

SECTION 2

INTRODUCTION

Brookline began formal Open Space and Recreation Planning through the Conservation Commission in 1976. The past decades have demonstrated the need to preserve existing open space and create smaller open spaces and “green” features across a range of properties, from the few remaining large parcels that are open and natural, to the dense commercial and residential developments that are being built and proposed in Brookline.

This Open Space and Recreation Plan is the Town’s eighth. This is the Town’s first seven-year plan; each previous plan has been crafted around a five-year cycle. Each plan has been built upon the accomplishments of the previous plan. Brookline’s 2005-2015 Comprehensive Plan and the 2006 Parks, Open Space and Recreation Strategic Master Plan confirm the Town’s commitment to open space, and provide a platform for this Open Space and Recreation Plan.

Brookline has made considerable progress in meeting the goals and action items from past Open Space and Recreation Plans. Open Space 2018 sets out action items for continuing and consolidating those achievements. New goals and objectives reflect more recent citizen concerns.

Recent Brookline accomplishments in open space protection include creation and rehabilitation of parks and fields, approval of Town By-Laws and policies relating to open space, and an increase in advocacy for open space and climate change issues.

There have been many highlights over the past seven years. The Town acquired Fisher Hill Reservoir and converted the property into a public park that provides both active and passive recreational opportunities. Playgrounds and parks have been restored and renovated for inclusivity purposes, and are now more accessible to people of all ages and abilities. For example, the Brookline Avenue Playground was updated in 2018 with new play equipment, including manipulative water play, and accessible surfacing, along with fencing, entrances, plantings, and a field. Corey Hill Playground has also seen significant improvements via new play equipment and furniture, including

water play, natural play elements on the hillside, exercise equipment, and a variety of seating for multigenerational use and enjoyment. Other renovated parks and playgrounds include Brookline Reservoir Park, Daniel F. Ford Playground at Emerson Garden, and Pierce Playground, among others. Brookline has also sought to further provide resources and opportunities for its residents to enjoy open space. The Lawton Community Garden was established in 2018 and has been very popular within the community. The Town has established a Stormwater Management By-Law amendment, addressing the removal of trees on private property. Open space preservation, stormwater and watershed protection, and maintenance of the urban forest have been advanced.

Citizen advocacy groups for parks, playgrounds and sanctuaries have substantially increased in number and in accomplishments. Advocacy for climate change action, including bicycle lanes and improved pedestrian pathways, is strong. There are increased environmental education opportunities for children and adults. Increasingly, the connections between open space, climate change, public health, transportation and community benefits are being recognized, and Brookline’s advocacy groups frequently work together in support of shared goals.

Brookline’s desirable residential and commercial location, as well as its schools, parks, varied neighborhoods and high level of services, lead to intense development pressure and high real estate costs. This desirability challenges the Town’s ability to protect, maintain, and create open space opportunities. Careful attention is required to ensure a balance of density and open space as development and redevelopment takes place. The Town has expressed a desire for preservation and creation of open space that is well served by regularly revisiting the planning process.

The Conservation Commission, which leads the Open Space and Recreation Plan process, determined a process for this Plan, which was as follows:

1. An Open Space and Recreation Plan Committee was convened in November 2015 with 19 members from various boards, commissions, Town departments and outside local interest groups. The Committee met twelve times between November 2015 and November 2018.

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2. Three public forums were held either within, or immediately adjacent to, Environmental Justice neighborhoods in an attempt to gather input from minority populations between October 2015 and February 2016. These forums were held at Coolidge Corner Library (Pleasant Street), Brookline Senior Center (Winchester Street), and at the Baker School (Beverly Road). Meetings were advertised through the local newspaper, e-mail notifications via the Town's Notify Me self-subscription service, and the Town's website. Enhanced outreach involved posting fliers in Brookline's parks and playgrounds, particularly those in proximity to Environmental Justice neighborhoods. These fliers were tailored to the interests and needs of each neighborhood, listing issues of concern specific to the nearby community. Additional outreach included informing representative Town Meeting Members so that they could relay the information to their specific precincts, and informing independent advocacy organizations, such as the Brookline GreenSpace Alliance.

3. Based on the input and comments received during the public forums and public comment period,

four working groups were established in the spring of 2016 to explore issues related to Open Space Protection and Zoning, Greenways, Infrastructure and Resource Protection, and Climate Change. The working groups met a total of 16 times during the spring, summer and fall of 2016.

4. Through the local newspaper and electronic postings and e-mails, the public was encouraged to submit additional comments.

5. The work and input of the four working groups, along with other input from Committee members and staff, was utilized to prepare drafts of the Plan's Needs Analysis, Goals and Objectives, and Action Plan, which were shared with the Open Space and Recreation Plan Committee.

6. Following the presentation to, and approval of, the draft Open Space and Recreation Plan by the Open Space and Recreation Plan Committee, the Plan was finalized, and then approved by the Brookline Select Board in June, 2019.

"In all things of nature there is something of the marvelous." Aristotle

"Conservation is a state of harmony between men and land." Aldo Leopold

"It is a wholesome and necessary thing for us to turn again to the earth and in the contemplation of her beauties to know of wonder and humility." Rachel Carson