

PLYMOUTH ARTS AND RECREATION PROFILE

October 4, 2005

1. Summary

Plymouth's arts and recreation opportunities contribute to the town's high quality of life. The town offers a wide range of assets, including its natural resources and its organized and developed facilities.

Nearly 70% of the respondents to the 2004 Community Attitude Survey are satisfied with the recreational opportunities in Plymouth. About 20% were not and about half the people who wrote comments expressed dismay that Plymouth does not have public access to water - nothing at Loon Lake or a public pool.

Although specific questions were not asked in the survey concerning the arts, people were asked if they were satisfied with the entertainment opportunities and 80% were satisfied. The *Plymouth, NH Cultural Plan 2001* (see Appendix A) documents focus group results and interviews that address more specifically the attitudes of community members concerning the arts.

This profile includes a discussion of both public and private recreation and arts facilities and programs. It identifies existing capacity and use, as well as current and future need. Finally, it offers goals and ways to achieve the goals. Much of this profile is based on the *Plymouth, NH Cultural Plan* that was completed in June 2001 and conversations with the Parks and Recreation Department.

2. Existing Recreational Resources

As previously noted, 69% of those Plymouth residents surveyed in 2004 were satisfied with the recreational opportunities available in Plymouth. The town offers a wide range of facilities and services that are complemented by private entities as well as those of Plymouth State University.

Plymouth's Parks and Recreation Department

Facilities

Headquarters for the Plymouth Parks and Recreation Department are located in the Plymouth Elementary School building and currently employs seven full-time staff (director, program coordinator, secretary, park foreman, and three grounds-keepers) and a varying number of part-time instructors. The Department enjoys a unique relationship with the Plymouth School District by having the use of the Elementary School building after school hours and providing maintenance for the school grounds and playing fields.

The Parks and Recreation Department uses a number of recreational facilities owned by the Town of Plymouth:

Bulfinch Bandstand (gazebo) and picnic area located on the Town Common, “mini park” on the corner of Winter and Warren Streets, Langdon Park, Fox Pond Park, and school facilities include fields for football, soccer, baseball and field hockey, four outdoor tennis courts, two outdoor basketball courts, playground equipment, and cross country ski trails.

The Department also uses the town library facilities, Plymouth Regional Senior Citizen Center and has access to many facilities owned by Plymouth State University. These include playing fields, indoor track with tennis, volleyball and racquetball courts, dance room, indoor pool, concert hall/auditorium, library, outdoor basketball courts and eight outdoor tennis courts.

Fox Pond Park

Fox Pond Park is a 32-acre parcel owned by the Town of Plymouth. Former resident Rachel Keniston donated the land to the town. Over the years, the town has made various improvements, such as adding a pond, skating area, picnic shelter, several trails and an office/storage building. In 2002, a new \$44,000 playground was completed. Family and Friends Play, a dynamic group of women, envisioned the project and raised the support and funding needed to complete it.

The Fishing Derby is held every year at the pond in the spring. Prizes are awarded to different age levels during the day of the derby; stocked fish are tagged for additional prizes when caught at any time during the season; open up to age 15, disabled persons and senior citizens; fishing open all season after the derby for those within the groups. Trails are used for mountain biking, walking and during the winter for cross-country skiing and snowshoeing.

Parks and Recreation used Fox Pond Park as its headquarters for its summer camp program until the late 1990s. However, headquarters are now located at the Plymouth Elementary School. The change is due to a number of challenges at the Park including access limitations, and the condition of the building and septic system.

At the 2005 Town Meeting, Plymouth residents raised \$30,000 to help pay for the final design for the aforementioned improvements. With in-kind contributions and grants, it is hoped that construction will begin this summer.

Parks and Recreation Department Programs/Services

The Department provides many year-round recreation activities. These events are categorized by their seasonal play. Some of the activities included are:

- **Summer:** 5-week day camp, specialty camps (such as gymnastics, soccer, baseball, wrestling, theater and adventure camp), tennis, adult golf, weekly band concerts on the Town Common, senior bus trips, and the senior citizen picnic.
- **Fall:** youth soccer league, dance, gymnastics, swimming lessons, arts and crafts, clay works for kids, senior crafts, literacy program, Red Cross babysitting certification, Halloween Festival, and the Annual Art Show.
- **Winter:** youth basketball league, open gym, ice skating lessons, cross country skiing, adult volleyball, aerobics, Christmas parade, the Ski and Skate Sale, snowshoeing and senior exercise.
- **Spring:** youth t-ball, tennis lessons, computer club, Fishing Derby, mother-daughter craft and tea party, senior crafts, gymnastics, swimming lessons, and youth track and field.

It has been suggested that additional programming may be needed as Plymouth's population ages. There also has been interest in expanding non-athletic activities such as cultural and arts offerings.

Tenney Mountain

The Tenney Mountain Ski Area is located in west Plymouth on Route 3A. According to its advertisements, the resort provides 'big mountain family skiing.' There is also a snowboard terrain park that is open to snowboarders and skiers.

The resort has one triple chair lift, one double lift, a platter pull and a pony lift. There are currently 29 trails, a vertical drop of 1,400 feet, and snowmaking coverage for 90% of the trails. Additional improvements are planned, including a mid-mountain lodge and several new trails. However, financing has been a challenge (see Economic Profile.)

Plymouth Heritage Trail

The Heritage Trail is a program developed by the Trails Bureau of the State of New Hampshire. It was initiated in order to provide trails of historic interest from the Massachusetts border to the Canadian border. Participation in the program is voluntary for each town.

The Plymouth Heritage Trail was approved by the State in May 1997. The Chamber of Commerce, the Parks and Recreation Department, the Senior Citizen's Center and Plymouth State University have all pledge support for the maintenance of the Trail. The grand opening of the trail was held in the summer of 1998. A description of the Trail, complete with maps and interpretive guide, is available from the Plymouth Town Hall and Plymouth Area Chamber of Commerce.

Pemigewasset Canoe Launch

The New Hampshire Fish and Game Department owns a car-top canoe launch adjacent to the Plymouth District Court House, on the Pemigewasset River. Four parking spaces are provided on Green Street, as well as a designated handicapped space near the river. There is a picnic area, and a small natural amphitheater. The canoe launch is available for the public to use from dawn to dusk daily.

Other Recreational Areas

Langdon Park and Langdon Park Beach are located on the south side of the Baker River, between the Plymouth Regional High School and Route 3/Main Street. The area is undeveloped and has been used formally and informally for recreation. Most of the area is owned by Plymouth State University.

There is a canoe launch on the Baker River currently being repaired.

There are many other facilities that serve to meet the recreational needs of the community. These include the town library, the Pemigewasset and Baker Rivers, and many miscellaneous trails for snowmobiling, horseback riding, cross country skiing, sledding, off-road motor vehicles and mountain bikes including:

- Walter Newton Preserve off Cummings Hill Road,
- Mount Prospect which affords summit views looking to western Plymouth,
- Plymouth Mountain;
- Langdon Park,
- Fox Park, and
- Plymouth Regional High School trails and the snowmobile trails along Fairgrounds Road.

3. Existing Cultural Resources

For a small town, Plymouth has an extensive array of cultural institutions, activities, and artistic talent. It is the artistic and cultural hub of the region with non-profit institutions ranging from those with no staff and minimal budgets to those with more than a half dozen staff and significant resources.

Cultural/Arts Facilities

There are many different community cultural venues. Plymouth facilities that can hold from small groups of 25 up to large groups of 150 include:

- Pease Public Library,
- Plymouth Elementary and Plymouth Regional High Schools,
- Tenney Mountain Ski Lodge, and
- Plymouth Regional Senior Center.

The public and private schools in town also have lecture halls and stages that accommodate from 50 to 350 people.

Plymouth State University's (PSU) facilities include:

- Silver Cultural Arts Center with three performing spaces (Hanaway Theatre (capacity is 650), Smith Recital Hall, Studio Theatre) and exhibit space.
- Drerup Gallery at the Draper-Maynard Building that houses gallery space and classrooms,
- Hartman Union Building (HUB)
- Mark Sylvestre Planetarium, and
- Lamson Library for exhibition space.

Downtown Artworks offers small exhibition space. Alternative exhibition spaces can be found in churches and banks. Outdoor areas for performances and exhibitions include the Town Common, Fox Pond Park, the Fair Grounds, and "Riverside Park" (the riverfront along Green Street.)

Cultural/Arts Programming

The Plymouth Friends of the Arts is a regional organization that sponsors the arts, including youth productions, professional performance and performances in local schools. It is hosted by PSU. PSU not only provides the organization with a home but also supplies it with many in-kind services.

4. Recreation and Art Resources Needs

Although Plymouth has numerous recreation and cultural resources, the community continues to grow and opportunities exist to expand and enhance what is currently available. Some of these needs were discussed during the cultural planning efforts in 2000 and 2001. Other needs have surfaced since that time.

Recreation Facilities

A number of recreation facility improvements are currently under way. Upgrades at Fox Pond Park began during the summer of 2005. Details of the changes were noted previously. The Parks and Recreation Department also worked on improvements to the Town Common during the 2005 summer. The Rotary Club working with the town has developed a preliminary design for the Riverfront Park. This park has the potential to be a jewel of the Downtown. The town has not allocated funds for this park but supports the project and efforts to raise funds.

In the 2004 Community Attitude Survey, several recreation needs were identified:

- public access to Loon Lake and the rivers, and/or a public pool,
- public or private indoor recreational facilities (a well-equipped gym), and
- a community/recreation center

Within the 2005-2011 Capital Improvements Plan, there is a Parks and Recreation Department line item. However, there is not a reserve fund established for general "recreation facilities." As new recreation activities become popular (i.e., skateboarding and in-line skating) and passive recreation opportunities become available, the town should evaluate its need and its investment in multi-purpose facilities as a way to accommodate the highest number of users. A specific fund would enable the town to save for facilities and respond in a timely fashion.

Cultural Facilities

According to the *Plymouth, NH Cultural Plan*, there are a number of potential spaces to enhance the arts that should be investigated. These include:

- Plymouth Regional Senior Center,
- youth center on Main Street,
- churches,
- space near the Armory,
- retail spaces/window space for visual arts,
- old town sheds (possible arts "incubators"),
- outdoor amphitheatre at "Riverfront Park", and
- site for community arts center (classes, demonstrations, workspace).

5. Planning Considerations for Recreation and Arts

Goal: Enhance and expand the recreational opportunities in Plymouth.

1. Continue to provide, enhance and expand recreation activities balancing cultural/arts programs and athletics to meet town needs for people of all ages.
2. Emphasize and support "life-time" or "carryover" sports and activities.
3. Annually track number and types of recreational users at town facilities. Create and maintain a database to facilitate recreational planning.
4. Ensure facility maintenance is adequately funded and safety issues are addressed.
5. Coordinate and cooperate with the school district, PSU, neighboring communities, and private organizations in providing recreational opportunities and developing new facilities.
6. Explore options for swimming through public access to Loon Lake, the rivers (i.e., Baker River near Langdon Park) and/or development of a pool.
7. Explore the feasibility of new facilities including a community center, a skateboard park, and a year-round recreational facility.
8. Encourage, and when appropriate, require developers to set aside land for the provision of future residents' recreation needs.
9. Establish a capital reserve account as a capital improvement budget item to provide for the development of new facilities.
10. When available, use federal, state and private funding sources to support capital development of needed recreation facilities.

Goal: Enhance the climate that values arts and culture as an important component of community life.

1. Develop and enhance programs that recognize and publicize Plymouth's cultural assets.
2. Identify people and sites that have historic, cultural, natural, architectural, and artistic significance. Regularly update "Treasures" directory and publicize it.
3. Consider starting a local awards program to recognize achievements of individuals and organizations in the arts and cultural fields.
4. Provide a clearinghouse for the coordination of all Plymouth's cultural activities.
5. Support seasonal events such as festivals that feature local history, artists, writers, and craftspeople.
6. Friends of the Arts should work to eliminate barriers to residents' participation in cultural programming.

Goal: Identify and develop resources to support local artists and cultural organizations.

1. Consider establishing a permanent, independent cultural commission of no more than 10 members that can apply for, and receive funding.
2. Continue to assess current cultural facility needs.
3. Encourage incubator space for artists.
4. Support an outdoor performance and education center.
5. Encourage expansion of spaces for culture.

Goal: Engage community members in life-long learning using arts and culture.

1. Support and establish comprehensive arts-in-education program for the public schools.
2. Develop consistent, affordable, year-round arts and culture classes for adults and children, novices and experts (e.g., consider establishing a system to coordinate all non-school based classes, workshops, and activities offered by institutions and individuals.)
3. Collaborate with Plymouth State University to expand cultural programs.

Goal: Promote local arts and culture as a key component of Plymouth's economic vitality.

1. Promote the quality of life in Plymouth as enriched by its cultural assets.
2. Support the creation of a cultural identity for Plymouth and the region.
3. Encourage collaboration among arts and cultural organization as well as the Chamber of Commerce, Main Street Plymouth, Inc., local, regional, and state planning organizations, tourist groups, hospitality industry and economic development councils.
4. Enhance Plymouth's information services enabling audiences to locate and use cultural programs. Create more effective directional information.
5. Examine the impact of cultural nonprofits and related spending by arts audiences on Plymouth's economy and explore further development.