

14. OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION

During the Master Plan process, residents consistently identified the preservation of open space as a top priority for Wayland's future. Residents have differing, but overlapping reasons for wanting to conserve open space: some see it as a good way to limit growth and its impacts on water supply and schools; others wish to preserve Wayland's character and historic landscape; and still others are concerned about natural resources such as aquifers and plant and animal habitats. Although more than one-fourth of Wayland's land is already protected open space, there are several key undeveloped parcels of land that, if fully developed, would change the character of the Town. These parcels include the Mainstone Farm, the two golf courses, and the open lands on Lincoln Road near the Lincoln border. Preservation of these properties, in part or in whole, would require innovative partnerships between and among Town, state and federal agencies and programs, land use organizations, and private residents.

The open space recommendations in the Master Plan are consistent with those in the 2001 Open Space and Recreation Plan, although each plan addresses themes that the other does not, which is appropriate given the different focus and planning horizon of the two documents.

14.1 Protecting Additional Open Space

According to the MAPC build-out study conducted in 2000, see **Section 2.3**, only about 14% of the Town remained as unprotected, developable open space. Given past development rates in Wayland, this land could be consumed within a decade or two. Therefore, the Town must act quickly if it hopes to protect additional open space before there is little land left to protect.

14.1.1 Open Space Priorities

The first step of an open space protection program is to identify priorities for land conservation. The Open Space and Recreation Plan identifies as valuable any land that helps preserve the Town's semi-rural character or that contains or contributes to water bodies, wetlands, municipal water supply, wildlife habitat, or farmland. Since this list could encompass virtually all of the remaining developable parcels that are more than a few acres in size, the Master Plan proposes a somewhat narrowed set of criteria, which are shown in **Box 14-1**.

Box 14-1: Land Conservation Priorities

The following land conservation priorities are based on the 2001 Open Space and Recreation Plan as well as public input during the Master Plan process.

Priority	Rational
Farmland and open fields	Wayland is a mostly wooded town, so open fields are both visually interesting and ecologically important. They are also a key part of the Town's "heritage landscapes."
Land in the Sudbury River corridor	Land along the Sudbury River comprises a valuable ecological corridor, including outstanding migratory bird habitat. Undeveloped land along the river also helps maintain water quality by treating polluted runoff.
Key aquifer protection lands	Wayland depends upon its aquifers for drinking water, so these sources must be kept clean and abundant.
Large parcels	Large parcels (or small parcels adjacent to larger open spaces) generally offer more benefits for wildlife and recreation than small isolated parcels.

14.1.2 Land Protection Techniques

The second step of an open space protection program is to identify and implement techniques and funding mechanisms for protecting high-priority lands. Fortunately, Wayland's Conservation Commission and Open Space Committee have been pro-active in protecting open space in the past, and Town Meeting often has been willing to appropriate funds to purchase key parcels. **Box 14-2** discusses a variety of land protection techniques, many of which Wayland has already used successfully. These techniques include regulatory tools, various forms of state and local funding, and various ways of "leveraging" funds for maximum benefit.

Box 14-2: Tools for Land Conservation

A. Outright Acquisition

Outright acquisition provides the highest amount of protection for a piece of property. In addition, the group that purchases the property is able to control how it is used or managed. However, outright acquisition is often the most expensive technique, as well. Funding mechanisms for outright acquisition include:

1. Town funding from a one-time appropriation, an annual contribution to a land protection fund, an open space bond, or the Community Preservation Act.
2. Grant funding: for example, through the state's Self-Help program administered through the Division of Conservation Services.
3. Private conservation organization such as the Trustees of Reservations or Sudbury Valley Trustees.
4. Donations or "bargain sales" from landowners seeking to conserve their land or gain income tax benefits.

B. Restrictions and Easements

Restrictions and easements limit the future use of land by restricting or prohibiting development. However, the land continues to be owned and operated by a private owner. If the restriction on development is in perpetuity, this mechanism provides as much protection for land as outright acquisition. In addition, it can cost less than outright acquisition, offers more flexibility to meet the needs of the landowner, and allows the property to stay on the tax rolls. For example, a restriction could be negotiated that allows a landowner to continue to farm the land, live on the land, or even build another house on the property.

Funding can come from the same mechanisms as for outright acquisition. In addition, grant funding is available from various state programs including the Agricultural Preservation Restriction program, which purchases easements from farmers to restrict future development.

C. Temporary Protections

The State's Chapter 61, 61A, and 61B programs offer tax incentives for landowners to keep their property in active forestry, agricultural, and recreation use, respectively. However, these programs offer no long-term protection for land. See **Section 6.2.2** for additional discussion of these programs.

D. Other Tools

Other land conservation tools take advantage of the economics of land development to protect open space as part of new development projects (usually residential). As long as the open space is protected with a suitable conservation restriction, this form of open space protection is as good as outright acquisition. These tools include:

1. **Conservation Cluster Development:** Wayland's existing Conservation Cluster Development Bylaw has only been used once, but the Master Plan proposes changes to the bylaw to encourage its future use and effectiveness.
2. **Other Zoning Tools:** Wayland's existing Planned Development District bylaw and Senior and Family Housing Overlay District are two other development methods that conserve open space.
3. **Limited Development Projects:** In a limited development project, a conservation group (usually a nonprofit but sometimes a government body) first purchases a piece of land they would like to conserve as open space. Then, a portion of the site that is less important for conservation purposes is carved off and developed. The proceeds from this sale are used to repay money borrowed for the land purchase or used to fund future conservation efforts. The Paine Estate (Greenways) is an example of a Limited Development Project for which the Senior and Family Housing Overlay District was used.

These land protection techniques should be used in appropriate situations to help protect part or all of key unprotected open spaces in Wayland. **Box 14-3** suggests how these techniques might be applied to the Town's high priority open spaces.

Box 14-3: Possible Protection Strategies for Key Unprotected Open Space Lands

The following land protection techniques are suggested for protecting the most important natural, cultural, scenic, and recreational resource values of Wayland's unprotected open spaces at a minimum of cost to the Town.

Parcel(s)		Rationale
Mainstone Farm	Limited development, conservation restriction, and/or Conservation Cluster development, and/or outright acquisition (purchase), or a combination of options.	Some development on this site is acceptable (e.g., on the southern portion abutting the existing condo development), and outright purchase may be prohibitively expensive.
Wayland Country Club	Conservation restriction	This tract is an important link in the Sudbury River Corridor. A country club is an acceptable future use here, but further significant development should be avoided if possible.
Sandy Burr Country Club	Conservation restriction	Same as above.
Lincoln Road open lands	Outright acquisition, conservation restriction, and/or limited development project or a combination of options.	These lands merit protection for their water resource value and outstanding beauty. However, if funding for full protection is not possible, a limited development project with well-hidden estate lot(s) should be considered.
Other unprotected open space	Conservation Cluster development, outright acquisition, or a combination of options.	Smaller and less significant open space parcels should be sensitively designed if they are developed in the future.

14.1.3 Funding

Although the Town may be able to protect some open space with no monetary outlay (e.g., through the revised Conservation Cluster Development bylaw), the Master Plan recommends that the Town also consider the use of local funds for land conservation. There are several reasons for this recommendation. First, the Town's residents expressed strong support for land conservation during the Master Plan process. Second, land conservation supports several of the Master Plan goals, such as protecting the Town's water supply and preserving the Town's semi-rural character. Third, by balancing the Town's build-out potential with other needs such as affordable housing, land conservation reduces the chance that the Town would need to invest in expensive capital facilities in the future, such as a new school or new wells. Finally, local funds are needed as a "match" in order to access funds from various grant programs such as the state's Self-Help and Urban Self-Help grants for land acquisition.¹

The Town already has a funding source for open space protection through the CPA, which was adopted in 2001 and raised almost \$800,000 during its first year. Of this amount, at least 10% but no more than 80% may be used for open space protection efforts. This is an excellent funding source because it provides a steady stream of revenues that have been augmented by state matching funds for at least two years. However, it may not be adequate to fund all of the Town's future land conservation activities. The Town has two alternatives for raising the larger amount of money that it may need to purchase or protect some of the key unprotected open spaces listed in **Box 14-3**. One option, which the Town has done in the past, is to request a one-time Town Meeting appropriation whenever additional funds are needed for a particular purchase. While this has often worked in the past, appropriations are always subject to political and fiscal pressures, which may cause some parcels to be lost for lack of funding. In addition, it may be difficult to appropriate funds in the

¹ The state's Self-Help grant program reimburses cities and town for 52%-70% of the cost of purchasing eligible lands. These grants are awarded on a competitive basis and communities must have a current and approved Open Space and Recreation Plan in order to be eligible. Community Preservation Funds can be used as a match.

timeframe needed to make a land purchase, although the Town has been able to overcome this problem in the past by communicating with property owners before they are ready to sell.

A more aggressive option is to approve an open space bond, by bonding against future anticipated CPA revenues. There are a few reasons why this might be a good idea for Wayland. First, because there is so little unprotected open space left in Wayland, the Town may need to spend money in the next few years if it wants to protect such land, after which time there may be little or no more worthwhile conservation opportunities. A bond against future CPA revenues makes available a large amount of money right away rather than a slower trickle of funds annually over the next several years. Second, a bond recognizes that future Town residents will benefit from protected open space, and thus it is fair to ask them to share in the cost of protecting it. With the current low interest rates, the finance cost of a bond versus a cash appropriation is also relatively low. The Town could publicly discuss the merits of approving an open space bond before deciding how to proceed. Two factors to consider are how aggressive the Town wishes to be in protecting additional open space and how likely it is that Town Meeting would be willing to appropriate funds for future purposes in the absence of bond funds.

14.2 Trails and Outdoor Recreation

Wayland already offers numerous trails at the Town's various conservation areas as well as meandering foot paths along some of the Town's roads. This trail network is a wonderful resource for local residents, most of whom have at least one recreation trail within a mile of their home. However, the continued expansion of the Town's trail network and work to make these trails more accessible to residents is important. Five specific initiatives are suggested:

1. Examine the existing trail and circulation system.
2. As part of the development review process, seek permanent trail easements, parking, and linkages where appropriate. Identification of such linkages could be a required part of the Conservation Cluster Development planning process, which the Master Plan suggests be considered for any development of three or more units on five or more acres.
3. Continue to distribute and improve Wayland's Town-wide trails map to increase public knowledge and use of the Town's trails and open spaces. Also create a larger scale version of the map for planning purposes so as to highlight where gaps in the trail system exist and where key links could be made. With this information, volunteers can work with property owners whose land abut existing open space areas and trails to obtain permission to construct, maintain, or signpost trails through their property. Town boards can also use the map when reviewing development projects to determine whether the site contains a potential trail linkage, and if so, to request an easement.
4. Continue efforts to allow pedestrian access to the Weston and Hultman Aqueducts. These aqueducts provide an excellent opportunity to create long-distance walking trails and connect existing trails. While water quality concerns might preclude access to these aqueducts in the short term, the Town's continued collaboration with the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority to secure limited access to these areas (e.g., daytime access only) for the future and to address potential liability issues is important.

5. Continue to work with the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority, surrounding communities, and rails-to-trails advocacy organizations to establish a multi-use path along the rail right-of-way through Wayland Center. At the present time, Weston opposes creating the trail on that part of the right-of-way passing through Weston, but Wayland is not precluded from beginning work on the Town's part of the trail. The long-term vision for this corridor is a multi-use path similar in many respects to the Minuteman Bikeway—a regional asset for transportation, recreation, and even economic development.

Outdoor Recreation

As the demands for outdoor recreation facilities grow and as individual sports vary, the Town is continually in the process of evaluating the adequacy of its recreation facilities and planning for new ones. Recommendations for active recreation (e.g., indoor and outdoor sports fields and courts) are presented in **Section 15.5**, in the Public Facilities and Services recommendations. The greatest needs for passive recreation facilities, as identified during the Master Plan process, include an expansion of the trail system, additional picnic areas, and a public boat launch on Dudley Pond. Fulfillment of this final need is currently inhibited by problems with milfoil, an invasive aquatic weed that has clogged Dudley Pond and boating is limited to canoes, kayaks, and other non-motorized boats. To date, milfoil eradication efforts have been only partially successful.