



## **A Plan for Redesigning Rowley Field and Walker Field in Winsted, Connecticut**

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## **1.0 Introduction**

The Recreation Department in Winchester (Winsted), Connecticut set itself a goal of inclusive recreation, stating on their web page that,

The Winchester Recreation Department is responsible for providing recreation and leisure time activities for the citizens of the Town of Winchester/City of Winsted. The Department is committed to developing a progressive and responsive organization, which will not only provide quality programs but build partnerships with residents of all ages, and businesses and organizations within the community. It is our intention to achieve the goals and aspirations of all our various population groups currently, as well as in the future.

Winsted currently has little in the way of public green spaces where people of all ages are welcome and find value. The largest public park areas are at Rowley Field and Walker Field. Combined they make up nearly 16 acres in a picturesque setting on the southern edge of Winsted. However, because those two fields are designed almost exclusively for organized sports, many of Winsted's adult residents have no natural space to visit and relax, unwind, walk, or just be in nature.

The goal of this plan is to identify the best possible plan to act as a basis for redesigning both sides of the park. This plan will consider population demographics, established national best practices for park design, sustainability, and Winsted's growth and development goals as laid out in both the town's Plan of Conservation and Development and the Visioning Session Report from 2016. Six different plans of varying complexity are devised and assessed, including the ever-present option of not changing anything. The design alternative that is recommended here will be based on the specific criteria found within this plan and will have been determined to be the most effective of the group at meeting the needs and goals of Winsted and its residents.

The demographic data used was gathered from the United States Census. Winsted has only two census tracts and the park is on the border between them. The combination of census data, therefore, represents the entire town of Winsted even though some of the residents are well outside the ½-mile service area for a park of this size. Nevertheless, the densest parts of Winsted are near downtown and are therefore within, or very close to, the standard service area. Furthermore, this plan was developed as part of a Planning course at Central Connecticut State University and does not incorporate public input beyond what was included in the POCD and Visioning Report.

## 2.0 Inventory & Analysis

The park complex will be discussed by breaking it down into its two halves, then exploring the uses and conditions of each element within. The skate park to the south will not be discussed as it is separate from this proposal, except to note that it is popular and well used and is a good attraction for younger, more active visitors.

Rowley Field and Walker Field are on opposite sides of Rowley Street (Rt. 800/Old Rt. 8) on the southeastern edge of Winsted. Combined, the two parks are roughly 16 acres (see Figure 1). Between the two fields there are four baseball fields of varying sizes, two soccer fields that are painted in when needed, two tennis courts, one softball field, and one basketball court. Rowley Field also contains a popular fenced playground with an attached picnic table area. These two fields are primarily used for scheduled team sports and, with the exception of the basketball court and playground, are not often used casually or spontaneously by the general public.



Figure 1. Walker Field, Rowley Field, and the nearby skate park make for a large park complex at a southern entrance to Winsted. (Photo: Google Earth)



## 2.1 Existing Conditions of the Park

### *2.1.1 Park's Layout, Amenities & Conditions*

#### Rowley Field



*Figure 2. Rowley Field. R&B Sportsworld can be seen at the top of the photo, where there are batting cages, a go-cart track, minigolf, and an arcade. (Photo: Google Earth)*

Rowley Field, on the east side of Rowley Street, is home to a softball field, two baseball fields (one smaller for youth baseball), a newly resurfaced basketball court, a popular playground, an occasional soccer field, and a recreation building (referred to as the Playground Building or the Green Building). There are two parking lots adjacent to the field: a dirt lot to the north of the field, and a paved lot to the south (see Figure 2). A small stream runs along the southern edge toward the Still River to the east.



*Figure 3. Player seating at Ryan Memorial Field.*





*Figure 4. New dugouts were recently installed for two of the ball fields.*

the bunch. The larger baseball field (known as the Edwin Putsy Ryan Memorial Field) has only aluminum benches for players that are protected behind sections of chain link fence (see Figure 3). There are new cinder block dugouts for both the small baseball field and the softball field that are protected from foul balls by chain link, which is a nice idea but does tend to give them the feel of a prison cell or dog kennel (see Figure 4).

The soccer field, when it is painted in, feels cramped as it is wedged between the infield dirt of both the softball and small baseball fields, and the large stones that ring the northern parking lot. As such, there is little room for anything but team benches, which are removed after a game along with the portable bleachers.

Spectator seating is sparse and uncomfortable at all the sports fields. In the case of the softball and small baseball fields (and occasionally the soccer field), small aluminum bleachers are set up. There is little shade, and they feel cheap and exposed. The bleachers for Ryan Memorial Field are larger but made of sagging wood and sorely in need of paint (see Figure 5). They are also in foul territory just outside the outfield of the smaller baseball field, making them a potentially hazardous place to sit and watch a game.



*Figure 5. Old, saggy wooden bleachers are the only choice for spectators at Edwin Putsy Ryan Memorial Field.*

Ryan Memorial Field has six light towers that provide lighting for night games but, aside from that, the only other lighting at Rowley Field is near the basketball court, meaning that most of the park is unlit at night.

The Playground Building is used to host various indoor events organized by the recreation department such as karate classes. It has also been used in the past for a farmer's market, dog training classes, and other small happenings (*Recreation\_1.Pdf*). There are no public restrooms in this side of the park, although portable toilets are set up for larger community events.

Other than scheduled sporting events, Rowley Field mostly goes unused with a notable exception being the long-running Firemen's Carnival that is held in the western portion each August. It is very well attended and popular.

There are two entry points into Rowley Field for cars and one for pedestrians. The paved parking lot on the southern edge connects to Rowley Street via a driveway that is shared with neighboring Forest View Cemetery and is the most common entry point. The northern lot and driveway are dirt, and the lot is prone to becoming muddy when it gets wet (see Figure 6). The pedestrian entry is between the playground and the softball field and consists of a gap through the chain link fence and a short set of stairs down to field level that are not ADA compliant.

There is also a maintenance path that runs from the south parking lot east. Maintenance paths are necessary but this one, strangely, cuts into the outfield of Ryan Memorial Field before exiting through the fence in center field. The swath of land to the east, between Rowley Field and the Still River is overgrown with invasive vines and has several large, dead trees.



*Figure 6. The dirt parking lot on the northern edge of Rowley Field becomes muddy when it rains and would benefit from proper drainage and/or permeable pavement.*

Despite the popularity of the playground and the basketball court, the overall feeling at Rowley Field is not good. It is essentially a wide-open space broken up by fences, infield dirt, and small structures. Ryan Memorial Field and the eastern end feel separate, almost off-limits, from the rest of the park.



## Walker Field



*Figure 7. Walker Field's sports fields are easily visible in this aerial photo. There is little to attract visitors when games are not scheduled. (Photo: Google Earth)*

The western half of the park area is known as Walker Field and is more strictly sports oriented than Rowley Field. Here there are two more baseball fields, a soccer field, and two tennis courts (see Figure 7). A softball field was adjacent to the little league field until recently when it was removed in favor of the soccer field, though the backstop remains in place. The permanent structures in Walker Field include restrooms, a small food service building, and two sets of bleachers. Walker Field also houses two maintenance and storage buildings on its northeastern edge. The Mad River runs from west to east along part of the northern border of the field, separated by a thin line of small trees. Walker Field is undergoing extensive sod repair as part of



*Figure 8. Large permanent bleachers at Walker Field have been modestly refurbished. They also provide extra storage space for maintenance equipment.*



the installation of the soccer field, so much of the activity that would normally be there has been moved to Rowley Field. However, the high school baseball field is normally kept in good repair and the large, permanent bleachers there were upgraded and repainted only a few years ago (see Figure 8). The dugouts on that field are older but have been modestly updated with safety screens and new paint.



*Figure 9. The outfield fence at the little league field needs repair.*

The tennis courts themselves are in nice shape, but the high fence surrounding them has seen better days, having several holes and sagging areas along the lower portion. The gate was locked, and the nets were put away for the winter during my recent visit, but the court surface appeared level and free from any cracks or holes.

The little league field, on the western side of Walker Field, is where the most modernization has been happening. The ballfield is acceptable, though the outfield fence could use some fixing (see Figure 9). There is a chain link bullpen just outside the fence along the first base line. The spectator seating is built from stone along the retaining wall that separates Willow Street from the field (see Figure 10). An entrance from Willow Street has a wheelchair accessible ramp that meets a brick paved path leading left to seating or right to the restrooms and concession stand, neither of which is open when there are no games in progress. The little league field and spectator area are the only places in either Walker Field or Rowley Field that feels welcoming and purposeful.

There are four entrances to Walker Field, all for pedestrians, with two parking lots located across Willow Street from the field. Only the lot at the corner of Willow Street and Rowley Street is paved and it connects to another lot, up a hill, that is used for the previously mentioned skate park. This lot is closed in the winter. Crosswalks are present leading from both parking lots to Walker Field entrances, though they could use to be repainted. The sole entrance on Rowley Street is near the tennis courts and doubles as the town vehicle entrance. Because that entrance is far from the parking lots, people who want to play tennis often park in the parking lot of the neighboring business.



*Figure 10. A wheelchair ramp provides access to the little league field from Willow St. and leads to an attractive spectator area (though it could use some plants).*



## Elements of Space



Figure 11. Rowley Field and Walker Field are made of separate elements that too often do not work together to make the park feel welcoming. (Basemap: ESRI)

The elements that make up the park area can be seen above in Figure 11. The districts feel separate from each other, but large areas often do not share a cohesive theme. Only the little league field, the playground, and the tennis courts (thanks to a 10' fence) feel like places unto themselves. The large baseball field on the Rowley Field side of the park is cut off from other areas by a 4' chain link fence which makes it feel as if it is off limits for the casual visitor. Other than the spectator area of the little league field and the playground, there are no spaces that feel intentional, secluded, or distinct.

There is a thin district on the northern edge of Walker Field, between the Mad River and what used to be a softball field (see Figure 12). It stretches from the right field corner of the little league field almost to the maintenance and storage buildings. It is separated from the main open field by



Figure 12. A small area between Walker Field and the Mad River has a semi-secluded, relaxed feeling.



the maintenance path, which is easily crossed. There are about a dozen small trees planted in a row roughly following the contour of the river. With a few improvements, this area could easily be a kind of calm oasis out of the hot sun. It would be an ideal place for families to gather while a child is playing soccer, or just to relax by the river.

Almost all of the edges are physical barriers, fences, trees, walls, rivers, and roads that are difficult to cross and contribute to the unwelcome feeling. Only those playing scheduled, organized sports are made to feel that certain areas have been designated for them. Similarly, the nodes represented in the Figure 11

are all areas people come together naturally by chance, such as entrances. There are no places where people intentionally congregate, except perhaps for the basketball court, but even there, only those playing the game can take advantage of the space. Nor are the landmarks particularly noteworthy, they are merely known spots that can be used for orientation or giving directions.



Figure 13. Most of the entrances to Walker Field do not feel very welcoming.

There are many entrances to the park, Rowley Field has two entrances for cars and one for pedestrians; and Walker Field has four, all for pedestrians. But the number of entrances is not the whole story. The only pedestrian entrance that has seemingly been given any thought is the one furthest west on Willow Street that leads to the little league field. What was once a steep set of stone stairs has been remade into a wide, gradually sloping wheelchair ramp with a sturdy railing around the outside. It leads directly to the spectator area of the field and feels like a natural part of the place. All the other entrances to Walker Field are merely gaps in the fence (albeit intentional gaps) that lead directly onto the grass or dirt (see Figure 13).

fenced) and the softball field backstop and first base dugout. It is also just a gap in the fence and consists of a few steps down to the field level from the sidewalk. This is the only dedicated pedestrian entrance and really should be ADA compliant. The alternative to anyone with mobility issues—of which there are plenty in Winsted, as will be shown in a coming section, is to enter through the northern or southern driveways, putting them in potential conflict with motor vehicles.

The Rowley Field pedestrian entrance is the traditional entrance to that field but has since been squeezed by the playground (which is

Of the four parking lots available for park visitors two are poorly graded and drained dirt lots. Those lots tend to become muddy in wet conditions and can act as a deterrent for anyone wishing to use the park. While creating more impermeable surfaces by paving them is not ideal, they should at least be



graded to allow water to run off and storm drains should be installed to control rainwater. The northern lot at Rowley Field has large stones separating it from the field, which is a nice, rustic touch and effective at keeping cars off the field, though they could be made more attractive and thus act as a nice transition between districts.

There is a bus stop on Rowley Street, between the two sides of the park, but that is merely a commuter shuttle into and out of town. Direct access to the park from either west or east is impossible. The Mad River blocks the way from the west causing downtown residents to have to go a long way around, and to the east, the Still River creates a barrier between Rowley Field and commercial destinations such as McDonald's and Dunkin Donuts. If the proposed Riverwalk is built along the Mad River from downtown Winsted, it would naturally pass or terminate at Walker Field. Similarly, if a footbridge were built (although one has not been proposed) on the eastern side of Rowley Field, it would open up those businesses to increased foot traffic and allow park visitors easy access to refreshment.

### Groups and Events Using the Space

Other than pick-up basketball games at Rowley Field and children playing on the playground, the majority of activity at both sides of the park is due to the town recreation department. Winsted Youth League encompasses both baseball and softball; and the Winsted Youth Soccer Association manages the soccer league. Both

entities are branches of the recreation department (*Recreation\_1.Pdf*).

The recreation department directly manages other community recreation activities throughout Winsted. Some that take place within the park are the yearly Trunk or Treat Halloween event, an Easter egg hunt, a men's basketball league, summer camp, and a movie night in the field.



Figure 14. The annual Firemen's Carnival, a long-running fund raiser for the volunteer fire department, is a very popular town event.

Another main use of Rowley Field is the annual Firemen's Carnival (see Figure 14). Each August rides and games are set up in the eastern third of the field. This is a very popular event and any changes to the park would have to accommodate the carnival.

## Stakeholders

In addition to those actively using the park, the nearby businesses also have an interest in a popular, well used park. Immediately to the north of Rowley Field is a small commercial complex that offers casual dining and activities like miniature golf, go-cart racing, batting cages, and a video game arcade. A short walk from there is a Dairy Queen ice cream shop. As mentioned above, a McDonald's restaurant and a Dunkin Donuts are located on Main Street. Both could benefit from a busier park if a direct connection were made between them and the park. Currently, a person would have to walk some distance along Main Street to reach them.

## Funding

Both youth sports leagues are 100% volunteer and some other programs, such as the summer camp, are funded by donations. The recreation department is responsible for maintenance and employs seasonal part-time employees as well as a maintenance supervisor and recreation director. Several other seasonal employees are hired by the recreation department, including lifeguards and camp counselors. The recreation department budget approved for 2020-2021 was \$304,389 (*Tow\_fy22\_gf\_budget\_detail\_bos\_approved\_4.19.21.Pdf*).

### *2.1.2 Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats*

It is often useful to examine the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of a space. A SWOT analysis is a combination of existing conditions and future possibilities. Using such an analysis can help to give a sense of what is working and what is not, as well as defining future plans and what might hinder them. The SWOT analysis for Rowley and Walker Fields follows.

#### Strengths

- There is lots of open space.
- A variety of sports fields/courts are available.
- There are 4 parking lots, and the sidewalks are in good condition.
- The natural setting is attractive.
- The playground is in good condition and well-liked by the community.
- The little league field and surrounding space is modern and offers amenities.

#### Opportunities

- The open, flat space would make it easy to introduce uses other than sports.
- It is near a small commercial area offering ice cream, food, and activities.
- A more widely appealing park could be a starting point to revitalize nearby buildings and storefronts.
- Revitalization plans for the downtown area may include a Riverwalk allowing more direct pedestrian access to the park.
- The greenway being built to the south would naturally terminate at the park.

#### Weaknesses

- The park is not in or very close to any neighborhood.
- Driving is currently the easiest way to get to the park, prohibitive for spontaneous visits.
- The space is flat and open and does not feel fit for casual use.
- It is an unwelcoming place and there are no shade trees or areas to relax.
- There are no paths within the park.

## Threats

- It is an established space for scheduled sports.
- Without better connections people will not visit.
- It is on the edge of town and there are not often a lot of people there, making it feel unsafe at times.
- It has been a hang-out for rebellious teens, especially after dark.
- Environmental protection of the nearby rivers could complicate any redesign.
- There is only a crosswalk connecting the two sides of the park with no traffic signals to make crossing safer.

### *2.1.3 Summary of Park's Conditions*

Overall, Rowley Field and Walker Field are reasonably well maintained and are good for what they are. They are a complex of sports fields that are nominally open to the public yet foster a sense that you should not be there unless watching or competing in an organized sport. Offering a variety of sports and activities for children and teens is not a bad thing, but these fields do so at the expense of everyone else.

Getting to the park by foot is difficult because there is no direct, safe route from Winsted's most dense residential neighborhoods. There are a total of seven entrances between the two sides of the park but only one is ADA compliant without putting people with mobility challenges in competition with cars. Of the four parking lots that serve the park, only two are paved. Dirt parking lots are arguably better than pavement, but there is currently no drainage system to keep them from becoming mud pits.

Some updating has taken place in recent years, most notably, the spectator area near the little league baseball field feels like a nice, intentional place within the larger park. The playground has also been improved, with newer equipment and a shaded seating area for adults. The soccer field on the Walker Field side is in the process of being improved though it is unclear if it will become a more permanent, dedicated soccer space or if it will remain just a large, open space that occasionally hosts soccer games.

The amount of open space is really the largest problem with both Rowley Field and Walker Field. This seems like a strange statement when talking about a park, but without paths, trees, benches, flower beds, and separate-feeling places within the park, it is not much use to anyone besides those engaged in programs scheduled by the recreation department. The two combined fields create a large 16-acre park which has more than enough space to accommodate sports and a place for relaxation. With two rivers, a picturesque cemetery, and a small commercial area surrounding the park the opportunity for bringing a bit of nature and casual activity to the park is real.



### 2.1.4 Neighborhood Context

Rowley and Walker fields are located on the southern edge of Winsted, along Rowley Street, which divides them (see Figure 15). The fields are not in a residential area, though there are neighborhoods to the northwest and northeast that fall within the expected ½ mile service area for a park of this size.

Winsted is a small town and much of the densest portions are within walking distance of the two fields. The intersection of Rowley Street and Main Street is a few hundred yards north of the fields and is the location of several small store fronts and businesses.

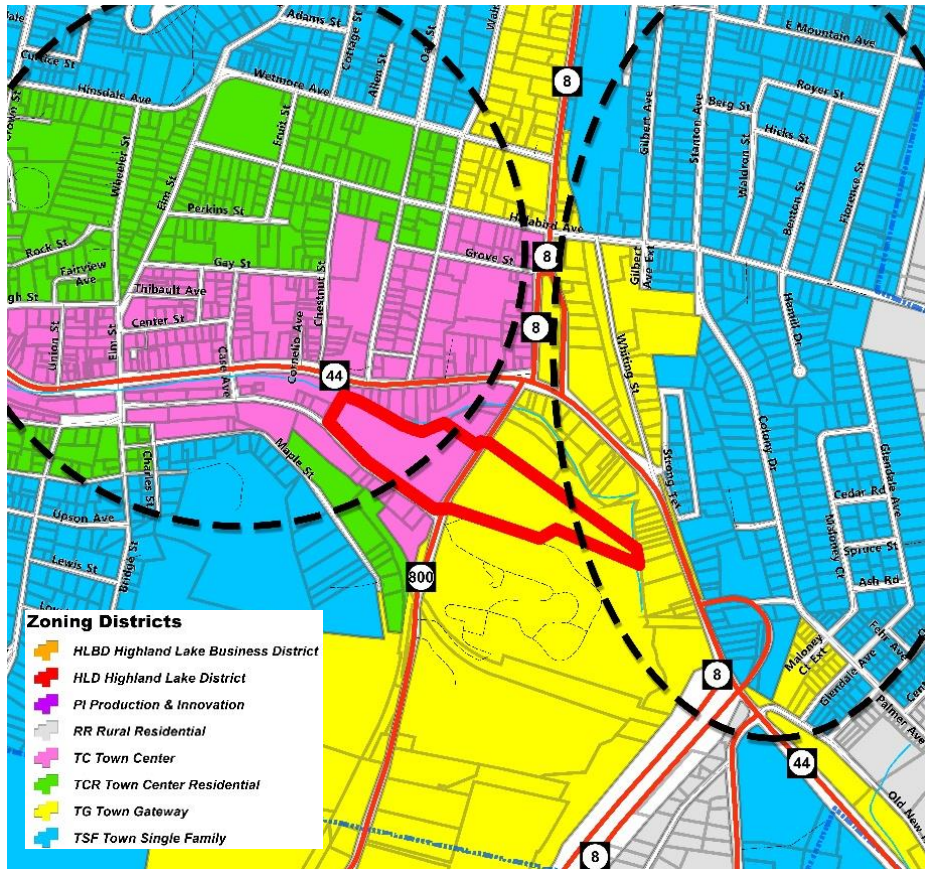


Figure 15. The park (outlined in red) is close to residential areas (circled in black). (Zoning map: townofwinchester.org)

commercial and residential uses (*Winsted\_zoning\_map\_7-17.Pdf*). There are some stand-alone businesses such as banks and gas stations but much of that area is store fronts on the ground floor with 3 or 4 floors of apartments above. In general, those apartments are low-income and not always in good repair.

There are several other uses clustered around Main Street and other main arteries through Winsted. The bulk of the areas north of Main Street and up the hills to the east and southwest, is residential (see Figure 16). Most of the units are single-family although there are many two-family houses, especially just north of downtown. Scattered through the central residential area are a handful of larger apartment buildings. Like the nearby mixed-use buildings, the apartments in these buildings tend to house low-income tenants and are not always kept in the best condition.

Northwestern Connecticut Community College’s campus is on the northeast corner of this busy intersection and there is also an old factory building on the southwest corner that could be redeveloped as apartments or even a public parking garage to encourage walking in this area. Between the intersection and Rowley Field is a small commercial complex containing restaurants and activities such as miniature golf and batting cages.

The town center (colored pink in Figure 15) contains a mix of

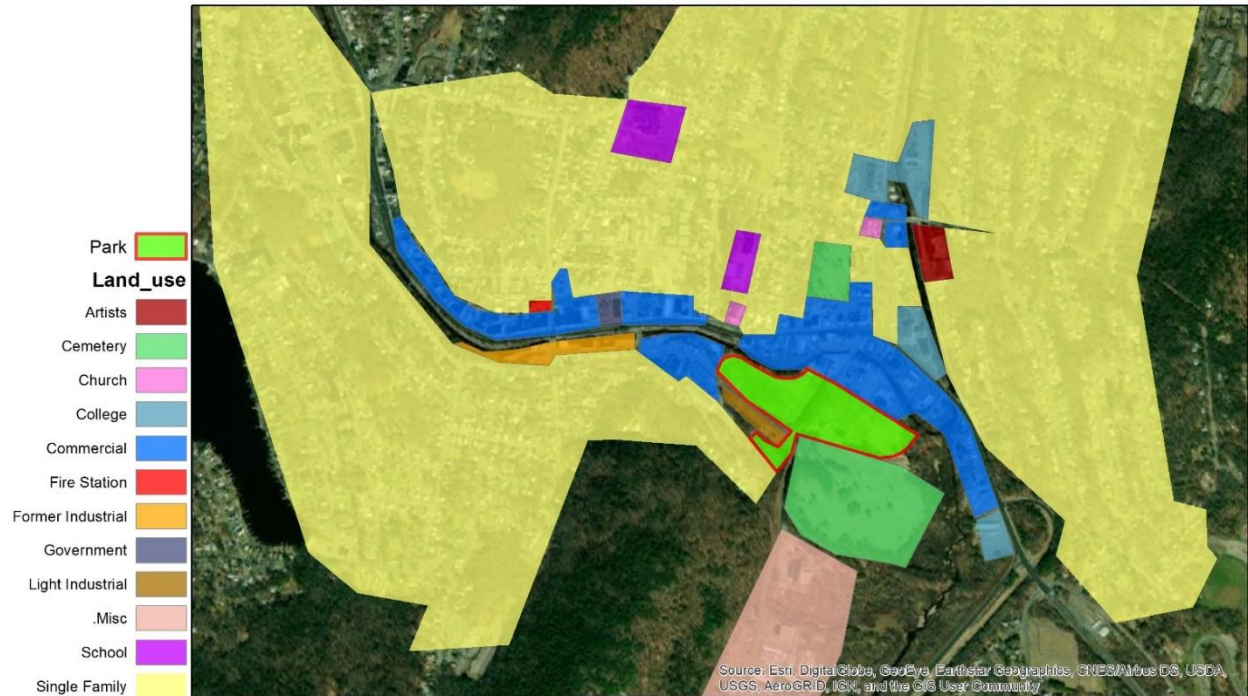


Figure 16. Land use in the center of Winsted is primarily residential. Although zoned single family. Many commercial buildings along Main Street often struggle to retain tenants.

Figure 17 shows transportation options around the park area. Transportation in Winsted is overwhelmingly by car. Public transportation is operated by the Northwestern CT Transit District and consists of a commuter shuttle that runs south to the larger city of Torrington and a single shuttlebus line that primarily runs along Main Street during weekdays (Transit). These services will deviate modestly from their published route to pick up passengers who have called in advance but, other than that, they do not stray into residential areas.

The sidewalks throughout Winsted are a mixed bag. Some neighborhoods have good, flat sidewalks, others have old and uneven ones, others have no sidewalks at all. The area immediately around Rowley and Walker fields has sidewalks that are in relatively good shape. Along Rowley Street, the sidewalks are older asphalt and are showing their age, but are not dangerous. The sidewalk along Willow Street, where most of the entrances to Walker Field are, is new concrete. That sidewalk, however, is only on the north side of the street and does not run the entire length of Willow Street. The sidewalks along Main Street are newer concrete and are very wide in places. Those sidewalks, too, do not run along the entire length of the street on both sides, leaving gaps where pedestrians must either cross four lanes of traffic, or walk on the shoulder.





Figure 17. Transportation options are limited in Winsted. Cars and walking are the most common ways people move around the town. (Basemap: ESRI)

There are four parking lots that are used for access to the park area. Two are dirt and prone to becoming muddy, and two are newly paved. The two parking lots on the Rowley Field side are on the northern and southern edges of the field, but the two lots used for Walker Field are across Willow Street from the field and require people to cross a sometimes busy street. Crosswalks are present near all three Walker Field entrances on Willow Street. A seasonal stop sign is employed at one crossing there during the summer months when there are more activities at the park. Connections between the two sides of the park are limited to a single crosswalk on Rowley Street. To make this an effective park, rather than two separate fields, better crossing/connections are needed.

Walking to the park is unpleasant from most neighborhoods. The Mad River separates the park from downtown Winsted, and the Still River separates it from neighborhoods on the east side of town. And the 4-lane Main Street runs alongside the Mad River, creating a hazardous barrier for pedestrians. With only two places to cross both Main Street and the Mad River, people walking to the park are forced to go a long way around, no matter which direction they are coming from. There are no direct routes from the eastern neighborhoods and any pedestrians must walk along, and eventually cross, Main Street. There is a crossing with signals just to the north of the park, but getting that far is often not worth the trouble.

To make the park more accessible to pedestrians, and thereby encourage people to walk there, direct connections are needed from the northwest and the east. A Riverwalk has already been proposed that would offer a connection to the western end of Walker Field from the downtown area (see Figure 18). And a simple footbridge over the river from the eastern end of Rowley Field would be an important part of making this park attractive and accessible to as many people as possible.



Figure 18. Possible locations of a proposed Riverwalk and a new footbridge to connect people more directly with the park. (Basemap: ESRI)

An analysis of the elements of space shows how inconvenient it is for Winsted’s residents to walk to Rowley and Walker fields (see Figure 19). It is clear from that analysis that both sides of the park are isolated from the rest of the Main Street corridor and from the nearest neighborhoods. The closest two connections, Rowley Street and Case Avenue both require people coming from the downtown neighborhoods to take a longer, indirect route. Willow Street, running parallel to Main Street on the south side of Mad River is a possible route for people walking from the southwest, but most of that street has no sidewalks and it is a busy street. Obviously, the location of the park is less than ideal for accessibility, but with some new paths and entry points, like those mentioned above, residents would benefit from having a nice, large park to visit and local businesses would benefit from increased foot traffic.



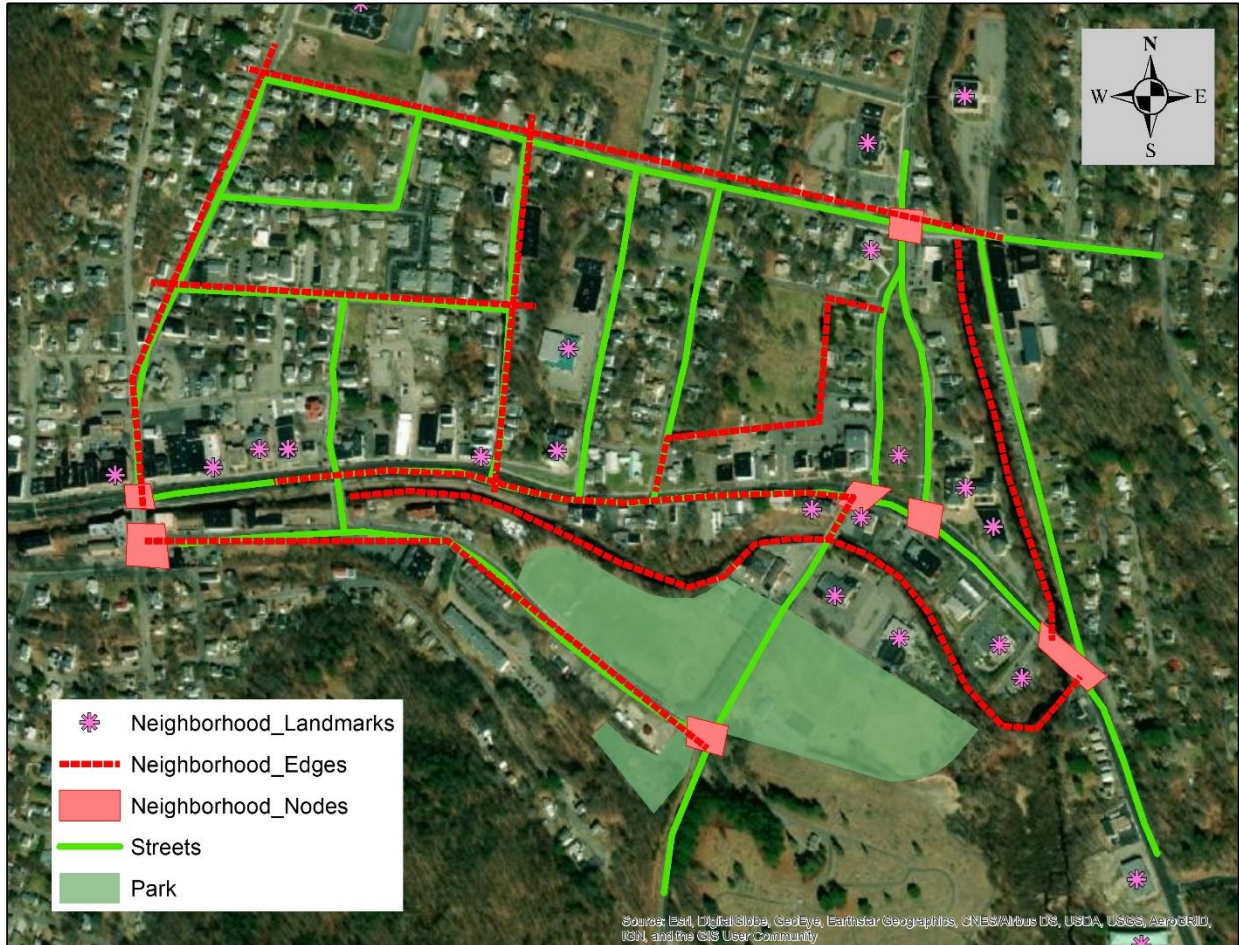


Figure 19. A Lynch Analysis of the elements of space shows how disconnected the park is from most of Winsted. (Basemap: ESRI)

Winsted is in need of a redesigned park in this space. There are currently no large parks that serve a variety of citizens (see Figure 20). Rowley Field and Walker Field are currently sports-oriented with no accommodation for other uses. The nearest alternative is East End Park, also known as the town green. That space has paved paths, a fountain, benches, and a large central platform that is used for summer concerts and, when the weather cooperates, graduation ceremonies for the community college. East End Park is much smaller than Rowley and Walker fields and suffers from a severe lack of parking. It also occupies an area between two one-way halves of Route 8 North, which can make it difficult to reach on foot.

Farther away is the Isabelle M. Pearson Middle School, on the northwestern edge of the assumed ½-mile service area of this park. That school is conveniently located in a residential neighborhood and offers a small playscape and a large open field. Children in the neighborhood often play there when school is not in session, but it is not a place for relaxing, picnicing, or a leisurely stroll. There are no trees, paths, or benches. Farther still is the town’s World War I memorial, dubbed the Soldiers’ Monument. It is a 3-story stone tower (closed to the public except on very rare occasions) perched on top of a steep hill. It is a good place to fly a kite but it is not meant for cookouts or large gatherings; and it is a long, steep walk from everywhere but the closest houses.



Winsted has several cemeteries, the largest of which is Forest View Cemetery immediately south of Rowley Field. This is a fairly large cemetery and is a nice, quiet place to walk. It is hilly, and offers some shade and secluded areas. It would be a great asset and neighbor to a redesigned park.

About a mile away from Rowley Field, to the east, is the area's regional high school. That school boasts many sports facilities such as baseball and softball fields, soccer fields, tennis courts, and a running track. Like almost everything in this part of Connecticut, it is on a hill; it is also on the outskirts of Winsted, making it a very unlikely destination on foot, especially for those not interested in playing a sport.

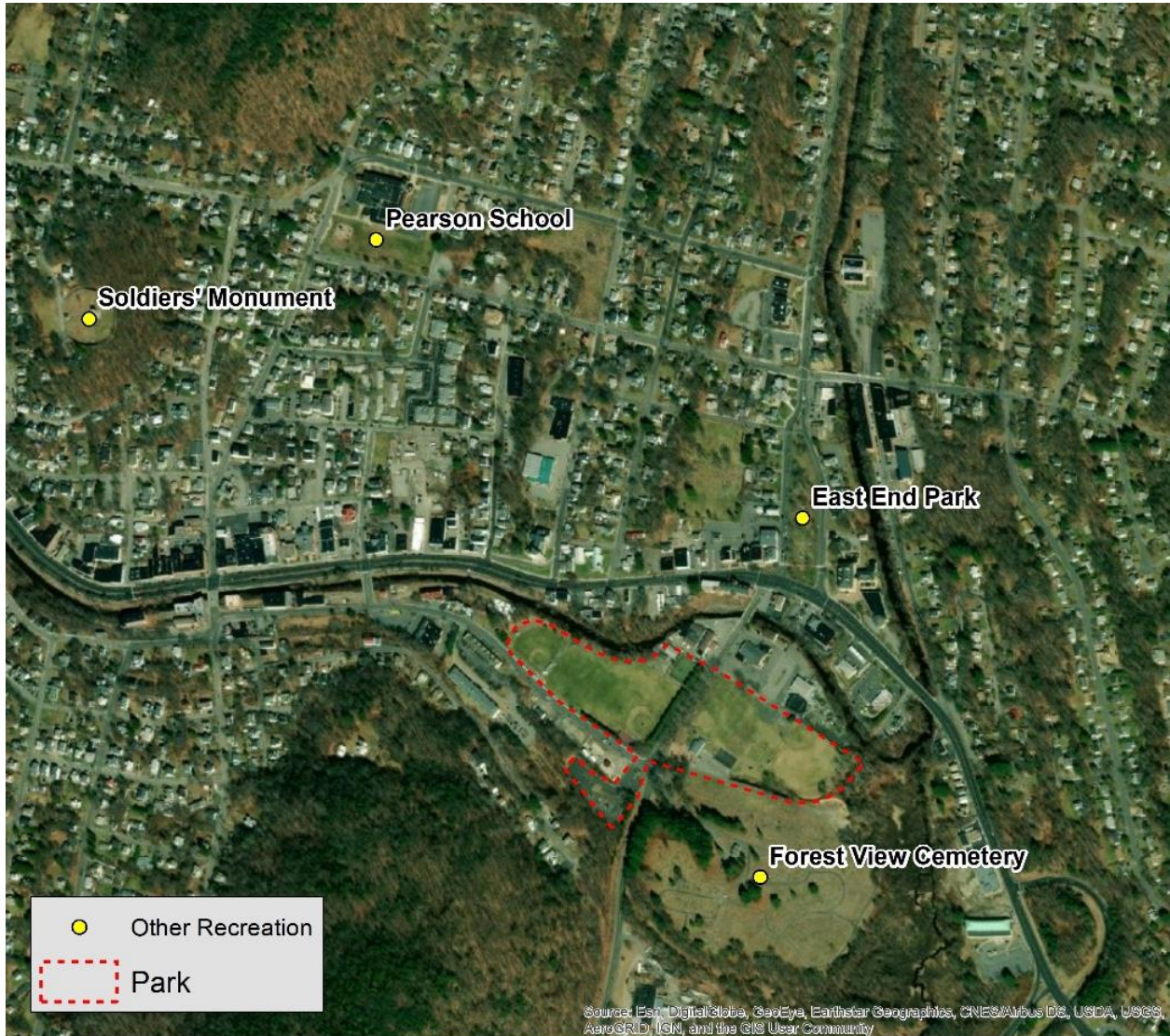


Figure 20. There are very few large public open spaces in Winsted suitable for spontaneous, passive recreation. (Basemap: ESRI)



## 2.2 Neighborhood Served by the Park

### 2.2.1 The Park's Service Area

For the purposes of this report, Walker Field and Rowley Field are being considered as one large neighborhood park. The Recreation and Open Space Standards indicate that, at approximately 16 acres, the neighborhoods served by Rowley and Walker Fields should fall roughly within ½-mile of the park (see Figure 21). In Winsted, this means that all of the downtown area—including the denser areas along Main St.—and the residential areas to the north and east are included. Some of the neighborhoods to the west/southwest are also within the ½-mile radius. Because Winsted is a small community with a limited number of parks, it is not unrealistic to imagine that an improved park would draw visitors from outside that radius.



Figure 21. A 1/2-mile radius shows the approximate neighborhoods served by the park. (Basemap: ESRI)

### 2.2.2 General Population Indicators

Men outnumber women in Winsted, with 5,542 males and 5,188 females (see Figure 22) (*Explore Census Data*). The population distribution by age skews older with more than half the population being over 40 years old. The largest single demographic is men between the ages of 60 and 64, which is 11% of the total town population, but overall, women over 40 outnumber men of the same ages. Boys 19 and under outnumber girls in the same age range 23% to 16% with the whole age cohort representing 39% of the town population. Within that range, boys aged between 5 and 9 have the largest share at 9%. This is not a population pyramid that shows healthy population growth. The population of Winsted will continue to age unless something is done to bring in more young people and families.

The breakdown of households in Winsted shows that few residents are having children (see Figure 23). Households led by a single woman have children at a greater rate than married/coupled households, with about 30% of married/coupled households having children compared to almost half (48%) of single female households. Of all children, the majority are between the ages of 6 and 17, showing that either residents are having fewer children or those who do have children move away; further indicating that Winsted’s population is aging (see Figure 24).

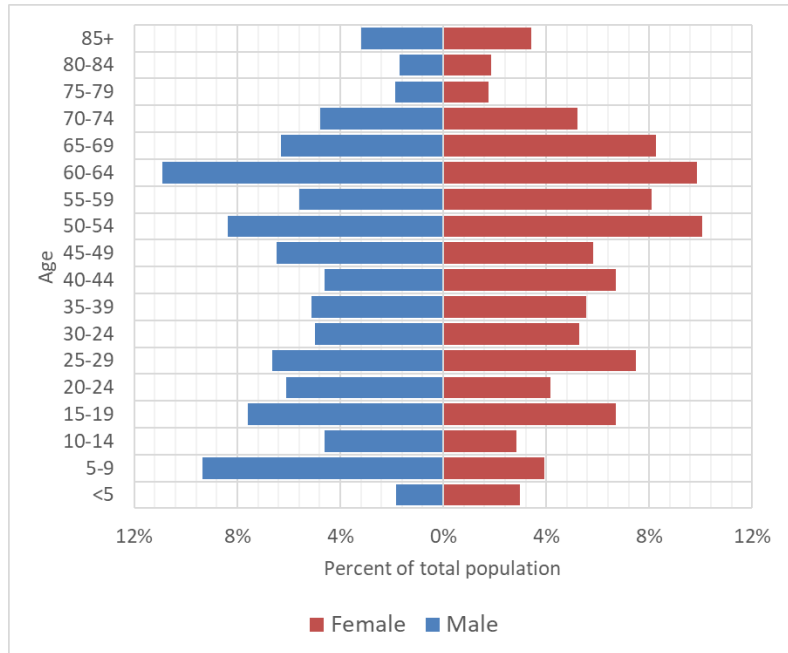


Figure 22. Winsted's population pyramid shows the distribution of age and gender. (U.S. Census 2019, Table S0101)

Two very different population scenarios are possible within the next ten years (see Figure 25).

Population projections based on the previous 9-year period show a continuation of the shrinking of Winsted’s population. After growing by a little more than 5% between the 2000 census and the 2010 census, the town’s population shrank between 2010 and 2019 from 11,221 to 10,730—nearly back to its 2000 level of 10,664. Projecting from those nine years, the town can expect its population to shrink as low as 10,239 people in the next 10 years. However, if the trends over the last nineteen years are projected, Winsted’s population will grow somewhat, but remain largely at its current size.

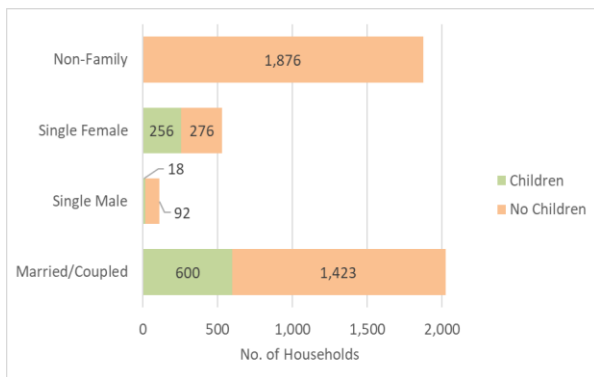


Figure 23. Most households are either non-family or married/coupled, but few have children. (U.S. Census 2019, table S1101)

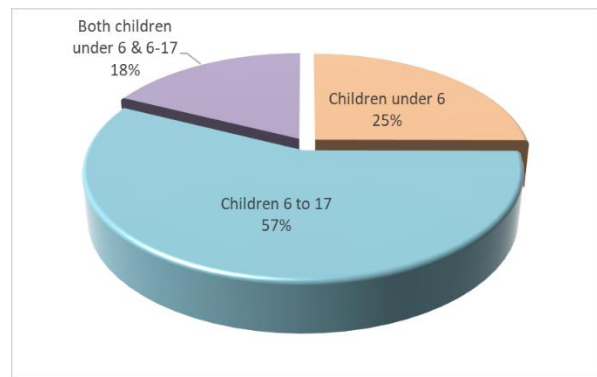


Figure 23. Most children are between the ages of 6 and 17, while relatively few households have both children below and above the age of 6. (U.S. Census 2019, table S1101)



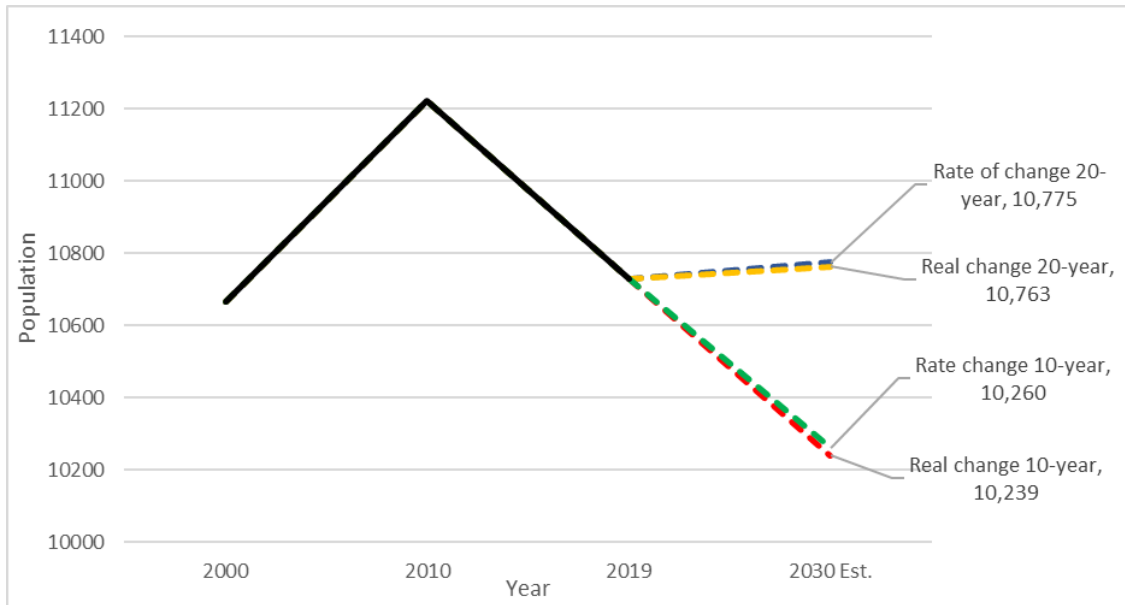


Figure 24. Winsted's projected population growth by 2030. (U.S. Census 2019, table S0601)

### 2.2.3 Resident Background Information

Most current residents were born in Connecticut and relatively few people come to live in Winsted from other places (see Figure 26). Only one quarter of the town's population were born outside of the state and only 2% were born outside of the United States. Of 1,821 residents who moved into Winsted in 2018, more than half came from within Litchfield County and only 16% came from outside Connecticut, while none came from outside the United States.

Winsted is not a very racially diverse place. At 88%, the majority of Winsted's population is white (see Figure 27). People of Hispanic or

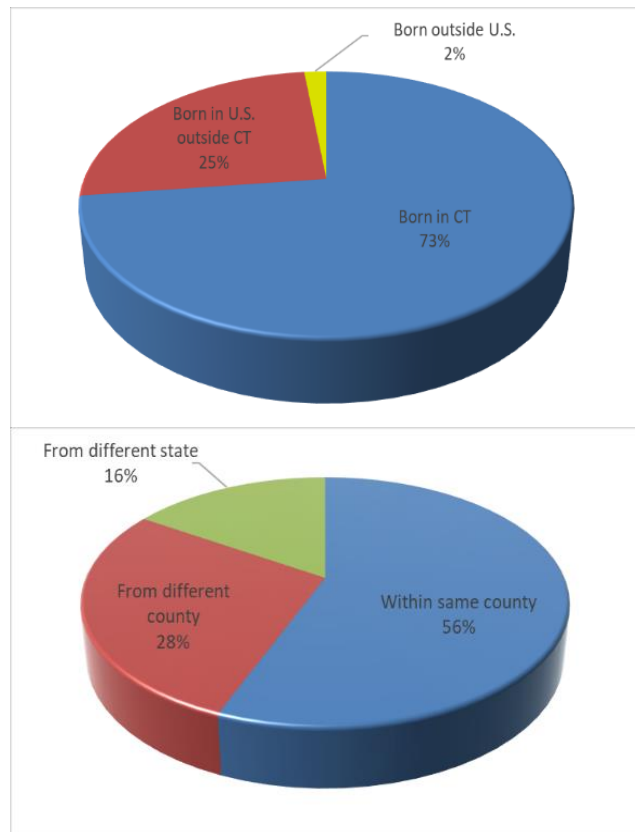


Figure 25. Most residents were born within Connecticut. Those who moved to Winsted in 2018 did so overwhelmingly from within Connecticut, and mostly from within Litchfield County. (U.S. Census 2019, table S0601)

Latino origin represent only 5% of the community, while Black or African American and American Indian each hold a 2% share of the population.

English is the primary language spoken in homes in Winsted (see Figure 28). Of those that do not speak English at home, however, English proficiency is split almost evenly between those who consider themselves to speak English well and those who do not, with proficient English speakers holding a slim 53% majority.

Approximately 16% of Winsted residents have a disability. Cognitive disabilities are the most common at 24% of the disabled population, with ambulatory disabilities close behind at 23% (see Figure 29). Disabilities increase with age, with nearly 90% of residents aged 75 and up suffering at least one disability (see Figure 30). Younger age groups

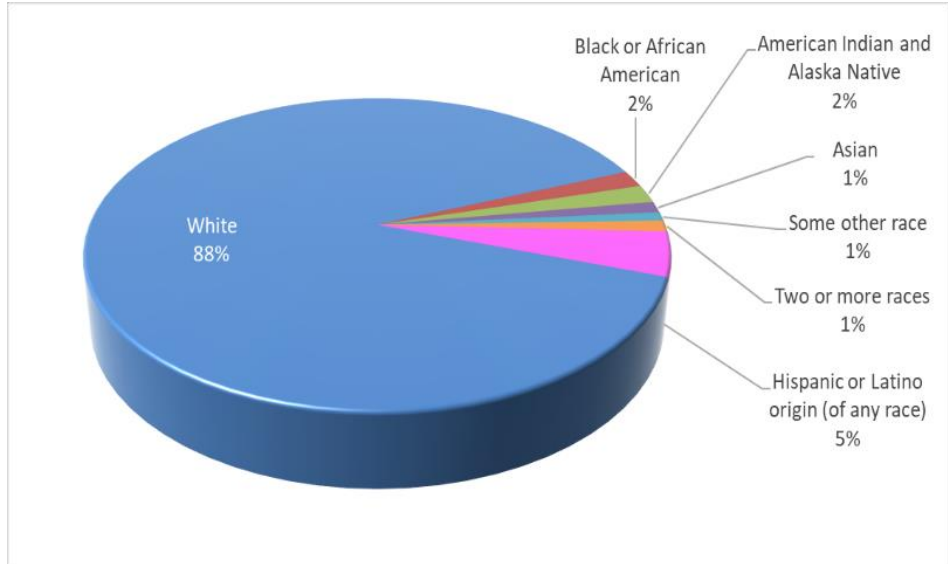


Figure 26. Winsted's population is overwhelmingly white. (U.S. Census 2019, table S0601)

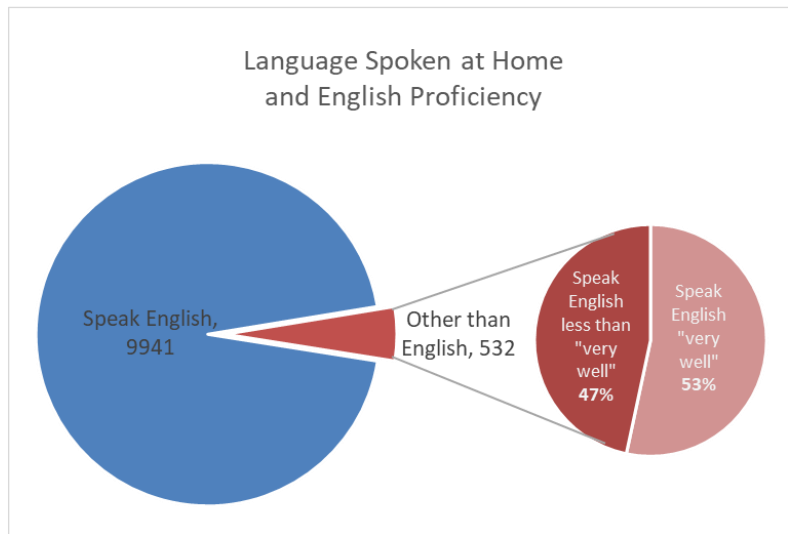


Figure 27. Most people in Winsted speak English at home and, among those who do not, English proficiency may be lacking. (U.S. Census 2019, table S0601)

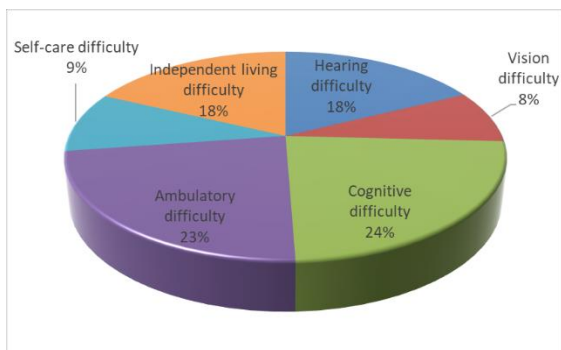


Figure 28. The prevalence of cognitive and ambulatory disabilities could be an indicator of an aging population. (U.S. Census 2019, table S1810)

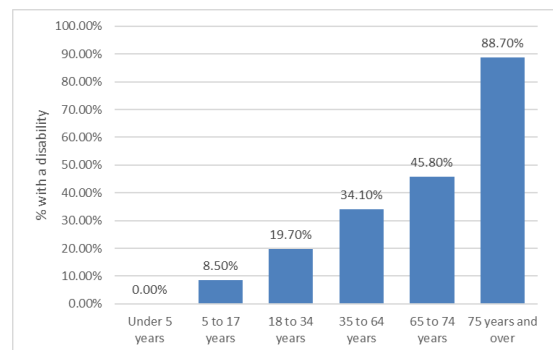


Figure 30. The percentage of disabilities increase with each ascending age group. (U.S. Census 2019, table

suffer from disabilities as well; residents between 35-64 have a disability rate of over 34%; and those 65-74 suffer at a rate of almost 65%.

### 2.2.4 Housing Type

Winsted is a small, rural town and, as such, is comprised mainly of single-unit housing (see Figure 31). Most of the remaining multi-unit housing is two-family houses, many of which were made by dividing the two floors in old, large, Victorian type houses. There are a relative handful of larger apartment buildings downtown, and the mixed-use buildings along Main Street have multiple units above the ground floor.

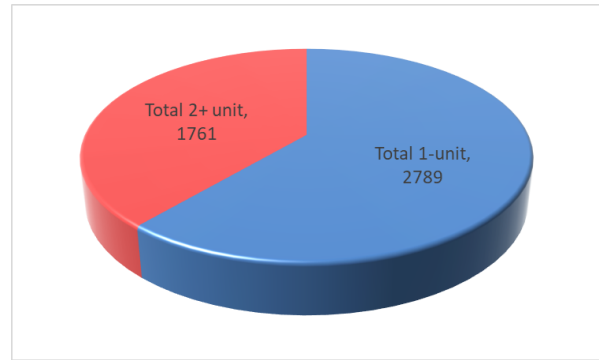


Figure 31. Most housing in Winsted is single unit. The multi-unit housing within the parks' service area is predominantly 2-family houses, with only a few apartment buildings or complexes. (U.S. Census 2019, table S1101)

### 2.2.5 Education: Enrollments & Attainment

All of Winsted's children between the ages of 3 and 17 are enrolled in school, but enrollment falls sharply after that (see Figure 32). School enrollment for young people aged 18 and 19 is just above 60%, and for those aged 20-24 enrollment plummets to only about 20%. Winsted had (it closed following the 2019-2020 school year) one private elementary school and so, for the years covered in the 2019 Census data, enrollment in town was divided between public and private schools (see Figure 33). The highest private school enrollment was for preschool aged children, at greater than 60%. For all the grades after that almost all students attended public schools.

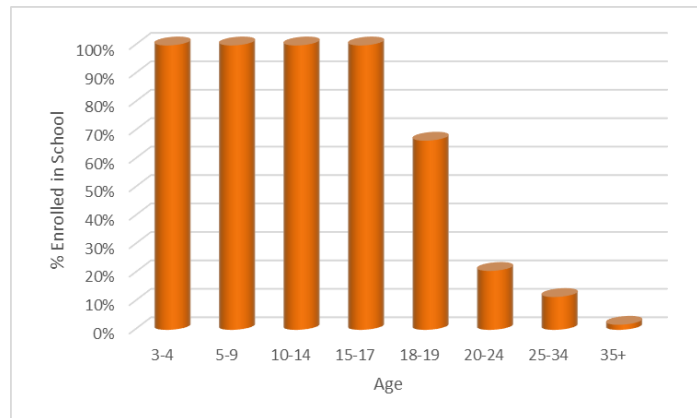


Figure 32. School enrollment is 100% for grade school and high school years but drops sharply after the age of 17. (U.S. Census 2019, table S1401)

### 2.2.6 Economic Indicators

Income in Winsted is spread along a wide range. Of the 9,348 residents over the age of 15, 1417 (15%) earn \$75,000 or more per year, which is the largest single income category in town (see Figure 34). But Winsted cannot be considered a wealthy town; fully 1/3 of residents earn less than \$25,000 in a year (see Figure 35). And in 2018 15% of town residents fell below the poverty line (see Figure 36).

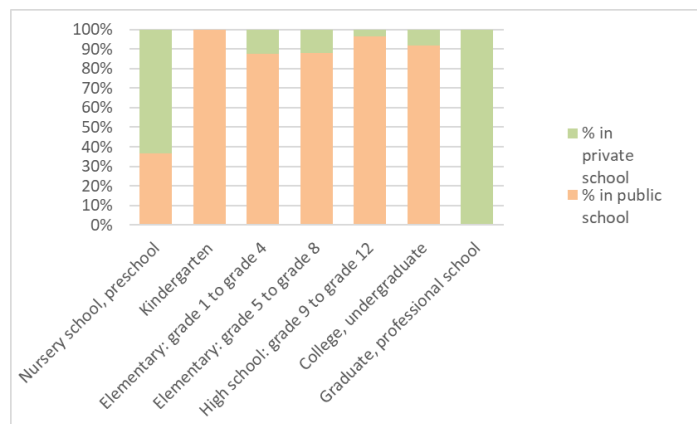


Figure 33. Early schooling relies heavily on private preschools, but the public school system takes over after that. (U.S. Census 2019, table S1401)



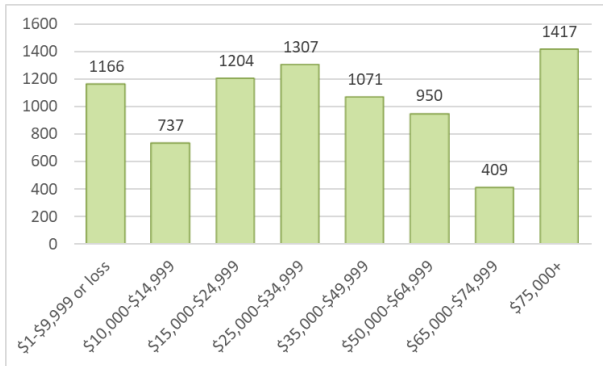


Figure 29. The single largest group makes over \$75,000/year, but most incomes are clustered in the \$15,000 - \$64,000 range. (U.S. Census 2019, table S0601)

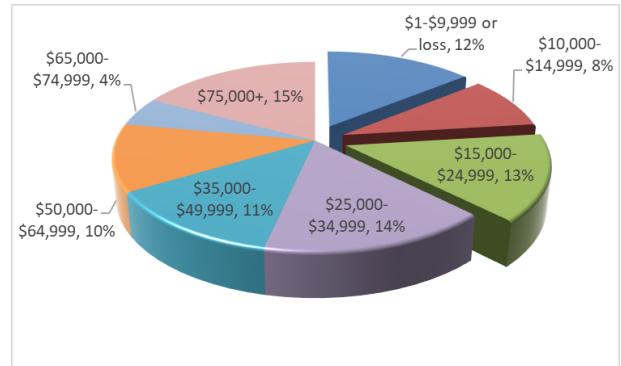


Figure 35. 33% of Winsted residents made less than \$25,000 in 2018. (U.S. Census 2019, table S0601)

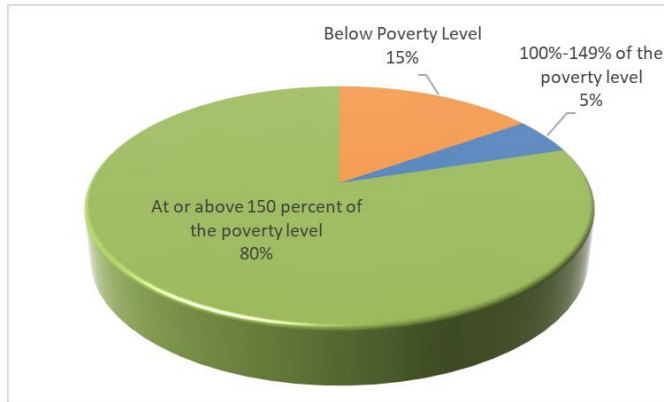


Figure 36. 15% of residents fell below the poverty line in 2018. (U.S. Census 2019, table S0601)

### 2.2.7 Employment Indicators

The jobs that Winsted residents do are varied, with the largest block, at 25%, being in educational and health care services (see Figure 37). Unemployment in Winsted is high, with an overall unemployment rate of 8% among the population 16 years and older. That unemployment has greater prevalence among younger workers—those between 16 and 34 years old—with the highest unemployment rate (16%) among residents in their early 30s (see Figure 38).

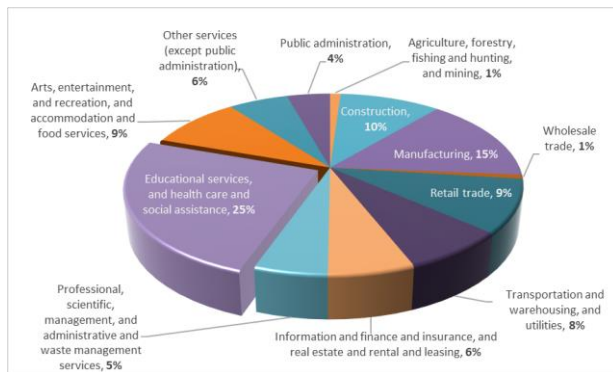


Figure 37. 25% of Winsted residents work in educational or health care services. Followed by manufacturing at 15%. (U.S. Census 2019, table S0802)

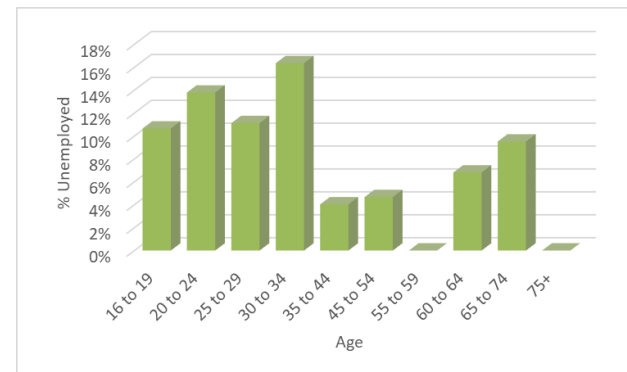


Figure 38. High unemployment peaks for workers in their early 30s. (U.S. Census 2019, table S2301)

### 2.2.8 Transportation Indicators

Almost all workers in Winsted work in Connecticut, with only 3% having jobs outside the state (see Figure 39). Of those who work in Connecticut, 67% also work within Litchfield County. This is reflected somewhat in the commute times shown in Figure 40. The largest number of people have a commute under 20 minutes and most people have a commute time of less than 45 minutes.

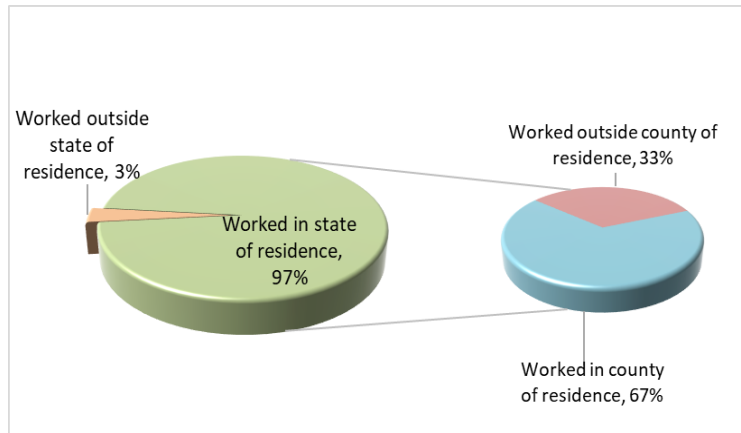


Figure 39. Most working people in Winsted work within Litchfield County; and only a relative handful work outside of Connecticut (U.S. Census 2019, table S0801).

A large majority of commuters drive alone to work and only 7% joining carpools (see Figure 41). Much of the remainder either work from home or walk to work. There is very limited public transportation in Winsted, which is probably why only 2% of commuters use it to get to work.

Access to a vehicle can be difficult for people. Despite the workforce in Winsted being evenly split between men and women, women have a harder time gaining access to a vehicle (see Figure 42). In fact, it is only when two vehicles are available that more women have access to them than do men.

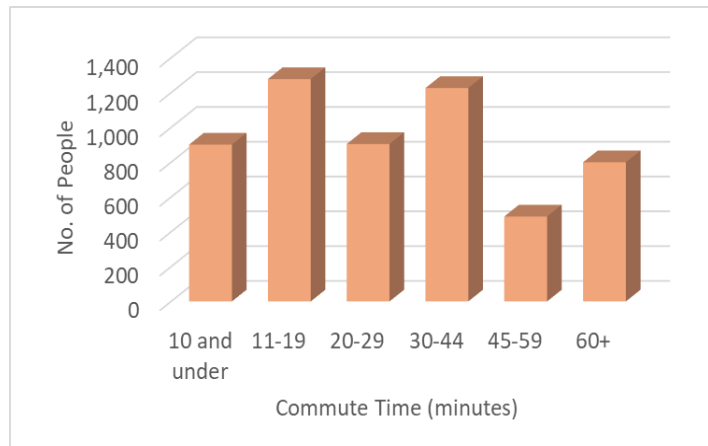


Figure 40. Commute times from Winsted are mostly under 45 minutes. (U.S. Census 2019, table S0801)

### 2.2.9 Summary of Neighborhood Indicators

There are few young children in Winsted and the town's population is aging, as well as shrinking. These realities highlight the need, now and in the future, for more passive recreation options in town. Though fewer in number, households led by single women have children at a greater rate than do married/coupled households.

Population projections indicate that Winsted can expect either modest growth over the next ten years or a continued decline in population. Therefore, Winsted can safely plan recreation facilities for the population it has, rather than anticipating an influx of new, younger residents. Maintaining sports facilities could be a factor in enticing young families to move to Winsted, but other considerations such as schools, employment, taxes, and property values probably carry more weight. Therefore, a park plan with a reduction of sports facilities would not hinder any potential growth in the near future.

A majority of Winsted residents were born in Connecticut (most likely in the immediate area if not in Winsted itself) indicating that Winsted does not offer sufficient enticements for people to move there. More than half of those who did move to Winsted in the previous year did so from within Litchfield County.

One of Winsted’s long-term goals (described in the next section) is to attract more residents and visitors. Improving recreational opportunities, in line with population demographics, can help to accomplish that goal.

Most residents are white English speakers, and disabilities among them are common, so ensuring that sufficient access to downtown stores and recreation exists is vital. The children that are in town are sure to get an education, at least until they graduate from high school. Very few go on to attend college immediately. Winsted is not a wealthy town. More than half the people earn less than \$35,000 per year, and nearly as many earn less than \$10,000 as earn over \$75,000. Unemployment is at 8%, with younger workers more likely to be unemployed than those over 35 years old.

Winsted suffers from a lack of public transportation causing most people to drive—mostly alone—to work each day and limiting opportunities for employment. Despite being within 30 minutes of both Massachusetts and New York, 97% of people work in Connecticut and two-thirds of those are employed in Litchfield County. Cars are necessary for most Winsted residents to hold a job, and women face difficulties gaining access to a motor vehicle despite representing half of the town’s workforce. Designing a walkable downtown with connections to arts and recreation can help to get people out of their cars and can improve access to different parts of Winsted for those who do not drive.

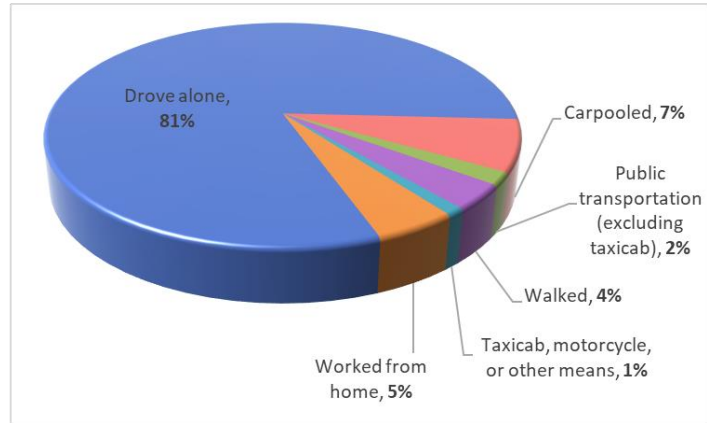


Figure 41. Most people drive themselves alone to work. The town has poor access to public transportation so other options are limited for workers who must travel more than a few miles. (U.S. Census 2019,

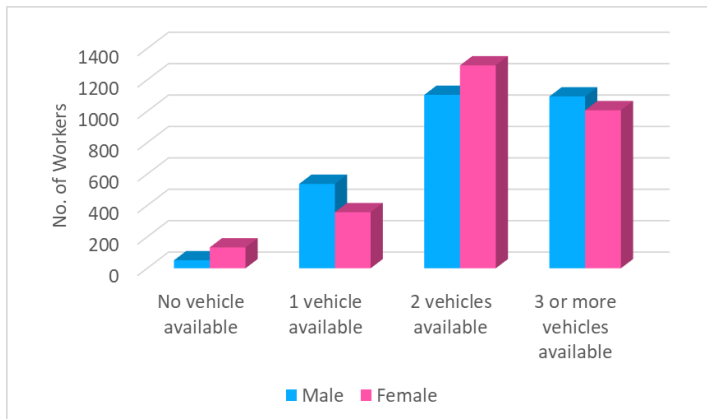


Figure 42. Female workers have less access to vehicles. (U.S. Census 2019, table S0801)



### **3.0 Goals**

This section is a summary of the goals identified by the Winsted community, as well as those that constitute the best practices for public space. Neither Winsted's 2010 Plan of Conservation and Development nor the Visioning Session report from 2016 make specific mention of plans for parks (*Pocd2011\_1.Pdf*; *Gomanyork\_report\_jan\_2017.Pdf*). However, some goals in other areas touch on themes that can be considered important to well-planned parks. The open space mentioned in the POCD primarily refers to the forested areas surrounding town but speaks to the desire for natural recreational areas.

#### *3.1 Overall Community Vision*

The residents of Winsted, at a 2016 visioning session and (more indirectly) through the POCD, decided that the image of the town was of paramount importance. They believe that emphasis should be on building a cohesive community image. To that end, they would like the downtown area to be more pedestrian friendly, and to highlight the artists' space on Whiting Street. Rowley and Walker fields can be instrumental in facilitating the kind of walkable community that residents want by being the connection between downtown and Whiting Street. A Riverwalk and footbridge (on the west and east sides of the park, respectively) would provide access to the park itself and create a safe, pleasant pedestrian connection between those two important nodes.

#### *3.2 Town Goals*

The town's specific goals that pertain to parks and open spaces follow:

- Encourage a pedestrian friendly downtown.
  - Safe, attractive experience
  - Pedestrian and transit-oriented development
  - Improved parking options
  - Create connections, particularly between downtown and Whiting Street.
- Establish Winsted as a destination
  - Serve as a tourism, cultural and higher education hub.
  - Create a 'Green Print' brand and identity to attract new residents.
  - Encourage shopping & eating downtown.
- Take advantage of town's natural beauty to attract people.
  - Complete Sue Grossman Greenway
  - Protect water features and watersheds.
- Improve access to the Mad River & Sue Grossman Greenway
  - Create an open space system/greenway incorporating the Mad and Still rivers
  - Create a Riverwalk along the Mad River.
- Enhance the town's "gateways".
  - Explore recreational use opportunities along Route 800 corridor.
  - Improve aesthetics.
  - Balance economic development with preserving the natural character of the area and the rivers.
- Preserve open space.
  - Develop neighborhood open spaces to create a sense of community.
- Attract middle- and upper-income households.

- Revitalize downtown neighborhoods.
- Look for opportunities for parks and/or community gardens.
- Enhance recreational opportunities.
- Encourage green practices.
  - Integrate open space & environmental safeguards in downtown redevelopment.
  - Encourage a change of mindset to value the interconnectedness of the environment and human quality of life.
  - Ensure that all development is minimally invasive.
  - Protect natural resources (water quality).

### 3.3 Park Design Best Practices

There are eight park design goals that Albert Rutledge defined in his 1981 book *A Visual Approach to Park Design* (Rutledge). Those goals are, briefly:

1. *Everything must have a purpose.* An element should be included only if it meets a need or solves a problem.
2. *Design must be for people.* Park design should be focused on what people need.
3. *Both function and aesthetic must be satisfied.* People *can* use it, but do they *want* to?
4. *Establish a substantial experience.* Elements should work in unison to create a positive impression.
5. *Establish an appropriate experience.* A park should fit both its natural and cultural contexts.
6. *Satisfy the technical requirements.* Minimum standards should be met for each element and they should be spaced in accordance with how people will use them.
7. *Meet needs for the lowest possible cost.* Prioritize elements to favor those that provide the greatest benefit for the least cost.
8. *Provide for ease of supervision.* Place elements/activities to facilitate ease of circulation.

### 3.4 Sustainability Criteria

The American Planning Association included the following 25 criteria for high performance public spaces in its 2016 Planning Advisory Service memo (Barth). These criteria were devised by 22 sustainability experts at the University of Florida and are broken into three sections.

#### **Social Criteria**

- The space improves the neighborhood.
- The space improves social and physical mobility through multimodal connectivity—auto, transit, bike, pedestrian.
- The space encourages the health and fitness of residents and visitors.
- The space provides relief from urban congestion and stressors such as social confrontation, noise pollution, and air pollution.
- The space provides places for formal and informal social gathering, art, performances, and community or civic events.
- The space provides opportunities for individual, group, passive, and active recreation.
- The space facilitates shared experiences among different groups of people.
- The space attracts diverse populations.
- The space promotes creative and constructive social interaction.

### **Environmental Criteria**

- The space uses energy, water, and material resources efficiently.
- The space improves water quality of both surface and ground water.
- The space serves as a net carbon sink.
- The space enhances, preserves, promotes, or contributes to biological diversity.
- Hardscape material were selected based on longevity of service, social/cultural/historical sustainability, regional availability, low carbon footprint, and/or other related criteria.
- The space provides opportunities to enhance environmental awareness and knowledge.
- The space serves as an interconnected node within larger-scale ecological corridors and natural habitat.

### **Economic Criteria**

- The space creates and facilitates revenue-generating opportunities for the public and/or the private sectors.
- The space creates meaningful and desirable employment.
- The space indirectly creates or sustains good, living-wage jobs.
- The space sustains or increases property values.
- The space catalyzes infill development and/or the reuse of obsolete or underused buildings or spaces.
- The space attracts new businesses.
- The space generates increased business and tax revenues.
- The space optimizes operations and maintenance costs (compared to other similar spaces)

## **4.0 Alternatives**

The location and size of the combined Rowley and Walker fields offers the potential for many different uses. There are countless alternatives that could be devised to meet the needs of the community. The six options listed below are an attempt to craft alternatives that offer broad appeal and accomplish as many of the town's goals as possible. Common to all plans is the reservation of the western 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of Rowley Field for the Firemen's Carnival, and, for alternatives 3-6, the expectation that a Riverwalk connection will be constructed between the park and downtown Winsted. Renderings of alternatives follow their description.

### 1) Make no changes.

All buildings, sports fields and courts, maintenance, and services will be kept in their current state. No additions, repairs, or alterations to physical structures and programs/schedules will be made except as already planned or scheduled as part of the current recreation budget.

### 2) Upgrade and repair

No new additions will be made, but repairs/replacements will be made to any park elements that requires it. Physical elements such as fences, sports fields and courts, playground equipment, buildings, seating, entrances, parking lots, etc. will be repaired to a level deemed necessary by the park maintainers and to meet safety standards. Specifically,

- Dirt parking lots will at least be levelled, possibly paved.
- Pedestrian entrances will be brought into compliance with the ADA.
- Fences will be repaired.

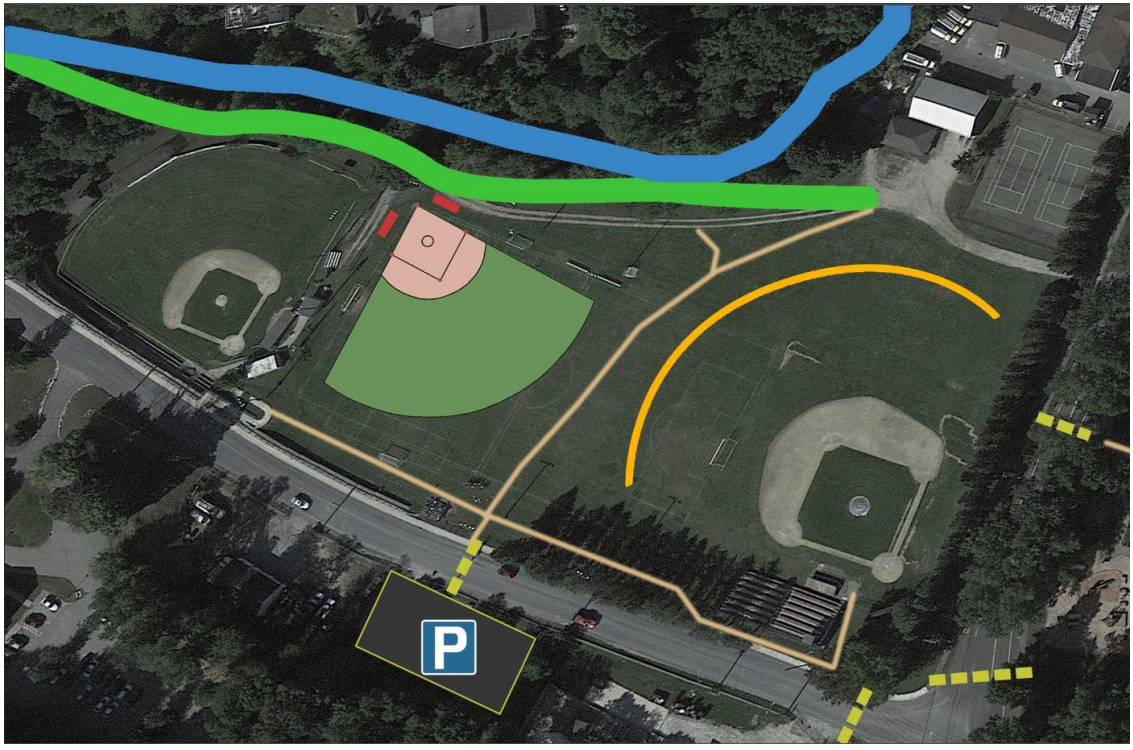


- The sod replacement in Walker Field will continue and any other areas needing resodding will be addressed.

### 3) Sports focus

It is important for children and adults alike to stay active to help maintain good health. Sports of all kinds are popular in American culture, and they can teach kids valuable life lessons and skills. This option increases the number and variety of sports fields and courts. It includes:

- Repairs/upgrades
  - Existing fences will be repaired or replaced as needed.
  - Some existing bleachers will be repaired or replaced.
  - An outfield fence will be added to the high school baseball field at Walker Field.
  - The dirt parking lot on Willow Street will be levelled and paved (ideally with permeable pavement).
- Changes/removals
  - The parking lot and driveway on the north side of Rowley Field will be removed.
  - The soccer field at Walker will be removed.
  - The softball field will be returned from Rowley to Walker.
- Additions
  - At least one additional basketball court will be added.
  - Volleyball courts will be added, with at least one being a sand court.
  - An obstacle course will be constructed.
  - New, permanent spectator seating will be built.
  - Dugouts will be added to Ryan Field.
  - The soccer field at Rowley will be made permanent.
  - Paths linking all the fields to each other and to the entrances will be constructed, with trees along side, and benches and lights.
  - Restrooms and a picnic area will be added to the western portion of Rowley.
- Access
  - All entrances will be made ADA compliant.
  - More and better crosswalks will be added to Rowley Street.
  - A Riverwalk will run along the Mad River and connect downtown Winsted to the existing maintenance path at Walker, ending at Rowley Street near the tennis courts.
  - A foot bridge will connect the northeastern corner of Rowley to the neighborhoods to the east and to fast food, coffee, and Northwestern CT Community College
- Services
  - More lighting will be added to some or all fields/courts, depending on cost.



-  Mad River
-  Riverwalk
-  Footbridge
-  New outfield Fence
-  Crosswalks
-  Paths
-  New Dugouts
-  Parking
-  Picnic area



Figure 43. The sports focused alternative relocates the softball field to Walker Field and adds several new sports facilities to Rowley Field for use by the public (Basemaps: Google Earth).



#### 4) Entertainment & Tourism

Winsted wants to attract visitors from out of town to boost its image and increase economic opportunities (*Gomanyork\_report\_jan\_2017.Pdf*). This alternative will use the park space for an entertainment venue and tourist attraction. Some elements could include:

- Repairs/upgrades
  - The southern parking lot at Rowley would be expanded into the cemetery to the south, into the field to the north, and into the playground to the west.
  - The playground building would be converted into a ticket/info center.
  - The dirt parking lot on Willow Street would be levelled and paved.
- Changes/removals
  - All of the sports facilities and structures at Rowley would be removed, except for the softball field.
  - The playground would be removed.
  - The northern parking lot at Rowley would be removed.
- Additions
  - An amphitheater with fixed seating would be built, likely on the eastern side of Rowley Field.
    - This could act as a flood water retention area in the event of the rivers flooding.
  - A 'lazy river' ride would be built (see Figure 44). A fence would surround it for safety and to ensure only ticket holders enter.
  - A public pool would be built on the southern edge. A fence would surround it for safety, but it would be open to the public free of charge.
  - A food court would be built, along with at least two restrooms.



Figure 4430. An example of a lazy river. (Photo: <https://southernliving.com>)



- A Riverwalk along the Mad River to the west would connect downtown to Rowley Street near the Walker Field tennis courts.
- A footbridge over the Mad River in the northeastern section of Rowley would connect the park to fast food, coffee, and the artists' buildings on Whiting Street.
- Paths, lights, trash cans, benches, etc. would be installed throughout.
- Access
  - There will be one car entrance and two dedicated pedestrian entrances. Anyone wishing to use the 'lazy river' would have to buy a ticket from the ticket window first.
  - The existing parking lot on the corner of Rowley and Willow streets would act as an overflow lot.
  - A traffic signal will be installed at the intersection at Rowley/Willow to help traffic flow into and out of the park, and to allow pedestrians to cross safely.
  - Crosswalks would be added, and existing crosswalks repainted.
- Other
  - The western 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of Rowley would remain open to accommodate the annual Firemen's Carnival.
  - The softball field at Rowley would remain in place with minor repairs to the backstop and field, as necessary.
  - Walker Field would remain largely unchanged, save for the completion of the soccer field there, small repairs to fences.

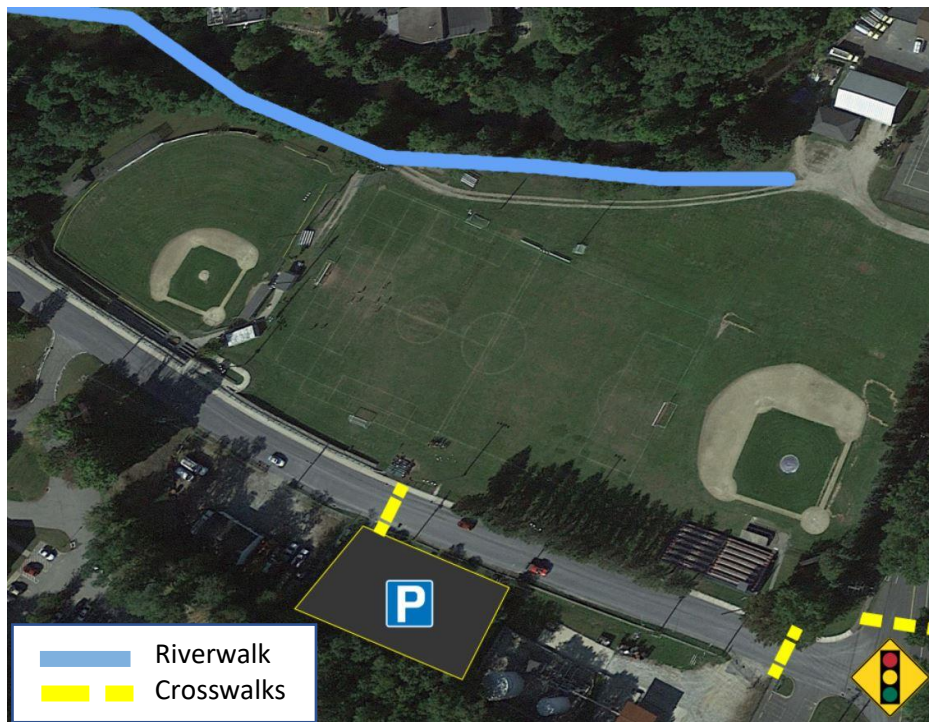


Figure 45. The Walker Field side of the park would remain largely unchanged, with only improvements to parking and crosswalks, as well as some fence repairs where needed. (Basemap: Google Earth)



Figure 46. The entertainment & tourism alternative would include major changes on the Rowley Field side of the park but would retain space for the annual carnival. (Basemap: Google Earth)

#### 5) Sports & nature

The two sides of the park currently cater almost exclusively to scheduled sporting events. This option would maintain the divide between the two sides of the park, with Walker Field continuing to host sports fields and courts, while Rowley Field is remade into a more natural, passive recreation park. This would entail:

- Repairs/upgrades to Walker Field
  - The softball field would be returned to its former location.
  - Paved ramps would be added at those entrances that do not already have them.
  - Fences would be repaired.
  - Sod repair would continue.
  - An outfield fence would be added to the large baseball field.
  - Paths would be added to connect the fields/courts with each other.
- Repairs/upgrades to Rowley Field
  - The soccer field would be rotated to run parallel to Rowley Street between the pedestrian entrance and the north driveway.
    - This also serves to reserve the western 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the field for the annual Firemen's Carnival.
  - The softball field, both baseball fields, and the basketball court would be removed.
  - All sports structures and associated elements (lighting, fences, etc.) would be removed.
  - All perimeter fences will be removed as safety allows or repaired.



- Ideally, there would be no fence along Rowley Street so people could simply stroll into the park.



Figure 47. A sculpture garden incorporates artwork and nature, providing a relaxing experience (Photo: <https://artbma.org>)

- Additions
  - A Riverwalk will connect downtown with the park. It will run along the Mad River, connecting to the existing maintenance path at Walker Field and exiting onto Rowley Street next to the tennis courts.
  - A footbridge will be added at the northeastern corner of Rowley Street, connecting the park to fast food, coffee, the artists' buildings on Whiting Street, and Northwestern CT Community College.
  - The remainder of Rowley Field will contain:
    - Paths.
    - Trees.
    - A gazebo.
    - Native gardens (in partnership with environmental science classes at the community college).
    - A sculpture garden (see Figure 47).
    - A splash pad (see Figure 48).
    - Restrooms.
    - An amphitheater in the eastern portion (good for graduation ceremonies, movies, and music).
      - A hill would be made, rising away from the stage, with stone seating built into it. It would create a bowl to retain potential flood water.
  - Two basketball courts and two volleyball courts would be built at Walker Field.
  - The thin strip of Walker along the Mad River will be landscaped and beautified as part of the addition of the Riverwalk along that field's northern edge.
  - Paths at Walker Field will connect all parts.
- Access & parking
  - All entrances will be made ADA compliant.





Figure 48. A splash pad provides fun and refreshment on hot summer days when many families lack the means to get to a local beach. (Photo credit: <https://brownsburgsentinel.com>)

- The dirt driveway at Rowley, and both dirt parking lots will be resurfaced with permeable asphalt.
- More well marked crosswalks will be added on Rowley Street, especially where the Riverwalk ends.
- Other considerations
  - Benches (w/charging stations), drinking fountains, lights, trash cans, and restrooms will be added along the paths at Rowley.

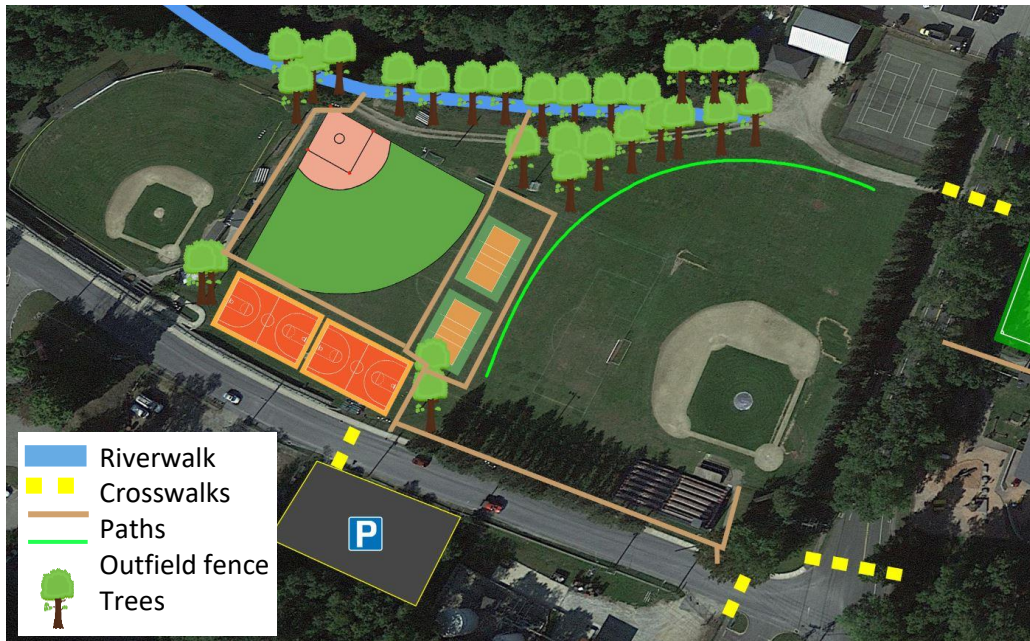


Figure 319. Sports fields, a Riverwalk, and improved crosswalks are among the additions under the 'sports & nature alternative design. (Basemap: Google Earth)



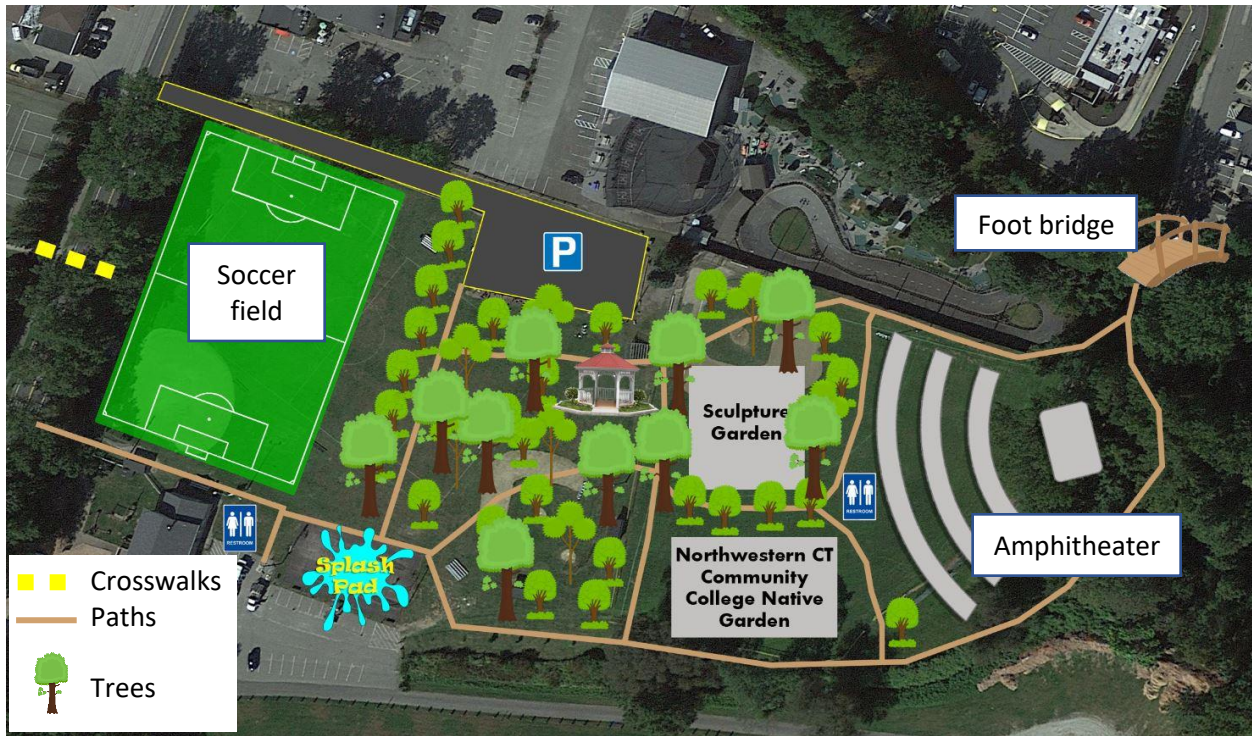


Figure 50. The sports & nature alternative remakes the Rowley Field portion of the park to accommodate more passive recreation. (Basemap: Google Earth)

6) Community garden & dog park

Residents of downtown Winsted have not had a convenient place to do their grocery shopping since the IGA closed several years ago. Residents without cars face a daunting and dangerous walk more than a mile east along Route 44 to the nearest Stop & Shop. The Winsted Farmer’s Market was successful for several years and demonstrated the local demand for fresh food. Because downtown Winsted has become a food desert, the nutritional health of the residents there is a concern.



Figure 51. Community garden (Photo: <https://cdn.thealternativedaily.com>)

Furthermore, in the downtown area there are no places for dogs to get exercise and to be socialized. Bored, restless, poorly socialized dogs can act out, destroying property and sometimes becoming dangerous to people and other animals. Having a safe, fenced area for dogs to run and play would be a benefit for safety and property. This alternative replaces the two baseball fields at Rowley Field with community gardens for those residents who need access to healthy food and

with a dog park to better meet the needs of fuzzy citizens. Both of these additions would foster health, safety, and a sense of community.

This option would include:

- Repairs/upgrades
  - The pedestrian entrances to both Rowley and Walker fields would be made ADA compliant.
  - Small repairs to fences and structures would be made at Walker Field as the budget allows.
- Changes
  - Ryan Field and the smaller baseball field at Rowley would be removed.
  - All associated structures such as fences, bleachers, dugouts, etc. will also be removed.
  - No changes would be made at Walker Field.
- Additions
  - An area in the middle 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of Rowley Field would be divided into sections for community gardens (see Figure 51).
  - The garden area would be enclosed by a fence to discourage foraging animals.
  - Each section within the garden area would be ringed by a path.
  - Several water spigots with hoses would be included.
  - The eastern 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of Rowley Field would be made into a dog park fenced with double air-lock style gates to prevent Fido from escaping (see Figure 52).
  - The ground within the dog park would be covered with wood chips or another soft, non-muddy option.
  - There would be a water tap, a waste bag dispenser, trash cans with lids, and benches and picnic tables.
  - Trees would be planted in and around the dog park and along paths.
  - Space for native gardens would be reserved along the eastern side of the field for use by Northwestern CT Community College.
  - A footbridge would connect the eastern end of the field with Main Street.
  - Restrooms would be added, possibly with composting toilets if capacity allows.



Figure 52. Dog parks can be a place for both humans and dogs to socialize. (Photo: <https://p1cdn4static.civiclive.com>)



- Access
  - The northern parking lot at Rowley would serve as the main access point for these two areas, while the paved southern lot would primarily serve the playground and the remaining 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the field, though either lot could be used by anyone.
  - The northern parking lot would be paved with a permeable pavement.
  - Paths would connect all the areas of Rowley Field.
  - The pedestrian entrances would be made ADA compliant.
- Other
  - The recreation department could expand its dog training classes by using the dog park.
  - The playground building could be used for gardening lessons/information.
  - Local vendors (White Flower Farm, Litchfield Nursery) could sell limited gardening supplies in the playground building.
  - A partnership with botany and ecology classes at the community college is possible in a section of the garden.



Figure 53. Community gardens and a dog park are the highlights of this alternative, but space for native gardens provides environmental and educational benefits as well. (Basemap: Google Earth)

## 5.0 Evaluation of Alternatives

Using the town goals specified in section 3.1, along with the best practices listed in section 3.3 and sustainability criteria detailed in section 3.4, an evaluation of the six preceding park alternatives was done. Political, stakeholder, and cost feasibility scores were included in the evaluation as well. To score each alternative, a simple scale from 0-2 was used, with 0 indicating that an alternative fails to meet or hinders a specific need, 1 representing partially met needs, and 2 meaning that the alternative meets a need fully. This was necessary to standardize the options so that the fulfillment of specific goals could be quantified, and the alternatives meaningfully compared to one another. The full evaluation tables can be found in Appendix 1.

No alternative performed better in any part of the analysis than did Alternative 5 “Sports & Nature” (see Table 1). Maintaining the Walker Field half of the park area as sports focused, and adding some new facilities there, coupled with converting the Rowley Field half to more nature focused, passive recreation allowed Alternative 5 to meet the largest number of stated town goals while simultaneously meeting almost all sustainability criteria. Due mainly to cost and an historic pattern of resistance to change, neither this, nor any of the other comprehensive alternatives were assumed to be very feasible.

*Table 1. Alternative 5, the Sports & Nature plan, was the clear winner with 103 total points. It was particularly effective in meeting the stated town goals and the sustainability criteria (both detailed in section 3).*

Alternative	Town Goals	Best Practices	Sustainability	Feasibility	Total
1 No Changes	10	9	12	6	37
2 Upgrade/Repair	13	9	12	5	39
3 Sports Focus	19	9	18	1	47
4 Entertainment & Tourism	21	10	25	1	57
<b>5 Sports &amp; Nature</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>103</b>
6 Gardens & Dog Park	37	15	28	0	80

Alternative 6 scored the second highest by also meeting many town and sustainability goals. It fell short, however, due in large part to its lack of economic benefit to the town, and to its relatively limited contribution to actual human recreation. Although what it lacked in promoting fitness, the community gardens somewhat made up for in nutritional health potential.

The Entertainment & Tourism option (#4) came in a distant third. Its economic impact was substantial, but it was too singularly focused to meet enough other needs. Similarly, Alternative 3 focused solely on sports, which not only does not draw visitors or new residents but does little to encourage fitness for the older residents of Winsted. Merely upgrading or repairing the existing parks and making no changes whatsoever were the least desirable alternatives from a goal standpoint, since the current park leaves much to be desired, and they offered no change from the existing uses. They were the cheapest alternatives, however, and for that reason, scored best on feasibility.

## **6.0 Recommendation**

By meeting nearly all of the town's social, economic, recreation, and nature goals the Sports & Nature alternative (alternative #5) is recommended as the best basis for redesigning the park. It retains and builds upon the sports available to Winsted residents for organized or informal games and leagues. At the same time, fully one-half of the park area is rededicated to more passive recreation, reflecting the reality of Winsted's aging population and opening the park to a wider variety of people. A summary of some of the major additions in the Sports & Nature alternative follows and are shown in See Figures 57-62 at the end of this section.

Common to both sides of the park:

- Paths would be added to connect the fields/courts with each other and with all entrances.
- The two dirt parking lots will be paved with permeable asphalt to reduce runoff into the Mad River.
- More crosswalks will be added connecting the two sides of the park and enhancing pedestrian safety.

Walker Field:

- The softball field will be returned to its former location at Walker Field (from Rowley Field).
- Two basketball courts and two volleyball courts will be added to Walker Field between the high school baseball field and the newly relocated softball field.
- A Riverwalk (see Figure 54) will connect downtown with the park. It will run along the Mad River, connecting to the existing maintenance path at Walker Field and exiting onto Rowley Street next to the tennis courts.



*Figure 54. A Riverwalk along the Mad River would serve as a connection to the park from Downtown Neighborhoods. It would also increase access and enjoyment of the river. (Photo: <https://greenblue.com/>)*



- The thin strip of Walker Field along the Mad River will be landscaped and beautified as part of the addition of the Riverwalk along that field's northern edge.

#### Rowley Field:

- A footbridge will be added at the northeastern corner of Rowley Field, connecting the park to fast food, coffee, the artists' buildings on Whiting Street, and Northwestern CT Community College.
  - With the addition of the Riverwalk, improved crosswalks, and this footbridge, Downtown will be effectively connected, through the park, to the artists at Whiting Street and to the community college.
- Space will be set aside for native gardens which will be planted and maintained by botany and ecology classes from Northwestern CT Community College.
- An amphitheater will serve as a place for community events, performances, and college graduation ceremonies, as well as act as a flood water retention and dispersal area if the Mad and Still rivers flood.
- A 'Splash Pad' will be constructed for children to play on to cool off in during the summer.
  - This will be especially helpful for lower-income residents living in the Downtown residential areas. They may have limited access to a car and, therefore, will often find it difficult to get to the local beaches at Highland Lake or Burr Pond.
  - It would also be used by the recreation department's summer camp program.
- A sculpture garden and wooded area would separate the east and west sides of Rowley Field, creating a buffer between activities and offering a quiet, natural setting for relaxing or walking.



Figure 55. A gazebo tucked in among the trees would provide a serene place to sit and rest or a venue for bird watching and photography. (Photo: <http://www.stcharlesparks.com/>)

- A gazebo could be tucked within this area (see Figure 55).
- Amenities such as restrooms, path lighting, benches, trash cans, and drinking fountains would also be part of the new design.

Possible changes based on other design alternatives:

- The community garden plots (see Figure 56) from alternative #6 are a big reason why that option scored so highly in the evaluation. It provides a direct benefit to the people of the Downtown neighborhoods and should be considered as a possible addition to the recommended design.
  - At a smaller scale, it could be included between the soccer field and the wooded area in the center of Rowley Field.
  - In the event that a partnership with the community college cannot be arranged, the space set aside for native gardens could be used.
  - A picnic area is also a worthy idea and could be incorporated into the wooded central area.
  - Picnic tables and small charcoal grills could be added amongst the trees.



Figure 56. With the nutritional health benefits afforded by fresh vegetables, Winsted's Downtown residents could benefit from adding a community garden to the recommended plan. (Photo: <https://cdn.thealternativedaily.com/>)



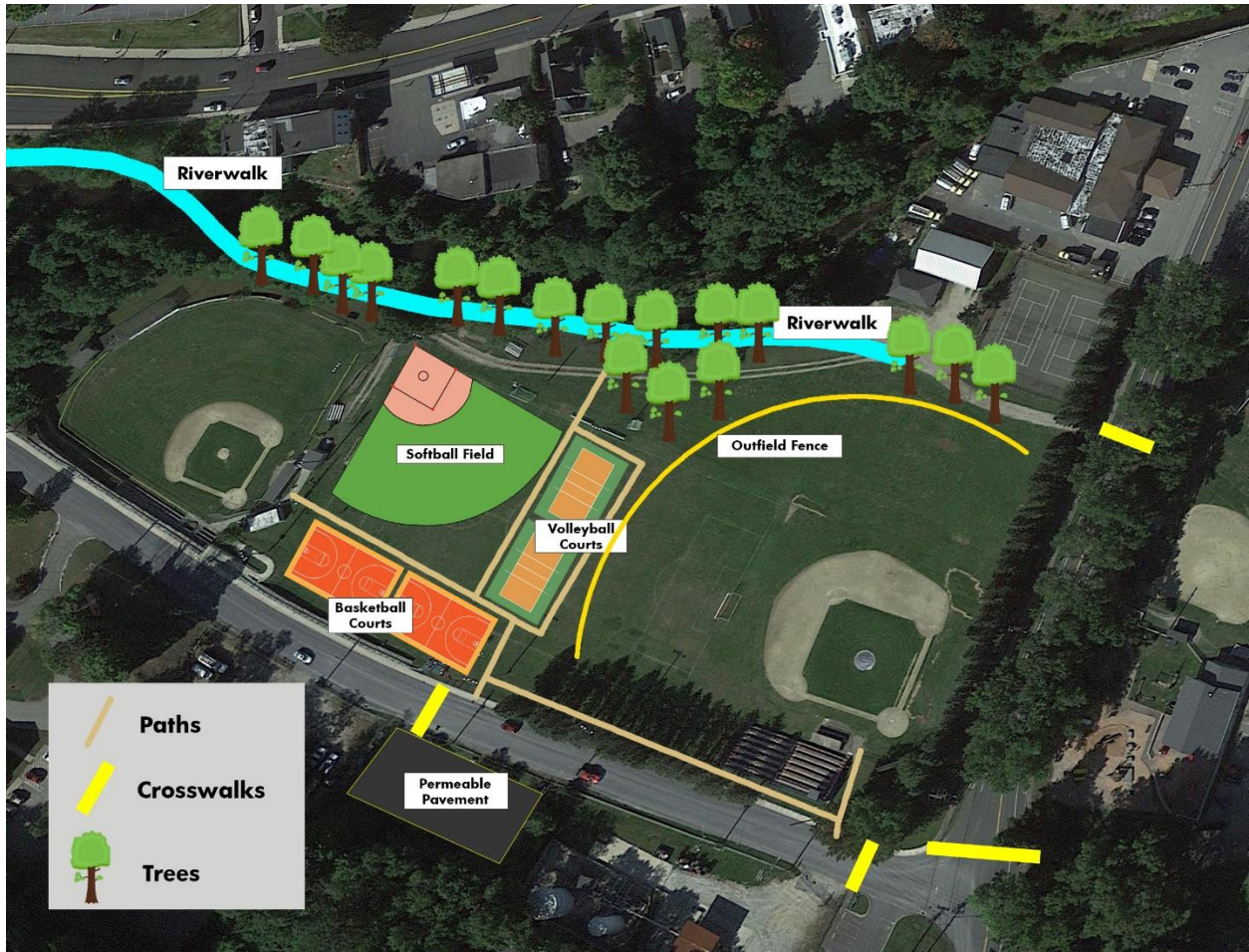


Figure 57. The Walker Field side of the park will remain focused on sports. New paths and crosswalks will improve circulation and safety. (Basemap: Google Earth)

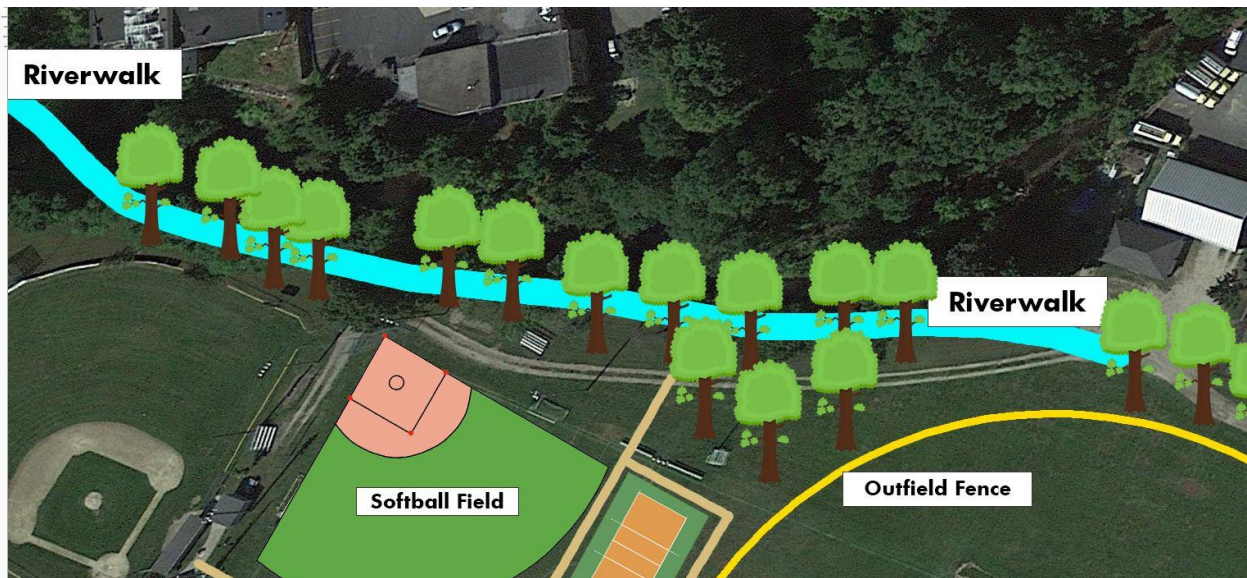


Figure 58. The Riverwalk will connect the Downtown area to the park and Whiting Street to the east. It follows the path of the Mad River along the northern edge of Walker Field. With trees and land scaping, this entrance to the park will become a secluded-feeling area of the otherwise busy park. (Basemap: Google Earth)



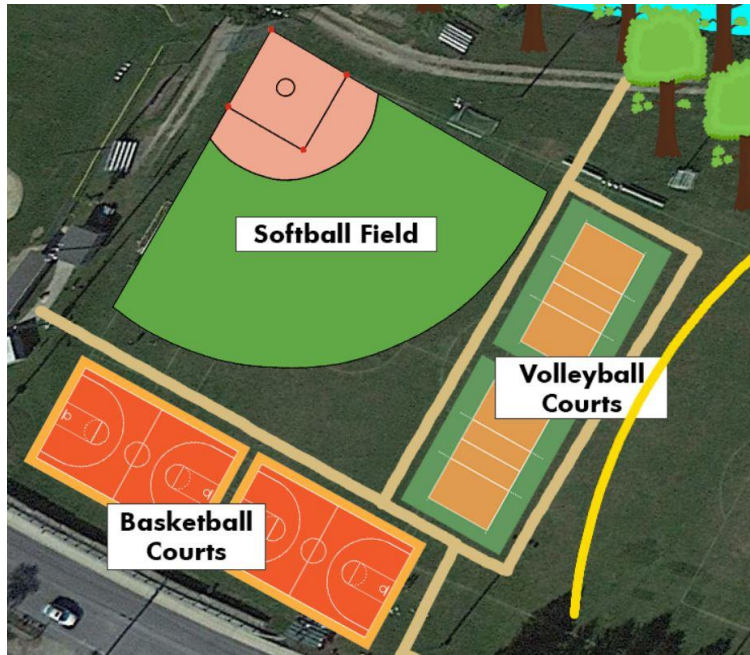


Figure 59. With the return on the softball field to the Walker Field side of the park, and the addition of basketball and volleyball courts, an increased variety of sports will be made available to Winsted residents. These fields



Figure 60. The recommended design at Rowley Field repurposes almost the entire area. Entertainment and passive recreation are emphasized, but sufficient space remains to easily accommodate the Firemen's Carnival. (Basemap: Google Earth)

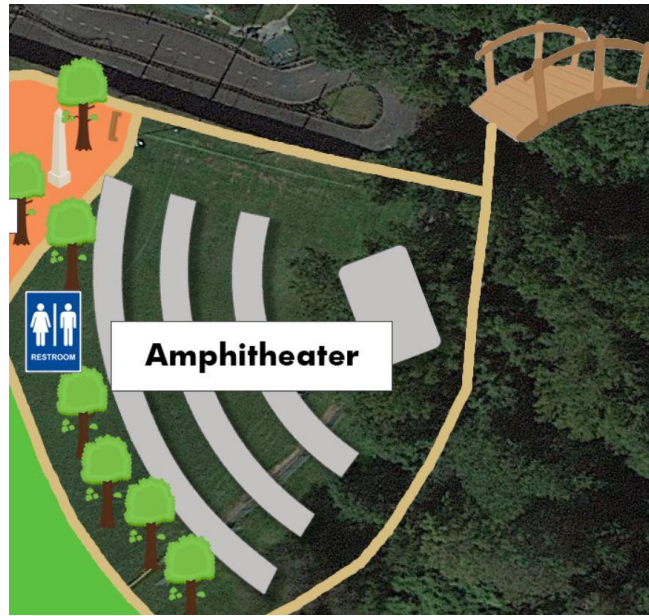


Figure 61. An amphitheater on the eastern end of Rowley Field can host performances, community events, and college graduation ceremonies. Access from the east is facilitated by a new foot bridge over the Mad River, also putting food and coffee within easy reach of park visitors. (Basemap: Google Earth)



Figure 62. The center portion of Rowley Field is completely remade with walking paths, a picnic area, sculpture garden, benches, and native gardens designed and tended by NCCC classes. (Basemap: Google Earth)



## Appendix 1

	Alt. 1 No changes	Alt. 2 Minor upgrades & repairs	Alt. 3 Sports Focus	Alt. 4 Entertainment & Tourism	Alt. 5 Sports & Nature	Alt. 6 Community gardens & Dog park
<b>Total Score</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>Feasibility</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>
Politically-Feasible	2	2	0	0	0	0
Support of Stakeholders	2	2	1	1	1	0
Cost	2	1	0	0	0	0
<b>Town Goals</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>37</b>
<i>Pedestrian friendly downtown</i>						
Safe, attractive experience	0	1	1	1	2	2
Pedestrian oriented dev.	0	0	2	2	2	1
Improved parking options	0	1	1	2	2	1
Connect Downtown to artists' on Whiting Street	0	0	2	2	2	2
<i>Make Winsted a destination</i>						
Tourism, culture, education hub	0	0	0	1	2	1
Attract 'green' minded residents	0	0	0	0	1	2
Shopping/eating downtown	0	0	1	2	2	0
<i>Use town's natural beauty</i>						
Complete Greenway	0	0	0	0	2	1
Protect water features	1	1	0	1	2	2
Improve access to Mad River	0	0	2	2	2	2
Open space system w/two rivers	2	2	1	0	2	2
Mad River Riverwalk	0	0	2	2	2	2
<i>Enhance town's gateways</i>						
Recreation along Route 800	1	1	2	2	2	0
Improve aesthetics	0	1	1	1	2	2
Balance economic growth with natural character	0	0	1	0	2	1
<i>Attract middle/upper income res.</i>						
Create sense of community	1	1	1	0	2	2
Revitalize downtown	0	0	1	2	2	1
Create parks/community gardens	0	0	0	0	2	2
Enhance recreational opportunities	0	0	1	1	2	0
<i>Adhere to 'Green Print'</i>						
Safeguard environment	0	0	0	0	2	1
Value interconnectedness of nature and quality of human life	1	1	0	0	2	2
Minimally invasive development	2	2	0	0	1	2
Preserve open space	2	2	0	0	1	2
Protect natural resources	0	0	0	0	1	2
Promote permaculture	0	0	0	0	1	2



**Appendix 1, continued**

	Alt. 1 No changes	Alt. 2 Minor upgrades & repairs	Alt. 3 Sports Focus	Alt. 4 Entertainment & Tourism	Alt. 5 Sports & Nature	Alt. 6 Community gardens & Dog park
<b>Best Practices</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>15</b>
Everything has a purpose	1	1	2	2	2	2
Designed for people's needs	1	1	1	1	2	2
Functional and aesthetic	1	1	1	1	2	2
Good experience	1	1	1	2	2	2
Contextually appropriate	1	1	1	0	2	1
Satisfy technical requirements	2	2	2	2	2	2
Needs met at lowest possible cost	1	1	0	0	1	2
Ease of circulation	1	1	1	2	2	2
<b>Sustainability</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>28</b>
<i>Social Criteria</i>						
Improve neighborhood	0	0	1	1	2	1
Improves multimodal mobility	0	0	1	1	1	1
Encourages health & fitness	1	1	2	1	2	1
Escape urban congestion/pollution	0	0	1	1	2	1
Provides space for gatherings	1	1	0	1	2	1
Active, passive & group recreation	1	1	1	1	2	1
Shared experiences	1	1	1	2	2	2
Attracts diverse populations	1	1	1	2	2	1
Promotes social interaction	1	1	1	1	2	2
<i>Environmental Criteria</i>						
Uses resources efficiently	2	2	0	0	2	2
Improves water quality	0	0	0	0	2	2
Net carbon sink	0	0	0	0	2	2
Biological diversity	0	0	0	0	2	1
Sustainable materials	2	2	1	0	2	2
Enhance environmental awareness	0	0	0	0	2	2
Part of ecological corridors & natural habitat	0	0	0	0	2	2
<i>Economic Criteria</i>						
Revenue generating opportunities	0	0	2	2	1	0
Creates employment	0	0	1	2	1	0
Good, living-wage jobs	0	0	1	2	1	0
Increases property values	0	0	1	2	2	1
Prompts infill development or building rehab	0	0	1	2	2	1
Attracts new businesses	0	0	1	2	2	0
Increases business & tax revenue	0	0	1	2	1	0
Optimizes costs	2	2	0	0	1	2

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