



## **MAYOR DAVID J. NARKEWICZ**

**City of Northampton**

**Office of the Mayor**

**210 Main Street Room 12**

**Northampton, MA 01060-3199**

**(413) 587-1249 Fax: (413) 587-1275D**

**[mayor@northamptonma.gov](mailto:mayor@northamptonma.gov)**

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### **City of Northampton Reopens Select Parks and Recreation Areas**

NORTHAMPTON - On April 4, 2020, Northampton Health Department Director Merridith O'Leary ordered the closing of school play areas, parks and recreation areas, and play structures to the public. Effective May 8, 2020, Director O'Leary will lift part of the order to allow the use of the following recreation areas; Agnes Fox Park, Arcanum Field, Ellerbrook Field, Florence Fields, Lampron Park, Maines Field, Look Park, Pulaski Park, Sheldon Field, and Veterans Field. Play structures, basketball courts, the skate park, and all school grounds will remain closed until further notice.

"Governor Baker's 'Stay-at-Home' advisory is still in effect and the Health Department does not encourage the public to leave their homes except for essential trips for necessary supplies," shared O'Leary. "At this stage of the pandemic, it is critical that we do not lose the progress we have achieved in controlling the spread of COVID-19." The Governor's order to wear a face covering is also in effect as of May 6, for both indoors and outdoors where you cannot maintain a six foot social distance. The city will enforce this order in the interest of public safety.

The intent is to safely reopen recreation areas for individual use or for family-unit recreation. The message is not to endorse day-long excursions out of the house or to encourage interactions outside the family unit, as the stay-at-home advisory remains in place. The Health Department and the City of Northampton maintain that the safest place to be is at home. The use of the parks should be brief and designed to accomplish something that cannot otherwise be accomplished.

In addition, the city urges residents to share public resources by limiting the duration of their visits to the parks, so that others can safely enjoy these resources. Residents are urged to avoid any area that looks over-crowded and seek alternate locations for exercise.

The COVID-19 virus can be spread person-to-person without symptoms. It is important to continue to wash hands, maintain a six foot social distance, and wear a face covering when in public, either indoors or outdoors, where adequate social distancing cannot be maintained.

Face coverings and masks are not a replacement for social distancing. Masks can help protect residents in situations where social distancing is not possible. Visiting a public park is an avoidable risk.

Children under the age of two years should not wear face coverings or masks. For children two years of age and older, a mask or face covering should be used if possible. Mask use by children two years of age and up to the age of five is encouraged but should be at the discretion of the child's parent or guardian at this time.

Parents and guardians should ensure that the mask fits snugly and does not obstruct a child's ability to breathe.

The fit of face coverings should be as follows:

- Fit securely and comfortably against the side of the face;
- Be secured with ties or ear loops;
- Allow for breathing without restriction; and
- Be able to be laundered and machine dried without damage or change of shape.

Exceptions for wearing face coverings or masks include situations that may inhibit an individual from wearing a face covering or mask safely. These may include, but are not limited to:

- Those who cannot breathe safely;
- Those who, due to a behavioral health diagnosis, are unable to do so;
- Those communicating with people who rely upon lip-reading;
- Those who require supplemental oxygen to breathe; and
- Those who are exercising outdoors and are able to keep physical distance from others

For more information contact:

Merridith O'Leary  
Public Health Director  
City of Northampton  
[healthdept@northamptonma.gov](mailto:healthdept@northamptonma.gov)  
(413) 587-1214