

VI. PARK AND OPEN SPACE STANDARDS

An inventory of Somers' current parks and open space areas is the first step in this planning process. The inventory establishes a framework from which future analysis is possible. Each park and open space area is designed to provide a sufficient amount of specific recreational use areas or facilities to serve a certain number of park users. For the purpose of this study, the users of Somers' park system are defined as the year-round resident population of the Town, and a ratio is used to measure the amount of parkland that is available to this population. The ratio is typically defined as the number of park acres recommended per 1,000 persons. Smaller, more basic parks typically have a ratio of 0.25 to 0.50 acres per 1,000 people. The larger parks with more amenities will be designed to provide more recreational acreage per person. The Town of Somers uses recommended standards developed by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) as a guide for park and open space planning. It should be emphasized that these standards are used as a flexible guideline and adapted to the particular needs of the community.

The following is a list of various types of park and open space facilities and their recommended levels of provision, based on NRPA guidelines. This list includes a hierarchy of parks and open space facilities based on an area to population ratio and a recommended minimum service area for each type of facility. The NRPA guidelines generally recommend 6.25 to 10.50 acres of total developed open space per 1,000 persons in the community. As a rapidly growing community intent on providing a quality park system to meet all of the outdoor recreational needs of Town residents, Somers intends to establish the high end of this range, 10.50 acres per 1,000 persons, as the Town standard. The Town of Somers therefore intends to add additional parkland and make improvements to existing parkland, as necessary, to meet this standard in the future. This high standard will help the Town meet the outdoor recreational needs of future residents as the population of Somers increases.

The NRPA recommends provision levels for various types of parks based on an acreage area to community population ratio, as well as a recommended minimum service area for each of these types of parks. After evaluating the NRPA standards, a system of park types has been identified as important to the Town of Somers park system. A descriptive hierarchy of these park types in Somers is as follows:

Mini-Park

Mini-Parks are meant to serve a specific purpose to a more densely situated neighborhood. Normally mini-parks are the size of a residential lot in the area.

Size:	Less than 1 acre.
Acres/1000 population:	Less than 1 acre.
Service Area:	¼ mile or less.
Location:	High-density neighborhoods where yards are small or unusable, and in close proximity to multi-family housing.

Typical facilities include: A grassy area or a small sandy beach. Some playground equipment and at least one sitting bench should be available. Landscaping is also a desirable asset.

Neighborhood Park

These parks are larger than mini-parks. They will have more amenities and expand on the playground facilities to attract both young children as well as the elderly. Active as well as passive recreation opportunities should be present.

Size: 1 to 10 acres.

Acres/1000 population: 1 to 2 acres.

Service Area: ½ mile or as limited by the community's physical characteristics.

Location: Adjacent to elementary schools or near the center of a neighborhood.

Typical facilities include: Playground facilities for multiple age groups in addition to a softball or baseball diamond, tennis courts, basketball courts, picnic area, restroom facilities, an overhead shelter, landscaping, multiple sitting benches, and parking.

Community Park

Community parks will expand on the amenities that the neighborhood parks provide. These parks are areas where larger events occur. They provide extensive active and passive recreation possibilities for anyone inclined. Community parks can be places for entertainment events such as band concerts, craft and other specialty shows, large picnics, festivals, or other larger venue events.

Size: More than 10 acres

Acres/1000 population: 5 to 8 acres.

Service Area: 1 to 3 miles.

Location: Near the center of several neighborhoods or selected because of notable natural features such as topography, woodland areas, or water.

Typical facilities include: All neighborhood park facilities plus additional softball and baseball diamonds, tennis courts, horseshoe courts, hard-surface game areas, multipurpose shelter building with restrooms, lighted parking, concession stand, and facilities for special events or activities such as an archery range, boat launch, swimming pier, sledding hill, band shell, community picnic area, extensive landscaping, and gardens.

Special Use Area

A special use area is a park or recreation area that meets a specific need or may serve one purpose.

Size:	Varies with the size of the area and land available.
Acres/1000 population:	Variable.
Service Area:	The whole community.
Location:	Wherever appropriate sites can be secured.
Typical Facilities:	Athletic fields, golf courses, swimming pools, community center, hiking and bike trails, greenways, historic sites, archaeological sites, or conservancy areas.

Regional Park

Diverse geographic areas that provide recreational opportunities for multiple communities. These parks encompass large areas and typically include environmentally significant lands and water bodies. They provide opportunities for both active and passive recreation on a much larger scale than community parks. Development of regional parks is controlled by higher levels of government such as the counties.

Service area: Multiple communities

Desirable Size: 200+ acres

Acres per 1,000 population: Variable

Desirable site characteristics: large diverse geographic areas that typically include surface water and/or environmentally significant lands.

Park Trail

Multipurpose trails located within greenways, parks, and natural resource areas. Their focus is on recreational value and harmony with the natural environment.

Type 1: Separate/single purpose hard-surfaced trails for pedestrians or bicyclists/in-line skaters.

Type 2: Multi-purpose hard-surfaced trails for pedestrians and bicyclists/in-line skaters.

Type 3: Nature trails for pedestrians. May be hard or soft-surfaced.

Connector Trail

Multi-purpose trails that emphasize safe travel for pedestrians to and from parks and around the community. Focus is as much on transportation as it is on recreation.

- Type 1: Hard-surfaced trails for pedestrians and/or bicyclists/in-line skaters located in an independent corridor (e.g., old railroad r.o.w., easement through private property)
- Type 2: Hard-surfaced trails for pedestrians and/or bicyclists/in-line skaters typically located within the road r.o.w.