

Section 1: PLAN SUMMARY

Open space, recreation, and the preservation of the natural features of the Town are of paramount concern to Grafton citizens. Not only do the rivers and rolling hills contribute to the beauty of the Town, they have helped to form the Town's development patterns. Major features of Grafton's landscape are the two north-to-south waterways composed of streams and rivers connecting natural and man made ponds, which in turn established the mill areas of Town. The rolling hills and valleys have contributed to the Town's character, the location of farms and open space, the Town and village centers, and to the non-residential development pattern.

Open spaces provide peaceful areas, pleasant vistas, sites for wildlife and fauna, active and passive recreational opportunities, safety from flooding and groundwater contamination, and they contribute to clean air. Municipal action is required to protect these features and benefits, which are threatened by development activity. Grafton citizens and interest groups have already begun to work together to proactively and innovatively preserve open space; however, the work needs to continue as development pressures mount. The visibility of new growth contributes to the sense of suburbanization without regard to vistas, coordination or neighborhood character. Without continued and intensified action by the Town to remove fragile land from potential development, Grafton will likely lose much of its scenic and environmental resources.

Grafton is situated along the Massachusetts Turnpike, and in the line of westward development from Interstate 495, southerly development from Worcester and, to a lesser extent, northerly development from Rhode Island. Development activity is rapidly depleting open space and imperiling resources. The loss of the open land to development can lead to increases in surface water runoff and negative impacts on groundwater resources.

This Open Space Plan emphasizes open space connections, open space corridors, and a combination of full range outdoor recreation.

Grafton planners used two methods to develop the goals and objectives of this Open Space & Recreation Plan. The first method was to conduct a citizen survey of Grafton households in an effort to discern their preferences regarding conservation and recreation. Conducted in May 2006, each household in Grafton received a survey containing eight questions dealing with open space and recreation. The survey response rate was 12.2%. The second method involved holding a public forum for the same purpose. Held on May 3, 2006, the goals and objectives from the Town's previous Open Space & Recreation Plan were reviewed with members of the public to see if they were still valid or warranted modification. Town planners made use of the public's input from the survey and forum to develop the following open space and recreation goals for Grafton:

- Preserve and Enhance Grafton's Water Resources
- Protect and Conserve Grafton's Land Resources
- Preserve Grafton's Town Character
- Provide Grafton with Varied and Geographically Well-Balanced Recreational Facilities and Opportunities
- Enhance Utilization of Existing Recreation and Conservation Resources

The Draft Plan was reviewed at a second public forum held in January 2007.

As stated above, Grafton previously addressed open space and recreation issues with a comprehensive Open Space and Recreation Plan¹, prepared in 1999. The 1999 Plan is still valid in many respects; however, there have been changes in Town and there is an even greater sense of urgency to preserving Grafton's resources. Changes and additions to the 1999 Plan primarily relate to updated data, establishment of open space corridors, and programs and regulations to protect the character of the Town.

¹ The 1999 Plan has provided the basis for this update. Much of the text is from that plan with additions and changes made for time adjustment and changes in and around Grafton.