

PLACE

Fall 2019

Brookline GreenSpace Alliance is a non-profit membership organization dedicated to the enhancement of open space in Brookline by supporting citizens in caring for their green spaces.



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Griggs Park Neighborhood Association
Lawton Park Community Garden
Larz Anderson Auto Museum
Linden Parks Association

Editor Marian Lazar

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President's Message

Brookline has prepared and accepted the 2018 Open Space Plan. BGSA appreciates the hard work and thoughtfulness that went into the preparation by the Conservation Commissioner and the Committee made up of a broad group of constituency organizations. The inventory, research and considerations of land use and climate impact will serve future planning and grant applications. Now, comes the challenge of implementation. Many of the Action items in the Plan have appeared in previous Plans; the ability of the Town to act on behalf of the environment and open space and recreational needs may be even harder now than in the past as land becomes more scarce and real estate values continue to escalate.

At the same time the Town now has a Sustainability Director and BGSA is strongly recommending that the Plan be a guide to her to prioritize and coordinate efforts to implement Action items in a timely fashion. Zoning, funding, and legislation should be aimed at fulfilling our goals as outlined in the 2018 Open Space Plan so that Brookline is moving in the direction of a healthier, more sustainable community ready to meet the challenges of climate change and increased density while protecting the beauty and recreational opportunities that green spaces can provide. **One long-overdue item is the creation of a funding mechanism for acquisition of open space needed for recreation, habitat and resiliency.**

We know the health of the environment is of urgent concern. Local governments are able to implement strategies that have significant impact. Brookline has a new tool to guide intelligent decision-making. Let's be smart enough to take the recommendations that have been carefully prepared and act!

Arlene Mattison, President



The 2010 Open Space Plan called for the renovation of many of Brookline's parks. Many of these goals have been met. Above; rehabilitation of Brookline Reservoir and Park. In the background, the historic gatehouse under reconstruction. On the cover: Fisher Hill Reservoir Park, another action plan item accomplished.

Open space and the Open Space Plan

In October, the Conservation Commission and the Parks and Open Space Division of the Department of Public Works, released the latest Open Space and Recreation Plan for the Town of Brookline. The Plan is available online at <https://www.brooklinema.gov/664/Open-Space-Plan>. This issue of PLACE will discuss the prominent features of the Plan, specifically those dealing with land protection. Some of the text is taken directly from the plan. Those sections are shown in **sans serif type**. Creation of the Plan makes Brookline eligible for state open space grant funding; it must be renewed every seven years. Once created, the Plan requires approval by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs and various Town Boards and Commissions.

Brookline began formal Open Space and Recreation Planning through the Conservation Commission in 1976. The past decades have demonstrated the need to preserve existing open space and create smaller open spaces and “green” features across a range of properties, from the few remaining large parcels that are open and natural, to the dense commercial and residential developments that are being built and proposed in Brookline. This Open Space and Recreation Plan, the Town’s eighth, is the Town’s first seven-year plan; each previous plan has been crafted around a five-year cycle.

Brookline Open Space 2018 builds on the successes, as well as the ongoing needs, identified in the previous seven Open Space and Recreation Plans, and also reflects issues and challenges that have emerged in the seven years since the last

Open Space and Recreation Plan. The Plan begins by laying out the community setting of Brookline, including a brief history of the Town’s development, open space patterns, and infrastructure.

There is an inventory of the Town’s environmental resources, including a detailed inventory of parks and sanctuaries. These sections are followed by a Needs Analysis, which was developed with significant input from the community. The Needs Analysis leads directly to the Goals and Objectives and an Action Plan, which have been designed to meet the open space needs identified by the community. The Open Space and Recreation Plan also includes maps, tables and figures that provide supporting information.

The first section after a brief introduction outlining the process of creating the Plan is a social and physical description of Brookline and a history of open space. Notable in this chapter is a table with results from a citizen survey from the 2006 Recreation Master Plan.

The next section is the Environmental Inventory and Analysis. This describes soils, geology and topography, as well as natural features such as wetlands and plant and animal life.

Table 2
Brookline Citizens' Priorities for New Facilities
Relative Importance Ranked on Scale of 1 (not important) to 4 (very important)

Facility	% Respondents Rating "4" (Very Important)	Mean Score for all Respondents
Open Space Acquisition, Preservation	48.1%	3.27
Parks - General	33.3	3.05
More Trails/Bike Paths	31.4	3.06
Fitness Center	29.7	2.89
More Sanctuaries/Nature Center	26.8	2.78
Outdoor Pool	26.1	2.70
Share with School Department	25.6	2.85
Performing Arts/Cultural Center	24.2	2.76
Parks - Organized Sports	21.3	2.63
Community Center	19.6	2.66
Indoor Leisure Play Pool	18.1	2.48
Picnic Areas/Pavilions	17.9	2.62
Indoor Ice Rink	17.1	2.44
Indoor Warm Therapy Pool	14.7	2.35
Amphitheater	11.8	2.32
More Gymnasiums	8.9	2.14
Skateboarding/In-Line Skating	7.2	1.83
BMX Bicycle Course	5.1	1.79
In-Line Hockey Court	1.9	1.54

Source: Brookline Parks, Open Space and Recreation Strategic Master Plan, June 2006 (Table 2.6)

The Plan contains an inventory of lands of conservation and recreation interest. It is prefaced with a discussion of open space protection.

Brookline’s open space system is a complex of publicly and privately owned land ranging from intensely managed landscapes to minimally managed woodlands and wetlands. The following inventory of open space parcels includes both lands legally protected for open space uses, and some lands without such legal protection. All open space parcels, whether private or public, protected or unprotected, have substantial value and provide incomparable services for Brookline residents and visitors. These open space assets provide environmental and public health benefits, and contribute to the aesthetic appeal of the community.

Publicly owned land in Brookline includes conservation areas, parks, playgrounds, recreation facilities, cemeteries, school yards, public works facilities and traffic circles. Many of these have legal safeguards to protect them as open spaces, but others are less protected or unprotected and could be used for different public purposes, such as additions to schools or Town buildings or could possibly be sold.

Privately owned lands which have open space values include agricultural and recreational land, institutional lands, and private estates of significant size. While the open space value of some of these private properties is protected, most is not.

Open space in Massachusetts may be protected under various legal principles and laws, resulting in different levels of security from alteration. These principles and laws are subject to court interpretation affecting lands throughout the Commonwealth. Most “protections” for publicly owned open space are not absolute but describe conditions or procedures by which open spaces can be converted to another use. Depending on its terms, a gift of land to a municipality for open space purposes may be treated differently than purchases of land by that town or city. Use of federal or state funds by a municipality to acquire or develop land for conservation or recreational uses affords “protection” by imposing strict requirements on any conversion to other uses. For a detailed discussion of land protection options please see pages 55-59 of the plan.

In preparation for the 2018 Open Space and Recreation Plan, research was completed for each public open space parcel. This research included locating the deed, determining the results of the Town Meeting vote, and identifying any other information in Town records relating to how the parcel was acquired by the Town. Where available, funding sources for projects were identified and a site’s historic significance was noted. This information has been summarized and included in the narrative portion of the Inventory entitled Deed/Title/Restrictions for each parcel. The documents themselves, such as the deeds and Town Meeting votes, were copied and collected in binders located in the Parks Department Office in Town Hall and are available for public inspection.

The body of this section is a careful inventory of all open space parcels in the Town.

For this Plan, the definition of open space draws on the new Brookline Conservation Restriction Policy. Open space is land that is substantially in a natural state or landscaped in such a manner that it provides some or all of the open space values listed at the left:

The Needs Analysis section follows the inventory and is divided into Resource Protection Needs and Community Needs. First among resource protection needs is acquisition of open space.

Open space has a significant public benefit and acquisition of additional open space is necessary in Brookline. Throughout the public meetings for this Plan it was clear there was a strong desire from the public for Brookline to develop a proactive planning process to enable the Town to act quickly should a parcel with significant open space potential become available for purchase or be at imminent risk of loss to development. There was also strong support for creating new open space when there are opportunities to do so, such as during redevelopment of private property or

Table 4
**PRIORITY UNPROTECTED OPEN SPACE
Parcels of 5+ acres**

Allendale Farm
Beaver Country Day School
Bournewood
Chestnut Hill Benevolent Association
Dexter School
Hancock Village
Hellenic College
Holy Transfiguration
Northeastern University (Parson’s Field)
Pine Manor
The Country Club

Open Space Values

- Provides
 - a. habitat for native plants and animals
 - b. "green features" or environmental services in built or urbanized spaces
 - c. a myriad of public benefits
- Protects
 - a. water bodies or wetland resources
 - b. water quality or contributes to stormwater control
 - c. significant trees
- Can be sustained for conservation purposes in an undisturbed or minimally managed condition
- Can be utilized for farming, forestry, or recreational use
- Preserves a scenic or historic view
- Is adjacent to land with open space value

street improvements. Even small open spaces such as pocket parks, vegetated traffic islands and linear tree lawns can play a valuable role in the Town's overall mix of open spaces. These small open spaces are particularly important for residential areas which do not have parks and gathering places near homes, such as in parts of South Brookline and in dense developments. These pocket parks provide significant benefits to residents, and are typically used heavily by neighbors in particular. In addition, they may have value to wildlife for habitat and foraging, or resting during migration. Next steps for further developing the Town's network of open space include:

- Establishing criteria and priorities for open space acquisition;
- Planning for a range of funding sources;
- Establishing agreements with owners of significant open spaces regarding potential protection of these open spaces;
- Proactively planning to promote protection of open spaces that are not feasible for Town acquisition;
- Creating new open space, especially in areas where there is little existing open space such as dense neighborhoods.

In addition to conservation and recreation values, open space is increasingly important to Brookline as the climate changes. Preserving open space, both larger and smaller spaces, is an important element in Brookline's efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

This category of the Needs Analysis also includes Other Protection of Publicly Owned Parcels Without Open Space Protection, Protection of Privately Owned Properties With Open Space Values and Zoning for Open Space.

Other resource protection needs are Greenways and Wildlife Corridors under the heading of Greenways. Wildlife corridors are a key component of a functioning urban ecosystem. Wildlife corridors may be large and diverse enough to support wildlife on their own, or they may function primarily as connections between larger areas that support wildlife. If the patches of larger habitat areas become isolated from one another as the narrow connecting wildlife corridors are lost, their ability to support wildlife may be lost.

Greenways are another type of Green Corridor. Greenways are routes that generally follow a street, roadway, or path and are characterized by their vegetation and scenic value as well as their amenity for non-motorized travel, such as pedestrians and bicycles. Greenways have sufficient buffers of trees and vegetation to provide shade, cooling, stormwater management, air and water quality improvement, and visual and sensory pleasure and safe travel for all users. Greenways help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to climate change by providing enhanced accessibility between town amenities, and encouraging walking or cycling as favorable alternatives to driving. As such, they can also reduce traffic congestion and conflicts related to insufficient parking.

The Needs Analysis described in Section 7 points to specific goals and objectives for the next seven years. In order for the Town to achieve these goals and objectives, Town Meeting, many boards and departments, community organizations, businesses and citizens must be proactive in implementing the necessary actions.

The following goals and objectives have been established based on the needs identified in Section 7, which reflect comments from public hearings, comments of various Town boards and departments, and the deliberations of the Open Space and Recreation Plan Committee and its working groups.

Similar goals are stated in the Plan for Green Corridors, Wildlife Corridors, Habitat, Wetlands, the Urban Forest and Recreational Land.

RESOURCE PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT GOALS

Unprotected Open Space

GOAL I: INCREASE PROTECTION OF PRIORITY UNPROTECTED OPEN SPACES AS IDENTIFIED IN THE 2018 OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN.

GOAL II: IDENTIFY AND PRIORITIZE ADDITIONAL PARCELS WITH SIGNIFICANT OPEN SPACE VALUE.

GOAL III: PROTECT OPEN SPACE BY ADHERING TO BROOKLINE'S "NO NET LOSS" PRINCIPLE.

GOAL IV: USE CONSERVATION RESTRICTION POLICY TO PROTECT LAND WITH CONSERVATION AND RESOURCE VALUES.

GOAL V: USE ZONING TOOLS TO PROTECT OPEN SPACE.

SEVEN YEAR ACTION PLAN

This Seven-Year Action Plan is based on the Goals and Objectives set forth in the preceding section. The accomplishment of this Plan will depend upon active support from a variety of parties, including many outside of Brookline government. Nevertheless, because this is a Town plan, the Seven-Year Action Plan identifies only Town boards, commissions, committees or departments to which responsibility is assigned for initiating or monitoring progress on individual action items. The Plan also identifies target dates for the accomplishment of action items. Some action items will require continuing attention and will be ongoing until the next Open Space and Recreation Plan. **An Open Space and Recreation Plan Monitoring Committee, led by the Conservation Commission and Brookline GreenSpace Alliance, will annually track progress on the Action Plan.**

RESOURCE PROTECTION GOALS

Unprotected Open Space

GOAL I: Increase protection of priority unprotected open spaces as identified in the 2018 Open Space and Recreation Plan

Objective 1. Communicate with property owners of priority unprotected open spaces to discuss potential protection of these open spaces.

Actions: .

Set up meetings with each property owner of the priority unprotected open spaces to discuss possible protection strategies. Conservation Commission (2019)

Objective 2. As appropriate, broaden community awareness of the status of priority unprotected open space.

Actions:

1. Work with the Select Board to develop a cooperative committee structure to identify appropriate protection measures for open space and new candidates for protection. Select Board, Conservation Commission, EDAB, Planning Board, DPW, School Department (2019)

2. Establish standards for prioritizing parcels for acquisition of open space. Select Board, Conservation Commission, EDAB, Planning Board, DPW, School Department (2020)

Objective 3. As appropriate, include protection of these and other unprotected open spaces in larger community planning processes.

Actions:

1. Work with the Select Board and appropriate committees to draft procedures for the processes when considering the acquisition of open spaces. Select Board, Conservation Commission, Parks and Open Space Division, Assessors Department (2022)

2. Develop and prepare the guidelines for presentation to the community through a series of community and neighborhood meetings. Conservation Commission (2023)

3. Present a final set of guidelines to the Select Board for their review and approval. Conservation Commission (2024)

Objective 4. Identify additional measures, approaches or incentives to protect priority unprotected open spaces.

Actions:

1. Establish outreach protocol. Conservation Commission (2020)

2. Reach out to private owners utilizing outreach protocol. Conservation Commission (2021)

3. Identify potential mechanisms to prevent loss of unprotected open space such as a land bank. Conservation Commission (2022)

GOAL II: Identify and prioritize additional parcels with significant open space value

Objective 1. Work with the Committee set forth in Goal I Objective 2, Action 1 to identify parcels with significant open space value.

Actions:

1. Identify parcels using a comprehensive approach to maximize open space values. Select Board, Conservation Commission, EDAB, Planning Board, DPW, School Department (2022)

Objective 2. Formalize procedures to determine whether parcels available for acquisition are significant to the interests of open space, including designating who will decide and how the decision will be made.

Actions:

1. Establish a Committee to create a specific review process, including a decision tree. Conservation Commission, Select Board, Park and Recreation Commission (2022)

Objective 3. Establish and follow specific protocols for reaching out to private owners of significant parcels.

Actions:

1. Work with Committee, as set forth in Goal I Objective 2 (Action 1), to establish an outreach protocol for private property owners. Conservation Commission, Select Board, Park and Recreation Commission (2022)

GOAL III: Protect open space by adhering to Brookline’s “No net Loss” principle

Objective 1. Continue tracking the status of publicly owned parcels in the Inventory of Lands of Conservation and Recreation Interest (Section 5) in light of legal or policy developments affecting the status of their protection.

Actions:

1. Develop a working group that includes the appropriate representation from various Town departments to identify those parcels under their respective controls that are not currently under Article 97 protection. Planning and Community Development Department, Conservation Commission, Assessors Department, Parks and Open Space Division, Select Board (2021)

2. Identify the most appropriate method of protection for each of the parcels. Planning and Community Development Department, Conservation Commission, Assessors Department, Parks and Open Space Division, Select Board (2023)

Objective 2. Increase protection of publicly owned open space that is not currently protected from development by placing under Article 97 protection, or other appropriate protection.

Actions:

1. Place the appropriate level of protection on the parcels that have been identified. Planning and Community Development Department, Conservation Commission, Assessors Department, Parks and Open Space Division, Select Board (2024)

2. Ensure that all Town parks and open spaces are recorded at the Registry of Deeds as protected under Article 97 or other appropriate protection. Parks and Open Space Division (2020)

3. Consider protection for small open spaces and corridors such as greenways or green streets. Parks and Open Space Division, Conservation Commission (2021)

GOAL IV: Use Conservation Restriction Policy to protect land with conservation and resource values.

Objective 1. Encourage conservation restrictions with public access, including areas of open space and potential for green features within the built environment.

Actions:

1. Adapt current Conservation Restriction Policy to encourage conservation restrictions on non-traditional parcels. Conservation Commission (2021)

“Well-designed accessible open space is important to support a physically active and healthy population....improve air quality....reduce the negative impacts of the urban heat-island effect....reduce stormwater pollution and flooding....mitigate the effects of climate change on flora and fauna...and help reduce energy consumption.”

*Open Space 2018
Open Space and Recreation
Plan for the Town of Brookline*

Brookline GreenSpace Alliance agrees that, “It is critical for the Town to continue a high standard of care and maintenance of its open space resources.”



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Brookline GreenSpace Alliance believes the Plan's goals and action plans for land protection, watershed, wetlands, habitat and parklands are vital to our Town. We need the commitment and resolve of our elected leaders and professional staff to have a positive impact on our quality of life and the environment, and to mitigate the threats of climate change.

We need citizen stewardship to see that progress is made.

Join with us.

Objective 2. Encourage conservation restrictions for land with significant conservation value even when public access is not an option.

Actions:

1. Ensure new development and redevelopment projects include conservation restrictions whenever possible to ensure the publicly-accessible open space is protected. Conservation Commission, Planning and Community Development Department, Building Department (ongoing)

2. Ensure that conservation restrictions are considered during large scale planning processes. Conservation Commission, Planning and Community Development Department, Building Department (2020)

GOAL V: Use zoning tools to protect open space.

Objective 1. Maintaining open communication channels with the Planning and Community Development Department will ensure better protection of open space and green features in the context of development and Town planning efforts.

Actions:

1. Work with the Planning and Community Development Department to review opportunities for additional protections. Conservation Commission, Planning and Community Development Department (2021)

Objective 2. Consider use of overlay districts, buffer zones and/or cluster zoning to protect open space.

Actions:

1. Work with the Planning and Community Development Department to review opportunities for additional protections. Conservation Commission, Planning and Community Development Department (2023)

2. Work with the Planning and Community Development Department to effect changes to the zoning districts of the Town where it is appropriate to do so. Conservation Commission, Planning and Community Development Department (2023)

Objective 3. Modify the Zoning By-Law to encourage the protection or creation of open space, trees and green features.

Actions:

1. Modify the Zoning ordinance to require projects over a certain size to meet specific goals using standardized tools such as the US Green Building Council's Sustainable Sites rating system. Conservation Commission, Planning and Community Development Department (2024)