
Colchester Parks and Recreation



PARK FACILITIES REPORT

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Executive Summary

Our Mission Statement:

The Colchester Parks and Recreation Department strives to build a stronger, healthier, more active community by providing safe and attractive parks and facilities and offering interesting and exciting programs and events that bring our residents together.

Our Value Statement:

The Colchester Parks and Recreation Department brings value to the Town of Colchester by creating recreation and leisure opportunity for the growth and enhancement of all community members. By developing diverse programs that promote citizen involvement we create opportunities to build strong relationships. We strive to increase the social, cultural, and physical well-being of all residents. We believe that working in cooperation with local businesses, organizations, and community members we can achieve success in meeting the recreational needs of all residents.

Our Vision:

The Colchester Recreation department is to be considered an essential and valued service in the community by developing, promoting, evaluating, and sustaining innovative programs, activities and events. Our staff will be known for their leadership and commitment to excellence as well as their ability to grow and change with the community.

Our Department:

The Colchester Recreation Commission is comprised of 10 Colchester residents who volunteer to guide the best practices and policies of the Recreation Department. The Commission provides oversight of the department budget, programming, staffing, community program development and park maintenance recommendations for improvements and advancements. The Recreation Commission acts in an advisory commission, appointed by the Board of Selectman. The day-to-day departmental needs are handled by the full time Recreation Director and Recreation Specialist. The Recreation Director reports monthly to the Commission on all departmental activity. As the head of the Department, the Director also works closely with the Selectman's office, Public Works, Board of Education and parks employees.

Our Community:

The Colchester Recreation Department is proud to offer the community many healthy recreational opportunities that are diverse, engaging and trendsetting. Our parks include the RecPlex, Splash Pad, playground, 9 ball fields, pavilion, town green and gazebo, Dog Park, Skate Park, tennis courts, basketball court, bocce courts, horseshoe pits, concession stand, Airline Trail spurs and Ruby Cohen Woodlands park and Story Walk.

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	2
COMMUNITY COLLABORATION	4
A LOOK INTO THE FUTURE...	5
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CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS	5-6
THE IMPORTANCE OF PARKS	7
COLCHESTER PARKS AND RECREATION	88
PLAYSCAPES	9-13
TENNIS COURTS	14-18
BASKETBALL COURT	19-21
SKATE PARK	22-23
PARK BENCHES & SIGNS	24
2021 INCORD DONATION	25-28
2021 PLAYGROUND FUNDRAISER	29-31
2021 PLAYGROUND BUDGET REQUEST	32
WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?	32
WE ARE DOING THIS TOGETHER	32

COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

We are strong proponents of inter-department cooperation and community collaboration. We believe that by working together we make better use of the community resources, engage more members to take an active role in their community, and enjoy the benefits of using the town parks. Over the past several years, we have worked with many community partners, including:

- Colchester Pupil Services
 - InCord
 - Colchester Lions Club
 - Cragin Memorial Library
 - Apple Rehab
 - 360 Defense
 - Inishmor Pub
 - Colchester Board of Education
 - Colchester Public Works
 - Planning and Zoning
 - Colchester Land Trust
 - Colchester Youth and Social Services
 - Colchester Hayward Fire Department
 - Colchester Giving Garden
 - Colchester Garden Club
 - Chatham Health District
 - The Music Bureau
 - Colchester Senior Center
 - Colchester Soccer Club
 - Colchester Baseball/Softball League
 - East Hampton Parks and Recreation
 - Hebron Parks and Recreation
 - Doreen's Dance Center
 - Colchester Emergency Management
 - State of CT, Dept. of Public Health
 - CT Recreation and Parks Association
 - Colchester Republican Town Party
 - Colchester Democratic Town Party
 - Coast Guard Auxiliary
 - State of CT, DEEP
 - American Red Cross
 - Colchester Police
 - Colchester Rotary Club
 - Colchester Business Association
 - Jansky Rubbish
 - Colchester Girl Scouts
 - Colchester Choir & Orchestra
 - Colchester Community Theatre
 - Colchester Collaboration (C3)
 - Colchester Youth Basketball
 - Colchester Youth Wrestling
 - Colchester Men's Softball
 - Colchester Women's Softball
 - Colchester Historical Society
 - Smarter Appliance
 - Troiano Auto Group
 - Gano's Power Equipment
 - Good Times Motoring Club
 - Abundant Life Church
 - Castle
 - Colchester Dog Park
 - Twisted Dog Yoga
 - Paws to the Wall Dog Training
 - Colchester Lacrosse
 - DJ Montez
 - National T'ai Chi day
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A LOOK INTO THE FUTURE...

The public parks in Colchester are some of the busiest places in town. If you stop by any park, you will find some members of our community, both young and old, enjoying the park amenities. The parks require care and resources as they age. When they become unsafe or dangerous, immediate action must be considered to rectify all concerns. The consideration of these anticipated needs and expenses should not be overlooked from year to year, as the costs can be considerable. An operating plan to meet safety standards and a funding strategy to meet repair and replacement needs are imperative to ensure continued community access to public facilities.

Looking into the future, let's work together to create a plan that focuses on the community needs and expectations that our public parks and facilities will be maintained and funded in a manner that brings pride, inclusion and inspiration to all who use them. Making a commitment to take care of the facilities over which we have a responsibility to act is the right thing to do, its what the community expects the leaders of the community to do. Let's do it- and let's do it well.

Capital Improvement Projects

The following capital improvement projects were presented for immediate repair or replacement. While cost is always a concern, safety is a priority. Many meetings with Public Works and the First Selectman have provided alternate options for short term safety corrections. These options, however, are not a permanent solution.

LOCATION		DESCRIPTION	PROJECT EXPENSE
RecPlex	Tennis Courts	Crack repairs needed until a decision is made about long term solution or replacement.	\$135,000.00
RecPlex	Pavilion	Replace/Repair roof on pavilion	\$14,000.00
RecPlex	Bathhouse	Replace cement block walls at bathhouse; Paint bathhouse	\$15,000.00
RecPlex	Park	Replace sign at entrance to park	\$800.00
RecPlex	Park	Adult Fitness trail around perimeter of park	\$18,008.00
RecPlex	Playground	Replace 2 existing playground structures (can no longer get parts to fix if something breaks)	\$206,524.00
PexPlex	Playground	Install fee for playground	\$51,800.00
RecPlex	Fields	Irrigation installed on all fields at RecPlex (Town Budget)	\$150,000
RecPlex	Fields	Irrigation installed on all fields at RecPlex (Field Sustainability Act)	\$46,000.00
RecPlex	Basketball Court	Repair surface cracks to preserve court. Determine best course of action for future repair/rebuild.	\$60,000.00
TBD	Fields	Additional field space, multi-use, green space	
Ruby Cohen	Parks	Continue to create opportunities	
RecPlex	Skatepark	Remove old ramps, build modern skate park near tennis courts	\$70,000.00
Town Green	Sign Board	Repair Community Sign Board	\$1,000.00
		TOTAL	\$716,132.00
Town Green		Gazebo roof repair, improved vehicle access, collaborate on parking issue, look at community use/fee structure/vehicle use	
RecPlex	Splash Pad	The Splash Pad is not in need of immediate repair or replacement, but consideration should be made for future needs based on the age and use of the structures.	

THE IMPORTANCE OF PARKS

NRPA PARK PULSE

Parks Are Essential, Especially During a Health Crisis

83% of adults find exercising at local parks, trails and open spaces essential to maintaining their mental and physical health during the COVID-19 pandemic.



59% of respondents say it is *very* or *extremely* essential to exercise in parks and green spaces to relieve stress and remain healthy during this crisis.

Numerous studies show there are physical and mental health benefits to spending time in green spaces. Local parks, trails and open spaces have recently become even more of a respite from stress. In March 2020, NRPA released a joint statement about using parks and open spaces while maintaining physical distancing. To date, more than 1,000 groups nationwide have signed on to voice support of the safe use of parks during this crisis. Visit www.nrpa.org/Coronavirus for more information.

Each month, through a poll of 1,000 U.S. residents focused on park and recreation issues, NRPA Park Pulse helps tell the park and recreation story. Questions span from the serious to the more lighthearted. The survey was conducted by Wakefield Research (www.wakefieldresearch.com).

Visit nrpa.org/ParkPulse for more information.



COLCHESTER PARKS

Colchester is a beautiful, sprawling Connecticut town that spans 31,872 acres and has a population of just over 16,000 residents. Our roads travel through wooded areas, along the picturesque Salmon River and through beautiful neighborhoods. We value our parks, rivers, and trails. Colchester has approximately 10.83 miles of trails and 6056 acres of open space that are available to the public for horseback riding, hiking, and biking and community recreational use. Colchester residents have access to several recreational ponds and rivers including Day Pond State Park, Salmon River State Park, Babcock Pond Wildlife Management Area and Ruby & Elizabeth Cohen Woodlands.

The Recreation Department is responsible for the scheduling, the use and future planning of local parks. Our parks include a RecPlex, Splash Pad, playgrounds, 9 ball fields, pavilion, town green and gazebo, Dog Park, Skate Park, tennis courts, basketball courts, bocce courts, horseshoe pits, concession stand, Airline Trail spurs and Ruby Cohen Woodlands.

We are proud of the work that has been done and the projects that are being planned for upcoming years, to increase the accesability, safety, availability and attractiveness of these parks.

On the following pages, you will find information about each park facility. Included are photos of the park facilities now, in their current state of disrepair, as well as in earlier days when they were serving the community well .

RecPlex

Nicknamed the "RecPlex," this is the main location for recreation in town, featuring a wide variety of facilities and activities, as well as the home and headquarters of the Parks Maintenance Crew.

The Sports fields located at the RecPlex include:

- **R1** - Little League Field (Lights)
- **R2** - Majors/JV Baseball Field (Lights)
- **R3** - Little League/Adult Softball Field (Lights)
- **R4** - T-Ball Field
- **R5** - Multipurpose Field (Partial Lights)
- **R6** - Softball/Adult Softball Field
- **R7** – Full Sized Soccer Field
- **R8** – Lower Football Field (Lights), vehicle access via Old Hartford Rd.
- Lights may only be activated by codes issued through the Public Works Office



Playscapes

InCord generously donated these 2 place structures in 2018. They are currently the newest pieces of playground equipment in Colchester.



Two distinct sets of equipment are available for younger children. Located between the Pavilion and the Splash Park, one set is designed for children ages 3-5, while the other is designed for ages 5-12. These playgrounds were installed in 1996. Since that time, the company is no longer in business. Replacement parts cannot be ordered for repairs and many items cannot be used because they are broken. Other parts are being used, but they are in very bad condition. These are pictures in their newer days:



A third playscape, the Galaxy, was located by the Skate Park, and was intended for more mature children. The Galaxy was removed in 2018 because of its dangerous condition. It could not be repaired.

Current Playscape Conditions

These photos were taken on April 21, 2021 and show the poor condition of the playground.

Below is the toddler playground. There was once a slide on the left side of the photo where there is now a piece of plywood.



A second view of the toddler playscape. These steps are rusted and peeling. The metal bends when an adult stand on the step.



This is a full view of the playscape for children ages 5-12 years. More detailed photos will follow, please notice some of these items:

- The zip line feature has been broken for years; no replacement parts are available.
- The steps are peeling and rusted.
- The bridge is peeling and rusted.
- The slides have fades, potentially degrading the plastic strength and integrity.
- The benches are peeling and rusted.







Tennis Annex

- Three lighted tennis courts, one lighted basketball court, as well as several lighted horseshoe pits, bocce courts and a swing set.
- To activate the lights, press the designated button on the small concrete building by the tennis courts. This will turn the lights on for 90 minutes. The lights are operational from 45 minutes before sunset through 10:50pm.

This is a picture of the tennis courts when they were newer:



These pictures were taken today and show the current condition.









BASKETBALL COURT

Below is a picture of the basketball courts as installed. The pictures that follow were taken today. As I was taking pictures, I talked to several young men who were using the court. They told me the court is dangerous due to the location of the crack- it crosses below the basket, where most are jumping and potentially landing on the crack. They also mentioned that the crack makes the ball bounce off the court in odd directions causing the potential for injury.



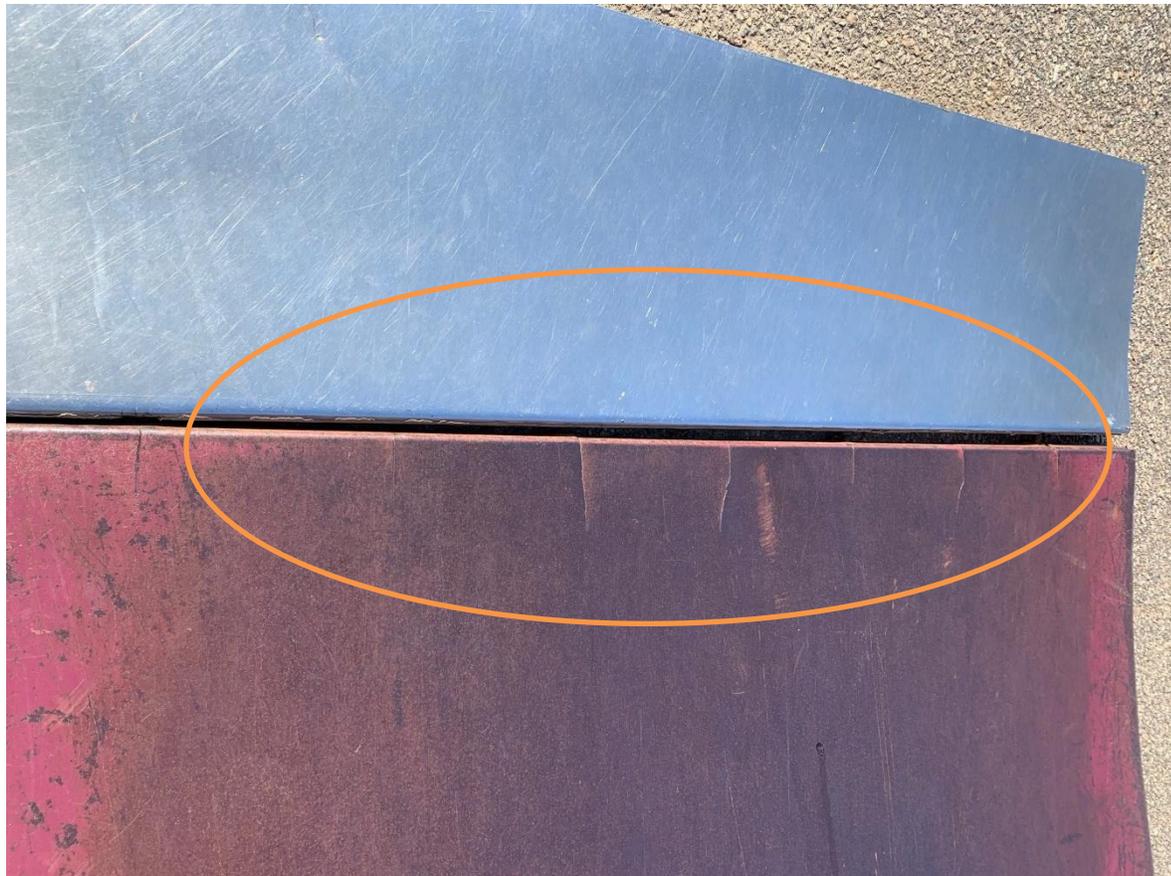




Skate Park

The Skate Park is located in the center of the Recreation Complex. The skate park was constructed through the fundraising efforts of a dedicated volunteer group. The use of helmets and pads are strongly recommended at the Skate Park. The current park is outdated and rarely used. At a recent Recreation Commission meeting, several high school students requested the commission open an exploratory subcommittee to investigate the next steps to build a new park. These are pictures taken today, April 21, 2021





Park Benches and Signs

There are various benches and signs that are in desperate need of replacement. When the public sees these signs, or old posts, it is their first impression of our parks. Would you want to sit on these benches?



2021 InCord Playscape Donation

As in 2018, InCord has generously donated the following playground structures. We plan on removing the old playground and installing these in May 2021.



Wobble Disc
Adventure
Bridge

Ages 2+



Toddler Quad
Swinger

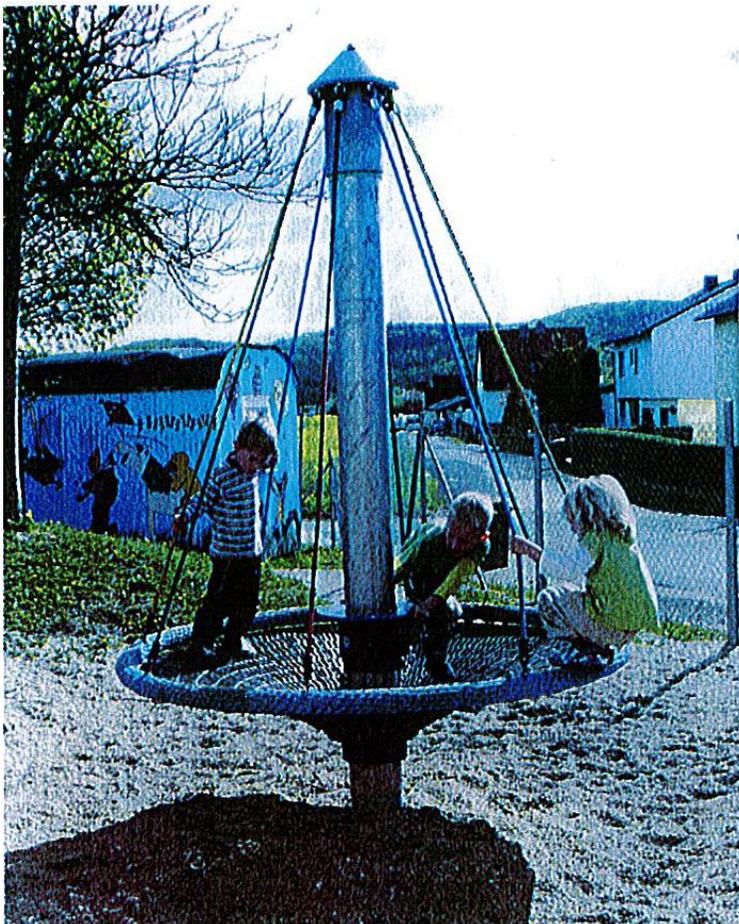
Ages 2+



Witches

Slide & Net

Ages 2+



Birds Nest Carousel

Ages 3+



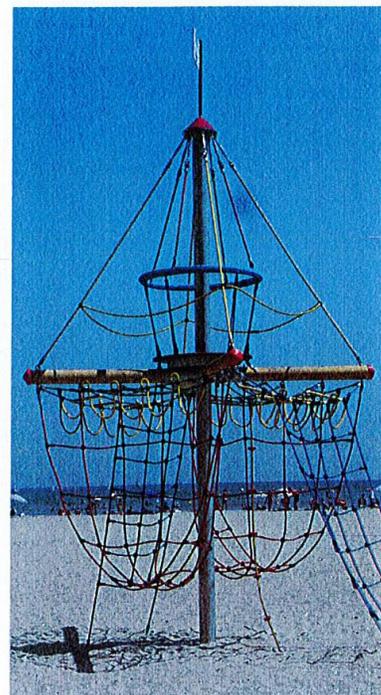
Haiger Rope Course

Ages 2+



Mini Rope End Swinger

Ages 2+



Pirate Tower

Ages 6+

Freedom Glider

Accessibility matters. Give the gift of play.



The Original Freedom Glider is the latest innovation in play accessibility

Exclusively from InCord Play - The Original Freedom Glider InCord Play wants to make play accessible and fun for everyone. We now carry a line of accessible and inclusive wheelchair swings.

This high-quality glider will provide an experience that up until now has not been available for parks, schools, senior homes or agencies dealing with people in wheelchairs. Our Glider is the perfect fit.

- Access for entire wheelchair
- High quality durable all-welded construction
- Self-propel option for maximum independence
- A variety of colors to choose from to suit your site



Arrives on-site completely assembled



Meets ASTM F1487



Available in single or side-by-side.

InCord Play has Freedom Gliders in stock now. If there is a special order we don't have readily available our lead time is only 3 weeks. Since the Freedom Glider arrives fully assembled, your site can be more accessible than ever and your visitors can be gliding in no time.

InCord Play • 860.537.1414 • incord.com/play

2021 Playground Fundraiser

Together with the Colchester community, we have set a goal of raising \$50,000 to complete the new playground. InCord has donated 6 playground structures and our plan is to purchase additional equipment from InCord at a deep discount to provide play areas for older children as well as additional inclusive pieces to create a playground that meets the needs for every child in Colchester.



Haiger
Inclusion
Ramp



Seesaw
Ages 3-Adult



Rocket Climber

Ages 3+



Fortuna Course

Ages 3+



Tipi
Ages 6+



Spider 6-6
Ages 6+



Laola Birds Nest
Tree
Ages 6+

2021 Playground Budget Request

Together with Public Works, the 2021 Capital Improvement budget request of \$57,983 for the RecPlex playground has been allocated in the following manner:

- New signs that meet the ASTM and CPSC standards
- Pathways built to access to playground components that meet the ADA requirements and make the playground accessible for children of all abilities. This may include creating paths that are solid as woodchips are not ADA compliant.
- Cement for installation of 15 pieces of equipment
- Playground will be expanded.

Why is this important?

NetPlay (InCord) playgrounds focus on building skills such as coordination, balance, and spatial awareness: every child has their own challenges, but these playgrounds encourage each child to grow individually. The playgrounds meet all US ASTM and CSA standards.

“Adventurous play builds physical and mental strength. NetPlay USA structures and adventure play products provide everything your park, playground, or home backyard need for the perfect combination of challenging fun and safety.”

We are excited to be one of the very first US playgrounds to offer some of these components. This playground will be unlike any other in neighboring towns and will be something that our community can and should be very proud of.

We are doing it TOGETHER

The Recreation Department and InCord are so proud of the work that is accomplished when we do it together. The project has been mutually beneficial in so many ways. I am sure we will continue to see the benefits of collaboration for years to come.

Together with the Colchester community, we are working on an ambitious fundraising campaign. The community understands how desperately a new playground is needed and they are willing to help us reach our goal.

We hope that the Town of Colchester will work with us as well. Whether it's a book at the Library, or a ride at the Senior Center, the citizens of Colchester expect their public buildings, facilities and parks will be maintained in a safe and useable condition. They expect they will be repaired or replaced as needed and that there will be a plan to achieve this.