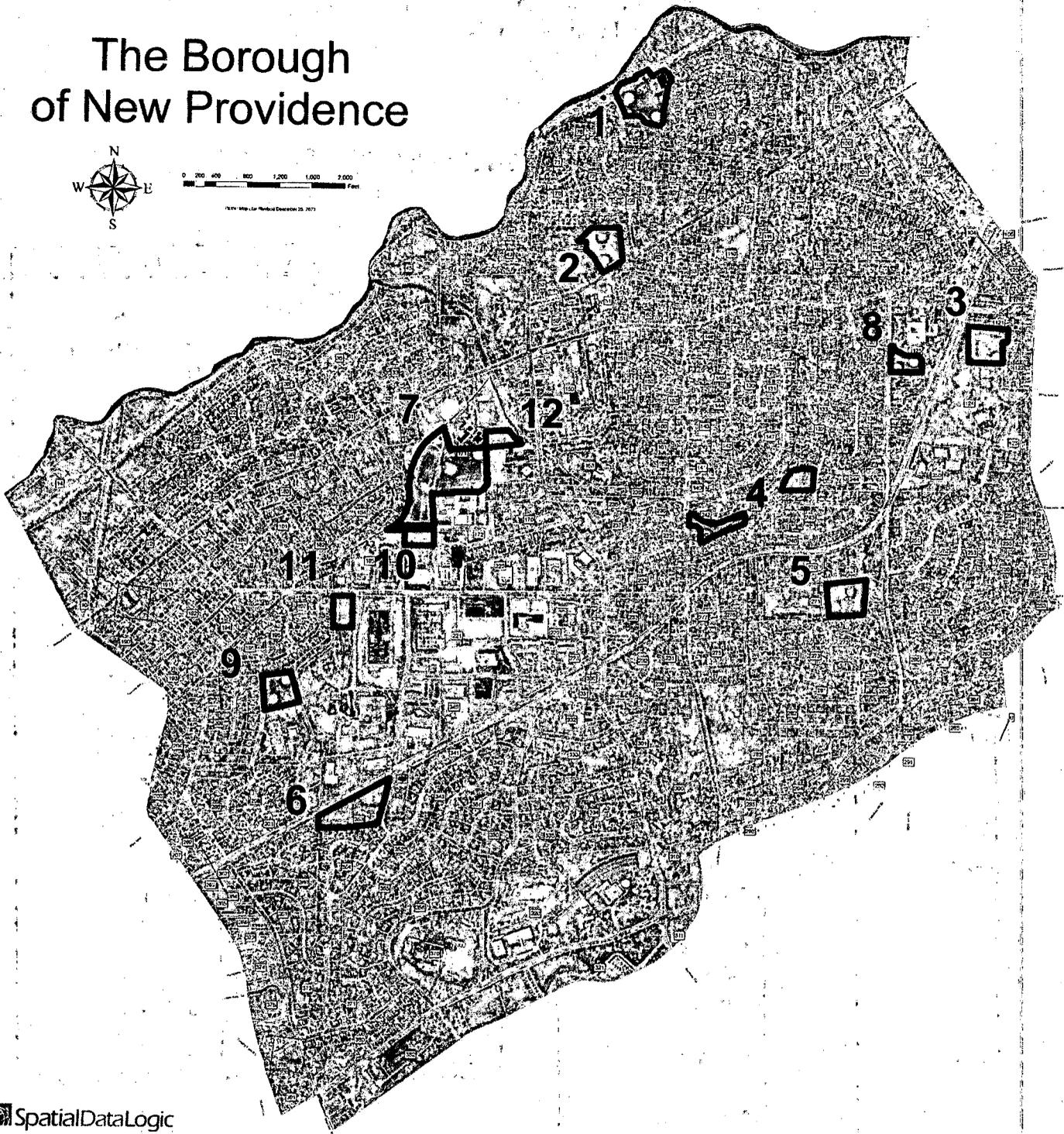
- A map of the Borough of New Providence Field Locations
- New Providence Existing Fields Inventory
- Open Space Advisory Board: Borough and County Owned Property
- New Providence Existing Fields Synopsis

The Borough of New Providence



0 200 400 800 1,200 1,600 2,000 Feet

Map Data for Public Use Only 2017



SpatialDataLogic

BOROUGH OWNED



- 1) OAKWOOD PARK
- 2) LINCOLN FIELD
- 3) GROVE FIELD
- 4) LIONS PARK
- 5) HILLVIEW FIELD
- 6) WARNER FIELD

BOARD OF EDUCATION



- 7) HIGH SCHOOL
- 8) SALT BROOK SCOOOL
- 9) ROBERTS SCHOOL

PRIVATELY OWNED FIELDS



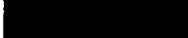
- 10) AIRCAST
- 11) CR BARD
- 12) OUR LADY OF PEACE

New Providence Recreation Master Plan
Part I: Fields Analysis

NEW PROVIDENCE EXISTING FIELDS INVENTORY

FIELD NAME	OWNER	SITE FACILITIES
OAKWOOD	Borough	1 Full-size Field
		2 Very Small Fields
		1 Full-size Diamond
		1 Small Diamond
		1 Basketball Court
		2 Ice Skating Ponds
		1 Playground Area
		1 Picnic Area
		3 Horseshoe Pits
		1 Bocce Court
		1 Canoe Launch
		Nature Trail/Wooded Area
		2 Bathroom Facilities
LINCOLN	Borough	1 Full-size Field
		1 Very Small Field
		2 Small Diamonds
		1 Basketball Court
		Swings
HILLVIEW	Borough	1 Full-size Field
		2 Small Diamonds
GROVE	Borough	1 Small Field
		1 Small Diamond
		Dog Park
WARNER	Borough	1 Small Field
LIONS PARK	Borough	1 Small Diamond
		1 Basketball Court
		1 Playground Area
		1 Bathroom Facility

FIELD NAME	OWNER	SITE FACILITIES
LEIDER (HS)	Board of Ed	1 Full-size Field
		1 Track & Field Facility
		1 Snack Shack
		1 Bathroom Facility
WEST (HS)	Board of Ed	1 Full-size Field
COMPLEX (HS)	Board of Ed	1 Full-size Field
		1 Very Small Field
		2 full-size Diamonds
		1 Small Diamonds
ROBERTS	Board of Ed	1 Full-size Field
		2 Small Diamonds
SALT BROOK	Board of Ed	2 Small Diamonds
AIRCAS Licensed for use to BOE and NPSC	Private	1 Small Field
BARD Licensed exclusively for use to NPSC	Private	1 Full-size Field
OLP Licensed for use to NPSC	Private	1 Small Field

 Borough Owned
 Board of Education
 Privately Owned

New Providence Recreation Master Plan
Part I: Fields Analysis

NEW PROVIDENCE
EXISTING FIELDS SYNOPSIS

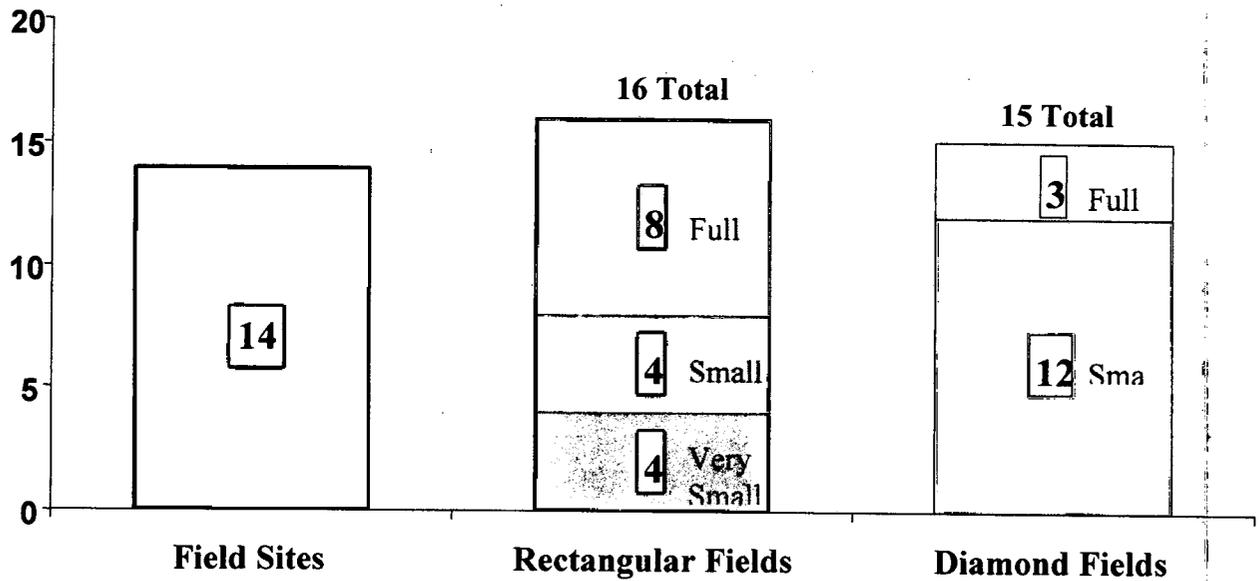
FIELD	TURF CONDITION	PARKING	BATHROOM
Borough			
OAKWOOD	Substandard	50-Car Parking Lot/Street	2 Permanent (Field House)
LINCOLN	Substandard	Street/Borough Lot/Foreign Legion Lot	Portable
HILLVIEW	Substandard	School Parking Lot/Street	Portable
GROVE	Substandard	25-Car Parking Lot	Portable
WARNER	Substandard	Street	None
LIONS PARK	Good	Street	1 Permanent (Field House)
Board of Education			
LEIDER (High School)	Fair	Multiple Lots/Street	In school
WEST (High School)	Substandard	Multiple Lots/Street	In school
COMPLEX (High School)	Substandard	Multiple Lots/OLP/Street	In school, Portable
ROBERTS	Substandard	School Parking Lot/Street	In school
SALT BROOK	Fair	School Parking Lot/Street	In school
Private			
AIRCAST	Substandard	Multiple Lots	None
BARD	Substandard	Street	None
OLP	Substandard	Parking Lot	In church

New Providence Recreation Master Plan
Part I: Fields Analysis

B. Field Sites vs. Individual Fields

In New Providence there are 31 playing fields spread across 14 field sites. There are 16 rectangular fields—8 full-sized; 4 small; and 4 very small. In addition, there are 15 diamond fields—12 small and 3 full-sized. Due to space constraints, diamond and rectangular fields overlap at six field sites, where the traffic from heavy use sports (i.e., football, lacrosse, soccer) impacts the quality and availability of the overlapping baseball/softball field.

Number of Fields in New Providence:



New Providence Recreation Master Plan
Part I: Fields Analysis

Fields Available at Each Field Site

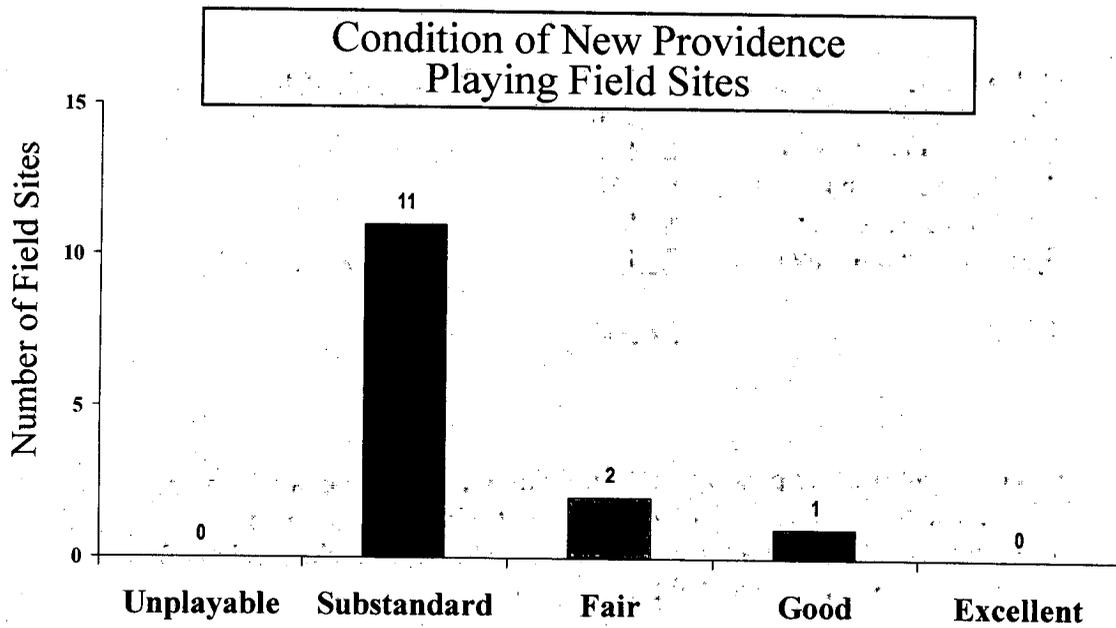
Field Site	<u># Rectangular Fields</u>			<u># Diamond Fields</u>		Total
	Full	Small	Very Small	Full	Small	
<u>Rectangle Only</u>						
Aircast	0	1	0	--	--	
Bard	1	0	0	--	--	
Leider	1	0	0	--	--	
OLP	0	1	0	--	--	
Warner*	0	1	0	--	--	
West	1	0	0	--	--	
Total	3	3	0	--	--	6
<u>Diamond Only</u>						
Lions Park	--	--	--	0	1	
Salt Brook	--	--	--	0	2	
Total	--	--	--	0	3	3
<u>Overlapping Rectangle/Diamond</u>						
Complex	1	0	1	2	1	
Grove	0	1	0	0	1	
Hillview	1	0	0	0	2	
Lincoln	1	0	1	0	2	
Oakwood	1	0	2	1	1	
Roberts	1	0	0	0	2	
Total	5	1	4	3	9	22
 Grand Total	 8	 4	 4	 3	 12	 31
 Rectangular Total						 16
 Diamond Total						 15

**Warner still has a back stop, but the diamond field there has not been used for years.*

New Providence Recreation Master Plan
Part I: Fields Analysis

C. Turf Conditions

The inventory of field sites shows that the turf conditions of most New Providence fields need improvement, as 11 out of 14 were rated “substandard.” Leider and Salt Brook were rated in “fair” condition; Lions Park was rated “good;” and none were rated “excellent.”



New Providence Recreation Master Plan
Part I: Fields Analysis

D. Hypotheses

Several possible causes of these substandard field conditions were explored:

- Minimal Maintenance
- Suboptimal Scheduling
- Overuse

Hypothesis #1: Minimal Maintenance

The current maintenance costs for Borough fields obtained from the Department of Public Works averages \$4,500 per field site per year.

<u>BOROUGH FIELD SITES - AVERAGE COST/SITE/YEAR</u>	
Grass Cutting	\$3,000
Fertilization (2x year)	\$ 620
Aeration (2x year)	\$ 150
Top Soil/Seed/Labor	\$ 560
Sprinkler Maintenance*	<u>\$ 170</u>
	*Hillview only
TOTAL	\$4,500

Expert opinion on appropriate expenditures for a field range dramatically from about \$10,000 - \$30,000 per field per year. Obviously, even taking the low end of this range, the amount of money spent maintaining each New Providence field site (which often contains multiple fields) is low and probably inadequate.

NOTE: The Borough and BOE have separate staffs for field maintenance and share services with regard to maintenance equipment and chemical application. The costs above are for Borough fields only, as BOE numbers were not available.

New Providence Recreation Master Plan
Part I: Fields Analysis

Hypothesis #2: Suboptimal Scheduling

A written protocol entitled "Facilities Programming Policy, Procedure & Maintenance" for coordination of town field usage exists but is not currently followed. The BOE and Borough's Recreation Department schedule their fields separately. The BOE publishes a schedule of fees and procedures for obtaining its fields. A Borough field may be obtained via a written letter to the New Providence Recreation Department. There is no centralized method for communicating that a field is playable on a day-to-day basis. There is also no formal mechanism for reviewing and determining the long-term playability of a field. Presently, scheduling procedures are not well understood by the public and are currently under review by the Recreation Commission.

Without a well designed and implemented field scheduling plan, there is no mechanism for ensuring that fields are allocated fairly to relevant New Providence groups or used at appropriate intervals and levels.

Hypothesis #3: Overuse

To determine whether overuse is contributing to substandard field conditions, data was obtained on:

- Ideal maximum hours of field usage for a natural turf field;
- Actual field use.

New Providence Recreation Master Plan
Part I: Fields Analysis

E. Overuse Analysis

1. Ideal Maximum Hours of Usage for a Natural Turf Field

In an effort to quantify the ideal maximum hours of field use, the research of Dr. David Minner of Iowa State University, a noted sports-turf specialist, was reviewed. Dr. Minner has recommended that the average playing time for a field should not exceed about 80 events per year for high school and college athletes engaged in high impact sports (i.e., "heavy use"). About 80 "events" per year is the maximum number of field events before a playing surface is damaged beyond repair, requiring reconstruction. Assuming an event is a practice or a game about 1 ½ hours long, the recommended maximum number of field hours would be 120 heavy-use hours (80 events x 1 ½ hours).

In order to validate that about 80 events or 120 heavy-use hours per year is a reasonable benchmark; the usage at the High School Leider field was examined. This field is considered the premier, showcase field in town, with maximum effort to preserve its condition through limited use, proper maintenance, and a functional irrigation system. In 2005/2006, events were limited to 116 heavy-use hours. The condition of the field was rated as "fair." This suggests that the benchmark of about 80 events or 120 heavy-use hours is realistic, and is therefore an appropriate benchmark by which we could measure our field usage:

2. Actual Field Use

To calculate average hours of field usage, each sponsoring athletic group provided the number of teams, team types (e.g., micro league soccer, girls U-12 soccer, boys U-14 soccer, etc.) and each team's field requirements. This included the sport, level, type and size of field, number of games, average game time, number of practices, average practice time, and the number of teams for each type. In addition, the impact of the ~150 member New Providence High School marching band was included.

See Appendices G and H for Fall 2005 and Spring 2006 usage charts, respectively.

New Providence Recreation Master Plan
Part I: Fields Analysis

3. Analysis Approach

- For each team, “total annual field hours” for fall 2005 (10 week season); spring 2006 (10 week season); and summer 2006 (5 week season) were determined by taking into account all of the team’s practices and games. Two weeks of preseason data were included for high school teams only.
- If a team shared the field for practice, it was assumed that a given team only used half of the field.
- A team’s “total annual field hours” was then weighted by a “wear rating” of 0.333 (light), 0.667 (medium), or 1.0 (heavy) based on the impact that team would have on natural turf fields. This basically converts all field use to a “heavy-use equivalent.” The wear rating was a way of recognizing that not all athletes and sports stress the field turf equally. For example, full-sized athletes playing football, soccer or lacrosse received the heaviest “wear rating,” while all baseball and softball teams were assigned the lightest “wear rating.”
- A team’s total annual heavy usage was allocated to a specific field based on what proportion of the team’s annual events took place on a given field.
- *Total* “annual heavy usage” for a given New Providence *field* was determined simply by adding together data from each relevant team.
- *Total* “annual heavy usage” for all New Providence fields was determined by adding together data across all teams or across all fields.
- In determining field usage, we focused on gathering organized, recurring and significant usage. Incidental usage, such as pick up games, summer camps, graduation, and July 4th celebration, was not accounted for and would, obviously, increase usage numbers. All cancelled events due, for example, to poor field conditions were not accounted for and would slightly decrease usage.
- Because the configuration of field sites varies greatly, sites were grouped as follows:
 - Sites with rectangular fields only
 - Sites with diamond fields only
 - Sites with overlapping rectangular and diamond fields.

The chart on the following page summarizes field use. For more detailed field usage data, see Appendix I.

New Providence Recreation Master Plan
Part I: Fields Analysis

New Providence Field Use by Site

	# of Fields	Total Use	Heavy Use	Annual Hours			Extra Fields Needed @ 120 Hours Heavy
				Heavy Use/Field	Ideal Heavy Use/Field	Heavy Overuse/Field	
Rectangular Fields Only							
Aircast	1	420	420	420	120	300	3
Bard	1	576	424	424	120	304	3
Leider	1	136	116	116	120	none	0
OLP	1	510	353	353	120	233	2
Warner Place	1	240	164	164	120	44	0
West	1	480	405	405	120	285	2
Total	6	2362	1882				10
Average		394	314				
Average w/o Leider		445	353				
Diamond-Shaped Fields Only							
Lions Park	1	237	53	53	120	none	
Salt Brook	2	159	35	18	120	none	
Total	3	396	88				
Average		132	29				
Overlapping Rectangular and Diamond Fields							
Rectangular Fields							
Complex	2	462	462	231	120	111	2
Grove	1	260	184	184	120	64	1
Hillview	1	302	284	284	120	164	1
Lincoln	2	610	489	245	120	125	2
Oakwood	3	474	333	111	120	none	0
Roberts	1	235	235	235	120	115	1
Total	10	2343	1987				7
Average		234	199				
Diamond Fields							
Complex	3	1080	217	72	120	none	
Grove	1	55	19	19	120	none	
Hillview	2	447	102	51	120	none	
Lincoln	2	175	40	20	120	none	
Oakwood	2	488	107	54	120	none	
Roberts	2	613	129	65	120	none	
Total	12	2858	614				
Average		238	51				
Total Rectangles	16	4705	3869				17
Total Diamonds	15	3254	702				none
Total Combined	31	7959	4571				17

New Providence Recreation Master Plan
Part I: Fields Analysis

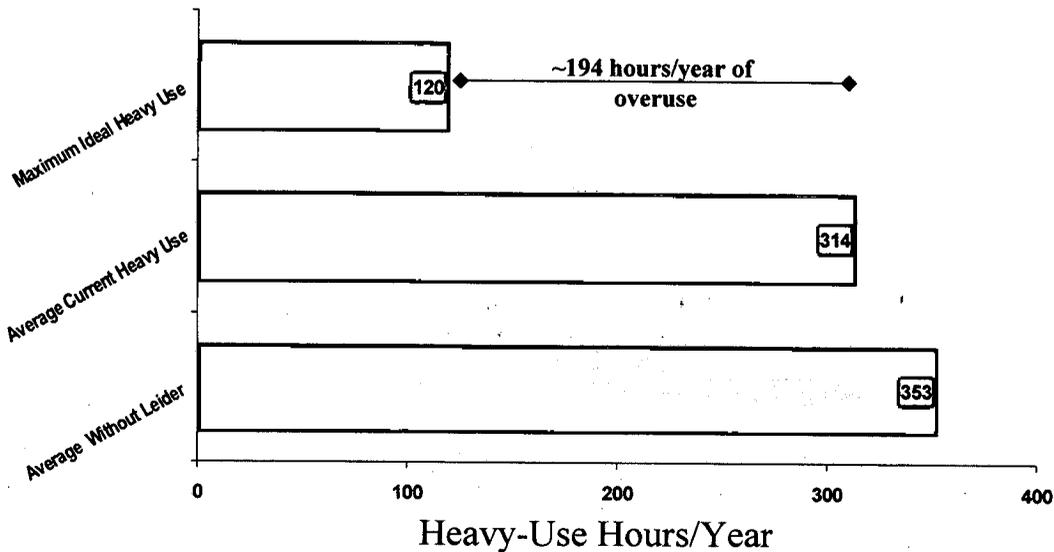
4. Findings

a. Sites with Rectangular Fields Only

In New Providence there are six sites with rectangular fields only—full-sized fields at Bard, Leider, and West fields and small fields at Aircast, OLP, and Warner. These six fields average 314 heavy-use hours per year. As Leider field is the showcase field in town, it averages only 116 heavy-use hours per year and is in fair condition. If Leider is excluded from the field usage average, the amount of heavy use on the remaining five fields jumps to 353 heavy-use hours per field per year. This is almost *triple* the desired benchmark of 120 heavy-use hours annually and consistent with the “substandard” ratings of these fields. As a result we would need *triple* the current number of natural, rectangular turf fields or a total of 15 fields—the 5 original fields and 10 additional fields to accommodate current demand.

It should be noted that three of the six rectangular fields are privately owned (Aircast, Bard, and OLP). Since these fields are not controlled by the Borough or the Board of Education, uncertainty exists regarding their extended availability. Of course, not being able to use these three fields would present problems in meeting our ever increasing recreational demands.

Average Annual Heavy-Use Hours
At Sites With Rectangular Fields Only*:



* Aircast; Bard; Leider; OLP; Warner Place; West Field

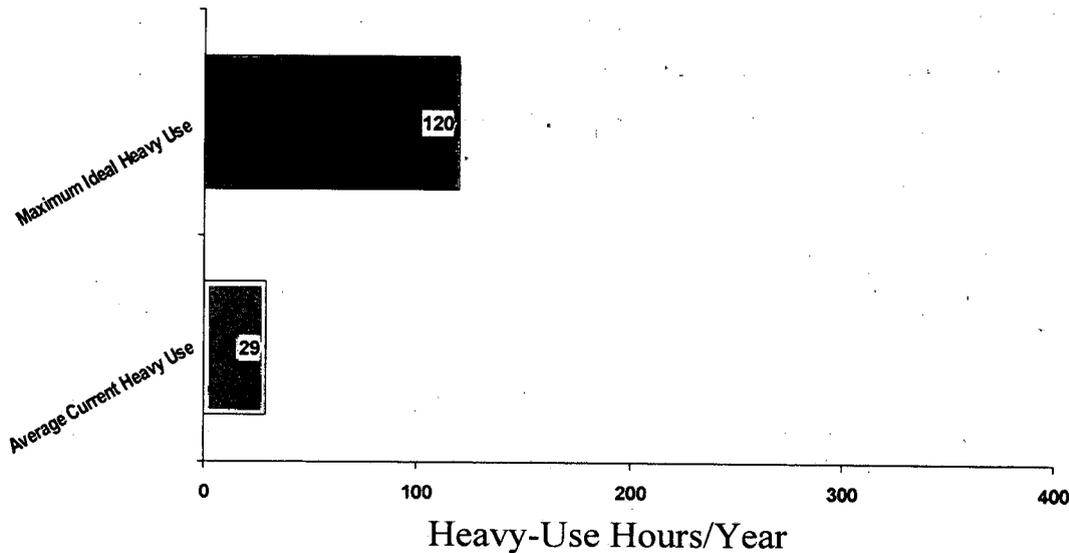
New Providence Recreation Master Plan
Part I: Fields Analysis

b. Sites with Diamond Fields Only

In New Providence there are only two sites with diamond fields only—Lions Park, with one small diamond, and Salt Brook School, with two small diamonds. These three diamond fields are used an average of 132 hours a year. Most of the use on these fields is by younger children for baseball and softball. As a result, there are only 29 heavy-use hours per year on these fields. This is well within the benchmark of 120 heavy-use hours annually, and therefore it is not surprising that these fields were rated either in “fair” or “good” condition.

Lions Park is an extremely small field, with a brook bordering the back. Salt Brook has been spared usage from heavy field sports, as the BOE has designated this field as a “back up” for middle school and high school field sports.

Average Annual Heavy-Use Hours
At Sites With Diamond Fields Only*:



* Lions Park and Salt Brook.

New Providence Recreation Master Plan
Part I: Fields Analysis

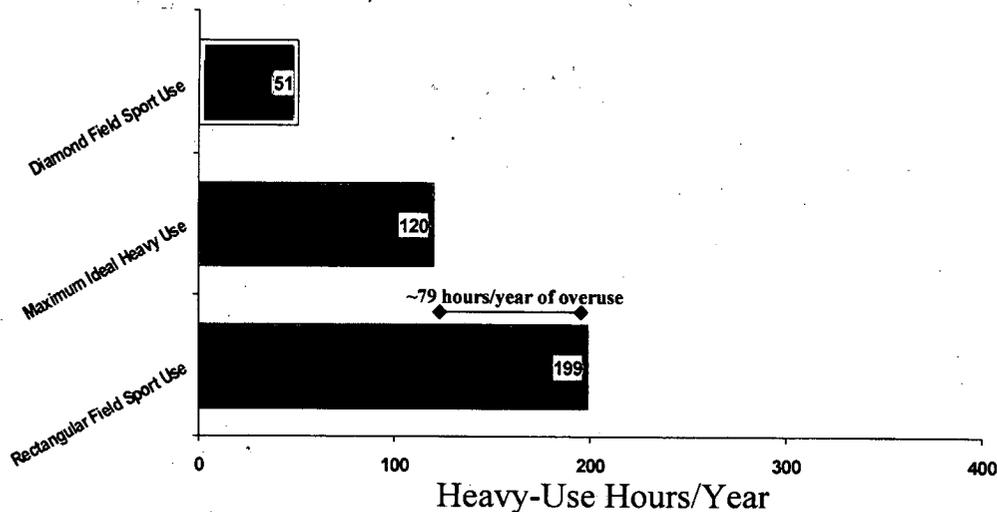
c. Sites with Overlapping Rectangular and Diamond Fields

In New Providence there are six sites with overlapping rectangular and diamond fields—the Complex (High School), Grove, Hillview, Lincoln, Oakwood, and Roberts. At these sites, a total of 10 rectangular fields overlap with at least one of the 12 diamond fields.

The 10 rectangular fields here average 199 heavy-use hours per field per year. This is 70% more than the desired benchmark of 120 heavy-use hours annually and consistent with these fields' "substandard" ratings. As a result we would need 70% more natural, rectangular turf fields than we have now, or a total of 17 fields—the 10 original fields plus 7 additional fields.

The 12 diamond fields average only 51 heavy-use hours per field per year from baseball and softball. This obviously falls well within acceptable annual usage. As it is the outfield of the diamonds that overlaps with the rectangular fields, any possible heavy use from baseball and softball in this outfield area was deemed inconsequential to the quality of the overlapping rectangular field. Yet, the outfield of these diamond fields is vastly overused due to the 199 heavy use hours from heavy-use sports.

Average Annual Heavy-Use Hours
At Sites With Overlapping Rectangular/Diamond Fields*:



*Complex (HS); Grove; Hillview; Lincoln; Oakwood Park; Roberts

New Providence Recreation Master Plan
Part I: Fields Analysis

5. Summary

It appears that overuse of rectangular fields by heavy use sports is the primary reason for substandard conditions of field sites in New Providence. **Nineteen additional** natural rectangular turf fields would be needed to accommodate current demand (see below). Future additional outdoor recreational programs, such as field hockey, would require even more new fields.

- The five sites with rectangular fields only (not including Leider) have an average of 353 heavy-use hours/field/year, resulting in substandard turf conditions. **Ten additional** natural rectangular turf fields would be needed to accommodate this current demand.
- The two sites with diamond fields only (i.e., Lions Park and Salt Brook) are underutilized, are currently in fair to good condition, and may be able to support judicious additional practice time for heavy use sports, such as lacrosse.
- On the six remaining sites in town, the ten rectangular fields that overlap with diamond fields average 199 heavy-use hours/field/year. **Seven additional** natural rectangular turf fields would be needed to accommodate this current demand.
- Lacrosse is only marginally accommodated in town and is estimated to require about 240 heavy-use hours/year to accommodate club activity of five boys' teams and five girls' teams. Therefore, **two additional** natural rectangular turf fields would be needed.

Additional Natural Turf Fields Needed to Accommodate Demand

<u>Field Site:</u>	<u>Rectangular Fields</u>	<u>Diamond Fields</u>
Rectangular Fields Only	10	--
Diamond Fields Only	--	0
Overlapping Rec/Diamonds	7	0
Lacrosse	2	--
Total	19	0

New Providence Recreation Master Plan
Part I: Fields Analysis

6. **Synopsis of Current Situation**

The three hypotheses of minimal maintenance, suboptimal scheduling, and field overuse were explored. Field overuse is clearly the root cause of substandard field conditions. Given the degree of the overuse, additional money spent on maintenance would probably not have been productive. Once overuse is eliminated, however, additional maintenance and better scheduling procedures will be required to keep New Providence natural turf fields in acceptable condition.

New Providence Recreation Master Plan
Part I: Fields Analysis

III. Solutions Explored and Evaluated

Athletic recreation is highly valued by town residents. Therefore, limiting enrollment in sports programs was not considered as a way of addressing damaging field overuse. Overuse must first be eliminated before any substantial reconstruction efforts would have a meaningful long-term impact and be a productive use of funds.

Over the last five years, costly field reconstruction efforts to rectangular fields such as Grove, Hillview, and Warner have been undertaken. Yet, these well intended efforts have yielded only short term benefits. The reason for this is clear-- even the best constructed and maintained natural turf field cannot withstand two to three times the maximum recommended amount of field use, and field conditions will quickly deteriorate.

Addressing the overuse is consequently the top priority. When use on natural turf fields is brought down to acceptable levels, then money spent on field improvements, maintenance, and scheduling will be a worthwhile financial investment.

To address the considerable overuse and the resulting substandard conditions on rectangular field areas in town, the committee investigated three ways of gaining more playing field capacity:

- Sharing field sites;
- Developing new field sites;
- Synthetic turf.

A. Sharing Field Sites

Sharing Union County fields in surrounding towns was explored. There are few such fields available and access to them is highly limited, as the town in which the field is located is given first priority.

The City of Summit is making plans to use some of the "transfer station" property in the Pittsford/Elkwood area as sports fields. As New Providence borders this site, discussions regarding possible sharing options should be explored. This possible option, however, will not realistically meet any of our short terms needs.

New Providence Recreation Master Plan
Part I: Fields Analysis

B. Developing New Field Sites

An extensive review of existing vacant/underdeveloped land was made including all borough and county lots. At the present time there are no suitable vacant properties available for new fields due to streams, forested areas, wetlands, and other geographical limitations.

Converting vacant, already developed properties to playing fields was also investigated. For developed properties, however, the price of the property, the condemnation of buildings, necessary clearing of land, and the construction of new fields are cost prohibitive.

The RMPC consulted the New Providence Open Space Advisory Board with regard to possible acquisition of properties that may have open space/recreational usage potential, especially those that border any existing parks with fields. No sites are presently available for which a new athletic field was considered the best and most appropriate use.

New Providence Recreation Master Plan
Part I: Fields Analysis

C. Synthetic Turf Fields

1. Synthetic Turf Capacity

Many towns with similar overuse problems have found that switching to synthetic turf on rectangular fields adds predictable playing time that is rarely affected by weather. The question arises about how much capacity a synthetic field delivers. For a sport with a 20-week season (10 weeks in both the fall and spring), a synthetic turf field without lights can be used about 620 hours. Adding lights increases this to about 920 hours of playing time.

Rectangular Field Capacity with Synthetic Turf

Weekday	3 p.m. to 6 p.m.	15 hours/week
Saturday	8 a.m. to 6 p.m.	10 hours/week
<u>Sunday</u>	<u>12 p.m. to 6 p.m.</u>	<u>6 hours/week</u>
Total		31 hours/week
		620 hours/year
		(31 hours/week * 20 weeks)

Rectangular Field Capacity with Synthetic Turf and Lights

Weekday	3 p.m. to 9 p.m.	30 hours/week
Saturday	9 a.m. to 7 p.m.	10 hours/week
<u>Sunday</u>	<u>12 p.m. to 6 p.m.</u>	<u>6 hours/week</u>
Total		46 hours/week
		920 hours/year
		(46 hours/week * 20 weeks)

New Providence Recreation Master Plan
Part I: Fields Analysis

2. New Providence Synthetic Turf Needs

The following charts show how many synthetic fields, with or without lights, would be needed to reduce the usage on the town's remaining natural turf fields to appropriate levels (120 heavy-use hours annually):

- 3 lit synthetic rectangular turf fields or 5 non-lit fields will address current needs:
- 3 lit synthetic rectangular fields can accommodate 2,760 heavy-use hours (3 * 920/hours apiece). This would leave 1,349 (4,109-2760) heavy-use hours for the remaining 13 natural turf fields, or 104 heavy-use hours/field
- 5 non-lit synthetic rectangular turf fields can accommodate 3,100 heavy-use hours (5 * 620/hours apiece). This would leave 1,009 (4,109-3,100) heavy-use hours for the remaining 11 natural turf fields, or 92 heavy-use hours/field.

Impact of Synthetic Turf With Lights

	# Original Natural Turf Fields	Total Heavy Use Hrs.	New Providence Lacrosse	New Tot Heavy Use Hrs.	# Synthetic Fields	Amt. Heavy Use on Syn. Flds	Heavy Use Left for Nat. Fields	# Natural Fields	Heavy Use Per Nat. Field	Ideal Nat. Turf Use	Hrs. of Overuse
Synthetic Turf	16	3869	240	4109	0	0	4109	16	257	120	137
Plus Lights	16	3869	240	4109	1	920	3189	15	213	120	93
	16	3869	240	4109	2	1840	2269	14	162	120	42
	16	3869	240	4109	3	2760	1349	13	104	120	-16
	16	3869	240	4109	4	3680	429	12	36	120	-84
	16	3869	240	4109	5	4600	-491	11	-45	120	-165
	16	3869	240	4109	6	5520	-1411	10	-141	120	-261

Impact of Synthetic Turf (No Lights)

	# Original Natural Turf Fields	Total Heavy Use Hrs.	New Providence Lacrosse	New Tot Heavy Use Hrs.	# Synthetic Fields	Amt. Heavy Use on Syn. Flds	Heavy Use Left for Nat. Fields	# Natural Fields	Heavy Use Per Nat. Field	Ideal Nat. Turf Use	Hrs. of Overuse
Synthetic Turf	16	3869	240	4109	0	0	4109	16	257	120	137
(no lights)	16	3869	240	4109	1	620	3489	15	233	120	113
	16	3869	240	4109	2	1240	2869	14	205	120	85
	16	3869	240	4109	3	1860	2249	13	173	120	53
	16	3869	240	4109	4	2480	1629	12	136	120	16
	16	3869	240	4109	5	3100	1009	11	92	120	-28
	16	3869	240	4109	6	3720	389	10	39	120	-81

Assumptions/Inputs

- The town's 16 rectangular fields now accommodate 3,869 heavy-use hours.
- 240 hours for New Providence lacrosse was added to accommodate future needs (totaling 4,109 heavy-use hours/year).
- The capacity of a synthetic rectangular turf field is 620 hours/year, without lights, and 920 hours/year with lights.
- All use on synthetic turf fields is heavy use.
- Synthetic fields are used at 100% capacity.

New Providence Recreation Master Plan
Part I: Fields Analysis

3. Additional Synthetic Turf Benefits

Synthetic turf is effective at addressing needed field capacity, and switching to this surface has many additional benefits. The following chart compares the synthetic versus natural turf. Where relevant, 1 synthetic turf field was compared to 5 natural turf fields, as capacities are similar.

1 SYNTHETIC TURF FIELD	5 NATURAL TURF FIELDS
<p><u>Initial Cost:</u> Large upfront, one-time cost requires funding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Site preparation (~\$400,000) - Turf installation (~\$400,000) - Total estimate (~\$800,000) 	<p><u>Initial Cost:</u> 1 synthetic field = 5+ natural turf fields Initial natural turf installation = ~\$125,000 per field * 5 fields = ~\$625,000 total.</p>
<p><u>Ongoing costs: Minimal</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Brush to keep level - Yearly painted lines - Cost ~ \$1,000/year 	<p><u>Ongoing costs: Significant</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mowing, watering, re-seeding - Fertilizer/herbicides/pesticides - Frequent game lining - Cost ~\$10,000 -\$30,000/field/year * 5 fields = ~\$50,000-\$150,000/year
<p><u>Warranty:</u> 8-10 years</p>	<p><u>Warranty:</u> None</p>
<p><u>Surface Replacement:</u> May be required after 10-12 years (turf surface only @ ~\$400,000)</p>	<p><u>Surface Replacement:</u> May be required after 5 years @ ~\$125,000 per field * 5 fields = ~\$625,000 total.</p>
<p><u>Environmental Considerations:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Turf is often made of recycled material 	<p><u>Environmental Considerations:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Requires fertilizer/herbicide/pesticide application with resulting exposure/run-off
<p><u>Availability/Durability:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Available 365 days a year (except in snow) - Use during and immediately after rain - No need to pull field out of use 	<p><u>Availability/Durability:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use ideally limited to 120 heavy-use hours - Not usable when field is wet - May need to pull out of use to rest field
<p><u>Field Surface Quality/Safety:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cushioned, even playing surface suggests fewer injuries - Retains heat, requiring attention to hydration - Small rubber pellets used in some turf surfaces create cleaning issues 	<p><u>Field Surface Quality:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Often uneven, hard surface, worn to dirt in areas

New Providence Recreation Master Plan
Part I: Fields Analysis

IV. Recommendations

Recognizing that the recommendation for 3 to 5 synthetic fields is overwhelming and costly, we looked to prioritize and in effect phase in improvements to town fields. The redistribution of heavy use to synthetic fields will allow for the condition of the town's remaining natural turf fields to be restored through proper maintenance, scheduling, and reconstruction, if necessary.

The following criteria was used to determine which New Providence fields, if any, would be the best candidates for converting to synthetic turf and adding lights:

- Fields which need to accommodate the most heavy use (i.e., older athletes engaged in high-impact turf sport)
- Fields which can support the most incremental use
- Fields that are large enough to accommodate markings for and dimensions of all the three major rectangular field sports--football, lacrosse, soccer
- Fields which have the most immediate need for extensive work
- Fields with adequate parking potential
- Fields which minimize neighborhood impact (e.g. lighting, noise, traffic, etc.)

New Providence Recreation Master Plan
Part I: Fields Analysis

A. Priority #1: Add Synthetic Turf and Lights

Leider and West Fields are the clear choices to convert to synthetic fields with lights. The cost of converting these fields is summarized below.

Leider Field: Synthetic turf with lights for this field would give the town the most incremental usage as this field is currently underutilized to preserve its condition. With existing substructure, water source, and bleachers, installation costs are minimized.

West Field: This is the town field most needing repair. Installing synthetic turf would best accommodate this field's heavy use and be more cost efficient than installing new, natural turf.

	<u>Estimated Costs</u>	
	<u>Leider*</u>	<u>West</u>
Synthetic turf	\$765,000	\$850,000
Lighting	250,000	450,000
Fencing	--	50,000
Bleachers	-- *	100,000
	\$1,015,000	\$1,450,000

COMBINED TOTAL = \$2,465,000

* In the future, an evaluation (repair/modify/replace) should be done on the bleachers, press box/coaches area, and the sound system at this stadium site.

New Providence Recreation Master Plan
Part I: Fields Analysis

B. Priority #2: Reconfigure Current Fields for Multipurpose Use

Installation of synthetic turf and lighting at two New Providence fields will clearly help address the current level of heavy wear, but alone will not divert enough traffic to bring the use on the remaining natural turf fields to acceptable levels. Additional measures are therefore needed. The town has two athletic sites with considerable untapped potential that have not undergone significant renovation in years and need attention.

Oakwood Park Complex: This is the Borough's largest athletic field facility and has the most potential for incremental use via reconfiguration. Current constraints are slope/grading, field layout, and parking issues.

High School Complex: This large area needs major repair/reconstruction and has excellent potential as a multipurpose use complex. Reconfiguration would allow multiple baseball and softball games at the same time. Adding lighting would have minimal neighborhood impact.

To maximize the potential of these sites for multi-purpose use, the Borough should hire a consulting engineer. This engineer would determine if the sites can be reconfigured to add rectangular field capacity; investigate turf improvements (natural or synthetic); and evaluate lighting options. The estimated cost for the consulting engineer is about \$50,000/site.

C. Priority #3: Improve the Conditions of Natural Turf Fields Through Maintenance and Scheduling

Maintenance Recommendations

Hire a sports field consultant to develop a comprehensive field maintenance plan. The consultant would draw soil samples from all of our fields, analyze the returned results, and recommend a comprehensive maintenance plan. This plan would include recommendations by field on the type of grass to grow; the appropriate fertilizer and weed killer to apply; the frequencies of application, aeration, and mowing; irrigation needs; and rest and rotation cycles. The specialist could provide accurate estimates regarding appropriate annual maintenance costs.

New Providence Recreation Master Plan
Part I: Fields Analysis

Scheduling Recommendations

Serious consideration should be made for centralized scheduling of all fields. Centralized field scheduling between BOE, the Borough, and private organizations would ensure field usage is kept at appropriate levels and allow for the needed field repairs. Consideration should be given to hiring a field-use manager to coordinate field usage and scheduling. A formal field-use protocol should be developed. The protocol should address issues such as:

- scheduling procedures for the public
- who or what organization may use the fields
- how fields are allocated
- when fields are playable
- process on closing fields due to inclement weather
- the parties responsible
- fees structure
- process on how the public is notified of available fields

D. Additional Recommendations

New Providence residents have expressed concerns about the availability and accessibility of bathrooms at all town field sites. The Borough, BOE, and local sports organizations should coordinate efforts to ensure portable bathrooms are available during active sports seasons and even on fields where there are permanent bathrooms, as they are not always open.

For additional recommended improvements listed by field site, see chart on the following page.

New Providence Recreation Master Plan
Part I: Fields Analysis

**NEW PROVIDENCE FIELDS
ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS**

FIELD	RECOMMENDATIONS
Borough	
OAKWOOD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reconfigure to maximize use • Reconstruct field to reduce slope • Increase parking capacity • Consider minimizing play under power lines in re-design
LINCOLN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relocate rear baseball diamond so dirt infield is not part of soccer field • Needs brook bank stabilization
GROVE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect field from dogs and cats • Widen entrance road
HILLVIEW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resolve drainage issue at lower right field • Repair irrigation system
LIONS PARK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scoop out infield clay before adding new clay • Consider scheduling additional athletic practices, e.g. lacrosse
WARNER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resolve irrigation issue
Board of Education	
LEIDER (High School)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Install synthetic turf and/or lighting to accommodate demand and improve field condition
WEST (High School)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Install synthetic turf and/or lighting to accommodate <u>excessive</u> demand and improve field condition
COMPLEX (High School)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reconstruct field (drainage, irrigation) • Reconfigure fields to maximize # of events going on at the same time
ROBERTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scoop out infield clay before adding new clay
SALT BROOK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scoop out infield clay before adding new clay • Consider scheduling additional athletic practices, e.g. lacrosse
Private	
AIRCAST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchase field if it becomes available to avoid possible loss of usage
BARD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchase field if it becomes available to avoid possible loss of usage
OLP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purchase field if it becomes available to avoid possible loss of usage

New Providence Recreation Master Plan
Part I: Fields Analysis

V. Conclusion

Recreation is an important aspect of the lives of many New Providence residents. Explosive growth in the number of school-age children coupled with increasing demand per child for recreation has led to increased demand for sports utilizing outdoor athletic fields (i.e., baseball, football, lacrosse, soccer, and softball). Providers of sports programs in New Providence (i.e., Borough, BOE, and private organizations) strive to accommodate all interested children. This has led to field overuse, particularly of the town's rectangular fields. The resulting substandard field conditions have triggered concerns among town residents.

The installation of synthetic turf, with or without lights, is the best first effort in accommodating demand for rectangular fields. Reconfiguration of two major town complexes is the second priority. Once field usage levels are appropriate, significant efforts must be made to properly maintain, schedule, and reconstruct our natural turf fields as necessary.

Collaborative efforts of the Borough, BOE, and private organizations will be critical to meeting the town's demand for fields.