



West Boylston, MA

Open Space and Recreation Plan

July 2017



Prepared by the
West Boylston Open Space Implementation Committee (OSIC) and the
West Boylston Parks Commission (Commission)
with Technical Assistance from the
Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC)

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- Board of Assessors Office

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- Department of Conservation and Recreation Division of Water Supply Protection, John Scannell and Jim French
- Water District Superintendent, Michael Coveney
- Greater Worcester Land Trust
- Wachusett Greenways
- Seven Hills Wheelmen
- Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission

1. PLAN SUMMARY

1A. OVERVIEW

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2017 Open Space and Recreation Plan Update (OSRP) compiles environmental and recreational information specific to West Boylston to provide a guiding document for the next seven (7) years. The OSRP, once accepted by the State, will qualify the town for multiple State funding opportunities through the Division of Conservation Services in the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR).

The intent of the OSRP is to document local open space and recreation status, needs, and concerns, and to include these issues in all building development and facility repair/maintenance projects initiated by the Town. Implementation of the May 2016 Complete Streets Policy, intended to improve access for bicycle and pedestrian use along roadways to schools, residences, and businesses will help. Utilization of this funding source, up to \$400,000, will implement projects not considered feasible otherwise.

The recent accomplishments of the Parks Commission, including creating field use scheduling, evaluating facilities conditions, considering enhancements at Goodale Park, constructing a new practice field, and improving safety fencing. The highest needs noted for Parks are to improve substandard (Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA)) facilities (track and baseball fields), fill the Recreation Director position, evaluate swimming options, ensure fields remain at Mixer property, improve elder and universal access to existing fields.

The Open Space Implementation Committee (OSIC) initiated the Complete Streets Policy and has worked to protect multiple open space properties that were on the properties of interest list through coordination with DCR land acquisition and Greater Worcester Land Trust. The proximity to Town drinking water sources and mapped aquifers increases the need to protect these undeveloped lands and Community Preservation Funds can be used for this purpose. The OSIC advocates for protection of existing Town open spaces because “once it is developed, it doesn’t come back.” The OSIC encourages use of the State Chapter 61 Program which allows landowners to pay significantly-reduced taxes on property formally designated in forested, agricultural, or recreational use. Action Items associated with open space include: improve/expand walking and bicycle access throughout town, acquire/protect priority open space parcels, encourage landowner donations/designations to limit development, and investigate a fenced dog park.

The OSIC coordinated two town-wide surveys recently, one in the fall of 2013 and another in the summer of 2016, where responses from more than 350 households were received. 88% of the respondents believed it was important to protect open space and nature, with the most used facilities being sidewalks and local trails for walking. The three (3) most important items to fund were sidewalks, a swimming facility, and protecting open space near town wells.

In [Section 9. Seven Year Action Plan](#), there is a complete list of Action Items to implement each of the stated goals over the next seven (7) years, which note funding sources, timeframe, and responsible party; highlights are shown on [Map 10: Action Plan Map](#).

PLAN SUMMARY

The benefits of open and recreational spaces, whether privately or publicly owned, are numerous. They contribute to quality of life and community character, provide a center for community activities, protect and enhance nearby property values, attract businesses, and do not burden the town with excessive expenses. Open space protects our water supplies and also provides natural areas for stormwater infiltration, wildlife corridors, improves air quality, and reduces localized flooding. Recreation facilities provide venues for family and community sharing and personal growth and development.

Today West Boylston is at a crossroads; feeling the cumulative pressures of urban development and business expansion, population increases, aging infrastructure, aging citizens, fewer school-aged citizens, and budget shortfalls. Providing recreational opportunities for the whole community is a fundamental part of the character of West Boylston that should be continued and expanded. Given the small amount of town-owned land, especially near our drinking water wells, there is a dire need to preserve open space threatened by development.

The West Boylston Water District’s Source Water Protection Plan state, “Residential and commercial developments, with all of their associated land uses, are the biggest threats to a drinking water supply. Their contamination is slow and insidious, often overlooked until a crisis is thrust upon the community, usually requiring a lot of funding to remediate.

Residents value the areas of their town that are rural. Rural landscaped provides many benefits including wildlife habitat, aquifer/surface water recharge, farmland, and aesthetic beauty. It is critically important that town officials discuss alternatives to development with landowners to preserve open space.”

In order to secure and protect valuable parcels of



Goodale Park. Photo credit CMRPC.

open space, it is essential to bring forth today's issues and concerns regarding development, land exchanges, and open space and recreational needs. If the town does not take significant steps to preserve open space in West Boylston, it may be too late. Once developed, open space is essentially lost forever.

The West Boylston Parks Commission (the Commission) and the Open Space Implementation Committee (OSIC) have a responsibility to increase awareness of local citizens and public officials to the benefits of providing recreation opportunities for all the town's citizens, and of acquiring, preserving and managing open space, which includes updating the Open Space and Recreation Plan. To complete this Plan, the West Boylston OSIC worked together with the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) to analyze current conditions, gather public feedback, and generate the following seven-year action plan.

1B. PLAN PROCESS

This OSRP builds an understanding of West Boylston's current place in the region, its history and sense of self, its demographics, and its growth and development patterns. A thorough review of the geology, landscape, water resources, vegetation, wildlife and fisheries, unique and scenic resources, as well as, environmental challenges was necessary to develop a clear picture of the area's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. Working with the Town's assessor and others, an inventory of public and private lands of conservation and recreation interest was compiled.



West Boylston Town Offices. *Photo credit CMRPC.*

This is the third revision of West Boylston's Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP). The original OSRP plan was completed in 1996 with revised plans in 2002 and 2009. Both versions laid the groundwork for this updated Open Space and Recreation Plan, the purpose of which is to evaluate current conditions, issues and concerns; and to plan for the future.

The plan identifies those special places and spaces that town residents enjoy, and sets out a strategy for improving open space and recreation opportunities in a manner that is sustainable for future generations. Central themes running through this document are to protect the town's drinking water,

and to provide open space and recreation opportunities together with land conservation programs that enhance the health and safety of its citizens and preserve the character of the Town. [Section 9. Seven Year Action Plan](#) includes progressive steps to increase community information dissemination and involvement, to improve recreational opportunities for West Boylston's residents and visitors, and to foster economic growth by promoting its open space and recreation opportunities. It stipulates detailed action steps, time frames, and suggests responsible parties to assist West Boylston to move forward. This Open Space and Recreation Plan reaffirms West Boylston's desire to meet the following goals:

1. Protect and Preserve Open Space Parcels
2. Maintain and Enhance the Town's Recreation Facilities
3. Protect and Enhance Opportunities to Access and Enjoy Natural Resources
4. Plan and Develop Greenways and Walkable Connections in the Town with Consideration to Appropriate Regional Connections
5. Conduct Sound Management of Open Space and Recreation Facilities

2. INTRODUCTION

2A. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The West Boylston Parks Commission (the Commission) is tasked with the duty to lay out and improve public parks, make rules for their use and governance. Subject to appropriation, they shall have the power to conduct park programs and recreation program activities at places other than such public parks. The Commission ensures the availability of safe and well-maintained recreation facilities throughout the town.

The West Boylston Open Space Implementation Committee (OSIC) is an advisory committee to the Board of Selectmen whose mission is:



Open Space at Goodale Park. Photo Credit CMRPC.

Maintain a balanced approach to provide safe open space and recreational opportunities for active and passive activities, to provide a safe and adequate water supply, to enhance the Town character, and to support opportunities for agriculture and wildlife to flourish in a fiscally-responsible manner.

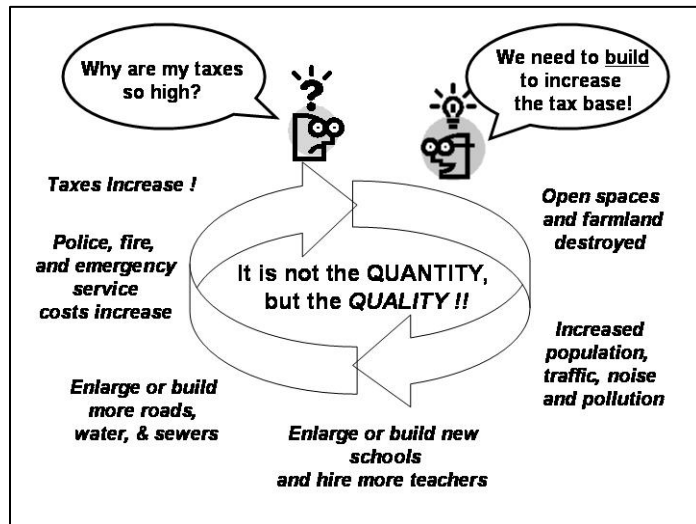
The OSIC believes open space represents more than lands set aside for aesthetic beauty and/or recreational use. Open space, as described in this plan, also ensures public health through water supply protection and providing a wide range of recreational opportunities for all ages and abilities of townspeople. Once accepted, the Town will qualify for a variety of open space and recreation project funding programs.

OPEN SPACE IMPLEMENTATION COMMITTEE VISION

Although West Boylston is no longer a rural farming community, a desire to remain a semi-rural and close-knit community is the reason many people choose to live here, as well as the proximity to the Wachusett Reservoir. However, West Boylston's location abutting the City of Worcester generates significant development pressures. The Town has undergone significant transformation from a rural community of small farms in a close working relationship with the land into a growing suburban

bedroom community composed of a mixture of small business and light industry. In recent years, the pace of residential, commercial and industrial development has quickened dramatically and now threatens the town’s public health, safety, character, rural landscape and overall quality of life. Town officials frequently state their desire for an increase in business and development to provide economic opportunity, additional revenue and to lower property taxes. However, although there are exceptions, the general rule is that the larger the town/city, the higher the taxes.¹ This is because development requires town services (i.e. water, sewer, road maintenance, education, police, fire, emergency services and trash disposal) and studies have shown that urban/suburban residential growth rarely pays its own way. This begins a cycle in which development leads to loss of open space, more infrastructure, increased municipal financial burdens (to pay for new roads, schools, public safety and emergency services) and increased taxes as shown in the diagram below. West Boylston is on the edge of this precipice, and this development strategy needs to be seriously reassessed in the next update of the Town-wide Master Plan.

A long-term community vision, as presented in an updated Master Plan will help guide the town’s strategic decisions. Each immediate decision made by any Town Board or Commission should fit in to the plan to reach the overall goal. The 2017 Open Space and Recreation Plan implementation strategy outlines steps that allow the Town to preserve the very best of West Boylston and check those actions that would diminish it as a special place.



The OSIC would like to see the Town move away from arguments that pit growth against preservation, and instead focus on protecting natural resources and improving quality of life while also encouraging responsible growth. Open space needs to be recognized as enriching and not impeding growth and development. This plan is an effort to hold on to the best of West Boylston, while responding to the pressures in a rapidly changing world; and ensuring public health and safety decisions are made in a fiscally-sound manner.

Cycle of Development and Increasing Municipal Services and Taxes

¹ The Trust for Public Land. (TPL). 1999. Long-term relationship between development and property tax bills. TPL New England Region Report.

Imagine driving around West Boylston 20 years from now. What will you see? Will the town be an attractive and affordable place to live and work? Will it have a safe and healthy environment, creative and efficient uses of our natural resources, with a welcoming village character that sustains its connection to the past, and a sense of place for families seeking a quieter alternative? Or will you see a community characterized by urban sprawl, crumbling municipal infrastructure, and unorganized business/industrial development resulting in degradation of public health, air, and drinking water? Which future would you rather see?

Planning can preserve our valued resources and create opportunities to develop our community.

West Boylston is facing a critical crossroads. The Town needs to determine how to respond to development pressure, while also protecting watersheds that maintain clean and ample drinking water for our community. The OSIC intends to work to promote a future that balances public health and safety, fiscal stability, and a managed development program. The OSIC believes that the majority of residents want to preserve these aspects of life in West Boylston, as well as retain and expand its unique community character.

DEFINITIONS

To differentiate between open space and lands used for recreational facilities, this plan utilizes the following definitions. This by no means is intended to prioritize one aspect over the other within this report.

When the term “*Open space*” is used in this document, it refers to undeveloped land, both publicly and privately owned. It is land in a predominantly natural state or altered for natural resources-based uses (i.e., farming, orchards, forestry, hunting and fishing, walking-type parks and trails), and may include, but is not limited to agricultural lands, fields, wooded areas, forests, wetlands and water bodies. Examples of publicly owned open space would be Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) land, the Mass Central Rail Trail, Water District land, and undeveloped county/state land associated with the House of Corrections. Examples of privately owned open space include farms, forest lands, and passive recreation areas.

The term “*recreational open space*” or “*recreation*” refers to land used for active recreational purposes, such as Woodland Park, athletic fields, or golf courses. Land used for active recreation does not qualify technically as open space because, for example, these parcels often have portions covered with paved surfaces such as that for tennis courts, basketball courts and parking lots. In addition, athletic fields require regular fertilizer applications and are usually installed with fencing and outbuildings. Since this plan deals with both open space and recreation, we have presented an approach to obtain the benefits of developing new and maintaining existing recreational facilities, without losing scarce valued

environmental assets. In addition, grants and partnerships between federal, state and local agencies are often based on recommendations the applicant community makes in its Open Space and Recreation Plan. Hence, we recognize and embrace opportunities for healthy outdoor activities, be it hiking along forest trails or a competitive soccer or football field.

2B. PLANNING PROCESS AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

PUBLIC BOARDS

The West Boylston Open Space Implementation Committee consists of seven (7) members, listed below. The committee meets once a month at the Town Hall.

- Barbara Wyatt (Resident)
- Brenda Bowman (Resident)
- Gary Flynn (Parks Commission)
- John Hadley (Conservation Commission)
- Mike Peckar (Resident)
- Raymond DeSanti (Resident)
- Vincent Vignaly (Planning Board)

The West Boylston Parks Commission consists of five (5) members, listed below:

- Gary Flynn (Resident)
- James Pedone (School Designee)
- John Pitro (Resident)
- Robert Dunne (Resident)
- Steven Blake (Resident)

This Plan is a working document intended to focus and direct the efforts of many boards and commissions in West Boylston to provide safe and varied opportunities for recreation.

LOCAL INTERVIEWS

Members of the committee and/or CMRPC staff attended Parks Commission meetings, and spoke with the Water District, Director of the DPW, Historical Commission, Conservation Commission, and received valuable assistance from the Town Administrator's Municipal Assistant. Ms. Anita M. Scheipers, Town Administrator and Chairman of the West Boylston Town-Wide Planning Committee, attended meetings as well. Members and CMRPC discussed open space and recreation opportunities and concerns with agency staff from the Department of Conservation and Recreation, the Greater Worcester Land Trust, Wachusett Greenways, Seven Hills Wheelmen and other recreational groups across the region.

PUBLIC SURVEY

The OSIC conducted monthly meetings, a public survey, a public forum, and a public hearing to encourage community involvement. The public survey was conducted during the summer of 2016 on-line in Survey Monkey and was also provided in hard copy at a variety of locations including the library, the Town Hall, the Senior Center, Angell Brook Community and Freedom Village apartments, among others. The link to the survey was distributed through the Town Administrator's blog, was posted on the Town's website and Facebook page, was listed on the electronic sign at the Town Common, and notice was provided in the individual electric bills. The link was also sent out by the school superintendent. Feedback from the survey is included in [Section 7B. Summary of Community Needs.](#)

Open Space and Recreation Plan: YOUR INPUT IS NEEDED

The West Boylston Open Space Implementation Committee is updating the Open Space and Recreation Plan. We want your opinions on topics such as: open space conservation, water resource protection, local agriculture, and the overall town character. The survey will have questions addressing your understanding of the town's current open space, what preservation needs you believe are most important, and what types of recreation spaces you value and participate in.

Hard copies are available at the Town Hall, Beaman Memorial Public Library, and Senior Center. The survey can also be taken online at TINYURL.COM/WB-OSRP.

Please deliver or mail all hard copy response to the outside mailbox at the Town Hall located at:



West Boylston Municipal Offices
140 Worcester Street
West Boylston, MA 01583



PUBLIC FORUMS

The Committee organized two public forums at the Board of Selectmen's Meeting Room. The first was held on the evening of June 2, 2016 to discuss the draft plan and survey results, and to draft goals, objectives and an action plan. The second was held on March 21, 2017 to get comments on a final draft of the OSRP. Feedback from the public forums is included in the [Section 7B. Summary of Community Needs.](#)

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Upon completion of the DRAFT OSRP, the committee posted the draft on the Town website. Formal notices of opportunities for public comments were sent directly to all subscribers on the Town of West Boylston's website to receive hearing notices. The OSIC presented the plan and received feedback directly from members of the Board of Selectmen, Conservation Commission, Parks Facilities Committee, Parks Commission, Planning Board and Town-wide Planning Committee at separate meetings with each of these boards. The Committee also solicited public input from Town Boards and Commissions, neighborhood groups, and environmental groups through the posting of the plan on the Town Website and distribution of draft versions of Open Space and Recreation Plan Update. An official notice was sent to all individual citizens

who have subscribed to notices of any public hearings in West Boylston. While response was limited, the information was used as one of many methods of gauging the public's needs and desires.

3. COMMUNITY SETTING

3A. REGIONAL CONTEXT

West Boylston is a small residential suburb of Worcester, Massachusetts, the second largest city in New England. The Town is located in central Massachusetts, north of Worcester, west of Boylston, south of Sterling and east of Holden. West Boylston has approximately 300 businesses including retail, service, and light manufacturing companies. Businesses are mainly located on Route 12 and industries are mainly in the Hartwell Street Industrial Area.

Similar to the four other towns (Boylston, Holden, Princeton, Sterling) within the Wachusett Reservoir Watershed, housing is generally single-family in traditional residential areas and subdivisions. Within this region, most retail businesses are located in the strip commercial developments or in shopping plazas. The Town is accessed by Routes 12, 140, and 110 as well as Interstate 190. A railway track also traverses the town and is utilized daily for the transport of freight.

Most of the town is located in the Wachusett Reservoir's watershed and twenty percent (20%) of the Wachusett Reservoir is located in West Boylston. The watershed offers beautiful scenery for both residents and visitors and the Reservoir presents a fishing challenge to many sport enthusiasts. Limited passive recreation around the Reservoir is popular for the residents and visitors. While natural areas abound around the Reservoir, utilization is limited somewhat due to protections necessary for water quality.

West Boylston is located within the region served by the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission. CMRPC is the designated regional planning agency (RPA) for the Central Massachusetts region, which includes the City of Worcester and the surrounding 39 communities. This region encompasses the southern two-thirds of Worcester County. CMRPC provides municipal and regional planning for Land Use and Transportation, as well as a variety of Community Development services. For regional context, a locator map for West Boylston is included as **Map 1: Regional Context Map**.

3B. HISTORY OF THE COMMUNITY

West Boylston was once populated by Native Americans. The land was rich in open fields, hills and valleys, and many streams and springs made it an ideal location along a Native American trail to Mt. Wachusett. Near the rivers are indications of Native American settlement and corn patches. European settlers arrived in West Boylston around 1720 as part of the Lancaster Population grant.

INCORPORATION

As more families came to settle in the community, they became unwilling to travel to the Congregational Church in Boylston for church services and town meetings. A group of families, led by Ezra Beaman, constructed a church three miles west of Boylston on the site present Common in West Boylston. The group desired to become their own town, and in 1796 they received precinct status from the state legislature. However, it was not until 1808 that West Boylston became a town thanks to the determined efforts of businessmen and politician Ezra Beaman.

At its incorporation in 1808, the town took parts of territory from Boylston, Sterling, Shrewsbury and Holden. The Town's location – at the site where the Quinapoxet River joined the Stillwater River and formed the southern branch of the Nashua River – was an important factor in the town's development. The original inhabitants were farmers, but with an abundant water supply a few businesses were started along the waterways. A grist mill, saw mill and blacksmith shop soon appeared. A number of different small mills were built in response to the growth in the population. These evolved into larger and more varied industries. Since the first mills were wooden structures, fire was a constant danger and as a result many of the rebuilt buildings were made of stone or brick.

Robert Bailey Thomas, the founder of the Old Farmer's Almanac, lived on a farm in West Boylston, Massachusetts. Thomas calculated the cycles of the moon and compiled essays and historical facts for inclusion in the yearly almanacs. He served as the town clerk of West Boylston in 1808 and as a state legislator in 1820.² West Boylston was also the home to Reed Pipe Organs, some of which are still in use today.³

By the mid 1800's, the Worcester and Nashua Railroad came through town, and in 1880 the Central Massachusetts Railroad and the Boston to Northampton came through the Oakdale section of town. The advent of the railroads allowed large quantities of farm products to be shipped to Boston on a daily basis. Crops including corn, rye, wheat, oats, milk and cider, contributed to the prosperity of West Boylston. Manufacturing continued to grow with cotton, wool and wire products being made, as well as scythes, boots and baskets. One well known manufacturer from this time was Erastus Bigelow. Bigelow Mills was where the first power loom for weaving carpets was invented.

² American Antiquarian Portrait Bios. Accessed via: <http://www.americanantiquarian.org/Inventories/Portraits/bios/133.pdf>

³ A Handbook of New England, Second Edition. 1917. Porter E. Sargent. Accessed via:

https://books.google.com/books?id=jKETAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA393&lpg=PA393&dq=west+boylston+pipe+organ+manufactur&source=bl&ots=GliOaKKsDS&sig=jr8iEyBC2cZugPF-kMUOcLDoV38&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwil5MP4_YPQAhVn_4MKHQzKC6sQ6AEIMDAD#v=onepage&q&f=false

WACHUSETT RESERVOIR

By 1890, the town had approximately 3,000 residents with five (5) churches, ten (10) schools and several meeting halls. At that time, Boston was seeking to increase its water supply and the Metropolitan Water Board was created under the provisions of Chapter 488 of the Acts of the year 1895. The Board selected West Boylston as the best place to construct a reservoir and soon the state began taking land including the Town center along the river. Over 1,500 residents were displaced, as well as eight schools, three churches, most of the farms and all of the mills. The construction of the Wachusett Reservoir cost \$11 million and required over 750 laborers, many of which were immigrants from Italy. Following completion of the Wachusett Dam in Clinton, the valley was flooded in 1905, thus forming the Wachusett Reservoir. The Reservoir encompasses over one square mile out of the nearly 14 square miles of the town. The lovely Old Stone Church stands as the last reminder of the town that once existed in the valley.

FARMING

West Boylston had high quality fertile soils – some of the best in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts – and as such, agriculture, including dairy farming, and timber harvesting flourished. Agriculture was productive despite the hills and rocks that characterized the landscape. Prior to postwar World War II, small family farms included dairy, fruit trees and vegetables. After World War II, there was a steady loss of these farms to subdivisions and commercial development. The farms and related open space were especially significant for the town’s water supply protection providing both underground recharge and safeguarding the surface waters.

CURRENT CONDITIONS

Today, West Boylston is mostly a residential “bedroom” town. Absent the Wachusett Reservoir, the Town may have faced the fate of many mill towns: abandoned mills and high unemployment. Although the Reservoir was a disaster for the town at the time of formation, today it is a picturesque landmark which provides passive recreational opportunities and scenic beauty. See Section 4.F (Scenic and Unique Environments) for additional historic information and for properties that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.^{4,5,6,7}

⁴ Edgar Whitcomb, West Boylston Historical Commission, 1996

⁵ Worcester Area League of Women Voters, “Know Your Town,” 1977

⁶ “Transformation of a mill town,” The Banner, January 8, 1987

⁷ Ron Borjeson, West Boylston Historical Commission, 2000-2002

3C. POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

POPULATION

To plan for West Boylston's open space and recreation needs, the size, density, age and composition of the town's population must be considered. From 1940 to 2010, the town's population more than quadrupled, growing from 1,822 to 7,792 residents. However, it is important to note that the Worcester County Jail and House of Corrections is located in West Boylston. While the capacity of the jail is approximately 800, it hosts approximately 1,300 inmates each year. When these numbers are discounted, the population more than tripled during this period⁸.

As shown in the exhibit below, the greatest period of growth occurred in the 1950s, when the population grew 115%. Since that time the population has still grown overall, albeit at a slower rate than in the 1950's and 1960s. In the 1960s, the population grew 15.3%. It decreased by 2.6% in the 1970's, and decreased again by 7% in 1990 with a total citizen population of 5,770 in 1990. From 1990 to 2000, the citizen population increased by 7%, and in 2010, the citizen population grew to 6,531 indicating growth rate of 3%. The 2010 citizen population is 100 citizens fewer than the citizen population in 1980 (before the construction of the jail).

Exhibit 1: West Boylston Population Estimates Table and Graph

| Year | Citizen Population | Inmate Population | Total Population | % Change Citizens | % Total Change |
|------|--------------------|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|----------------|
| 1940 | 1,822 | -- | 1,822 | -- | -- |
| 1950 | 2,570 | -- | 2,570 | 41.10% | 41.10% |
| 1960 | 5,526 | -- | 5,526 | 115.00% | 115.00% |
| 1970 | 6,369 | -- | 6,369 | 15.30% | 15.30% |
| 1980 | 5,936 | 268 | 6,204 | -2.60% | -2.60% |
| 1990 | 5,770 | 841 | 6,611 | -7.00% | 6.60% |
| 2000 | 6,320 | 1,161 | 7,481 | 7.10% | 13.20% |
| 2010 | 6,531 | 1,138 | 7,669 | 3.00% | 2.50% |

Source: US Census 2010 and West Boylston Housing Production Plan, 2012.

⁸ Sheriff's Office, Worcester County/State Jail, West Boylston, October 10, 2000



Please note that this OSRP is associated with the citizen population and not the inmate population. Thus, the focus of the population evaluation shown below is for the citizen population, not including the inmate population. Unless otherwise noted, all numbers refer to the citizen population.

POPULATION PROJECTIONS

CMRPC regularly publishes population projections for transportation planning purposes, which are vetted with communities.⁹ As part of the 2011 Long Range Transportation Plan, town-level projections were developed based upon past growth trends, land use and infrastructure capacity, planned future projects, and stakeholder input. Populations estimates for West Boylston indicate that by the year 2040 the population of will be about 8,700. This represents an increase of 14%, which is similar to the percent growth estimated for Shrewsbury, as shown in the exhibit below. The two (2) towns experience similar development patterns because both have limited developable lands, though Shrewsbury’s is due to build out, while West Boylston’s is due to the extent of land owned by DCR. It is noted that similar aggressive projections were made in the 2005 Master Plan that suggested that the town’s population would be 8,412 by 2010. The actual census count was 7,669 in 2010.

⁹ For comparison purposes, in the year 2000, CMRPC projected that the 2010 population of West Boylston would be 7,209. The actual population in 2010 was 7,669 according to the U.S. Census. Previous to the year 2000 projects were made at the sub-regional level and are not available for the town of West Boylston.

In looking at the population projections for the town Water District in 2001, Tata & Howard, Inc. estimated that the town's population would increase to 8,681 by the year 2020.¹⁰

Exhibit 2: Population Projections

| Town | 2010 | 2020 | 2030 | 2040 | % Change 2010 to 2040 |
|----------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------------------|
| West Boylston | 7,669 | 8,105 | 8,512 | 8,766 | 14% |
| Boylston | 4,355 | 4,627 | 4,684 | 4,901 | 13% |
| Holden | 17,346 | 19,314 | 21,209 | 21,712 | 25% |
| Shrewsbury | 35,608 | 37,790 | 39,641 | 41,071 | 15% |
| Sterling | 7,808 | 7,950 | 7,750 | 7,500 | -4% |
| Worcester | 181,045 | 188,064 | 194,372 | 197,196 | 9% |

Source: Population Projections as published in the Regional Transportation Plan and Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC) Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)
Note: These values include the inmate population

As reported in the 2010 US Census, West Boylston has a smaller population than many of its neighbors, including the City of Worcester, Shrewsbury, Holden and Sterling. The only neighboring municipality with a smaller population is Boylston, with 4,355 people.

POPULATION DENSITY

West Boylston has a total of 13.8 square miles of land with a population density was of 472 persons per square mile in 2010. This density is higher than Boylston and Sterling, but lower than Holden, Shrewsbury and the City of Worcester, as seen in the exhibit below.

Exhibit 3: Population Density in West Boylston and Surrounding Communities in 2010

| Geographic Area | Total Population | Square Miles | Persons Per Square Mile |
|---|------------------|--------------|----------------------------|
| Boylston | 4,335 | 19.7 | 221 |
| Sterling | 7,808 | 32 | 247 |
| Holden | 17,346 | 36 | 479 |
| West Boylston Citizen Population | 6,531 | 13.8 | 472 |
| Shrewsbury | 35,608 | 22 | 1,646 |
| Worcester | 181,045 | 38 | 4,695 |

¹⁰ Tata & Howard, Inc., "Open Space Plan – Water Supply, T&H No. 1360," December 6, 2001, Draft Attachment – Section 3-Population Projections

| Geographic Area | Total Population | Square Miles | Persons Per Square Mile |
|------------------------|------------------|--------------|-------------------------|
| Worcester County | 798,552 | 1,579 | 528 |
| Massachusetts | 6,547,629 | 10,554 | 620 |
| Source: US Census 2010 | | | |

HOUSEHOLDS

The number of households has been growing over the past few decades as shown in the exhibit below.

Exhibit 4: Number of Households in West Boylston 1980-2010

| Year | # Households | % Total Change |
|---|--------------|----------------|
| 1980 | 2,048 | 8.10% |
| 1990 | 2,214 | 7.50% |
| 2000 | 2,413 | 8.25% |
| 2010 | 2,616 | 7.76% |
| Source: US Census 2010 and West Boylston Master Plan (2005) | | |

During the 1980s, the number of households grew by 8.1 percent (8.1%) and has continued to increase at a rate between seven and eight percent (7-8 %) since that time. At the same time, the number of people per household has been decreasing from 3.03 people per household in 1980 to 2.56 in 2000 and 2010, which indicates households are getting smaller.

POPULATION BY AGE GROUP

Age group distribution in West Boylston has changed considerably since 1960. In 1960, the 15 and younger age group comprised 35.8%, which decreased to 15.8% in 1990 and increased again to 18% in 2000. Since that time, it has hovered around 13% to 14%. The population of the 65 or older population comprised only 7.1% in 1960 and since then has seen a steady increase to 16.3% in 1990, 14.7% in 2000, and 18% in 2010 as shown in the exhibit below.

Exhibit 5: Population by Age Group

| Age Group | 1960 | | 1970 | | 1980 | | 1990 | | 2000 | | 2010 | |
|-----------|-------|-----|-------|-----|-------|-----|-------|-----|-------|-----|-------|-----|
| | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % |
| Under 15 | 1,980 | 36% | 1,843 | 29% | 1,152 | 19% | 1,047 | 16% | 1,323 | 18% | 1,041 | 14% |
| 15-24 | 501 | 9% | 1,005 | 16% | 1,097 | 18% | 907 | 14% | 913 | 12% | 429 | 6% |
| 25-44 | 1,664 | 30% | 1,407 | 22% | 1,653 | 27% | 2,217 | 34% | 2,446 | 33% | 1,896 | 26% |

| Age Group | 1960 | | 1970 | | 1980 | | 1990 | | 2000 | | 2010 | |
|--------------|--------------|-----|--------------|-----|--------------|-----|--------------|-----|--------------|-----|--------------|-----|
| | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % | # | % |
| 45-64 | 990 | 18% | 1,573 | 25% | 1,573 | 25% | 1,359 | 21% | 1,698 | 23% | 2,586 | 35% |
| Over 64 | 391 | 7% | 567 | 9% | 729 | 12% | 1,081 | 16% | 1,101 | 15% | 1,336 | 18% |
| Total | 5,526 | | 6,395 | | 6,204 | | 6,611 | | 7,481 | | 7,288 | |

Source: US Census 2010

In terms of population, in 2010, 35% of the population fell into the 45-64 age group. Those aged 25-44 made up 26%. Together, these two large groups, whose ages range from 25 to 64, made up over half the town's population. In 2014, the largest age group in town was between 45 and 64 years old.

The elderly population (greater than age 64) is expected to continue to grow significantly as the large baby boomer generation (those born after World War II) ages. Those 64 and older increased from a total of 391 residents in 1960 to 1,336 residents in 2010, or a 242%. In addition to an aging population, the influx of new seniors to town was because Hillside Village and Angell Brook developments, containing 249 units of new over-55 housing, was permitted and constructed between 2002 and 2010.

Growth or decline in the population of the various age groups has implications for schools and classroom sizes, recreation facilities, municipal services, housing, and economic development needs for the community. Younger and school aged residents have a need for more active recreation facilities such as soccer and baseball fields. The population under the age of 25 dropped by 766 persons from 2000 to 2010. For middle-aged residents, active recreation areas for league sports may be needed as well as passive recreation facilities and special provisions like wheelchair accessibility may be needed. In sum, these age trends taken with the increase in the Town's total population will create pressures for the provision of open space and passive recreation facilities over more active sports field facilities.

POPULATION DISTRIBUTION

The population within the town is unevenly distributed. According to the Town's Housing Plan, Precinct 1, which is in the southern part of town, contains 1,357 people per square mile and 4,206 people total, while Precinct 2, which is in the northern part of town, contains only 324 people per square mile and 3,463 people total. This is largely because of the large amount of DCR-owned land in the northern Precinct 1 compared with Precinct 2.

INCOME

The median household income in West Boylston was estimated at \$53,777 in 2000 and \$79,906 in 2010. This is approximately 77% above the Worcester County average of \$45,036 in 2010 and 6% higher than

the Massachusetts average household income, which was \$64,509 in 2010. These estimates are based on the 2000 and 2010 U.S. Census, and are shown in the exhibit below.

Exhibit 6: Median Household Income

| Geographic Location | 2000 Median Household Income | 2010 Median Household Income |
|---------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| West Boylston | \$53,777 | \$79,906 |
| Boylston | \$67,703 | \$88,214 |
| Sterling | \$67,188 | \$102,115 |
| Holden | \$64,297 | \$88,405 |
| Worcester | \$35,623 | \$45,036 |
| Shrewsbury | \$64,237 | \$85,697 |
| Worcester County | \$47,874 | \$64,152 |
| Massachusetts | \$50,502 | \$64,509 |

Source: US Census 2000 and 2010

EMPLOYMENT

According to the Division of Employment and Training in Massachusetts, in 2016 West Boylston had a labor force of 3,093. Of these, 2,926 were employed and 167 were unemployed contributing to an unemployment rate of 5.4%. This is roughly one percent higher than the state unemployment average of 4.5%. The unemployment rate in West Boylston has been declining – the March 2016 rate for West Boylston is 0.4% lower than the 2015 average and 4% lower than the 2010 average, signaling a rebound from the 2008 recession as shown in the following exhibit.¹¹

Exhibit 7: Labor Force, Employment, and Unemployment: West Boylston

| Year | Labor Force | Employed | Unemployed | Unemployment Rate (%) | Percent Below poverty level* |
|------|-------------|----------|------------|-----------------------|------------------------------|
| 2016 | 3,093 | 2,926 | 167 | 5.4 | Not available |
| 2015 | 3,086 | 2,908 | 178 | 5.8 | Not available |
| 2014 | 3,092 | 2,894 | 198 | 6.4 | 5.4 |
| 2013 | 3,091 | 2,854 | 237 | 7.7 | 4.9 |
| 2012 | 3,063 | 2,834 | 229 | 7.5 | 4.1 |
| 2011 | 3,034 | 2,783 | 251 | 8.3 | 3.6 |

¹¹ Mass.gov Labor Market Information. Accessed via: <http://www.mass.gov/lwd/economic-data/>

| Year | Labor Force | Employed | Unemployed | Unemployment Rate (%) | Percent Below poverty level* |
|--------------|-------------|-------------|------------|-----------------------|------------------------------|
| 2010 | 3,036 | 2,750 | 286 | 9.4 | 1.6 |
| MA (6/2016) | 3,572,600 | 3,413,000 | 159,500 | 4.5 | 11.6 |
| US (12/2016) | 159,640,000 | 152,151,000 | 7,529,000 | 5 | 4.7 |

Town Source: Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development and ACS Survey/ US Census 2014
MA Source: http://lmi2.detma.org/lmi/pdf/MA2015_Workforce_and_Labor_Area_Review.pdf
US Source: <http://www.dlt.ri.gov/lmi/laus/us/usadj.htm>
Note: Not seasonally corrected. All data presented is the average for the year.

The 2014 Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development reported that there were 283 establishments with an average employment of 3,717. The largest number of establishments is in health care and social assistance (39), however, 10 educational establishments contribute the largest amount to the local economy via employee wages at almost \$15,223,448. This is a transition from 2007, where construction had the largest number of establishments, and manufacturing contributed the largest amount to the local economy via employee wages as shown in the exhibit below.¹²

Exhibit 8: 2014 Average Employment and Wages by Industry

| Industry | Establishments | Total Wages | Average Employment | Average Weekly Wage |
|-------------------------------------|----------------|--------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Construction | 37 | \$7,663,801 | 153 | \$963 |
| Manufacturing | 12 | \$14,233,813 | 295 | \$928 |
| Utilities | 3 | \$3,428,409 | 52 | \$1,268 |
| Wholesale Trade | 18 | \$14,232,219 | 183 | \$1,496 |
| Retail Trade | 35 | \$11,357,176 | 408 | \$535 |
| Transportation and Warehousing | 8 | \$8,430,001 | 180 | \$901 |
| Information | 4 | \$588,675 | 33 | \$343 |
| Finance and Insurance | 13 | \$2,764,444 | 55 | \$967 |
| Real Estate and Rental and Leasing | 5 | \$454,177 | 9 | \$970 |
| Professional and Technical Services | 24 | \$10,117,513 | 144 | \$1,351 |
| Administrative and Waste Services | 17 | \$7,123,639 | 131 | \$1,046 |
| Educational Services | 10 | \$15,223,448 | 354 | \$827 |
| Health Care and Social Assistance | 39 | \$13,985,314 | 394 | \$683 |
| Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation | 4 | \$2,184,515 | 86 | \$488 |

¹² Mass.gov Municipal Employment Data: http://lmi2.detma.org/lmi/lmi_town.asp

| Industry | Establishments | Total Wages | Average Employment | Average Weekly Wage |
|----------------------------------|----------------|----------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Accommodation and Food Services | 24 | \$5,492,632 | 405 | \$261 |
| Other Services, Ex. Public Admin | 21 | \$4,089,654 | 199 | \$395 |
| Total, All Industries | 283 | \$156,777,011 | 3,717 | \$811 |

Source: Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (http://lmi2.detma.org/lmi/lmi_town.asp)

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Since 2002, the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA) has been implementing an Environmental Justice Policy to help ensure that all Massachusetts residents experience equal protection and meaningful involvement with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies and the equitable distribution of environmental benefits. This policy was instituted recognizing that communities across the Commonwealth, particularly those densely populated urban neighborhoods in and around the state’s older industrial areas, are facing many environmental challenges associated with Massachusetts’ industrial legacy. Residents in these predominantly low-income and minority communities – nearly 29% of the state population – lack open space and recreational resources and often live side-by-side numerous existing large and small sources of pollution and old abandoned, contaminated sites, which can pose risks to public health and the environment.

Critical to advancing Environmental Justice (EJ) in the Commonwealth is the equitable distribution of environmental assets such as parks, open space, and recreation. Toward this end, and where applicable, municipalities shall identify and prioritize open space sites in their Open Space and Recreation Plans that are socially, recreationally, and ecologically important to EJ populations within the community.

Environmental Justice populations in Massachusetts are determined by the following criteria:

- Households that earn 65% or less of the statewide household median income;
- 25% or more of the residents are minority;
- 25% or more of the residents are foreign-born; or
- 25% or more of the residents are lacking English proficiency.

Environmental Justice Populations for West Boylston have been mapped in **Map 2: Environmental Justice Map**. The map indicates that there are no Environmental Justice Populations in West Boylston. However, there are Environmental Justice populations in the northern portion of Worcester, which is adjacent to the southern border of West Boylston.

Although there are technically no Environmental Justice populations in West Boylston, there are still vulnerable populations which must be considered. **Map 2: Environmental Justice Map** shows the areas in town with a minority population greater than 20% as well as the areas in town where persons greater

than 75 years of age is 18%. These vulnerable populations should be considered throughout the Open Space Planning Process and the OSIC made an effort to reach these populations throughout the public participation process. For example, the portion of town with a high elderly population could benefit from expanded bus services. Additional bus service between West Boylston and Worcester would have the added benefit of providing Environmental Justice populations in Worcester with access to the Mass Central Rail Trail and Wachusett Reservoir. Expanded bus options include extending the bus line back to the intersection of Central Street and Prospect or looping it out to the Mass Central Rail Trail around the Thomas Basin of the Wachusett Reservoir (Thomas Street/Beaman Street intersection).

3D. GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

PATTERNS AND TRENDS

West Boylston’s Town Center was flooded at the turn of the twentieth century when the Wachusett Reservoir was created. Since then, West Boylston has been mainly a residential community. By 2016, about 40 percent (40%) of Town’s land was owned by the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR).

Zoning

Similar to many other communities across the US, since 1946, West Boylston’s growth has been influenced by zoning regulations. The first set of zoning bylaws specified that single family residential (SR) lots had to be a minimum of 10,000 square feet, while lots for multi-family dwelling units had to be a minimum of 7,500 square feet per unit. The minimum sizes for lots increased gradually until 1984, when the Town increased the required single family residential lot size from 30,000 to 40,000 and multi-family dwelling lot size from 15,000 to 20,000 square feet per unit. Two years later, the town passed Aquifer Protection District Zoning to protect the recharge areas of the town’s wells. This overlay zone required lot sizes to be 50,000 square feet as shown in the attached **Map 3: Zoning Map**.

West Boylston now has six (6) main zoning districts, which are distributed across town. According to MassGIS, 79.3% of the town area is zoned for Single Family Residences, 4.8% for General Residence (multi-family housing), 4% for Commercial, 3% for Business, and 6.4% for Industrial.

Exhibit 9: Zoning Districts

| Zoning District | Acres | Percent |
|---------------------------------|----------------|---------|
| Business | 278.2 | 3.1% |
| Commercial/Limited Industrial | 353.8 | 4.0% |
| Conservation | 210.3 | 2.4% |
| General Residence | 424.0 | 4.8% |
| Industrial | 567.3 | 6.4% |
| Single Residence | 7,005.3 | 79.3% |
| Total | 8,838.9 | |
| Source: CMRPC, MassDOT, MassGIS | | |

The Business Districts cover 3.1%, or 278.2 acres. Much of this business- zoned land is a strip bordering both sides of the southern section of Route 12. The other areas zoned for business are smaller and very scattered. They are located in Oakdale at the intersection of Laurel Street and Route 140 (North Main Street), at the intersection of Prospect and Woodland Streets, at the intersection of Route 110/Prescott Street/Route 12, along the very northern part of Route 12, at the intersection of Hartwell and Shrewsbury Streets, and at the intersection of Route 12 with Prospect/Goodale Streets up to Central Street.

The Industrial District makes up 6.4%, or 567.3 acres of the land. All of this land is located in the southeastern part of town off of Hartwell, Shrewsbury, and East Mountain Streets. Commercial/Limited Industrial District land makes up 4%, or 353.8 acres. This is the area located north of I-190 abutting Holden and Sterling. This new district was voted to be added to the Zoning Map at the October 2007 Town Meeting. Only 2.4%, or 210.3 acres of the land in West Boylston is zoned Conservation. This land is located where the county/state jail and the former county hospital are sited. This conservation zoned land is almost completely surrounded by industrially zoned land. The county jail expanded into the nearby former county hospital land.

Residents have maintained the ability to build on pre-existing lots due to Zoning “grandfathering” provisions and state mandates. Additionally, under Massachusetts’s Subsidized Housing law, Chapter 774, the town’s Zoning Board of Appeals granted a

Comprehensive Permit in 1990 that allowed single family homes with septic systems to be built on lots as small as 8,737 square feet at Lancaster Commons, which is about half a mile from the Wachusett Reservoir. With about half the single-family homes located on lots of less than half an acre, septic problems occurred. Because failing septic systems were thought to be polluting the Reservoir’s tributaries, the state agreed in 1996 to pay about two-thirds the cost of



Wachusett Reservoir. *Photo Credit CMRPC.*

sewering the more densely populated sections of West Boylston. Approximately 50-60% of the town's area is sewerage in a project which began in 1996 and was completed in 2005. The availability of sewers has promoted development because land that could not accommodate septic systems could not be developed. Since sewers have become available, this development limitation has been lost. In October 2005, Town Meeting voted to change the zoning map to expand the Continuing Care Retirement

Community (CCRC) District to the east of Angell Brook. In 2005, the Planning Board revised the subdivision regulations to reduce impervious areas, increase open space, and to encourage “Low Impact Development” methods. The Incentive Zoning Bylaw passed in May 2006 allowed density bonuses if some portion of the units are Subsidized units, but it does not require a portion of all housing in town to be Subsidized. At the October 2006 Town Meeting, the town passed a Residential Cluster Development (RCD) By-law to provide an alternative residential subdivision design concept to increase the supply of desirable housing in the Town of West Boylston, while maintaining or creating additional open spaces within the community.

In 2009 DCR owned 2,736 acres (4.3 square miles) in town, not including the 622 acres of land under water. Since that time, they have purchased 170.3 acres, bringing the total to 2,906.3 acres of land. If land under water is included, then the total becomes 3,528.3 acres, which indicates that DCR owns approximately 40% of the land area in the town. If land under water is not included, then DCR owns approximately 33% of the land area in town. Land under water is often not included with DCR land area calculations because the land that is under water is not used to calculate the payments in lieu of taxes and it is coded differently in the Town Assessor data.

Residential Development

The Town of West Boylston offers the advantages of small-town life with the convenience of highway access to urban Worcester, Metro-West Boston and cities of the north County, Leominster and Fitchburg. The presence of the Wachusett Reservoir provides vistas of natural beauty and preserved open space but at the same time creates unique challenges to land development for residential growth.

Through its Master Plan (2005), Economic Development Plan (2011), and Housing Production Plan (2012), West Boylston desires to provide housing options for a diverse range of households while preserving its vision of a community rural in character. Just over 50% of the housing stock in West Boylston is on quarter acre lots or smaller. Based on the 2012 Assessor Data for West Boylston’s housing value, and an adjusted price for a subsidized 3-bedroom apartment of \$173,400, more than 18% of the existing housing stock of West Boylston is affordable in terms of price. However, these homes are not counted in the Subsidized Housing Inventory (SHI) because they do not meet state criteria as articulated in Chapter 40B, principally because they are not subsidized by the state. Building permits issued in West Boylston since 2007 are shown in the exhibit below.

Exhibit 10: Building Permits Issued in FY 2008 - FY 2016

| Year | New Single Family | Multi-Family Units | Affordable Housing Units | New Commercial Buildings |
|------------------|-------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 7/1/07 - 6/30/08 | 7 | 22 | 1 | 1 |
| 7/1/08 - 6/30/09 | 2 | 7 | 2 | 2 |
| 7/1/09 - 6/30/10 | 30 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| 7/1/10 - 6/30/11 | 13 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

| Year | New Single Family | Multi-Family Units | Affordable Housing Units | New Commercial Buildings |
|------------------|-------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 7/1/11 - 6/30/12 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| 7/1/12 - 6/30/13 | 12 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| 7/1/13 - 6/30/14 | 26 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| 7/1/14 - 6/30/15 | 11 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| 7/1/15 - 6/30/16 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 3 |
| Total | 117 | 29 | 3 | 14 |

Source: West Boylston Building Department 2016

According to the West Boylston Building Department, since 2008 there have been 117 new single family building permits issued, and 29 multi-family building permits issued. There have also been three affordable housing units created as well as 14 new commercial buildings.

INFRASTRUCTURE

As a second key feature for West Boylston’s growth, the town’s transportation infrastructure also plays an important role in the town’s development. As recommended by the 2005 Master Plan, the Town Administrator created and appointed a Transportation Committee, to assess and focus on attention to these issues. The mission of the Transportation Committee is to advise Town Boards on transportation issues of importance to the Town and to study needs and implement targeted improvements (i.e. the Route 12 Corridor reconstruction, sidewalk and trail projects, improve dangerous intersections, etc.). The Committee was intended to work towards implementing transportation goals found in the Route 12 Master Plan and the West Boylston Master Plan and to offer suggestions to improve or add to these goals. The Planning Board initiated and drafted a Complete Streets Policy that was adopted by the Board of Selectmen in May, 2016. The Transportation Committee is coordinating the work associated with preparation of the Prioritized Plan for the town. Once accepted the work on these plans can receive up to \$400,000 in state funding for implementation each year.

Roadways

Route 12 serves as a major transportation artery in West Boylston, and acts as a vital major highway for the region. Route 12 also draws heavy traffic volumes, and serves as the primary area for local commercial activity. This especially impacts the southernmost part of the route, which feeds into Worcester at Interstate Route 190 (I-190). The I-190 interchange has resulted in a reduced demand for Route 12 as I-190 has evolved into the preferred link from Worcester to areas North and South of the city.

In 2007, West Boylston changed the zoning on 348 acres of land north of the I-190 to allow Commercial/Limited Industrial uses with hopes to encourage clean industry or retail, and expand the tax base. The DCR owns about 65 percent (65%) of the land in this area.

Other major roads exist in West Boylston, notably Routes 140 and 110, which converge with Route 12 near the Reservoir. These minor highways receive traffic from the less-traveled roads and residential streets. Most of the major roads run north/south through West Boylston.

In 1996, the Town of West Boylston upgraded Shrewsbury Street and installed sewers shortly thereafter. It was hoped that this reconstruction would reduce the number of trucks using Maple Street, which is zoned for single family residential use, but that change has not been realized.

Most recently, the Planning Board initiated an effort to participate in the Complete Streets Program. Complete Streets is an approach to local transportation planning that requires streets to be planned, designed, operated, and maintained to support safe and convenient access for users of all ages and abilities. Consideration is given to different modes of transportation, such as walking, cycling, public transportation, as well as driving automobiles or delivery vehicles. In May 2016, the Town Selectmen



Sidewalk by Town Hall. *Photo Credit CMRPC.*

adopted a Complete Streets policy, which put the town on target to obtain a share of state transportation funds. With an estimated \$12.5 million available, the town has initially contracted with CMRPC to conduct the project prioritization planning effort, which the State will reimbursement the Town for up to \$50,000 in technical assistance. Long range planning is needed to incorporate the bicycle pathway systems and walking trails that were shown as a priority to respondents in the public survey.

Sidewalks

The single issue generating comments during the public surveys in 2016 and 2013; and during the Public Forums on this draft document were relative to sidewalk needs. The Townspeople want the existing sidewalks repaired and maintained and new sidewalks or walking pathways created.

The Town completed a project to construct new sidewalks and rehabilitate existing ones in 2016. The project included approximately 8,500 feet of sidewalks and cost just short of \$900,000. The future renovations and expansions depicted have not received public comment, so are still preliminary, but the highest priority areas are within a mile of the public schools and to access shopping destination points.

Map 9B: Complete Streets Sidewalk Plan is attached.

The sidewalk issues noted during public input included:

1. Repairing the poor conditions on Newton Street near the library, Prescott Street up to the Mixer property, and the sidewalk along Route 12 from the railroad bridge to the Worcester City Line.
2. Constructing sections of sidewalk at gap locations along Crescent Street to Pine Arden, Lower Central Street, Route 12 from the center of town (on the southbound side) to the City of Worcester, and for the extension of the Mass Central Rail Trail to get to Pleasant Street.
3. Installing new sidewalks along Goodale Street west from the tennis courts, Newton Street north of Prospect Street, Hartwell Street (from Hillside Village to Shrewsbury Street), and anything within a mile of the town schools.

Bike Routes

The only officially-designated state bike trail in West Boylston is the Rail Trail. Bicycle lanes on the roadways within a mile of the schools are often less than one foot wide, with poor pavement conditions and do not provide safe passage for young riders. However, recreational biking is still common in West Boylston due to the beautiful routes around the Wachusett Reservoir. Local groups such as the Seven Hills Wheelmen (<http://www.sevenhillswheelmen.org/>) organize rides through West Boylston on both weeknights and weekends. The heavy bike traffic in West Boylston affects both transportation planning and open space planning. It is especially important to consider bike traffic throughout these planning processes. The need to include bicycle and pedestrian improvements all along Route 140 was included as a Regional need within the Central 13 Regional Planning Project in 2012¹³. All changes to Routes 140 and Route 110 in West Boylston should include widening and bicycle safety improvements; and this should be included as a high priority within the Complete Streets program.

Bus Routes

The Worcester Regional Transit Authority (WRTA) offers Fixed Route and Paratransit services within the Town of West Boylston, primarily providing access to the Walmart in town along Route 12. West Boylston also receives ADA paratransit service three quarters of a mile around WRTA fixed routes, including Route 12. Paratransit operates the same days and hours as the fixed route system. This service is open to people with disabilities that can show that their disability prevents



Bus Stop in West Boylston. Photo Credit CMRPC.

¹³ http://www.cmrpc.org/Central_PP

them from using the fixed route service some or all of the time. This is done through an in-house application process at the WRTA Hub.

West Boylston also receives non-ADA paratransit service, which is available to residents of West Boylston who are ages 60+ and people with disabilities regardless of age. The application process is less rigorous and is generally extended to all people with disabilities. It is offered weekdays, generally 9am-3pm. Service is offered within West Boylston and one town out to Worcester, Holden and Boylston.

Together, paratransit and fixed route services are an important element of the transit infrastructure in West Boylston. With the Worcester Regional Transit Authority (WRTA) fixed route buses now offering bike racks, these transportation corridors have the potential for connection with the Wachusett Greenways trails, such as the Mass Central Rail Trail. However, that connection would require the route to be extended to reach Oakdale. The Town could work together with the WRTA to expand the bus route. This is not an easy process, but is one that is worth focusing on.

Although there are technically no Environmental Justice populations in West Boylston, there are still vulnerable populations which must be considered. **Map 2: Environmental Justice and Vulnerable Populations** shows the areas in town with a minority population greater than 20% as well as the area in town where persons greater than 75 year of age is 18%. These vulnerable populations should be considered throughout the Open Space Planning Process and the OSIC made an effort to reach these populations throughout the public participation process. For example, the portion of town with a high elderly population could benefit from expanded bus services. Additional bus service between West Boylston and Worcester would have the added benefit of providing Environmental Justice populations in Worcester with access to the Mass Central Rail Trail and Wachusett Reservoir. Expanded bus options include extending the bus line back to the intersection of Central Street and Prospect or looping it out to the Mass Central Rail Trail around the Thomas Basin of the Wachusett Reservoir (Thomas Street/Beaman Street intersection). The loop to the Mass Central Rail Trail would bring it closer to the approved 40B project at 92 North Main Street to provide these units with public transportation options.

Water Supply

The availability of ample high quality water is essential for the growth and development of any community. Water connects us all and clean water is crucial for a high quality of life. The West Boylston Water District, an independent governmental body, is the primary supplier of water to the town. The District services 99% of the town's water users, and only 1% gets its water from private wells. All of the District's water is derived from groundwater sources.

Each year, the West Boylston Water District is permitted to withdraw an average 560,000 gallons of water per day. It is important to note the West Boylston Water District does not utilize any water from the Wachusett Reservoir. Instead, the Wachusett Reservoir is overseen by the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority, which provides water for Boston and surrounding communities. When it was completed in 1905, the Wachusett Reservoir was the largest public water supply reservoir in the world.

The West Boylston Water District obtains its water from three well-fields. The Lee Street well-fields has one active well. Two inactive wells were closed in 1986 due to high levels of iron and manganese. The United States Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) and MassDEP currently list manganese and iron as secondary contaminants because of aesthetic concerns including unacceptable taste and staining of fixtures.¹⁴ The Pleasant Valley and Oakdale wellfields each contain one well: with a second well possibly to be developed in the Pleasant Valley area.

Residential water consumption is estimated by Tata & Howard Inc., the Water District's engineering consultants, to be 60 percent (60%) of total use. All connections are metered, offering an incentive to customers to conserve water since billing is directly related to consumption. To reduce water usage, the District placed a moratorium on the installation of new in-ground irrigation systems in March 2001, but enforcement is difficult. The District continues to investigate locations for new sources.

According to the West Boylston Water District Superintendent, the water meets Federal Safe Drinking Water Act standards. Sodium, nitrate and nitrite, organic pollutants, such as solvents or toxic metals and arsenic are well below safe contaminant levels required by the Federal and State governments¹⁵. The District has also installed emergency chlorination at their existing supply sources due to the presence of total coliform bacteria detected in routine sampling rounds within the distribution system. The construction of the emergency chlorination systems was funded through the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) loan program administered by DEP.

Town Meeting passed an Aquifer and Watershed Protection District Zoning Bylaw in 1986. The Bylaw was amended in 1994 when the state and federal drinking water regulations were made more stringent. Within this Aquifer Zone, lots must have 50,000 square feet, 150 feet of frontage, and can only have 15 percent (15%) impervious coverage (including half of the abutting roadway), whereas in other areas the minimums are 40,000 square feet, 120 feet of frontage, and no limit to impervious coverage. The Aquifer and Watershed Protection Zoning District is an overlay, superimposed on the existing zoning districts, and it applies only to future uses. Certain activities, which are considered potential threats to the water supply, are prohibited within the District. Such activities include landfills, open dumps, and storage of hazardous waste, liquid hazardous materials and petroleum products except under rigidly controlled circumstances. Other activities are allowed only with a special permit.

Sewers

West Boylston did not have sewers until 2001 when a special Town Meeting voted to authorize the Board of Selectmen to borrow \$11,668,000 to construct sewers. This was designed to help DCR and the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA) comply with EPA's July 11, 1993 Consent Order to protect the water quality of the Wachusett Reservoir¹⁶. A Sewer Facilities Plan identified the areas that

¹⁴ Mass DEP Fact Sheet. Manganese in Drinking Water. Fact Sheet for Consumers. Accessed via: <http://www.mass.gov/eea/docs/dep/water/drinking/alpha/i-thru-z/mangfactsheet.pdf> and Standards and Guidelines For Contaminants In Massachusetts Drinking Waters Accessed via: <http://www.mass.gov/eea/docs/dep/water/dwstand.pdf>

¹⁵ Michael Coveney, Water District Superintendent, 2007 and 2016

¹⁶ Paul Guida, Town Administrator and former Acting Superintendent of Sewers, August 2001

needed to be sewered, as well as septic systems that needed to be replaced. The Sewer Facilities Plan set out a program for phased construction and design to serve the areas of greatest need first.

As of January 1, 2008, there were a total of 1,515 properties connected to the municipal sewer system. The West Boylston Sewer System is managed by the Department of Public Works. It covers approximately 60 percent (60%) of the residential properties and all of the industrial and business properties in town. All properties within the Sewer District are required to connect to the sewer system. The Mandatory Sewer Connection Regulation from the Board of Health was adopted in September of 2002.

The sewer construction has eliminated much of the local environmental contamination from failing septic systems. The sewage is transferred to the sewage treatment plant in Millbury. This has decreased ground water recharge to the local wells, which could have a negative impact on available water supply. Since sewers have also increased development, the water must be monitored closely to assure the needed flow without negative impacts to current users.

The need for planned open space and recreation in the densely developed sewered areas becomes more important as infill lots, that previously could not meet Title 5 requirements, have received additional development pressure to reduce minimum lot area and minimum frontage requirements to become developable due to sewer availability. If sewers are extended into outlying, open areas that are not currently included in the area to be sewered, this will also cause additional growth and loss of open space. To prevent this from happening, the Board of Sewer Commissioners adopted two (2) policies that prohibit the extension of sewers into non-sewered areas. It should also be noted that the DCR put policies in place to comply with Executive Order 385, the state's directive ordering its agencies not to take any action that will increase sprawl. For instance, the DCR limited the number of sewer stubs to undeveloped land.¹⁷

West Boylston's proximity to Worcester, to I-190, I-290 and Route 495, and the sewers are all factors that will encourage growth in the town. The Boston area's economy has triggered tremendous growth along Route 495, which is pushing westward



I-190 Sign for Route 12, West Boylston Exit. Photo Credit CMRPC.

¹⁷ Jonathan Gulliver, Sewer Project Coordinator-West Boylston, DCR, March 27, 2002

toward West Boylston. Although the DCR owns 40 percent (40%) of the town to protect the Reservoir, its purchases in West Boylston have slowed and its acquisition program is more focused on land that includes or is in close proximity to streams and wetlands.

4. ENVIRONMENTAL INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

4A. GEOLOGY AND SOILS

The terrain of West Boylston ranges from rolling hills to steep slopes, with some areas of exposed bedrock and three large flat swamps: the headwaters of Wauschacum Brook is along Route 12 in the North end of town; the headwaters of Malden and Gates Brooks is off of Prospect Street, and the headwaters of Muddy Brook is in the industrial area on the southern end of town. Elevations in West Boylston range from 386 feet above sea level at the shore of the Reservoir, to 870 feet above sea level at Malden Hill. About 15 percent (15%) of the area has slopes in excess of 15 percent (15%), located primarily in the West, near Malden Hill or at the edge of the Reservoir. The vegetative cover is primarily hardwood and mixed hardwood/softwood forest. Due to the soil types and hilly nature of West Boylston, erosion potential in town is low-to-moderate on the average slopes and moderate-to-high on the slopes greater than 15 percent (15%).

Most areas of West Boylston have slow percolation rates because the land consists of glacial till (hardpan), with up to 100 feet covering bedrock. The remainder of town is covered by fluvial or lacustrine stratified drift (sand/silt/gravel), especially along Malden Brook and the southern areas surrounding the Reservoir. The stratified drift ranged in depth from five (5) feet to 130 feet. These deposits are very permeable and therefore susceptible to function as a contamination transport pathway.

Map 4: Soils and Geologic Features Map includes location of the Prime Farmland Soils as defined by the Natural Resource Conservation Service. Prime Farmland Soils include land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for economically producing sustained high yields of food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops, when treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods. This map also provides information on dominant drainage class.

The general classes of soils found in West Boylston are Hinckley-Merrimac-Windsor (north) and Paxton-Woodbridge-Canton (south). There are over twenty specific soil types, with five dominating: Chatfield-Hollis-Rock outcrop, Hinckley sandy loam, Paxton fine sandy loam, Canton fine sandy loam, and Merrimac fine sandy loam. Based on the SCS soil survey, all these soil types are severely limited for subsurface sanitary disposal.

- Chatfield-Hollis-Rock outcrop is a well-drained soil with moderate to rapid permeability and many stones. Bedrock is generally encountered between ten and forty inches from the surface and may restrict septic system instillation.
- Merrimac and Canton series consist of very deep, well-drained soils on glacial outwash plains, eskers, and stream terraces. Permeability is rapid, which makes these soils poor filters for septic system leach fields. Seepage of effluent through the substratum may cause groundwater contamination. Merrimac is the predominant soil type along Gates Brook.
- Paxton series consists of very deep, strongly sloped, well-drained soils with many stones. The permeability is slow to very slow. The limitations to soil absorption systems are the slow

permeability and the seasonally high groundwater tables. *See Map 4: Soil and Geologic Features Map.*

4B. TOPOGRAPHY AND LANDSCAPE CHARACTER



Reservoir by the Highway. *Photo Credit CMRPC.*

The Wachusett Reservoir and its surroundings are West Boylston's most distinctive features. The diversity of landform, with rolling hills and forested upland, add beauty, character, and uniqueness to West Boylston. The town is amply endowed with streams and open space, but few farms remain, since most have been subdivided or sold to the DCR for watershed protection.

4C. WATER RESOURCES

West Boylston is gifted with many water resources, including the Stillwater and Quinapoxet Rivers, which meet at the Thomas Basin and form the main tributary to the Wachusett Reservoir.

The majority of West Boylston is located in the Nashua River Watershed, except for the southern section of town, which is located in the Blackstone Watershed. This section of the Nashua River flows to the Wachusett Reservoir and therefore the majority of town is located within a drainage basin leading to an Outstanding Resource Water, being the Wachusett Reservoir, which is a surface water supply. (see *Map 5: Water Resources 1*)



Wachusett Reservoir. *Photo Credit CMRPC.*

- **Wachusett Reservoir:** The reservoir is eight (8) miles long, six and a half (6.5) square miles in area, and has 37 miles of shoreline. The Wachusett Reservoir covers the central region of West Boylston and parts of Boylston, Sterling, and Clinton. It is the water supply for Metropolitan Boston, supplying 2.5 million people in 61 cities and towns. Its two (2) main tributaries, the Stillwater River and Quinapoxet River, enter the Reservoir at the Thomas Basin in West Boylston. In addition, water is piped from the Quabbin Reservoir, entering the Quinapoxet River in West Boylston before it reaches the Thomas Basin.
- **Stillwater River** flows north to south through the northwest area of West Boylston, entering the Wachusett Reservoir in the north-central region of West Boylston at the Stillwater Basin.
- **Quinapoxet River** flows west to east into the Wachusett Reservoir at Thomas Basin in the northwest corner of West Boylston.
- **Waushacum Brook** flows southerly from West Waushacum Pond in Sterling to merge with the Stillwater River, entering the Wachusett Reservoir through the Stillwater Basin.
- **Malden Brook** flows north into the Thomas Basin at the western-central area of West Boylston.
- **Muddy Brook** flows north to south near the town landfill and discharges into the Reservoir's South Bay.
- **Gates Brook** flows south to north through the central business section and densely developed residential section of West Boylston. Discharges east of Route 12, and north of Route 140 into the Reservoir.
- **Angell Brook** is located in the southeastern part of West Boylston and flows southerly into Worcester to Poor Farm Brook and to City Farm Pond in Shrewsbury. It's the only stream not tributary to the Wachusett Reservoir in West Boylston.
- **West Boylston Brook** is located in the center of town and flows northeast to the Reservoir.
- **Three Lily Ponds** are located in the east central region of West Boylston, north of the Reservoir at the base of French Hill; the ponds are an estimated two (2) acres in area and are typically isolated, but only discharge to the Reservoir under extreme flooding.
- **Carroll's Pond** is located on Prospect Street, very close to the center of town flowing into West Boylston Brook. This one (1) acre pond was a farm pond and remains the site of much wildlife activity.
- **Edward's Pond** is located at the base of Malden Hill, in the northwest corner of West Boylston on Malden Street. This pond is less than an acre, but there is a small animal path that local walkers utilize.

Map 6: Water Resources 2 depicts the water supply sources and protection zones around these sources, along with the flood hazard areas in town. **Map 6: Water Resources 2** also depicts three (3)

community groundwater wells that supply West Boylston with potable water. There is also one Transient Non-Community water supply well serving the 1000 Goodale Street facility owned by Holy Cross College. The Flood Hazard areas are delineated from maps compiled by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and are located at the DPW office in West Boylston. Areas that flood regularly are limited to those locations in proximity to the larger streams located in the above list. The areas of town within the Aquifer Protection Districts are the areas that are mapped aquifers in town. The **Map 3: Zoning Map** depicts these areas and the associated regulations limit potentially hazardous activities from occurring in these areas.

4D. VEGETATION

The vegetation of West Boylston is determined by land use, climate, elevation, topography, aspect, and soils/geology. Vegetation serves as an anchor to topsoil, helping to control erosion. It also provides shade, animal habitat and aesthetic beauty. Traditionally timber harvesting has played an important role of New England's economy. Many years ago this was true of West Boylston as well. Timber harvesting still goes on in the Town, most of which is done on DCR-owned lands, but also on smaller properties having minor significance.

Most of the undeveloped land in West Boylston is covered in transitional hardwood and pine forest, except for areas adjacent to the Reservoir, which are heavily covered in red pine. DCR has been thinning these forests so an undergrowth of small shrubs now appears. The areas around the Reservoir are accessible and used for hiking, snow-shoeing, cross-country skiing and other non-motorized forms of recreation due to the presence of numerous fire roads that exist locally.

Most of the few remaining farms, with their open fields, were bought by the DCR. From 2000 to 2010, the DCR bought the 102 acre Giobellina Farm on Fairbanks Street, which was formerly under the Chapter 61A agricultural tax exemption program. The DCR also acquired approximately 85 acres of the Antinarella Farm, including 25 acres of open fields, on Prospect Street. Much of the Smith Farm on Prescott Street, which was also under Chapter 61A, has also been acquired by the DCR, but some haying is still done there. Since 2010, 20 acres of the Mazzolini farm on Lancaster Street that had not been in operation for years was sold to the DCR, leaving only the farmhouse.¹⁸

The Wachusett Country Club, located in West Boylston, is one of the most picturesque and manicured golf courses in the State and provides wonderful panoramic views of the Wachusett Reservoir. Public lands, such as parks, ball fields, cemeteries and lawns are well-maintained; however there remains a desire for more landscaping of commercial and industrial areas in the town.

¹⁸ West Boylston 2009 OSRP.

4E. FISH AND WILDLIFE

WILDLIFE

The list of all rare species in West Boylston under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act (MESA) is shown below along with other indicators of local biodiversity, including Watch Listed plants, delisted species, and priority natural communities. Any MESA listed species with a most recent observation date within the past 25 years is considered to be current. Older dates may be species occurrences that have not been recently inventoried, or lost from Town as land use has changed (see [Exhibit 11](#), below). The Plant Watch List (WL) is an unofficial, non-regulatory list of plants of known or suspected conservation concern that NHESP is interested in tracking. Species maybe included on the list for a number of reasons.

Exhibit 11: Rare Species and Natural Communities as of August 9, 2016

| Scientific Name | Common Name | MESA Status* | Most Recent Observation |
|---|------------------------|--------------|-------------------------|
| VERTEBRATES | | | |
| <i>Glyptemys insculpta</i> | Wood Turtle | SC | 1997 |
| <i>Caprimulgus vociferous</i> | Eastern Whip-poor-will | SC | 2013 |
| <i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i> | Bald Eagle | T | 2014 |
| INVERTEBRATES | | | |
| None | | | |
| VASCULAR PLANTS | | | |
| <i>Arceuthobium pusillum</i> | Dwarf Mistletoe | SC | 1899 |
| <i>Cyperus houghtonii</i> | Houghton's Flatsedge | E | 2008 |
| <i>Lipocarpa micrantha</i> | Dwarf Bulrush | T | 2011 |
| <i>Ophioglossum pusillum</i> | Adder's-tongue Fern | T | 1932 |
| NATURAL COMMUNITIES | | | |
| None | | | |
| CERTIFIED VERNAL POOLS | | | |
| Certified Vernal Pools (1) | | | Certified: 1992 |
| *KEY TO MESA STATUS: E = Endangered. T = Threatened. SC = Special Concern. WL= unofficial Watch List, not regulated. Source: http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dfg/dfw/natural-heritage/species-information-and-conservation/town-species-viewer.html | | | |

Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program species fact sheets are included in [Appendix A](#).

ANIMAL SPECIES

The currently known rare vertebrate animal species in West Boylston are associated with rivers and the Wachusett reservoir, and the wetlands around them. Wood Turtles spend time in streams and upland and riverside forests, but over-winter in the river (or stream) bank. The turtles also use uplands for much of their lives including foraging for food.



Wood Turtle (Animalspot.net)

The Wachusett Reservoir and surrounding undeveloped lands provide habitat for wintering Bald Eagles. A pair of eagles has been nesting on an island in the reservoir, which means that West Boylston is part of their habitat. Common Loons also nest in the Wachusett Reservoir, making the whole reservoir part of their habitat as well.

The state Threatened Orange Sallow Moth is known from just over the line in Sterling, and its open oak forest habitat continues into West Boylston. The Orange Sallow Moth (*Rhodoecia aurantiago*) inhabits dry and open oak woodland on rocky uplands (ridges, hilltops, and steep slopes), and the edges of old fields, power line cuts, and other openings within such habitat.



Large Whorled Pogonia
Photo Courtesy of Tim Lyons

Several of the rare plants of West Boylston were more common when pastures and open fields were more common: Wild Lupine (WL), Adder's-tongue Fern (T), and Whorled Milkwort (WL) are plants of such open areas and now grow on roadsides, railroad embankments and other places where there are periodic disturbances that keep the land open. Large Whorled Pogonia (WL) is an orchid of acidic, usually oak, forests, where it is generally uncommon. Dwarf Mistletoe (SC) grows on spruce trees, usually around the forested edges of bogs. NHESP has no records of

uncommon natural communities in West Boylston. Because of the historic record of Dwarf Mistletoe and the presence of bogs in surrounding towns, bogs would be a possibility. Unfortunately, the MassDEP Wetlands data layer on MassGIS does not include any bogs, although the 'shallow marsh, meadows and fens' data could include unidentified bogs.

VERNAL POOLS

West Boylston has one Certified Vernal Pool (CVP) and many Potential Vernal Pools¹⁹ (PVP) (identified from aerial photographs, needing verification on the ground). Areas of swamps also provide habitat for vernal pool species.

Certifying the PVPs would provide additional protection to these wetlands and the species that use them. There are several clusters of PVPs, which provide extra habitat value for the species that use them since each pool is somewhat different and provides alternate habitats in different years and seasons. Any such lands already protected are good sites for biodiversity and good cores for larger properties.

Large linked conservation land provides the best

opportunities to maintain populations of rare and endangered species and limit species loss from the Town. Land protection that ties in with open space in other municipalities, and other protected open space, public or private is one way to provide important large areas of biodiversity protection. Even with so much of West Boylston being protected by DCR to protect the watershed, there are fragments that if connected to other pieces would provide better habitat.



Vernal Pool, Photo Courtesy of Mass.gov

BIO MAP 2

In 2012 the Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game, through the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife's Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program (NHESP), and The Nature Conservancy's Massachusetts Program developed *BioMap2* to protect the state's biodiversity in the context of climate change. *BioMap2* (See [Map 7: Habitat Features Map](#)) identifies two (2) complementary spatial layers, Core Habitat and Critical Natural Landscape as defined below.

- Core Habitat identifies key areas that are critical for the long-term persistence of rare species and other Species of Conservation Concern, as well as a wide diversity of natural communities and intact ecosystems across the Commonwealth. Protection of Core Habitats will contribute to the conservation of specific elements of biodiversity.
- Critical Natural Landscape identifies large natural Landscape Blocks that are minimally impacted by development. If protected, these areas will provide habitat for wide-ranging native species, support intact ecological processes, maintain connectivity among habitats, and enhance

¹⁹ The PVP data are available as a data layer from MassGIS at <http://www.mass.gov/mgis/pvp.htm>

ecological resilience to natural and anthropogenic disturbances in a rapidly changing world. Areas delineated as Critical Natural Landscape also include buffering upland around wetland, coastal, and aquatic Core Habitats to help ensure their long-term integrity.²⁰

The most important areas of West Boylston to protect to maintain known biodiversity are the areas shown on the image below. Any work intended in these areas need to include management of the rare species and their habitats. This area is also the site of the southern-most population of self-sustaining land locked salmon. See [Map 7: Habitat Features Map](#). The BioMap2 Core Habitat and Critical Natural Landscape for West Boylston are shown below.

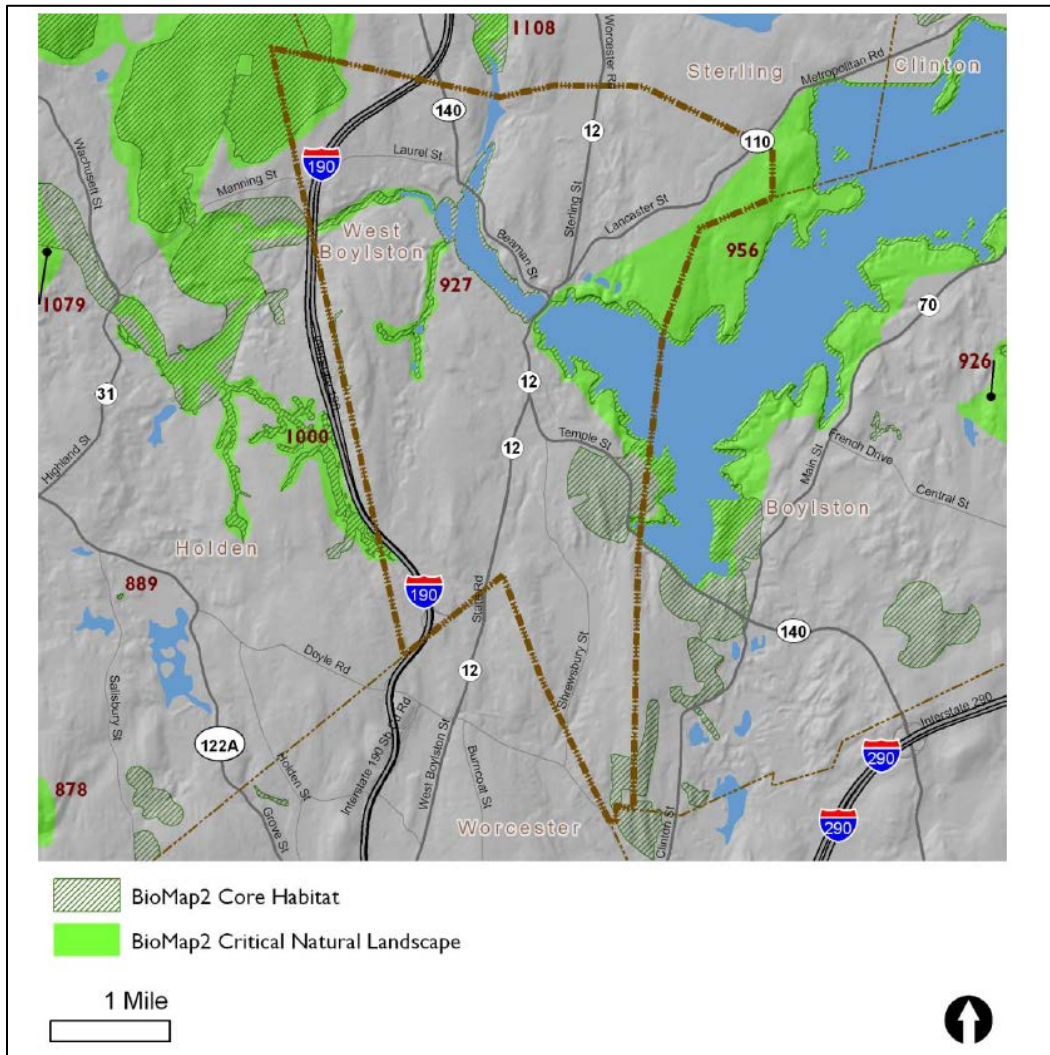


Exhibit 12: Bio Map 2 Critical Natural Landscape in West Boylston

²⁰ Mass GIS BioMap. http://maps.massgis.state.ma.us/dfg/biomap/pdf/town_core/West%20Boylston.pdf

FISHERIES

The Town of West Boylston has diverse and abundant aquatic habitats consisting of cold water and warm water streams and small ponds. These habitats are home to many fish species, both native or introduced and stocked. Many angling opportunities are available on DCR lands, except for the area within 100 feet of the shaft where water from Quabbin Reservoir flows into the Quinapoxet River.²¹ Fishing from bridges is also prohibited.

Warm Water

There are a few small warm water ponds in West Boylston. These ponds have similar fish species such as bass, pickerel, perch, sunfishes, bullhead, various minnows, dace and shiners. Water depth, chemistry, and aquatic vegetation vary from pond to pond. This results in different quality and quantity of fish species composition. Some shallow smaller ponds are subject to oxygen depletion during winter months and breeding stress in spring/summer results in some fish mortality. Generally, the town's ponds have good fish production capability.

Cold Water

There are many small brooks in West Boylston, having both wild trout, salmon, and native char. Eastern Brook Trout is the prime species in many town brooks.

Wachusett Reservoir

This 6.5 square mile water supply creates an exceptional fisheries habitat. The 37-mile shoreline is mostly open to fishing. Dates are set annually by the DCR depending on ice conditions. The Reservoir has abundant warm water and cold water species of fish. The warm water catch is dominated by smallmouth bass and yellow perch, with good numbers of white perch, rock bass, bluegills, pumpkinseeds and bullheads also harvested. Analysis of creel census data conducted at the Reservoir reveals a limited harvest period of lake trout, brown trout and rainbow trout. Landlocked salmon fishing is popular during spring and fall. Thousands of salmon spawn each fall up the Stillwater River. Unlike Atlantic salmon, which is protected by law, the Stillwater salmon offer a unique fishing opportunity in Massachusetts.²² Abundant numbers of prey



Wachusett Reservoir. Photo Credit CMRPC.

²¹ Brian Bjorklund, Wildlife Specialist, USGS

²² Brian Bjorklund, Wildlife Specialist, USGS

species such as rainbow smelt are an important element contributing to the size and condition of trout and salmon. Many state record fish have been caught at Wachusett Reservoir.

Division of Fisheries and Wildlife stocks trout in the Quinapoxet and Stillwater Rivers, as well as in other brooks such as Gates Brook. Species stocked are brook trout, rainbow trout, and brown trout.

The Division of Fisheries and Wildlife have documented salmonid species in Gates Brook, almost up to Pierce Street. There is an old foundation/dam structure that is creating an impediment to further travel. Opportunities to create passable conditions should be evaluated.

Pollution in some of the waters such as Gates Brook, has caused some deformities in some species of brook trout. There are concerns with pollution in storm water runoff and street drainage. Additionally, the removal of trees, shrubs, and underbrush along the brooks has caused changes in the water temperature and oxygenation of the brooks, further resulting in fish decline. The Town worked with the state Fisheries and Wildlife Division to selectively restore some of the natural habitats.²³

WILDLIFE

Diversity and variety of wildlife habitat are the strong points of the environment of West Boylston. Wildlife habitat includes upland forested areas, many different wetland types, early successional brushy fields, active agricultural fields, and suburban backyards. Hunting is a popular activity that brings revenue to the local communities. It also maintains a healthy wild game population by preventing overpopulation, spread of zoonotic disease, reduces crop and property damage, as well as livestock and pet predation. The wildlife species found in West Boylston are common to all of central Massachusetts. Occasionally, uncommon animals are seen in West Boylston. Moose, turkey vulture, American bald eagle, black bear, and bobcat populations are expanding and have been regularly sighted in town.²⁴

A complete listing of wildlife species including mammals, birds, fishes, reptiles and amphibians is too extensive to be noted here. There are many excellent field guides available for reference. An overabundance of gulls and geese in the region has caused water quality problems in the Reservoir. The DCR has a program to reduce the populations and limit the public's feeding of these birds. The areas in town that remain in their natural condition provide habitat for State endangered and threatened species, including the common loon, spotted turtle, dwarf mistletoe, and the Adder's Tongue fern.

Private Lands

Most of the wildlife habitats consist of suburban backyards and farmland. Raccoon, whitetail deer, cottontail rabbit, grey squirrel, red fox, eastern coyote and various species of songbirds are found in this diverse environment. The abundant wildlife species are ones that can adapt to this changing habitat. This adaptability to humans can present problems at times. Crop damage, livestock predation, property

²³ Carolyn Padden, Chair, West Boylston Conservation Commission in 2009

²⁴ Carolyn Padden, Chair, West Boylston Conservation Commission in 2009

damage, and health and safety concerns result from the interaction of people and wildlife, with the potential for car accidents from deer and the transmission of diseases, such as rabies, from raccoons.

Public Lands

Forty percent (40%) of West Boylston is owned by the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). Much of this land is forested. Wildlife species such as whitetail deer, ruffed grouse, grey fox, coyote, turkey, and fisher⁴ benefit from forest habitat management conducted by this state agency. Wachusett Reservoir is home to an increasing resident Canada goose population. The large open water expanse coupled with protected shorelines and small islands create good waterfowl habitat. Other waterfowl such as loons, cormorants, dabbling and diving ducks, and gulls are seen in many areas around the Reservoir.

4F. SCENIC RESOURCES AND UNIQUE ENVIRONMENTS

UNIQUE ENVIRONMENTS

The existing open spaces in West Boylston create a unique mixture of an expansive open space surrounding the Wachusett Reservoir and the undeveloped wooded corridors along its tributaries for wildlife migration in all directions radiating from the body of the Reservoir. This creates a wonderful opportunity for animals to utilize corridors to access resources they need to survive. The opportunities to utilize this system should be further enhanced for the benefit of the whole region.

SCENIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

The Town of West Boylston is located on the high ground surrounding the Wachusett Reservoir, south of Wachusett Mountain. There are many spectacular views of the mountain and the valley below, which serves as a principal asset of the region. Before 1890, the site of the village center (often referenced as the “Lower Common”) housed factories, farms, churches and homes. But today this area is the site of a great reservoir, held back by the Wachusett Dam in Clinton. Two rivers, the Quinapoxet and the Stillwater Rivers meet at the historic village center of Oakdale. From there, these rivers flow into the Thomas Basin and enter the Wachusett Reservoir. See [Map 8: Scenic & Unique Features Map](#). The May 2017 search of the Massachusetts Cultural Resources Information System is presented in [Appendix B](#).

Old Stone Church

The Old Stone Church, located along Route 12, is one of the most photographed scenes of the region. It has remained a monument to



Old Stone Church. Photo Credit CMRPC.

the scores of buildings removed in the 1890s by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, when the Reservoir was built. The church is now listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The land owned by the DCR remains tightly regulated open space. Shoreline fishing is allowed at the Reservoir, but boating and swimming are prohibited. Limited use of the land surrounding the Reservoir is permitted, but it is not encouraged.

Lily Ponds

On DCR land, east of where Lancaster Street joins Route 12, is one of West Boylston's best kept secrets: three beautiful Lily Ponds. Hidden from public view, these ponds once served as the center of recreation activity in town. In 1876, West Boylston celebrated the nation's centennial at the Lily Ponds. During the 1930s and 1940s, the town's bathing beach was located at these ponds. As late as 1937, the Park Commission's Annual Report referenced the close relationship between these ponds and the town's Parks Commission stating: "The maintenance of Lily Pond bathing beach, being a recreational activity, was supervised by the Park Commission. An attendant, or life guard, was appointed for duty during certain hours daily from the middle of June until Labor Day. A new float was built and the beach improved through the addition of sand..."²⁵.

The DCR lands and waters are undoubtedly the Town of West Boylston's most scenic resources, but there are other areas that deserve recognition as well. One such area is the Wachusett Country Club.

Wachusett Country Club & Other Vista Locations

This scenic resource is celebrating its 90th birthday this year! The Wachusett Country Club opened in 1927, when its 18-hole, public golf course was first designed by the famous golf course designer, Donald Ross. The views from its lush green fairways are a major asset to the town. From its high spot along Prospect Street, residents get truly spectacular, panoramic views looking down on the blue waters of the Reservoir, as well as views of Mt. Wachusett.²⁶ Other high elevations in town with similar beautiful views include: the top of the hill near Pleasant Street, where one can see as far east as Marlboro. At 870 feet elevation, Malden Hill is the highest spot in town and commands views of not only the Reservoir, but also Mt. Wachusett and Thomas Basin. Similarly, the view of the Old Stone Church from High Plains Cemetery, is beautiful as it overlooks the Reservoir, but it has become marred by many powerlines in its pathway.

Mass Central Rail Trail

The Mass Central Rail Trail (MCRT) is another unique and scenic feature in West Boylston. The MCRT is located on the abandoned



²⁵ Town of West Boylston, Annual Town Report, Years 1922, 1923, 1930, Report of the Park Commission

²⁶ Paul Dunn & B.J. Dunn, Donald Ross Golf Courses Everyone Can Play, Taylor Trade Publishing, 2017, pp. 152 – 153

line of the former Mass Central Railroad, which once ran an east-west route between Boston and Northampton. The Oakdale section of the MCRT opened in 1997 and runs from Thomas Basin to the Holden town line, along an easement on land owned by the Town. The West Boylston section of the MCRT was built and is maintained by Wachusett Greenways, in partnership with the DCR and the town. Wachusett Greenways is an all-volunteer non-profit group which focuses on the MCRT in five towns north of Worcester. In Holden, the trail runs west through the Springdale Mill River Walk, and over two bridges that were installed in the early 2000s, to River Road along DCR owned land, just over the town line in Holden and the Springdale Mill River Walk. Along the Oakdale section of the MCRT, one can see ruins of the old Whiting Mill, as well as the Quabbin Aqueduct outfall and dam. The Oakdale section is the most popular section of the MCRT, and to support the activity and trail usage, in 2006, the DCR built a new parking lot in cooperation with the Town, per an order to the West Boylston Water District requiring them to comply with federal EPA rules to keep parking areas 400 feet from the Town's Oakdale well.

The West Boylston DPW assists with maintenance for the portion of the MCRT within town. Wachusett Greenways provides trail clearing and maintenance, planned outdoor activities, and direct development of 32 miles of the proposed MCRT through the towns of Oakham, Rutland, Holden, West Boylston, and Sterling. Wachusett Greenways plans to develop the MCRT east from Oakdale to Pleasant Street, along Beaman Street and Prospect Street. Pleasant Street is a former town road that has been closed off for years and runs north from Beaman Street, east of the bridge that divides Stillwater Basin from the Thomas Basin. A large impediment to the development of that trail is the bridge mentioned above, which was rebuilt in 2002, but did not include an adequate sidewalk along its full length for safe pedestrian access. MCRT is working to overcome this impediment and hopes to improve the parking facilities in the near future.

Goodale Park

Goodale Park is the town's first and most historic park. In 1911, former Selectman Aaron Goodale IV left three and a half (3.5) acres of his land at the corner of Goodale and Crescent Streets to the Town, creating Goodale Park.²⁷ That same year the "summer house" or "shelter house" off Goodale Street was added to the Park²⁸. Back then, the former Goodale Street School was located across Crescent Street from the Park, but today's Major Edwards Elementary School and the West Boylston Middle/High School did not exist, leaving much of the area abutting Goodale Park natural and undeveloped. Active recreational components of the Park before 1935 included one baseball field and two tennis courts, which were sometimes even used for volleyball and basketball.²⁹

In 1931, Goodale Park was expanded after the Park's uphill neighbor, Major Victor Edwards, donated five and a half (5.5) acres of his abutting land to the Park, extending the Park to the current High School location. Probably attracted by the high elevation at the top of Goodale Park, which gave spectacular

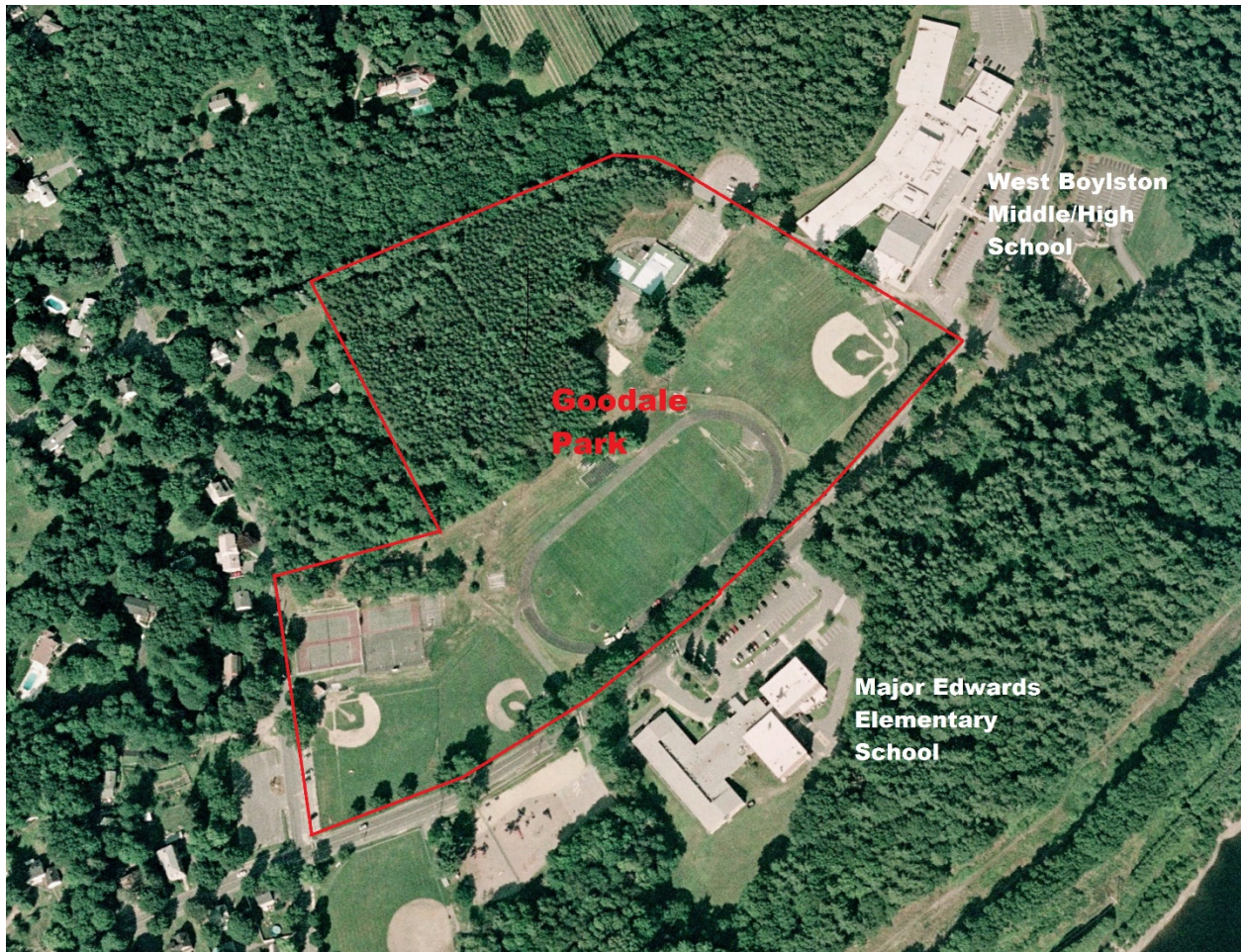
²⁷ Hamilton, Helen Maxwell, "the History of West Boylston," 2000, p. 177

²⁸ Town Annual Reports, Park Commission, 1922, 1923

²⁹ Town Annual Reports, Park Commission, 1916, 1917, 1928, 1931, 1932, 1934, 1935

views of the Wachusett Reservoir, Major Edwards built his beautiful home, “Eastover,” overlooking the Park at 18 Malden Street in 1911. A co-founder of Morgan Construction Company and holder of over 100 patents, Edwards gave much to the Town, including serving on its Park Commission. In 1931, Major Edwards also donated three and a half (3.5) acres of land on Crescent Street (across from Goodale Park), enabling construction of the Major Victor Edwards High School, which opened in 1936.³⁰ This building remains part of the Major Edwards Elementary School even after it was expanded in the 1960s.

A large grove of trees existed in the upper portion of today’s Goodale Park, just below Major Edwards’ home. Around 1922, these chestnut trees started dying of chestnut blight, so they were replaced with evergreen trees. This Grove lasted until the Hurricane of 1938, which blew down many of the trees. At that time, the MDC owned this upper portion of land, so, once again, the trees were replaced – this time red pines were planted by the MDC. In 1947, the MDC sold this Pine Grove land (for a token sum) to the Town.³¹



Aerial photo of Goodale Park showing Pine Grove and pool at top – July 2007

³⁰ Hamilton, op. cit. pp. 147 – 149, 179 – 180. Also see Richard J. Giarusso, “Edwards made major contribution to town,” *The Banner*, October 8, 1992, p. 7.

³¹ May 10, 2002 interview with former West Boylston Historical Society President, Edgar Whitcomb.

In 2002, the Parks Commission wanted to remove this Grove that had stood here for 80 years to install a new practice field. Many residents, however, campaigned against removing the Pine Grove. Led by the former president of West Boylston's Historical Society (Edgar Whitcomb), approximately 1,000 residents signed a petition opposing the Parks Commission's proposal and they were successful in stopping it. However, after a severe ice storm in 2008 downed many of the pines, the Parks Commission decided not to replace them and, without a formal public hearing, opted instead to remove the remaining trees. Town meeting in 2016 approved creation of a practice field in this area to relieve the overuse problems occurring at other high school fields. This new practice field is partially located where the Park's swimming pool once stood.



Aerial Photo of Goodale Park showing loss of Pine Grove and swimming pool at top – August 2016

The swimming pool opened in 1954 with much celebration. Given to the town by the MDC, it was located at the High School end of the Pine Grove (see July 2007 photo above). It was a hub of summer recreational activity, offering swimming lessons for children, time for adults-only swims, and a scenic

picnic area in the Pine Grove for families to gather. High repair costs due to lack of maintenance and dwindling attendance led to the pool's closure in 2008 and it was finally demolished in 2014. ³²

Goodale Park is a unique park in West Boylston, not only because it is the town's first park but also because of the very important role it has played in the town's history. During World War I, it was used as a drill field by the Massachusetts State Guard. Over the years, many town events and celebrations have been held here, including the town's Centennial and Bicentennial celebrations in 1908 and 2008. Fourth of July celebrations, which used to last three days drawing people from miles away, were held here and still are. ³³ During the summer, band concerts and other cultural events continue to be held here.



Ballfields at Goodale Park. *Photo Credit CMRPC.*

Although most of Goodale Park is today covered with active recreational facilities used by the High School and sports leagues, the upper portion of the Park, where the Pine Grove once was, still offers spectacular views of Wachusett Reservoir. The increasing use of chain link fences, retaining walls and large scoreboards have, however, significantly lessened the Park's natural beauty. Future use of this steep upper portion should include ways to protect and improve the passive recreational opportunities and leave natural buffers between the Park's many active sports facilities and the abutting residential properties.

Today, Goodale Park is the Town of West Boylston's most significant park and recreational facility. It provides athletic fields and open space for the adjacent High School and Major Edwards Elementary School, as well as for community leagues and recreation programs. The intensive amount of use and their age has caused the existing fields to decline. Recently, using Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds, the town hired BETA Inc. to guide the Town through a Master Planning process that started with assessing the site's limited area and compiling desired uses requested from user groups. All uses were evaluated to determine how best to meet the Town's needs while maximizing the facilities that could be included at the Park. BETA prepared over six (6) options for improvements to Goodale Park. Each plan

³² Town Annual Reports, Parks Commission 2008-2009, 2013-2014

³³ Frank A. Brown and Beverly K. Goodale for the West Boylston Historical Society, "Images of America: West Boylston Arcadia Publishing, 2005, p. 81

was presented to the Parks Facilities Committee for review and discussion. Based on input from the committee BETA prepared a recommended Master Plan for Goodale Park, including a phasing plan that was accepted by the Parks Commission. Cost estimates were completed after geotechnical information was conducted to evaluate earth movement costs. The facilities layout was not adjusted to optimize earth movement costs, and the completed cost was estimated to be more than \$20 million. This cost is based on the completed Concept Plan, which includes escalation costs and contingencies, but could be less if facilities are down-graded or other savings found. This project will be presented before multiple Town Meetings for support from the voters before any of it can be implemented. Moving forward, the results from this plan will be used by the Parks Commission to respond to the more immediate needs of the community while taking into consideration the fiscal constraints being placed on townspeople. Exhibit 13 is a rendering of the Goodale Park Master Plan Concept Plan and a table of the projected timing and costs of each phase of the different facilities being proposed. Additional information on the plan can be viewed at: http://www.westboylston-ma.gov/sites/westboylstonma/files/uploads/goodale_park_master_plan.pdf



Goodale Park Master Plan

Exhibit 13: Goodale Park Master Plan Concept Drawing And Preliminary Cost Estimates

| Timing | Facilities | Cost (Millions) |
|--------------------|--|------------------------|
| Phase 1 (3 Years) | Synthetic Track & Field & Stadium | \$11.10 |
| Phase 2 (6 Years) | Little League Fields & Concession/Rest Rooms & Multi-Use Field | \$3.90 |
| Phase 3 (8 Years) | High School Baseball Field | \$3.10 |
| Phase 4 (11 Years) | Pool & Exercise Trail Stations | \$5.70 |
| TOTAL | | \$23.80 |

Town Commons

The Town Commons are well-maintained and planted with a variety of flowers and shrubs. It is surrounded by many old homes, two (2) churches, the Beaman Memorial Library, two (2) fraternal buildings, and an attractive cemetery. The three (3) main sections of the Town Common provide an enjoyable setting for many community activities to occur. A gazebo on the Common hosts a variety of



Town Common. Photo Credit CMRPC.

summer concerts and picnicking. Other activities on the common include winter ice skating, church festivals, Scouting events, yard and craft sales. Many of the older historical buildings around the Common remain, and a selection of them were moved up from the valley before the Reservoir was built.

North of the Town Common is the Bigelow Tavern Historic District, where the old tavern serves as the headquarters for the West Boylston Historical Society. In 1992, the Bigelow Tavern Historic District,

which includes properties at 60, 64, and 65 Worcester Street, was established. The properties in this district include the Bigelow Tavern, the distillery across the street, and the Seth White General Store. The store once served as a place where town meetings were held.

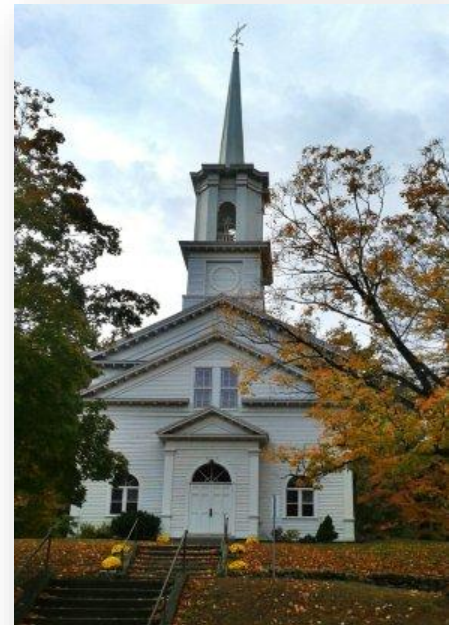
In 2006, the West Boylston Historical Commission was able to procure the historic circa 1780 Jacob Winn Barn from the DCR, when they decided to demolish the building. It was then moved into the West Boylston Historical Society from its original site at 77 Lancaster Street.

Village of Oakdale

Some people believe that the Village of Oakdale is the best-preserved part of town, and demonstrates what the area looked like before the Reservoir flooded the town's center in 1905. It has a number of homes that remain virtually unchanged from the time it was a busy mill town, over 100 years ago. These homes are now part of the Oakdale Historic District, which was established by the West Boylston Historical Commission in 1996. The district now includes properties in Oakdale along North Main Street, May Street, Green Street, High Street, and Waushacum Street.

The Oakdale area of town looks essentially as it did in the last century. There exists the town's oldest surviving church building, the Oakdale Methodist Church, which was built in 1858. There are four (4) of the town's remaining schoolhouses from the 19th century. Today, Oakdale remains West Boylston's only surviving mill village, although the southern section of the village, including the site of the mill and its related housing, no longer exists.

Other properties included on the National Registry of Historic Places in West Boylston include: the Quinapoxet River Bridge (listed in 1990), the Old Stone Church (listed in 1973), Mount Vernon Cemetery and Holbrook Chapel on the east Town Common (listed in 2008) and in 2016 the Beaman Memorial Library was also listed.



Oakdale Methodist Church.
Photo Credit CMRPC.

4G. ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES

ASIAN LONGHORNED BEETLE

The Asian Longhorned beetle (ALB) is an invasive wood-boring insect that attacks hardwood trees, including maple, birch and elm. A large infestation of ALB was discovered in Worcester, MA in August 2008 and is currently under eradication. The Worcester area has removed more than 35,000 host trees

to try to halt the infestation. A small infestation of just six (6) trees was found in Boston in 2010. The spread of ALB would cause negative impacts to the maple sugaring, nursery, tourism and forest product industries of Massachusetts, and would seriously threaten our state's forest, park and street trees. Currently the ALB is found in Worcester and surrounding towns, including West Boylston. All of West Boylston is included in the regulated area to suppress and control the ALB, which means all tree removal, trimming of host trees and composting performed in the quarantined zones must follow state regulations.³⁴

FISCAL CHALLENGES

By far the greatest challenge to protecting and enhancing open space and recreation is the perception that it is too expensive or that someone else is doing it. This is particularly the case in West Boylston due to the fact that DCR owns 40% of the town. State and federal governments have long recognized the need to preserve certain open space because it provides significant public good. However, decisions regarding open space preservation are increasingly being made at the local level. Local government officials and land trusts are developing fiscal capacities and experience in land management and stewardship, supplementing the services provided by state and local governments.³⁵ Local governments operate within an increasingly tight fiscal environment and are heavily dependent on the property tax for operating revenue, so the fiscal and economic implications of open space preservation decisions are of paramount consideration.

Open space supports natural ecosystems that provide direct benefits to society, though it is difficult to estimate the monetary value of such benefits. Population growth and real estate development do not necessarily provide net fiscal benefits to local governments. (That is, providing and maintaining infrastructure and other services to accommodate new residential development usually cost more than the development generates in property tax and other revenues.³⁶ Fiscal impact analyses have been conducted that compare the net effects on municipal budgets of open space. The Northeastern Office of the American Farmland Trust³⁷ studied six (6) rural towns in Connecticut, Massachusetts and New York State and found that, on average, residential development required \$1.13 in municipal services for every \$1 of revenue received in property taxes. Farm, forest and open space land required only \$0.29 in services per dollar of revenue. Other cost-benefit studies have been done in the region by Commonwealth Research Group showing further regional comparisons and their results agree (see exhibit below).

³⁴ Massachusetts Introduced Pests Outreach Project: <http://massnrc.org/pests/alb/>

³⁵ Greater Yellowstone Coalition. 1993. The fiscal and economic impacts of local conservation and community development measures: a review of the literature, and Fausold, C. J. and R. J. Lilleholm. 1996. The economic value of open space. Working Paper from the Lincoln Land Trust, Land Lines Vol. 8, No. 5.

³⁶ Ladd, H. 1992. Effects of Population Growth on Local Spending and Taxes. Lincoln Institute of Land Policy working paper, Cambridge, MA. 53 pages.

³⁷ Freedgood, J., and R.C. Wagner. 1992. Cost of Community Services Studies: Snapshots of Net Fiscal Impacts of Different Land Uses in Towns. Northeastern Office, American Farmland Trust.

Exhibit 14: Fiscal Cost Associated with Different Land Uses

| Land Use Type | For This Much Tax Paid (Revenue Incoming) | Use This Much in Town Services (Costs to Town) |
|---|--|---|
| Residential | \$ 1.00 | \$ 1.13 |
| Commercial | \$ 1.00 | \$ 0.43 |
| Open Space | \$ 1.00 | \$ 0.29 |
| Source: Northeastern Office of the American Farmland Trust | | |

Although the OSIC does not have the resources to analyze data specifically for West Boylston at this time, general findings from these studies show:

- Residential development typically incurs a net fiscal cost to the town
- Commercial development typically generates a net fiscal surplus, but attracts more residential development, and
- Open space, forests and farmlands typically generate a net fiscal surplus to the town AND are fiscally better for the town than residential development and equal to or better than non-residential development.

Many other studies have confirmed that significant increases in land value are associated with proximity to open space lands.³⁸ This increase in property value is not included in the above cost computations. It should also be noted here that though the DCR does not pay taxes, they do pay the Town a Payment In-lieu-of Taxes (PILOT payment) which in 2016 was \$670,855 paid annually. This amount would greatly affect the calculations in West Boylston and make the return on DCR property even more beneficial to the town than any other typical open space.

RAILWAYS

The Town has requested, but has been denied access to data to learn what chemicals and/or nuclear materials are being transported on the railroad that passes through West Boylston. Since the railroad travels over the Reservoir at Thomas Basin and right through the town, there is some concern regarding potential spills. The PanAm Railroad – Guilford Line has been contacted, but responded that release of the information is a security risk.

WATER DISTRICT

³⁸ Lacy, J. 1990. An Examination of Market Appreciation for Clustered Housing with Permanent Open Space. Center for Rural Massachusetts, Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning, University of Massachusetts, Amherst MA. 14 pages.

Providing safe, affordable, and reliable potable water is a serious challenge. The West Boylston Water District has talked with the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority about the possibility of getting water from Wachusett Reservoir in the future, but this appears to be cost prohibitive. In addition, since most of this water would eventually be discharged into the town's sewers, it would mean water being transferred out of our watershed and would probably need state approval under the Interbasin Transfer Act. There is concern that withdrawal up to the old safe yield of the existing wells will result in a water supply deficit of 0.10 million gallons per day (mgd) under a maximum day demand (MDD) in 2020. The Inter-basin transfer and its repercussions had been brought to the Town's attention early in the sewer planning and again when the mandatory sewer connection requirement from the Board of Health was made. Sewer use in 2007 transported an average of 481,000 gallons of water per day from the ground in West Boylston to the sewage treatment plant in Millbury. This reduced volume of recharge to the town wells may be a significant concern. It was estimated to increase to 587,000 gallons per day in 2020.³⁹

SEWER

The sewer project was implemented to reduce pollution of small backyard streams from failing septic systems. When residents voted approval of the sewer project at town meeting, they were told that connections would not be mandatory if their septic system met Title 5 regulations. As a result of the low hookup rate, however, the Sewer Commissioners encouraged the Board of Health to require connections for all lots within the sewer service area so that there will be adequate revenue to operate the sewer system.⁴⁰

Sewer service access pipes (stubs) were provided without consulting the landowners, so assumptions that were made relative to development potential were not always correct. The landowners who had intended to keep existing open land as unsewered and undeveloped have been faced with a situation that was forced upon them and they had no opportunity for input into the decision. This has increased the value of these lots that now have sewer service stubs. The property is then taxed more, and owners are required to pay the increased taxes. These owners, some of whom had intended to simply hold onto the open lot, are now forced to sell the land to developers due to the higher taxes. There should be an alternative to keep these lots reasonably valued if a commitment is documented to keep it as open space.

With the installation of the sewer system, small "grandfathered" lots may now be developed in these sewer areas. This infill development may create other environmental problems, such as increasing the amount of development and impervious area, thus increasing runoff and the potential of flooding and pollution. For example, flooding complaints increased in the Bunker Hill Parkway/Trenton Lane area following construction on "grandfathered" lots. When old plans of the area were found during relocation of the Town offices in 2014, the site where a new home was built and the rear yards that had been filled in were found to be marked as 'drainage areas' to function to hold runoff. There is also increased use of fertilizers and pesticides when development occurs, which degrades water quality. The high density of

³⁹ Tata & Howard, Inc., "Open Space Plan – Water Supply, T&H No. 1360," December 6, 2001

⁴⁰ Elise Wellington, Secretary, 2009 West Boylston Open Space and Recreation Plan Update

development and its related heavy traffic in the sewerer southerly section of town will reduce the availability of open space and increase the potential for pollution and contamination of both land and water.⁴¹

SENSITIVE AREAS

The DCR has aggressively acquired land in particularly sensitive areas, thus increasing open space, but unfortunately not necessarily allowing some desirable recreational uses (swimming, boating, off-road biking, and overnight camping) of its land. Although active recreational use is not permitted on most of the DCR-owned land in town, there has been a problem of All-terrain vehicles (ATV) using DCR-owned land near Lee Street. Carving trails through this protected land, ATV users have actually ridden down the stream bed, causing erosion and harming fish. This area included sections of Malden Brook, which flows into the Reservoir. ATVs have also been a problem on privately-owned open space, such Stones Throw Farm (formerly Malden Brook Farm).

DOG FECES

The Parks Commission and the Mass Central Rail Trail have documented problems with users leaving their dogs' feces on their properties. Feces is easily visible on the fields, the trails and on the adjacent DCR-owned land, even though owners are required to keep animals on leash, to clean up after them, and to stay on the Town-owned Mass Central Rail Trail property (this is the reason DCR no longer allows dogs on the watershed property). This problem is even worse at fenced athletic areas in town. The installation of fencing around Goodale Park athletic fields in 2016 has triggered the use by dog owners to let their pets go off-leash. The problem is that these owners are not picking up the animals' feces and children are unexpectedly playing/landing in it. Dogs are required to be leashed and owners are required by Town Bylaws to pick up their dogs' feces, but some dog walkers do not abide by these rules.⁴² More aggressive enforcement of these regulations is needed by town police and the zoning enforcement officers.

EROSION AND FLOODING

There are only a few areas where erosion and flooding impact areas within the Town of West Boylston. This includes the areas adjacent to Gates Brook parallel to Worcester Street in the southern end of town, and flooding at the flatlands along Route 12 just south of the Sterling Town Line.

POLLUTANT-IMPACTED AREAS

The Shell Tank Farm on Shrewsbury Street is currently in the remediation process due to a release of thousands of gallons of petroleum into the ground in the late 1970's. A ground water treatment system has been in place and the below ground storage tanks have been removed. The cleanup is nearing completion,

⁴¹ Carolyn Padden, Chair, West Boylston Conservation Commission in 2009

⁴² Mike Peckar, West Boylston Implementation Committee 2016

with the remaining items being monitoring of test wells for low level contamination. The small concentration of petroleum that remains is being treated through phytoremediation. This involves planting fast growing hybrid poplar trees that draw up the pollutants with the ground water and retain the pollutants in the wood. This was the first time that phytoremediation was being used to clean up a hazardous waste site in central Massachusetts.⁴³ This area was proposed to be developed into commercial uses and a portion of the property was discussed used for Little League fields for the town at a Planning Board meeting when the Site Plan Review approval was discussed in 2016.

Map 4: Soils & Geologic Features also shows the locations of Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) Tier-Classified Sites (21E) and Activity and Use Limitation Sites. 21E sites are those locations where the Mass DEP has been notified of or discovered a “reportable” release of oil or hazardous material to the environment. Tier Classified sites are required to have a certain level of monitoring and clean up oversight. The MassDEP Tier Classified Oil and/or Hazardous Material Sites data layer is a statewide point dataset containing the approximate location of oil and/or hazardous material disposal sites that have been (1) reported and (2) Tier Classified under M.G.L. Chapter 21E and the Massachusetts Contingency Plan (MCP). Activity and Use Limitation (AUL) is one type of acceptable response at some 21 Sites that allows certain uses compatible with certain levels of cleanup. West Boylston has one Tier 2 Classified 21 E Site and two (2) such AUL sites.

⁴³ Shell Oil, Shrewsbury Street West Boylston, Site Remediation Plan, 2001.

5. CONSERVATION AND RECREATION INTEREST

5A. OVERVIEW

Public recreation and open space provide a focus for community life and promote a unique and identifiable community character. Open space can also be an oasis for quiet reflection and can greatly enhance the connection to the natural world. Open space also has economic benefits by protecting and enhancing property values of nearby land, and attracting businesses, new residents, and public and private investment. Research on this topic suggests that the proximity to recreation and open space is the most important factor in choosing where to locate a small business, while the quality of life ranks as the third most important factor in choosing the location of a large business. Additionally, conservation land provides natural rainwater storage and corridors for wildlife. Even small pockets of green space may serve an important function for migratory birds and butterflies. Open space reduces runoff and diminishes the frequency and severity of flooding. Wooded open space helps to cool the air and improves air quality.

This plan aims to comprehensively discuss and consider the issues and goals of organizations within West Boylston related to the protection, acquisition and enhancement of open space and recreation facilities. The definition of “Protected” within this OSRP is intended to refer to parcels of land that have some limitations from the development of structures on the property through public, non-profit, or private mechanisms. This means the properties are managed primarily for preservation or recreation purposes. These include DCR properties owned in fee or with deeded restriction for water supply protection; properties owned by the Greater Worcester Land Trust or Worcester County; and properties under Chapter 61 that require notice to the town before any development occurs.

COMMUNITY PRESERVATION ACT

On April 4, 2007, the citizens of West Boylston adopted the Community Preservation Act (CPA), which provides state matching funds for money collected by the town. Town Meeting approved an article, and a ballot ratification was passed to collect a property tax surcharge of two percent (2%), with exemptions for the first \$100,000, low-income, low or moderate income elderly, and reductions for properties with abatements or exemptions. Shortly after the adoption of the CPA, the Town Administrator established the Community Preservation Committee whose duties are to plan, gather and present recommendations at town meetings to allocate and spend the surcharge funds. The law stipulates that at least 10 percent of the funds must be spent on each of three purposes: open space, historic preservation and affordable housing. The remaining 70 percent (70%) can be spent on parks, recreation, or any of the three previously noted purposes. The adoption of this act by the town has provided concrete benefits to the recreation and open space needs of the town. All town committees and citizen organizations that have an interest in open space or recreation must work together to assure that spending proposals brought to town meeting are publicly approved. According to the Community

Preservation Coalition, the projects funded through the CPA related to Open Space and Recreation are shown in the exhibit below.

Exhibit 15: Community Preservation Fund Projects related to Open Space and Recreation

| Project Name | Description | Amount | Approval Date |
|---|--|---------------|---------------|
| Goodale Park Design Services | Architectural and Engineering Services | \$25,000.00 | 10/20/2008 |
| Preservation of Goodale Park | Renovate tennis and basketball courts | \$ 618,000.00 | 5/17/2010 |
| Lee Street Land Purchase | Purchase Land on Lee Street | \$ 70,000.00 | 10/18/2010 |
| Goodale Park Master Plan | A grant for the creation a Master Plan for Goodale Park and the surrounding town owned land. | \$ 50,000.00 | 10/21/2013 |
| Woodland Park Fencing/Safety Netting | A grant for the purchase of fencing and safety netting at the high school baseball field, girls' softball field and Woodland Park. | \$ 26,740.00 | 5/19/2014 |
| Baseball Field Fencing | A grant for fencing at the high school baseball field and Little League "A". | \$ 29, 654.00 | 10/19/2015 |
| Goodale Park Expansion | A grant for a practice field at Goodale Park at old Town Pool area. | \$ 52,817.00 | 5/16/2016 |
| Goodale Park Well | A grant for an artesian irrigation well for Goodale Park fields | \$ 17,500.00 | 5/16/2016 |
| Malden Hill South | Purchase 12.5 Acres on Goodale St. | \$ 165,000.00 | 10/17/2016 |
| Source: http://communitypreservation.org/projects/new | | | |

The acquisition of land is slowed by the need to do “due diligence” investigations and survey work before the proposal can go before Town Meeting for approval. These preparations cost a few thousand dollars. A process is needed to ensure that there are funds to complete this work in a thorough and swift manner so property owners are not negatively impacted by the long timeframe for the Town to buy the property.

In 2009, the Wachusett Working Landscapes Partnership provided communities in this region geographic information and assistance to manage the growth. The Wachusett Greenprint Map identifies resources that the town wanted to preserve, as well as places that are suitable for development. The map indicates developed areas, roads, recreational trails and major water bodies. Portions of the maps in red or orange indicate important natural resources that are not permanently protected and which have absolute (red) or partial (orange) development constraints. These areas with partial constraints often are the most important to protect from future development pressures. White areas show lands that lack these development constraints and which may be more suitable for development. The map is included as an attachment to this report and can also be found online.⁴⁴ In

44 <http://www.commonwaters.org/images/stories/pdfs/WestBoylston.pdf>

addition, an inventory of the municipally-owned conservation and recreational properties is included in *Map 9: Open Space Inventory Map*.

5B. PRIVATE PARCELS

There are many private landowners in West Boylston who support the protection of open spaces and the development of additional recreational facilities. The OSRP can be used as a vehicle to educate these philanthropists that there are options available to them. These include sales, donations, deeded development restrictions, cooperative agreements, and Chapter 61 Land restrictions.

The OSIC and Commission encourage landowners to contact the OSIC to discuss placing a portion of their land into a permanently-deeded restricted use. This will likely provide a tax reduction, reduce future real estate taxes, provide an open space or recreational use for the town on the portion of the property, prohibit building development on the property, and can generally be worded as desired by the landowner for special considerations. The OSIC is tasked with preparing pamphlets and flyers to educate interested landowners.

The OSIC has reviewed properties and received suggestions from town boards and the public to consider specific properties for protection or for future fields or active recreation development. The properties that are currently under the Chapter 61 programs are of primary importance and keeping them in an open condition is a priority of the Committee. Exhibit 16: Private Properties of Interest lists potential properties for acquisition or recreation potential. The recommended use is based upon its protection, acquisition, or the implementation of development restrictions. The desired uses for these lands include retaining them as undeveloped open spaces, walking trails, bicycle pathways/widening, a dog park and disc golf.

Exhibit 16: 2016 Open Space and Recreation Private Properties of Interest

| # | Property | Desired | Future Use | Actions 2009-2016 |
|---|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|--|---|
| 1 | 137 Shrewsbury St. | Acquisition/ Cooperation | Baseball Fields | Inquiry in November, Parks Commission Discussions |
| 2 | 7.5 Acres 264 Prospect St. | Acquisition | Prot. Town Well Prot. Open Space | 2011 GWLT contact, no interest then, 2016 ZBA Denied Spec. Permit |
| 3 | 14.5 Acres 18 Malden St. to Pool | Ch. 61 or Acq. | Prot. Woodland & Playing Field | Owner contacted PB in 2008, No reply to follow-ups. |
| 4 | 5 Acres of 60 Acres Sterling St. | Acquisition | Playing Fields, Dog Park | No Contact |
| 5 | 11 Acres, Hillside Drive | Acquisition | Prot. Open Space | 2014 Right of First Refusal Requested, but rejected |
| 6 | DCR - 180 Beaman St. | Cooperation | Playing Fields/Gym Use, Dog Park | No formal contact from Selectmen |
| 7 | 4.3 Acres 19 Crescent St. | Muni. Use | Senior Ctr/Dog Park | No Contact |
| 8 | 30.4 Acres 55 Campground Rd | Acquisition | Prot. Open Space | No Contact |

| # | Property | Desired | Future Use | Actions 2009-2016 |
|----|---------------------------------|-------------|-------------------|---|
| 9 | 43.8 Acres 60 Fairbanks St. | Acquisition | Prot. Open Space | 2015 OSIC contact, In Chapter 61, No Interest to change |
| 10 | 19 Acres 135 Pierce St. | Acquisition | Prot. Woodland | 2015 AHT contact, legal issues |
| 11 | 6 of 7.3 Acres 153 Crescent St. | Acquisition | Prot. Agriculture | No Contact, School Farm |
| 12 | 20 Acres, 241 Laurel St. | Acquisition | Prot. Woodland | No Contact |
| 13 | 14.5 Acres, 71 Laurel St. | Acq/Ch. 61A | Prot. Agriculture | Not Interested in 2014 |
| 14 | 8 Acres, 98 Prospect St. | Ch. 61A | Prot. Agriculture | No Contact |

Sometimes the landowner can leverage tax savings and other funding to allow a donation of a portion of the property to the Town, as was done in 2016 for property off Maple Street. Any acquisition would need to be approved at Town Meeting, though cooperation with DCR has allowed properties to be protected as open space without costing the town anything. The intended funding sources for the areas near Town water supplies include grants and CPA monies designated for open space protection, as was done for the Kent property on Lee Street in 2010. Therefore, an estimate of the costs of each parcel is not included.

The properties listed in the preceding table are those suggested by and to the OSIC as having value to the town. Since the recent passing of George Bernardin (a long-time philanthropist who spent countless hours assisting the town with legal and open space-related issues) the town lacks experience in approaching landowners to discuss financial savings and local benefits of permanently limiting development on their properties. The OSIC needs to establish a protocol to contact land owners to discuss selling or donating land to the town, and advertise/market this opportunity. The DCR owns most of the open space lands in West Boylston, however there is still a significant amount of privately-owned lands that gain tax benefits through “Chapter Laws” within the state. Private lands that are within the State’s special taxation programs (Chapter 61, 61A, and 61B) are actively managed by their owners, but only have limited or temporary protection. Private owners can manage their land for forestry, agriculture, and/or recreation purposes and receive a benefit of reduced property tax under Chapter 61. Chapter 61 is for forested lands, Chapter 61A for agricultural and horticultural lands, and Chapter 61B is for recreational lands. Chapter lands are considered as having limited protection. While these lands provide significant open space in communities while in the program, once the property is sold or the owner chooses not to participate in the special taxation program, there is no longer a commitment to open space management. If the property is put up for sale, the community has the first right to purchase the property or assign its right to a non-profit. The Town should inventory and prioritize what limited Chapter land there is and other open space for acquisition or other protection measures. In addition, the Town should insure that notice is given immediately to conservation and Recreation Commissions if a Notice of Sale of a Chapter property is delivered to the Select Board. A communication system to allow for rapid response should be developed. Working with local non-profits, may help make acquisitions possible, especially with limited municipal staff time and funds. Chapter Properties are shown on Exhibit 16 below.

Stone’s Throw Farm (formerly Malden Brook Farm) is one of the only large, privately-owned lots of land in town. It is located along Prospect Street and Lee Street and contained about 200 acres of land, but some has been sold due to financial difficulties. In the year 2000, Malden Brook Farm was recognized by the Massachusetts Department of Agriculture as a “Century Massachusetts Family Farm” since it had been under the same family ownership for over 100 years. Its barn was built with wood from houses that were torn down when the DCR needed room to make the Reservoir. Today, Stone’s Throw Farm continues to harvest and sell produce to local establishments. The farm is currently under Chapter 61A, which is a state law that allows for reduced local property taxes on agriculture and horticulture lands in order to preserve the state’s ever-depleting farmland. In exchange for these benefits, the town is given the right to recover some of the tax benefits afforded the owner if the land is ever to be sold, and an option to purchase the property should it be sold for any purpose other than to continue to serve as a farm.

Near Stones Throw Farm on Prospect Street is an even larger privately-owned tract of land that is undeveloped and provides spectacular views of the Reservoir. Wachusett Country Club’s 18-hole golf course provides much open space at a high elevation. It is presently under Chapter 61B. This land classification program is designed to encourage preservation of the state’s open space and promote recreational land uses. It offers reduced property taxes to property owners willing to make a long-term commitment to preserving land in an undeveloped condition or for use for outdoor activities. In exchange, the town is given the right to recover some of the tax benefits afforded the owner and an option to purchase the property should the land be sold or used for any purpose other than to maintain it as open space or for recreational use. Exhibit 16 shows the current Chapter Lands in West Boylston.

Exhibit 16: 2016 Chapter Lands within the Town of West Boylston

| Chapter | Location | No. Of Acres |
|------------------------------|----------------------|---------------|
| CHAPTER 61 – FORESTRY | | |
| 61 | Keyes Street | 14.80 |
| 61 | Phelps Street | 11.88 |
| 61 | Malden Street | 11.93 |
| 61 | Fairbanks Street | 14.50 |
| 61 | Fairbanks Street | 43.83 |
| 61 | Raymond S Huntington | 1.49 |
| 61 | Raymond S Huntington | 1.85 |
| 61 | Raymond S Huntington | 52.64 |
| 61 | Raymond S Huntington | 14.42 |
| 61 | Laurel Street | 2.80 |
| 61 | Laurel Street | 20.00 |
| 61 | Lancaster Street | 11.60 |
| 61 | Hosmer Street | 15.10 |
| Total Chapter 61 | | 216.84 |

| Chapter | Location | No. Of Acres |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------|---------------|
| CHAPTER 61A – AGRICULTURAL | | |
| 61A | Fairbanks Street | 19.08 |
| 61A | Fairbanks Street | 33.00 |
| 61A | Lancaster Street | 7.20 |
| 61A | Prospect Street | 27.33 |
| 61A | Lee Street | 24.49 |
| 61A | Prospect Street | 4.33 |
| 61A | Lee Street | 4.40 |
| 61A | Prospect Street | 17.00 |
| 61A | Prospect Street | 71.85 |
| 61A | Lancaster Street | 1.12 |
| 61A | Lancaster Street | 17.08 |
| 61A | Lancaster Street | 15.00 |
| 61A | Lancaster Street | 5.00 |
| 61A | Lancaster Street | 27.00 |
| 61A | Lancaster Street | 16.00 |
| 61A | Prospect Street | 26.09 |
| Total Chapter 61A | | 315.97 |
| CHAPTER 61B – RECREATIONAL | | |
| 61B | Prospect Street | 44.70 |
| 61B | Prospect Street | 134.64 |
| 61B | Laurel Street | 16.00 |
| 61B | Shrewsbury Street | 4.29 |
| 61B | Shrewsbury Street | 35.78 |
| Total Chapter 61B | | 235.41 |
| Total Chapter Lands | | 768.22 |

DCR has purchased Watershed Preservation Restrictions on a few parcels within West Boylston. A Watershed Preservation Restriction is a deeded sale of the development rights on a parcel of property. The DCR typically pays approximately 80% of the full purchase property value for these rights. This method allows the current owner to retain ownership, but protects the open space by restricting development on the property. Typically, the limitations are that buildings or roadways cannot be constructed on the property and restrictions on other potentially pollution-generating activities are also included. The list of parcels that DCR has purchased CRs is included in the exhibit below.

Exhibit 17: DCR Watershed Preservation Restrictions

| Location | Area (acres) |
|---|--------------|
| Laurel Street | 13.6 |
| Phelps Place | 16.8 |
| Prospect Street | 24.4 |
| Prospect Street | 27.9 |
| Malden Brook Farms, Malden and Lee Street | 37.1 |
| Total | 119.8 |

The only remaining agricultural land in West Boylston under the Massachusetts Department of Agriculture – Agriculture Preservation Restriction (APR) program is at Stones Throw Farm on Prospect Street. Other opportunities to protect open spaces and maintain a rural character in town are through local Zoning and General Bylaws. The Planning Board enacted a Residential Cluster Development bylaw, which allows developers to present an open space (Cluster) plan as well as a conventional plan of development for all residential projects of more than five (5) acres, and permit reduced lot areas if significant open space is permanently protected. In addition, the Conservation Commission has attempted to establish a local wetlands protection bylaw that would provide stronger protection than the state wetland regulations in order to protect isolated wetlands, vernal pools and provide protective buffer zones. Town meeting voted down their proposal in the spring of 2016, but they planned to revise it and resubmit.

Recently a landowner on Shrewsbury Street approached the town to coordinate use of the property as two regulation-sized Little League fields and a 90’ diamond high school baseball field. The Parks Commission is investigating this opportunity and is hopeful that something good will come of it for both parties.

5C. PUBLIC AND NON-PROFIT PARCELS

DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION

Much of the land that is protected within the Town of West Boylston is owned by the Department Of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) due to a very active acquisition program resulting from legislation enacted along with the Watershed Protection Act in 1992. This required approximately \$8 million be budgeted for acquisition of impacted parcels to offset development limitations to property owners. From 1992-2002, DCR purchased 1,244 acres of land in West Boylston, and since 2008 they acquired eight (8) properties, totaling 184.5 acres (see Exhibit 18 below).⁴⁵

Exhibit 18: DCR Acquisitions in West Boylston Since 2008

| Name | Acq FY | Acres | Interest | Location |
|-----------------|--------|-------|----------|-------------------|
| Germain | 2008 | 14.2 | Fee | Fairbanks Street |
| Anthony | 2010 | 3.5 | Fee | off Temple Street |
| Mazzoleni/Smith | 2012 | 22.5 | Fee | Lancaster Street |
| Chapman | 2013 | 2.3 | Fee | North Main Street |
| Pusateri | 2015 | 30.8 | Fee | Lancaster Street |

⁴⁵ Jim French, Land Acquisitions Director, Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), Division of Water Supply Protection, West Boylston, 2016

| Name | Acq FY | Acres | Interest | Location |
|----------------------|--------|--------------|----------|------------------------------|
| CLT Park (Shell Oil) | 2015 | 62.5 | Fee | off Shrewsbury Street |
| Kenneway | 2016 | 36.5 | Fee | Fairbanks Street |
| Weisel | 2016 | 12.2 | Fee | off Maple/Shrewsbury Streets |
| Total | | 184.5 | | |

The DCR-owned property is protected in a manner similar to "Article 97" lands, which means it is difficult to change the ownership or use of DCR land. A petition must be submitted to the Department of Conservation and Recreation, who must approve the change in use or ownership. The DCR Commissioners must then submit a request to the State legislature and obtain a two-thirds majority vote to formally approve the change.

Although the DCR does not pay taxes on the land that it owns, it is required under Chapter 59, S.5G, of Massachusetts General Laws to make Payments-in-Lieu-of-Taxes (PILOT) to the town. The DCR's protected open space land is valued as if it is developable property, though much is considered rear land with some prime lots. That figure is then multiplied by the highest tax rate (the commercial tax rate) to determine the PILOT amount. West Boylston now receives an average of \$170/acre (including water areas) from the DCR for permanently protected open space, or \$240/acre of 'land'. The justification for this low number is that the majority of this land is wetland and backland. Since the town has the same tax rate for both commercial and residential property, the town has not received as much in PILOT payments as it could if it had adopted a tiered tax rate. The PILOT payment to West Boylston was \$670,855.00 in FY2016. This amount reflects the Department of Revenue's policy that land under water has no value.

The DCR developed a Public Access Plan for its lands and updated it again in 2011. The Plan maintains the policy of "limited public access" on DCR lands in West Boylston. Passive recreational uses, such as hiking, picnicking, shore fishing, and cross country skiing, are allowed in all areas of West Boylston, except the restricted access area (approximately 10 acres) within 100 feet of the Quabbin Aqueduct discharge point on the Quinapoxet River. Animals, such as dogs and horses, however, are not allowed access on DCR land, which some residents resent. Direct contact with the Reservoir, including boating, is prohibited. Swimming in the Reservoir or its tributaries is not allowed. Snowmobiles and all-terrain vehicles are not permitted to use DCR lands. The Public Access Plan allowed increased public access along a small portion of the town's western border with Holden where hunting is on DCR land. Mountain biking is not allowed on DCR land in West Boylston. In this area noted as Tributary Headwaters Zone (which is located outside of West Boylston, mainly in Holden and Sterling beyond I-190), canoeing is only allowed on the Quinapoxet River upstream of the River Road dam above the Quabbin Aqueduct.

Today, DCR employs rangers to help enforce its regulations. These rangers have authority to issue fines for a violation of DCR policies. Today, many residents feel that the town should negotiate with the DCR for reasonable and minimally-polluting use of their lands such as athletic fields. If DCR were to totally

prohibit public access to its lands, as Worcester has done on its watershed lands in Holden, West Boylston would be severely impacted. At public hearings on the original DCR Public Access Plan and Updates the town did not offer any input into the Plan.

In the past, the Parks Commission maintained a lease with the DCR to use DCR property located in the Oakdale section of town. This land consisted of the property that contained a men's softball field and the land used for practice fields on the opposite side of Thomas Street. Although the lease had expired in 1992, the Parks Commission continued to maintain these properties and schedule activities there until 2005. At that time, the DCR was pressured by the EPA to limit all activity within 400 feet of the Reservoir, and since no official contact from the Parks Commission had occurred for years, use of this property is no longer allowed.

TOWN-OWNED OPEN SPACE

Municipal lands under active use (schools, town halls, highway department facilities, police/fire facilities, etc.) are not generally considered permanently protected. A public disposition process however, theoretically insures some level of protection. They cannot be sold without due process. The currently-existing 'open spaces owned by the town' includes the Mass Central Rail Trail, the abandoned section of River Road parallel to the Mass Central Rail Trail, the recently-acquired Malden Hill South, the Mixer Property on Prescott Street (which is being considered as the only feasible location for a Senior Center), and the open land along Sterling Street (the site where the Town's Police Station is under construction).

There is very little municipally-owned open space (about 1.5%) and there is significant competition to use the Town-owned land for municipal service buildings, a senior center, and athletic fields. No forum/committee is established to weigh the benefits and drawbacks of development proposals for Town-owned land. It has been a first come-first served process. Protection of the existing municipally-owned open spaces is a high priority of this Open Space and Recreation Plan.

Recently, the 2016 Town Meeting unanimously approved the purchase of 12.51 acres adjacent to the last remaining farm in West Boylston. Located south of the intersection of Goodale and Lee Streets, the wooded hilltop on the West Boylston and Holden line provides opportunities for passive recreation, including camping, hiking, snowshoeing and dog walking, according to the GWLT. The property is adjacent to 100-plus acres protected as working farmland, has pasture views to the south, and forms a corridor with Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation lands to the north.⁴⁶

Most of the property that is owned by the town is specifically managed by the Parks Commission. There is no "Article 97" property in the Town of West Boylston. The schools own the land that is under the

⁴⁶ <http://www.telegram.com/news/20161019/west-boylston-town-meeting-votes-to-protect-12-acres-next-to-last-working-farm>

buildings, an area for future expansion of the high school, and some of the parking necessary for those buildings. There are parcels of Publicly owned land under the West Boylston Municipal Lighting Plant and the West Boylston Housing Authority, but these do not contain “open spaces or recreational” opportunities. One large tract of open space owned by the town is the town’s former landfill, which has been closed and properly capped. Located on the southern part of Route 140, a solar array has been constructed.

HOUSE OF CORRECTIONS AND MUNICIPAL LIGHT PLANT

In addition to DCR, the House of Correction owns about 210 acres or a little over two (2) percent of the land in town. The combination of these two State Agencies’ ownership results in about forty-two percent (42%) of the town. The House of Correction land along Shrewsbury Street is a large tract. The town and the West Boylston Municipal Lighting Plant (WBMLP) obtained approximately 70 acres of this land for municipal use. The WBMLP has transferred control of approximately 36 acres of this land to the Selectmen. The WBMLP had considered relocating to this site, but decided to remain at Crescent and Prospect Streets. The area was then developed as a solar array to generate power for the town. In 2016, the OSIC began investigating options to use a portion of this property as a fenced-in dog park facility. In 2008 the Sheriff announced he was in negotiations to allow the Town to use Jail property for recreational purposes, but no further public information is available to track the status.

FARMLAND

West Boylston contains Chapter 61A farmland, some of which is in the state Department of Agriculture’s farmland program for state/DCR-owned lands. Working in conjunction with the DCR, farmers have been allowed to bid on farming some of these lands that are now owned by the DCR. For example, in 1997 the DCR purchased a 21-acre hay field adjacent to Wachusett Country Club on Prospect Street. This field on Prospect Street had been maintained by Malden Brook Farm as a hay field for years. Like the Smith Farm, it is an example of cooperation between an operating farm, the DCR, and the Massachusetts Department of Agriculture. In 1999 the DCR purchased the Giobellina Farm on Fairbanks Street and about 12 acres of this farm are still in the DCR-Massachusetts Department of Agriculture program.

A complete list of all open space parcels is provided in the [Appendix C](#).

Exhibit 19: Open Spaces by Ownership Type

| Owner | Level of Protection | Acres | Notes |
|---|---------------------|-----------------|--|
| <i>State</i> | | | |
| DCR - Division of Water Supply Protection | Perpetuity | 2,967.25 | Does not include land under water (672.05 acres). |
| Department of Fish and Game | | 4.39 | Poutwater Pond WMA |
| Commonwealth of Massachusetts | | 0.02 | Unknown |
| Worcester County | | 241.40 | Worcester County Jail & House of Correction |
| Total State | | 3,213.07 | |
| <i>Municipal</i> | | | |
| Town of West Boylston | Perpetuity | 67.16 | Includes Kent CR, Town Common x3, Town Wells x4, Wachusett Reservoir x2, Water District Land x2 |
| Town of West Boylston | Limited | 85.67 | Includes the following sites; Goodale Park, Major Edwards School, Mixter Bldg Fields, Mt Vernon Cemetery, T-Ball Field, Town Gravel Bank, West Boylston High School, Woodland Park |
| Town of West Boylston | None | 115.55 | |
| Total Municipal | | 268.38 | |
| Greater Worcester Land Trust | Perpetuity | 1.29 | |
| <i>Private</i> | | | |
| Under Conservation Restriction | Perpetuity | 19.65 | Angell Brook CR, Hillside Village CR |
| Under Agricultural Preservation Restriction | Perpetuity | 79.65 | Malden Brook Farms APR |
| Watershed Preservation Restrictions | Perpetuity | 121.54 | Malden Brook Farms/Tashjian WPR, Whiting WPR, Goodale WPR |
| Cemetery | Limited | 15.27 | Oakdale and St. Luke Cemetery |
| Wachusett Country Club | None | 181.154864 | |
| Woodhaven Campground | None | 52.65 | |
| Worcester Country Club | None | 40.07 | |
| Chapter 61 (Forestry) | Limited | 216.84 | Acre amounts provided by the Town of West Boylston and NOT based on GIS calculations |
| Chapter 61A (Agricultural/Horticultural) | Limited | 315.97 | |
| Chapter 61B (Recreational Property) | Limited | 235.41 | |
| Total Chapter Lands | | 768.22 | |
| Total Private | | 1,279.49 | |
| Total Acres Protected in Perpetuity | | 3,502.36 | |
| Total Acres with Limited Protection | | 869.15 | |
| Total Acres with No Permanent Protection | | 389.42 | |
| Total Acres of all Open Space Types | | 4,760.94 | |
| Notes: Ownership Types based on MassGIS Protected and Recreational Open Space data layer. (09/2016) | | | |

GREATER WORCESTER LAND TRUST

In March 2000, the West Boylston Land Trust was formed to save open space from development and to protect natural resources. It was granted 501c 3 status by the Internal Revenue Service, so that gifts of land or conservation restrictions to the Trust are tax deductible.

The Trust received its first donation of land in West Boylston, a 1.07-acre parcel of woods and an intermittent stream located southwest of 117 Goodale Street, in 2001. The parcel was named Pine Glen and has been used for educational purposes. In 2009 the Greater Worcester Land Trust and the West Boylston Land Trust merged their conservation holdings and membership, and the West Boylston Land Trust dissolved. In 2012, the Greater Worcester Land Trust installed signage at Pine Glen and continues to provide stewardship of that property.

A 5.4-acre lot adjacent to the Town Well on Lee Street was acquired by the town through the coordination provided by the GWLT in 2010. The GWLT holds a conservation restriction on the property to allow public access, but limits activities that could negatively impact the town well.

In the spring of 2016 the Town accepted about 13 acres in the rear portion of 263 Maple Street, which was owned by GWLT for some months to bridge the gap between when a willing donator could transfer and the Town accepted the property.

GWLT again assisted the Town with a gap acquisition and coordination of a 12.5-acre acquisition of land at 353 Goodale Street that abuts the Holden Town line, and is assisting in protecting an adjacent 13 acres of land also owned by Dennis Minnich. October 2016 Town Meeting voted to acquire the property and reimburse GWLT for their efforts.

5D. PARKS AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES AND USAGE

The West Boylston Parks Commission (“the Commission”) is made up of five (5) members whose mission is to manage all of the parks facilities in the town of West Boylston. The Commission was created on March 27, 1893, under Article 15, when the town voted to accept MGL Chapter 45, Section 2 which allows a town to elect a Board of Parks Commissioners. The board members became appointed versus elected in 1995 and in 1988 the members increased to five (5) members from three (3). Each member serves for a term of three (3) years. The mission of the Commission is to lay out and improve public parks and make rules for their use and government. Subject to appropriation, the Commission has the power to conduct park programs and recreation program activities at places other than such public parks. The West Boylston Department of Public Works (DPW) performs the majority of maintenance and construction activities for the parks facilities. In 2006, the Board of Selectmen created the Parks and Recreation Facility Review Committee to assist the Commission with the assessment and planning of parks facilities. In 2010, the Commission hired a part-time Recreation Director to coordinate recreation programs for town residents.

One unique challenge for the Commission is that, unlike most other towns whose school departments control and maintain outdoor facilities for their students and sports teams, the parks facilities provide the only space for West Boylston schools to conduct their outdoor practices, games, recess activities and gym classes. This requires that the Commission work closely with the School Department to ensure that the parks facilities meet the needs of the West Boylston school students and teams in addition to the traditional resident and organized recreational users. Many of the improvements to the parks facilities have been through cooperative efforts with the Boy Scouts and the Eagle Scout Projects. Among these have been the following:

- Recent improvements to the benches in the East Common around the gazebo;
- Installation of picnic tables in the Summer House;
- Handicapped fishing platform and access path along the Quinapoxet River;
- Access stairway and erosion protection along Mass Central Rail Trail to the Quinapoxet River;
- Nature trail beside and behind Major Edward Elementary School;
- Painting the snack shack and refurbishing the bleachers at the all-purpose field;
- Clean up and placement of an informational kiosk at the Old Stone Church.

A major source of funds to maintain, improve and layout the parks facilities is the West Boylston Community Preservation Committee (CPC). The CPC has been an important funding source for several projects including the Goodale Basketball/Tennis Court project, Goodale/Woodland Park fence improvements, Goodale practice field construction, and a Goodale Park Master Plan. (see Exhibit 13)



Pride Park Playground. Photo Credit CMRPC.

The following information regarding the Town of West Boylston's parks and recreational facilities has been compiled from information supplied by the Commission. This information is current as of December 2016, and includes reviews of existing parks facility use request permit forms and on-site inspections of each facility as weather and conditions permitted.

In 2016 the Parks and Recreation Facility Review Committee developed a long-term master plan concept for Goodale Park. The Parks Commission feels that the Goodale Park Master Plan implementation, including phasing, costs, and prioritization of facilities be based on current priorities and realistic financing. It is a guide to be used for decision-making, and should be taken as one of many planning tools that are available to the town to manage parks and recreation facilities. Open space and natural contouring should continue to be a priority throughout any developments at Goodale Park.

Many of the parks and recreation facilities are aging and are in need of major repair and/or complete renovation. The Commission continues to review all the current facilities in West Boylston to determine what improvements and additional facilities will be necessary in the future. The Commission believes that demands for available field space should justify requests for additional fields. Although, at times, parks may appear underutilized, improved management has occurred and there still are high demands that require additional field space.

The following sections outline the current parks and recreation facilities and their respective uses, which are also shown in the exhibit on the following page.

Exhibit 20: Park and Recreation Facilities

| Site Name | Location | Playground | Track | Baseball/ Softball | Tennis | Basketball | Soccer | Football | XC Skiing | Fishing | Boating | Walking Trails | Other |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------|-------|-----------------------|--------|------------|--------|----------|--------------|---------|---------|-------------------|--|
| Goodale Park | 42 Crescent Street | | X | X X | X | X | X | X | | | | | Performance stage |
| Woodland Park | Prospect Street | | | | X | X | X | | | | | | |
| Mixer Park | Prescott Street | | | X | | | X | | X | | | X | |
| Pride Park | Crescent Street | X | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Fire Roads at Wachusett Reservoir | multiple | | | | | | | | X | X | | X | |
| Old Stone Church | 99 Beaman Street | | | | | | | | X | X | | X | Historic Site |
| Mass Central Rail Trail | Parking provided on Thomas St. | | | | | | | | X | X | | X | |
| Three Lily Ponds | Off Sterling Street | | | | | | | | | X | | | |
| Beaman Memorial Library | 8 Newton Street | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Mount Vernon Cemetery | Church Street | | | | | | | | X | | | X | Historic |
| | 187 Prospect Street | | | | | | | | | | | | Golf, wedding location, scenic, and dining |
| St. Luke's Cemetery | Lancaster St. | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | | | | | X | Biking |
| Bigelow Tavern | 65 Worcester Street | | | | | | | | | | | | Historical Society, Museum and Library |
| High Plains Cemetery | 39 High Street | | | | | | | | | | | | Historic |
| Town Commons | 77 Worcester St | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Roads Around Thomas Basin | | | | | | | | | | X | | X | Biking |
| Quinapoxet River | | | | | | | | | | X | | X | Kayaking |
| Stillwater River | | | | | | | | | | X | | | |

Pool

The former pool was opened in the summer of 1953 and was closed due to safety concerns in 2005. It consisted of a 25 meter, 6-lane main pool, and a ten-meter intermediate pool. The pool and ancillary structures were demolished in 2013 and the area was re-graded for additional field space (see “Fields” below). The Commission is working with other boards and groups within town to explore the possibility of building a new pool in West Boylston at some future date.

Playing Fields

- **Goodale Park Game Field: Soccer, Football, Track, School Recess:** The Game (a.k.a. all-purpose) Field is a 120-yard field, across from Major Edwards School and the main use is for football and soccer games but also provides an area for school recess and other community events. The field is encompassed by a 5-lane asphalt track and also houses a discus pad and long jump pit. There is lighting and an underground, timed watering system. The current track is not adequate to host high school level meets as it does not meet the minimum competition standards of the Massachusetts Interscholastic Athletic Association (MIAA). The Commission is looking into options for bringing the track and grandstand area into compliance with local building codes, ADA regulations, and MIAA standards for competition.
- **Goodale Park Townsend Field: Youth baseball, softball and soccer:** Townsend field (a.k.a. Goodale A), which is located in Goodale Park at the northeast corner of the intersection of Goodale and Crescent Streets; and Goodale B field, which is located between Goodale A and the game field, are adjacent non-regulation sized Little League baseball diamonds and fields used by the schools and recreational soccer, baseball and softball groups. It has an underground timed watering system without lights. The Commission will evaluate options for future renovation of this space.
- **Goodale Park Girls Softball Field:** The Girls Softball field, which is located across Crescent Street from Goodale A field and adjacent to Pride Park, is a softball diamond and field with a perimeter fence. It is used by middle/high school, youth and women's softball, and youth soccer. It has an underground timed watering system without lights.
- **Goodale Park High School Baseball Field:** The High School Baseball field is a non-regulation sized baseball field south of the High School and is used for age 13+ baseball games for the school and recreational groups. It has an underground timed watering system without lights. In 2015-16, a new fence was installed in the center and right field area and along the first base line which fully encloses the field. The high school football team uses the space beyond the outfield fence for practices. The Commission will evaluate options for future renovation of this space.

The Commission has recently completed construction of an additional practice field in the area of the former pool complex above the High School baseball field. It was approved at May 2016 town meeting, and is intended to be used primarily for football practices but will also provide additional space for other

games, practices and recreation programs throughout the year. The Parks Commission is also exploring development of another full-sized practice/game field on town-owned land.

- **Woodland Field: soccer, recreation, baseball:** Woodland field is located south of Woodland Street at Shrine Avenue. The field is a full-sized soccer field and is used by school and recreational soccer groups and youth baseball. It has an underground timed watering system without lights. The field is inadequately drained and will require some renovation to improve its playability following inclement weather. The Commission will evaluate options for future renovation of this space.
- **Mixer Park Field: Youth softball, baseball and soccer:** Mixer field is a youth softball-sized diamond with large outfield area located off Prescott Street and is used by youth baseball, softball and youth soccer. It has no lights and no underground timed watering system. The field is undersized for soccer and inadequately drained and will require some renovation to improve its playability following inclement weather. The Commission will evaluate options for future renovation of this space.

Basketball Courts

- **Goodale Park Courts:** The courts were reconstructed in 2011. There are two (2) full size courts. Lights are available for the courts. The Commission will evaluate options for future renovation of this space.
- **Woodland Park Courts:** There is one undersized court in poor condition and not adequate for competition. The Commission will evaluate options for future renovation of this space.



Basketball Courts at Goodale Park. Photo Credit CMRPC.

Tennis Courts

- **Goodale Park:** The courts were reconstructed in 2011. There are three (3) full courts with lights.
- **Woodland Park:** There are two full courts without lights in poor condition and have limitations competition.

Trails

- **Mass Central Rail Trail:** The Mass Central Rail Trail is a section of the Wachusett Greenways trail system that runs from Holden to Sterling, through West Boylston. Currently, a 1.5-mile section of the trail has been completed from the Holden Town Line, to the intersection of Beaman and Thomas Streets. There are plans to extend the Mass Central Rail Trail another mile to Sterling along Pleasant Street. The OSIC hopes to partner with Wachusett Greenways and the DCR to extend the Rail Trail east from Thomas Street to Pleasant Street and to Bean Road, Sterling.
- **Walking trails:** Every day townspeople and visitors utilize the sidewalks and streets surrounding the schools and the Thomas Basin, and the Central Street, Newton Street areas. These areas provide exercise loops of varying lengths and difficulty.

Playgrounds

Pride Park is a playground located between the Major Edwards Elementary school and the Girls Softball field. It is intended for use by children under the age of 12 and their families and it also provides recess space during the school day for the students at Major Edwards Elementary School.

Commons

- **Center Common** is at the Town Center and contains the current flagpole and veteran's memorial monuments.
- **West Common** is located west of Route 12/140 at the Town Center and has an underground watering system.
- **East Common** is located at the Town Center off Worcester St., east of Routes 12/140. It has a bandstand/gazebo and memorial benches.

Seasonal Facilities

- **Snack Shacks:** There are three snack shacks located in the Goodale Park area which are used during the summer months. One snack shack is located at Townsend Field (Goodale A) and is operated by the Little League. The second and one is located at the girls' softball field. The third snack shack is located at the game field and track area and is operated during High School football soccer games, and youth soccer and youth football events.
- **Summer House:** Located on the western edge of the Goodale basketball and tennis courts, the Summer House is a covered picnic area with several picnic tables overlooking Goodale Park and is used during the warmer months. The house was constructed over 50 years ago and the roof was re-shingled in 2013.
- **Outdoor Concert Stage:** Located at Goodale Park at the southwest corner of the game field, the concert stage is elevated above the field level and it has a concrete floor with metal staging. The venue is used during the summer months for concerts and other events.

- **Outdoor Hockey Rinks:** Located on the East and West common areas the two temporary outdoor rinks are constructed by the DPW and filled with water to provide recreational skating areas during the winter months.

Facility Use

Coordinating the usage of the fields and other parks facilities is challenging because there are often too many requests for too few facilities. An estimated 1,250 games and practices are conducted on parks facilities by approximately 1,000 permitted users annually not including recreation programs. The parks facility use process is managed by the Commission using a field use request form requiring approval from the Commission and sign-offs from the Chief of Police and DPW Director. A schedule of regular and one-time users of the parks and recreational facilities is kept by the Commission and is posted seasonally on the town website. This is done to help coordinate field usage and to make facility use and availability public for the benefit of the residents of West Boylston, in-town recreational groups, and outside permitted users. The following is a summary of the normal annual parks facility usage by the school and recreational groups in town.

West Boylston Public Schools

The West Boylston Middle/High School and Major Edwards Elementary School are major users of the facilities at Goodale Park, Woodland Park and Pride Park. They are given priority usage by the Commission since the School Department has no outdoor sports and recreational facilities of their own. Their use is mainly during the school day for gym classes and recess and after school for sports practices and games. The use by the schools usually ends around 5:00-6:00pm which allows other in-town recreational users to conduct regular practices and games. During the 180-day school year the parks facilities adjacent to both schools are used during school hours for recess time and gym classes for the student population.

During the summer, Junior Varsity and Varsity football as well as girl's Middle School, Junior Varsity, and Varsity Soccer use the following fields: Goodale A/B, Goodale Game field, Woodland field. There are approximately 125 players, 300 games and practices per season. During the spring, junior varsity and varsity Softball, junior varsity and varsity baseball, and boys' and girls' varsity Tennis utilize the following fields: Goodale A/B field, Girls' Softball field, HS Baseball field, and Goodale Tennis courts. There are approximately 125 players, and 300 games and practices per season.

Youth Soccer

Youth Soccer season runs from August through October for boys and girls aged 5-18, and is overseen by the West Boylston Youth Soccer Association (WBYSA). Youth Soccer uses the parks facilities mainly in the fall. Youth Soccer also uses the park facilities less frequently in the spring and summer for occasional soccer clinics, practices and events.

During the summer and fall Goodale Fields A/B, and the Goodale Game field are used by the girls' softball. Mixer field, and Woodland field are used for soccer. There are 200 players, 200 games and

practices per season. During the spring, Woodland field is used by about 40 players with 25 practices per season.

Youth Baseball

Youth Baseball season lasts from April through July for boys aged 4-12 and is overseen by the West Boylston Little League (WBLL). Youth Baseball uses the parks facilities mainly in the spring and early summer. Youth Baseball also uses the park facilities less frequently in the late summer and fall for occasional baseball clinics, practices and events. The use of these fields is as follows:

- SPRING: Goodale A/B field, Mixer field, Woodland field; 150 players, 250 practices and games per season
- SUMMER/FALL: Goodale A/B field; 40 players, 25 practices per season

Women's Adult and Girls Youth Softball

Youth and Adult Softball seasons run from April through August for girls aged 5-12 and adult women. Youth softball is overseen by West Boylston Youth Softball (WBYSB) and adult softball by West Boylston Woman's Softball (WBWS). Youth Softball uses the parks facilities in the spring and early summer. Women's Softball uses the park facilities Wednesday evenings from June through August for games only. Use is as follows:

- SPRING/SUMMER: Goodale A/B field, Girls' Softball field, Mixer field; 150 players, 150 games and practices per season

AAU baseball, Sr. Babe Ruth

AAU Baseball and Senior Babe Ruth Baseball seasons run from April through July for boys aged 12-18. AAU Baseball is run by the Central Mass Spartans club and Senior Babe Ruth Baseball by West Boylston Senior Babe Ruth Baseball (WBSBR). Use of the parks facilities by these groups is mainly for baseball games on the High School baseball field. Use is as follows:

- SPRING/SUMMER: HS Baseball field; 60 players, 25 games per season

PARKS AND RECREATION PROGRAMS

The Parks Commission offers recreation programs including summer basketball, tennis, golf, youth soccer, an Easter Egg Hunt, days of play, half-day programs, and more. A fee is charged to support the programs. Prior to the loss of the town pool, the Commission ran a popular Summer Recreation Program over the course of several weeks during the summer. Activities offered included tennis, arts and crafts, swimming and field sports. Facilities used were the tennis courts, basketball courts, fields adjacent to the High School and indoor high school facilities. The Commission is considering options for rebuilding the town pool so that a full Summer Recreation Program may be offered again in the future.

The Parks Commission established a part-time paid position for a Recreation Program Director in 2013. The programs were well-received by Townspeople and the program grew steadily. Recently the Director resigned and the Parks Commission has been asked to fill the position so that these and other programs might continue. This position could provide many different benefits to the community and Commission.

PASSIVE RECREATION/OTHER USES

The greatest resources for exercise in town are the sidewalks and wide shoulders of the roadways where there are walkers/joggers/cyclists enjoying access year-round. Walkers and joggers utilize the Goodale Park game complex which includes a 440-yard track. At certain times of the year the track area is lit so that walkers/joggers of all ages are able to use the track at night. The Mass Central Rail Trail is used by many runners, walkers, cyclists and cross-country skiers and is open year-round. The West Boylston section of the trail allows dog-walking and there are occasional events hosted by the Wachusett Greenways organization as well as other user groups. There are extensive hiking/cross country skiing trails throughout the DCR-owned properties in town. These are used by many residents as well as bringing visitors into town.

Other events take place on the Parks Facilities throughout town in all the Parks Facilities throughout all seasons of the year. Groups such as the West Boylston Arts Foundation (WBAF), PTA, Boy/Girl Scouts, It's a Celebration Committee, West Best, West Boylston Council on Aging (COA), and the Beaman Oak Club among others have hosted regular events in the parks. Events conducted on the facilities include concerts, festivals, weddings, ceremonies, graduations, parades, skating, and many non-profit charitable events. Many residents and visitors also make use of the parks in town on a daily basis. The Parks Facilities are a valuable resource for the residents and visitors of the town and they remain some of the key features that enhance the quality of life for those who live, work and play in the town of West Boylston.

5E. PARKS AND RECREATIONAL FACILITY HANDICAPPED ACCESS EVALUATION

An ADA evaluation was conducted as part of this Open Space and Recreation Plan Update for the Parks Commission. The work was completed by the Building Inspector. Forms are included in [Appendix G](#). The Handicapped Access Survey has been completed by in coordination with the Town Administrator's Office and the Building Inspector, as noted above; with the assistance of the Parks Department for all facilities under their control. In addition, residents with disabilities assisted with the inventory by reviewing all forms as produced by the Building Inspector, and visited the facilities to confirm conditions. The Conservation Commission has no recreational facilities and at this time runs no programs that are subject to this regulation. Both the Parks Commission and the Conservation Commission meet at the Town Offices, located at 127 Hartwell Street, which is handicap accessible.

6. COMMUNITY VISION

6A. COMMUNITY CONDITIONS

The West Boylston OSIC believes that a balanced approach to open space and recreation is needed to provide safe opportunities for all types of recreation, to provide a safe and adequate water supply, to enhance the Town character, and to support opportunities for agriculture and wildlife to flourish in a fiscally-responsible manner. Preservation of open space and recreation facilities benefit the citizens by providing opportunities for passive and active recreation which keeps citizens vibrant, active and engaged in the community. Open space also combats air pollution, attenuates noise, prevents erosion, and provides protection from storm damage and flooding. Furthermore, one of the most effective ways to help protect human health and safety is through protection of open space.

Strategically-located open space protects surface and ground water resources by allowing naturally-occurring systems to provide water quality treatment and enhanced recharge to the water supply, which is significantly less expensive than constructing and operating a local water treatment plant. Open space also provides a significant buffer of protection in the event of an accidental or intentional release of a contaminant that could get into the town water supplies.

The Town's character is closely associated with the amount, location, and condition of the open space within its boundaries. It provides the backdrop of our historic villages and residential clusters that are threatened by suburban style sprawl. Open spaces and athletic competitions within our community are the things that visitors remember and want to return to and share with others, which provides opportunities to build small businesses to cater to these visitors.

The benefit of agricultural activity in town is associated with the rural characteristics that are desirable locations to live, but are valued for their scenic beauty and for their economic potential. The rising demand for locally-grown food provides significant opportunities to provide for West Boylston as well as the Worcester markets. Fields, forests and their wildlife habitats are becoming fragmented across the state. Diversity and variety of wildlife habitat are the strong points of the current environment of West Boylston. Wildlife habitat includes upland forested areas, many different wetland types, early successional brushy fields, and active agricultural fields. All these provide high quality habitats for wildlife, which in turn benefit West Boylston through our enjoyment of them, and in providing opportunities for financial gain from others who similarly would like to enjoy them.

6B. DESCRIPTION OF PROCESS

The West Boylston Open Space Implementation Committee (OSIC) requested professional assistance to prepare the OSRP Update. Authorized and executed by the Board of Selectmen, a contract with CMRPC was established and work began. In the spring/summer of 2016, the West Boylston OSIC developed and administered a survey to assess the needs and concerns of citizens regarding these issues. The survey was adapted from successful surveys used by other communities in their open space and recreation planning processes, and tailored specifically to West Boylston. The survey was distributed in hard copy

to multiple locations and was available electronically on the Town's website. The survey summary is presented in *Appendix D*.

The Committee worked closely with the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) on the development, distribution and collection of residential surveys, facilitated a community forum in the summer of 2016, reviewed and commented on chapter drafts, and synthesized the wealth of information in the context of their collective experience and developed a shared set of goals, objectives, and action steps. The Committee publicized and organized a Public Forum at the West Boylston Town Hall in the summer of 2016 to discuss the draft survey results and to obtain additional feedback from audience members. A second Public Forum was held at the Town Hall to review the final draft of the OSRP on February 28, 2017, and the comments/suggestions made during this stage were considered and incorporated where appropriate.

6C. STATEMENT OF OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION GOALS

West Boylston has a wealth of open space surrounding the Wachusett Reservoir, but it is owned and managed by the DCR. Many recreational uses are restricted by the DCR. Most of the town's unrestricted recreational areas are in constant demand, currently overused, and with the projected population growth, the burden on these areas will increase. The Town requires a plan that addresses the needs for increased recreational space, as well as recreational areas and activities that are accessible to the elderly and disabled. Cost-efficient recreational opportunities should be available to town residents of all ages and capabilities. This Plan sets goals to improve opportunities for recreation for all ages and abilities; and to preserve the aesthetics of the Town's environment and West Boylston's small town character, while also preserving the purity of the Town's water supply.

Although the DCR has acquired forty percent (40%) of the land in West Boylston and some people resent the loss of property taxes this has meant for the town, most of West Boylston's residents seem to appreciate having this open space. They would also like increased access rights to the DCR's vast land holdings and increased annual Payment In-lieu-of Taxes (PILOT) payments. The goals for this update are to protect the drinking water supplies, to improve coordination among town officials and the community, to preserve existing open spaces and recreational facilities, to provide new and improved recreational spaces, to protect additional open spaces, to promote expanded agriculture, and to protect wildlife habitat.

7. ANALYSIS OF NEEDS

The Town of West Boylston has abundant natural open spaces where walking and hiking is allowed, but these are mostly accessed by automobile. Improved sidewalks and pathways were desired. The roadway network is utilized by multiple bicycle rider groups and provides some reasonably good opportunities for road bicycling. The comments received in the survey indicated that the greatest demand from town residents is for swimming facilities, as well as increased facilities and activities for the elderly and the very young.

7A. REGIONAL RESOURCE PROTECTION NEEDS

The regional needs assessment compiled by the Department of Conservation Services in 2006 was reviewed for regional needs. Analysis at the regional level is required to consider when applying for grants under the Land and Water Conservation Fund and state Self-Help and Urban Self-Help programs. When asked, what new facilities would most benefit them, residents of the Central Region showed the highest interest in facilities for walking (16.4%), swimming (17.0%), hiking (14.4%, the strongest interest in the state), road biking (12.1%), and playground activity (10.2%).⁴⁷ These data from the Central Region indicate similarities to those presented by local residents in the areas of swimming, safe walking and play grounds. However, local residents did not necessarily indicate the need for more hiking areas. The miles of trails at the Wachusett Reservoir and along the Mass Central Rail Trail provide exceptional walking and hiking opportunities, though walking access to these would be greatly appreciated.

The preferences noted in the Massachusetts Outdoors 2006 report for Central Region residents regarding new funding initiatives showed strongest support for maintaining existing facilities (93.9%), followed by the acquisition of new recreation areas (81.1%), and support of additional park staff (78.8%) ranked high as well. The maintenance and acquisition preferences agree with feedback from local residents as well.

We also reviewed the Massachusetts Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP), completed in 2012 by the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs Submitted to the National Park Service Land & Water Conservation Fund. The four (4) main goals are:

1. Increase the availability of all types of trails for recreation.
2. Increase the availability of water-based recreation.
3. Invest in recreation and conservation areas that are close to home for short visits.
4. Invest in racially, economically, and age diverse neighborhoods given their projected increase in participation in outdoor recreation.

⁴⁷ Massachusetts Department of Conservation Services, Massachusetts Outdoors 2006, Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP).

Similarly, this Plan seeks to invest in recreation and conservation areas that are closer to home and to create recreation areas that are suitable for a more racially, economically, and age diverse population, while also increasing the ability of all types of trails for recreation. Residents of West Boylston would also like water-based recreation, since, this is strictly prohibited at the Wachusett Reservoir.

7B. SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY'S NEEDS

The Town of West Boylston has abundant natural open spaces where walking and hiking is allowed, but they typically need to drive to access these areas. The roadway network provides reasonably good opportunities in some locations, while dangerous conditions exist along some main access routes for road bicycling. The comments received at the Public Forums and in the survey indicated that the greatest demand is for swimming facilities, a community/recreation center, bicycle trails/access, as well as increased facilities and activities for the elderly and the very young.

The Public Forum on March 21, 2017 provided comments and feedback clearly stating that sidewalks and walking paths were in greatest demand. Many of the noted locations will become part of the 2017 Complete Street Prioritization Plan and be implemented through that process, which is partially funded by MassDOT. The noted priorities for sidewalk improvements are to provide safe pedestrian access to town schools and recreation areas, retail sites, and connections to low income and elderly residential communities.

The comments and discussions of the Goodale Park Master Plan (GPMP) raised some concerns that need to be evaluated by the Commission before changes in this area proceed, including:

1. Do the deeds for the properties making up Goodale Park limit future use of some areas to only natural park uses for some period of time?
2. Can the facilities be rearranged to fit into the slope on the land to save the extensive earth moving costs?
3. Can alternative renovations of the existing facilities be accomplished to meet the minimum needs of the community.
4. Can the facilities be scaled back to meet the minimum needs in West Boylston and save on costs?
5. Can one or more of the facilities proposed for Goodale Park be located on other land in town to provide space for existing facility renovation? (i.e. locate the swimming facility at Mixer land sooner than 10 years, or investigate locating Little League baseball fields on private land offered by a landowner on Shrewsbury Street in town at a Planning Board meeting in the fall of 2016.)
6. Incorporate some athletic field development/upgrades to other town projects, specifically the Senior Center, where a community center could be incorporated.

West Boylston residents enjoy open space and recreation resources. As previously mentioned, CMRPC and the OSIC implemented a survey to better understand the needs of residents related to open space and recreation. The full survey summary is included in [Appendix D](#). Questions 8 through 12 of the 2016 survey gauged resident sentiment with regard to the recreational opportunities. Survey respondents

noted their top five (5) recreational needs in West Boylston are: swimming pool, a community recreation center/building, bike trails/paths, local neighborhood parks, and a large park with many facilities. These are based on the total number of votes that each element received, on a scale of 1 to 5, where One (1) means most needed and Five (5) means fifth most needed. The request for a swimming pool was by far the most needed facility with a total of 57 “votes” and 61% of those “votes” were for the swimming pool as the “most needed” facility.



Track at Goodale Park. Photo Credit CMRPC.

The majorities of respondents (58%) were very satisfied or satisfied with the recreation spaces and facilities in West Boylston for individuals under age 18 to play and recreate in. Less respondents (42%) were very satisfied or satisfied with the recreation spaces and facilities in West Boylston for residents over the age of 18 to play and recreate in. Of the respondents, 53% were very satisfied or satisfied with the conditions of these facilities. There was a majority of respondents (59%) who felt neutral about the availability of spaces for adult sport programs.

While West Boylston has an abundance of recreational resources, there were a few hidden gems that many residents had not heard about, such as the many bicycle routes on the roads around the Wachusett Reservoir, and hiking/cross country skiing trails at the Reservoir.

A total of 70% of individuals agree that access to West Boylston’s open space by walking or biking is important (20%), very important (28.6%), or incredibly important (21.4%). Many steps can be taken to create more walkable or bike friendly routes around town. Formalizing and mapping trails, bike routes, paths, and safe sidewalks is one planned step in encouraging more walkability within West Boylston. Survey results also highlighted the desire for recreation facilities for seniors and to provide safe walking opportunities for seniors and youngsters. Implementation of a comprehensive Complete Streets policy

that prioritizes the work needed to connect and repair the existing sidewalks, as well as construct new sidewalks is considered important.

As of December 2016, there were 567 registered dogs in West Boylston. The town could greatly benefit from a dog park that would essentially provide a place for the members of the West Boylston community to meet while their dogs play, and promote community involvement as a potential Boy Scout or Girl Scout merit badge project. In the 2016 OSRP survey, residents expressed interest in a dog park in town. This would take pressure off of the West Boylston section of the Mass Central Rail Trail, which is currently where many residents walk their dogs. DCR prohibits dogs from their properties and pet owners are using the Rail Trail and recently fenced-in areas of the baseball fields, softball field, and tennis courts to allow their dogs to run. Unfortunately, these owners are not picking up the feces, which children are contacting and other users are forced to address. The OSIC identified three potential locations for a dog park: a 3.5-acre DCR property on the south side of Goodale Street almost across from Phelps Place, a property located at 19 Crescent Street, or the north side of Tivnan Drive. The OSIC formed a dog park subcommittee, and have since been approved by the West Boylston Board of Selectmen to contact the Stanton Foundation for dog park grant information and funding.

Next steps on this project will be to review the proposed guidelines, prepare the initial proposal, and apply for a design grant from the Stanton Foundation to present to the Board of Selectmen for consideration to move forward with the project.

ADDITIONAL IDEAS RAISED DURING PLAN PREPARATION

The following ideas were identified through conversations with local residents, committees and officials:

- A Visitors Center in town, possibly in cooperation with DCR at their 180 Beaman Street office, or part of the Historic Society building on Worcester Street.
- Improvements to the trailhead parking at the Mass Central Rail Trail and the addition of interpretive trails along the Rail Trail to old historic sites and extension of the trail to Sterling.
- Participation in the Complete Streets Program to ensure improved bicycle/pedestrian access along Thomas Street, Temple Street, Crescent Street, and Route 12 at the railroad underpass.
- Identification of the process to more expeditiously utilize Community Preservation Act funds to complete 'due diligence' in preparation for Town Meeting action to purchase development restrictions or fee title of properties.

Exhibit 21 is a chart of recreation facilities available to West Boylston residents and the typical populations needed to establish reasonable demand for the services.

Exhibit 21: Recreation Needs and Related Facilities

| Activity/ Facility | Variations | No. Of Units Per Population | Location | Facility |
|---|--------------------------------|---|--|---|
| Badminton | | 1 per 5000 | N/A | |
| Basketball | Youth | 1 per 5,000 | | |
| | High School | | High School | 1 indoor gym |
| | Youth League | | Goodale park, Elementary school, Hillside Gym (Boylston) | 2 outdoor courts, 2 indoor gyms |
| Handball Racquetball | | 1 per 20,000 | N/A | |
| Ice Hockey | Indoor | 1 per 100,000 depends on climate | Assabet HS Co-op, Marlborough, Worcester, Auburn | New England Sports Ctr (5 rinks), Navin Arena (1 rink), Buffone Arena (1 rink), Horgan Arena (1 rink) |
| | Outdoor | | Common (west) | 1 small rink |
| Tennis | | 1 court per 2,000 | Goodale Park, Woodland Park | 3 competition courts, 2 practice courts |
| Volleyball | | 1 per 50,00 | N/A | |
| Baseball | Official | 2 per 5000 | Goodale park | 1 diamond |
| | Little League | Lighted 1 per 30,000 | Goodale park, Mixer field | 2 diamonds 1 diamond |
| Field Hockey | | 1 per 20,000 | Tahanto HS Co-op | |
| Football | | 1 per 10,000 | Goodale park | 1 HS game field, 1 practice field |
| Soccer | | 1 per 5,000 | Goodale park, Woodland park, Mixer | 1 HS game field, 1 large practice/game field, 1 small practice/game field |
| Golf-driving Range | | 1 per 10,000 | Wachusett CC, Cyprian Keyes GC | 2 driving ranges |
| ¼ Mile Running Track | | 1 per 20,000 | Goodale park | |
| Softball | | 1 per 5,000 (if also used for youth baseball) | Goodale park | 1 softball, 2 shared baseball diamonds |
| Multiple Recreation Courts | basketball, volleyball, tennis | 1 per 10,000 | Goodale park, Woodland park | 3 basketball, 5 tennis courts |
| Trails | | 1 system per region | Oakdale | Mass Central Rail trail |
| Archery Range | | 1 per 50,000 | N/A | |
| Combination Skeet & Trap Field | | 2 per 5,000 | N/A | |
| Golf | 9-hole par 3 | No data | Cyprian Keyes GC | 9-hole par 3 course |
| | 18-hole standard | | Wachusett CC | 18-hole par 72 course |
| | | | Cyprian Keyes GC | 18-hole par 72 course |
| | 9-standard | | Worcester CC | 18-hole par 72 course |
| Swimming Pools | | 1 per 20,000 | Clinton | DCR-managed summer pool |
| | | | Holden | Town summer pool |
| | | | Worcester YMCA | Private year-round pool |
| Beach Areas | | 15 min. travel time | Sterling | Town summer beach |
| | | 30 min. travel time | Worcester - Quinsigamond | DCR-managed summer beach |

8. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

In developing the goals and objectives of this Plan, the Committee has reviewed the following:

- Previous Open Space and Recreation Plans (OSRPs) prepared for the Town of West Boylston;
- The OSRP research data and maps included in this plan;
- The 2016 Survey Results and the Public Forum comments;
- The 2005 West Boylston Master Plan;
- Other related plans previously produced; and
- OSRPs from other communities

As described in preceding sections, the Town of West Boylston's needs identified in this Plan can be characterized into the following categories:

Goal I: Protect and Preserve Open Space Parcels

Objectives

- A. Preserve and maintain existing town-owned open space, especially in the densely-developed southern area of town.
- B. Support efforts for non-municipal (private and state) landowners to retain open space or share use of their property and protect open space.
- C. Acquire and/or protect additional town-owned open space.
- D. Educate town officials and citizens about opportunities and benefits of open space.
- E. Encourage use of open space for agriculture, where appropriate and realistic.
- F. Conduct sound management of open space land.

Goal II: Maintain and Enhance the Town's Recreation Facilities

Objectives

- A. Expand/increase the available recreation facilities in town including areas for swimming and picnicking;
- B. Preserve, maintain and improve existing town-owned passive and active recreational facilities;
- C. Upgrade existing recreational facilities to meet Americans with Disabilities Act requirements;
- D. Expand amount of gym and indoor recreational space; and
- E. Increase parking and provide sanitary facilities at high usage recreation sites.

Goal III: Protect and Enhance Natural Resources

Objectives

- A. Protect town water supply.
- B. Protect streams and ponds in town; and
- C. Protect special wildlife and botanical areas in town

Goal IV: Plan and Develop Greenways and Walkable Connections in the Town with Consideration to Appropriate Regional Connections

Objectives

- A. Implement the Complete Streets Program.
- B. Increase mapped paths, trails, bike and pedestrian routes.
- D. Launch efforts with neighboring towns to develop greenway connections.
- E. Provide safe pedestrian access to open spaces and recreation areas.
- F. Incorporate historic preservation into planning efforts.

Goal V: Conduct Sound Management of Open Space and Recreation Facilities

Objectives

- A. Coordinate town efforts to maintain, improve, and expand recreation facilities in town.
- B. Communicate with DCR and House of Corrections regarding opportunities on their properties and increasing revenue.
- C. Educate town officials and citizens about opportunities and benefits of open space.
- D. Implement and enforce land use regulations professionally and consistently.
- E. Utilize available Community Preservation funds equitably and responsibly.
- F. Ensure access, usage, and fair compensation of state and quasi-state property in town.

9. SEVEN YEAR ACTION PLAN

The following is an Action Plan that will guide the Town’s activities and priorities for the next seven (7) years. For each goal, there are several actions that were identified to accomplish the goal. Each action has a responsible entity identified, resources, and priority and timing. The first table list 13 actions that are geographically located on Map 10: Action Plan Map. Appendix F provides the Town with a listing of some grants and resources that may be useful in implementing these actions.

| Action ID | Property | Action Description |
|-----------|-----------------------------------|---|
| 1 | Goodale Park | Improve substandard track/baseball facilities & evaluate swimming facility/location. |
| 2 | 137 Shrewsbury Street | Discuss town baseball fields opportunity |
| 3 | 264 Prospect Street | Acquire 7.3 acres adjacent to Town Well |
| 4 | Town-wide | Hire a Director of Recreation Programs |
| 5 | Town-wide | Improve elder/universal access to fields |
| 6 | 19 Tivnan Drive | Investigate fenced dog park |
| 7 | 277 Sterling Street | Acquire 5 acres for athletic fields |
| 8 | Crescent, Goodale, Newton Streets | Improve sidewalks and bicycle access near Town schools, Apportion Chapter 90 money annually |
| 9 | Route 140 | Implement Complete Streets Policy |
| 10 | 120 Prescott Street | Insure playing field construction is included in Senior Center Development |
| 11 | Large Lots | Encourage landowner donations/deed restrictions to limit development |
| 12 | 19 Crescent Street | Acquire for Municipal Use/Senior Center/Community Center |
| 13 | 18 Malden Street | Protected open space with buffer from future school development |

Exhibit 22: Seven Year Action Plan

Abbreviations

- BOS: Board of Selectmen
- ConCom: Conservation Commission
- OSIC: Open Space Implementation Committee
- CPC: Community Preservation Committee
- DPW: Department of Public Works
- GWLT: Greater Worcester Land Trust

| Goals | Action | Responsible Entities | Resources | Priority/ Timing |
|--|--|---|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Goal I: Protect, Preserve and Expand Open Space Parcels | | | | |
| A. Preserve and maintain existing town-owned open space, especially in the densely-developed southern area of town. B. Support efforts for non-municipal (private and state) landowners to retain open space or share use of their property and protect open space. C. Acquire and/or protect additional town-owned open space. D. Educate town officials and citizens about opportunities and benefits of open space. E. Encourage use of open space for agriculture, where appropriate and realistic. F. Conduct sound management of open space land. | | | | |
| A | Provide adequate maintenance of the town’s open spaces, streams, and special habitats. | Parks Commission and DPW | Time & resources | Year 1-7 |
| C | Maintain a prioritized inventory of available land for town acquisition for open space and/or recreation. | The Parks Commission, Community Preservation Committee, OSIC | Time & resources | Year 1 |
| A | Coordinate with the GWLT to acquire desirable parcels and/or development rights so they remain as open space and to provide linkages to other facilities. | Parks Commission, Town Administrator, OSIC, CPC, ConCom | Time & resources | Year 1 |
| B | Partner with DCR and state legislature to ensure local access to DCR-owned parcels for passive recreation and, where suitable, for active recreation. | OSIC, Town Administrator, town residents and officials | Time & resources | Year 1 |
| C | Acquire desirable parcels or create development restrictions to keep parcels in undeveloped condition. | GWLT, DCR, and WPRs | Time & resources, CPA | Year 1 |
| C | Establish a protocol to contact land owners to discuss selling or donating land to the town, and advertise/market this opportunity. | OSIC, GWLT | Time & resources | Year 1 |
| A | Protect areas of open spaces in town to the maximum extent and provide innovative programs to allow private land owners to preserve open space. | OSIC, Parks Commission, Parks Facilities Committee | Time & resources | Year 1 |
| A | Encourage assistance from community organizations to maintain and enhance Town facilities, such as Scouting organizations and the Garden Clubs. | Parks Commission, Town Administrator | Time & resources | Year 1 |
| A | Preserve small town character through development controls and maintenance of minimum area requirements in zoning to keep undeveloped areas within developed sections of town open. | Planning Board, BOS | Time & resources | Year 1 |
| C | Establish a long-range plan to ensure the preservation and encourage additional lands under Chapters 61, 61A, and 61B and contact land-owners who could potentially benefit from the Chapter 61 Program, and assist them in filing for the benefits of Chapter 61, 61A, and 61B. | OSIC, Board of Assessors, Agricultural Commission, The Town Administrator | Time & resources | Year 1 |
| A, C | Commit to preserve and expand the current amount of town-owned open space land. | BOS | Time & resources | Year 1 |
| D | Educate town officials, citizens and students about tax benefits, availability and location of open space through use of the Town website, create brochures, and other educational materials and include in Town reports and electric bills. | OSIC, WBLT DPW, Parks Commission | Time & resources | Year 1 |

| Goals | Action | Responsible Entities | Resources | Priority/ Timing |
|--|--|---------------------------------------|--|---------------------|
| C | Establish a mechanism to minimize tax valuation similar to those within the Chapter Lands program for lots where the owner commits and documents a deed restriction noting the limitation that the land will not be developed and will remain as open space. | BOS, OSIC, Board of Assessors | Time & resources | Year 1 |
| C | Compile and distribute flyers to educate and encourage private landowners to donate all or portions of their property to the town or GWLT. | OSIC, GWLT | Time & resources | Year 1-5 |
| E | Implement cooperative college internship programs to increase usage and/or yields of products for sale for private lands or DCR lands. | Agricultural Commission | Time & resources | Year 1-7 |
| E | Review and update "Right to Farm" bylaw, if needed. | Agricultural Commission | Time & resources | Year 1 |
| E | Coordinate with USDA, DCR, and area college resources to encourage utilization of land for agricultural uses. | Agricultural Commission | Time & resources | Year 1 |
| F | Include all applicable boards and commissions in discussions regarding open space land use decisions. | PB, BOS, CC, Town Administrator, OSIC | Time & resources | Year 1 |
| A, C, F | Review and update policy for Right of First Refusal action (ROFR). | BOS, Town Administrator | Time & resources | Year 1 |
| F | Draft and implement a plan to control invasive species on open spaces that involves citizens and groups/interns/students, with town promotion and education. | OSIC, local citizens | Time | Year 1-3 |
| Goal II: Maintain, enhance and Expand the Town's Recreation Facilities | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Expand/increase the available recreation facilities in town including areas for swimming and picnicking; B. Preserve, maintain and improve existing town-owned passive and active recreational facilities; C. Upgrade existing recreational facilities to meet Americans with Disabilities Act requirements; D. Expand amount of gym and indoor recreational space; and E. Increase parking and provide sanitary facilities at high usage recreation sites. | | | | |
| B | Provide additional fields to supplement high use fields including the planned practice football field. | Parks Commission | TBD | TBD |
| A | Compose an inventory of available open spaces for consideration of town recreation facilities and develop GIS Layer as well as spreadsheet with locations of all recreational facilities. Develop maps, pamphlets, and informational packets about town-owned open space and recreational facilities, and develop an outreach campaign for distribution to the public. | Parks Commission, OSIC, CMRPC, DPW | Time & resources, DLTA | Year 1 |
| A | Coordinate with landowners willing to allow town use of their property for recreation facilities, i.e. baseball fields off Shrewsbury Street. | Parks Commission, OSIC. Selectmen | Time & resources | Year 1 |
| A, D | Increase opportunities for recreation on town-owned land, especially for very young children (youth) and the elderly/seniors (Including Woodland Park and in the north end of town). | The Parks Commission | MA Self-Help Funding | Year 1 |
| A | Investigate alternatives for swimming opportunities for town residents and increase outreach regarding free open and public spaces in the interim, such as the pool in Clinton. Secure funding to create a new or expanded town pool facility. | The Parks Commission | State and Federal Funding, Private Partnership | Year 1-4 |
| B | Establish and publish a protocol for maintenance and operations of all Town parks and establish adequate funding for maintenance needs. | Parks Commission, DPW, BOS | Time & resources | Year 1 |
| B | Edit Town Zoning Bylaws to expand the existing residential screening bylaw to require a Buffer Zone (protected vegetated setback) that provides a visual and auditory screening between athletic fields and abutting residential land. | Planning Board | Time & resources | Year 1 |
| B | Renovate the All-Purpose field and running track in Goodale Park to have track facilities where high school meets can be held. | Parks Commission, BOS | State and Federal Funding | Year 2 |

| Goals | Action | Responsible Entities | Resources | Priority/ Timing |
|-------|---|---|--------------------------------------|---------------------|
| B | Develop and implement rules/regulations and fees for use of Park facilities and revise every five years. | Parks Commission | Time & resources | Year 1 |
| B | Enforce violations where dumping of trash and yard wastes occur, particularly near streams and wetlands. | Police Department, ConComm | Time & resources | Year 1 |
| B | Assess interest in formation of community gardens and look for an appropriate site, such as former farmland or DCR land. | Parks Commission, Agricultural Commission | Time | Year 3 |
| A | Establish a list of possible picnic areas, and develop them. Possibly in the old Pine Grove. | OSIC, Parks Commission | Time | Year 2-3 |
| C | Review the needs at all town recreation facilities for compliance with ADA and prepare an implementation plan. Investigate funding opportunities and upgrade existing recreational facilities to meet ADA requirements. | Parks Commission and DPW | Time, State and Federal Funding | Year 1-3 |
| D | Compile a list of available indoor recreation facilities and approach owners for use of their facilities and investigate the possibility of constructing an indoor gym and recreation facility on land currently owned by the town. (Possibly as part of Senior Center development). | Parks Commission and BOS | Time & resources | Year 1 |
| C | Continue to provide sanitary facilities at high usage recreation sites. (Goodale Park, Woodland Park, Pride Park, Mixter Field and Mass Central Rail Trail). | BOS, Town Administrator | Time & Local funding | Year 1 |
| E | Provide safe and adequate number of parking spaces for athletic events and recreational facilities. | Parks Commission and DPW | State and Federal Funding | Year 3 |
| A | Communicate with DCR and House of Corrections regarding opportunities on their properties. Continue to negotiate with the House of Corrections to gain the needed recreational facilities for town residents. | BOS, Town Administrator, Residents | Time | Year 1-3 |
| A | Improve and expand Active recreational facilities at the Mixter property, Prescott St. | Parks Commission | Time | Year 1-3 |
| B | Assess the benefits of utilizing the Parks Facilities Committee to advise and monitor long range planning projects for the recreation facilities in town. | Parks Commission BOS, Town Administrator | Time | Year 1 |
| B | Renovate the Soccer field at Woodland Park. | Parks Commission and BOS | CPA and Federal Funding | Year 2 |
| C | Review facilities for use by seniors and youth increase opportunities for passive recreation, especially when any parks/open space project is being planned. | Parks Commission, OSIC | Time | Year 1 |
| B, C | Assess and implement opportunities to increase the usage by the disabled and senior citizens of walking trails and sidewalks. Improve public notice of the handicapped fishing platform along River Road to the Quinapoxet River recently improved by DCR. | Parks Commission, DPW | Time | Year 2 |
| B, C | Ensure utilization of a portion of the Mixter property (off Prescott Street) as a site to provide additional passive recreational facilities for elders, improved playing fields, and a playground for grandchildren to enjoy, since the Senior Center is anticipated to be located here. | Parks Commission, BOS, OSIC | State and Federal Funding | Year 1 |
| B, C | Evaluate and prioritize renovations to the All-Purpose Field and track, baseball fields, and softball field based on community needs and financial constraints. | Parks Commission | CPA, Local State and Federal Funding | Year 4 |
| D | Support a Visitors Center in town, possibly in cooperation with DCR at their 180 Beaman Street office, or include it as part of the Historic Society building on Worcester Street. | Town Administrator | Local State and Federal Funding | Year 5 |
| A, B | Ensure that the Goodale Park Master Plan implementation, including phasing, costs, and prioritization of facilities is based on current priorities and realistic financing, and is a guide to be used for decision-making. | Parks Commission and OSIC | Time | Year 1-7 |

| Goals | Action | Responsible Entities | Resources | Priority/ Timing |
|--|--|---|--------------------|---------------------|
| Goal III: Protect and Enhance Natural Resources | | | | |
| A. Protect town water supply; B. Protect streams and ponds in town; and C. Protect special wildlife and botanical areas in town. | | | | |
| C | Support actions that protect important habitat for rare species, such as BioMap2 habitat. | OSIC, ConComm | Time | Year 1-3 |
| B | Support efforts to protect and enhance water amenities. Cooperate with DCR to repair and protect natural environments. | ConComm, BOS, OSIC, DPW | Time | Year 1-3 |
| A, B, C | Protect environmentally-sensitive areas through Zoning controls, restrictions on development or acquisition of development rights, and leverage DCR acquisitions where appropriate. | OSIC, BOS, Planning Board | Time | Year 1-3 |
| A, B, C | Coordinate work with town departments and state agencies to protect existing and potential water sources and significant natural features in town. | Water District, ConComm, BOS | Time | Year 1-3 |
| A, B | As required by the MS4 permit, implement storm water protection measures to reduce contaminant discharges to tributaries including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure adequate street cleaning and basin maintenance; • Conduct stormwater education and publicize alternatives to polluting land use practices, such as excessive fertilizer uses and hazardous material usage/dumping, including poisonous cleaners, paints, etc. • Publicize residential household hazardous waste disposal opportunities. • Implement a program to reduce phosphorus. | DPW, Water District, Wachusett Earth Day Recycling Center | DPW Budget Funding | Year 1-7 |
| B | Review new development and redevelopment projects to assess MEMA Flood Hazard Zones. Ensure stormwater bylaw compliance of no increase in runoff flows, which causes stream bank erosion and stresses local streams. | Planning Board | Time | Year 1 |
| B | Protect privately owned wetlands by encouraging certification of vernal pools, utilizing students and volunteers such as Scouts. | ConComm, Schools | Time | Year 1 |
| C | Support programs that protect and educate townspeople about biodiversity. | School Department | Time | Year 1 |
| A | Coordinate land protection and future land purchases to assure an adequate supply of water, with a focus on the Town's existing wellhead areas and potential new sources. | Water District, OSIC | Time | Year 1 |
| A | Evaluate options and implement practices to remove high levels of manganese in the water. | Water District | Time | Year 1 |
| A, B, C | Continue enforcement of zoning bylaws designed to protect the environment, such as Aquifer Protection Zoning, minimum lot sizing, and Residential Cluster Development. | Town Administrator, Building Inspector | Time | Year 1 |
| A | Collaborate with the water district to implement their capital improvement plan through assistance with purchasing properties to protect source water. | | Time | Year 1 |
| B | Preserve fisheries in the Wachusett Reservoir and its tributaries. | | Time | Year 1 |
| C | Acquire open land and development rights and/or restrict development with conservation easements in sensitive areas | The Town and the GWLT | Time & resources | Year 1 |
| B | Assess and expand wildlife greenway corridors along streams or wetlands. | ConComm, OSIC | Time & resources | Year 2 |
| A, B | Establish a dog park on town-owned land, possibly in partnership with DCR, to take pressure off the heavy use by dog walkers of the Mass Central Rail Trail on very sensitive watershed lands | OSIC, BOS, DCR | Time & resources | Year 1 |
| A, B | Evaluate existing laws and update as needed, to educate and enforce rules for walking dogs on the Mass Central Rail Trail and throughout town. | OSIC, DPW, Wachusett Greenways, Building Inspector | Time & resources | Year 1-3 |

| Goals | Action | Responsible Entities | Resources | Priority/ Timing |
|--|---|--|---|---------------------|
| Goal IV: Plan and Develop Greenways and Walkable Connections in the Town with Consideration to Appropriate Regional Connections | | | | |
| <p>A. Implement the Complete Streets Program.</p> <p>B. Increase mapped paths, trails, bike and pedestrian routes.</p> <p>C. Launch efforts with neighboring towns to develop greenway connections.</p> <p>D. Provide safe pedestrian access to open spaces and recreation areas.</p> <p>E. Incorporate historic preservation into planning efforts.</p> | | | | |
| A, D | <p>Integrate Complete Streets principles in all town and regional projects.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide new accesses to/between town-owned open space and recreation facilities including development and improvement of sidewalks and walking trails to facilitate pedestrian traffic. • Update Sidewalk Plan following significant improvements completed in 2016 and develop formal protocol/policy for maintenance and expansions. • Maintain a comprehensive inventory of pedestrian and bicycle facility infrastructure to prioritize projects to eliminate gaps and substandard conditions in the sidewalk and bikeway network. • Allow for wider shoulders that would accommodate bike lanes, with particular attention to Route 140 throughout town. • Evaluate east-west access routes to bus lines and retail services for low-income and aging populations. <p>Specific locations include: Thomas Street, Temple Street, Crescent Street, and Route 12 at the railroad underpass.</p> | Transportation Committee, DPW, Planning Board, BOS, Town Administrator | Chapter 90, Safe Routes to School, Complete Streets | Year 1-5 |
| B, D | Prioritize repair, maintenance, and expansion of existing pedestrian and bike infrastructure. Partner with Wachusett Greenways and the DCR to extend the Mass Central Rail Trail east from Thomas Street to Pleasant Street and then to Prescott St, and tie into Bean Road, Sterling. | Wachusett Greenways, DCR, OSIC, DPW | Time & resources | Year 1 |
| B, D | Develop North-South and East- West trail links for walkways and wildlife corridors, and develop links to trails and wildlife corridors in abutting towns. | Town-wide Planning Committee, OSIC | Time & resources | Year 2 |
| B, C | Continue to acquire easements and corridor parcels (by purchase or by gift) to link open space parcels via natural corridors for hiking and wildlife routes. | GWLT | CPA funds and Gifts | |
| B, C | Support Wachusett Greenways' efforts to maintain and expand its trail networks, and cooperate with Wachusett Greenways to improve the trailhead parking at the Mass Central Rail Trail. Support the addition of interpretive trails along the Rail Trail to old historic sites and extension of the trail to Sterling. | The Town Administrator, DPW | Time & resources | Year 2 |
| C | Ensure active representation to the Wachusett Greenways. | OSIC | Time & resources | Year 2 |
| E | Coordinate open space preservation activities with historical preservation. Support the historic interpretive trail development along Mass Central Rail Trail and the Springdale Mill Celebrations. | OSIC, Historic Preservation, Parks Commission | Time & resources | Year 2 |
| E | Investigate the use of grants from DCR's Heritage Landscape Inventory Program to preserve historic and treasured landscapes and leverage grants and expand historic sites along the Mass Central Rail Trail. | OSIC, Historic Preservation, Parks Commission | Time & resources | Year 2 |

| Goals | Action | Responsible Entities | Resources | Priority/ Timing |
|---|--|--|------------------|---------------------|
| C | Support efforts by Wachusett Greenways to develop historic interpretive side trails along the Mass Central Rail Trail. | OSIC, Historic Preservation, Parks Commission | Time & resources | Year 2 |
| Goal V: Conduct Sound Management of Open Space and Recreation Facilities | | | | |
| <p>A. Coordinate town efforts to maintain, improve, and expand recreation facilities in town.</p> <p>B. Communicate with DCR and House of Corrections regarding opportunities on their properties and increasing revenue.</p> <p>C. Educate town officials and citizens about opportunities and benefits of open space.</p> <p>D. Implement and enforce land use regulations professionally and consistently.</p> <p>E. Utilize available Community Preservation funds equitably and responsibly.</p> <p>F. Provide access, usage, and fair compensation of state and quasi-state property in town.</p> | | | | |
| A | Improve coordination among local boards and officials and include all applicable boards and commissions in discussions regarding open space and recreation land use decisions. | Town Administrator, BOS, PB, ConComm, OSIC, Parks Commission, Parks Facilities Committee | Time & resources | Year 1-7 |
| C | Educate local officials and boards dealing with issues regarding land use, open space, and recreation, and the impacts of these on the town's tax base. | Town Administrator, BOS, PB, ConComm, OSIC | Time & resources | Year 1-7 |
| A | Establish and enforce attendance and training on policies for appointed positions. | Town Administrator | Time & resources | Year 1-7 |
| A | Publish meeting minutes and agendas promptly on website. | BOS | Time & resources | Year 2 |
| B, F | Obtain compensation from the House of Corrections for community services used. | BOS, Police Chief | Time & resources | Year 2 |
| B, F | Increase payment-in-lieu-of-taxes from the DCR Water Supply Protection. | BOS, Assessors | Time & resources | Year 2 |
| B, E | Review and submit comments on draft DCR Program Plans when they are being updated. Document and publicize town needs and wishes regarding future uses of DCR and former county-owned land to ensure that parts remain open and accessible for recreational use. Incorporate comments and input on DCR Land Management and Public Access Plans. | BOS, Parks Commission | Time & resources | Year 2 |
| C | Encourage reduced tax assessments for properties with deeded development restrictions. | Town Administrator, OSIC, CPC, Assessors | Time & resources | Year 2 |
| A | Provide coordination of opportunities among parks, open space, water supply, and other town agencies for grants and other programs available to protect town resources. | Town Administrator, OSIC, CPC, Parks Commission | Time & resources | Year 2 |
| D | Implement and enforce land use regulations professionally and consistently. | Parks Commission, Building Inspector, Planning Board, ConComm, ZBA | Time & resources | Year 2 |
| A | Communicate with DPW and Water District managers so existing town resources are not overextended. | Town Administrator | Time & resources | Year 2 |
| A | Communicate with town departments to provide clear information to reviewing boards during review of development proposals. | Town Administrator, Planning Board, ConCom | Time & resources | Year 2 |
| A | Ensure public input is encouraged and enabled whenever a use change is proposed for any open space owned by the Town. | Town Administrator | Time & resources | Year 2 |
| A | Coordinate activities of town parks and recreation agents, including the Open Space Implementation Committee, Parks Commission and Parks Facilities Committee; and ensure protocols such as a parks usage schedule on Parks' website, and pesticide application notification are documented. | Town Administrator | Time & resources | Year 1 |
| E | Identify the process to more expeditiously utilize Community Preservation Act funds to complete 'due diligence' work before requesting purchase of lands or development restrictions on lands at Town Meeting. | Town Administrator, OSIC | Time & resources | Year 1 |

10. PUBLIC COMMENTS ON DRAFT PLAN AND PLAN APPROVAL

Multiple draft versions of this update of the Open Space and Recreation Plan were distributed to the Planning Board, Board of Selectmen, Town Administrator, Conservation Commission, and the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC). [Section 2B. Planning Process and Public Participation](#) discusses the public participation process that was followed to gain municipal and public input. [Appendix E](#) contains comments obtained from the June 2, 2016 and the March 21, 2017 community forums.

Requests for comments on this update of the Open Space and Recreation Plan were distributed to the Board of Health, Water District, Department of Public Works, Building Inspector, Zoning Board of Appeals, Economic Development Task Force, Parks Facilities Committee, West Boylston Historical Committee, Greater Worcester Land Trust, and Wachusett Greenways.

The Draft Open Space and Recreation Plan Update was made available for review on the Town's web site for 30 days.

The public hearing notice and the minutes noting all comments received are included in [Appendix E](#). This Plan was reviewed during another public hearing with the Board of Selectmen and received their vote of support on June 21, 2017.

The following required letters of support are attached:

- West Boylston Board of Selectmen
- West Boylston Planning Board
- Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC)