



Framingham Open Space and Recreation Plan Executive Summary

July 2008



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Framingham, MA
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Prepared by the Open Space and Recreation Planning Committee, Department of Parks and Recreation, 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 Planning Committee members were:

- Tom Mahoney, Planning Board, Chair
- Thomas Branham, Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee, Vice Chair
- Karen Dempsey, Disability Commission
- Dennis Giombetti, Board of Selectmen
- George C. Harrington, Agricultural Commission
- Pam Helinek, Conservation Commission
- Dan Jones, Parks and Recreation Commission
- Mark Lamkin, Resident At-large
- Andy Limeri, School Committee
- Bob Moore, Resident At-Large
- Chris Walsh, Historic District Commission

Staff Support was provided by:

- Jennifer Steel, Conservation Commission, Assistant Agent
- Michele Grzenda, Conservation Commission, Agent
- Geoff Kovar, Department of Public Works, Engineering, Director of GIS
- Stephanie McNulty, Conservation Intern
- Trisha Powell, Parks and Recreation, Superintendent of Recreation
- Eugene Kennedy, Community and Economic Development, Assistant Director
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A. Purpose of the Plan

The overall purpose of the 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 places that have ecological, recreational, civic, 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 2008 Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) is an update of earlier versions of the Plan. In September 2007 an Open Space and Recreation Plan Committee was established to oversee revision of the Plan. Assisted by Framingham's Planning and Economic Development, the Conservation Commission staff, and Park and Recreation staff, the OSRP 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 many meetings with municipal staff.

C. Goals of the Plan

The end result of the planning process is a coordinated set of goals and objectives and a five-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 to meet unmet needs
- Undertake other efforts that will support open space and recreation

D. Implementation of the Plan

Action items designed to achieve each goal are spelled out in the Action Plan. There, detailed actions, responsible parties, and specific timeframes are identified. Since this Open Space and Recreation Plan reflects the substantive input from and 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. Five-Year Action Plan

Introduction

This is the five-year action plan the Open Space and Recreation Planning Committee (OSRPC) feels is necessary to achieve the goals and objectives identified in the previous chapter (see Map 8: Action Plan). It is critical that this 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 oversight and coordination by an implementation committee with broad representation and vision (see below). Staff should develop a roughly quarterly meeting schedule to ensure that efforts are being undertaken and well-coordinated. An implementation committee should be formed, 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 OSRPC believes that this plan focuses on a few key actions.

1. Ensuring aggressive implementation of the plan.

Action 5A2: Form a new permanent Open Space and Recreation Implementation Committee (OSRIC) to monitor progress of the plan, communicate with involved departments, and conduct research and develop recommendations as noted in this plan

Action 5C1: Appoint a new CPA study committee

The surveys and forums identified an interest in taking another look at the Community Preservation Act (CPA) as a means to fund some of the actions in this chapter. This would provide one means of funding.

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

2. Focusing on the maintenance of existing facilities and programs.

Action 1A4: Undertake actions identified in Table 7-1 for Recreation Facilities in Need of Improvements

Action 2A2: Continue and expand Conservation land steward program and workdays to help maintain and improve and make consistent open space parcels

3. Protecting 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. Creating 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.

Key to the Lead Municipalities

Key to Lead Municipal Bodies in Action Plan Below	
Acronym	Body Name
AgCom	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
OSRIC	Open Space and Recreation Implementation Committee
P&R	Parks and Recreation Department
PB	Planning Board
Sch D	School Department

The Action Plan

Five-Year Action Plan (2008-2012)				
#	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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anna Murphy Park (A) • Bates Road (B) • Bowditch Field (C) • Butterworth Park (D) • Cushing Memorial Park (E) • Danforth Park (F) • Farm Pond Recreation Area (G) • Furber Park (H) • Lake Waushakum Beach (I) • Learned's Pond Beach (J) • Long's Complex (K) • Mason Park (L) • Merchant Road (M) • Mt. Wayte Park (N) • Oakvale Park (O) • Saxonville Beach (P) • Saxonville Falls Park (Q) • Temple Street Playground ® • Victory Field (S) • Winch Park (T) 	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

Five-Year Action Plan (2008-2012)				
#	Goal	Objective	Action	Lead Dept.
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
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	OSRIC, P&R, CC
2A3			3. Continue and expand Conservation land steward program and workdays to help maintain and improve trails and infrastructure	CC
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 new trails layer in town GIS	CC
2A7			7. Implement ADA/access improvements needed at all conservation and open space parcels	DC CC
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 aquatic weed infestations	1. Continue the Town's pond management program	CC
			2. Support DCR in their efforts to address weed 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.)	OSRIC, 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	OSRIC, AgCom

Five-Year Action Plan (2008-2012)				
#	Goal	Objective	Action	Lead Dept.
3B1		B. Coordinate with 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 by transferring it to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	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, OSRIC
3C2			2. Develop coordinated administrative process for dealing with Ch61 land when it becomes available through the right of first refusal (i.e., consider adopting the Mt. Grace process)	AgCom, 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	OSRIC
3D1		D. Aggressively pursue purchase or protection of priority open space parcels as they become available	1. Pursue priority lands identified in Tables 5-15 through 5-19. Develop and distribute educational materials, seek sources of funding and support, encourage the development of "neighborhood" advocacy groups	OSRIC
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
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. Form a taskforce/committee (with representation by DC) to develop an integrated long-term plan for public trails in Framingham. Include existing trails (e.g., Bay Circuit Trail, Bruce Freeman Rail Trail, Cochituate Rail Trail, municipal trails, SVT trails, and state park 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 committee should act as advocates for new trail projects and provide maintenance for existing trails in Framingham	BOS, B&PAC
4A2			2. Complete and open the Cochituate Rail Trail	CED, CRT

Five-Year Action Plan (2008-2012)				
#	Goal	Objective	Action	Lead Dept.
4A3			3. Continue preliminary studies and advanced planning in support of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail	CED, B&PAC
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	CED, DPW
4A7			7. Support the Bay Circuit Trail effort by attending meetings and implementing recommendations	B&PAC
4A8			8. Re-establish trails leading to the Framingham schools	SchD
4A9			9. 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 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
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	2. Identify locations for possible new trails, outdoor classrooms, public access points, and camping areas on conservation land. Implement as possible	CC
5A1	5. Undertake other town-wide efforts that will support open space and recreation	A. Pursue aggressive implementation of this plan	1. Form a new Open Space and Recreation Implementation Committee to monitor progress of the plan, communicate with involved departments, and conduct research and develop recommendations as noted in this plan	BOS

Five-Year Action Plan (2008-2012)				
#	Goal	Objective	Action	Lead Dept.
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	OSRIC
5B2			2. Appoint 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	AgCom
			2. Pursue other funding mechanisms identified in the report cited in 5B1 as appropriate	OSRIC
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, OSRIC
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	OSRIC
5G1		G. Address invasive species town-wide	1. Develop a management plan for invasive species on town land	CC, DPW, P&R
5H1		H. 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
			2. Develop historic landscapes as historic districts	HDC
			3. Undertake stonewall preservation education	HC, HDC
			4. Undertake scenic road marking and outreach to address tree preservation along scenic roads	PB
5I1		I. 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



