





## CHAPTER F Needs Assessment

### Community Needs

This chapter documents the needs that influence the types and number of parks, recreation facilities, and trails that are needed in the community. The needs assessment phase of the Parks and Recreation master plan documents the demand for services from current and future residents in association with the inventory of existing facilities (Chapter E) and highlights potential areas of shortfall or oversupply. This will in turn give direction to future master plan recommendations. Identifying levels of satisfaction, perceptions, use patterns, and priorities for recreational programs and facilities through contact with the user public was an important part of this process. Accurately assessing the needs of the community requires a diverse approach, using many different techniques to gather information. Collectively, the data from these various sources creates a picture of what is needed and desired within Dedham, and can serve as the basis from which to develop a list of projects, priorities and actions, which will be the next step in this planning process. Each technique used in this process provides valuable information, but the data from any one technique should not be viewed in isolation and without comparing the needs to the Mission, Vision, Goals, and Objectives of the community.

Areas of the community that do not have convenient, safe access to neighborhood parks were identified in Chapter C. Chapter C includes population and growth projections and demographic characteristics in Dedham. This chapter and chapter D (Programming) summarize a comparison of peer communities and national standards to determine the levels of service they provide for parkland, common recreation facilities, and recreation programming. The data set serves as a benchmark when determining the levels of service that are appropriate for Dedham.

Recreational preferences and the level of demand for additional park amenities and recreational opportunities are also addressed in this chapter. Pertinent information from national databases on recreation participation levels and data from the Massachusetts State Outdoor Recreation Plan 2012 have been considered. Two public open houses were held to solicit input from the general public, and a community wide survey with questions related to the master planning process and open space was made available to the public. Comments were also solicited from the public through a project website. Members from the local organizations, businesses, Dedham Schools, and town staff from various departments also participated in various meetings to help provide insight to the issues and needs present in the community. Additionally, interviews were conducted with representatives of other public and nonprofit recreation providers in Dedham to assess any specific needs their organizations may have.

Residents of Dedham care greatly about their parks and open space. Public participation as part of the master plan process was excellent with over 502+ responses to the public survey. The public workshops were well attended with 60+ people attending the initial workshop and approximately 150 attendants at the second workshop, filling the Oakdale School Gymnasium where survey findings were presented. A summary of the survey findings can be found in the Towns updated Open Space and Recreation Plan.

Dedham residents largely participate in recreation activities similarly to Massachusetts and national trends. Residents of Dedham get their largest amount of recreation through fitness sports (walking, biking, jogging, aerobics etc.) National trends show us that while fitness sports and outdoor sports are popular amongst all age groups, individual and team sports are most popular for the Gen Z and Millennials population. In findings from the last Massachusetts Open Space and Recreation Survey found that, while participation in youth sports is high, there are exceptions for both baseball and softball which were mentioned less frequently in survey responses and have seen a decline at both the state and national level.

How residents of Dedham recreate and currently use their parks is an important piece of the needs analysis. Equally important is what the community Dedham sees as needs and/or demand for recreation opportunities in the future. Responses to the town wide survey were wide spread and included both active and passive forms of recreation. In correlation to how Dedham currently recreates respondents to the survey want more bike paths and walking and hiking trails in order to accommodate their largest form of recreation.

Based on public input, the OSRP and PR Master Plan Steering Committee interpreted the wide spread needs and aspirations of the community and summarized the key findings into four major community impact or benefit areas, environmental, social, economic and cultural. Subsequently, this group asked the community whether they had heard their voices and understood their needs correctly through a second public workshop. The interpretation of community needs provided a foundation on which the mission, vision and goals were established.



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Key findings of community needs and aspirations summarized as follows:

**Environmental:**

- There is an opportunity for DPR to take more of a role in the support of environmental stewardship and green practices.
- Residents use trails in parks and would like to have a connected system of trails, pathways and sidewalks throughout the Town and connecting open spaces.
- Residents want better management of natural resources and more environmental education on protection and restoration..
- Some residents would like to see more use of parks and open space for environmental education, programing and wildlife exploration opportunities.
- A large majority of residents would like to see better maintenance of existing park facilities, specifically athletic fields.

**Social:**

- The community expects DPR to help socially knit the community together and strengthen neighborhoods through communication and partnerships within the community.
- The community expects DPR to foster social equity and provide affordable and accessible programs and services in parks and facilities to serve all populations.
- The community needs adaptive and specialized programs and ADA accessible facilities for persons with disabilities.
- The community appreciates that safe parks can enhance public safety and build strong neighborhoods. Residents want their parks safe and clean.
- The community expects DPR to provide more programming for its adult and senior populations.
- The community expects DPR to provide more programming for its teen population.

**Economic:**

- Residents value community wellness and physical activities to keep them healthy and active.
- The community expects DPR to invest in the younger generation to reap longer-term fiscal, social and health benefits.
- Taxpayers/ voters expect DPR to be fiscally responsible.
- The community expects DPR to provide better and higher quality care of existing facilities.
- The community prefers free and self-directed opportunities in parks near their homes to keep them healthy.

**Cultural:**

- Parts of the community recognized that DPR can play a significant role in “place-making” and shaping a livable town through culture and heritage programs.
- The community appreciates special events and festivals like Dedham Day and the annual Flag Day Parade which make Dedham a fun and engaging place to live.

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## Level of Service

Level-of-service (LOS) standards are measures of the minimum amount of a public facility which must be provided to meet a community's basic needs and expectations. LOS measures are typically expressed as ratios of facility capacity to the number of users. For example, a community may set a standard for how many park acres are needed per 1000 population. Other examples of LOS representation are the Median Number of Residents per facility or amenity, or as a ratio of distance to a particular facility.

In Chapter E as part of a review of the DPR's existing facilities the recommendation was made to develop a park classification system within Dedham. That classification system allows DPR to assess the needs for particular facilities or amenities based on established measurements for each classification. The Table in Chapter E: (Parks and Recreation Land) summarizes proposed park classification systems. The following maps show the level of service as a ratio of distance for each of the classification types based on national standards for Towns of similar population. Deficiencies fall outside of the highlighted areas.

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# Town of Dedham Massachusetts



## Map 9 Level of Service

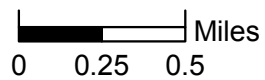
Environmental Justice Neighborhood

### Pedestrian/Bike Radius

- 1/2 Mile (Neighborhood Park)
- 2 Miles (Community Park)

### Ownership/Management

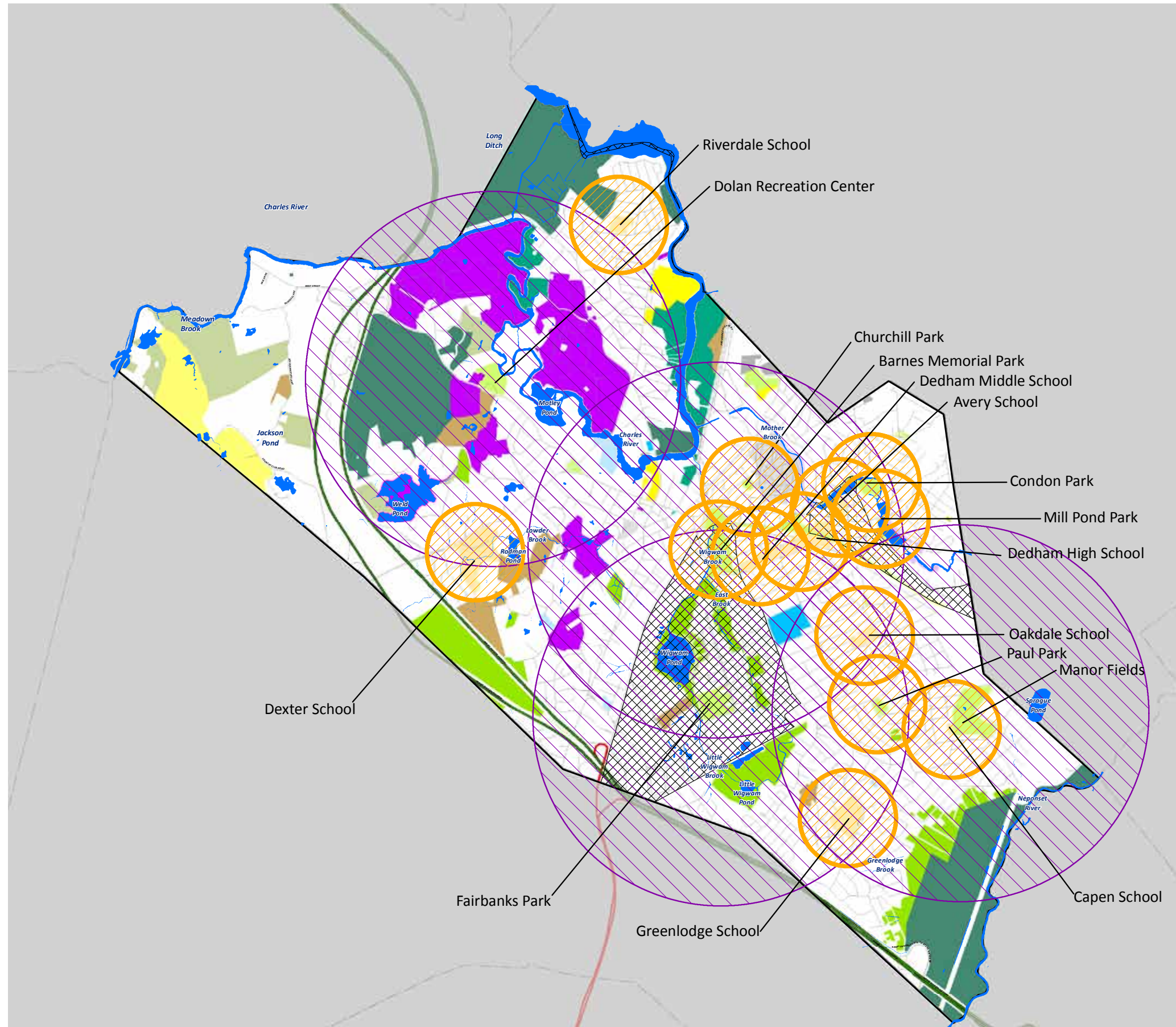
- US Army Corps of Engineers
- Private Undeveloped
- Private Cemetery/Church
- Private Conservation Org.
- Private Recreation
- Private School/Institution
- Commonwealth of MA (flood control)
- Commonwealth of MA (DCR)
- Town- Unassigned
- Town DPW (cemetery)
- Town Conservation Comm.
- Town Historical
- Town Parks & Recreation
- Public Schools
- Dedham Westwood Water District



Data Sources: Town of Dedham, MassGIS

This document is intended for  
Town of Dedham planning  
purposes only.

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Dedham Parks and Recreation manages portions of 22 parks including open spaces associated with schools and just over 188 acres of land. That is one park for every 1,147 residents and 7.45 acres for every 1,000 residents. Compared to national standards of 1 park for every 1,331 residents and 9.6 acres for every 1,000 residents.

In addition to the land areas managed by DPR there are a number of amenities and areas that provide unique experiences. In order to determine needs or deficiencies in park amenities, a diverse approach was used to collect both qualitative and quantitative data for comparison and evaluation.

The following table summarizes national standard for Median population per facility as part of annual survey conducted by National Parks and Recreation Association sent out to all participating communities.

<b>Facility</b>	<b>% of Communities Offering</b>	<b>National Std. Median Population per Facility</b>	<b>Facility per population Dedham</b>
Diamond Field Softball/Little League	68	6453	1401
Diamond Fields Adult Baseball	49	19226	12612
Playground	90	3633	2522
Basketball Court Outdoor	82	7430	5044
Tennis Court Outdoor	72	4375	8408
Multi-Use Field Rectangular Youth	45	6199	5044
Multi-use Field Rectangular Field Full Size	41	12226	8408
Multi-use Synthetic Turf Rectangular Full Size	11	34242	12612
Recreation Center	59	27591	25224
Gym	56	28856	25224
Swimming Pool Outdoor	53	33128	25224
Dog Park	52	425000	25224
Community Garden	45	31000	25224
Swimming Pool Indoor	8	47800	25224

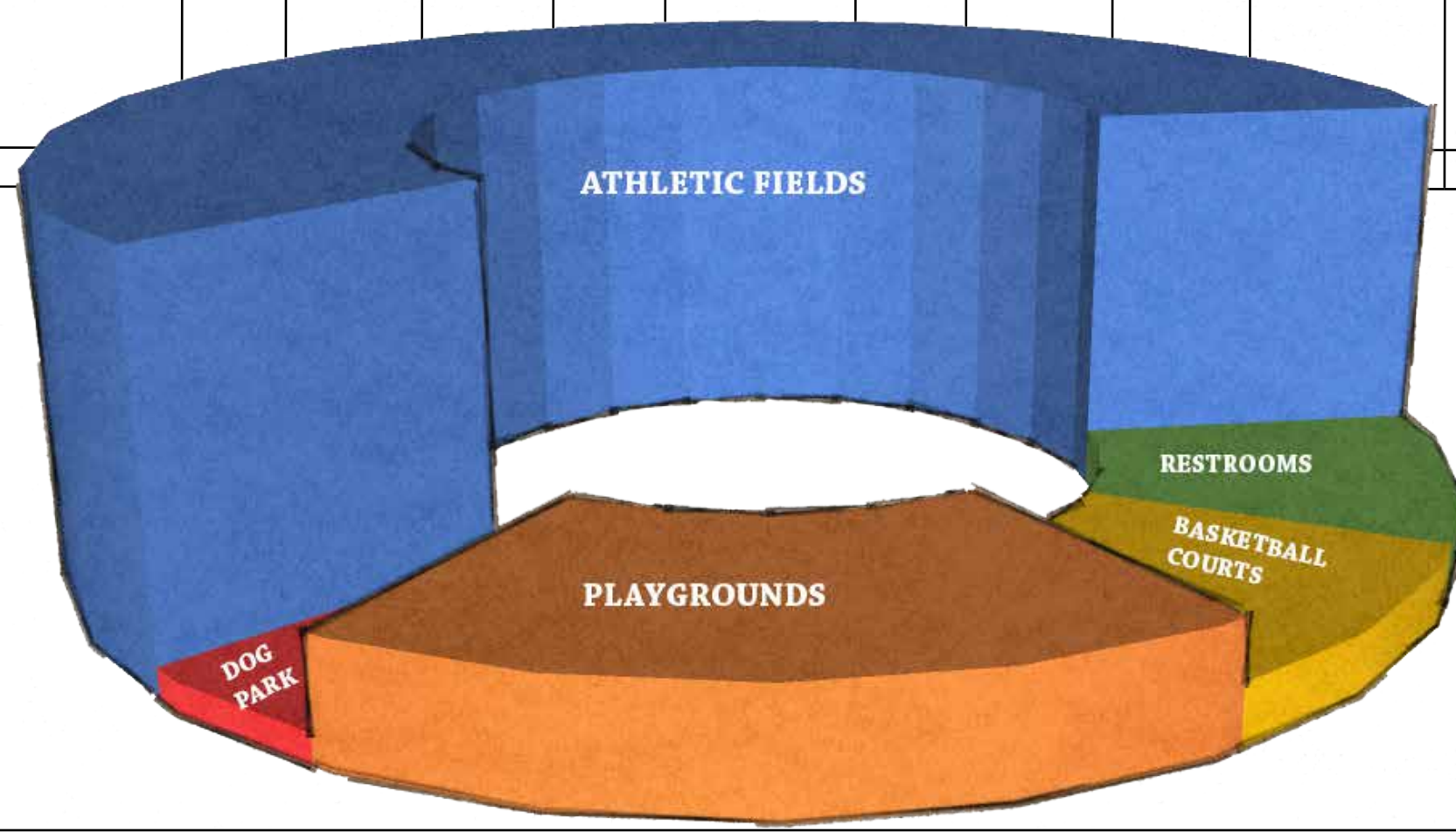
The tables show that DPR is generally meeting or exceeding its peers on a national scale when it comes to providing the most popular park amenities. Certain amenity areas such as picnic areas, restrooms and shelters were not included in the 2017 NPRA Agency Review, but these are areas in which DPR can improve. A large number of spaces and amenities are not accessible as defined by code, and while the spaces may be old enough to be grandfathered in, attempts should be made in the future to bring facilities up to code and reflect the mission of DPR. A full assessment of ADA components can be found in the appendix of the 2017 Open Space and Recreation Master Plan.

In the areas pertaining to athletic recreation spaces the town would seem to largely outperform its peers, providing more public athletic recreation spaces than the national average with the exception of football and lacrosse, which do not have dedicated facilities. However, members of the committee and the public believed that based on its participation numbers and quality of its athletic spaces that this comparison did not adequately reflect the community’s needs.



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	Churchill Park	Fairbanks Park	Condon Park	Dolan Center	Memorial Park	Gonzalez Field	Pool Field	Paul Park	Harnett Square	Former Landfill	Manor Fields	Oakdale Square	The Triangle	
Athletic Field Type	Softball	Little League/ Softball	Little League/ Softball	Softball	Baseball	Soccer	U-10 Soccer	Little League/ Softball		VACANT	VACANT			
# of Athletic Fields	1	3.5	1.5	1	3.5	1	1	1						13.5
Athletic Field Overlay	0	Soccer	Soccer	0	Multi-use	0	0	0						0
Basketball Court	1		0	0	0	0	0	1						2
Picnic Area	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0						0
Restrooms	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0						2
Structures or Shelters	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0						0
Playground	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	1						4
Trail System	None	None	None	Yes	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	
Dog Park	None	None	None	1	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	None	1
Skate Park	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	
*Note: Picnic Areas must be accessible as defined by ADA code														



The current trends in athletics were evaluated from a local, state, and national perspective to help better understand the need for additional athletic fields over the next 10+ years. Sources utilized as part of this analysis include: a questionnaire survey of the user groups; interactive workshops with representatives of the Town; participation statistics provided by the DPR; and participation statistics from the National Federation of High School Association (NFHS).

The evaluation from a national and state perspective provides a comprehensive understanding of the trends in athletics. Boys and girls lacrosse are the fastest growing sport from a national and state perspective among the sports that utilize the athletic fields included in the masterplan.

The user groups that participated in the questionnaire included representatives in the following sports: Dedham Youth Baseball, Dedham Girls Softball, Dedham Pop Warner Football, Dedham Boys Lacrosse, Dedham Youth Soccer, Dedham Youth Hockey, and Dedham Youth Basketball.

From interaction with the user groups in workshops and the questionnaire process it was noted there is consistently an issue with scheduling of the athletic open spaces and each group would prefer the ability to manage the schedule of certain spaces. It was also noted the maintenance, quality and overuse are major issues amongst both user groups and the general public. Most user groups agreed that some of the need for additional space could be addressed by improving the existing fields to provide a better natural turf playing surface.

Further evaluation was done to assess the quality and make up as well as the hours that each facility was used. After evaluation facilities were assigned a weighted value based on make up. The make up of each facility was defined by a combination of drainage characteristics, irrigation and surface treatment. The table below defines the weighted values.

Field Construction Type	Recommended Primary Use	Recommended Number Weekly Events	Avg Hours of Use Weekly
Synthetic	Game	25	37.5
Engineered/Irrigated	Game	18	27
Engineered/non irrigated	Game/Practice	13	19.5
Non Engineered/Irrigated	Practice Low Level Games	12	18
Non Engineered/Non Irrigated	Practice Only	9	13.5

Using the weighted values a capacity of hours was determined for each field over the course of both the Spring and Fall seasons. Use beyond the hours indicated per week or per season begins to degrade the playing surface excessively wearing out the vegetative cover and not allowing the field to recover properly.

Following the determination of a capacity for both spring and fall athletic seasons a demand was determined using a combination of the permit inventories provided by DPR and responses to the survey by each user group. Permitted hours and evaluations for each facility are shown in following table.

Spring Season April 1st-June 30th																				
	Avery Practice	Churchill Park	Capen School	Capone Field (Fairbanks Park)	Collins Field (Fairbanks Park)	Condon Park	Sugrue Field (Dolan Center)	Davis Field (Memorial Park)	Frietas Field (Fairbanks Park)	Gonzalez Field	Greenlodge School	Heaphy Field	Lowen Field	Lower Memorial Park	Nagle Field (Fairbanks Park)	Oakdale School	Pool Field	Paul Park	Sullivan (Memorial Park)	Riverdale School
Field Use	Soccer	Softball/Little League	Softball/U-10 overlay	Softball/Little League	Softball/Little League	Multi-use	Softball/Little League	Baseball	Soccer	Soccer	Multi-use	Baseball	Softball/Little League	Football/Soccer	Softball/Little-League	Multi-use	Soccer	Softball/Lit-	Softball/Lit-	Multi-use
Size	U-10	60'	60'	60	60	60	60	90	Full Size	Full Size	60	90	60	Full Size	60	60	Junior	60	60	60/Full Size
																Remove				
Recommendation			Full size multit-use																	
Dedham Youth Soccer			210			288			406	336				210		42	336			322
Dedham Youth Baseball				574	378	168		378			252	728			378	210		378		210
Dedham Girls Softball		322											322							75
Dedham Pop-warner																				
Dedham Youth Lacrosse																				
Dedham High School		82.5					105	174				133	105							90
Hub Softball						96														
Ursuline			105							105										
Socca Sista										24										
Mens Soccer																				
Rental																				168
		404.5	315	574	378	552	527	552	406	465	252	861	427	210	378	252	336	378	333	532
Spring Season Length 14wk avg	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14
Field Construction Type (1-5)	2	2	5	4	4	4	1	4	4	1	5	2	2	5	4	5	4	5	4	5
Capacity/wk	27	27	13.5	18	18	18	37.5	18	18	37.5	13.5	27	27	13.5	18	13.5	18	13.5	18	13.5
Avg HRs/wk		28.9	22.5	41.0	27.0	39.4	37.6	39.4	29.0	33.2	18.0	61.5	30.5	15.0	27.0	18.0	24.0	27.0	23.8	38.0
Capacity/season	378	378	189	252	252	252	525	252	252	525	189	378	378	189	252	189	252	189	252	189
Season Use		404.5	315	574	378	552	527	552	406	465	252	861	427	210	378	252	336	378	333	532

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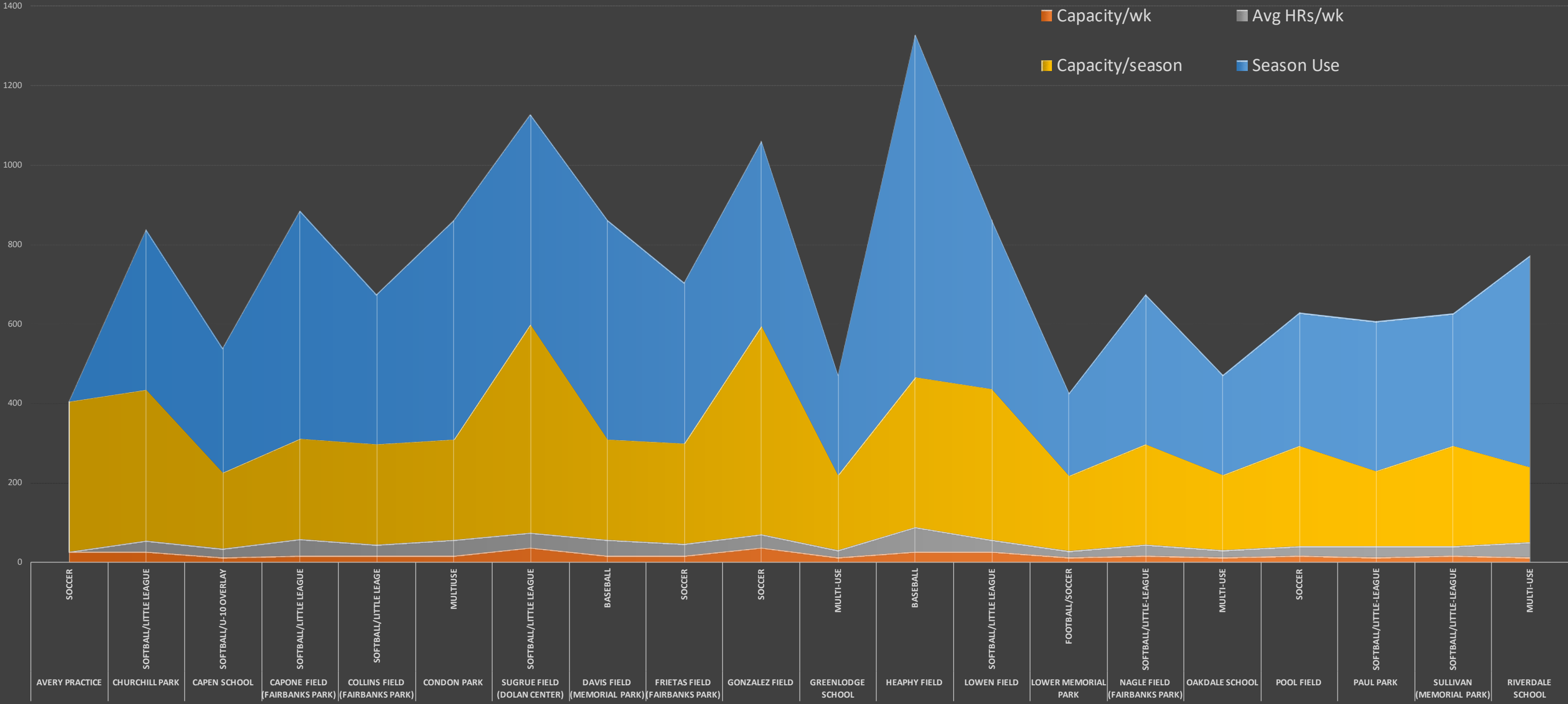
Spring	Total Hrs Over Capacity	New Engineered Irrigated Field x 14 wks	Fields Short (Demand)
Softball	630	378	1.67
Soccer	241	378	0.64
u-10	84	378	0.22
Football	0	378	1
Lacrosse	0	378	1
Baseball 90'	783	378	2.07
Little League	1060.5	378	2.81

The graph showing demand versus capacity portrays the amount that athletic fields in Dedham are over scheduled and overused compared to their capacity. A number of things can be done to help relieve capacity related issues. Improving grading, drainage, and natural turf surfaces for natural turf fields, are all recommendations to improve the quality and capacity of playing fields. However natural grass fields need to be rested, and allowed to recover, or degradation and failure of the surface will occur. DPR should develop a scheduling system with input from user groups that will allow for a more equitable reservation and division of athletic spaces. DPR should also revise its maintenance practices, limit hours of use to something closer to the facility's capacity and consider reorganization of spaces over time to alleviate capacity and align facilities with current trends and participation numbers.

Synthetic turf fields are another solution and an increasingly popular trend for athletic fields to address issues related to over-use, maintenance, and limited space. Synthetic turf generally has a lifecycle of 8-12 years with an unlimited amount of use. Sports lighting dramatically increases potential for use, extending playable hours past dark.

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# SPRING FIELD USAGE



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The graph for Athletic Field hours of use during the summer, shows a dramatic difference in hours of use as compared to the spring. There is still a significant amount of over use on certain fields. However based on user group interviews and survey information a portion of the hours of overuse are inflated based on the current permitting process. Baseball for example is reserving fields in blocks for use but may not be using all of those hours. The other observation that can be taken away from this data is that Dedham should be limiting hours per field and spreading out hours amongst facilities. None of the school little league fields are being used during the summer yet the little league fields at Fairbanks Park are dramatically overused and the baseball program is actually causing a significant amount of damage to fields that is necessary. Fairbanks Park fields should be used for games only during summer, and practices for little league should be spread among the remaining little league fields. The Dolan Center synthetic turf field should support the most little league/softball use of any single field in the system and it currently only supports half that of other little league fields. This graph also brings into question the plan for Manor Fields. While this Master Plan supports Manor Fields and its amenities it does not solve the dramatic over utilization of Heaphy and Davis fields.

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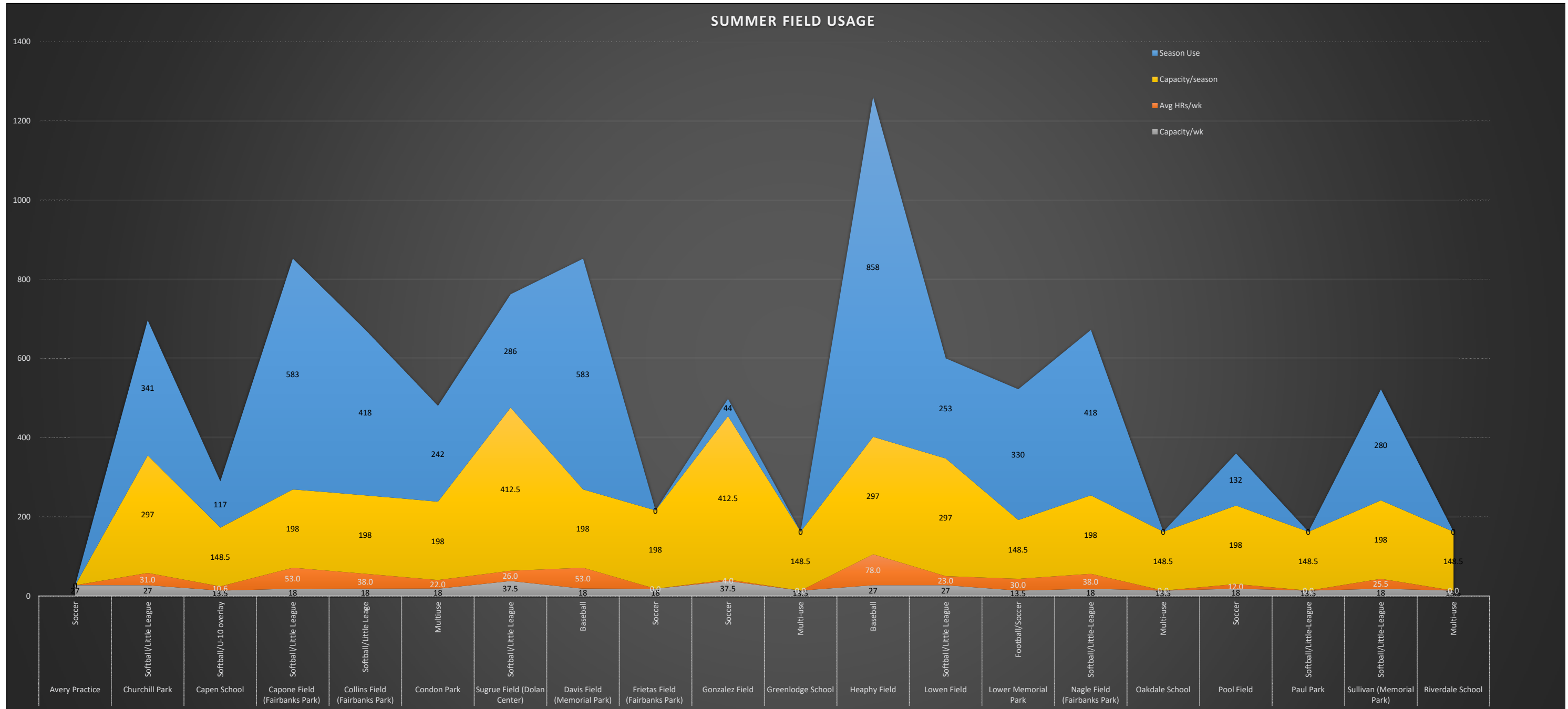
Summer Season June 1st-August 31st																				
	Avery Practice	Churchill Park	Capen School	Capone Field (Fairbanks Park)	Collins Field (Fairbanks Park)	Condon Park	Sugrue Field (Dolan Center)	Davis Field (Memorial Park)	Frietas Field (Fairbanks Park)	Gonzalez Field	Greenlodge School	Heaphy Field	Lowen Field	Lower Memorial Park	Nagle Field (Fairbanks Park)	Oakdale School	Pool Field	Paul Park	Sullivan (Memorial Park)	Riverdale School
Field Use	Soccer	Softball/Little League	Softball/U-10 overlay	Softball/Little League	Softball/Little League	Multiuse	Softball/Little League	Baseball	Soccer	Soccer	Multi-use	Baseball	Softball/Little League	Football/Soccer	Softball/Little-League	Multi-use	Soccer	Softball/Lit-	Softball/Little-League	Multi-use
Size	U-10	60'	60'	60	60	60	60	90	Full Size	Full Size	60	90	60	Full Size	60	60	Junior	60	60	60/Full Size
Recommendation			Full size multit-use																	
Dedham Youth Soccer																				
Dedham Youth Baseball				583	418			583				858			418					
Dedham Girls Softball		341				176	286						253							
Dedham Pop-warner														330			132			
Dedham Youth Lacrosse																				
Dedham High School																				
Hub Softball						66													280	
Rental			117							44										
		341	117	583	418	242	286	583	0	44	0	858	253	330	418	0	132	0	280	0
Spring Season Length 14wk avg	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14
Field Construction Type (1-5)	2	2	5	4	4	4	1	4	4	1	5	2	2	5	4	5	4	5	4	5
Capacity/wk	27	27	13.5	18	18	18	37.5	18	18	37.5	13.5	27	27	13.5	18	13.5	18	13.5	18	13.5
Avg HRs/wk		24.4	8.4	41.6	29.9	17.3	20.4	41.6	0.0	3.1	0.0	61.3	18.1	23.6	29.9	0.0	9.4	0.0	20.0	0.0
Capacity/season	378	378	189	252	252	252	525	252	252	525	189	378	378	189	252	189	252	189	252	189
Season Use		341	117	583	418	242	286	583	0	44	0	858	253	330	418	0	132	0	280	0







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Fall Season September 1st - November 15th																					
		Avery Practice	Churchill Park	Capen School	Capone Field (Fairbanks Park)	Collins Field (Fairbanks Park)	Condon Park	Sugrue Field (Dolan Center)	Davis Field (Memorial Park)	Frietas Field (Fairbanks Park)	Gonzalez Field	Greenlodge School	Heaphy Field	Lowen Field	Lower Memorial Park	Nagle Field (Fairbanks Park)	Oakdale School	Pool Field	Paul Park	Sullivan (Memorial Park)	Riverdale School
Field Use		Soccer	Softball/Little League	Softball/U-10 overlay	Softball/Little League	Softball/Little League	Multiuse	Softball/Little League	Baseball	Soccer	Soccer	Multi-use	Baseball	Softball/Little League	Football/Soccer	Softball/Lit-	Multi-use	Soccer	Softball/Lit-	Softball/Lit-	Multi-use
Size		U-10	60'	60'	60	60	60	60	90	Full Size	Full Size	60	90	60	Full Size	60	60	Junior	60	60	60/Full Size
Recommendation				Full size multit-use																	
Dedham Youth Soccer										217	132	75					90	119			75
Dedham Youth Baseball					372								40			234					
Dedham Girls Softball							90	130						70							
Dedham Pop-warner															75						
Dedham Youth Lacrosse																					
Dedham High School							150			175	90				180			210			67.5
Mens Soccer																					
Rental											48										63
			0	0	372	0	240	130	0	392	270	75	40	70	255	234	90	329	0	63	142.5
Spring Season Length 14wk avg		14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	14
Field Construction Type (1-5)		2	2	5	4	4	4	1	4	4	1	5	2	2	5	4	5	4	5	4	5
Capacity/wk		27	27	13.5	18	18	18	37.5	18	18	37.5	13.5	27	27	13.5	18	13.5	18	13.5	18	13.5
Avg HRs/wk			0.0	0.0	26.6	0.0	17.1	9.3	0.0	28.0	19.3	5.4	2.9	5.0	18.2	16.7	6.4	23.5	0.0	4.5	10.2
Capacity/season		378	378	189	252	252	252	525	252	252	525	189	378	378	189	252	189	252	189	252	189
Season Use			0	0	372	0	240	130	0	392	270	75	40	70	255	234	90	329	0	63	142.5

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Fall athletic field usage shows similar trends to the summer usage. While there is some need for rectangular sports fields to support usage by soccer, football and lacrosse, the biggest trend continues to show the over use of baseball fields. Hours can be spread amongst little league facilities for baseball in the fall specifically where you have shorter days and shorter windows of usage without lighting. The amount of time spent in hours of use per participant in baseball far exceeds that of any other sport. This master plan does not support the addition of little league fields to the Dedham parks system but rather encourages a permitting system that is both fair and supportive of baseball but limits use of facilities in order to preserve the facilities in the long term future. Steps take by DPR to renovate Gonzalez Field and the continued to support Manor Fields will go a long way in the support of rectangular multi-use field space. Based on participation information collected in this master plan and future trends, Dedham should have enough multi-use field space to support its programming in the near future with the addition of Manor Fields. Future planning of school yards and the former landfill should further study the need for an additional full size baseball field to support usage trends.

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