



# **Framingham Open Space and Recreation Plan Executive Summary**

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The Plan was prepared by the Open Space and Recreation Plan Implementation Working Group (OSRPIWG) and staff from the Department of Parks and Recreation, Conservation Commission and Department of Community and Economic Development.

Special thanks go to all the residents who responded to the survey or provided comments and suggestions at public forums or meetings; your thoughtful comments are reflected in this plan.

The Open Space and Recreation Plan Implementation Working Group was chaired by Eugene Kennedy of the Community and Economic Development Department. Open Space and Recreation Plan Implementation Working Group members include:

- Laurie Lee, Board of Selectman
- David Williams, Assistant Town Manager (past)
- Paul Barden, Deputy Director DPW
- Maeghan Walters, Assistant Conservation Administrator
- Amanda Loomis, Planning Board Administrator
- Trisha Powell, Parks and Recreation Commission
- Jim Duane, Director Parks and Recreation
- Eugene Kennedy, Interim Director of Community and Economic Development
- Jennifer Thompson, Assistant Town Manager (current)
- Robert McArthur, Conservation Administrator
- Marianne Iarossi, Senior Planner

Staff Support was provided by:

- Geoff Kovar, Department of Public Works, Engineering, Director of GIS

## **A. Purpose of the Plan**

The overall purpose of the 2013 Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) is to serve as a guide for protecting, managing, improving, and expanding Framingham's open space and recreation resources in the face of continuing development pressures. More specifically, the purposes of this OSRP are:

- To identify unique open space and recreation assets and places that have ecological, recreational, civic, historic and/or scenic value;
- To prioritize the open space and recreation needs for all citizens of Framingham;
- To identify specific goals, objectives, and recommended priority actions; and
- To qualify the Town for State and Federal cost-sharing funds that might be available for capital improvement and acquisition projects.

## **B. Process of Revising the Plan**

This Open Space and Recreation Plan is an update of an earlier version of the Plan completed in 2008. As part of the implementation of the 2008 Plan, an Open Space and Recreation Plan Implementation Working Group (OSRPIWG) was established in 2010. The OSRPIWG is a policy and implementation group that includes representatives from the Board of Selectmen, Town Manager's office, Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Parks and Recreation Commission, Department of Public Works and the Community and Economic Development office. The OSRPIWG met throughout 2010 to 2013 to discuss and implement priority recommendations from the 2008 Plan. As the group most familiar with the 2008 Plan the OSRPIWG was the logical choice to prepare the 2013 update. The OSRPIWG represents the various boards and commissions involved in open space and recreation lands and programs. Assisted by staff from Community and Economic Development, Conservation Commission, Planning Board and Parks and Recreation, the OSRPIWG Committee undertook a comprehensive analysis of Framingham's Open Space and Recreation resources. Inventories of the Town's open space, recreation, and historic and cultural resources were updated. The Town's open space preservation and recreation needs were assessed through public forums, widely distributed surveys, and meetings with municipal staff and various boards, commissions and committees. The labors of this effort have resulted in the seven (7) year action plan.

## **C. Goals of the Plan**

The end result of the planning process is a coordinated set of goals and objectives and a seven-year action plan that outlines specific tasks to meet the Town's open space and recreation goals. The open space and recreation goals are as follows:

- Maintenance and improvement of the current inventory of active recreational facilities;
- Maintenance and improvement of the current inventory of conservation and open space parcels;
- Conservation of natural resources and open space to protect water resources, wildlife habitat, and horticultural, agricultural and sylvan opportunities, and passive recreational opportunities;
- Creation of new recreational facilities and programs to meet resident needs as appropriate; and
- Undertake other town-wide efforts that will support open space and recreation.

## **D. Implementation of the Plan**

Action items designed to achieve each goal are enumerated in the Seven Year Action Plan. The Action Plan identifies goals, objectives, detailed actions and responsible parties. Since this OSRP reflects the substantive input from and the broad consensus of many Town departments, boards, commissions and committees, non-profit organizations, and resident volunteers, and spells out specific attainable tasks, we are hopeful that implementation will be swift and effective.

## **E. Seven Year Action Plan**

### **Introduction**

In 2010, the Massachusetts Division of Conservation Services (DCS) modified its open space planning requirements to allow communities to prepare seven year, rather than five (5) year plans, in order to qualify for state grant funding. Consequently, this Executive Summary includes the seven (7) year action plan that the Open Space and Recreation Plan Implementation Working Group feels is necessary to achieve the goals and objectives identified in the plan. It is critical that the plan remain an active document, used by all relevant departments in their planning and day-to-day operations. This will require dedicated coordination at the departmental staff level, as well as continued oversight and coordination by the implementation Working Group with broad representation and vision. The implementation Working Group should develop a roughly quarterly meeting schedule to ensure that efforts are being undertaken and well-coordinated. The implementation Working Group that was formed in response to a recommendation in the 2008 Plan should continue its role, meet roughly quarterly, and serve as a guiding body that undertakes research and issues recommendations to the Board of Selectmen and other relevant boards.

### **Highlights of the Action Plan**

The OSRPIWG believes that a few of the objectives and actions are particularly important; they are critical in achieving the stated goals or because they support other objectives and actions. They are discussed briefly below.

#### **1. Ensure aggressive implementation of the plan.**

Action 5A1: Continue the Open Space and Recreation Plan Implementation Working Group (OSRPIWG) to monitor progress of the plan, communicate with involved departments, and conduct research and develop recommendations as noted in this plan

Action 5B1: Research the list of possible funding mechanisms listed in Ch 7 and develop a report recommending funding strategies for Framingham

Action 5B2: Appoint a new CPA study committee

#### **2. Focus on the maintenance of existing facilities and programs.**

Action 1A1: Undertake actions identified in Table 7-1 and Map 10 for Recreation Facilities in Need of Improvements

Action 2A3: Continue and expand the conservation land steward program and workdays to help maintain and improve and make consistent open space parcels

### **3. Protect open space in Framingham**

Action 3A1: Research private land, tax title land, other town land, etc. and identify priority parcels for acquisition (based on size, current land use, ecological diversity, presence of rare species, adjacency to protected land, etc.)

### **4. Create non-motorized corridors in Framingham**

Objective 4A: Create and complete corridors for non-motorized passage that serve as greenways and provide access to passive and active recreation facilities, places of work, school, public transportation connections, or other points of interest in town

Objective 4B: Create new parks, playgrounds and passive facilities

Objective 4E: Coordinate enhanced public access to the aqueducts with the MWRA

## **Key to the Lead Municipal Agencies**

<b>Key to Lead Municipal Bodies in Action Plan Below</b>	
<b>Acronym</b>	<b>Body Name</b>
Agri. Com	Agricultural Commission
B&PAC	Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee
BOS	Board of Selectmen
CED	Community and Economic Development
CC	Conservation Commission
DC	Disability Commission
DPW	Department of Public Works
HC	Historic Commission
HDC	Historic District Commission
OSRIWG	Open Space and Recreation Implementation Working Group
P&R	Parks and Recreation Department
PB	Planning Board
Sch D	School Department

## The Seven Year Action Plan (2013-2020)

#	Goal	Objective	Action	Lead Dept.
1A1	1. Maintenance and improvement of the current inventory of active recreational facilities	A. Improve routine maintenance and continue to improve existing facilities	1. Undertake necessary improvements of recreation facilities identified in Table 7-1 and Map 10. Those facilities in need of upgrades are listed below. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bates Road Park (A)</li> <li>• Bowditch Field (B)</li> <li>• Butterworth Park (C)</li> <li>• Cushing Memorial Park (D)</li> <li>• Danforth Park (E)</li> <li>• Dennison Park (F)</li> <li>• Farm Pond Recreation Area (G)</li> <li>• Furber Park (H)</li> <li>• Loring Arena (I)</li> <li>• Mason Park (J)</li> <li>• Mt. Wayte Park (K)</li> <li>• Nobscot Park (L)</li> <li>• Oakvale Park (M)</li> <li>• Saxonville Beach (N)</li> <li>• Temple Street Playground (O)</li> <li>• Lake Waushakum Beach (P)</li> <li>• Winch Park (Q)</li> <li>• Victory Field (R)</li> <li>• Edwards and Main St cemetery (S)</li> </ul>	P&R
1A2			2. Continue to use GIS technology to keep up-to-date lists of parcels managed by the Parks and Rec. Department	P&R
1A3			3. Seek opportunities modernize technological support for facilities tracking and maintenance	P&R
1A4			4. Continue coordination with schools and the private sector for maintenance and use of facilities	P&R, Sch D
1A5			5. Encourage the development of “neighborhood” stewardship groups	P&R
1A6			6. Implement ADA improvements needed as outlined in the ADA Self Evaluation and Transition Plan as well as any other access improvements needed at existing recreational facilities	P&R, DC
1A7			7. Undertake stormwater improvements near the town’s recreational beaches	P&R, DPW
1A8			8. Update Cushing Park Master Plan and implement recommended improvements	P&R
1A9			9. Continue to coordinate efforts to manage the Town Common	P&R, DPW, HC, HDC
2A1	2. Maintenance and improvement of the current inventory of Conservation and open space parcels	A. Increase active stewardship and land management of Conservation land and other municipal open space parcels	1. Continue to use GIS technology to keep up-to-date lists of parcels managed by the Conservation Department	CC
2A2			2. Encourage the development of stewardship groups such as “Adopt-a-Park”, “Adopt-a-CC Parcel”, “Adopt-a-River”, “Adopt-a-Tree”, and “Adopt-a-Trail” programs	OSRPIWG, P&R, CC
2A3			3. Continue and expand Conservation land steward program and workdays to help maintain and improve trails and infrastructure	CC

#	Goal	Objective	Action	Lead Dept.
2A4			4. Encourage Eagle Scouts, community service students, and other volunteers to undertake conservation projects	CC
2A5			5. Ensure that each trailed parcel of Conservation land is welcoming, informative, and user-friendly (i.e., all parcels should have trail head signs, maps and map boxes, trail markers, land use regulations, etc.)	CC
2A6			6. Create and maintain new trails layer in town GIS	CC
2A7			7. Implement ADA/access improvements needed at all conservation and open space parcels	DC CC
2A8			8. Coordinate with Wayland for preservation of Stone's Bridge	DPW
2B1		B. Address encroachments by abutters to Conservation land	1. Create an encroachment policy, identify major and minor violations and begin pursuing compliance	CC
2C1		C. Address invasive land and aquatic species infestations	1. Continue the Town's pond management program	CC
2C2			2. Support DCR in their efforts to address species infestations in Lake Cochituate	CC
3A1	3. Conservation of natural resources and open space to protect water resources, wildlife habitat, and horticultural, agricultural and silvicultural opportunities, and passive recreational opportunities	A. Identify priority parcels for acquisition/protection for ecological value, agricultural value, and recreational value	1. Research private land, tax title land, other town land, etc. and identify priority parcels for acquisition and/or protection (based on size, current land use, ecological diversity, presence of rare species, adjacency to protected land, etc.). See Tables 5-14 to 5-18	OSRPIWG, CC, P&R, BOS
3A2			2. Research and identify parcels for suggested voluntary addition to Chapter 61 program or Agricultural Preservation Restriction or Conservation Restriction	OSRPIWG, Agri. Com
3A3			3. Evaluate zoning and other approaches for preserving agricultural lands, including agricultural preservation and transfer of development rights regulations	PB OSRPIWG CED
3B1		B. Coordinate with local and regional land protection efforts	1. Remain engaged in the Greater Callahan State Park land protection effort to enlarge the protected open space network near Callahan State Park	CC
3B2			2. Remain engaged in the effort to protect the Sudbury River Oxbow	CC
3B3			3. Support efforts of the Garden in the Woods to improve and enhance its grounds	CED CC
3C1		C. Develop coordinated administrative processes associated with land acquisition and protection	1. Develop coordinated administrative process for review of tax title land prior to it being sold at auction and undertake annual review of tax title list for possible acquisition priorities	BOS, OSRPIWG

#	Goal	Objective	Action	Lead Dept.
3C2			2. Develop coordinated administrative process for dealing with Ch 61 land when it becomes available through the right of first refusal (i.e., consider adopting the Mt. Grace process)	Agri. Com, BOS
3C3			3. Bring town departments together to identify land management needs; then develop a recommendation for the BOS for a coordinated program for addressing maintenance of town-owned land	OSRPIWG
3C4			4. Ensure currently owned open space and recreation lands are designated and protected under Article 97.	C&ED, CC, P&R
3D1		D. Aggressively pursue purchase or protection of priority open space parcels as they become available	1. Pursue priority lands identified in Tables 5-14 through 5-18.	OSRPIWG
3E1		E. Provide more education and outreach addressing the preservation of natural resources (e.g., landscaping and land stewardship practices, water resource protection, stormwater management, invasive species, illicit discharge, nutrient loading)	1. Increase general public education and outreach efforts through the development and distribution of flyers, initiation of cable TV programming, lectures, or nature walks, etc.	CC
3E2			2. Develop and distribute educational materials, seek sources of funding and support, encourage the development of "neighborhood" advocacy groups	CC
4A1	4. Creation of new recreational facilities and programs to meet unmet needs	A. Create and complete corridors for non-motorized passage that serve as greenways and transit corridors, and provide access to passive and active recreation facilities, places of work, school, public transportation connections, or other points of interest in town	1. Continue to implement the work of the public trails taskforce to develop an integrated long-term plan for public trails in Framingham. Include existing trail corridors (e.g., Bay Circuit Trail, Bruce Freeman Rail Trail, Cochituate Rail Trail, municipal trails, SVT trails, state park trails, and school trails), proposed major "arteries" (e.g., CSX right-of-way, South Sudbury Aqueduct, and Weston Aqueduct), proposed destination trails (e.g., Farm Pond loop trail and new historic trails), and proposed connector trails (e.g., downtown-train station, downtown-Farm Pond). The OSRPIWG should act as advocates for new trail projects and provide support for existing trails in Framingham	BOS, OSRPIWG, P&R, CED, B&PAC
4A2			2. Complete and open the Cochituate Rail Trail	CED, DPW
4A3			3. Continue preliminary studies and advanced planning in support of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail	CED, B&PAC

#	Goal	Objective	Action	Lead Dept.
4A4			4. Support the planning for the South Sudbury Rail Trail, Upper Charles Trail, the Southborough/Callahan South Link, and the Weston Aqueduct Greenway and Trail System	BOS, B&PAC
4A5			5. Develop mass transit connection points at trail heads where feasible (e.g., MWRTA bus stops at trail heads)	CED
4A6			6. Install bike racks throughout downtown Framingham and bike lockers at train station or where appropriate	CED, DPW
4A7			7. Support the Bay Circuit Trail effort by attending meetings, implementing recommendations and obtaining MWRA public access permits	B&PAC
4A8			8. Re-establish trails leading to the Framingham schools	Sch D
4A9			9. Complete a townwide Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan	CED, P&R,PB, DPW
4A10			10. Ensure that all new facilities are adequately lit, patrolled, and maintained, and that they meet current AAB and ADA laws. Ensure that existing and new public trails meet ADA and AAB regulations where feasible.	PB, DC
4B1		B. Create new parks, playgrounds, and passive facilities	1. Study the need for and develop a report that identifies priority locations/areas for new recreation facilities (consider: multi-use neighborhood fields/parks, basketball courts, tot lots, skate parks, river and pond and lake access/boat launches, dog parks, golf courses, softball fields, tennis courts, swimming pools, an amphitheater, facilities for elderly residents).	P&R
4B2			2. Implement the report cited in 4B1 as much as possible; ensure that all new facilities are adequately lit, patrolled, and maintained; and ensure that they meet current AAB and ADA laws	P&R, DC
4B3			3. Pursue Brownfields grants to accommodate new facilities	CED
4B4			4. Develop a Management Plan for the 21 Edgebrook property	P&R
4B5			5. Acquisition of 322 Salem End Road excluding perimeter of reservoir and work with entity selected to manage the Stearns and Brackett Wildlife Preserve	P&R
4B6			6. Develop a management and reuse plan for the 88 acre Danforth Green property	P&R CED
4B7			7. Explore expanding Cushing Park by acquiring additional land	P&R
4B8			8. Pursue new community garden locations	P&R

#	Goal	Objective	Action	Lead Dept.
4B9			9. As part of restoration following the sewer crossing of the Sudbury River at Concord St. develop a new park, including river access, that is integrated with the park for the 2 School St. development	P&R CC, PB
4B10			10. Reach environmental equity through the increase of new recreation facilities where needed most on the south side of Framingham, as noted in the Environmental Equity and Open Space Analysis.	P&R, CC
4C1		C. Determine what new recreation programs are needed	1. Study the need for, develop a report, and implement new and varied programs for "youth at risk", "disabled", and "special needs" populations	P&R DC
4D1		D. Determine what new Conservation land amenities are needed	1. Identify locations for possible new trails, outdoor classrooms, public access points, and camping areas on conservation land. Implement as possible	CC
4E1		E. Coordinate public access to the Aqueducts with the MWRA	1. Prepare Management Plan for Weston Aqueduct	P&R
4E2			2. Amend the 8m permit to expand public access to the Weston Aqueduct	P&R OSRPIWG
4E3			3. Evaluate the Sudbury Aqueduct for enhanced public access	P&R OSRPIWG
5A1	5. Undertake other town-wide efforts that will support open space and recreation	A. Pursue aggressive implementation of this plan	1. Continue the work of the Open Space and Recreation Implementation Working Group to monitor progress of the plan, communicate with involved departments, and conduct research and develop recommendations as noted in this plan	BOS OSRPIWG
5A2			2. Develop routine staff meeting schedule to discuss and coordinate implementation of this plan	BOS, CC, P&R
5B1		B. Identify possible sources of funding for implementation of this Action Plan	1. Research the list of possible funding mechanisms listed in Ch 7 and develop a report recommending funding strategies for Framingham	OSRPIWG
5B2			2. Appoint a new CPA Study Committee to determine the feasibility, costs, and benefits of passing the CPA in Framingham	BOS
5C1		C. Aggressively pursue the recommended funding strategies noted in the report cited in 5B1.	1. Develop a recommendation to establish, through Town Meeting, a fund (and a policy) to channel money from Ch 61 back taxes to a fund dedicated to land conservation efforts	Agri. Com
5C2			2. Pursue other funding mechanisms identified in the report cited in 5B1 as appropriate	OSRPIWG
5C3			3. Develop a better system to track the status of priority parcels so that the town is in a better position to respond to pending sales	OSRPIWG
5D1		D. Maintain current and complete records of municipal resources	1. Ensure the routine updating of inventories of Conservation land and Parks and Recreation land and routine coordination with the Assessor's Office	BOS, OSRPIWG

#	Goal	Objective	Action	Lead Dept.
5E1		E. Ensure that departmental budgets have adequate maintenance line items	1. Issue directive to pertinent departments (e.g., Conservation, Parks and Recreation) to include maintenance in their annual budgets	BOS, CC, P&R
5F1		F. Inform and educate citizens about the open space and recreation facilities that exist in Framingham	1. Develop a comprehensive and consistent set of maps and lists of facilities of Parks and Recreation and Conservation lands and facilities; identify handicapped access; post on the town website, public access television, and MRRS	OSRPIWG
5G1		G. Preserve scenic, historic, archeological, ecological, cultural, and geologic features and the open space surrounding significant historic and landscape features.	1. Develop recommendation for Town Meeting for the expansion of local historic districts	HDC
5G2			2. Develop historic landscapes as historic districts	HDC
5G3			3. Undertake stonewall preservation education	HC, HDC
5G4			4. Add signs to designate all historic districts	HC, HDC
5G5			5. Review the list of scenic roads	PB
5G6			6. Undertake scenic road marking and outreach to address tree preservation along scenic roads	PB
5H1		H. Maximize preservation of open space in development projects	1. Provide incentives for developers to practice low impact development and cluster development by developing changes to the zoning bylaw that addresses incentives in the special permit process	PB