

# RECREATION CHAPTER DRAFT 3-10-2022

## CONTENTS

Introduction ..... 1

Existing recreational opportunities..... 2

    Committees and Facilities ..... 2

    Significant Events In Town ..... 3

    Outdoor recreation ..... 4

Looking ahead ..... 5

    Public Outreach and awareness..... 5

    Opportunities for seniors..... 6

    Dedicated Community Space ..... 6

Conclusion..... 7

Recommendations ..... 7

Recreation Chapter Implementation ..... 8

## INTRODUCTION

Fremont’s natural, historical, and cultural landscape provides an ideal setting for residents and visitors to partake in a variety of recreational opportunities. From town forests and conservation areas to extensive trail networks including the 18-mile Rockingham Rail Trail, there is no shortage of opportunities to enjoy the town’s pristine natural features. Residents also enjoy a lively assortment of year-round organized activities and special events. The Fremont Parks and Recreation Commission organizes programs for residents of all ages including game nights, arts and crafts workshops, annual holiday events and summer camps. At the Fremont Public Library, patrons can participate exercise classes, walking groups and clubs for knitting, gardening, reading and movies. In the spring and summer, kids and adults can be found playing baseball, softball, and soccer at Memorial Park through sports leagues organized by the Fremont Athletic Association. Each year, residents gather

on the library lawn for a community cookout to celebrate the annual scarecrow making contest.

Providing recreational opportunities is generally supported by Fremont residents. As stated in the Vision chapter of the Master Plan, residents of all ages have expressed a desire to invest in recreational opportunities. Furthermore, 63% of respondents in the 2020 Master Plan survey agree that the Town should pursue more recreational facilities. Many also voiced their support for maintaining trails and open spaces for recreation, encouraging more town-wide gatherings, and improving recreation opportunities for seniors.

Promoting and investing in recreation for the town enhances the quality of life for existing residents and attracts new residents. This provides opportunities for improved health and wellbeing and increased economic development. However, Fremont is mindful of the land use and resource management issues that may arise by promoting and expanding recreational opportunities and areas in town. Preserving open spaces and maintaining the town’s rural character have been identified by residents as most important when thinking about the future of Fremont. Therefore, Fremont aims to improve and expand recreational opportunities in town while maintaining the rural character that is valued and enjoyed by residents today.

The purpose of this chapter is to identify existing recreation opportunities in Fremont and provide guidance for future planning and programming. This chapter focuses on increasing awareness and improving accessibility to existing recreational opportunities, promoting, and exploring new opportunities, and enhancing coordination and collaboration among Town staff, committees, local organizations, and the many volunteers that organize activities and events that bring the community together.



Figure 1: Fremont Soccer Team 2021; credit: Nancy Murray

## EXISTING RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

### COMMITTEES AND FACILITIES

#### Fremont Parks and Recreation Commission

*“Dedicated to planning and providing recreational activities through open space and facilities for the Fremont community including children, adults and senior citizens.” - Parks and Recreation Mission Statement*

Recognizing the vital role that public recreation plays in fostering a cohesive community, the Fremont Parks and Recreation Commission was established in 1982 and is comprised of five dedicated volunteers appointed by the Board of Selectmen. The Commission is directly involved with planning and programming community activities such as arts and craft workshops for adults and children, game nights, and a variety of seasonal and holiday events for Easter, Halloween, and Christmas. The Commission also organizes an annual summer youth program for children grades one through six. The Commission often coordinates with the library, Select Board and other groups in town to organize annual community events such as the Memorial Day Parade, spring, and fall “Bulky Day” – a town-wide litter cleanup event, the annual Santa Parade, and town-wide Christmas Tree Lighting ceremony.



Figure 2: Fremont Garden Club hosts mushroom presentation; Photo credit: Nancy Murray

#### Fremont Public Library

As is a growing trend among public libraries throughout the country, the Fremont Public Library is a major community hub in town, offering a variety of programs and services to patrons of all ages. In addition to a large selection of books and movies available for lending, the library hosts Fremont’s many community clubs including the Giving Hands knitting group, garden club, foreign film club, chess league, book clubs and reading groups for all ages. Throughout the week, residents gather for fitness classes such as Tai Chi and “Walk Away the Pounds,” a low impact exercise class that encourages light movement in a fun and comfortable environment. Additionally, throughout the year, patrons enjoy a variety of special events and speakers on varying topics.

*“I love what the library does to support community gatherings with its community room and the various programs it offers.” – Fremont resident*

With growing technological trends, the Fremont Public Library also offers access to audio books, movies, and state databases through computers, smartphones, and tablets. During the COVID-19 pandemic, these services were expanded. After closing to the public during the pandemic, the library implemented curbside pickup and bookmobile delivery, where patrons can request books, DVDs, and magazines and pick them up outside the library door. This service has since expanded into a grocery shopping service and medicine pickup/delivery system for those in need and is still available today.

#### Ray-Fre Senior Center

The Ray-Fre senior center was established in 1968, as a joint senior center for both Raymond and Fremont residents. The Center is in downtown Raymond and offers a variety of activities and programs to Fremont and Raymond residents ages 55 and older. At the Center, members partake in social events and activities such as billiards, cribbage, card games, knitting and walking groups, computer classes and line dancing. The Center also provides meals through Rockingham Nutrition Meals on Wheels twice a week to residents 60 and older. For more information on membership to the Ray-Fre Senior Center visit [www.rayfre.com](http://www.rayfre.com).

## Fremont Athletic Association (FAA)

The Fremont Athletic Association (FAA) is a non-profit organization organized by volunteers from Fremont and surrounding communities. The FAA is dedicated to the development of young athletes through sports programs including soccer, baseball, softball, basketball, and track. The program focuses on improving athletic skills among kids while also emphasizing team building, sportsmanship, hard work and commitment. While leagues are advertised to Fremont residents, members of surrounding communities are also able to participate. The FAA also organizes softball and basketball leagues for adults if enough people are interested in creating a league. Teams often utilize Memorial Park for games and practices during the Spring and Summer months but also participate in indoor sports and activities at the Ellis School Gym. For more information on how to join a league or get involved with the FAA, visit: <http://fremontathleticassociation.org/>

## Fremont Historical Museum

Fremont has a rich historical and cultural heritage with many interesting points and landmarks throughout town. Much of the town's history can be explored at the Fremont Historical Museum, which contains over 50 exhibits dating between 1734 and 2001 including wreckage from the B-52 Stratofortress Plane that crashed into Fremont's Spruce Swamp in 1959, the historic Spaulding and Frost Barrel Cooperage, the historic 1800 Twin-Porch Meeting House and exhibits on Fremont's four historical riots. The museum also has an exhibit for "The Shaggs," the 1960's all-girl band from Fremont that was popular in the late 1990's. The museum is open on the second Sunday of the month from May until October. Tours are organized by the Town Historian and Historical Society.

Residents and visitors can also explore historical points of interest throughout town with the Car Tour Guide of Historic Fremont, created by Town Historian, Matthew Thomas. Beginning at the Brentwood town line on NH Route 107, residents and visitors are guided west toward the Fremont Village stopping along the way to visit several historical landmarks including the site of the 1734 Tree Riot, the Old Railroad Depot and the 1800 Twin-porch Meeting House. The guide provides detailed context for each of the site stops as well as a history of significant events.

More information and how to join the Historical Society can be found by visiting: <https://www.fremont.nh.gov/historical-society>

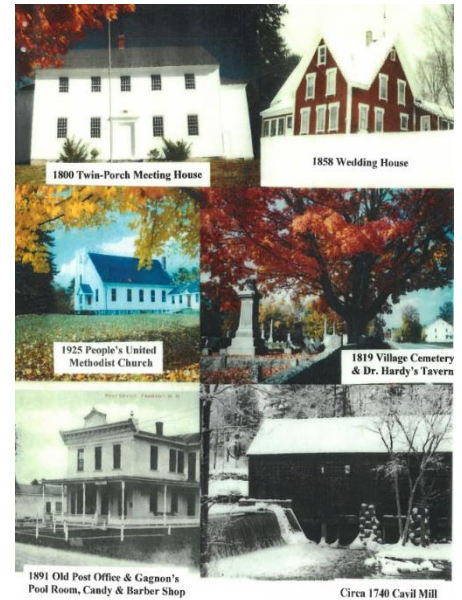
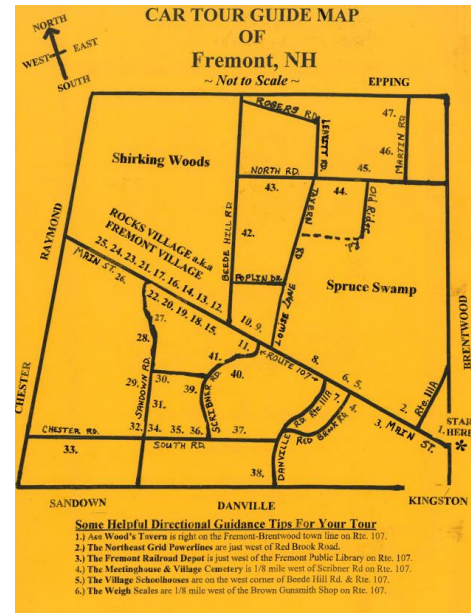


Figure 3: Car Tour Guide of Historic Fremont, NH by Matthew Thomas (Full document at [www.Fremont.gov](http://www.Fremont.gov))

## SIGNIFICANT EVENTS IN TOWN

### NH Grass Drags and Water Cross Event

The NH Grass Drags and Water Cross is a three-day event in Fremont organized by the New Hampshire Snowmobile Association. The event includes a variety of snowmobile races and competitions as well as vendor displays, food and entertainment and onsite camping. The event is one of the largest snowmobile events in the United States, drawing over 40,000 spectators per year and contributing greatly to Fremont's local economy. For more information visit: <https://nhsa.com/nh-grass-drags-water-cross/>

### NH Renaissance Faire

The NH Renaissance Faire is a family-friendly outdoor gathering hosted in Fremont that holds a variety of educational, theatrical events as well as games, arts and crafts and music. The event also includes local artisan vendors showcasing and selling



handmade items such as jewelry, pottery, costumes, and herbals. Each year, the faire donates many of its proceeds. Over the past 15 years, the Faire has donated almost \$200,000 to the NH Food Bank and the Meals on Wheels. For more information visit: <http://www.nhrenfaire.com/>

## OUTDOOR RECREATION

Numerous studies have shown that outdoor recreation opportunities provide many benefits to a community including improved health, economic development, and overall enhanced quality of life. Outdoor recreation is vital to New Hampshire's economy and valued immensely by local communities. With its large amounts of open space and protected areas including town forests, conservation lands and trails, residents and visitors in Fremont enjoy a variety of four-season outdoor activities such as hiking, mountain biking, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, and hunting. The Fremont Conservation Commission and the Open Space Committee maintain the town-owned forests and trails in order to protect the ecological health of the properties and ensure safe and adequate public access. Additionally, the Conservation Commission organizes special events that promote awareness and the preservation of the town's forests. For example, the Commission coordinates with UNH Cooperative Extension to hold and promote the Statewide Bio Blitz Project, which encourages people to explore and record wildlife in town forests.

Over the course of the COVID19 Pandemic, New Hampshire has seen a significant rise in people engaging in and pursuing outdoor recreation opportunities. While this trend greatly contributes to state and local economies, it has also led to land use management issues such as parking, overcrowding and waste disposal. Even at the local level, rural communities such as Fremont have seen an uptick in usage of local trails and town forests. Fremont remains cognizant of this growing trend in its planning and improvement efforts for the town's open spaces and trails. The following are publicly accessible town forests and trails in Fremont:

**Oak Ridge Town Forest:** Oak Ridge Town Forest encompasses nearly 190 acres of publicly accessible land. Wetlands account for a substantial area and bisect the property into north and south sections. The forest offers visitors beautiful woodland paths with areas of stream crossings and wetlands suitable for several activities including hiking, mountain biking, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, and hunting. Access to Oak Ridge North is from the intersection of Tavern and North Road. There is a gravel parking area at the end of Tavern Road. Access to Oak Ridge South is from

the intersection of Poplin Drive and Meetinghouse Road. For more information on Oak Ridge Town Forest visit: <https://www.fremont.nh.gov/conservation-commission/pages/town-forests>

### Glen Oaks Town Forest

The Glen Oaks Town Forest contains 313 acres of community-owned woodland and wetlands for residents to enjoy. The trails in the Glen Oaks Town Forest are a mixture of old logging or country roads and woodland paths. Popular activities include hiking, walking, mountain biking, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, and hunting. Glen Oaks directly abuts the prime wetland complex known as Spruce Swamp, which one of the largest wetland complexes in the Seacoast area. The trailhead can be found at the end of Andreski Drive in Fremont where there is parking and a kiosk. For more information on access to the Glen Oaks Town Forest visit: <https://www.fremont.nh.gov/conservation-commission/pages/town-forests>

### Cooperage Town Forest

The Cooperage Town Forest is 53 acres of woodland donated to the Town by a developer of a conservation subdivision in 2014. Trail access and parking can be found at the end of Spaulding Road or off Beedee Hill Road north of Bluefish Drive. For trail maps and information visit: <https://www.fremont.nh.gov/conservation-commission/pages/town-forests>

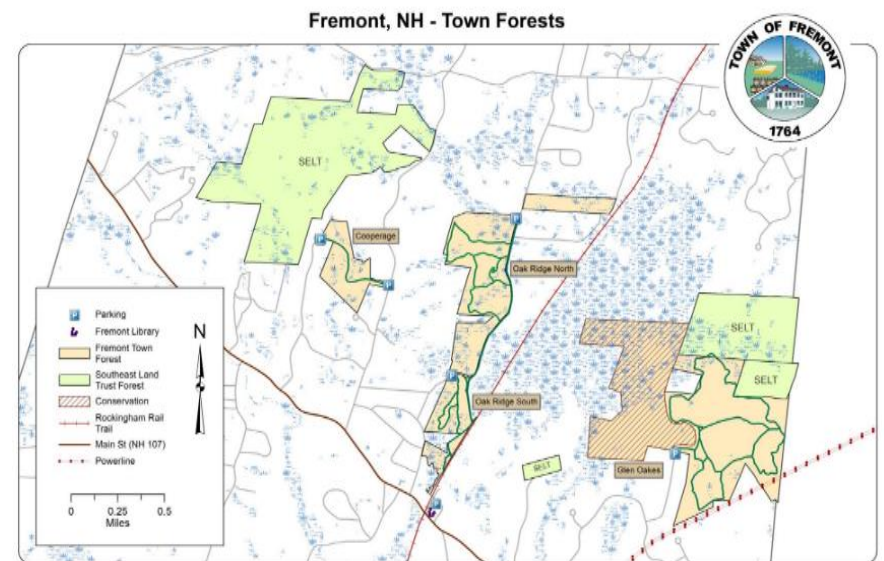


Figure 4: Fremont Town Forests (Full Map in Appendix A)

## Rockingham Recreational Trail

This 18-mile multi-use trail is one of the most popular rail trails in southern New Hampshire. The trail is a hard-packed gravel surface and begins at Depot Road in Windham and ends just before Route 125 in Epping. Popular activities include walking, running, snowshoeing, cross country skiing and OHRV use, (permitted only from Route 28 in Derry to Route 107 in Fremont). The trail is easily accessible and passes through beautiful wetlands and forests. Access and parking to the trail in Fremont can be found adjacent to Memorial Park off Route 107 across from the library. The Rockingham Recreational Trail is maintained by the State of New Hampshire. For more information on the Rockingham Rail Trail visit [nhstateparks.org](http://nhstateparks.org).

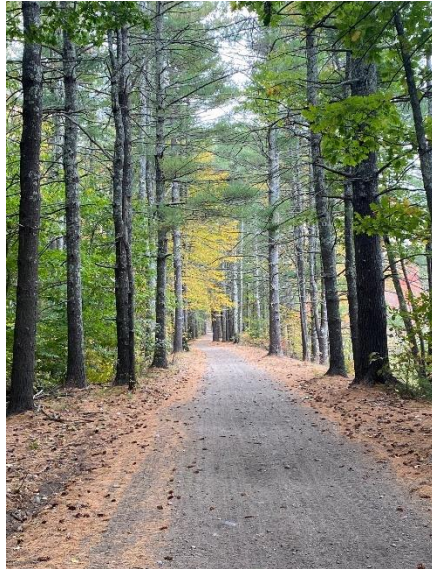


Figure 5: Rockingham Rail Trail; Photo credit: Nancy Murray

## Fremont Memorial Park

Fremont Memorial Park is located along Main Street (Route 107) and contains 14 acres of town-owned land, which includes a soccer field and track, a Little League baseball field, a Babe Ruth baseball field, a softball field, a playground, and a basketball court. The fields are mostly used and maintained by the Fremont Athletic Association for soccer, baseball, and softball programs. This site also contains a concessions and maintenance building, used for storage of maintenance equipment, bathrooms, and a concession stand. Residents can be found year-round utilizing the fields and the rail trail for outdoor recreation and organized sports programs.

## Exeter River

The Exeter River begins in Chester and flows 33 miles through the rural landscapes of Sandown, Raymond, Fremont, Danville, and Brentwood until it reaches Exeter where its name changes to the Squamscott River and becomes a tidal river. The Exeter-Squamscott River is a primary tributary to the Great Bay estuary. The Exeter River is not widely used for recreation in Fremont but can provide numerous opportunities such as kayaking, canoeing fishing and birdwatching. The generally free-flowing nature of the river provides excellent flat and quick water boating opportunities for canoes and kayaks and the diverse habitat and conditions of the rivers, including both cold and warm water fisheries, make it ideal for fishing, especially during the yearly spawning runs.<sup>1</sup>

Access to the river is somewhat limited in Fremont, as there are no public access points in town and many areas along the river are overgrown with vegetation. The town recognizes the value of this underutilized asset and aims to explore options for improving access to the river so that it may be utilized safely by residents and visitors for recreation. Strategies include siting areas for public access and improving maintenance such as vegetation clearing. Additionally, the town should enhance coordination with the [Exeter-Squamscott River Local Advisory Committee \(ESRLAC\)](#), a group of local citizens from towns along and near the river who work with communities to raise awareness about the river's significance and advocate for its protection. One of the goals outlined in [the ESRLAC Management Plan](#), is to work with communities to increase public access points to the river.

## LOOKING AHEAD

Fremont recognizes the value of community recreation and the need for maintaining and improving existing programs, events and open spaces as well as promoting new opportunities to enhance the wellbeing of the community. There are many opportunities for improving the state of recreation in Fremont as well as for providing new options. The following strategies were identified by the Fremont Recreation Master Plan subcommittee for improving and promoting recreation in town:

## PUBLIC OUTREACH AND AWARENESS

As stated throughout, Fremont offers a wide variety of recreational opportunities to residents and visitors. From organized sports leagues, clubs and walking trails to

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.des.nh.gov/sites/g/files/ehbemt341/files/documents/2020-01/rl-6.pdf>

community events and social activities. However, one of the largest impediments to engagement in these options is the lack of awareness among residents and visitors of what's going on in town. While town organizations and committees advertise events through their own outlets, there is the need for a larger, more readily accessible form of communication that promotes recreational opportunities and activities available in town. Like many communities in New Hampshire, one of the primary ways residents find out what is going on in their community is through word of mouth. While this may be effective, oftentimes residents such as those who may be homebound due to age or disability, just recently moved to town and/or do not have children in the school system, miss out on opportunities due to lack of awareness. This is especially true among senior citizens. Several strategies to improve the state of public outreach and awareness among Fremont residents were identified by the Recreation Master Plan Subcommittee:

- Adding a dedicated page on the town's website for recreation opportunities and events in town.
- Including recreational opportunities, upcoming events, and programs in the town's newsletter.
- Creating brochures or informational packets to be distributed throughout town with information on "all things Fremont," such as meeting dates, local businesses, recreation opportunities, and special events. Packets could be mailed to residents, posted online, and placed at the Town Hall, Library, Ellis School and in local businesses.
- Invite local organizations and clubs to set up informational tables at the annual Library cookout.
- Improve social media and website presence for disseminating information on upcoming events, programs, and activities.

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR SENIORS

The population of elderly residents in New Hampshire is growing. According to the [New Hampshire State Plan on Aging](#), it is estimated that over one third of New Hampshire's population will be 65 years of age or older by the year 2030. This will pose significant challenges for communities in meeting the needs of older adults. This is especially true among rural communities where access to services may become more difficult for people as they age due to proximity and limited transportation options.

Community engagement and social opportunities are significant factors for people as they age. Many older adults, especially after retirement, look for opportunities to stay engaged with their communities and participate in social events and activities. Providing recreation opportunities for older adults is important in fostering an inclusive and cohesive community and helps prevent social isolation, a growing problem among older adults in New Hampshire, exacerbated by the COVID-19 Pandemic. As previously mentioned, one of the biggest impediments to participating in existing programs and services is lack of awareness. A major theme to arise from the NH State Plan on Aging's survey was the need for increased outreach and communication, many citing that there may be services and programs available to them in town, but they were unsure where to go to find that information.

The Fremont Public Library and the Parks and Recreation Commission offer a variety of programs and events for seniors including workshops, exercise classes and social events. In light of the Covid-19 Pandemic, the Library expanded its bookmobile service, where patrons who can't make it to the library can request pick-up and drop-off of any Library material, into a grocery shopping service and medicine pickup/delivery system for those in need. The Parks and Recreation Commission often checks in on seniors throughout the year, more so during the Pandemic, where social isolation among adults skyrocketed throughout the State.

Fremont recognizes the need to provide more services and opportunities for a growing senior population. The town is currently working with the Rockingham Planning Commission's Age-Friendly Communities program to identify the current and future needs of older adults in town and how it can work to foster a community that meets the needs of all residents regardless of age or ability. The town should incorporate the findings and strategies identified in the Age Friendly Community Assessment (currently underway) in its recreation planning and programming.

"I would like to see more community programs for seniors." – Fremont resident

## DEDICATED COMMUNITY SPACE

A concern in providing new or expanded recreational opportunities in town is limited spaces for activities and events. The library is the primary meeting space for activities in town and often offers its community room to outside groups and organizations. The Ellis School gymnasium is also a widely used meeting space for groups, clubs, and sports. Not having a dedicated community space or center limits the number and size of activities that the Parks and Recreation Commission and other organizations in town can provide. This challenge has been further exacerbated by the COVID-19 Pandemic where in-person meetings and social gatherings have been significantly limited regarding the number of people that can meet or halted altogether. In the Spring and Summer months, many activities are hosted outside, especially at Memorial Park, but come Fall and Winter, town departments, committees and other organizations have limited options for physical meeting spaces. Fremont town staff will work to assess the needs of the various recreational departments and groups in town and explore enhancing existing facilities as well as identifying potential new spaces for meetings, activities, and events.

**“The Town could really use a larger public meeting space other than the school gym.” – Fremont resident**

## CONCLUSION

This chapter of Fremont’s Master Plan represents an inventory and assessment of Fremont’s existing recreational assets and identifies areas where there are opportunities for improvement. One of Fremont’s primary goals is to improve upon and maintain existing programs in town and to increase awareness to residents of the opportunities that are available. Additionally, the town will pursue expanding its recreational programming by exploring ways to improve access to the Exeter River, identifying additional community meeting spaces and enhancing coordination with town departments, organizations, and others in organizing events and activities for the community. Considering the land use management implications that may derive from expanding and promoting town wide recreation, especially open spaces and trails, careful planning is required to ensure safe and adequate access to recreation while preserving the rural community character.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were identified by the Fremont Master Plan Recreation Subcommittee:

1. **Improve awareness among residents of existing recreational opportunities in town and explore future outreach strategies for promoting activities and events.**
2. **Expand and promote recreational opportunities for senior residents to foster a cohesive, inclusive community.**
3. **Improve access to the Exeter River with signage, maintenance, and structural improvements.**
4. **Identify additional community meeting spaces in town for meetings, activities, and events.**
5. **Improve facilities at Memorial Park including lighting, access, and concessions.**
6. **Improve wayfinding signage throughout town for trails, fields, historical landmarks, and other points of interest.**

**Recommendation 1 - Improve awareness among residents of existing recreational opportunities in town and explore future outreach strategies for promoting activities and events.**

	Responsible Party	Timeframe	Cost (if known)	Funding Source	Progress, Year:
<b>Action Item #1</b> – Update the town’s website to include a dedicated page for all recreational opportunities available to residents including events, programs, facilities, and maps.	Town Staff	Short term, ongoing	Unknown	Staff time	
<b>Action Item #2</b> – Improve social media presence and investigate new online channels to provide information about town events, programs, and facilities.	Parks & Recreation Commission	Short term, ongoing	Unknown	Staff time, RPC	
<b>Action Item #3</b> – Create physical brochures or packets that include recreational opportunities in town and how to get involved. Packets could be mailed to residents and placed in Town Hall, Library, Ellis School and in local businesses.	Parks & Recreation Commission	Medium term, ongoing	Unknown	Grants, donations	

**Recommendation 2 – Expand and promote recreational opportunities for senior residents to foster a cohesive, inclusive community.**

	Responsible Party	Timeframe	Cost (if known)	Funding Source	Progress, Year:
<b>Action Item #1</b> – Incorporate findings and strategies identified in Fremont’s Age-Friendly Community Assessment into future recreation planning and programming.	Parks and Recreation Commission	Medium term, ongoing	Unknown	Unknown	
<b>Action Item #2</b> – Strengthen coordination with the Ray-Fre Senior Center in promoting activities for seniors.	Parks and Recreation Commission	Medium term, ongoing	No cost	NA	



<b>Action Item #3</b> – Continue coordination with the library to implement more activities for seniors such as coffee social hours.	Parks and Recreation Commission, Fremont Public Library	Medium term, ongoing	Unknown	Unknown	
<b>Recommendation 3 – Improve access to the Exeter River with signage, maintenance, and structural improvements.</b>					
	<b>Responsible Party</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Cost (if known)</b>	<b>Funding Source</b>	<b>Progress, Year:</b>
<b>Action Item #1</b> - Work with the Exeter-Squamscott River Local Advisory Committee (ESRLAC) on efforts to improve public access to the river.	Conservation Commission	Medium term	Unknown	Unknown	
<b>Action Item #2</b> – Consult with state and local officials such as NH Fish and Game, NHDES and Fremont Conservation Commission to determine scope and magnitude of river maintenance as well as responsible parties.	Conservation Commission	Long-term	Unknown	Unknown	
<b>Action Item #2</b> – Work with the Rockingham Planning Commission and the ESRLAC to Inventory town-owned properties abutting the river to identify potential public access sites.	Conservation Commission, Land use staff	Short term	Unknown	RPC Dues	
<b>Recommendation 4- Identify additional community meeting spaces in town for meetings, activities, and events.</b>					
	<b>Responsible Party</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>	<b>Cost (if known)</b>	<b>Funding Source</b>	<b>Progress, _____ Year:</b>
<b>Action Item #1-</b> Identify existing facilities that could be used for recreational purposes such as the Town Hall.	Parks and Recreation Commission	Long term	Unknown	Unknown	
<b>Action Item #2</b> – Work with the town to explore building new or expanding existing meeting spaces in town for recreational purposes.	Parks and Recreation Commission, Building Department	Long term	Unknown	Unknown	
<b>Recommendation 5 – Improve facilities at Memorial Park including lighting, access, and concessions.</b>					

	Responsible Party	Timeframe	Cost (if known)	Funding Source	Progress, _____	Year:
<b>Action Item #1:</b> Continue coordination with Fremont Athletic Association to assist with ongoing park and field maintenance.	Parks and Recreation Commission	Short term, ongoing	No cost	NA		
<b>Action Item # 2:</b> Explore the possibility and pursue funding for constructing a pavilion.	Parks and Recreation Commission	Long term	Unknown	Grants, town budget		
<b>Recommendation 6 – Improve wayfinding signage throughout town for trails, fields, historical landmarks, and other points of interest.</b>						
	Responsible Party	Timeframe	Cost (if known)	Funding Source	Progress, _____	Year:
<b>Action Item #1:</b> Work with the Conservation Commission and the Historical Society to Identify areas and points of interest throughout town that would benefit from more wayfinding signage such as trails, the Fremont Historical Museum, and other significant sites. Develop an informational brochure and map with points of interest to be distributed at the Town Hall and local businesses	Parks and Recreation Commission, Conservation Commission, Historical Society	Short term, ongoing	No cost	Unknown		

# Fremont, NH - Town Forests

