

SECTION 1**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Brookline Open Space 2018 is the Town of Brookline's eighth Open Space and Recreation Plan, and reflects the Town's diverse open space system, its complex needs, and the goals of the community. Although Brookline is a long-established community in which most land area has been developed, there remain significant and important open space resources throughout the town, and open space management and protection is a priority.

Brookline's open space resources range in scale from grand, historic parks and private estates to small pocket parks and public gathering places in commercial areas. The system comprises nature sanctuaries which are home to native wildlife and plants; parks managed primarily for active and passive recreation; pedestrian pathways, greenways and wildlife corridors; wetlands and other natural resource areas; and a vital urban forest. The environmental and public health benefits that accrue from this open space are considerable, and its presence also contributes greatly to the aesthetic appeal of the community.

In recognition of the variety of open spaces which characterize Brookline, this Plan defines open space as follows:

1. Land substantially in a natural state or landscaped in such a manner as to allow the preservation of wildlife and other natural resources; and
2. Land and space intentionally designed to contribute to openness and promote natural resource values as a part of built space.

Brookline Open Space 2018 builds on the successes, as well as the ongoing needs, identified in the previous seven Open Space and Recreation Plans, and also reflects issues and challenges that have emerged in the seven years since the last Open Space and Recreation Plan. The Plan begins by laying out the community setting of Brookline, including a brief history of the Town's development, open space patterns, and infrastructure. There is an inventory of the Town's environmental resources, including a detailed inventory of parks and sanctuaries. These sections are followed by a Needs Analysis, which was developed with significant input from the community. The Needs Analysis leads directly to the Goals and Objectives and an Action Plan, which have been designed to meet the open space needs identified by the community. The Open Space and Recreation Plan also includes maps, tables and figures that provide supporting information.

The Open Space and Recreation Plan is a document that has guided and informed open space planning in Brookline since the first Plan was published in 1976. Many of Brookline's goals identified in previous Open Space and Recreation Plans have been met. Within the last 15 years, Brookline has adopted a local wetlands protection By-Law, adopted a Conservation Restriction Policy, developed Skyline Park, acquired the former Fisher Hill Reservoir from the state of Massachusetts, added bicycle and pedestrian improvements, and restored and refurbished numerous parks, among other achievements. Nevertheless, many open space needs remain, and some goals have been carried into this Plan from previous Plans. Despite Brookline's progress, the Town continues to lose open space, which affects wildlife, shrinks the tree canopy, increases impervious land cover, reduces habitat and breaks up green corridors. One of Brookline's most important open space needs is to identify and strengthen tools for the permanent protection of key unprotected open space. Although this goal is carried forward from previous Plans, Brookline Open Space 2018 identifies several new tools that may be useful in this effort, including heightening community awareness and coordinating with the Planning and Community Development Department regarding development and Town planning efforts. The need to establish funding sources for open space preservation remains unmet and is a high priority.

This Plan also identifies new needs and establishes goals and objectives to meet them. Over the past seven years, there has been a growing recognition of the links between open space and other important

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concerns, notably public health and climate change. Well-designed, accessible open space is important to support a physically active and healthy population. Brookline's open spaces should strengthen active and passive recreation, as well as enhance bicycle and pedestrian transportation. A healthy urban forest, including street trees, will improve air quality and reduce the growing problem of the urban heat-island effect. Increased urban greening on both public and private property will reduce the negative impacts of stormwater pollution and flooding, both of which will likely worsen with climate change. A well connected open space system will mitigate the effects of climate change on threatened flora and fauna. In addition, many open space strategies will help reduce energy consumption.

The Plan also reflects Brookline's current economic circumstances, and emphasizes the importance of maintenance and stewardship of our existing open space resources, even in times of fiscal stress. The economic, public health, habitat, water resource and aesthetic benefits of Brookline's open space system are well-established and will increase in importance as the Town grows and the climate changes. This Plan reflects the strong consensus that it is critical for the Town to continue a high standard of care and maintenance of its open space resources.

To accomplish the goals set out in the Plan, there are a wide variety of activities detailed in the Action Plan. While some actions are specific and have a clear timeline, others call for further study of a specific challenge to identify the most appropriate strategies for moving forward. Brookline's previous Open Space and Recreation Plans have proven to be valuable, living documents, helping shape and direct open space protection and management, and establishing goals for the future. Brookline Open Space 2018 continues that tradition, celebrating our achievements, identifying our needs, and setting out a plan to meet our goals.

Town of Brookline, Massachusetts

Open Space Map

Legend

PROTECTED OPEN SPACE AND OTHER OPEN LAND

- BROOKLINE LAND TRUST
- CEMETERIES
- COMMUNITY PARKS
- CONSERVATION AREAS
- CONSERVATION RESTRICTIONS
- GOLF COURSE
- NATIONAL HISTORIC SITES
- NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS & PLAYGROUNDS
- PASSIVE PARKS
- SCHOOL PLAYGROUNDS
- STATE PROPERTIES
- TRAFFIC ISLANDS & OTHER SMALL OPEN SPACES

OTHER UNPROTECTED OPEN LAND

- AGRICULTURAL AND RECREATION LAND
- CEMETERIES
- NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS & PLAYGROUNDS
- PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS
- SCHOOL PLAYGROUNDS
- STATE PROPERTIES
- TRAFFIC ISLANDS & OTHER SMALL OPEN SPACES

- WATER BODY
- STREAMS AND RIVERS
- STREET EDGES
- TOWN BOUNDARY



Data Sources

Street edge, town boundary, water bodies, and open space layers were created by and are from the Brookline GIS Database.

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