

Parks, Trails and Recreation

Recreational use of parks, including passive recreation and nature trails, and active recreation and programs are the subject of this chapter. The Natural Resources Commission acts as the Park Commission in Wellesley to oversee the management of certain recreation sites and trails (through the Trails Committee appointed by the NRC). The Recreation Commission focuses on providing recreation programs for Wellesley residents, including summer camps, operating Morses Pond Beach, providing after-school programming, and collaborating with the Youth Commission and the Council on Aging to partner on programs for teens and seniors. The Playing Fields Task Force is an advisory committee made up of representatives of five Town boards (including the NRC and the Recreation Commission) and six sports leagues.

Finding the proper balance among natural resources and conservation open space, passive recreation, and active recreation is one of Wellesley's major challenges, as it is for many communities in Eastern Massachusetts. Recreation use and preferences vary with the life cycle and providing opportunities for active lifestyles is also a health goal. Families with young children need playgrounds, many school-age children and youth are involved in organized sports, and although many adults are also interested in active sports, priorities tend to shift with age to opportunities for individual fitness, such as

biking, running, and walking. In Wellesley, a majority of residents, as indicated in the Open Space and Recreation Plan survey, is interested in having more of both active and passive recreation resources. At the same time, there is very strong support for nature-based recreation and the conservation of natural open space.

The Town has been pursuing ways to improve existing active recreation resources and use them more efficiently. The number of athletic fields is limited, and lighting for nighttime use is controversial. In 2016, renovation of the Hunnewell Track and Field was completed. The field size was expanded to accommodate sports like soccer, lacrosse, and field hockey, and the grass field was converted to artificial turf to allow for year-round use. Plans for onsite bathrooms and team rooms are in progress. Plans are also being developed to improve the girls' softball fields at the Hunnewell and Lee fields. The new recreation facility at 900 Worcester Street will add an aquatic facility, ice rink, indoor soccer field, and a fitness facility. As noted in Chapter 4, the expansion of town-owned open space is difficult because Wellesley real estate is very expensive and remaining large parcels of open space are controlled by institutional owners. Discussions about the "North 40" parcel acquired by the Town show that there are multiple potential uses of the land, including for passive and active recreation.

Supporting town government concepts

The Unified Plan's emphasis on making town government more customer-centric, data-driven and strategic, and transparent is reflected in several of this chapter's strategies, including monitoring usage and demand at the 900 Worcester Street facility and regular surveys on recreation preferences, including needs of different demographic groups.

A. Parks and Recreation in the Vision and Values

VISION

Wellesley is a town recognized for its ...exemplary town services...a quality of life that enhances the health and social well-being of its residents....



VALUES

Enhance the health and wellness of residents through public health initiatives, educational, social and recreational opportunities; create the conditions for healthy lifestyles through easy access to healthful food, medical and psychological care, support systems, non-motorized transportation options, and town facilities.

B. Goals And Policies

GOALS	POLICIES FOR DECISION MAKERS
<i>The Town provides recreational open space, facilities, and programs for family, youth and adult activities, both team and individual.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preserve a balance between active and passive recreation and natural resources. Preserve a balance between individual activities and team or group activities.
<i>The open space trail system is integrated with an overall pedestrian and bicycle network.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support creation of volunteer groups to assist in trail maintenance, development, and enhancement. Coordinate trail management with development of a town-wide network of pedestrian and bicycle routes.
<i>Town recreation facilities and programs meet the changing needs of the community.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey users and evaluate programs regularly to respond to demographic and other changes in community demand
<i>The Town maintains a state-approved Open Space and Recreation Plan.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide resources to update the OSRP to retain eligibility for grants.

C. Findings And Challenges

FINDINGS

Overview

- The Natural Resources Commission (NRC), created in 1978 has the statutory authority and responsibility of Park Commission, Conservation Commission, Tree Warden, Town Forest Committee, and Forestry and Pest Control Officer under Massachusetts law. The NRC appoints the Wetlands Protection Committee and the Trails Committee.
- The Recreation Commission's mission is to provide recreational and educational opportunities to Wellesley residents. Commission members typically chair the Playing Field Task Force and also chaired the 900 Worcester Planning Committee that developed the program for the new indoor recreational facility to be managed by a private contractor
- The Wellesley Open Space and Recreation Plan, completed in 2015, contains information on the recreational use of Town parks. The plan was approved by the State, making Wellesley eligible for applicable state grant programs.
- During the OSRP planning process, the NRC conducted an online survey, with the link widely distributed to residents by multiple means, that received more than 600 responses.

OSRP 2015 SUMMARY RESULTS

- 91% feel it's important to acquire and preserve open space for active and passive recreation.
- 94% percent are concerned about water pollution from pesticides and stormwater runoff.
- 87% think it's important to acquire and preserve open space for natural resource protection.
- 82% are concerned about Wellesley trees.
- 89% feel areas specific to passive recreation are important.
- 67% feel areas specific to active sports are important.
- 76% would like our trail system to be expanded and improved.
- 71% would like to acquire more land for conservation purposes.
- 66% would like to acquire more land for recreational facilities.
- 80% would like better places to run and bike.

- OSRP goals related to recreation include:
 - Provide recreational facilities that meet the needs of the town's residents.
 - Continue to provide recreational facilities that meet the needs of the Town's residents.
 - Enhance accessibility to both playgrounds and trails for young, old and handicapped users.
 - Connect parks, playing fields and other public and publicly-accessible lands with walkways and bike-ways to create a network of parks and open space within Wellesley and neighboring towns.

- Provide more indoor and outdoor multi-purpose park and recreational lands and facilities.

Nature Recreation: Woodland Trails

- The Trails Committee in December 2016 issued a Trails Development and Improvement Plan for 2017-2022. It ranked trail projects using the following criteria (the rankings appear below):
 - Benefits to trails network: *high, medium, low*
 - Trail access issues: *difficult, moderate, easy, none*
 - Town capital cost: *high* (greater than \$10,000), *moderate* (between \$1,000 and \$10,000), *low* (less than \$1,000), *none*
 - Town ongoing expense: *high* (greater than \$1,000/year), *moderate* (between \$100 and \$1,000/year), *low* (less than \$100/year), *none*.

BENEFITS TO TRAILS NETWORK	ACCESS ISSUES	CAPITAL COSTS	ONGOING EXPENSE
1. Brook Path improvements at high school			
High	Moderate	High	Low
2. Paintshop Pond Trail			
High	Difficult	Low-Moderate	None
3. Sudbury Path connection to Natick			
High	Difficult	Moderate	Low
4. North 40 trails			
High	Difficult	Unknown	Unknown
5. Road crossings safety			
High	None	Low-Moderate	Low
6. Riverside Rail Trail			
High	Difficult	None	None
7. Charles River Path Extension to Crosstown Trail			
Medium	Easy	None	None
8. Crosstown Trail relocation in Hills			
Medium	None	None	None
9. Morses Pond Trail Relocation			
Medium	Easy	None	None
10. Charles River footbridge to Elm Bank			
High	Difficult	None	None
11. Crosstown Trail crossing at Route 9			
High	Difficult	None	None

- Ongoing projects as of late 2017 are Brook Path improvements at the High School; and Paintshop Pond Trail.
- The Committee identified nine future trail projects and ranked them according to their criteria:

TRAILS COMMITTEE PRIORITIES (2016)

Several of these trail projects are intended to bridge gaps between existing trail segments. The list shows priority based on the Committee's criteria:

- Sudbury Path connection to Natick:** Extend the Sudbury Path from the Cheever House along Washington St. to the Natick town line.
- North 40 Trails:** Preserve the Crosstown Trail along the Cochituate Aqueduct as an open space corridor, maximize open space retained for passive recreational use, and retain/establish trails connecting the neighborhood to the Crosstown Trail.
- Road crossings safety:** Work with the Traffic Committee to identify safety concerns and priorities for crosswalks where trails cross roads.
- Riverside Rail Trail:** Advocate for the completion of the rail trail connecting the new DCR bridge over the Charles River in Lower Falls to the Riverside MBTA station in Newton.
- Charles River Path extension to Crosstown Trail:** Instead of ending the Charles River Path at the Weston town line, extend the trail through Indian Springs Park to the Crosstown Trail. *Completed in 2017.*
- Crosstown Trail relocation in Hills:** Reroute the trail to avoid walking through congested areas along Washington St from Cliff Rd to Woodlawn Ave. *Completed in 2017.*
- Morses Pond Trail relocation:** Instead of following the paved path along the beach access road, reroute the trail through the woods to the parking lot. *Completed in 2017.*
- Charles River Footbridge to Elm Bank:** Construct a footbridge across the Charles River that will connect the Waban Arches to Elm Bank. The bridge is inspired by the Blue Heron Bridge built by DCR across the Charles connecting Newton to Watertown.
- Crosstown Trail crossing at Route 9:** Currently the trail crosses Route 9 at the Overbrook Dr traffic light. With the recent Town acquisition of Cochituate Aqueduct land north of Route 9, investigate options for a safe trail crossing where the aqueduct crosses the highway.

Recreation Department

- The Recreation Department is headquartered in the Warren Building, which includes a gym, dance studio, multipurpose classroom, teaching kitchen, and art studio.
- The Recreation Department's mission is to provide recreational and educational opportunities to enhance the quality of life for all Wellesley residents in the most cost effective manner: "something for everyone."
- Programs are fee-based and the fees cover all expenses except staff salaries.
- Funds not used for expenses and operations are returned to the General Fund. The department typically contributes as much as \$100,000 back to the town budget every year. The department currently cannot use money it collects from fees for recreation-related capital improvements.
- The Recreation Commission also sponsors special events such as summer concerts and movies, Halloween Parade, and others. Some of these events are supported by private funds.
- In 2016, the Department offered 559 recreational programs serving 6,648 participants.
- The Recreation Department provides After School programs at elementary schools, works with the Senior Center to maximize programs at the new Senior Center, and partners with the Youth Commission to develop Teen Center Programming.
- The Recreation Department operates recreation facilities at Morses Pond, most recently serving 28,387 visitors in 2016. The number of resident tags increased from 2,987 in 2015 to 4,283 in 2016.

Athletic Fields

- Like many communities, Wellesley experiences high demand for athletic fields from school teams, youth leagues, adult leagues, and other users. The growth of team sports, with accompanying demand for practice and game space, is a challenge to many towns in our region, including those with more available land. At the same time, many argue that organized sports serve specialized groups more than the community as a whole.



- There are 25 fields available for recreational purposes in Wellesley.
- Improvements to Wellesley High School Track and Field were complete in 2016: increased field size to accommodate more sports: soccer, lacrosse and field hockey as well as football; installation of synthetic turf field to make daily, multi-season play possible. On-site bathroom facilities and a field house are planned for 2018.
- A new multipurpose athletic field requires a minimum of 1 to 2 acres of land.
- The Playing Fields Task Force is an Advisory Committee of the Board of Selectmen, Recreation Commission, Board of Public Works, Natural Resources Commission, and School Committee to manage use of playing fields. It consists of representatives from the major user groups (Public Schools, Little League/Softball, Youth Soccer, Youth Lacrosse, Youth Football, Adult Leagues, and the boards listed above.
- Field use fees are collected by the Recreation Department and are then segregated into accounts for use by DPW for field maintenance. Field fees may be expended by Board of Public Works after consultation with the Recreation Commission and NRC.
- A 2016 review of the athletics programs at Wellesley Middle and High Schools found that Wellesley has very high participation rates, teams that excel, and good coaching. Concerns focused on communication, transparency, need for good facilities for all teams, and equal distribution of resources between girls' and boys' teams.

Wellesley Sports Center at 900 Worcester Street

- The Town has entered into a land lease with a private owner-operator of the facility who will build, operate, and manage it. The facility is expected to open in fall 2018 and include the following:
 - NHL size hockey rinks
 - Swimming pool
 - Teaching/therapy pool
 - Indoor turf field suitable for high school soccer
 - Fitness area with physical therapy and strength conditioning areas

Private recreational groups

- The Wellesley Teen Center serves 5th to 8th grade youth with Saturday dances. It is run by parents and funded by fees.
- Community Investors is a nonprofit focusing on providing community sports-based youth development
- Wellesley's Wonderful Weekend is a town festival run by a private committee of residents and assisted by town departments.

ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) access

- The OSRP identified the need to expand ADA accessibility in the town open space and recreation network.
- As improvements are made to town recreational facilities of all types, they are upgraded to meet Americans with Disabilities Act requirements and modern safety standards. The Fuller Brook Park project includes construction of accessible pathways and parking.
- The law does not require that all municipal sites be made accessible to people with disabilities but that there be accessible sites for services within

the community. The New England ADA Center at the Institute for Human-Centered Design (www.newenglandada.org) provides information, training and assistance on ADA and other accessibility issues, including checklists (<http://adachecklist.org/checklist.html#rec>)

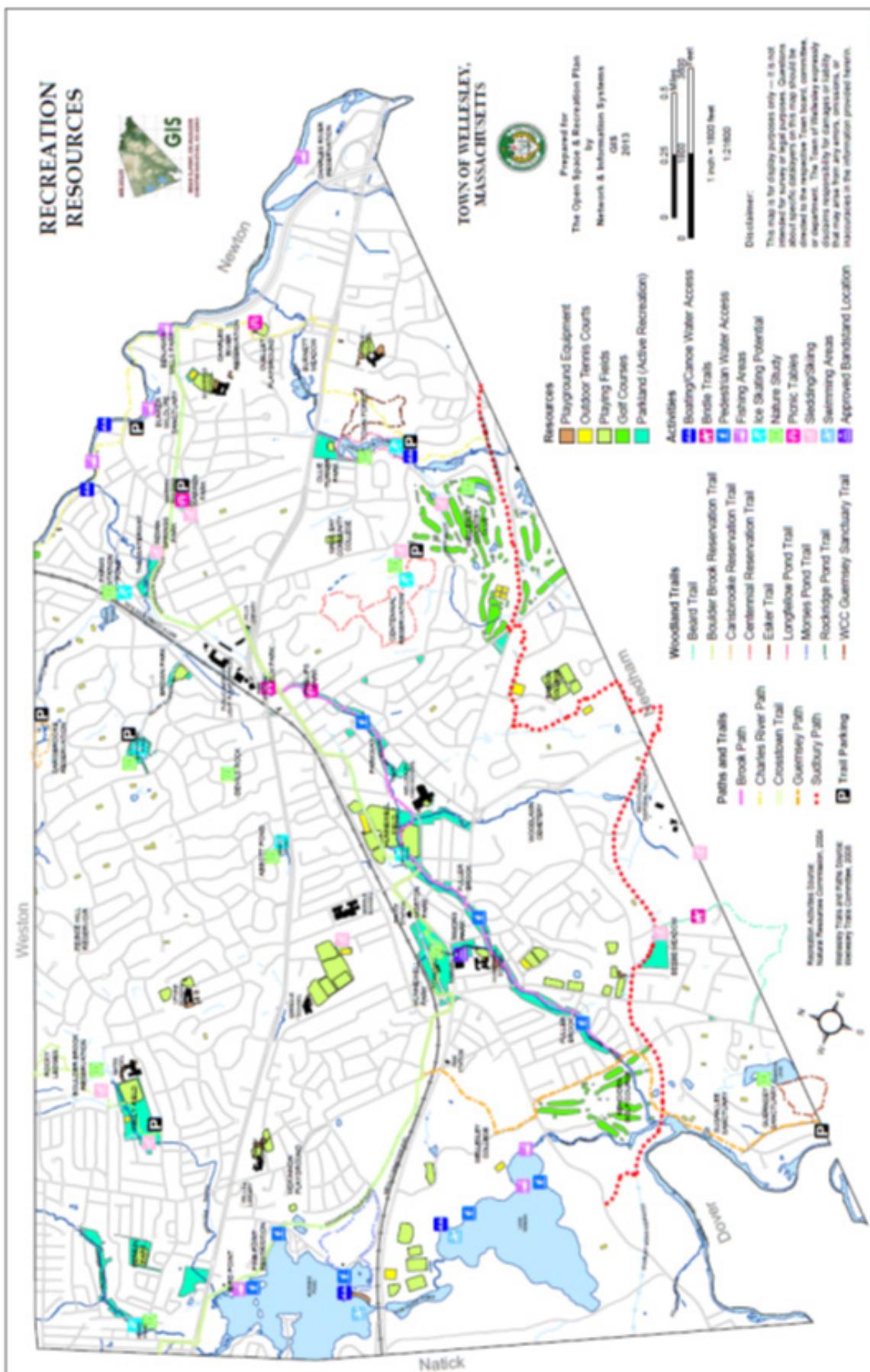
Playgrounds and park improvements

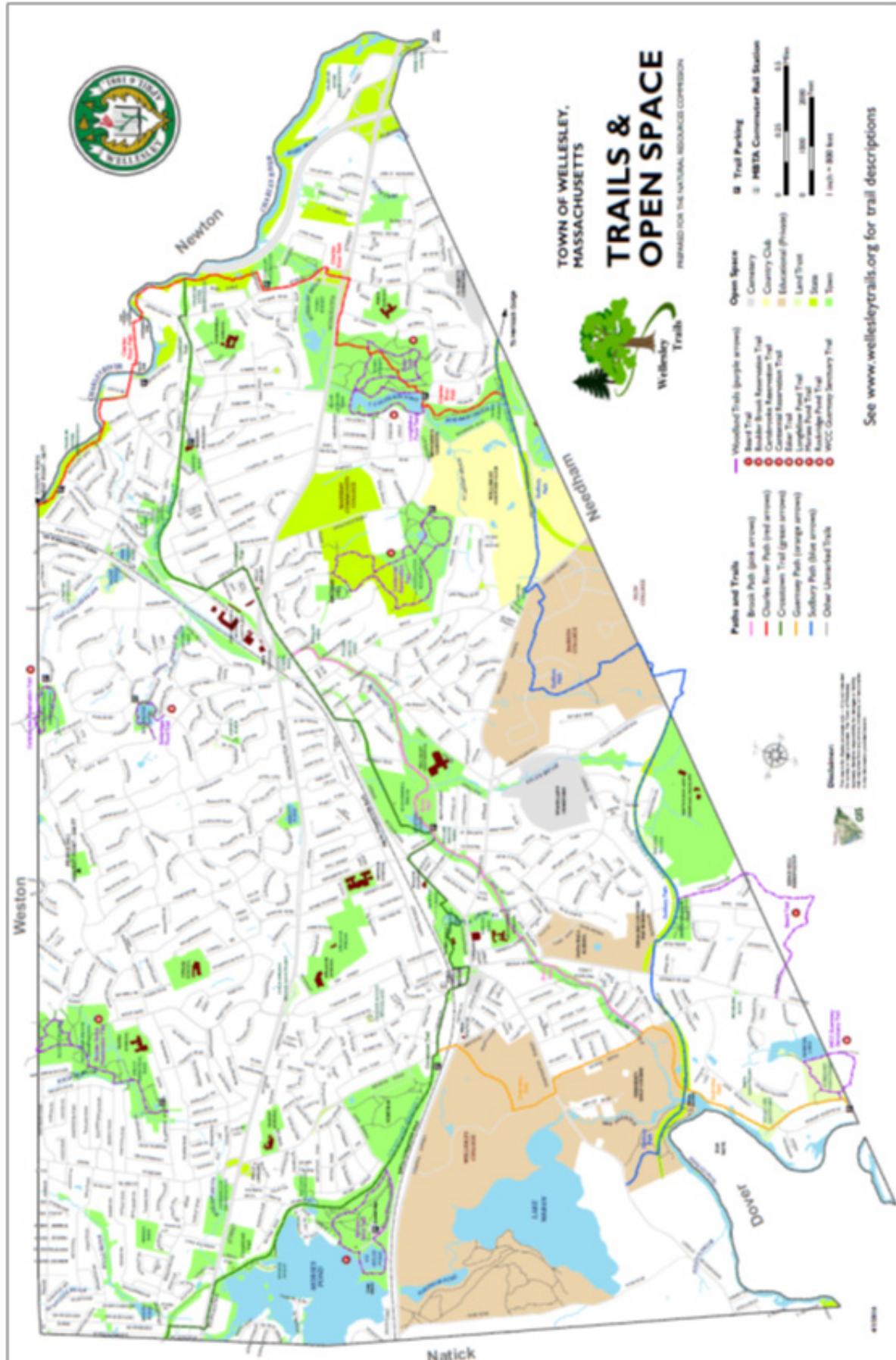
- The NRC and DPW implemented a Park and Playground Master Plan, including new playgrounds at Ouellet Park, Warren Park, Phillips Park, and Hunnewell Field Tot Lot. In addition, amenities such as trash cans, benches, picnic tables, and trees and shrubs were installed in recent years at Longfellow Pond, Rockridge Pond, Reeds Pond, Town Hall Duck Pond, and Morses Pond.

Park and recreation standards

- The OSRP uses standards developed by the National Recreation and Park Association for types of parks and recreational facilities. The NRPA standards are typically expressed in terms of the facilities per 1,000 persons. They were originally developed in the second half of the twentieth century as new suburbs were being created from farm and forest lands. Since the beginning of the 21st century, an alternative metric based on access is increasingly used for more densely build-up communities. The access metric is whether a park is within a five- or ten-minute walk (one-quarter to one-half mile). Research has shown that people use parks more if they can walk to them, regardless of size.
- The OSRP includes a statement that the NRC and Recreation Commission should assess park and recreation needs based on “population projects in and current demands,” but does not indicate what criteria should be used to make decisions if and when there are conflicts about use.







Challenges

- The Open Space and Recreation Plan identified these natural resource challenges:
 - › The increased use of Wellesley's active recreation space exerts significant pressure on the Town to convert some of its passive recreation space to active space.
 - › Wellesley's built-out condition and high property values preclude the acquisition of significant amounts of open space.
 - › Significant open space areas are either held by institutions or are in tax abatement programs that provide limited protection against development.
- Balancing the need and value of open space with other town initiatives and priorities.
- Balancing passive and active use of open space
- Balancing private property rights with regulation.
- Providing sufficient outdoor and indoor recreation facilities for current and future use.
- Improving safety at trail street crossings and along streets without sidewalks.
- Providing recreational and social activities for teenagers in ways that will attract them to participate
- Improving Morse's Pond facilities, bathhouse and programming
- Systematically surveying recreation program users, evaluating programs, and responding to user demand

D. What The Community Said

Themes in public meetings and surveys:

- Very high level of public appreciation of open space in general
- Preserve/enhance trails, parks, conservation land, waterways, community gardens
- Preserve green space; protect the environment and natural resources
- Desire for more choice in after-school programs
- Difficulty balancing demand for athletic fields with desire for open space.

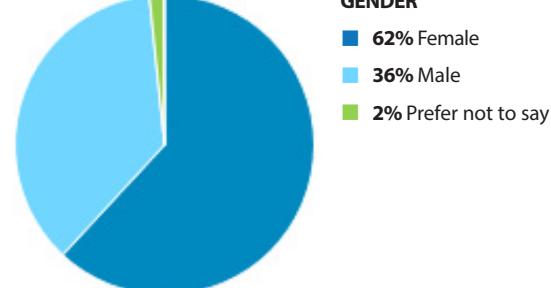
OSRP 2015 SUMMARY RESULTS WITH RECREATION-RELATED ITEMS HIGHLIGHTED

- 91% feel it's important to acquire and preserve open space for active and passive recreation.
- 94% percent are concerned about water pollution from pesticides and stormwater runoff.
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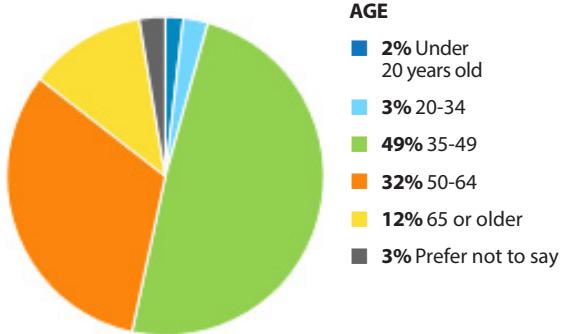
Recreation survey

Because other Unified Plan surveys offered reduced opportunities to comment on recreation issues, a separate recreation-oriented survey was made available in July 2017 at the request of a Steering Committee member. Nine hundred ninety-three responses were received. Questions focused particularly on Morse's Pond, natural parks and trails, playgrounds, and active recreation facilities (especially athletic fields and courts). Because nighttime lighting and noise had emerged as an issue in workshops and meetings, the survey included several questions on this issue.

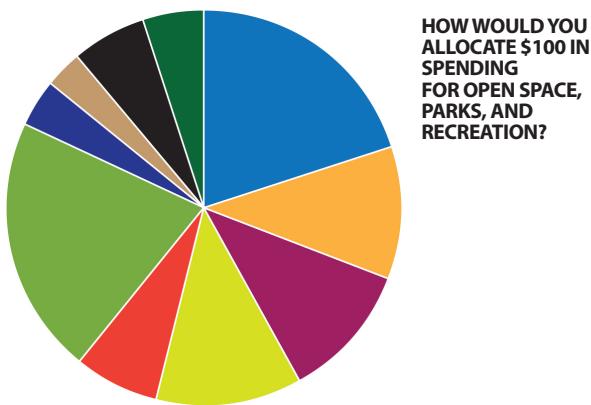
SURVEY RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS



SURVEY RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS (CONT.)



In the recreation-oriented survey, respondents were asked the same question about allocation of funding as participants in the workshop described in Chapter 4, where most participants focused on natural resources issues. Perhaps not surprisingly, in the recreation-oriented survey there was a greater emphasis on providing new or upgraded recreation facilities.



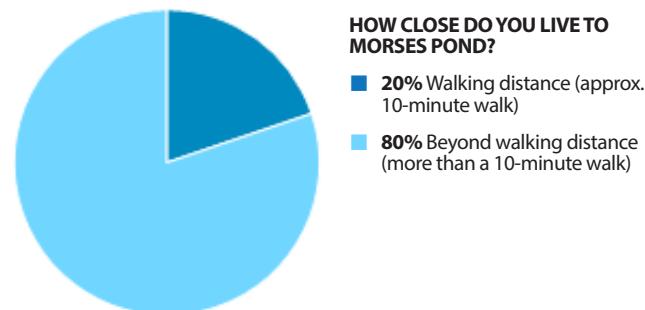
- 20% Focus on the open space and parks that we already have. Maintain, improve, reduce encroachment.
- 11% Expand existing parks and open space with adjacent land, when available.
- 11% New parks: acquire land or conservation easements for new parks or natural open space.
- 12% Focus on existing trails: maintain, improve, reduce encroachment.
- 7% Expand the trail network with new trails.
- 21% New athletic fields or facilities for **youth team** sports
- 4% New athletic fields or facilities for **adult team** sports
- 3% New facilities for **adult individual** sports (e.g., tennis)
- 6% Improve pond swimming facilities
- 5% Other

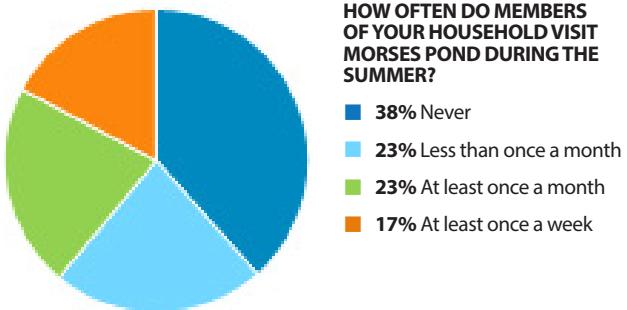
Comparison: How Workshop Participants And Recreation Survey Respondents Allocated Funds For Recreation

OPTION	WORK-SHOP	SURVEY
Focus on what we already have... maintain, improve, reduce encroachment	16%	20%
Expand existing parks and open space with adjacent land when available	20%	11%
New parks; acquire land or conservation easements for new parks or natural open space	22%	11%
Focus on existing trails: maintain, improve, reduce encroachment	9%	12%
Expand the trail network with new trails	3%	7%
New athletic fields or facilities for youth team sports	3%	21%
New athletic fields or facilities for adult team sports	1%	4%
New facilities for individual adult sports (e.g., tennis)	1%	3%
Improve pond facilities	5%	6%
Parks for walking, individual exercise, enjoying nature (passive parks)	9%	N/A
Other	11%	5%

QUESTIONS ABOUT MORSES POND

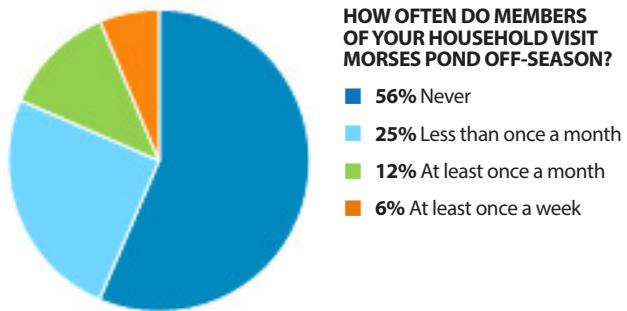
While 38% of respondents never go to Morses Pond in the summer, 39% go at least once a month. Visitation is less frequent in the off-season, with 56% never visiting the pond. Less than half, 44%, were satisfied or very satisfied with their Morses Pond experience, with nearly the same percentage (43%) describing themselves as neutral.





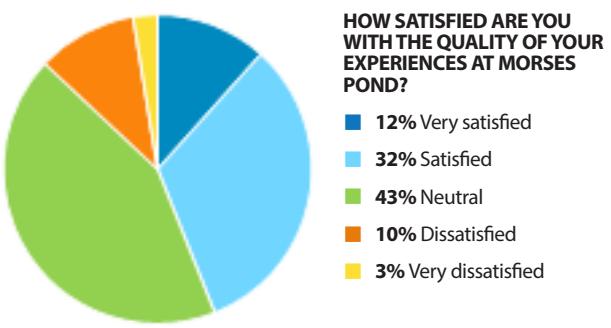
HOW OFTEN DO MEMBERS OF YOUR HOUSEHOLD VISIT MORGES POND DURING THE SUMMER?

- 38% Never
- 23% Less than once a month
- 23% At least once a month
- 17% At least once a week



HOW OFTEN DO MEMBERS OF YOUR HOUSEHOLD VISIT MORGES POND OFF-SEASON?

- 56% Never
- 25% Less than once a month
- 12% At least once a month
- 6% At least once a week



HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH THE QUALITY OF YOUR EXPERIENCES AT MORGES POND?

- 12% Very satisfied
- 32% Satisfied
- 43% Neutral
- 10% Dissatisfied
- 3% Very dissatisfied

CONCERNs ABOUT MORGES POND

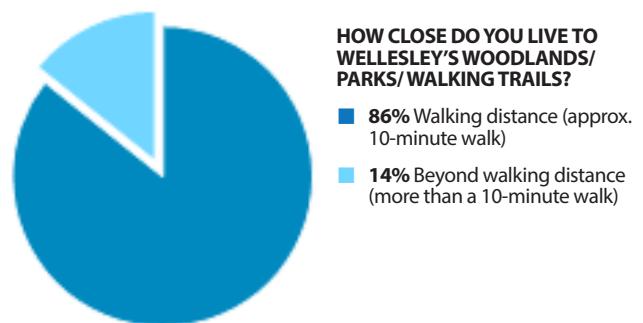
Respondents were asked if they had any concerns about Morses Pond. Some acknowledged recent improvements: "Great to see the investments made to upgrade the pond experience this season!" "New sand looks great and layout is improved. Could use additional upgrades to facilities." In some cases, it appeared that comments were not based on recent visits to use the pond. The most frequently-mentioned topics of concern were:

- **Weeds and vegetation, both in the pond and the upland.** Respondents mentioned milfoil and other water vegetation, weeds, poison ivy, and invasive plants as not being kept under control.
- **Water quality.** There were many comments that the water is "murky," and concerns that it is polluted, both by runoff from adjacent properties and by bacteria.
- **Cleanliness and maintenance.** Some respondents said that the sand and facilities were not well maintained or kept sufficiently clean.

- **Crowds and non-residents users.** Especially on weekends, some respondents said the pond was too crowded and that there were many non-Wellesley groups reserving the shaded areas.
- **Boating access.** There was a desire by some for more and better access for canoeing, kayaking, paddle boats, small sailboats, and emphasis on the upkeep of the docks and floats. When the gate is closed, the distance to carry canoes or kayaks is too great.
- **Amenities.** In addition to better restrooms and changing facilities, a number of people requested some kind of snack bar. One person suggested that a food truck could serve that role.
- **Length of season.** While there were comments based on conditions in previous years, some respondents would like the beach to have a longer season and stay open through Labor Day.

QUESTIONS ABOUT WOODLANDS, PARKS, AND TRAILS

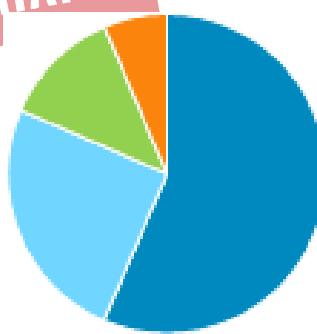
Wellesley residents in surveys and workshops expressed strong interest and commitment to open space preservation, and 54% of survey respondents said that they visit Wellesley's woodlands, parks and walking trails at least once a week. Certain trails or walking paths are very well known, such as Fuller Brook Path, while others appear to be less well known. Eight-six percent of respondents described their experience as Satisfactory or Very Satisfactory.



HOW CLOSE DO YOU LIVE TO WELLESLEY'S WOODLANDS/ PARKS/ WALKING TRAILS?

- 86% Walking distance (approx. 10-minute walk)
- 14% Beyond walking distance (more than a 10-minute walk)

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HOW OFTEN DO MEMBERS OF YOUR HOUSEHOLD VISIT WELLESLEY'S WOODLANDS/ PARKS/ WALKING TRAILS?

- 54% At least once a week
- 25% At least once a month
- 15% Less than once a month
- 6% Never

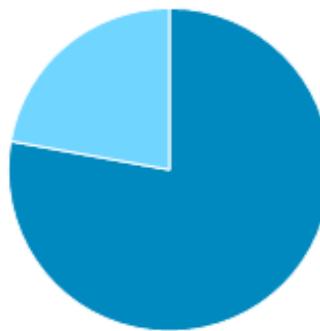


HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH THE QUALITY OF YOUR EXPERIENCE AT WELLESLEY'S WOODLANDS/ PARKS/ WALKING TRAILS?

- 36% Very satisfied
- 50% Satisfied
- 11% Neutral
- 2% Dissatisfied
- 0% Very dissatisfied

QUESTIONS ABOUT PLAYGROUNDS

A majority of respondents (78%) live within walking distance of a playground and only 30% say they never visit the playgrounds. This may well reflect the age profile of respondents. Satisfaction with Wellesley playgrounds is relatively high: 73% satisfied or very satisfied and 24% neutral. Only 4% of respondents were dissatisfied.



HOW CLOSE DO YOU LIVE TO WELLESLEY'S PLAYGROUNDS?

- 78% Walking distance (approx. 10-minute walk)
- 22% Beyond walking distance (more than a 10-minute walk)



HOW OFTEN DO MEMBERS OF YOUR HOUSEHOLD VISIT WELLESLEY'S PLAYGROUNDS?

- 30% Never
- 30% Less than once a month
- 22% At least once a month
- 17% At least once a week



HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH THE QUALITY OF YOUR EXPERIENCE AT WELLESLEY'S PLAYGROUNDS?

- 26% Very satisfied
- 47% Satisfied
- 24% Neutral
- 3% Dissatisfied
- 1% Very dissatisfied

CONCERN ABOUT WOODLANDS, PARKS AND TRAILS

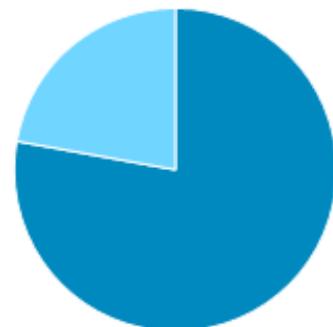
- **Positive comments:** Those who use the trails are often very positive. "These trails are outstanding resources....Hiking in the winter is enjoyable if the trails are passable...The walking trails are a wonderful part of Wellesley. The work to upgrade the trails the last several years has been excellent."
- **Connections and accessibility needed:** A repeated theme is to connect trails across the town. "Adding some smaller trails to tie together the town network would be great; Hard to make connections between many of the trails....I would like to expand them so that we can use them more as town bike paths for children so they are not forced to bike on dangerous streets. Connect them to the schools where possible!.... expand so you can bike/run all the way thru Wellesley...Investment in these areas is paying off... maybe add some functional fitness elements to paths...Trails are fantastic....Would love some that are stroller/ wheelchair accessible."
- **Litter, dog waste, invasives, poison ivy, habitat for ticks:** Concerns included litter, poison ivy, yard debris, and dog waste; overgrown trails providing too much tick habitat. Some comments that dog owners or professional dog walkers do not control their dogs.

CONCERN ABOUT PLAYGROUNDS

- There was general satisfaction with playgrounds, but some respondents find the design and equipment "boring" and would like to see more innovative options, such as splash parks for water play. "Not enough creative and innovative structures—all of them are the same and there are so many awesome new models around other cities "

- Concerns include trash and litter, lack of bathrooms, more handicap/stroller accessibility, insufficient shade, lack of water fountains at some playgrounds.

QUESTIONS ABOUT ATHLETIC FACILITIES



HOW CLOSE DO YOU LIVE TO WELLESLEY'S ATHLETIC FACILITIES?

- 78% Walking distance (approx. 10-minute walk)
- 22% Beyond walking distance (more than a 10-minute walk)



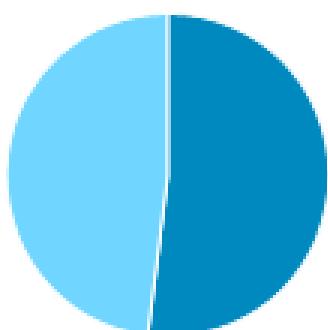
HOW OFTEN DO MEMBERS OF YOUR HOUSEHOLD VISIT WELLESLEY'S ATHLETIC FACILITIES?

- 21% Never
- 20% Less than once a month
- 18% At least once a month
- 42% At least once a week



HOW SATISFIED ARE YOU WITH THE QUALITY OF YOUR EXPERIENCE AT WELLESLEY'S ATHLETIC FACILITIES?

- 16% Very Satisfied
- 44% Satisfied
- 28% Neutral
- 11% Dissatisfied
- 1% Very dissatisfied



HOW WOULD THE ADDITION OF LIGHTS AFFECT YOUR HOUSEHOLD'S USE OF ATHLETIC FACILITIES?

- 52% No change or I/my household would use them less
- 48% I and/or my household would use them more often



HOW WOULD THE ADDITION OF LIGHTS TO ATHLETIC/RECREATIONAL AREAS IN WELLESLEY AFFECT THE SURROUNDING AREAS?

- 66% No adverse impact
- 17% Detract
- 17% No change

CONCERNS ABOUT ATHLETIC FIELDS AND ACTIVE RECREATION AREAS

- Positive:** Some positive comments—“Playing fields are very good overall.”
- Tennis courts:** Some in bad condition; concerns that nonresidents can reserve courts for long periods.
- Indoor sports space:** “The town desperately needs a new full sized basketball court/multi-use gymnasium for the youth and high school (and adult) use.” “How about open court basketball at a different school / court Monday–Friday?”
- More active recreation opportunities for adults:** “There is strong evidence that regular exercise leads to better outcomes in terms of health and happiness. I would like to see Wellesley improve its facilities (and access to facilities) for adult exercise and sports.... seems that kids get priority almost to the exclusion of adults; bummer: we still like to play, too!”
- Review after 900 Worcester Street facility is open:** “Let's see how town residents take to the athletic complex on Route 9 before we start talking about additional new athletic/playing fields.”
- Insufficient field space for town athletic programs:** Providing field space to external/club organizations is a concern; need lighted High School field complex; many sports vying for practice and game time; insufficient attention to girls sports.
- Too much focus on field sports:** “I do not support giving up natural open space to create more playing fields. It results in loss of habitat and narrows the utility of the land to those involved in specific sports.” “Stop the madness with emphasis on field sports!”

A public workshop held in May 2107 (described in more detail in Chapter 4) focused on natural resources, conservation, parks, and recreation. It was attended by participants focused primarily on natural resources and open space conservation. Participants, organized into six table groups, ranked their top three priorities. They included several priorities with a recreational orientation.

- Focus on existing assets—trails, open space, parks
- Improve pond facilities
- Athletic facilities
- Trails maintained and expansion
- Resolve tension between recreation drive for revenue with NRC preservation of green spaces and passive recreation space

E. Strategies And Actions To Achieve The Goals

GOAL 1: THE TOWN PROVIDES RECREATIONAL OPEN SPACE, FACILITIES, AND PROGRAMS FOR FAMILY, YOUTH AND ADULT ACTIVITIES, BOTH TEAM AND INDIVIDUAL.

Policies

- Preserve a balance between active and passive recreation.
- Preserve a balance between individual activities and team or group activities.

STRATEGIES

A. Maintain and improve active recreation areas, including athletic fields and programs.

ACTIONS	WHEN	WHO
i. Continue to improve Morses Pond swimming and boating areas, activities, and operations while continuing to manage it in an environmentally sound way.	2018-2022	NRC; Recreation Commission; DPW
ii. Upgrade the Morses Pond bathhouse and provide better amenities, such as a snack bar or food truck.	2018-2022	Recreation Commission
iii. Consider allowing the Recreation Commission to use a portion of fees collected for capital improvements and amenities. These projects should be identified in the commission's strategic plan (see Chapter 14 on town government strategies).	2018-2022	Recreation Commission; Town Meeting
iv. Create a report with data and analysis on the demand for and use of athletic fields and sports facilities such as tennis courts, both Town-owned and owned by other organizations. An analysis that includes the characteristics of the organizations (school, adult, predominantly non-Wellesley residents, etc.), requests for use granted and denied, and so on, can provide a foundation for making decisions on priorities.	2018-2022	Playing Fields Task Force; Recreation Commission
v. Consider options for an indoor gymnasium suitable for community use as well as school use in upcoming school construction planning and design, without negatively affecting school operations and safety.	2018-2022	School Committee; Board of Selectmen; Permanent Building Committee;
vi. Commission a survey of a representative sample of Wellesley adults to aid in decision making about the balance of active and passive open space and the potential uses of the North 40. A scientific survey with a sample designed to reflect the composition of the Wellesley population may help in decision making.	2022-2028	NRC; Recreation Commission

ACTIONS	WHEN	WHO
vii. Include innovative designs and activities when making playground improvements. Consider splash/spray parks, inclusive playgrounds for children of all abilities, adventure playgrounds, theme play, and so on.	2022-2028	NRC; Recreation Commission; DPW

GOAL 2: THE OPEN SPACE TRAIL SYSTEM IS INTEGRATED WITH AN OVERALL PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE NETWORK.

Policies

- Support volunteer trail creation and enhancement.
- Town trail management is coordinated for consistency.
- Establish a coordinating system for trail management and marking that deters encroachment and enhances safety

STRATEGIES

A. Give priority to trail expansion that connects with town-wide networks.

Responses to the recreation survey showed that residents are very interested in creating more trails and active transportation routes that create a network that connects across the town.

ACTIONS	WHEN	WHO
i. Focus on enhancing and expanding trail segments that link across the town. The Trails Committee in its 2016-2020 plan identified several trail expansions with potential regional links to adjacent towns.	2018-2022	Trails Committee

B. Coordinate trail development and maintenance requirements for consistency across management entities.

ACTIONS	WHEN	WHO
i. Within the Trails Committee, identify management inconsistencies and potential remedies that could support trail creation and maintenance.	2022-2028	Trails Committee
ii. Work with Town management entities to reduce inconsistencies	2022-2028	Trails Committee and management entities.

C. Expand and enhance the existing trails network within Wellesley and to adjacent towns, and establish management policies for trail monitoring, maintenance and development.

The Trails Committee will continue to focus on nature trails and connecting them to trails in adjacent town. Residents who participated in the

Unified Plan planning process supported the idea of a town-wide network that can include trails on park and conservation property. The Trails Committee should be represented in efforts to develop a town-wide network of active transportation (pedestrian and bicycle). See Chapter 10 for a strategy to create safe links between existing pedestrian and bike segments.

ACTIONS	WHEN	WHO
i. Document management policies for trails- monitoring, maintenance and development.	2018-2022	Trails Committee
ii. Consult with the Trails Committee about opportunities to link trails in parks and conservation areas with pedestrian and bike networks in surrounding areas. This would also include preserving and improving the existing trail system in the North 40, connecting it to town-wide and regional trails.	2018-2022	Mobility Committee, North 40 Committee, to include Trails Committee representative

GOAL 3: TOWN RECREATION FACILITIES AND PROGRAMS MEET THE CHANGING NEEDS OF THE COMMUNITY.

Policy

- Evaluate facilities and programs regularly to respond to demographic and other changes in community demand.

STRATEGIES

A. Improve the data collection system about the use, satisfaction, and demand for recreation facilities and programs, as well as changing needs.

ACTIONS	WHEN	WHO
i. Monitor usage and demand at the 900 Worcester Street facility to inform Town recreation planning. Require the management to share data on membership and usage for different sports and activities.	2018-2022	Facility operator; Recreation Commission
ii. Survey Wellesley residents every five years about their recreational needs as part of the OSRP update. Be sure to collect demographic information to understand if changing characteristics of the population are affecting recreation needs.	2018-2022	NRC; Recreation Commission
iii. Use brief surveys of satisfaction and desired improvements for every Recreation Department program. A simple digital survey accessible from mobile devices could be developed to be used by multiple programs and easily analyzed.	2018-2022	Recreation Commission

GOAL 4: THE TOWN MAINTAINS A STATE-APPROVED OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN.

Policy

- Provide resources to update the OSRP to retain eligibility for grants.

[This section also appears in Chapter 4 -Natural Resources and Conservation.]

STRATEGIES

- Update the Open Space and Recreation Plan in a timely manner to inform NRC, Recreation Commission, and Town strategic planning and to obtain state approval for eligibility for state funding.*

The current OSRP was adopted in 2015 and will expire in April 2021. The previous plan was adopted in 1994, twenty-one years earlier. Timely updates will inform NRC, Recreation Commission and Town understanding of open space and recreation needs.

ACTIONS	WHEN	WHO
<p>i. <i>Review the OSRP plan at least once a year to measure progress and identify any needed changes to the inventory and action plan.</i> Annual consultation between the NRC and Recreation will enhance communication about balancing natural resources and passive recreation issues with active recreation issues</p>	2018-2022	NRC; Recreation Commission
<p>ii. <i>Program the full update of the document for FY 2021.</i></p>	2018-2022	NRC and Recreation Commission; Trails Committee; and consult with other boards