

# LowellSTAT Report

December 2013

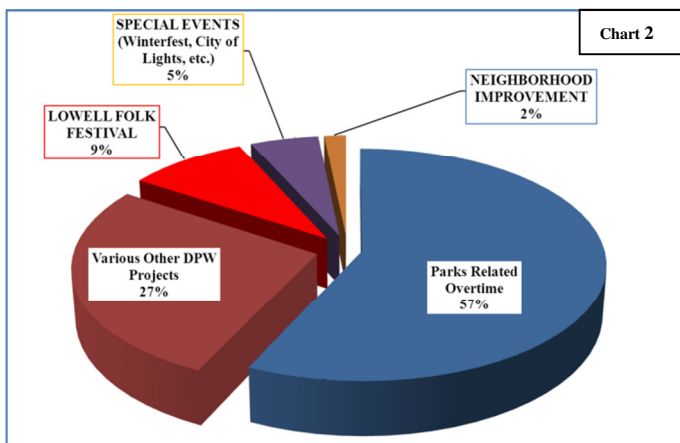
Subject: Parks



**The Role of Parks and Recreation in Urban Life:** Public parks are a fundamental component of the built environment and a contributing factor in establishing residential livability. Based on performance ratings gathered through a residential survey contained in the City of Lowell’s recent update to the Master Plan, *Sustainable Lowell 2025* (PDF version available here: <http://bit.ly/JfA9jl>), residents **over 70** rated Lowell’s parks most favorably (**8.2** out of **10**), whereas residents **under 30** rated parks least favorably (**5.9** out of **10**). The table below lists the breakdown of public conservation and recreation space, all of which is maintained by the Parks Department. In Lowell, there are **3.79 acres of developed park land per 1,000 residents**<sup>1</sup>. Within each park there are a number of amenities for recreational use by the public including **42 basketball courts, 22 tennis courts, 21 baseball diamonds, 4 skate parks, 3 swimming pools, 2 bocce ball courts, and 1 dog park**, among others. **92%** of all the parcels in Lowell are within **1/3 mile** of a developed park, meaning that nearly all residential and commercial parcels are within walking distance of a park or developed open space.

Recreational Resources by Neighborhood				
Neighborhood	2010 Population	% Total	Recreational Acreage	% Total Acreage
The Acre	12,271	11.52%	28.58	6.9%
Back Central	5,367	5.04%	30.88	7.5%
Belvidere/ South Lowell	19,951	18.73%	121.8	29.6%
Centralville	15,237	14.30%	66.53	16.2%
Downtown	5,267	4.94%	2.86	0.7%
Highlands	30,190	28.34%	65.31	15.9%
Pawtucketville	15,020	14.10%	95.36	23.2%

Furthermore, in the summer time, the Recreation Department utilizes the parks as venues for the various programming options they offer for the youth of the city. They also employ young Lowellians as counselors, lifeguards, and camp staff; providing job opportunities that afford valuable work experience by utilizing a mix of city and grant funding. This past year, the City of Lowell provided **49,770.5 hours of work to 248 employees**. Studies have shown summer employment leads to a significant reduction in violent crime amongst youth and encourages positive engagement in the community.<sup>2</sup>



**Overtime:** Overtime usage by employees in the Parks Department continues to be the highest amongst divisions of DPW. The gross payout to Parks employees increased from **\$173,725.86** in FY12 to **\$238,568.89** in FY13, an increase of **37%**. However, not all of this overtime spending is directly related to the city parks, as shown **Chart 2**. For the period of July 1, 2009 through June 30, 2013, **57%** of overtime spending was on Parks related activities, while the other **43%** was dedicated to various other events and projects, like the **Folk Festival**. The administration is continuing to work with DPW to contain overtime spending and maximize work efficiency to enable projects to be

completed on straight time, as well as developing performance scorecards in line with other DPW divisions.

<sup>1</sup> [The National Recreation and Park Association](http://www.nrap.org) suggests that a park system, at a minimum, be composed of a total of **6.25 to 10.50 acres** of developed open space per 1,000 population.

<sup>2</sup> Anderson, Travis (2013, July 09) “Summer Jobs Add Up To Less Violence in Study.” *The Boston Globe*. <http://b.globe.com/1b3mimC>