

B

CRMC Rights-of-Way

Rights of Way to the Shore

The record reflects that the evidentiary burden of proof has in fact been met for the designation of these identified parcels as public right of ways. As a result of these findings of fact and conclusions of law, the CRMC has designated the below listed parcels as public rights of way. Grover J. Fugate, Executive Director, CRMC signed this designation on August 25, 1993. On January 6, 2000 the CRMC provided Middletown Public Works Department shoreline access markers, posts and signs to identify Middletown's designated rights of way, Y-1, Y-3, Y-4, Y-5, Y-6, Y-7, Y-8, Y-9, Y-10 and Y-11. The Town of Middletown carried out this posting action in the spring of 2000.

The attached figure shows the location of the rights of way. The letter and number on these rights of way have been assigned by CRMC as follows:

Y-1: Tuckerman Ave.: located on Tax Assessor's Plate 116SE. This 30 foot right of way to the ocean dates back to deeds written in the 1800s and identified by the CRMC, in June 1989, as right of way 4-1. The centerline of the way in the boundary between lots 104 and 105.

Y-2: Tuckerman Ave./Tuckerman Terrace: located on Tax Assessor's Plate 116SE. This right of way/road to the ocean runs at least 369 feet from Tuckerman Ave. to the shoreline. (Y-2/ Private ROW)

Y-3: Shore Road: located on Tax Assessor's Plate 116SE. This 10 foot right of way runs to the ocean and is identified as Lot 4.

Y-4: Third Beach Road: located on Tax Assessor's Plate 131. This unnamed right of way runs over 140 feet to the Sakonnet River. It lies between Lots 5 and 6 (6B & 6A).

Y-5: Intersection of the Southeastern end of Esplanade/Shore Rd: located on Tax Assessor's Plate 116NE. This 15-foot right of way to the ocean is identified as Lot 83 and is described in the deeds for both Lots 82 and 84.

Y-6: Indian Ave: located on Tax Assessor's Plate 129. This road/right of way to the Sakonnet River lies between Lots 75 and 176, opposite Lot 65 and is known as Taggarts Ferry Road.

Y-7: Peckham Ave.: located on Tax Assessor's Plate 133. This extension of Peckham Avenue runs as a right of way/road over 600 feet to the Sakonnet River and is bounded to the north and south by Lots 4 and 5, respectively.

Y-8: Northwestern end of Esplanade: located at the juncture of Tax Assessor's Plates 116NW and 116NE. This right of way to the ocean was identified by the State of Rhode Island as Number 144 in an inventory of public rights of way to the shore published in March 1970 and is described as running parallel to the Esplanade, 290 feet from the intersection of Tuckerman Ave. to the ocean.

Y-9: Western end of Purgatory Rd (Second Beach Ave.): located on Tax Assessor's Plate 116NW, Lot 45. This 40-foot right of way runs to the ocean between Lots 44 and 46, next to Atlantic Beach.

Y-10: Shore Road, west of Lot 107: located on Tax Assessor's Plate 116SE. This 10 foot right of way runs to the ocean and is identified as lot 12.

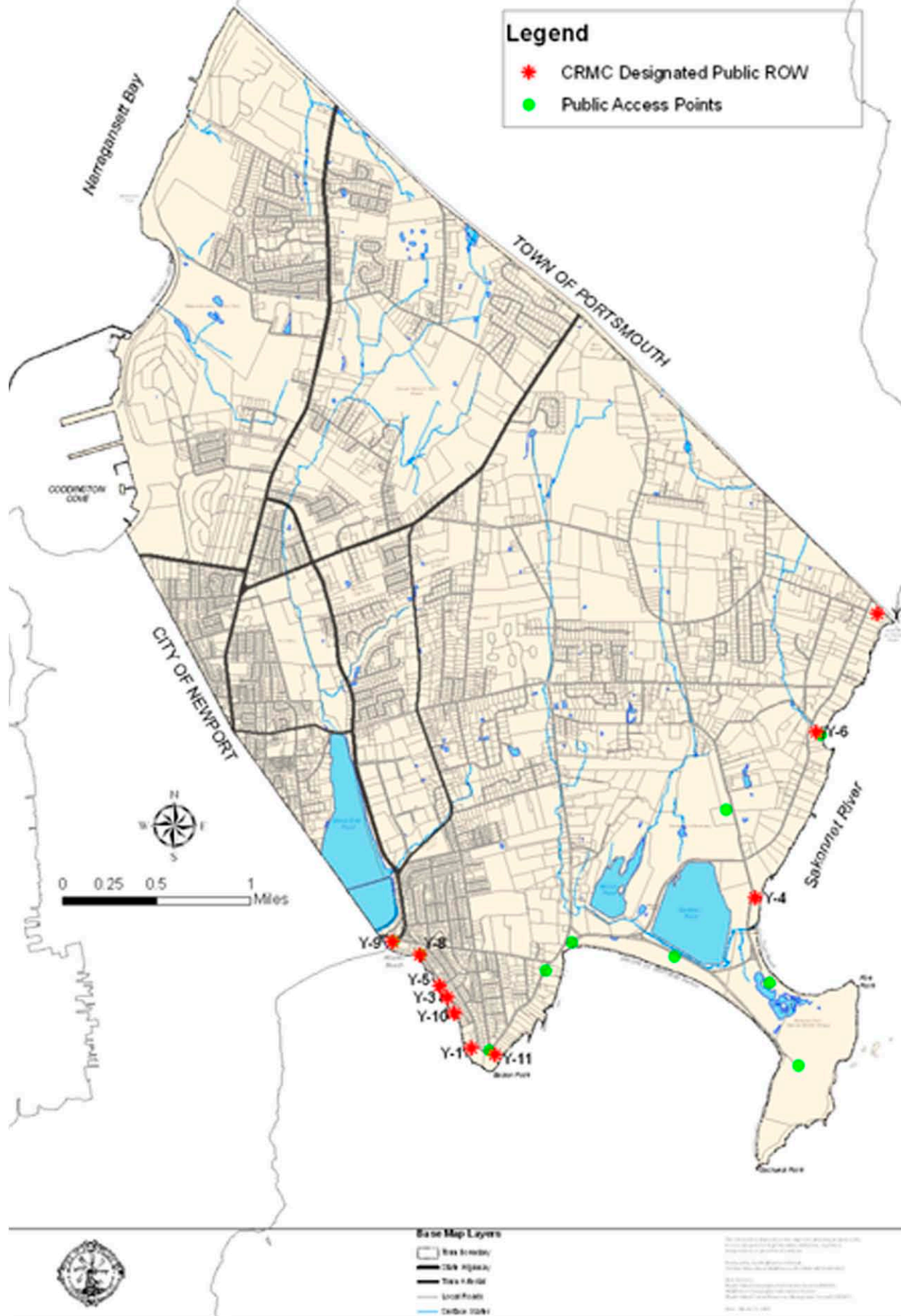
Y-11: Tuckerman Ave (opposite Wolcott Ave.): located on Tax Assessor's Plate 122. This is a 30 foot right of way to the ocean.

DRAFT

CRMC DESIGNATED PUBLIC RIGHTS-OF-WAY

DRAFT

Middletown, Rhode Island



This map was prepared for the City of Middletown, Rhode Island, by the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management (DEM) on behalf of the Rhode Island Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC). The map shows the CRMC Designated Public Rights-of-Way and Public Access Points in Middletown, Rhode Island. The map is based on the most current data available to the CRMC as of the date of publication. The CRMC is not responsible for any errors or omissions on this map. For more information, please contact the CRMC at (401) 863-1400.

C

Sakonnet Greenway Trail

You Are HERE



See Rules & Regs. panel for a closer look at open trails

Aquidneck Land Trust's Sakonnet Greenway Trail



- Properties conserved by the Aquidneck Land Trust
- Pedestrian and Equestrian Use
- Pedestrian Use Only
- Parking

Approximate location of future section of the Sakonnet Greenway Trail

The more clearly we can focus our attention on the wonders and the realities of the universe, the less taste we shall have for destruction.
-Rachel Carson

D

Open Space and Fields Committee: Open Space and Recreation Acquisition Policy

**TOWN OF MIDDLETOWN
OPEN SPACE AND FIELDS COMMITTEE
OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION ACQUISITION POLICY**

I. Purpose

This policy establishes the principles and procedures to be used by the Middletown Open Space and Fields Committee (“MOS&FC”) for the review and recommendation to the Town Council of potential acquisition of real property for open space and recreational purposes. In preserving open space, the goal of the Town is to preserve land which best meets the criteria listed herein.

Eligible lands include those parcels in the town of Middletown which are primarily undeveloped and which consist of open, agricultural, or littoral property, freshwater and saltwater wetlands and adjoining uplands, beaches, wildlife habitats, land providing access to or views of the ocean, harbors and ponds, land for hiking, bicycling and other recreational use, land for agricultural use, and land for watershed protection.

Acquisitions may include the purchase or donation of fee interests in land, conservation easements or other restrictive easements on real property.

Any potential acquisition of real property for open space and recreational purposes that is reviewed by the MOS&FC will be ranked by the criteria listed below. This process will ensure that the Town gains the greatest benefit from its open space and recreation funds by objectively reviewing proposed land acquisition projects using established criteria. Before a land acquisition project can be ranked, as described below, it must be consistent with the Town’s Comprehensive Community Plan.

II. Project Ranking

After the initial determination of consistency with the Comprehensive Community Plan is made, each proposed open space project will be ranked by the Open Space and Fields Committee on the following nine (9) criteria:

1. Groundwater and watershed protection potential;
2. Ecologically significant habitat;
3. Proximity to other protected land;
4. Farmland preservation;
5. Historic/cultural/scenic qualities;
6. Size of parcel;
7. Potential to offset the impact of residential development;
8. Leverage of Town funds in project acquisition; and
9. Potential for recreational use.

Each parcel will be evaluated by the nine (9) criteria listed above. For each measure, a point score will be assigned, from 0 to 3. The maximum score will be 27. The point system is intended to establish an objective way to identify the best projects

for acquisition or protection. Those projects rating a score of 14 or above will be considered priority projects. Projects rating a score less than 14 may still be considered for acquisition based on exceptional circumstances.

The final decision to acquire real property for open space or recreation purposes will be made by the Town Council. All recommendations made by the MOS&FC regarding potential land acquisitions are non-binding. Additionally, all negotiations with the MOS&FC are non-binding and the MOS&FC shall have no ability to obligate the Town in any manner. An option shall be provided for any offerer to donate their respective real property to the Middletown Historical Society. Open space land and recreation acquisition decisions need not follow a strict rank order, as the opportunities to acquire specific land will vary by project.

III. Jointly Funded Projects

The Town of Middletown endorses jointly funded projects and will actively participate in projects with other public and private organizations; as such projects will maximize the total amount of protected land and maximize the use of municipal funds.

TOWN OF MIDDLETOWN OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PROJECT RANKING – POINT SYSTEM				
CRITERIA	NUMBER OF POINTS AWARDED			
	0	1	2	3
Potential to offset impact of development; number of housing units possible	<10	10-50	51-100	Over 100
Size of parcel	<10 acres	10-25 acres	26-50 acres	Over 50 acres
Groundwater and watershed protection	Minimal or none	Low	Medium	High
Ecologically significant habitat	Degraded habitat	Average habitat	Above average habitat	Prime habitat
Proximity to other protected land (distance from parcel to other protected land)	More than ½ mile away	¼ to ½ mile	<1/4 mile	Abutting or in linkage area
Leverage of Town funds – amount of project funding from Town	Over 75%	51 – 75%	25 – 50%	<25%
Farmland	None	Inactive farm	Active farm <25 acres	Active farm >25 acres
Historic/Cultural/Scenic/ Neighborhood value	Minimal or none	Low	Medium	High
Potential for recreational use	Minimal or none	Low	Medium	High

**TOWN OF MIDDLETOWN
OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PROJECT RANKING**

SOURCE OF VALUES USED IN PROJECT RANKING

1. Potential to Offset Impact of Development – Calculations based on maximum residential dwelling units permitted by current zoning per the applicable provisions of the zoning ordinance and/or subdivision and land development regulations. For land zoned for non-residential purposes, an estimate of the intensity of development shall be used.
2. Groundwater and Watershed Protection – Parcel contains significant freshwater wetlands or significantly protects public and/or private water supply sources.
3. Ecologically Significant Habitat – Parcel contains endangered or threatened species or species of State interest or is in close proximity to areas that contain such species. Parcel is contiguous or in close proximity to habitat corridors. Parcel contains unique, unusual, or important wildlife habitat.
4. Historic / Cultural / Scenic / Neighborhood Value – Parcel has significant historical or cultural value. Parcel has significant scenic views or contains distinctive scenic landscape features. Parcel is adjacent to or in close proximity to neighborhoods that lack significant open space or recreation areas.
5. Potential for Recreational Use – Parcel contains areas that are suitable for recreational use such as ball fields, trails, areas for swimming, boating, or fishing, or other active or passive recreational activities..

E

Site Visit Notes and Photographs

Appendix – Site Visit Notes and Photographs

War Memorial Field (at Berkeley Peckham)

Locus Map



Notes

- Overall condition is (excellent, good, fair)
- Babe Ruth baseball is played here
- Repair/replacement of bleachers underway
- Parking is tight
- The accessory buildings need renovation

Photos



Panorama of ballfield



Additional bleachers on right field side use parking spaces



Looking down the third base line



Dugout



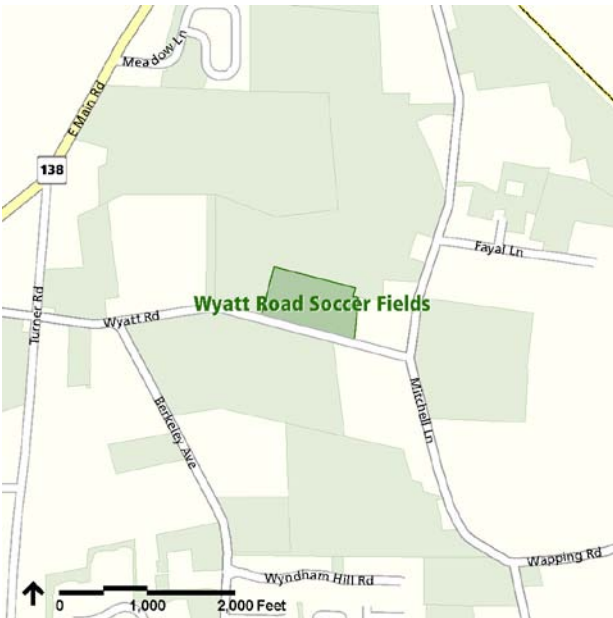
Bleachers are in poor condition



Entryway to bleachers

Wyatt Road Soccer Fields

Locus Map



Notes

- Overall condition is (excellent, good, fair)
- Lots of fields, three tiers
- Fields are used heavily
- Parking is adequate

Photos



Wyatt soccer fields



Albro Woods

Site Locus



Notes

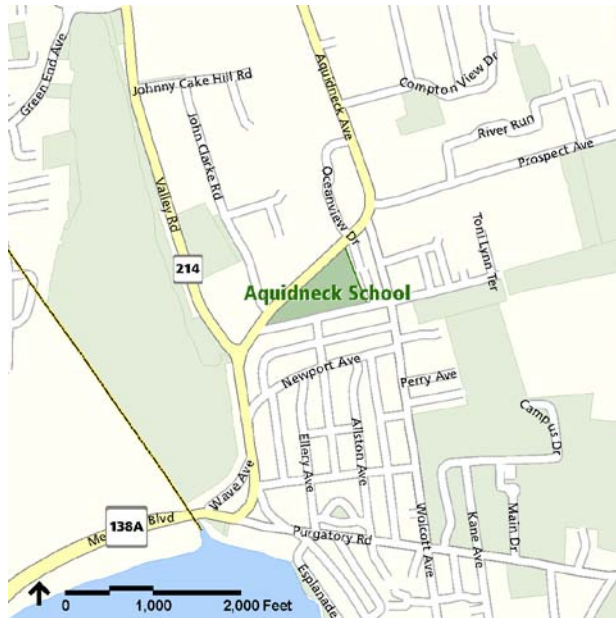
- Overall condition is (excellent, good, fair)
- Conservation property, walking trail
- Abuts Tibbett's Farm and Boulevard Nurseries site

Photos



Aquidneck Elementary

Site Locus



Notes

- Overall condition is (excellent, good, fair)
- High demand for limited space
- Youth baseball and girls softball; the lower field is used for minors and the upper is used for majors (Middletown Little League)
- Parking is a problem
- Fields are close to a busy road
- Drainage and grading issues
- Bleachers are in poor shape
- Storage facility roof leaks

Photos

See next pages.



Views from the lower field



Drainage issues at lower field



Views from upper field



Batting cages at upper field



Parking at upper field



Looking back at upper field's home plate



Dugouts at upper field



Interior of upper field dugouts



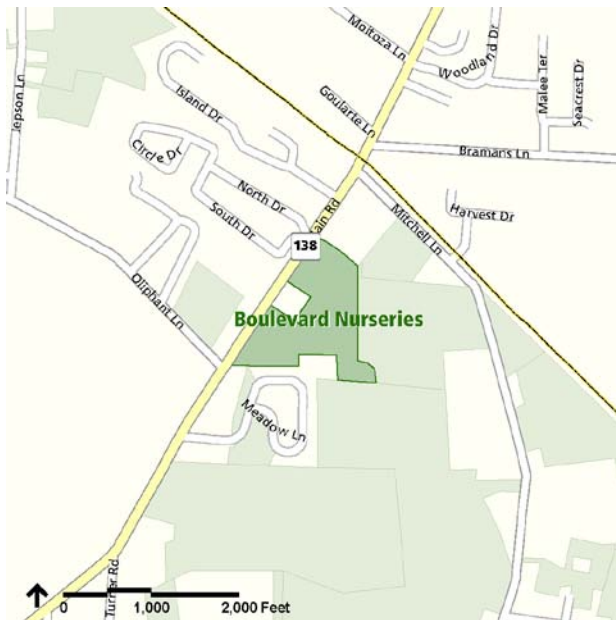
Storage shed interior at upper field



Subpar bleachers at upper field

Boulevard Nurseries

Site Locus



Notes

- Under a conservation easement
- Currently farmed under a lease agreement with the Kempenaar family
- Abuts Albro Woods and Tibbett's Farm to form a large block of open space
- Potential future recreation land
- Billboards are a distraction

Photos

See next page.



**Looking across Boulevard Nurseries
along East Main Rd**

Demery Memorial Park

Site Locus



Notes

- Overall condition is (excellent, good, fair)
- Only enough parking for 5 to 6 cars
- Abuts a farm
- Wildflowers did not take

Photos

See next page.



Parking is tight



Nice open passive/active space



View of the parking lot



Room for about 5 to 6 cars

Dunlap Wheeler

Site Locus



Notes

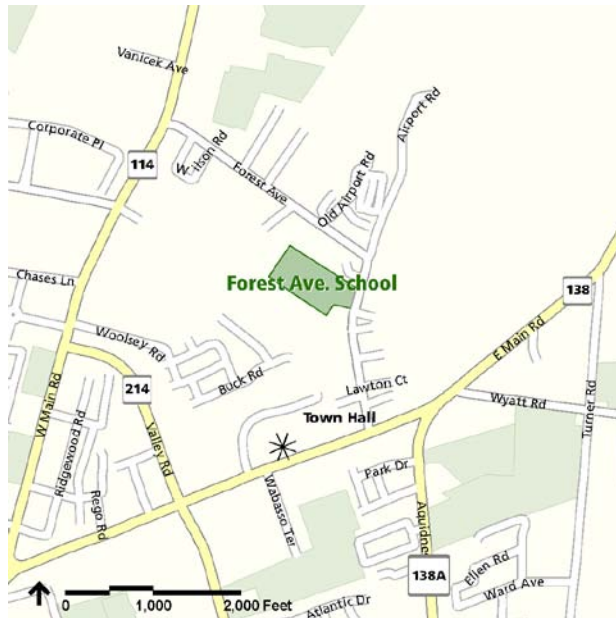
- Overall condition is (excellent, good, fair)
- Parking is adequate
- Public access to coast
- High level of traffic
- Initial landscape efforts have not taken due to the harsh seaside location of the park

Photos



Forest Ave. School

Site Locus



Notes

- Overall condition is (excellent, good, fair)
- New playground; basketball court, gym
- Multi-use field not big enough for community use
- Parking is a problem

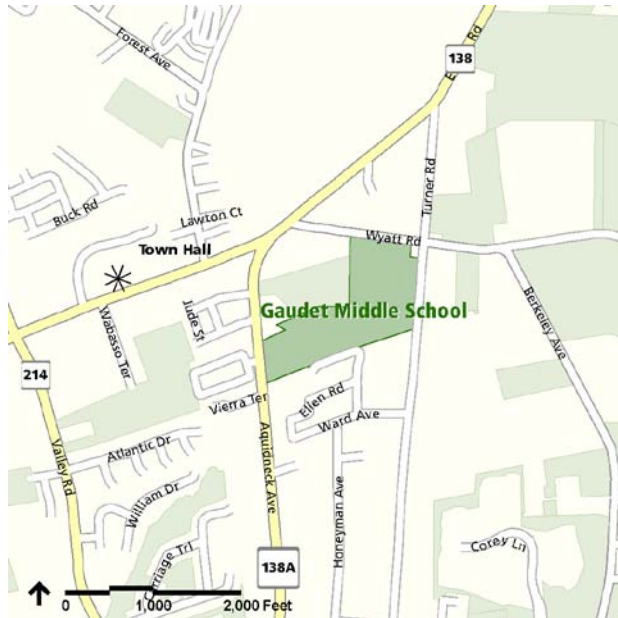
Photos



Playground equipment at Forest Ave School

Gaudet Middle School

Site Locus



Notes

- Overall condition is (excellent for new facilities, good, fair for Middle School property)
- Walking/running track, track & field, baseball, basketball, tennis, practice field (not adequate for games)
- Brand new football field, paid for by Salve Regina University
- Well-equipped gym
- Baseball field fencing, benches, and dugout need repairs

Photos

See next pages.



Drainage issues at Gaudet



Practice fields at Gaudet



Track and football field at Gaudet





New bleachers and storage facility



Storage facility



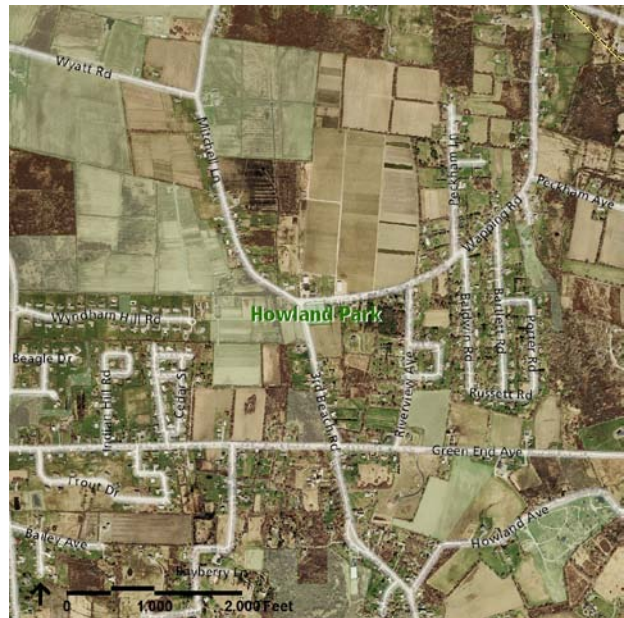
Practice equipment



Ticket booth

Howland Park

Site Locus



Notes

- Overall condition is (excellent, good, fair)
- Street hockey rink, basketball, playground
- One of the more popular parks in town for children and parents (spoke to someone with 3 or 4 kids, she said she visited the park a few times a week on average)
- High traffic area
- Adequate parking
- There are a couple of abutting lots for sale
- Private shade structure being built

Photos

See next page.



Playground equipment at Howland Park



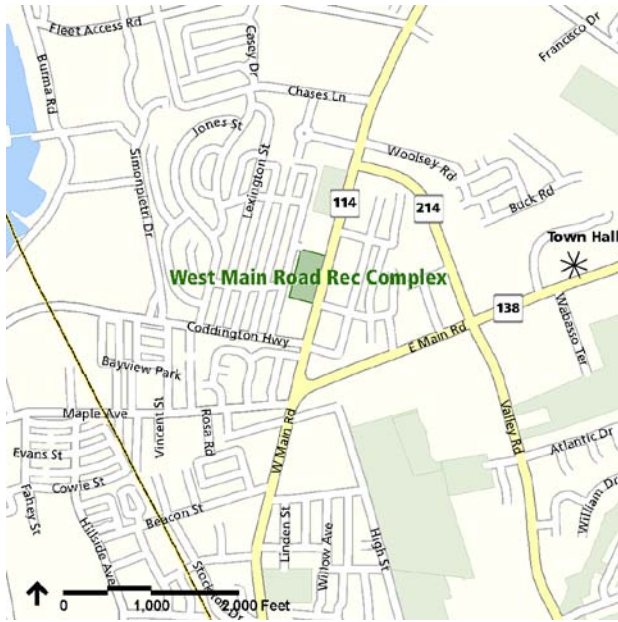
Play areas



Street hockey rink

Kennedy School/West Main Rd Recreation Complex

Site Locus



Notes

- Overall condition is (excellent, good, fair)
- School closed
- Playground, multi-purpose play area, softball, basketball
- Adequate parking, new lot
- Concession and modular bathroom on site
- Some of the structures associated with the fields need renovation
- Fields are located near the road and houses

Photos

See next pages.



Ballfield



Basketball court with restrooms in the background



Facilities



Parking

Linden Park

Site Locus



Notes

- Overall condition is (excellent, good, fair)
- Playground, lacrosse, soccer practice field, gym
- Easement to improve walkway to neighborhoods
- Adequate parking

Photos



Middletown High

Site Locus



Notes

- Overall condition is (excellent, good, fair)
- High traffic area; adequate parking
- Basketball courts, softball, practice field
- Fields are heavily used
- School practice until 5pm and then other groups come in
- Fields not good for games – no bathrooms or stands
- Small gym – not even regulation size basketball court

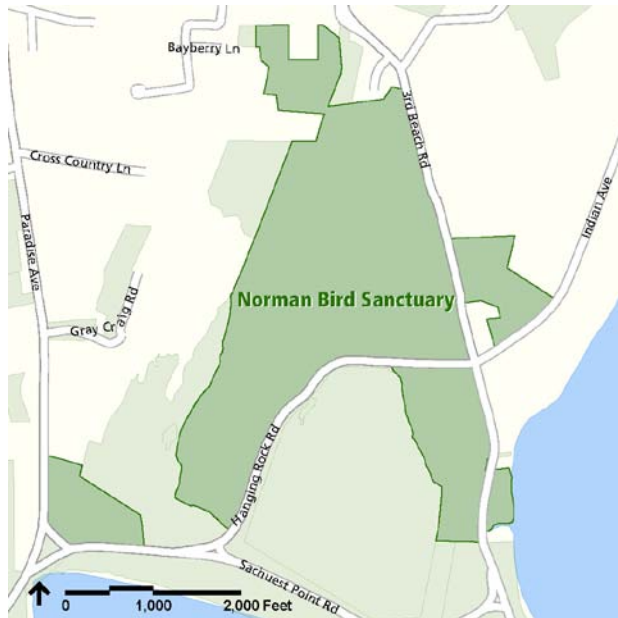
Photos

See next page.



Norman Bird Sanctuary

Site Locus



Notes

- Overall condition is (excellent, good, fair)
- Private
- Over seven miles of hiking trails
- Activities for kids in the summertime

Photos

See next page.



Welcome center



Parking

Oliphant School

Site Locus



Notes

- Overall condition is (excellent, good, fair)
- 2 tee ball fields
- Field surface not appropriate for young children
- No dugouts to protect children, fields in state of disrepair (e.g. rusty backstop), and there are grading issues
- Drainage is good
- Adequate parking
- No bathrooms
- Playground is suitable for small children, but requires upgrades

Photos

See next page.



Playground equipment



Tee ball field at Oliphant



Bleachers at Oliphant are in disrepair

Surfers End

Site Locus



Notes

- Only portable toilets
- Parking is tight

Photos



Panorama of Surfers End



Looking towards second beach



Surfers End abuts conservation property

Second Beach

Site Locus



Notes

- Overall condition is (excellent, good, fair)
- 1200 parking spaces, but it does fill up at peak times
- Most popular beach
- There are restrooms available

Photos



Surface parking





Beach house



Beach access



Beach goers

The Valley

Site Locus



Notes

- Very large parcel, ~50 acres in size (undeveloped)
- Former nursery – land is contaminated
- DEM requires substantial mitigation for the property to be used as a park, i.e. capping and soil clean up

Photos

See next page.



Third Beach

Site Locus

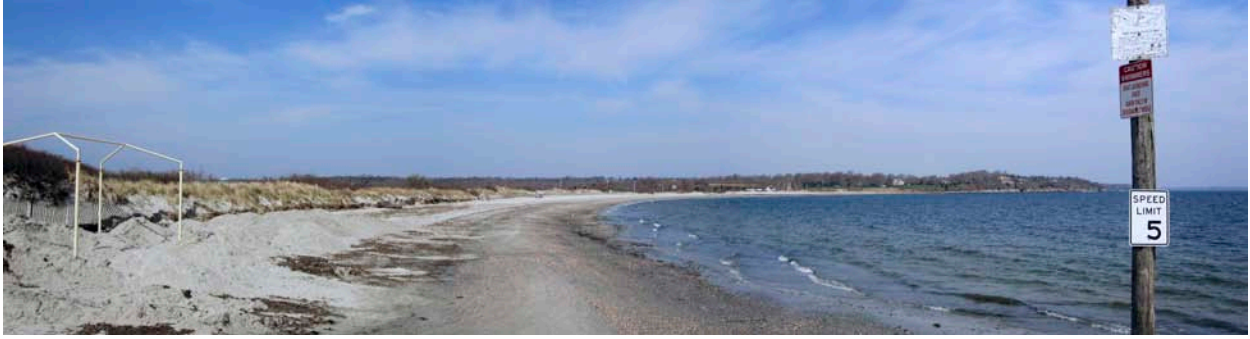


Notes

- Overall condition is (excellent, good, fair)
- Only public boat dock in town
- Parking is adequate, but does fill up
- Only portable toilets
- Least popular of the beaches

Photos

See next page.



Panorama of Third Beach

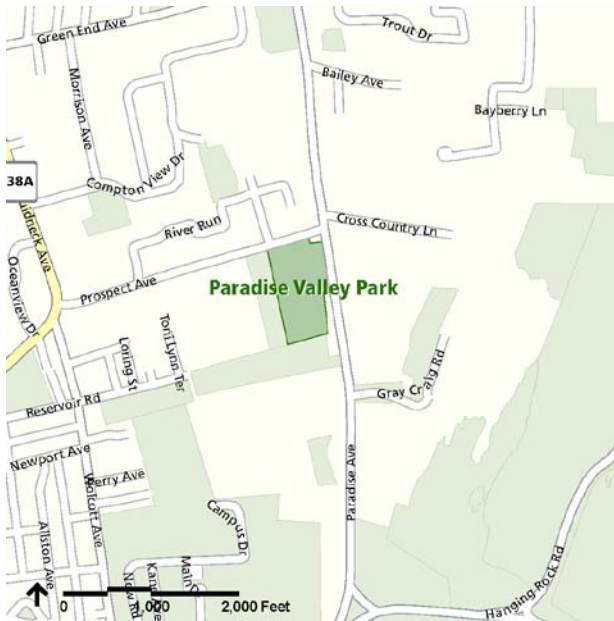


Parking



Paradise Valley Park

Site Locus



Notes

- Overall condition is (excellent, good, fair)
- Park supports passive and light active recreation (walking)
- Plenty of walking trails
- Old mill on site
- Abuts former RI Diocese property now owned by the Town

Photos

See next page.



Walking path and gazebo

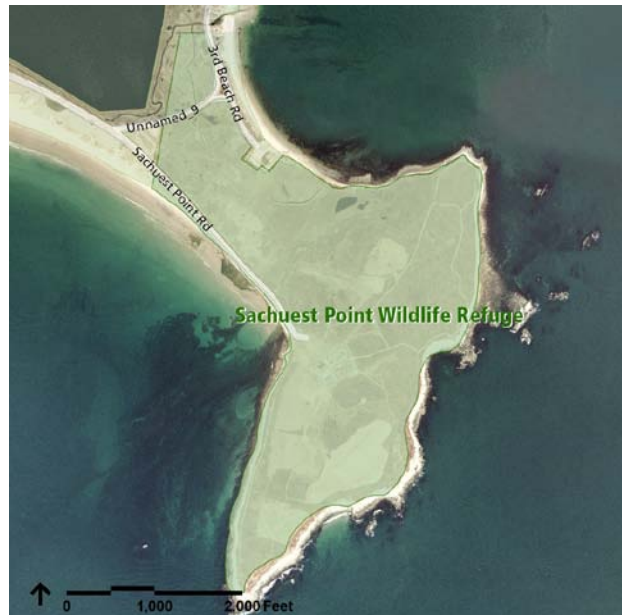


Parking



Sachuest Point Wildlife Refuge

Site Locus



Notes

- Overall condition is (excellent, good, fair)
- Interpretive center
- Running path
- Extensive wetland areas
- Natural setting

Photos

See next page.

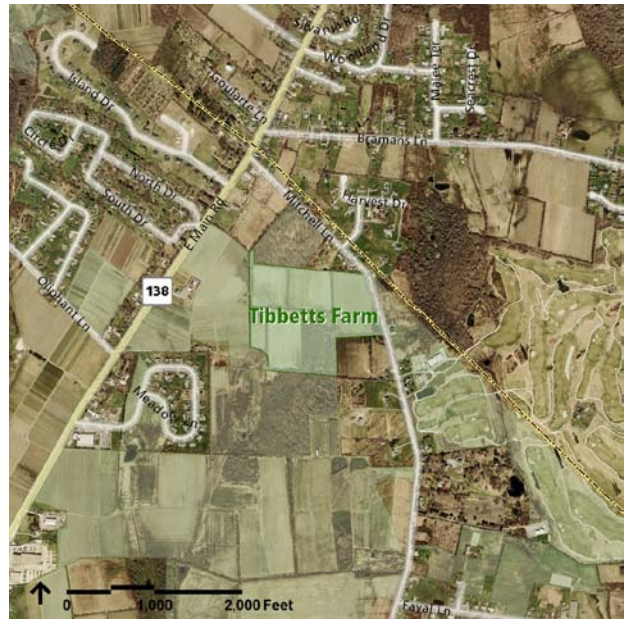


Visitor Center



Tibbett's Farm

Site Locus



Notes

- Leased by the Town to local farmers
- Protected in perpetuity

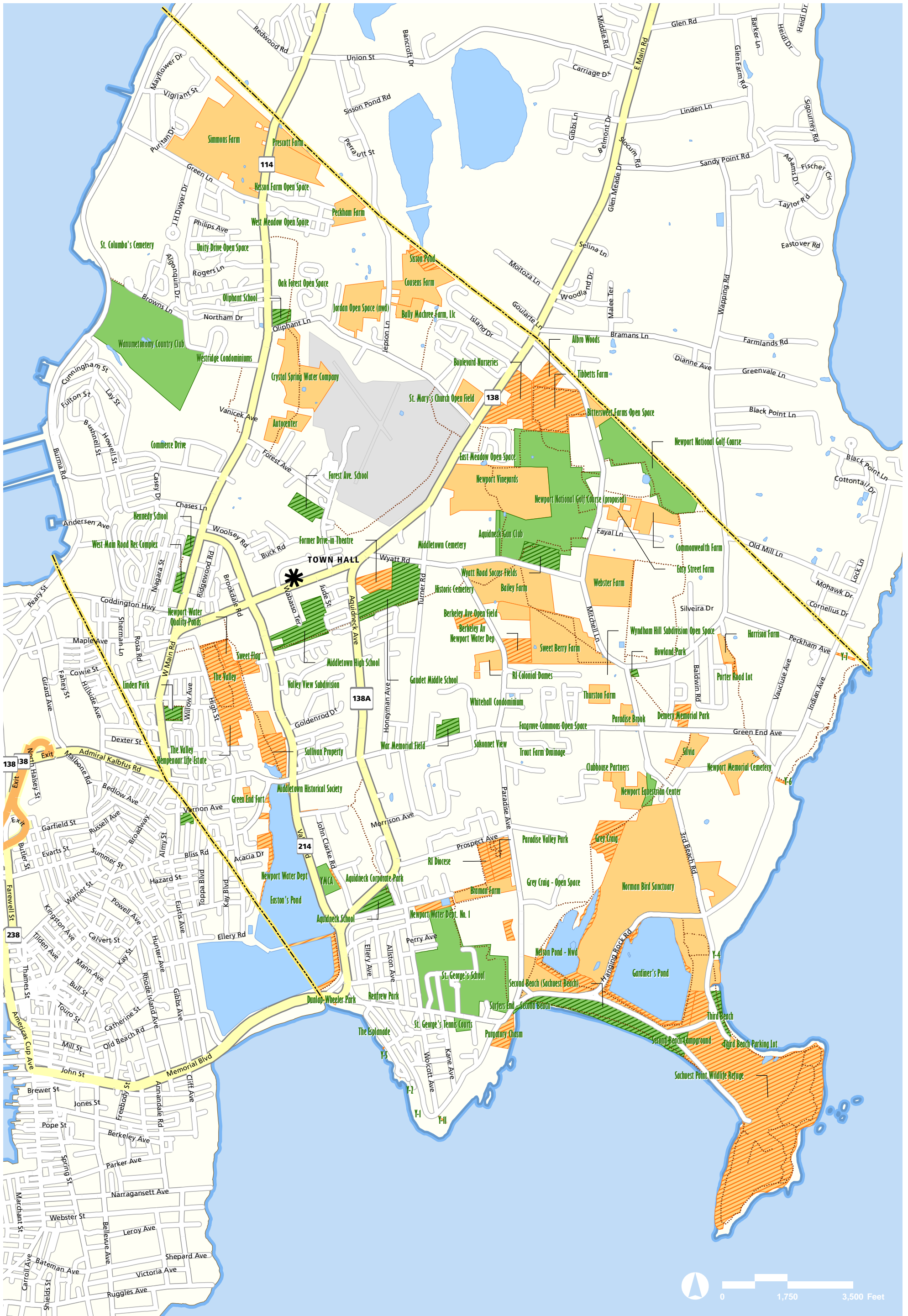
Photos

See next page.



F

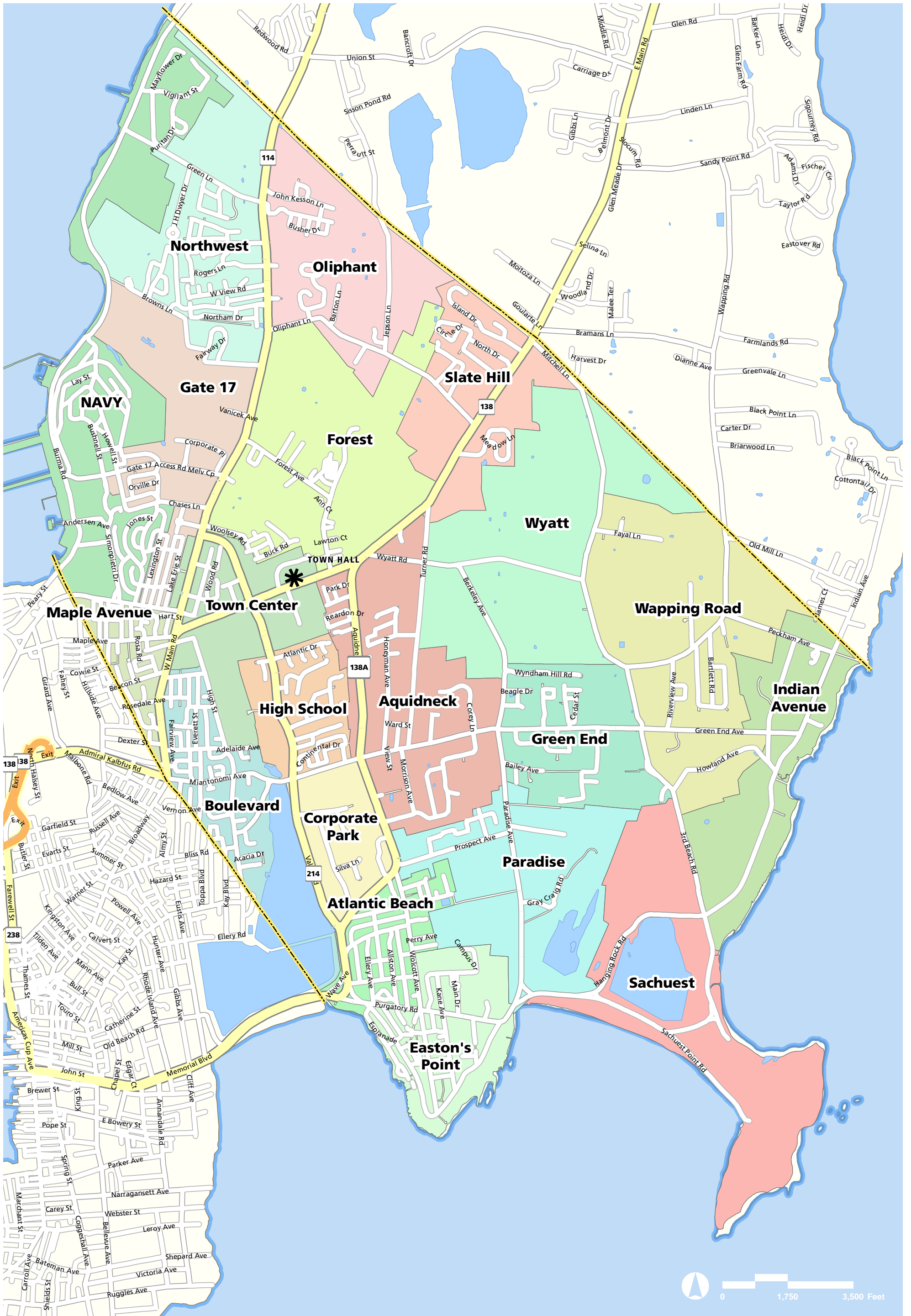
Maps



Source: RIGIS, Town of Middletown

Legend

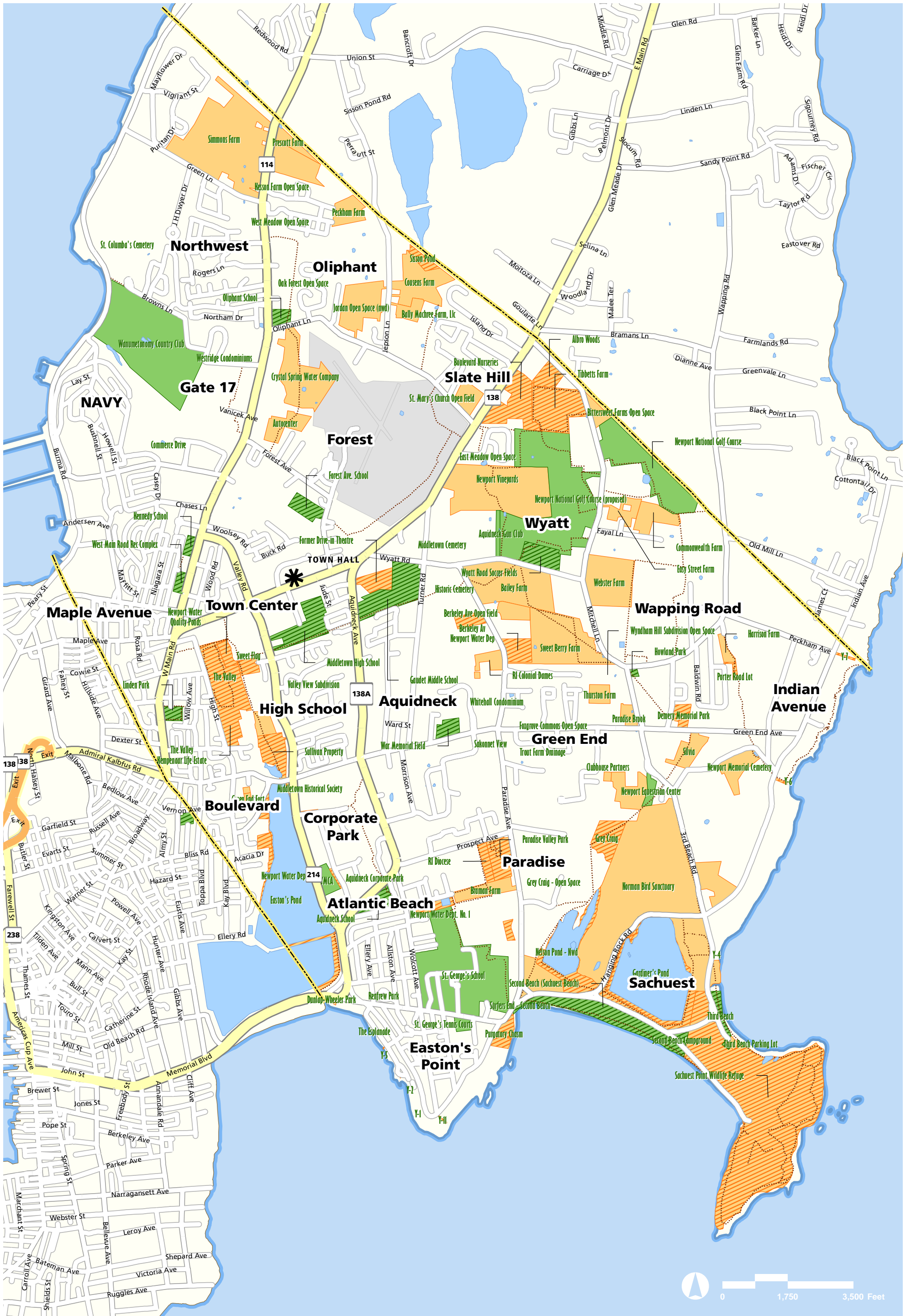
- Town Line
- Recreational Trails
- Open Space**
- Privately Owned Active
- Publicly Owned Active
- Privately Owned Passive
- Publicly Owned Passive



Source: RIGIS, Town of Middletown

Legend

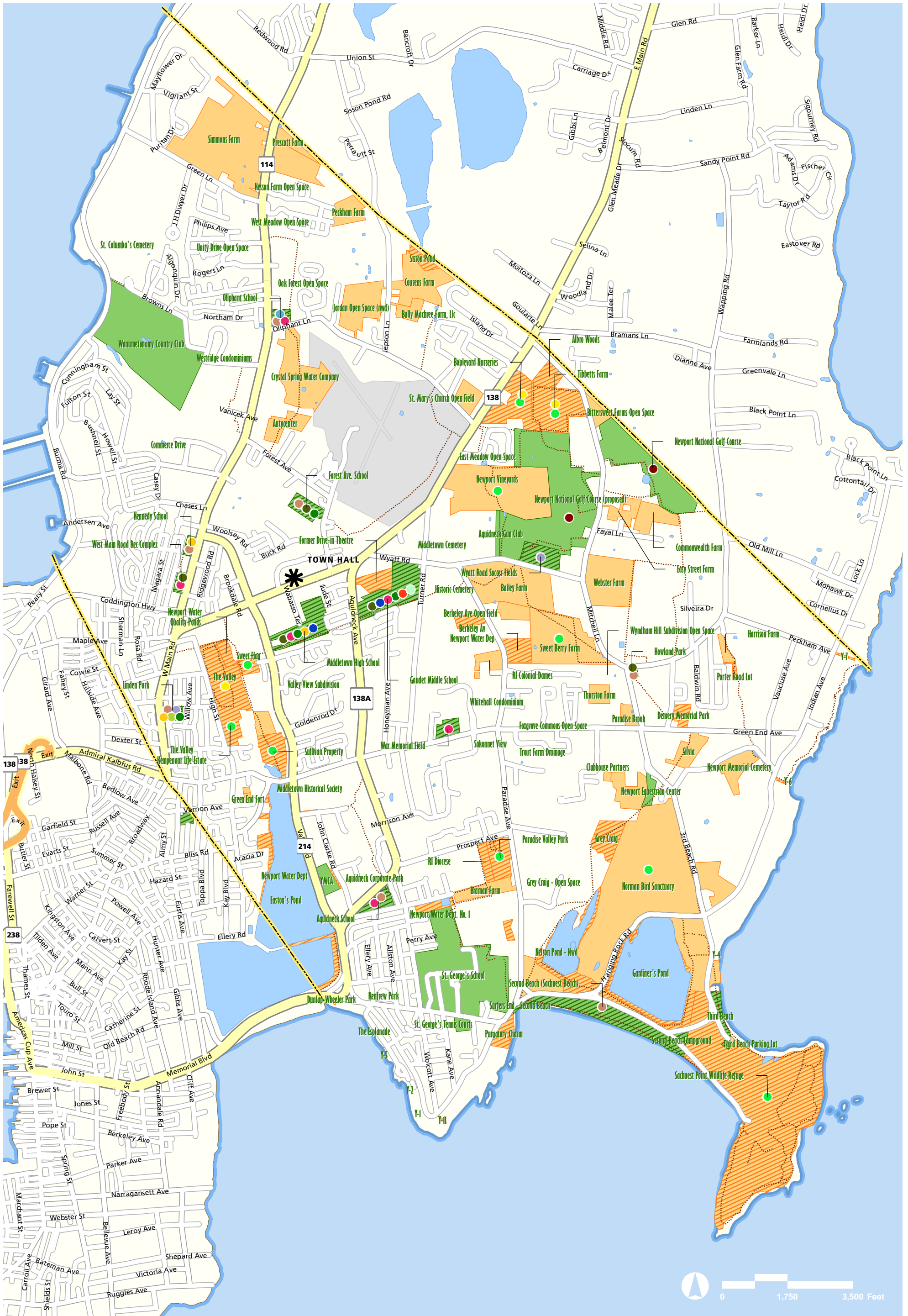
- Town Line
- Boulevard
- Gate 17
- Maple Avenue
- Paradise
- Wapping Road
- Neighborhoods**
- Corporate Park
- Green End
- Navy
- Sachuest
- Wyatt
- Aquidneck
- Easton's Point
- High School
- Northwest
- Slate Hill
- Atlantic Beach
- Forest
- Indian Avenue
- Oliphant
- Town Center



Source: RIGIS, Town of Middletown

Legend

- Town Line
- Recreational Trails
- Privately Owned Active
- Privately Owned Passive
- Publicly Owned Active
- Publicly Owned Passive



Source: RIGIS, Town of Middletown

Legend

- | | | | | |
|---------------------|-------------------------|---------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| Town Line | Open Space | Use | Soccer | Generally Accessible |
| Recreational Trails | Privately Owned Active | Running Track | Practice Field | Football |
| | Publicly Owned Active | Lacrosse | Potential Field | Basketball |
| | Privately Owned Passive | Tee Ball | Playground | Baseball |
| | Publicly Owned Passive | Tennis | Golf | Gym |

G

Public Outreach Summary

Appendix – Public Outreach Summary

2008 Public Outreach

A series of public meetings were held in 2008 during which a Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis was conducted. Input was requested for each major passive and active recreational facility in Middletown and participants provided input on what they liked and disliked about each. Issues raised included concerns about access, maintenance, safety, and needed improvements. At the same time, it was clear that people liked the diversity of activities and the scenic values associated with the Town's facilities. The beaches have always ranked highly in terms of usage and value. The summary of the notes from those sessions are attached.

Additionally, a survey was conducted, the results from which are summarized below.

1. The availability of local park and recreation opportunities was rated as very or extremely important by 85.7% of respondents.
2. Of those people that contacted the Parks and Recreation Department, 89% thought the response was average or better.
3. The age groups that respondents indicated were most in need of more recreation programs included 11 – 14 years old, 15 – 19 years old, and 7 – 10 years old, respectively. Other age groups, both older and younger, received significantly less votes.
4. The programs that people wanted to see added the most included nature and outdoor programs, fitness and wellness programs, summer programs, individual and team sports, and after-school programs (top five vote getters).
5. Taking that to the next level of detail, respondents identified the following top five programs: canoeing and kayaking, environmental/wildlife programs, family activities, nature walks, and after-school activities. Others included summer camp, tennis lessons, golf lessons, yoga classes, ice skating lessons, middle school sports, sailing lessons, "teen fun", indoor winter activities, children's exercise, outdoor cultural events, and theatrical productions.

6. When asked about how frequently people utilize various facilities, it was clear that there was a high knowledge of the parks, fields, etc. (very few responses indicating that the facility was unknown to the respondent). By a significant majority, the beaches were the most popular places to visit. Ballfields and basketball courts were also frequented by a large number of people.

7. People rated the maintenance of the facilities highly. Only 16% felt that these efforts were not very good or poor.

8. Residents would consider supporting a number of new recreation facilities with new tax dollars. The facilities receiving the most votes included bicycle/pedestrian paths, walking/hiking/cross country ski trails, increased access to the beaches, more open space and conservation land, a dog park, and a multi-generational community center.

9. Only 14.5% indicated that they would not be willing to pay additional property taxes to fund increased recreational opportunities.

2010 Public Outreach

As part of the planning process resulting in the preparation of this Recreation and Open Space Plan, a public outreach effort was undertaken to gauge local opinion on the critical recreation open space issues and concerns. There were three components to this public outreach campaign that took place during March and April 2010.

- A short outline survey was conducted from the homepage of the Town's website.
- A public forum was held on April 22, 2010
- Interviews were conducted with key stakeholders during March and April 2010, which was summarized in a report prepared prior to the public forum.

This memorandum will summarize the results of the online survey and the public forum.

Online Survey

The online survey, which was accessible for a few weeks, asked four questions:

1. What do you like about the Town open space and recreational resources?
2. What are your major concerns regarding the Town's recreational and natural open spaces?
3. Funding open space improvements: Select up to five improvements from the following list that you consider important for the Town to pursue.
4. How many times per year do you typically use the following publically accessible property in Middletown?

Thirty-nine people responded to the survey and the key findings are presented below:

- The assets of Middletown’s open space and recreational resources that received the highest vote totals (all over a 50% response rate) were mixed use areas for walking and playing; community playgrounds/meeting space; playing fields; walkable, accessible areas, open to all; and natural, wooded open spaces.
- The top five concerns that people had included insufficient recreation/athletic fields; maintenance in general; limits on use; vandalism/graffiti; dogs (cleanup, disturbance to others); and trash collection. (Note that there was a tie between the last two concerns mentioned.)
- If one had a chance to pick five improvements they would be willing to fund, the top five choices were more facilities/activities for teens; more indoor sports/recreation facilities; more playing fields for team sports; more walking/nature trails; and acquisition of land for recreational use.
- When asked about the number of visits to 30 various open space and recreation resources, the key findings are as follows:
 - Respondents were not familiar with the Sullivan property, Demery Memorial Park, Dunlap-Wheeler Park, Pebble Beach, and the Senior Center bocce courts.
 - The places respondents were most likely to visit (seven times or more) included the JFK School Grounds, Forest Ave. School Grounds, Senior Center bocce courts, Sachuest Campground, Oliphant School Grounds, and West Main Recreation Complex.

The results appear to be consistent with the issues and suggestions frequently raised during the stakeholder interviews – fields are in high demand and maintenance is important. There is a strong desire to expand recreational and open space opportunities as well. Although active recreation seems to get the most attention, there is support for both active recreation (playing fields, etc.) and passive walking trails. The complete results are attached.

Public Forum

The public forum was held on the evening of Thursday, April 22, 2010. It was attended by approximately twenty people. A presentation was made that provided attendees with some background information about Middletown and its open space and recreational resources. The presentation materials were provided to the Town after the forum.

The next phase of the meeting was to begin the process of reviewing the goals and policies for the Recreation and Open Space Master Plan. The discussion started with a review of the goals and policies from the previous plan, which are listed below.

GOAL I: Ensure the Town meets the ongoing recreation needs of the community.

POLICIES:

1. Meet community recreation needs through the development, implementation and management of a program designed to fulfill the expressed needs of the Town residents.
2. Administer and fund an active recreation program that ensures adequate maintenance and repair of recreational facilities.

GOAL II: Develop recreation facilities to serve individual and social needs, and afford outlets for creative expression that contributes to the quality of life of the residents.

POLICY: Provide equal recreation opportunity for the entire community that includes passive as well as active forms of recreation.

GOAL III: Properly manage RCOS sites and acquire additional RCOS sites as appropriate.

POLICIES:

1. Acquire and preserve RCOS sites that protect land and water sources while allowing for public access.
2. Expand the inventory of systematically preserved open space and natural resources that are beneficial to cultural, civic and environmental values.

GOAL IV: Expand water based recreational opportunities.

POLICY: Provide public access to water based recreational activities.

Participants at the forum generally felt that these goals and policies are still relevant. They were asked to provide some input as to any concerns or priorities relating to each goal. The following is a summary of those comments:

Goal I:

- encourage developers to include tot lots in their development plans
- should be done in a timely manner so residents can utilize the facilities right away

Goal II:

- the wording is a little vague and should be revised to be more specific
- since schools usually have priority in scheduling, the community at large is at a disadvantage
- this is especially true with so many activities being scheduled for each facility
- keep it simple – end the goal at “outlets for creative expression”
- consider consolidation of fields
- look for opportunities to host tournaments that bring in tourists/visitors
- provide opportunities for dance, art, photography, and public performances

Goal III:

- let the Town determine priorities with public input

Goal IV:

- no beach development, but make improvements as needed
- west side access for boating, fishing, and passive activities
- better boardwalks needed

Finally, the last exercise during the public forum was to use the Turning Point voting tool to ask questions of the audience for instant responses. In addition to asking people a non-related “fun” question, we asked how long have those in attendance lived in Middletown (58% lived in Middletown for more than 20 years). Other questions asked included:

- How often do you use open space and recreational facilities in Middletown?
 - Results were evenly split between once a month, three times a month, once a week, and “lost count”. No one said “never”.
- What is the most common activity you do when you visit a Middletown park or open space area?
 - Together walking/hiking and aesthetics/views garnered 81%. Use of playing fields ranked much lower among those in attendance.
- How do you get to your favorite open space area or park?
 - Overwhelmingly, most people drive
- Do you believe that your neighborhood has easy access to some type of park and recreation facility?
 - Most people (53%) said they are within walking distance of a facility, however, given the answer to the previous question, it was not necessarily the ones they visit the most.
 - Very few said it was difficult to access any facility
- How can your neighborhood be better served?
 - 40% said a new park or open space would be the best option
 - The remainder was split between expansion of existing facilities with different uses, better connections between neighborhoods and parks, or that it did not matter to them.

Stakeholder Interviews

Introduction

In an effort to appreciate the roles and interests of the numerous stakeholder groups, VHB conducted interviews with a number of recreation and open space facility user groups in February and March 2010. This was done in an effort to gain an understanding as to the level of activity at each facility and to define any issues and concerns regarding the condition and maintenance of the facilities as well. To that end, representatives from a number of different leagues and organizations were contacted to obtain input on these questions. Additionally, Steering Committee members were interviewed. Some responses were made via e-mail, but most were interviewed over the phone. There were a couple of people that has not responded at this point in time.

Questions Asked

Generally, the following questions were asked, especially with respect to users of local playing fields. Questions were specifically tailored for other interest groups and stakeholders, such as those relating to beaches and open spaces used for more passive purposes.

Among the questions asked were the following:

- What fields/facilities do you use?
- How many people participate in your activities? Middletown only? Are the neighborhoods well served?
- How often are they used by your group and during what time period? Are there any conflicts with other users or activities?
- Can you generally assess the condition of the fields/facilities you use?
- What are the most significant needs that you think should be met?
- What services does your organization provide?

What follows is a summary of the responses and comments from each of the stakeholders. They are presented in no particular order. Some are simply copied from e-mail responses we received.

Interview Summaries

Read Saunders – Open Space and Fields Committee

His interest is in ensuring the best utilization of open spaces to support both passive and active recreation. It is important to make sure that activities for a wide range of interests are provided, not just for organized sports. All neighborhoods on the draft map circulated to the Committee should have easy access to open spaces.

He would support community farming as an option in some neighborhoods – maybe use Town property for this purpose. Also local farmers should have a location they can use year-round for selling produce. This may be addressed in the Town’s comprehensive plan (see criteria, definition of open space) and this plan should be consistent with that.

The Town needs to foster a better relationship with the Aquidneck Land Trust.

John Pinto – Open Space and Fields Committee (also Pop Warner)

He is most interested in providing fields for kids. There are not enough fields, especially baseball.

Voters approved a \$6 million bond issue for recreation and open space a couple of years ago. The Town should have the authority to use it. Some could be used for the Navy land and perhaps a boat ramp (like Burma Road in Portsmouth).

The following is his assessment of some of the park and recreation facilities.

- Paradise Park – the Town owns some of the land adjacent to the Diocese land. The Town should get a grant to clear the brush to better assess what is there. It is possible to use that land for walking trails.
- Little League Complex – there are no fields to practice on. The Town has only one major league and one minor league field, but no place to practice. The Town could host tournaments. Establishing a practice field could be done in conjunction with the lacrosse league. Walking paths could be created as well. Getting others involved help to build a bigger constituency for the fields.
- He would like to see a field house built that could be used for tennis, basketball, and track. Kids currently use a facility in Newport (the Martin Recreation Center, or the “Hut”). Another idea is to create an indoor walking track for senior citizens to use year round.
- The grass area at the Gaudet Field is overused to the point where it cannot repair itself.
- The Town should work with Salve Regina on other potential projects, perhaps even the field house. The college has money and the Town has land.
- There is a park that is heavily used for street hockey and basketball – more of that type of facility is needed.
- The men’s softball field is too close to the road and ideally should be moved.

Ted Clement – Aquidneck Land Trust (ALT)

The Land Trust has conserved 57 parcels in total – 25 are completely in Middletown and three straddle the Middletown/Portsmouth town line. ALT is the only accredited land trust in RI.

Conservation land is typically protected in several ways:

- Land held with conservation intent alone, such as the Glen (this is the least protective option)
- Land conserved by a deed restriction
- Perpetual conservation easement held by a qualified group, such as ALT. This is the most protective option and how the majority of the Middletown ALT holdings are conserved.

ALT looks for partners such as public entities with an interest in conservation when it acquires land.

Not all of the ALT holdings are accessible to the public (16 of the 28 in Middletown are accessible). Some of the parcels are used for active recreation. Working farms are generally restricted in their public access.

- The soccer fields are used for leagues and unstructured play.
- Three contiguous parcels (Tibbetts, Albro Woods, and Boulevard Nurseries) could be used for a mix of active recreation, passive recreation, and community agriculture in the future if the Plan demonstrates the need. ALT and the Town should be working together on such plans.
- The aforementioned three parcels on the northern end can serve as an open space gateway to Middletown. ALT is willing to work with the Town to realize this vision for the area.
- Some parcels could be used for working farms or community gardens.

ALT's Sakonnet Greenway Trail is Aquidneck Island's longest free public nature trail. About five contiguous miles are already built and open to the public. About four more miles of trails, all in Middletown, will be built and added in the next couple of years.

ALT also has an acquisition wish list – an estimated ten year window until the effort is likely to be completed.

Paul Theriault – Little League

Little League serves about 500 kids from Middletown, ages 5-15. It is almost a year-round operation including winter ball at Gaudet.

The fields are so spread out that it is difficult for parents to coordinate travel and child care. This also makes it hard to manage storage sheds and equipment.

The condition of the fields is less than adequate.

- T-ball field is always dusty.
- Safety issues
 - No lights
 - No warning track
 - No bullpens
- Not enough seating

Parking is generally OK since most of the games are played on school fields.

The Town needs another minor league baseball field and softball field. Two leagues play on fields that are too large. More practice space is needed as well. An indoor practice facility would be useful – the nearest one is in Fall River. Only the major league field has concessions.

From an e-mail:

We currently have 37 teams from T-ball to softball, ages 5 to 15. Middletown Little League only has rights to 5 fields and two of those are T-ball. So that leaves 3 fields for 33 teams. In order to play ball, we need to acquire permits from the Town or School Department to use other fields. The problem with doing so is we are often denied use on certain days. For example, our Single M division uses the Gaudet field and we have been told we can't play baseball on May 14 and 15th due to other commitments. Girls softball shares a field with the High School team. Obviously since it's school property, the High School team gets first priority on the field. Our MM and MMM divisions must share the lower Aquidneck field. Due to the total number of teams there, we are forced to play games on Sundays now.

Another issue we have with the fields we are allowed to use is that they are not skinned correctly.

Our T-ball field is skinned as a softball field, meaning there is no infield grass. This is a safety concern for small 5 year old kids as the ball will bounce off the hard dirt faster than it will off of grass. The Gaudet field is skinned for High School play. This means that the field is much too large for Little League. We have 6 and 7 year olds playing on that field and it's very difficult for the smaller kids to try and run a baseline that is 15 feet too long. Often kids are out on plays that would result in the player being safe if the baseline was correct.

I also have serious concerns with the current conditions of all of our fields. Most of the backstops need to be replaced as they are rusty and have pointy edges. Our stands at T-ball and Aquidneck are broken or rotting and are a safety risk for parents and siblings watching games.

Tina Vars – Pop Warner

Football and cheerleading programs serving kids aged 5-15; a total of approximately 250-300 per year from Middletown. A \$65 fee is charged and equipment is generally provided. Gaudet Field is used for home games and events, including playoffs.

The condition of that field is excellent.

Pop Warner has an excellent relationship with Salve Regina. Pop Warner paid for much of the concession stand and volunteers built the building used for equipment storage and a small office. It was paid for by the School Department, which operates it and uses a portion of it. The Town has been generous as well.

Field use generally starts on August 1st and runs every night from 4:30 – 8:00 PM for practices and games. Teams play 4-7 home games and then playoffs. There could be up to ten teams each year. Salve also plays games on the field on Saturdays.

The league provides everything including field training equipment and uniforms (new ones are needed). Parking is always an issue, but it has gotten better with the rearranged parking configuration. A paved

driveway or walkway between the front and back of the field, as well as good signage, would be useful. Occasionally, there is minor flooding near the bleachers. Apparently, Salve is possibly installing a new press box.

Tim Shaw – Men's Softball

The softball league primarily uses Pottsey Field at West Main Road Complex. There are leagues in the spring/summer and fall. There are usually 7 or 8 teams with about 20 players per team (generally more for the fall leagues). Games are held Monday – Thursday evenings.

The DPW takes care of the fields, which are in good shape although drainage could be a problem. DPW established a schedule for maintenance and the work seems to get done accordingly. Ideally, the field size should be bigger to avoid problems with nearby roads and homes (netting has been installed). Parking is not a problem (former tennis courts are used).

Ed Collins – School Department

Oliphant Administration Building

- Playground and 2 T-ball fields (playground interferes with one of the fields)
- No bathrooms
- Maintained by school
- Field layout not ideal

Forest Ave.

- Large open area/playfield for School Department – multi-use
- Used just for the school
- New playground
- Not big enough for community use

Aquidneck Ave. School

- Small gym for school use, not community
- New playground
- 3 baseball fields
 - Girls softball (generally OK, but needs some work)

- Major league baseball (in decent shape – some work needed)
- Minor league baseball (floods frequently)
- School mows field. League, School and Town do maintenance with League and School doing the majority
 - Town may need to help with maintenance
- Over 14 teams are trying to play games on two fields; 9 softball teams are trying to play games on one field

High School

- CYO size gym, not even a regulation size basketball court
- Field space maintained by school
- Softball field has a temporary fence; can't schedule 2 games at the same time
- Practice field is adequate – used for lacrosse and soccer; occasionally by community groups
 - Not adequate for organized games
 - No bathrooms
 - Limited stands

Gaudet Middle School

- Gym OK for middle school
- Major league baseball field in good shape
- Smaller practice field used by Little League for games

General comments

- Salve field in excellent shape, but that is the only real field – demand is high for additional field space
- Need more game playing space
 - Varsity, junior varsity, and freshmen all play on one field
 - Middle School plays at Berkley-Peckham
- Inadequate practice fields

- Only two real fields used by four school teams and four Babe Ruth teams
- The fields are generally well maintained
- Town needs a real gym
- Maintenance staff – 2 people full-time, year-round
- 60 acres of space to maintain keeps them busy
 - Town helps to some extent
 - One additional person would alleviate need for Town assistance

Colin Sullivan – Salve Regina

Salve Regina worked in collaboration with the Town to build fields (funded by the University on Middletown land). Salve Regina felt this was a positive arrangement and would like to see more cooperative efforts undertaken in the future. Although no further efforts have been undertaken to date, creation of an ad hoc committee with the Town may be useful as a way to foster continued communication. The University may be interested in baseball (including one that meets college specifications) and softball fields to increase field availability and flexibility. This would also reduce conflicts such as lacrosse use of the outfield on the baseball diamond.

The Town recently met with Salve officials to discuss future opportunities for collaboration. From the University’s perspective, on-campus athletic facilities are preferred to the extent possible, but Salve recognizes that the options are limited.

The following is a summary of potential future actions.

1. The biggest issue for Salve at present is limited on-campus men’s baseball facilities. The existing baseball field is shared with lacrosse. There is no permanent outfield fence and no lights. The field condition in the early spring tends to be poor.
2. Salve typically plays games in the southern states in March, with home games played April thru mid-May.
3. Salve would be interested in investigating options for providing a state-of-the-art men’s baseball facility at an off-campus location, possibly in cooperation with the Town.
4. Women’s softball is currently played off-campus. There is a desire and the potential to bring softball to the campus, possibly using and converting the current baseball field should baseball move to a new off-campus site.
5. There is also a need for multi-use field space which could be used for recreational programming such as rugby, and practice/competition space for other various sports.

Salve hockey currently uses St. George's and Portsmouth Abbey. There is no immediate need for an additional facility. If it is ultimately considered, a new ice rink would have to be sited off-campus due to historic preservation/architectural concerns.

Tom O'Loughlin – DPW

DPW has a maintenance schedule. The Town used to have a fully dedicated parks and recreation staff. They could line the ballfields when requested, but the priority was to respond to "recreation emergencies". The priority should now be maintenance such as grass cutting, with all other needs coming afterwards. Sometimes the leagues assist in lining the fields. The DPW is charged with maintaining all Town properties in addition to the fields (not the schools). They now have two full-time dedicated staff and one full-time seasonal worker.

Rian Wilkinson – Beach Commission

Beach Commission gets good support from the Town Council and the Town itself. The importance of the beaches to the Town is recognized. On average, between 32 and 35 lifeguards are hired each season. The Town can expect between 200 and 300 beach visits per weekday and up to 500 on weekends.

The overall approach is to try to keep the beaches the way they are with no commercial development. People tend to like the way the beaches are now – clean and natural. Volunteer groups help with the plantings, cleanup activities and maintenance.

Second Beach should generally remain as is – no commercialization. A new building is needed, which was supposed to be included in the 2008 bond issue. The Town spent \$400,000 on building improvements. The Commission is looking to construct a New England style building in 2012 for April – November uses.

Third Beach needs new facilities, but a new building would need to be on 13 foot high stakes. When you then build a two story structure, the building would block views of the beach, making that an undesirable situation. Sand erosion is a big problem at this beach, especially since the narrowest portion of the beach is the public portion. The west portion of the beach is open to the public, but not for swimming. The town will continue to bring in sand, but there will not be any major dredging operations.

There are ongoing efforts to conserve the dunes at the beach and the boardwalks and fencing have been upgraded/repaired. The issue of restroom facilities has been debated over the years. It has been suggested that a mobile bathroom facility be utilized rather than port-a-johns, but the issue of vandalism has prevented the Town from using a mobile bathroom. Road erosion has been an issue in the past as well.

The Town charges residents \$50 for a season pass to the beach, \$100 for nonresidents. Parking spaces tend to sell out by late morning, but the spaces open up again by early to mid afternoon. Generally, this is not considered to be a serious issue except for maybe 5 or 6 days/year.

The Town makes \$1 million per year from the beach fees, which goes to fund beach related expenses as well as other recreation programs. However, other extraordinary expenses for specific needs, improvements, or equipment have been supported by the Town. No request for money has been denied.

There are occasional closures due to wet weather and pollution. A nearby river is sometimes contaminated with pet waste.

Walt Wilderman – Youth Soccer

From an e-mail response:

Middletown Youth Soccer Club (MYSC) uses the Wyatt Road Soccer Complex. From April through June the fields are used Monday thru Friday from 4:30pm to dusk, and Sat-Sun from 7:30 am to dusk. In July and August we use the field Mon-Fri of the week after 4th of July from 7:30am to 5 pm for camp; and on week nights from 5pm to dusk for soccer school. From September through end of November we use the fields Monday thru Friday from 4:30pm to dusk, and on Sat and Sun from 7:30 to dusk. We also use the fields on Sunday mornings from April thru December.

The condition of the field is generally good, depending on weather. (see question on stewardship).

There is no conflict with other organizations. We do work with the Town Recreation Director, Tim Shaw, to deconflict if possible any requests for usage.

Over the course of the year we have approximately 800 players registered in our programs and about 175 adult coaches, assistant coaches, other volunteers and Board members involved...so close to 1,000 people.

MYSC does, or contracts and pays for, all the upkeep to the facilities with the exception of grass mowing, and most recently the town took over the contract for the irrigation system. We built, and maintain, the Concession Stand/Storage shed, and we maintain the grass with a big turf replacement program every fall. We have spent over \$50K of MYSC money in the last 5 years on upkeep. We also do all the field striping and purchase all playing and maintenance equipment.

The focus of the Club is Middletown, but we do accept players from other towns, Newport mostly. Out of town players make-up less than 5% of our players.

Steve Ponte – Men’s Pick-up Basketball

From an e-mailed response:

We have run adult hoops in Middletown for about 20 years. Probably more. It is open to men and women. We have used the Jos. Gaudet Middle school gym exclusively in the winter months. We run it two days a week usually Weds. and Friday nights from 6–9pm. This is subject to change as the

student/athletes in our district come first and if they need the gym we cancel or move the times. We have run a summer league at the high school and middle school but not in the last 2 years.

The gyms are in great condition and we are flexible and work our times within the school's athletic and social schedule.

Not real conflicts, student athletes come first...if they need the facilities pickup is cancelled or shifted. The times for pickup are very flexible.

We have 20–40 adults signed up to play and usually 25–30 show up on any given night. We have 2 administrators, myself and Dave Picard, who is a retired public school teacher.

As far as stewardship goes we collect 25 dollars from each member that goes to our recreation dept. At times we have mopped and swept the floors but not too much in the stewardship category.

The focus of the group is Middletown residents but we open it up to other districts to maintain more social contacts and get more adults into some sort of exercise program. Traditionally Weds. nights are for over-30 year old adults and Friday nights are open age groups. We have had high school students show up to play and have had adults in their 60's come and play. We have an end of the year social and we produce an end of the year newsletter that roasts a number of players based on their ability or inability. It has been quite a successful program.

Blair MacKenzie – Island Youth Lacrosse

From an e-mail response:

Gaudet Middle School, Middletown HS, Old Linden School Fields...they tore it down last year but the fields remain. Gaudet, gets used 4 nights a week... Linden 3x a week, HS 3x a week...hours at all are about 5–7pm

Generally, the condition of the fields is good all around, compared to fields around the state.

There is some competition for field use. With the Gaudet field, there's not so much.... But with the HS field there is minimal field space, HS soccer, youth soccer, HS lacrosse are all competing for field time.

Total involvement is about 240 kids (1st grade thru eighth grade). The participants come from all of Newport County.

We always make sure the field is in better shape than when we arrive, coaches make sure everyone picks up trash etc. They [towns] used to provide garbage cans but that's going away, now we [island youth lacrosse] bring our own.

Chris Greene – Babe Ruth Baseball

From an e-mail response:

Berkeley Peckham Field, Green End Ave. are the fields used.

Generally used from March to November, weekday afternoons, all day weekends.

High maintenance required but typical of a high-use field. Needs some capital improvements that are already in the works.

No conflict as I oversee the use of the field. Middletown Babe Ruth uses the field as does Gaudet Middle School baseball and Middletown High Freshman. BR defers to the school teams. School teams are on the field weekdays from 2:00 to 5:30 generally. I maintain a master schedule so that any rescheduling is coordinated with all 3 organizations.

This is a town field and we work closely with the Public Works Department daily.

The Babe Ruth use is Middletown primarily with some visiting teams from other communities for post-season play. The schools play visiting teams from

statewide there several times a week during the school year.

Rick Francis – Youth Wrestling

Jos. Gaudet Middle school gym. The gym is used weekdays after school. The High School kids come in at the tail end of basketball practice at 5pm. Club kids (ages range from 6 – 18) come in at 6pm and are there till about 7:30pm. The gym is in great shape... they just need *more* of it. He also mentioned the need for a field house.

There is major competition for use of the gym.

There are about:

- 40 youth participants
- 35–40 middle schoolers
- 25–30 high schoolers

The majority of both the club and school youth are from Middletown. However, Middletown's HS wrestling program is the only one on Aquidneck. So, HS kids that want to wrestle on a school team have to come to Middletown from Portsmouth and Providence.

We conduct overall equipment maintenance (i.e. wipe down the mats) and push up the bleachers.

Jan Eckhart – Planning Board

From an e-mail response:

I am basically satisfied with the progress of your plan thus far. My only concern, which I have expressed at the last meeting, was the accuracy of the survey methodology. There is potential to “over represent” the advocates of active, organized recreation. Advocates for passive open space and recreation could be underrepresented. This observation is not scientific only intuitive. I realize there is equal opportunity for all to participate and I don’t know how you could adjust for this even if you were to think this is the case. I only wanted to mention this to insure the data is truly representative of all Middletowners.

Mason Hawes – Open Space and Fields Committee

From e-mail responses:

My biggest concern is that we are faced with what appears to be a desire to group similar active recreation in new complexes, what happens with the current sites. Also with the West Main Road properties of the complex (including the school and the Navy property) and Linden Park what do we do with those sites? Linden does need to remain a neighborhood park but is there an additional use we can make of it. Also:

- Lacrosse needs a home.
- Do we build an ice skating rink (allowed for on the Boulevard property) if we were to acquire additional property in proximity of Gaudet? How would that affect any plan?
- Determine priorities of land acquisition, remediation, farming and recreation improvements.
- The role of agriculture is increasing and we have significant land resources with potential for additional acquisition. Determining best use, educational possibilities should be included.
- Making Middletown walkable and more bike friendly.
- An enclosed dog park of significant size.
- Shoreline access for fishing, picnicking, snorkeling, kayaking, boat launching.

