

Parks and Recreation



GOALS:

- A. Provide a broad array of high-quality recreational opportunities year round for Sodus residents of all ages and interests.
- B. Provide a network of multi-use recreational trails within the Town of Sodus.

Existing Recreational Facilities and Programs

Myers Memorial Park – This Village park is located on the southwest corner of the intersection of Main and Gaylord Streets adjoining the municipal parking lot. The park, developed in 2000, is a small passive park with park benches, decorative street lights and flower beds. The park is named after Myers Community Hospital. The original hospital stood on the lot.

Lighthouse Park – This Town park is located on Sodus Bay in the Village of Sodus Point. The park contains picnic tables and a historic lighthouse with a museum operated by the Sodus Bay Historical Society. The Historical Society also sponsors “Sundays in the Park” concert programs at the park during the summer months.

Harriman Park – This Town Park is located at the intersection of Route 14 and Margaretta Road and abuts Sodus Bay. The park contains a public boat launch and park benches.

Sodus Point Park - The park, situated across the street from the Sodus Point Village Hall, is owned and maintained by the Town of Sodus. The park is simply an open green space with no improvements.

Sodus Center Park – Located adjacent to Salmon Creek, this Town park is on the corner of the intersection of South and Main Streets in the Hamlet of Sodus Center. The park contains a swing set, picnic shelters and tables and a privy.

Sodus Point Beach – The park, owned and maintained by Wayne County, provides Sodus residents with access to Lake Ontario for wading, swimming and boating. In addition to the sand beach, the park contains a bathhouse/lifeguard shelter, concession stand, picnic pavilion, and a cottage that serves as a substation for the Sheriff’s marine patrol. Wayne County provides life guards from Independence Day through Labor Day. The boat launch is open for public use in the spring and fall, but is closed to boaters between Memorial Day and Labor Day due to parking space limitations.

Wayne County was awarded a \$750,000 grant in 2003 to make improvements to Sodus Point Beach. The bathhouse and Sheriff’s marine patrol substation will be razed and replaced with a single building that will serve as a bathhouse, marine patrol substation and lifeguard headquarters. The exact location of the new facility has not yet been determined. Other improvements will include the construction of a greenway path along the former trolley right-of-way

to link the lakeside park to downtown Sodus Point. Construction of the improvements is scheduled for 2005.

Willow Park – The Village of Sodus Point owns and maintains this park located on Bay Street in Sodus Point. The park contains a playground and a newly constructed skate/skateboard park.

Sodus Recreation – Sodus Recreation is a private, not-for-profit organization in existence since the early 1930s. The organization plans, schedules and provides youth and adult recreational activities for Sodus youth and adults. The nine member board of directors is comprised of the Recreation Director, two Village of Sodus residents, five Town residents, a Village Trustee and a Town Councilman. Although Sodus Recreation hires and supervises a part-time, paid staff, the Town of Sodus pays their salaries.

During July and August, Sodus Recreation runs a 5-week summer youth recreation program. Approximately 450 youth participated during the summer of 2004, up from the 356 participants in 2003. The program provides a wide spectrum of activities for youth ages 3-14. Activities include arts and crafts, dance and drama, tennis, soccer and track. Sodus Recreation also provides a swim program in which more than 100 children participate annually. Sodus Central School District facilities are used for many of the programs. The public beach on Lake Ontario at Sodus Point is used for the summer swim program. A fee of \$10.00 is charged for participation in the recreation programs, and an additional \$10.00 fee is charged for arts and crafts participants to cover the cost of materials and supplies.

Sodus Recreation also provides other year-round youth and adult recreational programs and activities. These include: junior wrestling, swimming lessons and competitive swimming, co-ed volleyball, men's and youth basketball. Sodus Central School District facilities are used for these programs and activities. Sodus Recreation supervises the public's use of the School District's weight and exercise room as well.

Sodus Little League – The Sodus Little League is a volunteer organization that operates a boys baseball and a girls softball league for youth ages 5-15. Although volunteers organize the league and coach the teams, umpires are paid for their services. Approximately 200 youth participate annually in the program which runs from April through July. Little League baseball games are played on two combination baseball-softball fields and a softball-only field adjacent to the Wallington Fire Hall on Wallington Fire Department property. Little League volunteers developed and maintain the fields and constructed a concession stand on the site. The program relies on business donations and participant registration fees for its operating funds.



Residents Survey Highlights

Parks and Recreation

48.8% of survey respondents strongly agreed and 29.5% somewhat agreed that it is important to provide additional recreational opportunities for the youth of the community.

The following results were obtained when respondents were asked what types of recreational facilities and programs should be provided or improved:

- 51.1% expressed support for a supervised youth recreation center
- 48.2% express support for an outdoor ice skating, rollerblading, and skateboarding facility.
- 27.8% expressed support for more parks
- 24.2% expressed support for more playgrounds and playground equipment

Survey questions about support for the development of various types of trails resulted in the following results:

- Bicycle Trails - 60.3% strongly support and 25.1% somewhat support
- Pedestrian Trails - 56.4% strongly support and 29.2% somewhat support

Sodus Soccer – Sodus Soccer is a volunteer organization that operates a traveling soccer league for boys and girls ages 11-18. Approximately 120 youth participate annually. Participants must meet Sodus Central School District eligibility requirements. The league is organized and operated by volunteers, but referees are paid. The program begins during the spring school break and ends in the first week of August. Two adult teams were organized for students who have graduated from high school and who will or are playing soccer at the college level.

Office of Aging and Youth (OFAY) is a Wayne County governmental department. Funding provided by New York State for youth programs is administered by OFAY which passes funding through to towns and villages. OFAY provides financial assistance to the: Sodus Youth Venture, (2) Sodus Recreation and (3) Sodus Point Youth Recreation Center.

OFAY operates the Sodus Point Beach program. The program includes swimming instruction provided by Red Cross certified swimming instructors. A new Sheriff's substation and lifeguard building will be constructed in 2005 which is expected to result in more beach space on the bay side of the peninsula.

OFAY also provides recreational programs for senior citizens. During the summer months, OFAY provides an assortment of senior activities at The Sodus Point lighthouse including craft fairs and music concerts. OFAY also provides congregate meals, Mondays through Fridays, at the Sodus United Third Methodist Church in the Village of Sodus. In addition to the meal, the programs includes social, cultural, recreational and educational activities.

Sodus Point Youth Center – The Youth Center is owned and operated by the Village of Sodus Point principally for the benefit and enjoyment of Sodus Point youth, but youth from the Town and Village of Sodus are also welcome to participate. The youth center has a paid staff who provide supervision and who plan and carry out various recreational programs and activities. During the summer months outdoor activities predominate which include sports and games, arts and crafts activities and field trips. During the school year, the youth center operates as a supervised youth drop-in center where youth can go after school or in the evening to play video games, shoot basketballs and/or to socialize with friends.

Beechwood State Park – The park, 175 acres in size, is located along Lake Ontario. New York State purchased the land in 1999 from the Girl Scouts which had used the parcel as a summer camp. The NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) is preparing a master plan for the park which is expected

to be completed by 2007. The small size of the parcel and its physical attributes will limit the type and scale of facilities that can be incorporated into the park. OPRHP would like to park's facilities to complement rather than duplicate the facilities available in the adjoining community. One possibility OPRHP is considering is developing the park principally for lodging and camping.

PRIVATE RECREATIONAL FACILITIES

Sodus Bay Heights Golf Club – The golf club operates a semi-private golf course located along Route 14 immediately south of the Village of Sodus Point. The facility contains an 18-hole golf course, a pro shop and a restaurant and banquet facility. The golf course is open seasonally April through October. The restaurant, which is also open to the public, operates seasonally from Good Friday through mid November.

Brantling Ski and Snowboard Center – The ski center is a small ski facility primarily serving beginning skiers and is located approximately three miles south of the Village of Sodus on Fish-farm Road. The center is comprised of a six small downhill slopes with a T-bar ski tow. The center also contains a ski lodge with a kitchen and bar, but no overnight lodging accommodations. The ski center also has a ski accessories shop.

The Mill Street Youth Center – The youth center is located on Mill Street in the “old mill”, a few doors down from the Municipal Building. Scarlet Thread Ministries operates the youth center which is funded through donations provided by areas churches and individuals. Currently (2005) the center is open on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 2:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. and serves youths ages 6 through 12.

The center is equipped with a pool table, ping pong table, foosball table and Play Stations with big screen TV. In addition to providing students with a safe and supervised place to drop-in after school to socialize with friends, the center sponsors a “coffee house” with entertainment periodically on Friday nights and a youth worship service on Thursday evenings. The Scarlet Thread Ministries hopes that the Mill Street Youth Center, when fully operational, will serve as a model for the establishment of similar youth centers elsewhere in Wayne County.

Residents Survey Highlights *continued*

- *Equestrian trails – 25.5% strongly support and 25.9% somewhat support. A large percentage (23.5%) expressed no opinion or a neutral opinion*
- *Snowmobile trails – 26.4% strongly support and 27.8% somewhat support, but 21.6% strongly oppose and 11.8% somewhat oppose*
- *All-terrain vehicle trails – 20.6% strongly support and 20.0% somewhat support, but 31.1% strongly oppose and 12.8% somewhat oppose*

Issues and Opportunities

Lack of a Community Park

Many municipalities have large community parks. Often such parks contain several types of improvements and facilities that provide residents of all ages and different interests with various opportunities for passive and active recreational pursuits. Unfortunately, the Town and Village of Sodus lack such a community park. The lack of such a community park may contribute to the problem of youth loitering in the downtown business district.

Other Issues and Opportunities

See the *Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources Group Discussion Highlights* section of this chapter for the issues and opportunities that were identified and discussed during the focus group meeting.



Existing Plans and Programs

Wayne County Recreationway Plan

The Wayne County Recreationway Plan is an outgrowth of the Genesee Transportation Council's (GTC) Regional Trails Initiative (RTI) completed in 2002. The purpose of the RTI is to address the need for cooperative trail planning efforts in the region. The Genesee Transportation Council is responsible for transportation planning for the nine-county Genesee-Finger Lakes region. The Regional Trails Initiative presents a strategy for expanding the existing trail network at the municipal level while supporting region trail system connectivity and accessibility.

The RTI identifies the following trail projects in Wayne County for "near term implementation:"

1. Wallington to Sodus Point Trail—This 3-mile long,, multi-use trail will be constructed on an abandoned railroad bed owned by Wayne County.

2. Route 104 Corridor Trail—This trail is divided into two segments, i.e., the 10-mile segment between the Town of Ontario and the Village of Sodus and the 14-mile segment between the Villages of Sodus and Wolcott. This multi-use trail will be constructed along the Route 104 corridor within the highway right-of-way and/or along the Ontario Midland railroad bed.

Part of the funding for the construction of the trails will be provided the Transportation Enhancements Program (TEP). TEP is a State-administered, federal transportation program that provides federal funding for non-traditional transportation projects.

Sodus Bay Waterfront Initiative

In 2001, faculty and students of the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry worked with Town of Sodus, Town of Huron and Village of Sodus Point officials and members of the community to develop a "vision plan" for the Sodus Bay area. One of the objectives the visioning plan calls for is the development of a comprehensive trail system that links residential, commercial, public land and points of interests within the area adjoining the bay. The recommended trail system would support walking and bicycling and would not only link resources within the bay area, but would also be extended to connect to the regional trail system.

Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources Focus Group Discussion Highlights

The Sodus Comprehensive Plan *Committee* (CPC) conducted a parks, recreation and cultural resources focus group meeting on September 20, 2004. The following recreation people participate in the meeting and discussion:

- Gretchen DePoint and Michael Madison – Sodus Recreation
- Penny Schockley – Wayne County Office of Aging and Youth
- Jim Gray – Sodus Soccer
- Bob Burlee, Sodus Little League
- Carol Garland, Sodus Free Library
- Eric Graves – Sodus Point Youth Recreation Center

Recreational Issues and Opportunities

During the focus group meeting, the following recreational issues and concerns were identified:

1. Residents may be unaware of or have difficulty obtaining information about the various youth sports programs offered in the community as there is no centralized source for obtaining information. In addition, each youth sports organization prepares its schedule independently and without regard to scheduling conflicts for youth who may participate in more than one sport. The formation of an umbrella committee to serve as a clearinghouse for youth sports information and to facilitate communication and coordination among the youth sports organizations would help to remediate these problems.
2. A centralized, shared youth sports facility containing baseball, softball and soccer fields and a concession stand would better enable the sports organizations to provide youth sports programming. Such a facility would be easier to maintain and would make it more cost effective to provide lighting to extend the time during which the sports fields could be used.
3. Young couples tend to move out of the area when they start families due, in part, to the limited youth recreational facilities and programs.
4. Although Sodus Central School District facilities are used to some extent by community organizations for their youth sports programs, school sponsored programs and activities preempt other activities and limit the amount of time school facilities are available for use by community organizations.
5. Youth sports organizations rely heavily on business donations for their funding. As there are a small number of local businesses and as these businesses have limited funds, they are not always able to donate as much or as frequently as requested.

6. *A supervised, youth center with sports facilities (e.g., basketball courts) is needed in Sodus. Adolescents need a place away from their homes where they can socialize and recreate with other youth and their friends. A youth center is especially needed for youth whose home life is stressful and/or not nurturing and supportive.*
7. *If the Town and/or Village establish a youth center, high-quality supervision and a paid staff are essential to its success. Supervisory staff needs to be firm and fair to garner the respect and cooperation of the youth who would use such a facility. Although community volunteers can provide much assistance, volunteers should not be used in place of paid staff as they are not always reliable, do not always have the aptitude or ability to supervise and communicate with youth, and often have difficulty enforcing rules and regulations consistently.*
8. *Not all youth want to participate in organized activities and sports programs. A youth center would provide such youth with a place to go to occupy their time constructively. A youth center would help to cut down on youth loitering on the streets and youths getting into trouble.*
9. *A lack of transportation presents a barrier to some youths who would like to participate in organized sporting programs and activities, but who have no means of conveyance to and from the sports facilities.*
10. *A program to assist teenagers to obtain part-time employment would be beneficial. Work experience is important as it teaches teenagers responsibility while providing them with a means to earn money.*
11. *The library has a very limited amount of off-street parking space behind the building. The limited amount of parking space limits the public's accessibility to the library.*
12. *The Sodus Little League has difficulty scheduling its games due to the high levels of enrollment and resulting large number of teams. Lighting is needed for the Little League fields so that the ball fields may be used later in the evenings and more games may be scheduled.*
13. *The amount of time Sodus Little League volunteers spend maintaining baseball and softball fields reduces the amount of time they have available for coaching and training the Little League teams. The Sodus Little League would like Town assistance in the maintenance of the ball fields.*

Tools and Techniques

Community Recreation Centers – Community recreation centers provide youths with a safe and supervised environment where they are less likely to get into trouble. The Mill Street Youth Center represents a fledgling effort by area churches to provide a faith-based youth center. The Mill Street Youth Center may become much effective at reducing youth loitering and juvenile delinquency as it becomes more established.

Other Wayne County communities have established community recreation and/or youth centers that provide useful models. These include: the Sodus Point Youth Recreation Center, the Palmyra Community Center, and the Red Creek Community Center. Each facility and the programs offered are unique.

Sources of Grant Funding

The NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) administers the Environmental Protection Fund and Clean Water / Clean Air Bond Act grant programs. Both programs provide grant funds to assist municipalities to acquire and develop land for recreational purposes. Not-for-profit corporations are also eligible provided the project funded is open to the public.

Both grant programs provide up to 50% of project funding and require a local match for the remainder of the funding. Local matches may be in the form of cash, in-kind service, donated labor and materials, or recently acquired property. These grant programs are very competitive and typically provide limited amounts of funding for projects.

Steps to Developing a Community Park

1. *Identify vacant parcels of land in or adjacent to the Village of Sodus with the potential to be developed into a community park.*
2. *Evaluate each parcel with regard to size, cost, appropriateness of location and potential impact on adjoining parcels, accessibility, natural features and environmental constraints.*
3. *Rank parcels by priority based on the foregoing analysis. If the parcel(s) have environmental constraints, discuss remediation options with the NYSDEC. Select the best parcel for a community park.*
4. *Inquire about the property owner's willingness to sell the parcel to the Town and/or Village. If property owner is willing to sell the property, purchase the property or obtain a purchase option until funding can be secured to purchase the property.*
5. *Develop a master plan for the development of the park. Engage an engineer and/or landscape architect to prepare preliminary cost estimates for each park improvement. Rank improvements in order of priority.*
6. *Make annual appropriations to a capital reserve account to accumulate funds for park development and pursue grant funds to reduce local costs.*
7. *Develop the park in accord with the master plan as funding permits.*

Recommended Actions

1. Continue to maintain existing Town and Village parks in good condition and appearance.
2. Explore and evaluate the feasibility of establishing a youth recreation center in the Village of Sodus jointly funded and operated by the Town and Village of Sodus and the Sodus Central School District. If feasible, establish a youth center.
3. Encourage the establishment of a clearinghouse for the dissemination of information about the recreational and sports activities and programs provided by various recreational agencies and sports organizations to increase resident awareness of the availability of recreational programs.
4. Encourage the establishment of a committee with representatives of the various youth sports organizations to meet annually or as necessary for the purpose of coordinating the scheduling of youth sporting events in order to reduce conflicts to the extent feasible.
5. Explore the potential and feasibility to develop jointly with the Sodus Central School a centralized youth sports facility containing baseball, softball and soccer fields, concession stand, restrooms, and lighting. If feasible, pursue funding to develop such a facility.
6. Work with and support Wayne County's efforts to develop the recreational trails identified in the Wayne County Recreationway Plan and the Genesee Transportation Council's Regional Trails Initiative (RTI) project.
7. Work with the Intermunicipal Committee established, in part, to develop recreational trails in the vicinity of Sodus Bay as identified in the Sodus Point Vision Plan.
8. Develop a community park with facilities such as picnic shelters, walking/nature trails, playground, basketball courts, skateboarding area, etc. that provide residents of all ages and interests with an assortment of recreational opportunities.