

# Town of Scituate Athletic Fields Master Plan

---

The master plan process began in 2016 in recognition of the necessity to prepare a master plan for town-owned outdoor athletic fields and other town-owned parcels that may potentially be developed for future athletic field use. This plan is a result of the work of the Recreation Department, the Recreation Field Use Subcommittee of the Recreation Commission and a study by Traverse Landscape Architects funded by the Recreation Department.

## **Overview**

The purpose of the master plan is to develop a strategy for investment and to provide the greatest improvement to athletic programs as funds become available. The master plan provides an assessment of the current athletic fields and projected recreational needs to guide future programmatic decisions and capital improvement planning. The planning process included an inventory and evaluation of the existing conditions as well as concepts and recommendations for potential improvements. The sites included in the master plan are Central Fields, Cudworth, Cushing School field, Flannery Field, Gates Fields, Greenbush Field, Hatherly (back field), High School Complex, Jenkins School Field, Purple Dinosaur, Roach Field, Wampatuck Field. (1) Details of each site including turf and field conditions, accessories, lights, fencing and signage can be found in the body of the Traverse study.

## **Key Findings:**

Information was provided to Traverse Landscape Architects by the committee indicating current field usage and overall participants.

1. The athletic fields in the Town of Scituate are intensely overused. This can be seen by both the hours the town recreation uses and the hours that the Scituate High School uses the athletic spaces. This has led to a decrease in the playability on fields throughout the town and an increased demand for maintenance on fields. (1)
2. The town is in need of additional fields to support town and High School Usage. The replacement of the existing field at the high school and the addition of another synthetic field will help to address the Title IX issue at the school, provide additional space to provide all of the hours of use required by current programs, and allow for the maintenance and rest of other fields as the community adjusts its maintenance schedules. (1)
  - a. Synthetic turf is recommended where appropriate to reduce irrigation, maintenance cost and provide flexibility in configuration to better utilize the space
3. Most fields are on school sites and not protected by parks and recreation property status. This should be carefully administered in the future as changes in school properties can lead to loss of fields within the town. This is currently occurring as the town decides the future of the Gates Middle School. (1)

4. The town does not currently have a balance of fields to equally support boys and girls sports, specifically softball. Spaces are needed to be developed to create equity throughout the community. (1)
5. Most of the fields in town are in need of major renovation or replacement. This is due to the major use of fields. This needs to be rectified through an increase in spaces that can sustain more use, allowing for the resting and repair of fields. (1)
6. A regular maintenance program including resting periods as outlined should be implemented to enhance the playability of existing natural turf surfaces in the short term. Additionally, this will increase the safety of play on these spaces and make the use of the fields enjoyable for all users. Lastly, a regular maintenance plan allows for more reasonable funding requests as opposed to larger requests in long-term intervals. (1)
7. There are three additional parcels of land that were identified and provided by the committee to Traverse Landscape Architects during this study (Clapp Road, behind the public library, and adjacent to the football field and Cushing Field). While it was not part of the directive to evaluate these parcels as part of the study, we did include them as reference as they do create the potential expansion for future recreation and athletic spaces. (1)

### **Action Plan**

The Scituate Athletic Fields Master Plan presents an approach to meeting the needs of the community for an adequate supply of quality sports fields, improve existing resources and maximize the use of funds for maintaining and building athletic fields in Scituate.

Based on the findings and analysis gained throughout the master plan process, the Scituate Recreation Commission, with participation by the Recreation Department, Traverse Landscape Architects and the representatives of the athletic sporting community recommends the following action plan:

- Establish a phased Athletic Field Capital Improvement Plan focusing on the following:
  - Address high priority needs within five (5) years beginning with development of new facilities to allow current usage to shift to those fields while existing fields are re-developed. This includes adding or updating facilities including safety, ADA compliance, Title IX compliance, lighting, parking, fencing/security at recommended locations.
  - Address medium and low priority needs within five (5) to ten (10) years while considering the overall effectiveness of the high priority improvements and any shifts in demand that might occur during this period.
- Additional improvements should be included in all redevelopment and new development projects including field amenities included but not limited to restrooms, concessions, irrigation, scoreboards, bleachers and storage facilities.

- The Town and School District should strongly consider the recommended improvements of developing synthetic fields at each of their facilities where high levels of school activities and sports events occur.
- Update maintenance standards on all fields as outlined in the Traverse report.
- Evaluate pricing policies related to fees on scheduled game fields based on true cost of service (in progress)
- Establish a life cycle maintenance and renewal/replacement program for all athletic fields to extend the life of fields and have the ability to replace or renovate fields once they have reached their useful lives.

Although this master plan will not be easy to implement, it has the ability to position Scituate with greatly improved fields and capacity to meet the user's needs with high quality athletic facilities.

### **Key Recommendations:**

1. Remove and Replace the existing track and synthetic turf field at SHS.
2. Create a large multi-use synthetic turf complex at SHS including Varsity Baseball, Varsity Softball and multi-use overlays. This will relieve capacity issues as well as the intense maintenance required to keep up with the overuse of fields at the high school.
3. Implement maintenance plan and proposed improvements to natural turf fields
4. Evaluate and locate new JV Baseball Field - Central Field SB2 is a possible location for this field as well as Scituate Recreation Department (Old Gates) baseball/softball field.
5. Improve grading, drainage, and natural turf surfaces for natural turf fields within the parks and lower level schools for town recreation use. If better natural turf fields are provided it will allow for more usage as well as being able to spread usage out so that fields can be rested and rehabilitated in a cycle.

### **Phasing Recommendations:**

Please note these recommendations are based on the current environment and should be evaluated yearly based on changing conditions for fields in town (property acquisition, school closings, town facility relocations, etc.)

#### **Immediate (0-2 years):**

- Implement new track and field at SHS, including bleachers, press box ADA compliant as well as accessories (Scoreboard, Restrooms, and Security etc.)
- Implement synthetic large synthetic turf field with baseball softball and multi-use overlays at SHS
- Implement maintenance program outlined and address current safety concerns at all athletic fields including minor regrading.

#### **Short Term (2-5 years):**

- Make improvements to Central fields including the relocation of JV Baseball
- Evaluate and potential redesign of Gates fields with new Senior Center being constructed
- Implement Improvements at Flannery Field.

- Implement improvements at Jenkins School lower field including larger size field and ADA access
- Implement improvements at Hatherly School backfield including larger field size

### **Long Term (5+ years)**

- Implement improvements at Wampanoag School backfield including larger field size
- Evaluate existing Town owned properties for potential expansion for new fields/complex
  - Property behind Library
  - Property purchased by Town on Clapp Road (Land Swap properties)
  - High School property behind Track and Turf field
- Investigate and evaluate properties for purchase by the Town for recreational use and field expansion if needed

Also to be included in the master plan is key participants for on-going sustainability, studying and usage of fields in the Town of Scituate