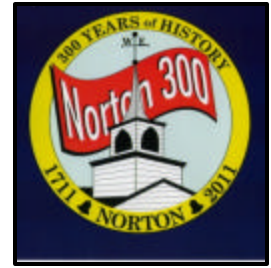


NORTON OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN SUMMARY



Town of Norton, Massachusetts

2011-2018

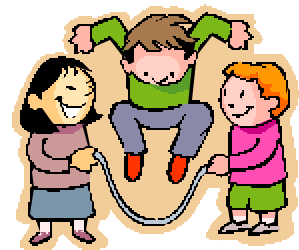
Special Points of Interest:

- **48 projects were undertaken from the last Open Space and Recreation Plan's Goals and Objectives Section**
- **Over 1,550 new acres of land have been permanently preserved in the last five years**
- **23% of Norton is now private open space or public/non-profit open space land, up from 19% five years ago and 9% ten years ago**

WHAT IS THE OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN (OSRP)?

The Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) is a locally generated planning document. Often compiled by the Conservation Commission or an Open Space Committee, a community produces an OSRP to identify its resources, community needs and a strategy for realizing the community's local goals for open space preservation. The OSRP is a way for the community to take control of future growth while preserving the resources that make the community unique. Some communities opt to hire a consultant

to assist with writing the plan. Other communities can produce the OSRP in-house with their GIS department. Norton is able to produce the OSRP in-house mostly by the Open Space Committee and through the use of grants for technical assistance from the South Coast Rail and the Southeastern Planning Economic Development District. The OSRP must be approved by the Division of Conservation Services and is a requirement for the community to be eligible for State and Federal Grants for open space and all other related projects.



WHAT ARE THE REQUIRED ELEMENTS OF THE OSRP?

An OSRP must include 11 sections, required maps and various appendices. The 11 sections required for inclusion are:

- Section 1- Plan Summary
- Section 2- Introduction
- Section 3 - Community Setting
- Section 4 - Environmental Inventory and Analysis
- Section 5 - Inventory of Lands of Conservation and Recreation Interest
- Section 6 - Community Vision
- Section 7 - Analysis of Needs
- Section 8 - Goals and Objectives
- Section 9 - Seven-Year Action Plan
- Section 10 - Public Comments
- Section 11 - References

The required maps include:

- Regional Context
- Environmental Justice
- Zoning
- Soils and Geologic Features
- Unique Features
- Water Resources
- Open Space Inventory
- Action Plan

The Open Space and Recreation Plan is a valuable planning tool for the community.

*"Very few communities have open space to preserve, and it is important for wildlife diversity and for human recreation"
~2010 Open Space Survey Respondent*

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NORTON OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN SUMMARY

SECTION 1: PLAN SUMMARY

The 2011-2018 Norton Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) focuses on smaller, more feasible projects that can be accomplished by volunteers or with grant funding rather than the broader, more numerous projects of the 2005-2010 OSRP. Residents are focusing on drinking water source protection and managing the properties that they currently possess and finding new creative ways to continue programs that have had funding cuts. Residents are still looking to the future

by looking more carefully at climate change and wildlife habitat and its impacts on the Norton environment. There is a strong sense of getting back to a “community”, partly due to the town’s 300th anniversary and partly to dissatisfaction that residents feel about losing the small town character they grew up with or for which they moved to Norton in the first place.

The goals of the 2011-2018 OSRP are:

- Goal 1: Protect wetlands,

“I love the feel of a small community” ~2010 Open Space Survey Respondent

water supply and watershed lands

- Goal 2: Increase educational opportunities
- Goal 3: Support natural resource protection in our three Areas of Critical Environmental Concern
- Goal 4: Protect wildlife habitat
- Goal 5: Improve public access to the town’s water

bodies, conservation and recreation areas

- Goal 6: Protect historical, archaeological, scenic and heritage landscapes
- Goal 7: Prevent agricultural losses
- Goal 8: Improve funding options for open space and recreation projects
- Goal 9: Expand recreational opportunities

SECTION 2: INTRODUCTION

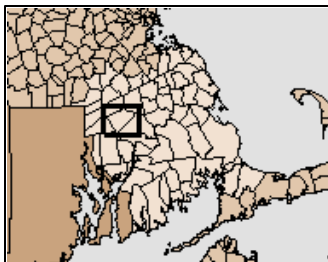
*“The amount of open space in Norton was why we moved here”
~2010 Open Space Survey Respondent*

This section includes the Statement of Purpose and a description of the Planning Process and Public Participation. The purpose of this updated Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) is to provide members of local boards and commissions, staff, and residents with the opportunity to work toward common goals in the areas of conserva-

tion and recreation on both local and regional levels. This OSRP continues the themes from the previous plan for protecting the town’s drinking water source and balancing development and growth with environmental protection. Public meetings were held January 19, 2010 and October 14, 2010 with the Audubon Society. An on-line Open

Space and Planning Survey was conducted from November 19, 2010 to December 9, 2010. Various boards and committees were asked to participate and provide comment. All of the Open Space Committee meetings are posted in accordance with the Open Meeting Law and everyone is welcome to attend.

SECTION 3: COMMUNITY SETTING



Norton (outlined) is located in Southeastern Massachusetts

The Community Setting section describes in detail Norton’s importance in the regional context, the history of Norton including archaeological and Native American history, current population characteristics including housing, employment and the economics of the town, growth and development patterns, the town’s infrastructure, and land use.

The Town of Norton, Bristol County, Massachusetts is located approximately 30 miles

south of Boston and 18 miles north of Providence, RI. Norton has a land area of 29.0 square miles.

The area, that in 1711 became the Town of Norton, came partly from the tract purchased from Plymouth County in 1637 by the founders of Taunton and surveyed in 1640 by Myles Standish. The northern point of that tract is Cobbler’s Corner, now in Mansfield, where the surveyors stopped to repair a shoe. The largest part, how-

ever, came from a portion of a second Taunton tract purchased in 1668, called the North Purchase. The town’s population is now 19,103 people. Like the adjacent communities, Norton’s land use has been greatly influenced by Route 495.

New articles in this section include the South Coast Rail Project, Priority Preservation Areas and Priority Development Areas (PPA/PDA), and Executive Order 525.

SECTION 4: ENVIRONMENTAL INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

The Environmental Inventory is by far the most extensive section within Norton's OSRP. It fully describes all of Norton's resources and environmental challenges. Articles in this section include discussions on the geology, soils, topography, farm land, landscape character, watersheds, major surface waters and rivers, aquifers, flood hazard areas, wetlands, water conservation, vegetation, forest land, rare species of plants and animals, fisheries, vernal

pools, biodiversity, landscaping for wildlife, scenic roads, cultural, archaeological and historical resources, Areas of Critical Environmental Concern, outstanding resource waters, BioMap2, hazardous waste, landfills, erosion, sedimentation, development impacts, pollution, impaired waters, petroleum spills, storm water management, exotic invasive plants and tick/mosquito-borne illnesses. New articles in this section include the National Wildlife Federa-

tion's Certified Wildlife Habitat program, impervious cover, climate change and light pollution.

Norton is approximately 40% wetland and 16% floodplain. Drinking water comes primarily from groundwater resources in the Canoe River Aquifer, which is also a Federally-designated Sole Source Aquifer. Three are three Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). They are the Canoe River ACEC, Hockomock Swamp ACEC

and the newly designated Three-Mile River ACEC. There are 106 Certified Vernal Pools and several areas of rare species habitat including that for turtles, salamanders, freshwater mussels, fish, plants and dragonflies. Norton has many different kinds of natural communities including red maple swamp, alluvial red maple swamp, white pine forest, agricultural field, mixed oak forest, and hemlock forest to name a few.

"However small an impact it may have, open space fights global warming" ~2010 Open Space Survey Respondent

SECTION 5: INVENTORY OF LANDS OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION INTEREST

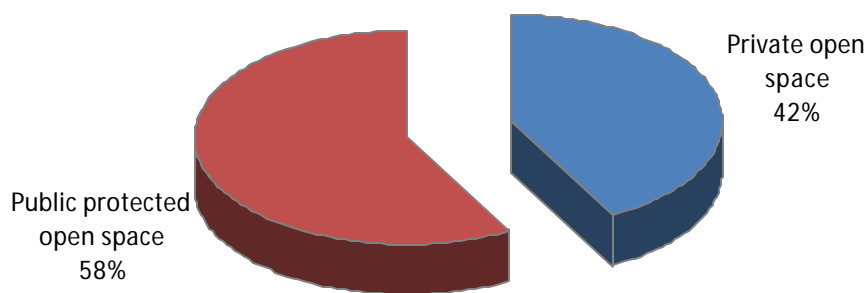
This section describes the ownership, management, current use, condition, recreation potential, public access, zoning, degree of protection and type of public access granted for each parcel in the open space inventory. The open space inventory includes private, public and non-profit agency land. Private land may include lands that are protected with a conservation

restriction, private recreation parcels such as a golf course and lands under the special taxation program known as Chapter 61 (for forestry, agriculture and recreation). Public land may include state and federal lands as well as municipal land such as that owned by the conservation commission, water department, town forest or recreation commission. Non-profit

agencies may have a clause in their documents requiring that land be preserved in its natural state and includes lands owned by the Land Preservation Society of Norton. There is also a description of each major piece of property with access information and an excel chart of all open space land.



Inventory of Open Space



Source: OSRP 2011-2018

Despite a dreary economy, through donations the Town of Norton and Land Preservation Society of Norton have preserved 1,550 acres of land in the past five years, greatly adding to the town's open space holdings.

NORTON OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN SUMMARY

SECTION 6: COMMUNITY VISION



The Community Vision section describes how the Open Space Committee determined the goals of the community. It describes how public comment was sought. It also lists the Statement of Open Space and Recreation Goals. Some of the goals are community-wide and others are listed as goals of a particular board or commission. This section also describes the Open Space and Planning Survey and the results. Here are a few of the major points from the survey:

- Hiking, biking, walking was the most enjoyed activity by residents
- Walking and equestrian trails should be expanded
- 70% of respondents said open space was important to preserve
- 56% said Norton's character is changing for the better
- 80% said they would pay a small fee to use a boat ramp or park
- Aquifer land is most important for preservation
- Picnic areas are needed near water bodies
- 85% said lack of facilities hinders recreation potential

SECTION 7: ANALYSIS OF NEEDS

This section contains a summary of the needs of the community that were voiced during public meetings and through the Open Space and Planning Survey. They are listed in general terms regarding the natural resources, community-wide goals and management needs.

Natural Resource Needs include:

- Land in the Canoe River Aquifer for drinking water protection
- Any land along a major water body
- Remaining forested land in Great Woods
- Historic/archaeological/scenic resources



Needs identified by the community!

Community Needs include:

- A town park
- Ice skating areas
- New fields for active recreation
- Bike trail
- Teen and Senior programs

Management Needs include:

- Resources to maintain athletic fields
- Better management of school fields
- Prevent damage by ATVs, illegal trash dumping, traffic and noise
- Management of invasive exotic species
- Staff and training
- Better communication between departments
- Better advertisement and access to information like the OSRP

"We have some wonderful resources in this town. At this time, not all areas are accessible for public recreation or other uses" ~ 2010 Open Space and Planning Survey Respondent.

SECTION 8: GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

This section lists all goals and objectives and related tasks. Below is one example:

Goal 1: Protect wetlands, water supply and watershed lands

- Objective 1: Assess and mitigate potential pollution sources to wetlands and water supply lands via best practical management.
- Objective 2: Encourage restrictive covenants and conservation restrictions

for large parcels and parcels that abut protected land

- Objective 3: Support regional projects involving wetlands and open space
- Objective 4: Identify other significant natural areas
- Objective 5: Provide sewer and water service to environmentally sensitive and susceptible areas
- Objective 6: Evaluate

municipal policies/bylaws to improve protection of resources

- Objective 7: Provide better public education and immediate response to exotic, invasive species threats
 - Task: Continue water chestnut removal at Barrowsville Pond
 - Task: Create educational campaign for residents



"Provide connections between neighborhoods and other spaces accessible by foot, both along the road and off road" ~2010 Open Space and Planning Survey Respondent

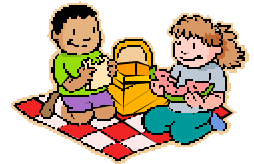
SECTION 9: SEVEN-YEAR ACTION PLAN

Section 9 provides a lengthy list of all of the accomplishments from the previous OSRP. It is evidence that the town does not need a lot of money or volunteers to achieve its open space goals. Most of the goals listed in this section were completed by the four people on the Open Space Committee. The second part of this section is to carefully estimate a timeframe and party to perform the goals and objectives of the previous section, Section 8. The seven-year action plan

will list the year and all of the projects we hope to accomplish in that timeframe and who our partners may be. All activities cannot be completed for obvious reasons, but with grant funding and non-profit partners such as The Nature Conservancy, Massachusetts, Audubon, and the Taunton River Watershed Campaign, we can realize a good portion of them. In 2011, we hope to work on the following projects:

- Complete boardwalk at Everett Leonard Conservation Area
- Certified Wildlife Habitat
- Identify possible Eagle Scout and Gold Award projects
- Preserve Crane Farm
- Reclaim portions of the football field

"I think there should be more walking trails with scenic views. There should be nice places where you can have family picnics or to gather with friends" ~2010 Open Space and Planning Survey Respondent



SECTION 10: PUBLIC COMMENTS

Insert mini-action plan map here

In addition to the required support letters from the Planning Board, Board of Selectmen, and Southeast Regional Planning and Economic Development District, the Open Space Committee will request comments and support letters from various boards and committees. This will demonstrate that the planning process was done with local input and participation. Local buy-in to the

plan will help facilitate accomplishing the goals. We already have letters from the Division of Conservation Services for the conditional approval of the OSRP and a letter from the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program. The Conservation Commission, Open Space Committee, Recreation Commission, Land Preservation Society, The Nature Conservancy, and others will submit letters of support.

The Action Plan Map shows the areas to focus open space projects for the next seven years.

SECTIONS 11: REFERENCES AND 12: GLOSSARY

Any references used in the writing of the articles in the OSRP are listed in Section 11. Resources for additional information are also listed at the end of each section for ease of the reader. We've included a website when available or a phone number. This section is not a requirement of the OSRP but we have highlighted certain terminology throughout the OSRP and provided a glossary at the end in Section 12.

"Find a way to get people to read and understand what the plan (OSRP) is all about" ~2010 Open Space and Planning Survey Respondent

SECTION 13: ADA COMPLIANCE (THE SECTION 504 REPORT)

In efforts to make open space areas accessible to people with disabilities, all municipal open space land is evaluated in the Section 504 Report. Included in the report is a copy of the town's ADA compliance policy, designation of an ADA coordinator letter and actual evaluation forms for public property. The Conservation properties that are in

the evaluation contain trails and may contain a parking spot. Conservation areas that do not provide trails are not evaluated. The recreation parcels that are evaluated include the Everett Leonard Complex and the Burchill Fields. Any improvements to the included properties should include ADA accessible improvements.



Norton Open Space and Recreation Plan Summary



Norton Open Space Committee

70 East Main Street

Norton MA 02766

Phone: 508-285-0275

Fax: 508-285-0277

E-mail: conservation@nortonmaus.com



WHERE CAN I READ THE OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN (OSRP)?

The Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) is available for review at the Conservation Commission Office at 70 East Main Street, Norton MA 02766. Unfortunately due to the size of the OSRP, hard copies are not available for the general public. We can make a copy of the OSRP on a cd if requested.

The OSRP is available at the Norton Public Library for viewing as a reference book. Two copies have been distributed to the Library.

The OSRP is available on the town's website at <http://www.nortonma.org>. Click Departments, then Conservation Commission. The Open Space Plan will have a separate folder. The OSRP is broken up into separate sections so it is easier to download. There is a Table of Contents with page numbers to make searching for a specific topic easier. Happy Reading!

WHO WRITES THE OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN (OSRP)?

The Open Space Committee generally takes the lead on writing the OSRP. We request comments and suggestions from all boards and committees and residents alike. By writing the OSRP ourselves, the Open Space Committee is saving the town anywhere between \$50,000.00 and \$70,000.00.

The Open Space Committee is a seven-member committee created to update the town's Open Space and Recreation Plan and conduct open space projects. There are currently three available seats on the committee. Anyone interested in serving on the committee for a three-year term should contact Conservation Agent, Jennifer Carlino at 508-285-0275 or conservation@nortonmaus.com.