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RECREATION

INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW

CONSERVATION EASEMENTS & LAND TRUSTS

ACCESS TO WATER BODIES

TRAIL MAINTENANCE

CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

INTRODUCTION

The natural resources of Belfast and the region provide numerous outdoor recreational opportunities like hiking, hunting, horseback riding, ATV, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, fishing, canoeing, kayaking, and sailing. Open space includes Belfast Bay and associated coastal areas, rivers and streams, athletic fields, parks, farms, forestlands, wetlands, and ponds, many of which are described in the natural resources chapters of this plan. The City's goal is to preserve, strengthen and advance public recreation opportunities. The City should seek to provide a comprehensive range of recreational uses including open space, water access and recreation facilities and programs to meet the needs of the community's diverse population.

OVERVIEW

Belfast should look to maintain existing facilities and services and should consider opportunities for new facilities and programs. The City should be bold in this effort, and should not limit its approaches to methods used in other towns and cities. Existing facilities, in general, can meet the projected needs of the community over the next ten years. Allocating sufficient resources for the ongoing maintenance of all facilities is crucial.

Upgrades or enhancements are recommended and many are planned for in the following city park facilities:

- **Belfast City Park:** Lighting; buried electrical service; road paving; grading of baseball field; pool bathhouse rehab; walkway repaired continued and enhanced; rehab restrooms; re-line and re-surface the pool (20 acres).
- **Kirby Lake (the Muck):** Ongoing trail maintenance (3 acres).
- **Skate Park (skateboards):** Re-design and upgrade.
- **Sportsman Park:** Entrance sign/marker; trail development (21 acres).
- **Steamboat Landing:** Water service for event vendors; drinking fountain (2.4 acres).
- **Wales Park:** Ramp and/or steps for entrance off Congress Street (1.5 acres).
- **Walsh Field Recreation Area (Ballfields, Dog Park, Little River Trailhead):** Sidewalk and parking lot repair or replacement.

CONSERVATION EASEMENTS & LAND TRUSTS

The City has worked with area land trusts, particularly the Coastal Mountain Land Trust, regarding the preservation of open spaces and access. The City also has aggressively pursued retaining public ownership of long established 'rangeways' that provide public access to coastal areas. Continuing, the City has worked cooperatively with Friends of Belfast Parks to maintain and fund improvements to many of the City's parks. While the City has not established a specific

open space fund, the City has often committed taxpayer revenues to benefit public access and recreation. For example, in the mid-1980's the City created Heritage Park, in 1999 the City worked with MBNA to establish Belfast Common and Steamboat Landing Park, in 2008 the City purchased additional land to expand the size of Belfast Common, in 2010 the City purchased the former Belfast & Moosehead Lake Railroad right-of-way to create the Rail Trail, and in 2014 established Park on Main. The City has adopted policies and Ordinances to help guide its activities, and recognizes that future amendments to such may be needed.

ACCESS TO WATER BODIES

There is public access to the major water bodies in Belfast. Drinking water is supplied through groundwater wells, not surface waters. Accordingly, recreational access to surface waters does not threaten public drinking water sources.

The City owns or controls multiple access points to the water. These are either rangeways or Rights-of-Way. The City routinely maintains most of these access points and is systematically working to make desired improvements. The City has recently made significant improvements to the preservation of rangeways for pedestrian use and access to the water.

TRAIL MAINTENANCE

The City maintains walking paths located within its parks, including waterfront walkways. The City also maintains the Armistice Bridge (the original Route 1 Memorial Bridge), which provides pedestrian access over the Passagassawakeag River to connect the east and west sides of Belfast. In general, recreational trails outside parks are maintained by private entities. No known conflicts exist.

CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

The Recreation Data Set has been incorporated and updated in the Belfast Comprehensive Plan map titled: Recreation.

The following publications are available: "Belfast City Rangeways: Public Shore Access (City of Belfast); "The Green Emeralds of Belfast" (Friends of Belfast Parks); "Belfast, In-town Nature Trail" (Hartdale Maps) and "Walk & Bike Belfast" (Hartdale Maps); "Trails" (Belfast Bay Watershed Coalition); "Belfast City Park Arboretum"; "Hills to Sea Trail" (Waldo County Trails Coalition); "Labyrinth Walk" (Phineas P. Quimby Labyrinth). These describe public recreational areas in the community. Programs designed to bring in visitors, families and friends are identified each year in annual reports and publications. The Coastal Mountains Land Trust also has trail maps and publications describing natural area and activities.

Belfast has an extensive system of City owned and maintained rangeways and public parks that support public access to Belfast Bay. The City notes that unlike many Maine communities there are few significant fresh water bodies (large ponds) in Belfast.

There are a number of recreational facilities in Belfast, which are available to the public (See the map titled Recreation):

- **Armistice Bridge (reconstructed in 2006)/Pedestrian Footbridge (Formerly known as the Veterans Memorial Bridge):** This renovated span (about 800 feet in length) crossing the Passagassawakeag River provides scenic views of the harbor and downtown, and provides connectivity across the River between the east and west sides of Belfast.
- **Belfast Area High School (recently renovated):** This facility has an indoor swimming pool with spectator seating and a gymnasium, and is surrounded by 20 acres, which accommodate 1,320 feet of running track, as well as baseball, football, field hockey, and soccer fields.
- **Belfast City Park:** This is a 20-acre municipal park with a 10,479 square foot outdoor pool with dressing rooms, baseball field, a full basketball court, two tennis courts, an innovative playground, benches, four pickle ball courts, restrooms, concession stand, and picnic tables with grills adjacent to them.
- **Belfast Common:** Dedicated in 1999, this park is on the former site of a poultry processing plant. People fly kites, walk dogs, picnic, sunbathe, and, in the winter, go sledding. An amphitheater provides a beautiful spot for concerts and is popular for outdoor events and weddings.
- **East Belfast School:** This 3-acre area has a soccer field and a playground. The facility also has an indoor gymnasium.
- **Eleanor Crawford Park:** This is a very small, triangular shaped park with benches and a flower garden.
- **Waterfall Arts Building (Former Governor Anderson School):** This 5-acre site includes baseball, football and softball fields, swings, and an outdoor ice rink. There are 50 parking spaces available.
- **Heritage Park:** This area is adjacent to the boat launching ramp and public landing. The location of the Come Boating! shed and dock. It provides an unobstructed view of the harbor and upper Penobscot bay, and is equipped with picnic tables and benches for the use of the public. It also supports public events.
- **Kirby Lake (The Muck):** This is a half-acre area which is used for ice skating during the winter months. The area is lit where skaters can put on their skates and there are picnic tables and benches. This is a popular location for bird watching.
- **Public Landing Ramp:** This is a 1.5-acre area, which includes a paved boat launch ramp and the Harbor Master's Office. It is bordered by floats, which provide temporary docking space for boaters using the ramp, a parking area, and toilet and shower facilities. Fuel and water are available at the adjacent public landing.
- **Skateboard Park:** This site has paved surfaces and ramps for skateboarding.
- **Sportsman Park:** This is a 21-acre site with a stream for fishing and areas for dogs to be off-leash. Future development of its wooded setting could include walking trails, cross-country ski trails, and other outdoor recreation activities.

- **Steamboat Landing:** In 1999, MBNA donated a portion of its waterfront property to the City. A gazebo is used for weddings, concerts, poetry readings, and picnics. The City also owns the Boathouse at the park which it uses for public events and rentals to public and private parties. The park has picnic tables and benches, kayak launch and rack, and is used for several events, such as Belfast Wienerfest, Maine Celtic Celebration, Belfast Arts in the Park, and Harborfest. The Harbor Walk also runs through the park.
- **Wales Park:** This two-acre plot of open space. There is a picnic shelter, benches, grills and swings and a slide for children.
- **Walsh Field Recreation Area:** Includes A) Dog Park - Open in 2008, this park was created by the Friends of Belfast Parks and members of the community as a gift to the City, its dog owners, and their dogs. B) Little League Baseball Field; C) Softball Field and D) Little River Trailhead developed and maintained by the Belfast Bay Watershed Coalition.
- **Park on Main:** A pocket park on Main Street in downtown with a picnic table chessboard, shady area, and a flower garden.
- **Kayak Launching Area:** Located at the Upper Bridge East Rangeway.
- **Rail Trail:** A 2.2 mile multi-use path that runs within the rail corridor along the upper stretches of the Passagassawakeag River.
- **Harbor Walk:** A path that connects the Belfast waterfront between the Armstice Bridge and the Boathouse at Steamboat Landing.
- **Rangeways:** 12 rangeways are located throughout the City that provides public access to the water and scenic views of the Bay.
- **4-Seasons Recreation Area:** Part of the former City-owned ski area was re-opened in 2010 with areas for sledding, tubing and snowboarding. The Passy Greenway Trail traverses the area. This site has a parking area.

There are also private health and recreational establishments that are available to Belfast residents. They include the Bay-Area Fitness, Belfast Dance Studio, the Game Loft, Waterfall Arts, Come Boating, Curling Club, and the YMCA. The YMCA opened its new facility in 2001 (including a walking track, gymnasium, and weight room) and its indoor pool in 2009. The City provides an annual subsidy to the YMCA, which allows income eligible residents to become YMCA members at no cost or at a reduced rate.