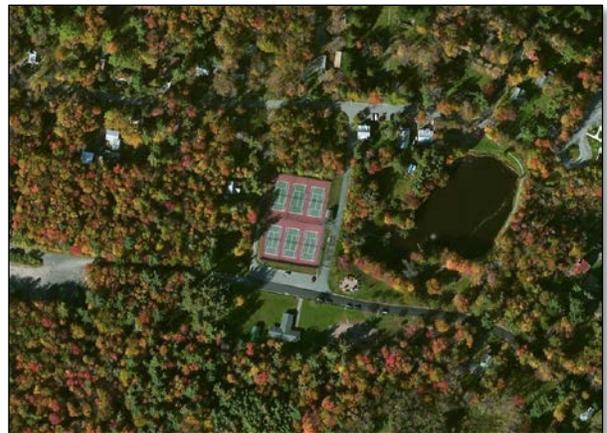


TOWN OF THOMPSON

SULLIVAN COUNTY, NEW YORK

PARKS AND RECREATION STUDY

JUNE 2017



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1.0 Introduction

The Town of Thompson has a long history as a scenic resort area and recreational destination in Sullivan County, New York. The Town has a growing year-round population and experiences a population surge during the summer months due to numerous camps, bungalow colonies and second home communities. The Town is undertaking a parks and recreation study in order to assess their existing recreational facilities and ensure that the community will have adequate resources to serve the future recreational needs of year-round and seasonal residents.

This study contains an inventory of the existing parks and recreational facilities used by Town residents and compares them to the current population in order to create a baseline of recreational needs per capita. The Town Planning Board will utilize this baseline when determining the need for additional recreational facilities to meet potential demand created by future development projects.

Background data for this study was obtained from U.S. Census records, National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) classifications and guidelines, and the NYS Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (2014-2019). In addition, information on the community's existing recreational facilities and usage was obtained from the Town of Thompson and Village of Monticello recreation departments, representatives of the Sullivan County YMCA and leaders of area youth athletic organizations.

This study originally focused only on parks and recreational facilities located within the Town of Thompson and outside the Village of Monticello boundary. However as research continued it was apparent that facilities within the Village should be included in the inventory. Town and Village parks are utilized by residents of both municipalities and one Village-owned park is actually located within the Town. Area sports leagues are open to youth in both municipalities, and MCSD recreation facilities serve children throughout the district, which includes sections of the Towns of Thompson, Forestburgh, Bethel, Fallsburg and Mamakating.

2.0 Existing Public Parks and Recreational Facilities

2.1 Town of Thompson Park

The Town of Thompson owns and operates a 173 acre community park located on Town Park Road near the northern town border. Park facilities include a new community building and playground, two pavilions, rest rooms, barbeque pits, an apple orchard and picnic areas, hiking/cross-country ski trails, a pedestrian bridge over the East Mongaup River, soccer/softball practice areas, and a 20' x 50' swimming pool. The swimming pool is only open during the summer day camp program which is operated by the Sullivan County YMCA. Approximately 200 children register for the seven week day camp session each summer. In 2010 the Monticello MAFCO-Football league created a youth football field in the south end of the park with lights and bleachers. The Town is currently adding new signage and hiking/cross-country ski trails and repairing storm and wind damage on the east side of Town Park Road.

2.2 Village of Monticello Parks and Recreation Facilities

2.2.1 Dillon Park and Pool

The Village of Monticello owns and operates Dillon Park, a 13.6 acre community park located in the Town of Thompson on the south side of Dillon Road. The park includes a 5 acre pond and fishing dock, a pavilion, gazebo, barbecue pits, picnic area, basketball court, playground with tire swing and slide, skate park, and a 30' x 60' swimming pool. The pool is open during July and August from noon to 7 p.m. with free admission.

2.2.2 De Hoyos Memorial Park and Pond

The Village of Monticello owns and operates De Hoyos Park and Pond, a community park located on Hay Street at the west end of the Village. The park is comprised of two parcels. The main recreation parcel is 11.5 acres and includes a pavilion, barbeque pit, toddler playground and older child playground, 6 tennis courts (in poor condition), a 2 acre pond stocked with fish, frogs and turtles, walking trails around the pond, a scenic overlook and ice skating. The park also includes a 13.6 acre wooded parcel at the west end of Hay Street which is undeveloped.

2.2.3 Ted Stroebele Recreation Center

The Ted Stroebele Center serves the Village as a community center rather than a recreation facility. It houses the Parks and Recreation Department offices, Village Court, Meals on Wheels program, Senior Citizen activities, and community meeting rooms.

2.3 Monticello Central School District (MCSD) Recreational Facilities

MCSD athletic fields and indoor recreation facilities are not open for general public use but may be rented by community groups when not scheduled for classes, practice or games by district sports teams. School affiliated groups, volunteer non-profit community groups, government agencies and local scouting organization are exempt from rental fees. Other organizations and youth groups have special contractual agreements with the district or have a reduced fee

schedule. The Village Recreation Department currently uses the MCSD gyms for free K-5 indoor recreation programs.

2.3.1 Monticello High School and Robert J. Kaiser Middle School Campus

The High School and Middle School campus includes a football field, baseball field, two softball fields, four soccer fields and track and field facilities. The ball and soccer fields are rented out to community groups during the entire outdoor season. The Monticello Little League uses the High School fields 1 and 2 for their six divisions: T-Ball, Rookie, Minors Softball, Minors Baseball, Majors Softball, and Majors Baseball. The Mamakating-Monticello AYSO uses the High School soccer field.

2.3.2 Somerville Athletic Field

MCSD recreation facilities at Somerville Field include a soccer/football field with bleachers and lights, softball field, track and field facilities, and two tennis courts.

2.3.3 Kenneth L. Rutherford Elementary School

Recreation facilities include two softball fields, basketball courts, a soccer field and two playground areas.

2.3.4 George L. Cook Elementary School

Recreation facilities include a baseball field, soccer field, miscellaneous courts and two playground areas.

2.4 New York State Forest Land

2.4.1 Wolf Brook Multiple Use Area

The Wolf Brook Multiple Use Area is a regional park comprised of 585 acres of NYS Forest Lands that are located entirely within the Town of Thompson just southwest of Wolf Lake. The area is accessible by north and south parking areas on Wolf Brook Road. The park features 1.9 miles of trails and unpaved roads open for hiking, horseback riding, cross-country skiing and biking. Trout fishing is available on the Wolf Pond Brook and Mullet Brook which are tributaries of the Neversink River. There are no designated campsites but primitive camping is allowed. Hunting and trapping are permitted during appropriate seasons.

2.4.2 Neversink River Unique Area

The Neversink River Unique Area is a regional park that includes 6,580 acres of NYS State Forest Land. Approximately 570 acres lie within the Town of Thompson, with the remaining 6,000 acres in the Town of Forestburg. The park is a hiking and fishing destination and includes a spectacular gorge and two major waterfalls. There are 11 acres of trails in the Neversink Area open for hiking, cross-country skiing and biking, including 1.6 miles within the Town of Thompson. Parking is available at the Katrina Falls trailhead. Canoeing, hunting, fishing, and trapping are permitted. The Nature Conservancy designated the Neversink River as one the 76 “Last Great Places” and the river is considered the birthplace of American dry fly fishing.

3.0 Existing Private Recreational Facilities

3.1 Rock Hill Park

In 2014 the Rock Hill Business and Community Association and the Rock Hill Fire Department constructed a new park on land adjacent to the Fire House on Glen Wild Road. Rock Park includes “Frog Field,” a softball field with lights and bleachers, a soccer field and a community playground with swing sets, seesaws and a firetruck. The total park area is approximately 4 acres. Frog Field is the home of the Sullivan County Slo-Pitch League and the soccer field is used by the Mamakating/Monticello AYSO.

3.2 Fireman’s Camp

The Monticello Fire Department owns the 4.4 acre Fireman’s Camp and 128 acre Sackett Lake parcel in the Town of Thompson. The camp is open to Monticello Fire Department families and is also open to the public during special sponsored events. The camp includes a beach area for boating and fishing, a playground, camp sites, gazebo, and a pole barn with kitchen.

3.3 YMCA of Sullivan County

The YMCA of Sullivan County recently opened a new Environmental Exploration Center on a 155 site on Wild Turnpike in Rock Hill. It includes a 3,000 square foot facility offering family based fitness classes, outdoor education, youth programs, and a summer environmental camp. The site includes a nature play area, low ropes course, archery, volleyball field, waterfront for boating and fishing, hiking trails, and snowshoeing.

3.4 Holiday Mountain Ski and Fun Park

Formerly owned and operated by the Town of Thompson, the 160 acre Holiday Mountain is now a commercial family sports center. Skiing, snowboarding and tubing are offered during the winter months and summer activities including go-carts, mini golf and rock climbing.

3.5 Private Homeowners Associations

Most Homeowners Associations in the Town of Thompson offer recreational facilities for members. Typical amenities include a clubhouse, swimming pool, tennis courts and walking trails. Several of the largest communities are located near the eastern Town boundary:

- **Lake Louise Marie –**

Lake Louise Marie is one of two residential lake communities located near Lake Louise Marie, an approximately 300 acre non-motorboat lake in the southeastern section of the Town. The community was originally developed in the 1960s with small lots located between the northern shore of the lake and Route 17. It currently has approximately 256 homes with a few remaining building lots. A feature of the community is the “Lake Louise Marie County Club” which is operated by the homeowners’ association and includes an outdoor pool, swimming beach, playground, tennis courts, handball and basketball courts, dock area and lake access for non-lake front homeowners.

- **Emerald Green –**

Emerald Green is a 1,400 acre residential lake community developed in the 1970s which currently has over 629 homes and 300 remaining building lots. It surrounds three lakes (Lake Louise Marie, Treasure Lake and Davis Lake) totaling 330 acres of water and provides 55 acres of common grounds and recreational facilities. Recreational resources for residents include pocket parks, a clubhouse with gym, an outdoor pool, swimming beach, boating, fishing, tennis courts, indoor and outdoor basketball, and handball courts.

- **Wolf Lake –**

Wolf Lake is a residential community with 1,550 acres in the Town surrounding the Wolf Lake reservoir, a 380 acre non-motorboat lake. It was originally founded as a “forever wild” summer fishing and boating retreat with approximately 200 lots. Many of the cabins and bungalows have been winterized for year round occupancy. There is a clubhouse and community beach and the surrounding land can be used for hiking, hunting, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing and ATVing.

- **Wanaksink Lake Club –**

The Wanaksink Lake Club, founded in 1935, owns a private 300 acre non-motorboat lake. It is surrounded by 300 lots with lakeside cottages and some larger homes, many of which have been winterized and upgraded for year round use. Amenities include a clubhouse, community beach and tennis court.

3.5 Private Camps, Cottages and Bungalows

According to Sullivan County 2016 Real Property Service (RPS) records there are 167 parcels in the Town classified as Property Class Code 417 (Camps, Cottages and Bungalows) covering 2,577 acres. In addition 9 parcels are classified as 580s (Camps, Camping Facilities and Resorts) covering a total of 913 acres. Most of these facilities provide recreational areas for use of their residents.

3.6 Private Forest Lands

According to 2016 RPS records there are 22 parcels in the Town of Thompson classified as Property Class Code 920 (Private Hunting and Fishing Clubs) covering a total of 2,050 acres.

4.0 Population and Housing Trends

4.1 United States Census

U.S. Census records for the Town of Thompson and Village of Monticello show that the Town experienced extremely rapid growth in the 1960s and 70s. Growth slowed during the following two decades and increased again between 2000 and 2010. The 2015 American Community Survey estimates that the County, Town and Village have experienced a slight decrease in population since 2010. **Table 4.1** shows the population trends in the County, Town and Village between 1960 and 2015.

Table 4.1 Population Trends 1960 – 2015

	1960 Census	1970 Census	1980 Census	1990 Census	2000 Census	2010 Census	2015 ACS Est.
Sullivan County	45,272	52,580	65,155	69,277	73,966	77,547	76,330
Population Change		7,308	12,575	4,122	4,689	3,581	-1,217
% Change		16.14%	23.92%	6.33%	6.77%	4.84%	-1.57%
Town of Thompson (incl Village)	8,792	11,418	13,479	13,711	14,189	15,308	15,098
Population Change		2,626	2,061	232	478	1,119	-210
% Change		29.87%	18.05%	1.72%	3.49%	7.89%	-1.37%
Village of Monticello	5,222	5,991	6,306	6,597	6,512	6,726	6,685
Population Change		769	315	291	-85	214	-41
% Change		14.73%	5.26%	4.61%	-1.29%	3.29%	-0.61%
Town of Thompson (excl Village)	3,570	5,427	7,173	7,114	7,677	8,582	8,413
Population Change		1,857	1,746	-59	563	905	-169
% Change		52.02%	32.17%	-0.82%	7.91%	11.79%	-1.97%

The U.S. Census population records do not reflect the seasonal population surge that the Town experiences each summer from the influx of people in vacation homes, bungalow colonies, resorts, camps and campgrounds. In order to get an estimate of the summer population the 2010 Census figures for the number of seasonal housing units (2,144) and average persons/household (2.45) were multiplied and added to the year-round population.

Table 4.2 2010 Census Seasonal Housing Units and Population

	Seasonal, Recreational or Occasional Use HU	Seasonal Population (2.45 Persons/HU)	2010 Census Population	Total Estimated Population
Town of Thompson (incl Village)	2,144	5,253	15,308	20,561
Village of Monticello	109	267	6,726	6,993
Town of Thompson (excl Village)	2,035	4,986	8,582	13,568

Table 4.2 indicates that the Town’s total 2010 summer population may have increased by about 5,253 persons (or approximately 34% of its year round population) to 20,561. If considering only the Town outside the Village, the summer population may have increased by about 4,986 persons (or approximately 58% of its year round population) to 13,568. Note that this is a very conservative estimate of the increase in the Town’s summer population.

4.2 Second Home Owners Study

Sullivan County conducted a Second Home Owner Study in 2008. According to tax roll data, second home owners in the County increased from 6,089 persons in 2001 to 10,085 persons in 2007, a 65% increase. The highest percentages of second homes were located in the Towns of Bethel (16.0%) and Thompson (14.7% or 1,482 homes.) A survey mailed to these second home owners had a 13.7% response rate. The typical respondent was between the ages of 55-74, married with no children at home, employed full-time, with a Bachelor’s degree or higher.

The 2016 Sullivan County RPS parcel data was checked to estimate the current number of second homes in the Town. There are 4,622 residential parcels (200s property class) of which 2,150 parcels have mailing addresses outside of the Monticello, Harris, Kiamesha Lake, Rock Hill, Glen Wild and Wurtsboro zipcodes. This correlates well with the 2010 Census figure of 2,144 seasonal, recreational or occasional use housing units.

4.2 Cornell Program on Applied Demographics

The Cornell Program on Applied Demographics (PAD) prepares population projections for New York State counties in 5 year intervals to 2040. PAD estimates that the population in Sullivan County will continue to rise from 77,547 persons in 2010 to a peak of 79,470 persons in 2055 before gradually declining. Note that these trends do not concur with current ACS estimates.

Figure 4.1 PAD Sullivan County Projections



5.0 Park Planning Guidelines

5.1 NRPA Guidelines

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) is a national, non-profit service organization dedicated to advancing parks, recreation and environmental efforts that enhance the quality of life for all. In 1996, the NRPA published the *Park, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines* which presented a model of typical park classifications as well as recommended service levels based on population. However, the NRPA determined that one set of standards does not fit all communities nationwide especially in urban areas. They recommended that each municipality develop customized Level of Service standards that reflect the specific conditions and unique nature of their community. The following NRPA Standards should therefore be viewed as general guidelines which can be customized by individual communities.

Table 5.1 NRPA Traditional Parkland Classifications

Type	Service Area Radius	Desirable Size	Acres/ 1000 residents	Site Characteristics and Facilities
Mini/Pocket Parks	< ¼ mile	< 1 acre	0.25 – 0.5 acres	Playground and/or passive recreation for specific groups such as tots or senior citizens. Easily walkable, typically no parking.
Neighborhood Parks	¼ - ½ mile	5 – 10 acres	1 – 2 acres	Serve surrounding neighborhoods with open space and facilities such as basketball courts, children’s play equipment and picnic tables.
Community Parks	1 – 2 miles	25+ acres	5 – 8 acres	May include areas for both intense and passive recreation such as athletic complexes, swimming pools, hiking trails and areas for viewing, sitting, and picnicking.
Regional Parks	Several Communities	200+ acres	5 – 10 acres	Contiguous with or encompassing natural resources.
Special Use Areas	No applicable standards	Variable	Variable	Area for specialized or single purpose recreation such as campgrounds, golf courses, etc.

Over the past few decades the general NRPA recommendation of a minimum of 10 acres of neighborhood/community parkland per 1,000 residents has become a common standard used by many communities. This metric currently remains relevant. The 2017 NRPA Agency Performance review indicates that the typical park and recreation agency has 9.6 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. Note that school district facilities and regional parks are not typically included in this calculation.

As noted in Section 4.1, the total estimated seasonal population in the Town of Thompson is approximately 20,561 persons. Based on the NRPA recommendation of 10 acres per 1,000 residents, the Town needs approximately 200 acres of public parkland to serve this population. As shown in **Table 5.2**, the Town of Thompson currently has just under 200 acres of public parkland, very close to the NRPA acreage guidelines.

Table 5.2 Town of Thompson / Village of Monticello Public Parks

Name	Type	Acres	Facilities
Thompson Town Park	Community	173	Community building, two pavilions, playground, swimming pool, picnic areas, hiking/cross country ski trails, football field, soccer/softball areas.
Dillon Park	Community	13.6	Pavilion, basketball court, skate park, playground, picnic areas, swimming pool, pond and fishing dock.
De Hoyos Park	Community	11.5	Pavilion, two playgrounds, tennis courts, pond, walking trail, ice skating
TOTAL		198.1	

NRPA traditional recommendations for the number of specific types of recreation facilities per population are shown in **Table 5.2**.

Table 5.2 Town of Thompson / Village of Monticello / MCSD Athletic Facilities

Facility Type	NRPA Standard per Population	Recommended for 20,000 Pop.	Existing Quantity
Baseball Field	1 per 5,000	4	2
Softball Field	1 per 5,000 <i>(if also used for youth baseball)</i>	4	6
Basketball Court	1 per 5,000	5	3
Football Field	1 per 20,000	1	3
Playgrounds	1 per 2,000	10	9
Soccer fields	1 per 10,000	2	9
Swimming Pools	1 per 20,000	1	2
Tennis Courts	1 per 2,000	10	8
Track	1 per 20,000	1	2

6.0 Findings

The Study incorporates the identification of existing public parks and recreational facilities including those owned by the Town of Thompson, Village of Monticello, Monticello Central School District, and State of New York. In addition, a number of large private recreational resources are identified. The Study provides a description of population trends and park planning guidelines.

The Study documents a relationship between the current publicly available parks and recreational facilities and the current estimated peak summer population. The estimated summer population in the Town is 20,561 persons and there are currently just under 200 acres of public park land. This closely matches the traditional NRPA metric of 10 acres per 1,000 residents. Thus current facilities are adequate to serve the current estimated summer population.

Furthermore, the Study identifies the need for additional parks and recreation facilities to support recreational demands in the areas of baseball, basketball, playgrounds and tennis courts using NRPA Standards. On this basis, new residential development that will contribute population growth, whether year-round or seasonal, will create a demand for parks and recreational facilities in addition to those that exist presently.

Thus, new residential development should be reviewed by the Town Planning Board on an individualized basis to determine if suitable park and/or recreational facilities of adequate size to meet the demands of the new population associated with the development can be located on the site of the new residential development. If such facilities cannot be located on-site, pursuant to Town Law §277, the Town Planning Board may require a sum of money in lieu of park land on site, in an amount established by the Town Board. Any monies required by the Planning Board in lieu of land for park, playground or other recreational purposes shall be deposited in a trust fund to be used by the Town exclusively for park, playground and other recreational purposes, including the acquisition of property.

Review and updating of the acreage and type of parks and recreational facilities as well as population trends is recommended on a five to ten year basis, depending on the availability of new datasets to support informed comparisons of population to parks and recreational facilities.