

Open Space Committee

Purpose of the Open Space and Recreation Plan

The purpose of the Open Space and Recreation Plan is stated very succinctly in Andover's 1989 Conservation and Recreation Plan - to provide a "balanced and integrated effort to protect invaluable natural resources while providing adequate active and passive recreational opportunities for all townspeople". Since Andover's first open space report was prepared in 1970, and subsequent plans developed in 1976, 1983, 1986, and 1989, the town has experienced enormous development pressures making the need for an updated plan more critical as the demands for open space preservation and recreation opportunities have grown. This plan builds on the strong framework provided from earlier reports and brings up to date much of the basic information contained in the 1989 plan and the 1998 draft plan.

Open Space Committee

On December 12, 1996 at the recommendation of the Town Manager and with the approval of the Board of Selectmen, sixteen citizens of the Town of Andover, representing a variety of interests in the areas of conservation and recreation, were appointed to the Open Space and Outdoor Recreation Plan Committee. The purpose of the committee was to update Andover's 1989 plan. This process was necessary in order for the town to be eligible for state funding targeting the acquisition and protection of natural resources. In addition, the updated Open Space and Recreation Plan will become part of the town's Master Plan to guide officials in prioritizing Town spending and in gauging citizen needs in the areas of open space and recreation.

The appointments were as follows:

Walter Bird, III, Chairman, Andover Conservation Commission
Gail L. Ralston, Facilitator, Andover Conservation Commission
Alan F. French, Andover Trails Committee
Steve Golden, Den Rock Park Preservation Committee
Brendan J. Dugan, resident of Shawsheen Village area
Mark R. DeLisio, Andover Conservation Commission
Mark Walker, Andover Commission on Disabilities
Susan W. Alovisetti, Andover Planning Board
Arthur W. Smith, Andover Council on Aging
William S. MacLeod, engineer, Andover Consultants
Virginia H. Cole, Andover/North Andover League of Women Voters
John D. Fitzpatrick, Andover Baseball League
Thomas F. Russell, Andover Youth Soccer
Ronald R. Hill, Andover Chamber of Commerce
Peggy Keck, Andover Village Improvement Society (AVIS)
Douglas M. Dunbar, Andover Board of Health

Meeting initially on February 5, 1997, the full committee held a series of meetings with various town boards prior to submitting a draft plan to the Board of Selectmen on August 18, 1997. The updating of specific sections of Andover's 1989 plan took place within the context of five subcommittees: Community Setting; Environmental Inventory and Analysis; Recreation, Conservation and American Disabilities Act (ADA) Inventory; Goals and Action Plan; and Active and Passive Recreation Needs and Analysis. These subcommittees met extensively, and presented periodic updates to the full committee for advice, information, and/or approval. A listing of the various public meetings is included in Appendix G in the 2001 Open Space and Recreation Plan.

Simultaneous to this process was the development, distribution and analysis of a citizen survey, intended to present to as many citizens as possible the opportunity to express their personal interests and priorities. The results of this survey were presented to the Board of Selectmen at their meeting of May 5, 1997. The survey was distributed a second time due to a limited response. The second distribution was sent with the Town census and 3870 Surveys were returned and tabulated. The results are in Appendix E of the 2001 Open Space and Recreation Plan.

The 1998 draft plan was developed based on a comprehensive review of the goals and objectives, citizen survey results, and subcommittee revisions to chapters from Andover's 1989 plan to ensure that the plan was consistent with the Massachusetts Division of Community Service's planning document entitled "1990 Open Space and Recreation Plan Requirements". In addition to presenting the draft plan to the Board of Selectmen, the draft plan was also made available at the public library, as well as submitted to other boards and commissions for review. A listing of these meetings and media coverage of these activities are included in the Appendix D.

How the Plan is Approved

The Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA) reviewed the draft plan and sent a letter to the Town with comments and corrections that needed to be completed before the Commonwealth of Massachusetts could formally approve the plan. The chief concern by EOEA was the completion of an ADA/Section 504 Accessibility Report. Other items included a more thorough description of what is required to make the conservation and recreation sites accessible to people with disabilities, a time table for action, a maximum build-out scenario, a discussion on wildlife corridors, and a section on environmental challenges.

During the 2000 and 2001, the above-mentioned checklist items were completed and a second draft Open Space and Recreation Plan was submitted to EOEA. In September 2001, the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs on behalf of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts formally approved Andover's 2001 Open Space and Recreation Plan. The approved plan is approved through September 2006.

Next Steps

Section 9 of the plan outlines the goals, objectives and action items, as well as the responsible party for implementing the plan. The responsibly party list includes, but is not limited to, the Conservation Commission, the Planning Division, Department of Public Works, Board of Health, Andover Village Improvement Society, Merrimack Valley Planning Commission, Department of Community Services, Parks and Recreation Department, and Town of Andover



Special mention should be made of the work and support of the town staff in all phases of the committee's work. These individuals included Laura DeGroot, Planning Department; Jim Greer, Conservation Department; Jim Bamford, Municipal Maintenance Department; Mary Donahue, Department Community Services; Paul Materazzo and Lisa LaGrasse, Planning Department, Kent Bertino, Town Mangers Office, and Candace Hall, Human Resources Office.

The entire Open Space & Recreation document is available for reference at the Memorial Hall Library or can be purchased at the Community Development and Planning Office located at the Andover Town Offices.