

Open Space and Recreation Plan

2022 - 2029

Town of Wellesley, MA



preferred by elderly persons.

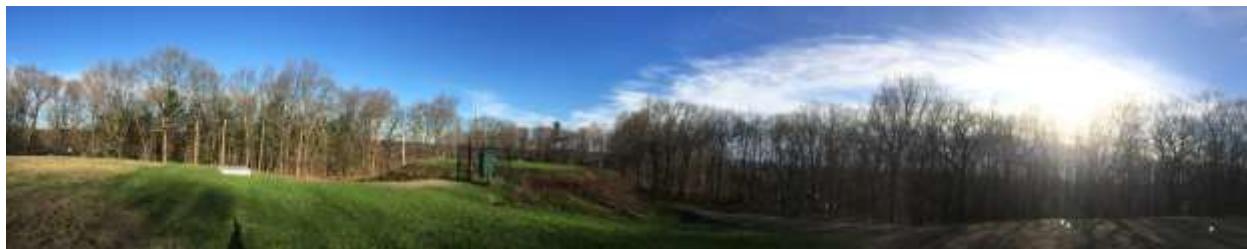


Photo Credit: Michael McManus



8. Goals and Objectives

The Community Vision and goals outlined in Section 6 and the Needs Analysis described in Section 7 point to 10 specific goals and subsequent objectives for the next seven years. For the Town to achieve these goals and objectives, Town Meeting, many boards and departments, community organizations and businesses, volunteer organizations, and citizens must be proactive in implementing the resulting 7-Year Action Plan outlined in Section 9. The following goals and objectives have been established based on the needs identified in Section 7, which reflect comments from public hearings, survey data, and findings from the Wellesley Unified Plan. The deliberations of the Natural Resource Commission, its subcommittees, and input from recreation, open space, and land use-related boards and Town departments have also been considered. Objectives are listed in the order of priority as identified by survey respondents.

Goal 1: Restore, preserve, and enhance open space

Objectives:

- A. Provide and maintain sufficient natural areas so important plant and wildlife species can be sustained.
- B. Continue to protect, enhance, and seek to increase open space in Wellesley. Maintain and improve the quality and health of the natural infrastructure of Wellesley.
- C. Preserve scenic, historic, geologic, and ecological features of the Town.
- D. Encourage and enforce protection of wetlands buffers along all streams, rivers, and ponds.
- E. Plan for flooding and severe weather events.
- F. Participate in regional initiatives such as Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness and Charles River Climate Compact to support and amplify efforts to mitigate climate change.

Goal 2: Protect, enhance, and restore Wellesley's sensitive land, water, and wetland resources

Objectives:

- A. Minimize the impact of fertilizers, pesticides, and other chemical lawn and landscape treatments on the Town's groundwater and surface water bodies.
- B. Protect Morses Pond, Lake Waban, and Longfellow Pond as primary water supply areas and passive recreational resources.
- C. Enforce laws, bylaws, and regulations to protect groundwater, wetlands, and surface water bodies.
- D. Protect open space and wetlands from encroachment, illegal use, and dumping. Minimize the impact of wastewater disposal on the Town's groundwater and surface water bodies.
- E. Carefully manage floodplain development to protect and maintain water quality and prevent flooding.
- F. Continue to restore and manage ponds to avoid eutrophication. Engage in regional efforts to protect water resources.
- G. Minimize the impact of salt on the Town's groundwater and surface water bodies.
- H. Continue to promote awareness of the environmental damage caused by stormwater runoff and increased impervious surfaces and regulate development to minimize pollution impacts.
- I. Enact new bylaws and regulations where necessary.

Goal 3: Expand and protect the tree canopy.

Objectives:

- A. Protect and enhance tree canopy on conservation and private lands.
- B. Enforce existing Town and state tree protection regulations.
- C. Educate residents on the importance and benefits of trees and the tree canopy.
- D. Build capacity and set numeric targets to protect the Town's tree canopy.
- E. Use data, information, and technology to understand the Town tree canopy.

Goal 4: Prevent natural resources and human health from hazardous materials and environmentally harmful practices.

Objectives:

- A. Assist residents in managing household hazardous materials in environmentally responsible ways.
- B. Encourage organic lawn care by private property owners and local academic institutions and promote the Town's Integrated Pest Management Policy.
- C. Be proactive on the campaign to fix gas leaks and plant new trees away from gas leaks. Encourage native plantings and pollinator gardens.
- D. Continue plastic reduction efforts. Promote awareness of the environmental damage caused by stormwater runoff and increased impervious surfaces and regulate development to minimize pollution impacts.
- E. Discourage excessive leaf blowing and promote leaving the leaves.
- F. Encourage the use of electric lawn care equipment.
- G. Discourage uplighting trees on private property to protect dark skies and Wellesley's nocturnal flora and fauna.
- H. Encourage the use of rain barrels and discourage overwatering lawns.
- I. Encourage citizen science projects to identify and record species to measure our Town's biodiversity.
- J. Install wildlife cameras.
- K. Maintain a map of residents practicing organic lawn care.

Goal 5: To address the accelerating climate change crisis by encouraging sustainable policy and practice within the Town government and throughout the community.

Objectives:

- A. Ensure that all new projects employ green infrastructure systems.
- B. Continue and expand existing Town efforts to reduce the waste stream and expand materials reuse and recycling (including food and yard waste composting) through Wellesley's 3R Working Group.
- C. Encourage the planting of native species to enhance biodiversity.
- D. Explore and implement efforts to conserve water resources.
- E. Encourage Town efforts to electrify vehicle and landscaping equipment and create "Green Zones." Utilize the Sustainable Building Guidelines when constructing facilities on parkland.
- F. Participate in the Town's Climate Action Planning process.
- G. Work across town departments to implement Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) recommendations.

Goal 6: Promote stewardship through environmental education outreach and programs.

Objectives:

- A. Protect woodlands, contiguous lands, and waterbodies. Provide residents with opportunities to learn about and employ sustainable efforts. Encourage community volunteer projects to promote stewardship of natural resources. Work in partnership with local and regional conservation groups to amplify messaging and efforts. Protect wellheads and develop a wellhead protection relates to open space and recreation. .

- B. Establish a tree nursery.
- C. Expand budget for environmental education.
- D. Create naturalist award.

Goal 7: Create resource management strategies to protect and increase open space and environmental resources.

Objectives:

- A. Expand and protect sensitive environmental resources through land acquisition and other approaches.
- B. Optimize management of open space and recreation facilities through improved systems, records, and communication.
- C. Classify public and private open space according to availability for use, appropriate intensity of use.
- D. Continue to update the Natural Resource Commission website with information about management objectives, resources, wetland protection, pesticide awareness, and trails.

Goal 8: Promote the awareness and use of Wellesley's parks, recreation facilities, and open space resources for the use and enjoyment of the public.

Objectives:

- A. Work with institutional partners to protect open space and provide additional recreational facilities where appropriate.
- B. Encourage use of natural open space areas and recreation facilities, consistent with their carrying capacity and intended functions.
- C. Publicize the Town's open space resources and recreation facilities.
- D. Sponsor Town events to promote utilization and appreciation of open space resources to foster resident's sense of identification and ownership of the land.
- E. Develop permitting parameters.

Goal 9: Ensure that open space and recreational programs continue to meet the needs of the Town.

Objectives:

- A. Preserve and enhance the quality of existing recreational facilities through careful maintenance and planning practices.
- B. Optimize passive and active recreational opportunities and protect sensitive environmental resources through land acquisition and other approaches.
- C. Balance to meet as many needs as possible while preserving and maintaining town resources for future use.
- D. Seek management options that will allow uses of town-owned, as well as private active recreational space, to fit and meet the changing needs of Wellesley's changing population.
- E. Create a recreational vision that will reflect collaboration between the Town's various landowners.

Goal 10: Provide opportunities for safe and enjoyable walking and bicycle access throughout the Town.

Objectives:

- A. Expand and enhance the Town-wide trails network that interconnects and traverses open space.
- B. Maintain the trails network and existing trails through park and woodlands.
- C. Promote the development of bicycle routes through the Town, as part of the regional transportation system.
- D. Pursue greater connectivity of open spaces on a local and regional level.



Photo Credit: Michael McManus

9. Seven-Year Action Plan

This Seven-Year Action Plan is based on the Goals and Objectives set forth in the preceding section, and feedback received from the public survey and forum. The success of this plan will depend upon active support from a variety of parties, including many outside of Wellesley 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. Many action items will require continuing attention and will be ongoing until the next Open Space and Recreation Plan Update. Priorities indicate what priority was given to each goal and subsequent action step from the survey. For instance, “Protecting trees, limiting tree removal during development, and ensuring proactive vegetation management” was the second highest importance for Goal one, which was considered the most important goal (shown as 1-2, below).

Table 17: Wellesley 7-Year Action Plan

Action Plan						
Goal	Objectives	Actions	Responsible Party	Priority	Time Frame	Cost/ Funding Source
1: Restore, preserve, and enhance open space	A. Provide and maintain sufficient natural areas so that important plant and wildlife species can be sustained.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protecting trees, limiting tree removal during development, and ensuring proactive vegetation management. 	NRC/Building Department	1-2	ASAP	50K/year
	B. Continue to protect, enhance, and seek to increase open space in Wellesley. Maintain and improve the quality and health of the natural infrastructure of Wellesley.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encouraging densification in appropriate areas. 	Planning Board	1-3	5 years	
	C. Preserve scenic, historic, geologic and ecological features of the Town.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limiting development and/or the effect of development near wetlands, surface water features, and wildlife habitat areas. 	Wetlands Protection Committee	1-1	ASAP	
	D. Encourage and enforce protection of wetlands buffers along all streams, rivers and ponds.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protecting existing protected lands by enforcing leash laws and minimizing harmful human practices 	NRC/SB/Schools/Library	1-4	3 years	
	E. Plan for flooding and severe weather events.					

	F. Participate in regional initiatives such as Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness and Charles River Climate Compact to support and amplify efforts to mitigate climate change.					
2: Protect, enhance, and restore Wellesley's sensitive land, water, and wetland resources	<p>A. Minimize the impact of fertilizers, pesticides, and other chemical lawn and landscape treatments on the Town's groundwater and surface water bodies.</p> <p>B. Protect Morses Pond, Lake Waban, and Longfellow Pond as primary water supply areas and as passive recreational resources.</p> <p>C. Enforce laws, bylaws, and regulations to protect groundwater, wetlands, and surface water bodies.</p> <p>D. Protect open space and wetlands from encroachment, illegal use, and dumping. Minimize the impact of wastewater disposal on the Town's groundwater and surface water bodies.</p> <p>E. Carefully manage floodplain development to protect and maintain water quality and to prevent flooding.</p> <p>F. Continue to restore and manage ponds to avoid eutrophication. Engage in regional efforts to protect water resources.</p> <p>G. Minimize the impact of salt on the Town's groundwater and surface water bodies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education or awareness initiatives to engage residents and encourage environmentally friendly behaviors. 	NRC/Climate Action Committee	2-2	FY23	New Staff Operating Budgets
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthening enforcement of existing regulations. 	Permitting Boards	2-3	ASAP	Staff Operating, consulting budgets
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focusing on Lake Waban, Morses Pond, and Longfellow Pond and/or drinking water resources. 	DPW/Water DEPARTMENT, Recreation	2-1	ASAP	Grants for PFAS, CPC
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encouraging more environment-friendly lawn care practices with most favorable toward the idea of limiting harmful applications. 	NRC	2-4	ASAP	CPC funds, MVP grants

	H. Continue to promote awareness of the environmental damage caused by storm water runoff and increased impervious surfaces and regulate development to minimize pollution impacts. I. Enact new bylaws and regulations where necessary.				
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3: Expand and protect the tree canopy.	A. Protect and enhance tree canopy on conservation and private lands. B. Enforce existing Town and state tree protection regulations. C. Educate residents on the importance and benefits of trees and the tree canopy. D. Build capacity and set numeric targets to protect the Town's tree canopy. E. Use data, information and technology to understand the Town tree canopy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stronger enforcement of existing tree regulations to prevent existing trees from being removed. Comments also focused on pairing enforcement with stricter penalties for illegal tree removals. 	Building Dept.	7-1	ASAP	Building Operating Budget
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raising awareness of tree canopy benefits and educating residents to encourage more tree plantings (especially on private property). 	NRC/Planning	7-2	FY23-24	NRC Operating Budget
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tree planting days and tree giveaways for residents. 	NRC	7-4	Ongoing	Capital Budget
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More actions to protect the tree canopy by mapping, quantifying benefits, and establishing metrics and removing invasive species and planting native species. 	NRC	7-3	FY23-24	Tree Bylaw Funds

4: Prevent damage to natural resources and human health from hazardous materials and environmentally harmful practices.	A. Assist residents to manage household hazardous materials in environmentally responsible ways.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mechanisms to encourage environmentally friendly behaviors. Education and incentives were frequently mentioned. Respondents also mentioned increasing the number of hazardous waste disposal days to facilitate safe disposal. 	Zoning, DPW Board of Health, NRC	7-2	5 years	NRC Operating Budget, MVP grants
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	<p>B. Encourage the use of organic lawn care by private property owners and local academic institutions and promote the Town's Integrated Pest Management Policy.</p> <p>C. Be proactive on the campaign to fix gas leaks and plant new trees away from gas leaks. Encourage native plantings and pollinator gardens.</p> <p>D. Continue plastic reduction efforts. Promote awareness of the environmental damage caused by storm water runoff and increased impervious surfaces and regulate development to minimize pollution impacts.</p> <p>E. Discourage excessive leaf blowing and promote leaving the leaves.</p> <p>F. Encourage the use of electric lawn care equipment.</p> <p>G. Discourage uplighting trees on private property to protect dark skies and Wellesley's nocturnal flora and fauna.</p> <p>H. Encourage the use of rain barrels and discourage overwatering lawns.</p> <p>I. Encourage citizen science projects to identify and record species to measure our Town's biodiversity.</p> <p>J. Install wildlife cameras.</p> <p>K. Maintain map of residents practicing organic lawn care.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on more environment-friendly lawn care practices. Comments proposed limiting and/or banning the use of loud, gas-powered lawn equipment (especially leaf blowers). Other comments focused on discouraging environmental harmful chemicals and encouraging native plantings. Increasing the number of hazardous waste disposal days to facilitate safe disposal, as well as educating residents about the environmental impacts of hazardous materials. Stronger enforcement and consequences for residents who violate Town regulations and by-laws. 	NRC, DPW	7-1	2-3 Years	NRC Operating Budget, MVP grants
			NRC, DPW	7-4	3 years	DPW Operating Budget, Board of Health
			NRC, Zoning, Building, Planning, Police	7-3	3 years	Building Department

<p>5: Take action to address the accelerating climate change crisis by encouraging sustainable policy and practice within Town government and throughout the community.</p>	<p>A. Ensure that all new projects employ green infrastructure systems.</p> <p>B. Continue and expand existing Town efforts to reduce the waste stream and expand materials reuse and recycling (including food and yard waste composting) through Wellesley's 3R Working Group.</p> <p>C. Encourage the planting of native species to enhance biodiversity.</p> <p>D. Explore and implement efforts to conserve water resources.</p> <p>E. Encourage Town efforts to electrify vehicle and landscaping equipment and create "Green Zones." Utilize the Sustainable Building Guidelines when constructing facilities on parkland.</p> <p>F. Participate in the Town's Climate Action Planning process.</p> <p>G. Work across town departments to implement Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) recommendations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encouraging environmentally responsible behaviors through incentives, education, and/or assistance. Composting, recycling, and trash was mentioned by multiple respondents. 	NRC, DPW, 3R Working Group	5-2	3 years	NRC, DPW budgets
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Instituting new regulations or focusing on enforcement of existing regulations, although three respondents questioned the need for more regulations and/or enforcement. 	NRC, Building, Zoning Planning	5-4	3 years	Building Department, Zoning and WPC
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementing sustainable practices within the Town's departments or on Town-owned land, in part to lead by example. 	DPW, NRC	5-1	Ongoing	DPW Field Maintenance budget
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More electric vehicle infrastructure/adoption and addressing idling issues with school parent-student drop-offs. 	Residents	5-3	5 years	Green Community grants, Capital
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use demonstration sites and education outreach to raise awareness of benefits of native species. 	NRC, Residents, Community Groups	5-5	2-3 Years	NRC Capital, CPC

6: Promote stewardship through environmental education outreach and programs.	A. Protect woodlands, contiguous lands, and waterbodies. Provide residents with opportunities to learn about and employ sustainable efforts. Encourage community volunteer projects to promote stewardship of natural resources. Partner with local and regional conservation groups to amplify messaging and efforts. Protect wellheads and develop a wellhead protection plan as it relates to open space and recreation. Establish a tree nursery. Expand budget for environmental education. Create naturalist award. Protect woodlands, contiguous lands, and waterbodies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on actions and engagement that would change Wellesley residents' behavior. Recommendations include incentivizing environmental protection by private actors, community education, community stewardship events, and better enforcement. 	NRC, DPW, Select Board	10-1	Ongoing/ ASAP	NRC Operating Budget
	B. Establish a tree nursery.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support increased environmental programming in K-12. Many recommended that environmental programming include younger grades to foster stewardship from an early age. 	NRC, Schools	10-3	2-3 years	NRC /Schools Operating budgets
	C. Expand budget for environmental education.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Planting more trees and plant species that provide benefits to local pollinators and protecting existing natural resources. Changing Town mowing policies to protect pond buffers and collaboration with local institutions was also mentioned. 	NRC	10-2	3-5 years	NRC Capital Budget
	D. Create naturalist award.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need for regional or institutional partnerships and increasing technical capacity to support the goal and/or its objectives 	Select Board, NRC, Planning	10-4	3-5 years	Select Board Operating budget
7: Create resource management strategies to protect and increase open space and environmental resources.	A. Expand and protect sensitive environmental resources through land acquisition and other approaches.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land acquisition and/or preventing development from destroying natural habitat. Partner with local private land trusts to pursue land acquisition. 	NRC, Planning	9-1	3-5 years	EEOAA grants, Capital Budget

<p>B. Optimize management of open space and recreation facilities through improved systems, records, and communication.</p> <p>C. Classify public and private open space according to availability for use, appropriate intensity of use.</p> <p>D. Continue to update the Natural Resource Commission website with information about management objectives, resources, wetland protection, pesticide awareness, and trails.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regulation and enforcement, including changes to existing zoning regulations to encourage more natural space. 	Zoning, Building, NRC, Planning	9-2	3-5 years	Building, Zoning, WPC budgets
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proactive communication strategies and existing methods to engage community members 	Town wide	9-3	ASAP/Ongoing	Select Board, NRC Operating Budgets
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate and address planning gaps and use existing studies, if any, to inform actions. 			2-3 years	Planning Department budget
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access restrictions at Lake Waban and Wellesley College's role. 	Planning, NRC, Select Board	9-4	2-3 years	NRC/ Select Board
		NRC, Select Board	9-5	2-3 years	

<p>8: Promote the awareness and use of Wellesley's parks, recreation facilities, and open space resources for the use and enjoyment of the public.</p>	<p>A. Work with institutional partners to protect open space and provide additional recreational facilities where appropriate.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing community engagement, encouraging use of active and passive recreation spaces through events and education, and increasing outreach to solicit diverse community input on OSRP topics. 	NRC, Select Board, local Sustainability groups	8-2	2-3 years	NRC, Recreation Dept. Budget
	<p>B. Encourage use of natural open space areas and recreation facilities, consistent with their carrying capacity and intended functions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adding recreation facilities, specifically a Town pool and dog park. 	Recreation Department, NRC, School Committee	8-3	2-3 years	NRC Capital Budgets
	<p>C. Publicize the Town's open space resources and recreation facilities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make a decision about athletic field lighting 	NRC, Schools, PFTF	8-4	1-2 years	Private Money
	<p>D. Sponsor Town events to promote utilization and appreciation of open space resources to foster resident's sense of identification and ownership of the land.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Balance active and passive recreational needs and land use. 	NRC	8-1	1-2 years	N/A

9: Ensure that open space and recreational programs continue to meet the needs of the Town.	<p>A. Preserve and enhance the quality of existing recreational facilities through careful maintenance and planning practices.</p> <p>B. Optimize passive and active recreational opportunities and protect sensitive environmental resources through land acquisition and other approaches.</p> <p>C. Balance to meet as many needs as possible while preserving and maintaining town resources for future use.</p> <p>D. Seek management options that will allow uses of town-owned, as well as private active recreational space, to fit and meet the changing needs of Wellesley's changing population.</p> <p>E. Create a recreational vision that will reflect collaboration between the Town's various landowners.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understanding and/or defining "needs" more clearly. Proposed action included continued engagement with community members to solicit feedback and assessing current recreation facilities to identify areas for improvement. 	Recreation, NRC, PFTF	6-2	1-2 years	NRC Operating, CPC funds
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expanding the Town's current roster of recreational facilities, specifically playground spaces, bike and walking trails, pools, recreational fields, and bathrooms. 	Recreation, NRC	6-7	3-6 years	CPC, Town Capital Budgets
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Balance Active and passive recreational resources 	NRC, Planning	6-1	3-6 years	EOEAA grant funds
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishing a walking path around Lake Waban. 	NRC, Trails, Wellesley College	6-3	3-5 years	Trails Operating Budget
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engaging with Wellesley College. 	NRC, Selectboard, Wellesley College	6-5	ASAP	N/A
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make decision about field lighting 	NRC, Schools, PFTF	6-6	3-5 years	N/A
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focusing the Natural Resource Commission's activities on non-recreation spaces 	NRC	6-4	2-3 years	N/A

10: Provide opportunities for safe and enjoyable walking and bicycle access throughout the Town.	<p>A. Expand and enhance the Town-wide trails network that interconnects, and traverses open space.</p> <p>B. Maintain the trails network and existing trails through park and woodlands.</p>					
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing dedicated cyclist and pedestrian pathways (especially bike lanes that are separated from vehicular traffic). 	Select Board, Mobility Committee, Planning	3-1	1-5 years	Capital Budget, regional Planning grants

	<p>C. Promote the development of bicycle routes through the Town, as part of the regional transportation system.</p> <p>D. Pursue greater connectivity of open spaces on a local and regional level.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adding and/or improving bike lanes and sidewalks on specific roads/paths (Weston Rd, Route 9, Brook Path, Wellesley Ave at Wellesley Country Club, Elm Bank Reservation to Wellesley Square, near Morses Pond Rd, Oakland Ave, Wellesley Ave near Fiske School, Washington St, and Central St). 	Select Board, Mobility Committee, Planning	3-2	1-5 years	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enforcing traffic rules for both vehicular traffic and cyclists on shared roads 	Select Board, Mobility Committee, Planning, Wellesley Police	3-3	ASAP	Police Public safety budget
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expanding the Town's existing trails and bike routes system in town as well as connecting to regional trail and bike networks 	Select Board, Mobility Committee, Planning	3-4	3-6 years	NRC, Trails Operating budget

