

SECTION 1 Plan Summary

In the 1999-2004 Open Space and Recreation Plan, the members of the Open Space Committee presented goals for meeting the open space and recreation needs of the residents of Norton and have recommended actions for achieving those goals. Although actions vary significantly (from creating a neighborhood playground to creating zoning which encourages agricultural land use, for example) it is clear that recreation and open space needs are closely linked. Members have identified the need to maintain, improve and expand upon existing conservation and recreation facilities and programs and to protect and promote the natural resources of Norton. Several of the goals proposed in the 1999-2004 Open Space and Recreation Plan were achieved. Where appropriate, the unrealized goals have been incorporated into the current document and new goals have been added.

SECTION 2 Introduction

Statement of Purpose

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 conservation and recreation on both local and regional levels. The document is a tool that can be used during permit reviews, long-term land use planning, grant writing and open space project planning. The Open Space Committee hopes that this plan will be used as an educational document to refresh our memories of the importance of our natural resources and how we are connected to them and have the ability to influence our world with our actions. This plan is a realistic look at the town's assets and the methods of obtaining the resources that we lack. It is a thorough discussion of the broad context of open space issues, a comprehensive view of Norton, and gives perspective to the magnitude of a task such as preserving the town's character and the residents' quality of life. This document is not a discussion of the town's efforts to fight the rising tide of development but a call to arms for residents to take an interest in shaping the future of the town, of their home, by using the current momentum of growth and development and converting that energy to create a positive influence. It identifies the great potential and opportunity for residents to effect positive changes.

This OSRP continues the themes from the previous plan of protecting the town's drinking water source and balancing development and growth with environmental protection. The OSRP demonstrates the interconnectedness of the natural physical landscape, like the geology and soils, with the man-made features, like impervious surfaces and storm water pollution, to illustrate the importance of and the uniqueness of our natural resources, like our aquifers. The OSRP also shows the paradoxes of human nature. It demonstrates the desire of residents to live in a rural community with farms and cows in the neighborhood and the subsequent realization of the distaste for the agricultural smells and sounds. It recognizes the desire in human nature to change the very things that attracted residents to a certain neighborhood. This OSRP attempts to identify the things we take for granted. In reading the OSRP, residents are reminded, in section 4, of the natural and physical world and how our behavior and actions can change it significantly. The discussion of storm water illustrates how one action can influence the nature and function of our environment. The OSRP invites residents to investigate their own behavior and evaluate consequences and influences that result from those behaviors. By being reminded of the basic functions of our environment and by thinking about the consequences, residents can make small changes that will have a domino effect. In a complex and fast-paced world filled with job, family and other related stresses, sometimes we just need a simple reminder.

Some of the major accomplishments of the past five years demonstrate the residents' commitment to preserving the character of the town. The Town of Norton has preserved over 604 acres of land through

acquisitions and over 557 acres of land through Conservation Restrictions. The Land Preservation Society of Norton has preserved over 221 acres of land and jointly holds 19 acres of land through Conservation Restrictions with the Conservation Commission. The Recreation Commission and the Norton Women of Today have worked diligently toward providing recreational opportunities for residents with improvements to existing parks and fields as well as the creation of the Tot Lot on West Main Street. The Open Space Committee hopes that this OSRP will inspire residents to become involved with open space projects. The plan is filled with interesting facts about the town. It contains an identification of land that should be preserved and strategies to complete those projects. It identifies a need for a more aggressive plan to purchase land for open space. It identifies the importance of the OSRP as we chart our course for the next five years. With this OSRP, we are better prepared to shape the future look of our community. We hope you will join us.

Planning Process and Public Participation

An ad-hoc committee of interested residents, town officials and staff, and members of a local land trust was formed in 2003 to update the Open Space and Recreation Plan. A survey of attitudes, concerns and opinions was publicized, distributed, collected and analyzed to determine current needs and goals. The survey was distributed at an Annual Town Meeting and was available at the Town Hall. The results were tabulated and published in a local newspaper. In addition, all committee meetings were posted and were open to the public at the Town Hall.

The draft 2004-2009 document was distributed, with a request for comments to members of town boards and commissions, staff, the Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District, Bristol County Conservation District II, the Director of the Division of Conservation Services, and a well-publicized public information meeting was conducted. All comments were reviewed and the document was revised where appropriate.

An identification of community needs and goals relating to open space planning was initiated by the Conservation Commission and Open Space Committee. Several town departments including the Town Manager, Board of Selectmen, Finance Committee, Town Clerk, Building Inspector, Water and Sewer Department, Highway Department and Planning Board made contributions to each section of the Open Space Plan. Other organizations also contributed to their respective sections of the plan including the Land Preservation Society of Norton, Norton Historical Society, and the Mansfield Natural Resources Trust. The Norton Grange, Norton Women of Today, and the Norton Youth Baseball and Softball League were included. Other towns/cities Open Space Plans were reviewed and, where applicable, were included in this Plan. Extensive community participation was incorporated.

The Open Space Committee consists of Jim Hendrickson, Chairman; Patricia MacLeod, Vice-Chairman; Dotti Freeman, Clerk; Joan Guerrero, Christopher Cox, Terri Kennedy and Jean Nardoizzi, and Jennifer Carlino, Conservation Agent. Joyce Marvel and Bill Hebard were also members of the committee and contributed to this document. Committee members first met August 14, 2003. Regular meetings were held on Thursdays in the Town Hall. The Committee distributed the Open Space and Recreation Planning Survey (enclosed) at the Fall Annual Town Meeting of October 8, 2003. Of the approximately 50 surveys distributed, twenty-six surveys were returned that evening. A press release for the surveys was printed in the Sun Chronicle, Norton Mirror, Taunton Gazette, Hometown Shopper, Norton Buzz, the town's website (nortonma.org) and on the local cable station. Copies of the survey were distributed to the Norton Public Library, Norton Post Office, Chartley Post Office and the Town Hall. A total of 84 surveys were completed and returned to the Conservation Office before December 1, 2003.

In addition, all residents were invited to an Open Space and Recreation Plan Brainstorming Session was held at the Norton Public Library November 20, 2003. Special invitations were sent to the Norton Women of Today, Land Preservation Society of Norton, Chartley Garden Club, Norton Grange, Council on Aging, Historic District Commission, Norton Historical Society, SRPEDD, Lake Winnecunnet Association, PTA, all departments, Norton Youth Baseball and Softball, Canoe River Aquifer Advisory Committee and others. Approximately 20 residents attended the session and contributed 30 projects to be included into the Open Space Plan. Results of the surveys and Brainstorming Session were tabulated and used to create a list of goals and objectives for this Plan. The survey results and list of goals and objectives were published in local newspapers in January 2004, the town's website and presented at a second public meeting in March 2004.

The second public meeting of March 11, 2004 reviewed the draft goals and objectives. Members of the Open Space Committee presented the goals and objectives with some examples of projects. Most attendees did not have too much to add except for the preservation of the land adjacent to Winslow Farm. At the March 11, 2004 public meeting, the Open Space Committee announced an artwork contest in order to encourage participation in the final product of the Open Space and Recreation Plan. Through the contest, the Open Space Committee hoped to select a new cover for the OSRP and use the remaining artwork within the document. Only two residents responded to the artwork contest.

The inspections for the Section 504 Report were completed on May 22, 2004. Members of the Open Space Committee, ADA Commission, Board of Selectmen, and Recreation Commission were invited to attend an inspection of conservation and recreation properties. Evaluation forms were completed for each property and included in this document.

In September 2004, the draft OSRP was sent to a number of organizations including Southeast Regional Planning and Economic Development District, Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program, Division of Conservation Services, ACEC Program Director Leslie Luchonock, State Archaeologist Brona Simon, Canoe River Aquifer Advisory Committee, Patrick Rogers (former Taunton River Watershed Basin Team Leader), Senator Jo Ann Sprague, Representative Michael Coppola, Representative Elizabeth Poirier, Norton Board of Selectmen, Planning Board, Water Department, Recreation Commission, Conservation Commission, Norton Historical Society, Norton Historic Commission, Finance Committee, Norton Library, former Open Space Committee members Joyce Marvel and Bill Hebard, Land Preservation Society of Norton, Norton Youth Baseball and Softball, Norton Women of Today, The Grange, Heather Graf, Bill Gouviea, Roger Marsan, Debi White of the Winslow Farm, Massachusetts Audubon Society, Manomet Center for Conservation Services, for comment.

In mid-October 2004, we received comments, suggestions and support letters from Manomet Center for Conservation Services, Brona Simon, the Norton Grange, the Land Preservation Society of Norton and the Norton Planning Board.