

## **SECTION 6**

### **COMMUNITY VISION**

The Brookline community has expressed its open space values and preferences through a number of planning processes that have been closely related topic-wise. In the early 2000s, Planning Department Town staff prepared *Issues and Opportunities* reports, organized outreach and facilitated discussions in Brookline neighborhoods. The Town also engaged a consultant team to process and analyze the data and convert it into a Comprehensive Plan. Since then, numerous public forums have been held at various locations across Town to explore the needs and demands of the community. These forums varied significantly in nature, from small group focus sessions to statistically valid surveys, to ensure the broadest spectrum of input possible. Further information was gathered from interviews with stakeholders, such as the Park and Recreation Commission, Parks and Open Space Division and Recreation Department staff, Brookline Greenspace Alliance, Brookline Community Education and Adult Programs, Brookline Council on Aging, and Brookline High School students. The plans that resulted from this outreach include the Brookline Comprehensive Plan 2005-2015, led by the Town's Department of Planning and Community Development; the Parks, Open Space and Recreation Strategic Master Plan, led by the Park and Recreation Commission and its staff, which was published in 2006; and Open Space 2010: Open Space and Recreation Plan for the Town of Brookline, led by the Conservation Commission.

This Plan complements the earlier Plans and reiterates many of the same themes regarding the

importance of open space, in addition to developing and incorporating new goals that reflect the changing needs of the community. The three public forums and various working group meetings that informed this Open Space and Recreation Plan, in addition to the numerous surveys, forums, meetings and hearings associated with the three aforementioned Plans, have illuminated the views and perspectives of a broad range of the Brookline community. The findings of all of these processes have been represented in Open Space 2018 and inform the open space vision expressed here.

Brookline's ideal vision of its open space and recreation system reflects the diverse character that is present everywhere else in this community. Home to a working farm that has been in the same family since the 17th century, elegant estate properties from a bygone age, and two renowned Emerald Necklace Parks designed by Olmsted, Brookline prizes the grand, dramatic open spaces and natural areas that are rich in history and ecological value. Additionally, due to the presence of several bustling commercial areas ringed by residential neighborhoods, the community also values the balance of density and accessible open space that makes for a vibrant community life in a more urban setting - small parks, pedestrian and bicycle-friendly ways and public gathering spaces are all key distinguishing features of Brookline.

The Town must protect open space values across a broad range of settings in order to preserve and promote the particular character of Brookline that is so cherished here. This is the challenge for the Open Space and Recreation Plan.

*"The whole of this neighborhood of Brookline is a kind of landscape garden, and there is nothing in America of the sort, so inexpressibly charming as the lanes which lead from one cottage, or villa, to another. No animals are allowed to run at large, and the open gates, with tempting vistas and glimpses under the pendent boughs, give it quite an Arcadian air of rural freedom and enjoyment. These lanes are clothed with a profusion of trees and wild shrubbery, often almost to the carriage tracks, and curve and wind about, in a manner quite bewildering to the stranger who attempts to thread them alone; and there are more hints here for the lover of the picturesque in lanes than we ever saw assembled together in so small a compass."*

Andrew Jackson Downing, *The Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening*, 1841