

The Town of Acton Open Space and Recreation Plan 2024-2031



Ice House Pond Photo by Pam Minichiello



Nagog Pond Photo by Mike Weinhold

Town of Acton 2024-2031 Open Space and Recreation Plan

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Former Natural Resources Director Tom Tidman leads community members on Nature Walk & Talk
Photo by Andrea Becerra, Sustainability Director

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**GOVERNMENTAL BODIES, COMMISSIONS,
AND COMMITTEES**

Agricultural Commission
Commission on Disabilities
Conservation Commission
Green Advisory Board
Land Stewardship Committee
Open Space Committee
Recreation Commission
Water Resources Advisory Committee
Acton Water District
Acton Boxborough School District

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS & AGENCIES

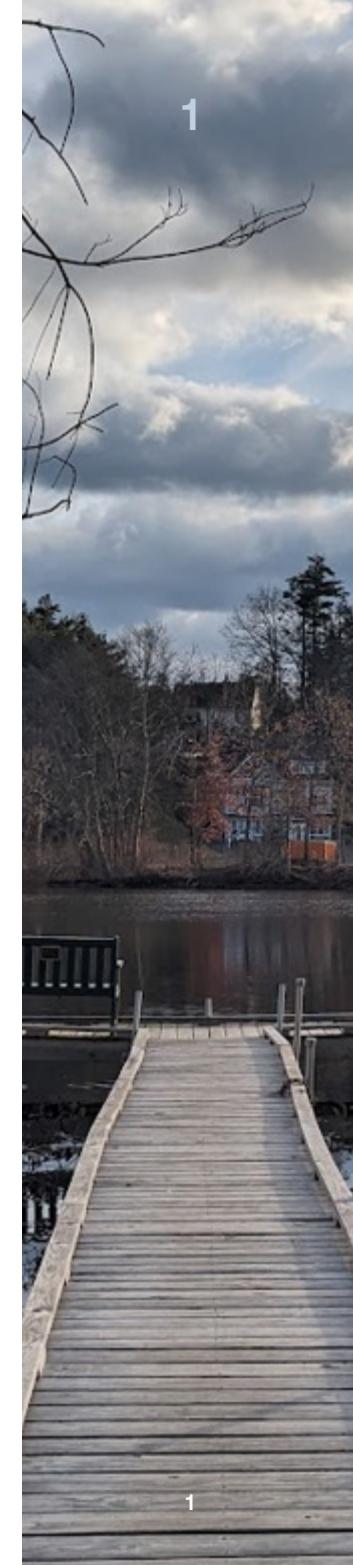
Acton Conservation Trust
Green Acton

Photographs not credited in captions are from the Town of Acton digital archives

SECTION 1: PLAN SUMMARY

A. Plan Overview

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A. PLAN OVERVIEW

1

Acton is a unique and historic town with multiple villages, diverse cultures, and active, engaged residents. Formerly comprised of hunting and subsequently agricultural lands, Acton is now a primarily suburban community with commercial clusters and villages centers spread throughout the Town. In the past decade, the Town has faced local and global challenges including the COVID-19 Pandemic and increased storm severity. Despite these challenges, Acton remains motivated to foster sustainability, safeguard critical environmental resources, enhance recreational opportunities, and preserve the historic, cultural, and scenic features that define the Town.

The Town of Acton 2024-2031 Open Space and Recreation Plan (2024-2031 OSRP) builds upon the robust foundation laid by the preceding plan, published in 2014. The 2024-2031 OSRP incorporates valuable insights based on new information, changing local perspectives, and lessons learned since the previous plan's publication. For example, the community's experience of extreme



This view shows East Acton Village Green as it was in the 1930s with Bursaw Gas on the right. East Acton Village Green is located at the junction of Concord Road and Great Road (2A-119). Recently redesigned, the area is now an historic park with picnic amenities, accessible from the Bruce Freeman Trail, a short walk from the Ice House Pond Parking Area. Photo courtesy of the Acton Historical Society

weather events has heightened awareness of environmental issues and underscored the importance of protecting critical environmental resources. Additionally, over the past decade there has been a growing demand in the community for diverse and inclusive recreational opportunities that reflect the changing preferences and the evolving needs of Acton's residents. The 2024-2031 OSRP recognizes these changes, serving as both a response to present

challenges and a forward-looking strategy shaped by the past experiences and current aspirations of Acton's community.

Through a comprehensive multi-year engagement process, residents expressed deep appreciation for Acton's historical, cultural, agricultural, and scenic features. This sentiment is encapsulated in the first goal of the 2024-2031 OSRP: to preserve and protect these integral elements that define

the town's identity. The community's environmental consciousness emerges as a driving force behind the second goal, emphasizing the importance of preserving critical resources such as ground and surface water, wildlife, and diverse habitats. The voices of residents emphasized a desire for inclusive recreational spaces, leading to the goal of improving and expanding recreation opportunities for everyone. Finally, Acton's commitment to sustainable practices resonated strongly within the community, prompting the addition of a fourth goal: incorporating sustainability into both current and future open space and recreation decisions.

The Town of Acton 2024-2031 Open Space and Recreation Plan is a roadmap that prioritizes sustainability, inclusivity, environmental stewardship, and cultural preservation. The successful implementation of this plan requires collaborative efforts from the community, local government, and neighboring stakeholders. By implementing the strategies outlined in this plan, Acton aims to create a vibrant and resilient community where residents can enjoy high quality recreational opportunities amidst a thriving natural landscape.



Kite flying at NARA

SECTION 2: INTRODUCTION

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Jones Playground Photo by Ian Bergemann

A. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The 2024-2031 Acton Open Space and Recreation Plan (2024-2031 OSRP) builds on its predecessor, the 2014 OSRP, which has played a crucial role in town planning. The 2024-2031 OSRP focuses mainly on the identification and analysis of Acton's existing assets, such as conservation lands and recreational amenities.

Going beyond an inventory, this new plan also aims to understand the intricate relationship between these assets and the changing needs of the community. Through a thorough examination, the plan seeks to optimize these assets strategically to better meet the diverse needs of Acton's residents.

The development of this plan involved a multi-year community engagement process orchestrated by the Town to foster a shared vision for its open spaces and recreational offerings. This inclusive approach ensured that the voices, preferences, and aspirations of the community were integrated into the 2024-2031 OSRP. The 2024-2031 OSRP represents an important update while also establishing the community's continued dedication to enhancing Acton's open spaces and recreational resources.

The Town, led by the efforts of its residents, made significant progress since the 2014 OSRP. Identification of open space opportunities contributed to preserving natural landscapes and cultural heritage. Efforts to enhance the Town's recreational opportunities created new spaces and improved existing ones to better serve diverse resident abilities and interests.

These achievements demonstrate that the Town addressed many 2014 OSRP objectives, leading to tangible outcomes and ongoing initiatives that align with the plan's overarching goals. The collaborative spirit behind these efforts demonstrates a commitment to a sustainable and thriving future for Acton, aiming to make the Town a model of considerate conservation and robust recreational opportunities.



Wildflowers and corn growing at the Hebert Farm Community Garden

Below is a compilation of achievements that have successfully addressed the action items outlined in the 2014 OSRP. Rather than a comprehensive view, this list provides a sample of the many achievements that further those goals. Most importantly, the community played a significant role in achieving these action items. Their advocacy and volunteer efforts showcased their active concern for the Town's open space and recreation.

Accomplishments from the previous OSRP

Goal #1: Preserve the Existing Elements of Acton's Rural Character

PRESERVE AND PROTECT FORESTS AND TREES

- Implemented meadow management plans for Morrison Farm, Jenks Conservation Land, Heath Hen Meadow, Grassy Pond, Stoneymeade, and NARA to ensure ecological health and biodiversity
- Secured Community Preservation Act (CPA) funding to execute a tree planting and replacement program along Acton's streets in collaboration with the Tree Warden, enhancing the town's canopy and promoting environmental sustainability.

- Replaced deceased apple trees with new ones in the Acton Arboretum, rejuvenating the landscape
- Expanded the Morrison Farm Orchard with new fruit trees, contributing to sustainable agriculture

PROTECT EXISTING OPEN FIELDS, MEADOWS, AND AGRICULTURAL PARCELS

- Renegotiated the lease agreement with the Department of Corrections for the Wetherbee Farm Field, securing a 20-year lease to enable the Town of Acton to actively manage 14 acres of ball fields at School Street
- Implemented an Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) on Stonefield Farm, now owned by Boston Area Gleaners, with the APR entrusted to the joint management of the Acton Conservation Trust and Sudbury Valley Trustees
- Implemented a comprehensive meadow management plan, including an annual mowing cycle to further the Town's commitment to sustainable land management



Dawn at Cucurbit Farm Photo by Cucurbit Farm



Hybrid Barn circa 1980
Photo from historical archives

SUPPORT LOCAL FARMS AND FARMING

- Designed and implemented a parking lot and trail system along the Ice House Pond frontage to connect to the Morrison Farm property with an extension of the trail along the shoreline
- Installed a well for the Morrison Farm Community Garden to serve as an irrigation source to ensure sustainable and efficient water management for agricultural activities
- Completed the design and installation of the Hebert Community Garden in South Acton, to foster community engagement and promote local agriculture
- Restored the Wet Meadow at Morrison Farm to preserve critical ecological habitat
- Established an Agricultural Commission and implemented a Right to Farm Bylaw to foster a supportive environment for local agriculture and promote the protection of farming practices within the community
- Implemented Phase 1 to connect the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail to Morrison Farm and the Ice House Pond Recreation

SOME OF THE LOCAL FARMING IN ACTON

- Bear Spot Farm and Foundation
- Boston Area Gleaners
- Cucurbit Farm
- Hebert Farm
- Daisy Hill Farm
- Idylwilde Farm
- Lythrum Farm
- Nashoba Valley Farm
- Shepley Hill Eventing
- Silverstone Stables and Farm
- Hebert farm community garden
- Morrison farm community garden
- North Acton community garden

Area to incorporate ADA-compliant trails and boardwalks

Goal #2: Protect Critical Environmental Resources

PRESERVE AND PROTECT ACTON'S WATER SUPPLIES AND CONSERVATION VALUES

- Established permanent protection for the parcel at 549 Main Street, the result of a successful collaboration between the Town and the Acton Water District

Acton Agricultural Commission



- Installed a rain garden adjacent to the parking lot at the Acton Arboretum to effectively address stormwater runoff and to contribute to sustainable water management practices
- The Acton Water District facilitated and completed an inventory of all open space parcels targeted for purchase

ENSURE PERMANENT PROTECTION STATUS OF ALL CONSERVATION PARCELS

- Implemented a multitude of Conservation Restrictions and Agricultural Preservation Restrictions, signifying a concerted effort to safeguard and preserve properties within the community:
 - 2020 Agricultural Preservation Restriction placed on Stonefield Farm
 - 2014 Conservation Restriction placed on 330 Central Street (Wright Hill)
 - 2015 Conservation Restriction placed on 49 Skyline Drive (Quail Ridge)
 - 2017 Conservation Restriction placed on 176 Central Street (Heath Hen Meadow)
 - 2018 Conservation Restriction placed on 161 Newtown Road (Grassy Pond West).
 - 2020 Conservation Restriction placed on Piper Lane
 - 2020 Agricultural Preservation Restriction placed on Stonefield Farm
 - 2021 Conservation Restriction placed on 13 Arlington Street (“Anderson Property”) and 180 Newtown Road Rear



Volunteers hand pulling Water Chestnut, an invasive aquatic species, from Ice House Pond on July 20, 2024

MANAGE AND CONTROL INVASIVE AND NUISANCE SPECIES

- Conducted a yearly garlic mustard removal program to actively address invasive plant species
- Initiated annual water chestnut removal and monitoring to proactively manage the spread of the invasive aquatic plant species
- Collaborated with land trusts to organize work days focused on Conservation Restrictions

- Through systematic removal efforts on conservation lands, volunteers and Land Stewards combated invasive species such as Japanese barberry, glossy buckthorn, Asiatic bittersweet, multiflora rose, and more
- Coordinated efforts of the Acton Garden Club, Friends of the Acton Arboretum, Acton Conservation Trust, and Acton Land Stewards to recruit hand-pickers and provide education on avoiding and removing invasive plant species



DEVELOP AND EXTEND TRAIL NETWORKS

- Created a user-friendly online resource for residents to explore and navigate all of the conservation areas within the community at www.trails.actonma.gov/map

- Improved access to the Grassy Pond Conservation Area with the construction of a three-car parking lot at the Newtown Road entrance

- Constructed the Blue and Green Trail at the Assabet River to provide opportunities to explore its scenic beauty

IMPROVE ACCESS TO AND USE OF MANAGED CONSERVATION AREAS

- Constructed a new parking lot at the Arboretum to enhance accessibility for visitors
- Replaced the Arboretum's bog boardwalk in 2015 to ensure its continued safety and accessibility
- Completed the Arboretum's sidewalk ramp leading to Minot Ave to improve accessibility for individuals with varying mobility needs
- Installed additional stream signs at strategic locations to strengthen environmental awareness. Locations include: Assabet River—Route 62; Inch Brook—Route 111; Mary's Brook—Minot Ave; and Spencer Brook —Pope Road
- Completed a universal path to the Wheeler Land Mill Site, complemented by the construction of a parking lot at Carlisle Road



Goal #3: Improve and Expand Recreation Opportunities for Everyone

EXPAND UNIVERSAL ACCESSIBILITY TO OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION SITES

- Constructed an accessible entrance at the Acton Arboretum to provide visitors with varying mobility needs a welcoming point of entry. An ADA-compliant ramp

was also constructed on the Minot Ave sidewalk at the Arboretum

- Upgraded the Miracle Field to achieve ADA compliance and achieve greater accessibility for individuals of all abilities to enjoy recreational activities

- Created a new Sports Plaza at NARA with a focus on ADA compliance, offering a recreational space accessible to everyone
- Installed raised garden beds at the Morrison Farm Community Gardens to promote inclusivity in agricultural activities, allowing accessibility for all
- Reconstructed the Mary's Brook Bridge to meet accessibility standards to ensure an inclusive pathway for all
- Jones Playground is now ADA compliant with ADA parking spaces, making this recreational area accessible to individuals with diverse mobility needs

EXPAND PUBLIC OUTREACH AND BETTER COMMUNICATION TO BETTER INFORM THE PUBLIC OF AVAILABLE PASSIVE AND ACTIVE RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

- Offered educational nature walks and guided birding walks to engage the community with the natural environment
- Through channels including the *Municipal Monthly* (bi-monthly e-newsletter) and the Recreation Facebook page, shared event updates and actively promoted various forms of recreation

IMPROVE AND EXPAND THE FACILITIES AT NARA

- Introduced improved picnicking facilities featuring the addition of the Picnic Pavilion, Picnic Pod, and the Sports Plaza to provide visitors with more recreational spaces to enjoy outdoor meals and gatherings
- Opened a spur from the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail to provide additional public access to the restrooms
- Successfully completed the comprehensive 2016-2026 NARA Master Plan, outlining strategic development and enhancement initiatives
- Constructed a concession and restroom facility dedicated to servicing the Upper Fields and Miracle Field, to provide essential amenities for park users
- Expanded parking access to accommodate the increasing number of visitors to NARA
- Replaced failing trees and undertook strategic tree planting in key areas to ensure the availability of shade for the comfort and enjoyment of park patrons

DEVELOP THE ICE HOUSE POND RECREATION AREA

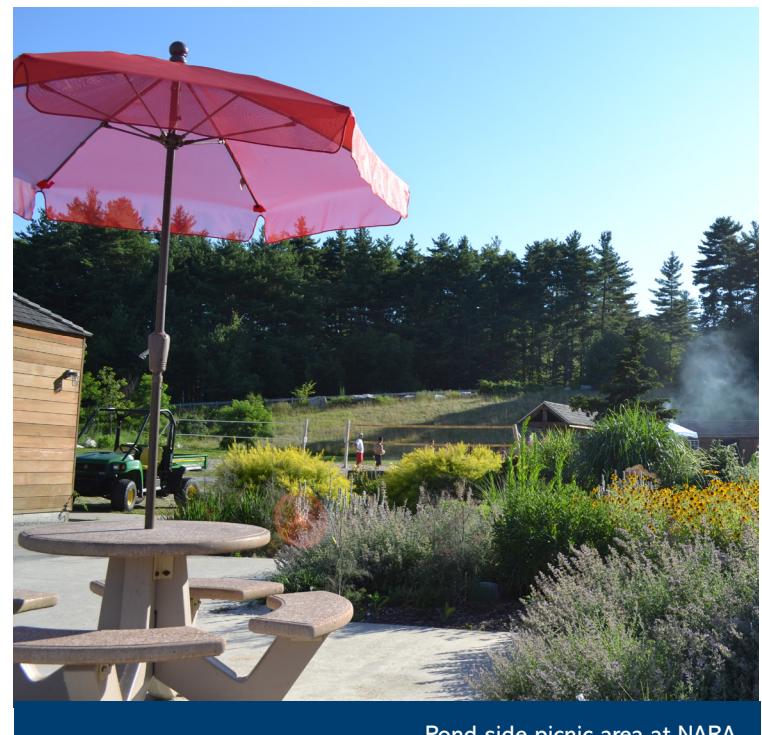
- Constructed a permeable parking lot in 2018, designed to minimize stormwater runoff
- Completed a trail connecting the universally accessible parking area at Ice House Pond to the Morrison Farm fields, improving connectivity and accessibility for visitors
- Completed a new picnic area, featuring picnic tables and a bench to provide a welcoming and comfortable space for individuals and families to enjoy outdoor meals and recreational activities

SECURE RECREATIONAL INDOOR SPACE

- Relocated the Recreation Offices to 50 Audubon Drive, marking a strategic move to a new facility to better serve and accommodate the community's recreational needs



Miracle Field



Pond-side picnic area at NARA

CREATE ADDITIONAL FACILITIES TO MEET THE DIVERSE NEEDS OF THE TOWN

- Provided community access to the Hebert Community Garden in South Acton to foster local engagement and promote sustainable agricultural practice
- Significantly upgraded Gardner Playground, including the addition of a new parking area, to enhance recreational amenities available to West Acton
- Implemented parking infrastructure improvements, including the creation of parking off Piper Road and the regrading of parking facilities at Jenks
- Completed the Ice House Pond parking lot to provide enhanced access and encourage community members to enjoy the outdoor recreational opportunities available
- Established a designated site for a Dog Park at 348 Main Street, laying the groundwork for a future community space catering to dog owners

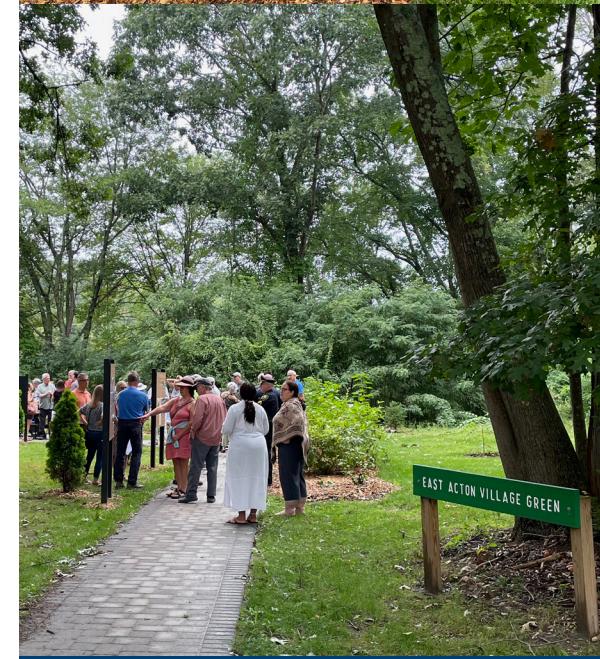
IMPROVE AND UPDATE EXISTING FACILITIES

- The TJ O'Grady Skate Park undergoes periodic graffiti removal, coupled with regular police patrols, to maintain a clean and safe environment for users

- Developed and constructed a new skate plaza and skate bowl at the Skate Park, to enhance the infrastructure for skateboard enthusiasts in the community
- To provide essential shelters for players, dugouts at NARA and Veterans Field now feature roofs
- Completed fence replacement at Elm Street Courts, ensuring the security and longevity of the facility
- Resurfaced the Elm Street Courts to enhance the playing surface

ENSURE PLAYGROUND FACILITIES ARE MADE UP-TO-DATE, SAFE, AND ACCESSIBLE

- Installed a new playground at Elm Street, providing an updated and engaging recreational space for community members
- Provided accesses to the Small Pavilion at Elm Street, ensuring that individuals of all abilities can enjoy the amenities at this location
- Constructed a shade structure at the NARA playground to enhance the comfort of park visitors during times of extreme weather
- The renovation of Jones Playground in 2020 included the addition of ADA-



Community members gather to dedicate new historic park at the East Acton Village Green



Town of Acton's Open Space and Recreation Plan

WE WANT TO KNOW WHAT OPEN
SPACE AND RECREATION AREAS
ARE IMPORTANT TO YOU!

TO TAKE OUR TOWN-WIDE SURVEY, PLEASE
GO TO THE LINK BELOW OR
SCAN THE QR CODE.

WE'RE LOOKING FORWARD TO HEARING
FROM YOU!



WWW.ACTONMA.GOV/OSRP

PLEASE COMPLETE THE SURVEY BY APRIL 15, 2022

compliant parking and the planting of
shade trees

ENHANCE THE QUALITY OF ACTON'S ATHLETIC FIELDS

- Enlisted outside contractors for
landscaping at various sections of NARA
and Veteran's Field, ensuring professional



care and maintenance of these outdoor
spaces

- Developed a comprehensive field
maintenance plan (with implementation
contingent on available funding
each year), to promote strategic and
systematic upkeep of sports fields and
recreational areas

ACQUIRE AND DEVELOP POCKET PARKS/COMMONS IN ACTON VILLAGES

- Constructed the East Acton Village Green
to provide a new and vibrant communal
space for residents to gather, relax, and
engage in community activities

2

Introduction to the 2024-2031 Plan's Goals

The 2024-2031 plan re-evaluates and
enhances the goals outlined in its 2014
predecessor, improving previous objectives
while introducing new, innovative
strategies that meet the changing needs of
Acton's dynamic social and environmental
landscape. The 2024 plan is dedicated to
fostering a resilient, inclusive, and vibrant
community by guiding current and future
decisions through the following goals:

1. Preserve and protect the historic,
cultural, agricultural, and scenic features
of Acton
2. Protect critical environmental resources,
including ground and surface water,
wildlife, diverse habitats, and ecosystems
3. Improve and expand recreational
opportunities for everyone
4. Incorporate sustainability in
current and future open space and
recreation decisions

B. PLANNING PROCESS AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

In 2021, the plan began with the creation of the Town Staff Working Group (Working Group) consisting of professionals dedicated to shaping Acton's open spaces and recreation. The group brings diverse expertise to ensure a well-informed planning approach, meeting intermittently from late 2021 until completion in 2024.

The Working Group included Nora Masler, Planner; Melissa Settipani-Rufo, Recreation Director; Mike Gendron, Conservation Manager; Kaila Sauer, Senior Planner; Kristin Alexander, GIS Officer; Andrea Becerra, Sustainability Director; and Ian Bergemann, Land Stewardship Coordinator. Special thanks go to Tom Tidman, former Natural Resources Director, and Bettina Abe, former Natural Resources Assistant. Their tireless dedication and wealth of knowledge significantly shaped the 2014 OSRP. Tidman and Abe, who devoted years to the community before retiring, played instrumental roles in developing the previous and current OSRPs. As the Town continues to benefit from their contributions, both plans stand as a testament to their work.

Engagement opportunities

Community engagement lies at the heart of this plan. While the Working Group played a pivotal role in its formulation, the insights garnered from the active participation of the community were central to the process.

SURVEYS

TOWN-WIDE SURVEY

Surveys are essential tools for community engagement, amplifying voices and gathering diverse perspectives. They provide structured platforms for residents to express their needs, concerns, and aspirations, fostering inclusive decision-making. In spring 2022, the Working Group collaborated with the Recreation Commission, Conservation Commission, and Open Space Committee to craft a survey. Building on insights from past plans, the survey aimed to uncover the community's current priorities. To ensure broad outreach, the survey was distributed via postcards with QR codes to all Acton addresses and was featured on the Town's website and through *Newsflash*. This approach resulted in 500 completed surveys received from March to April 15, 2022. The survey results played a pivotal

role in shaping the 2024-2031 OSRP. Key findings highlighted the community's interest in improved sidewalks, trails, enhanced communication on open space and recreation opportunities, and importance of water for use and recreation. The insights from this survey provided a basis for the 2024-2031 OSRP's goals and objectives. See appendix for results.

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT SURVEY

Involving youth in planning is crucial for creating projects that resonate with their needs and aspirations. By incorporating youth perspectives, ideas, and preferences, plans can resonate with the challenges and aspirations unique to this demographic. While the town-wide survey yielded valuable insights instrumental in shaping this 2024-2031 OSRP, the responses were predominantly from residents aged 35 and above. The data revealed a significant gap, with only one percent of respondents falling within the 18-24 age category, and a noticeable absence of input from those 18 and under. To address this, the Working Group engaged with three AP Environmental classes at Acton-Boxborough Regional High School in January 2023, providing a platform for direct interaction with students under 18.

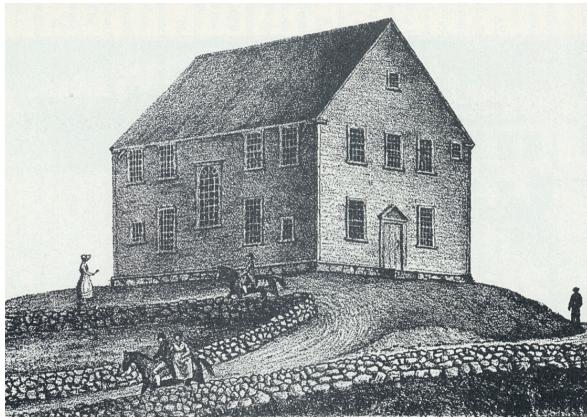
Students were presented a simplified version of the survey, offering them an opportunity to share their perspectives.

This targeted engagement filled a demographic gap while also providing a unique view of the preferences and priorities of students residing outside of Acton (e.g. Boxborough) who use and visit the Town's recreation facilities and conservation lands. The High School Student Survey highlighted the desire for more recreational opportunities and increased walkability, especially to access open space and recreational amenities. See appendix for results.

FORUMS/PUBLIC MEETINGS

The Working Group organized and conducted two comprehensive public forums to gather input for the 2024-2031 OSRP. Both forums were highly advertised through Town-wide newsflashes, the Municipal Monthly newsletter, social media posts with community leaders, direct outreach to local community groups, and flyers at conservation areas and local businesses. The first forum on November 10, 2022, introduced the 2024-2031 OSRP concept, shared insights





THE FIRST MEETING HOUSE. 1738.

from the town-wide survey, and allowed approximately 50 attendees to provide initial comments. Crafted through a two-year inclusive process, the second forum on December 6, 2023, presented the four goals for the 2024-2031 OSRP. During this second forum, the Working Group discussed the objectives and action items aligned with each goal, emphasizing those that directly stemmed from public input. The session also featured a detailed explanation of the parcel prioritization process with the use of the Sudbury Valley Trustees Parcel Prioritization Model. This model was used to establish an objective and comprehensive methodology for prioritizing parcels. Approximately 25 participants shared input that allowed staff to refine the 2024-2031 OSRP. In

both forums, the Working Group actively encouraged the public to pose questions and deliver comments. The questions and comments from the attendees' diverse perspectives were instrumental in shaping and refining the plan, ensuring that it reflects the collective aspirations and concerns of the community.

PHOTO COMPETITION

To collect a wide range of images while further connecting with a new sector of the community in the 2024-2031 OSRP process, the Town organized a photo competition that was open from October 2023 to mid-January 2024. It garnered a significant response. Over 54 participants submitted impressive photos capturing images from wildlife to recreation. The Working Group reviewed each submission, selecting images that best complemented different sections of the 2024-2031 OSRP. Ultimately, the collaborative photo competition contributed to an engaging and comprehensive 2024-2031 OSRP, reflecting the town's spirit and vitality.

LIAISON AND COMMISSION MEETINGS

To maintain a continuous flow of feedback throughout the planning process, the Working Group engaged with key boards

and committees via discussions at their respective meetings and through a dedicated Liaison Group. The Liaison Group, consisting of representatives from various boards, committees, and commissions, played a pivotal role in facilitating information exchange. The Working Group shared regular updates with the Liaison Group, and their feedback was actively sought between public engagement sessions.

A significant engagement milestone was the "Goal Workshop" on January 19, 2023, where Liaisons provided valuable feedback on proposed goals, leading to substantial improvements. The Working Group also extended outreach at key board and committee meetings to review specific action items that correlated to their role. Feedback sessions were conducted with the Conservation Commission, Open Space Committee, Acton Conservation Trust, Land Stewardship Committee, Agricultural Commission, the Green Advisory Board, and the Water Resource Advisory Committee. This comprehensive feedback loop allowed the Working Group to refine and finalize action items under each relevant goal and objective by

including the unique perspectives of each stakeholder group, and ensuring a well-informed and collaborative approach to shaping the 2024-2031 Open Space and Recreation Plan.

Other community planning processes

The 2014 OSRP was developed concurrently with Acton's 2020 Community Comprehensive Plan, reflecting a coordinated approach to community planning. Since the completion of the 2014 OSRP, the Town of Acton has undertaken numerous public engagement initiatives as part of other plans and projects. Many of these engagement processes directly align with the objectives outlined in the 2024-2031 OSRP. The feedback received through collaboration with these initiatives has also contributed to shaping the 2024-2031 OSRP.

PLANS

Climate Action Plan—ActOn Climate: The Road to a Resilient Net Zero Future

Extensive community outreach relevant to the 2024-2031 OSRP occurred with the Town's adoption of its first *Climate Action Plan* (CAP). At a 2020 Special Town Meeting, the vote to declare a Climate Emergency was nearly unanimous. It

explicitly called on the Town to commit to bringing net Town-wide carbon emissions to zero as quickly as possible, with a target date of 2030. The Climate Emergency Declaration goals relate directly to the 2024-2031 OSRP stating that the "Town of Acton's climate mobilization should also: (1) accelerate adaptation and resilience strategies in preparation for intensifying local and global climate impacts; (2) protect trees, forests, and other open spaces because of their ability to draw carbon out of the atmosphere and store it; and (3)

ensure that the costs of such mobilization efforts do not unfairly burden those who are economically or socially disadvantaged, and that the benefits of a realized, sustainable future accrue to all."

Acton's CAP process was accomplished in one year, incorporating multiple means of public engagement during both Phases I and II. These included public workshops, focus groups, public surveys, flyers, and social media. In collaboration with MAPC, over 20 community events were held



Eastern view of NARA



Attendees of NARA Summer Concert Series

between June 30, 2021, and June 1, 2022. Many of the Climate Goals that were supported through the CAP's community engagement process have direct links to climate planning for open space and recreation in Acton. Thus, the goals that were formulated through that process have been incorporated into the goals and action

items included in this rendition of the 2024-2031 OSRP.

NARA Master Plan 2016-2026

To establish the *NARA Master Plan*, the Recreation Department undertook a comprehensive online park-use survey, employing print and social media channels.

The survey, deliberately inclusive of both residents and non-residents, but with an emphasis on Acton residents, aimed to gather diverse perspectives on NARA's current state and future potential over the next decade. The survey, which received an overwhelming response from over 400 participants, stands as a testament to the community's active involvement in the Town's recreation offerings and NARA specifically. The 400+ responses guided the creation of the goals and corresponding action items in the *NARA Master Plan*, serving as the cornerstone for numerous recreation initiatives. They provide a robust framework for the ongoing development of NARA as well as other recreation areas throughout the Town and were therefore incorporated into this 2024-2031 OSRP.

Powder Mill Road Corridor Initiative

The Town of Acton has partnered with the neighboring Town of Maynard for a joint re-zoning effort along Powder Mill Road. This initiative aims to establish consistent zoning standards to create walkable mixed-use spaces, improve transportation options, and provide better access to the scenic Assabet River. The northern part of the corridor, which closely follows the

Assabet River, is currently underused and environmentally neglected.

Envisioning a revitalized corridor with safe pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure is a significant part of this effort. This transformation could connect Route 62 to the Assabet River Rail Trail and the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail, creating a secure and lively transit connection and recreation opportunity. It also sets the stage for potential future links, forming an interconnected network of pathways for the community.

The collaboration between Acton and Maynard involved various forums, surveys, and focus groups. Key themes such as river access align with the goals outlined in the previous and updated OSRPs.

PROJECTS

53 River Street Historic Park

In 2017, the Town of Acton acquired the property at 53 River Street, following Town Meeting approval in 2016. Subsequently, the Town undertook extensive coordination efforts to navigate the diverse challenges associated with utilizing the parcel. Recognizing the complexity of this task,



Nathan Pratt built a dam and gunpowder mill on the Assabet in 1835. Millstone above.

the 53 River Street Master Plan Special Committee was established in 2018, serving as a collaborative platform for addressing various facets and soliciting public input to inform the Select Board's decisions regarding the future application of the parcel.

Throughout 2018, the committee conducted a series of public engagement initiatives, including a survey, a public forum, and multiple meetings. Students at the Conway School pursuing their Masters in Ecological

Design orchestrated the public forum. A key finding from the survey revealed that 75 percent of respondents expressed a desire for a public park highlighting historical significance and 58 percent leaned towards conservation.

Considering all the information gathered by the 53 River Street Master Plan Special Committee and input from various regulatory bodies, the Town proceeded with the removal of the dam and implemented conceptual designs aimed at creating a



View of the Assabet River via the Assabet River Blue and Green trail boardwalk Photo by Ian Bergemann

park that focused on conservation while commemorating the historic elements of the parcel. Construction for the park commenced in the Fall of 2023.

While this historic park is site-specific to 53 River Street, the broader perspective gained throughout this process underscored the desire for utilizing parcels to meet multiple objectives; in this case recreation, conservation and historic preservation. Thus, the 2024-2031 OSRP incorporated feedback gathered throughout the 53 River Streets engagement.

Main Street Campus

In 2021, the Acton Select Board authorized and funded the architectural plan for what is referred to as the Main Street Campus. Collectively, the three parcels (348 to 364 Main Street addresses) would become referred to as the Main Street Campus and consist of the Acton Dog Park, a proposed Senior Park, and the McManus Manor Housing complex under the oversight of the Acton Housing Authority. The Main Street Campus presents a holistic integrated vision tying the three entities together with similar landscaping and

architectural features. Themes of increased recreational amenities for a diverse population are featured throughout this plan.

Dog Park

The initiative to establish a dog park in Acton traces its roots back to an action item in the 2014 OSRP, where a group of town residents recognized the diverse needs of dog owners and their pets. This led to the formation of the Acton Dog Park Committee in 2017, charged with assessing the necessity and potential benefits of a dog park. The committee engaged the community through various means, including surveys, confirming the community benefits of such a facility.

Following their initial engagement efforts, the committee integrated into the Main Street Campus subcommittee and collaborated with other key committees in the town. As a subcommittee of the Main Street Campus, the Dog Park Committee advanced the project, and is now positioned to put the construction out to bid in 2024. The Acton Dog Park Committee's process highlights the pivotal role of committed

residents in realizing the community's vision through the 2024-2031 OSRP.

Senior Park

A proposed Senior Park would occupy the center property of the three parcels in the Main Street Campus and is envisioned as a small, informal, universally accessible space that is open to all. The space will include features such as walkways, seating, surfaces, and equipment, presenting social and passive recreational opportunities that will encourage use by members of the senior community.

Starting in the spring of 2021 through to the conclusion of the high-level landscape design in November 2023, the Main Street Campus subcommittee met and advanced the architectural design of the Main Street Campus and the Senior Park in particular. The group focused on integrating the Senior Park with its neighbors without impacting those project schedules or design. The subcommittee regularly updated the Select Board and offered an opportunity for neighborhood input via a mailing that was sent to abutters.



Entry area with Fountain and storage area



Entry area with Bench - Engineered Wood Fiber



Service access gates



de Structure Concepts : Above Tower Hill Botanical Garden, and Quarry St. Quincy, Ma Dog Park de structures



Acton Dog Park - Refined Site Plan
Date: 03-15-2023

Dale Design, Inc. Landscape Architecture

C ENHANCED OUTREACH AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Acton's environmental justice (EJ) population is predominantly located in North Acton, where there is a concentration of minority populations, particularly Asian communities. This demographic insight underscores the importance of targeted outreach and culturally sensitive engagement strategies in the 2024-2031 OSRP planning process.

To effectively engage these communities, the Working Group utilized a range of inclusive strategies. Visual aids, infographics, and easy-to-read materials were tailored to be culturally relevant and accessible, ensuring that complex planning details were understandable to all residents, including those from Asian backgrounds in North Acton. Online platforms and interactive forums facilitated remote participation, addressing mobility challenges that might affect community members in this area.

A key aspect of inclusivity was the involvement of a representative from the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Committee in the Liaison Group. This

ensured that goals were shaped with input that reflected the perspectives and priorities of EJ communities. Moreover, proactive engagement with the DEI Committee from the outset of the planning process guaranteed that their insights were integrated early on, emphasizing the importance of incorporating diverse viewpoints in decision-making.

EJ populations were specifically outreached to by various means:

- **Social Media:** Platforms like Instagram and local newsletters effectively spread information about public forums, reaching diverse demographics including EJ communities.
- **Targeted Local Outreach:** Distributing flyers at community hubs like the Acton Asian Market and NARA (which is located in North Acton) ensured that information about forums reached directly to local EJ populations who might not be as active online.
- **Cultural and Linguistic Relevance:** Involving community leaders like Dawn Wang ensured that outreach was culturally sensitive and accessible.

Engagement with trusted community leaders further amplified outreach efforts by bringing the information directly to those communities.

- **Inclusive Data Collection:** By distributing surveys broadly, including to addresses within EJ populations, the Working Group gathered diverse perspectives on environmental justice issues, ensuring that community needs were thoroughly understood.
- **Accessibility Features:** Providing Zoom captioning during forums made virtual meetings inclusive for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing, enhancing participation and understanding.

By incorporating these tailored approaches, the Working Group not only aimed to bridge communication gaps and foster inclusivity but also to empower Asian communities in North Acton to actively shape decisions regarding open spaces and recreational planning. This holistic engagement strategy reflects Acton's commitment to addressing environmental justice concerns in a manner that is responsive to the diverse needs and perspectives of its residents.

SECTION 3: COMMUNITY SETTING

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Cosmos bloom in a field Photo by Debra Simes

This Section focuses on Acton's setting, including its regional context, history, demographics, growth, and development patterns. By describing the Town's evolution and future demands, this information serves as a backdrop to Acton's open space and recreation goals.

A. REGIONAL CONTEXT

Background

Acton, Massachusetts is situated in Middlesex County, approximately 21 miles northwest of Boston. Nestled in the Greater Boston area, Acton enjoys a prime location with convenient access to major urban centers and transportation networks. The town is in the SuAsCo (Sudbury, Assabet and Concord River) Watershed, with key water bodies such as Nashoba Brook contributing to the local hydrological system.

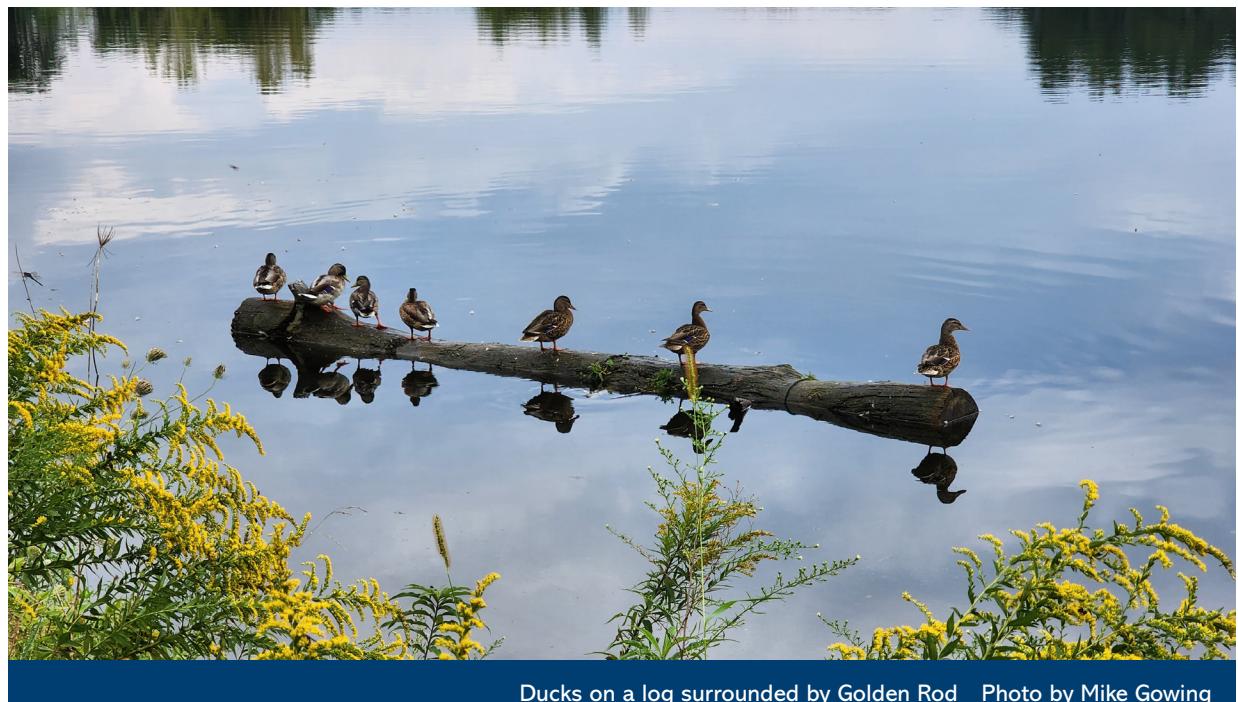
Acton is endowed with extensive open spaces, including parks, conservation areas, and recreational facilities. Notable landscape features include the expansive Great Hill Conservation Land, Nagog Hill Conservation Land, and the picturesque Acton Arboretum. These areas serve as hubs for outdoor activities while contributing to

the Town's ecological diversity and overall aesthetic appeal.

Economically, Acton is home to a mix of residential, commercial, and industrial developments. In terms of socio-economic context, Acton is recognized as an upper-middle-income suburb with a well-educated population. The Town's residents benefit from a robust school system, healthcare facilities, and a variety of cultural and recreational amenities.

Rather than one town center, Acton has multiple village areas.

At the Center of Town lies the traditional Town Common which marks the geographic and governmental town center. Town Hall and the Acton Memorial Library are here, as well as the "Red House," home to the Town's Sustainability Office. The surrounding neighborhood is one of Acton's designated Historic Districts. Historic homes surround the government buildings and the nearby Acton





Volunteer Shed at the Acton Arboretum Photo by Priya Prabaker

Congregational Church boasts a traditional New England structure including a spire. The Acton Arboretum is also walking distance from this central area of Town.

The Kelley's Corner neighborhood is located southwest of Route 2, with a combination of housing types as well as various retail establishments and services. This area is also home to many of the Town's schools including the Acton-Boxborough Regional High School, the RJ Grey Junior High School, the McCarthy-Towne Elementary School, and the Merriam Elementary School. In the fall of 2022, the Kelley's Corner infrastructure project broke ground. By implementing bike lanes, new sidewalks, turning lanes, and traffic signals, this project will increase safety and efficiency for all users. This project will also add pedestrian amenities and landscaping, including over 150 new street trees, enhancing the experience of pedestrians and the aesthetics of the streetscape.

A commercial, retail, and residential area runs east to west along Great Road (Route 2A). A significant part of this Great Road corridor also runs parallel to the Nashoba Brook and the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail,

which provides important wildlife habitat and recreation opportunities. Another important regional trail that runs through East Acton and by Nashoba Brook is the Bay Circuit Trail, designated as a state recreation priority. In addition to these recreational opportunities which draw many visitors from around the region, the stores, offices, and services on Great Road are used by residents of Acton and surrounding towns. This corridor also contains East Acton Village, as well as a large residential portion consisting of apartment buildings, condominium complexes, single-family homes, and several large subdivisions. A high percentage of Acton's naturally occurring affordable units and subsidized housing units are located along the Great Road corridor.

Farther along the Great Road Corridor lies North Acton. Due to residential development, including the Avalon Apartments, this area has been one of the fastest growing parts of Acton since the 2014 OSRP. North Acton is also home to the Town's largest park—the Nathaniel Allen Recreation Area (NARA). The park connects to the northern segment of the

Bruce Freeman Rail Trail in Acton. The Bay Circuit Trail also runs through North Acton, creating a regional trail connection.

The Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority (MBTA) commuter rail runs through West and South Acton. West Acton is a walkable neighborhood with an active commercial center comprised of local small businesses, the Citizens' Library, and the West Acton Post Office. It's located in one of the Town's Historic Districts, surrounded by single-family homes, as well as scattered multifamily homes. West Acton also includes the newly-updated Gardner Field Playground and various conservation areas, such as Guggins Brook, Wright Hill, and Jenks Conservation Land.

South Acton is a largely residential area consisting of single-family and multifamily homes. The South Acton commuter rail station is a key feature, connecting residents to the MBTA Commuter Rail Fitchburg Line. It provides convenient transportation to Boston and neighboring towns. There is a small commercial area in South Acton at the intersection of Main Street and School Street. A portion of South Acton along Main Street, School



Bay Circuit Trail, Trail through Time, and a yellow trail blaze are seen within Nashoba Brook Conservation Land



Peonies bloom in the Lilac Garden at the Acton Arboretum

Street, and River Street lies within one of the Town's Historic Districts. Other features of South Acton include the Assabet River Rail Trail, Jones Field, and the Great Hill/Little Great Hill Conservation area. Since the summer of 2022, the Town has been working on a Planning Initiative for South Acton called the South Acton Vision and Action Plan. This plan includes a zoning proposal to further activate the

village center as a commercial corridor. It also aims to increase the diversity of housing options near the train station, and comply with M.G.L. Chapter 40A Section 3A.

In the southeast corner of Acton, the Powder Mill corridor abuts the Assabet River. The Powder Mill Road corridor consists of approximately one mile in

Maynard and a half mile in Acton. Today, Powder Mill in Acton is characterized by disconnected strips of commercial, industrial and residential sprawl, including multiple auto sales and repair businesses. For the past two years, the towns of Acton and Maynard have worked together to create a long-term community-oriented strategy for the corridor to guide future growth. This plan seeks to support walkable mixed-use developments, advance complete streets transportation options, and expand access to the Assabet River¹.

Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (MAGIC) & MetroCommon 2050

The Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (MAGIC) is a collaborative initiative involving Acton and neighboring towns including: Bedford, Bolton, Boxborough, Carlisle, Concord, Hudson, Lexington, Lincoln, Littleton, Maynard, Stow, and Sudbury. MAGIC focuses on coordinating regional planning efforts related to land use, transportation, and environmental conservation. By facilitating intermunicipal cooperation, MAGIC promotes sustainable development

¹ This information is drawn from the Powder Mill Road Corridor Initiative.

practices and enhances the quality of life for residents across participating communities. This collaborative approach ensures that regional resources, such as open space and recreational amenities, are managed effectively and equitably to meet the diverse needs of Acton and its neighboring towns. For FY2025, MAGIC is collaborating on trails placemaking, trails connections, and existing noise policies.

As a member of MAGIC, Acton strides to align our local goals with the goals of MAPC, outlined in MetroCommon 2050. Acton's OSRP goals and objectives, as well as the action plan, are consistent with the goals from MetroCommon 2050, including the following:

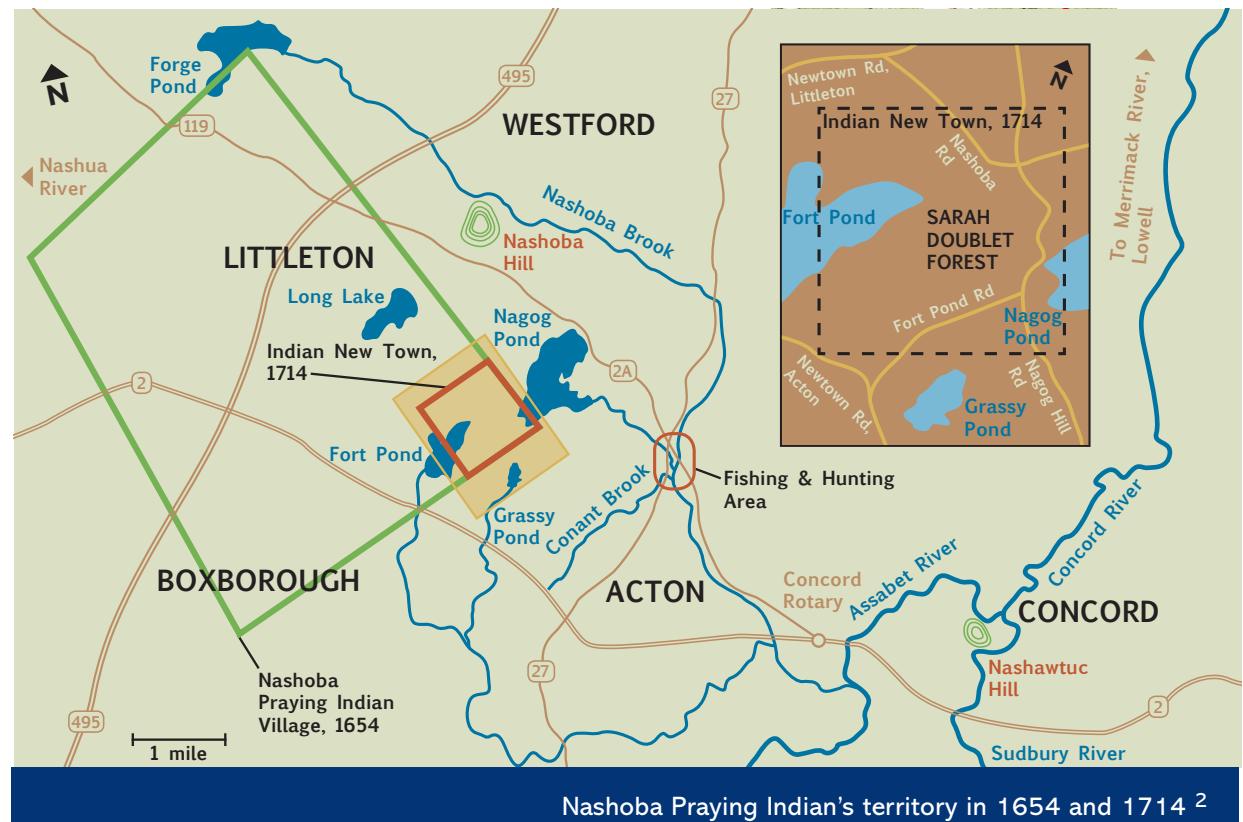
- **MC2050 Goal A:** Getting Around the Region — Traveling around Metro Boston is safe, affordable, convenient, and enjoyable.
 - Goal #3 of this OSRP recognizes the Town's concerted effort to provide safe mobility infrastructure for pedestrians and bicyclists and improve connectivity to Acton's parks and open spaces.
- **MC2050 Goal C:** A Climate-Resilient Region — Metro Boston is prepared for —

and resilient to — the impacts of climate change.

– By integrating climate resilience and improving the energy efficiency of open space and recreation spaces, Goal #4 of this OSRP underscores Acton's commitment to integrating sustainability principles into present and future decisions regarding open space and recreational activities,

contributing to a climate-resilient region prepared for the challenges of climate change.

- **MC2050 Goal F:** Greater Boston's air, water, land, and other natural resources are clean and protected — for us and for the rest of the ecosystem.
 - Goal #2 of Acton's plan aligns with MC2050 Goal F by focusing on the preservation of Acton's supplies and



ensure protection of parcels with ecological importance, not only for the community's benefit but also for the broader ecosystem of Greater Boston.

- **MC2050 Goal H:** Thriving Arts, Culture, and Heritage — Greater Boston is full of unique places and experiences that bring joy and foster diversity and social cohesion.
 - Supporting local farms and focusing on celebrating Acton's historic and cultural heritage helps enrich the community on key heritage features in Greater Boston.



East Acton Village Railway Station now the BFRT at Concord Rd crossing Photo courtesy Acton Historical Society

Open Space Resources of Regional Significance

BRUCE FREEMAN RAIL TRAIL

The Bruce Freeman Rail Trail spans 6.8 miles through the town, offering a scenic route for walking, rolling, jogging, biking, and rollerblading. This multi-use trail follows the former rail bed of the New Haven Railroad's Framingham and Lowell line, providing a picturesque journey through woodlands, wetlands, and urban areas. It provides a safe and scenic pathway that connects Acton to neighboring

towns such as Chelmsford, Westford, and Concord, promoting regional recreation and active transportation.

ASSABET RIVER RAIL TRAIL

The Assabet River Rail Trail, extending 12.5 miles, traverses Acton, serving as a vital link in the regional trail network. Following the abandoned Marlborough Branch Line of the Boston and Maine Railroad, this trail offers varying natural scenery and recreational opportunities, including hiking, biking, and birdwatching.

BAY CIRCUIT TRAIL

The Bay Circuit Trail (BCT) is a two-hundred-mile-long corridor of connected publicly accessible open spaces running between the north shore and the south shore of Massachusetts Bay and touching fifty Massachusetts towns. The Acton portion of this trail network traverses woodlands, fields, and historic sites, totaling about 9 miles. The concept behind this "Outer Emerald Necklace" dates back to 1929. Acton has been a part of the Bay Circuit Trail for over ten years, and both the Conservation Commission and the Select Board have dedicated our portion of the trail corridor that runs through the Nashoba Brook, Spring Hill, Camp Acton and Stoneymeade conservation areas.

ABUTTING CONSERVATION LANDS

Acton's conservation lands are integral to preserving natural ecosystems and enhancing recreational opportunities. Key conservation areas that abut other towns include:

- **Captain Sargent Conservation Land**

(Stow): Captain Sargent Conservation Land in nearby Stow borders Acton's Heath Hen Meadow and Dunn Conservation Land. This interconnected area supports diverse wildlife and offers trails for hiking and nature exploration, making it a popular destination for outdoor enthusiasts and nature lovers.

- **Stoneymeade Conservation Land:**

Located in Acton and adjacent to Concord's Annursnac Conservation Land, Stoneymeade Conservation Land protects valuable habitats and scenic landscapes. It features trails that wind through woodlands and meadows, providing residents with peaceful settings for walking, picnicking, and environmental education.

B HISTORY OF THE COMMUNITY

Indigenous history

Acton, and more specifically Nashoba Brook, has a rich Native American history as a hunting and fishing corridor. The Nashoba Brook Trail, along Nashoba Brook, ran roughly where Route 2A now exists and was a major pathway linking Musketaquid (Concord) with Nashobah Village (Littleton). "The marshy confluence of Conant Brook, with the Nashoba slightly upstream, was a Native camping area where plentiful deer, beaver, muskrat, and turkey still dwell." Because of its inland location, the Nashobah-Musketaquid area became important for the Massachusetts people. In 1654, four square miles of what is now Littleton, on the Acton Town line, became the Praying Indian Village of Nashobah Plantation. "Until the early 1800s, Indians lived in the Acton area, returning to camp at these seasonal hunting grounds well into the 19th century."²

Colonial history to modern era

The early colonial landscape of Acton included large meadow areas. In 1655,

Concord sought to annex these lands because they were prime for grazing. John Law was the earliest European settler in what is now known as the Town of Acton. He was a Concord shepherd who built his home in 1656 on School Street near Lawsbrook Road.

Nearly all of present-day Acton's 12,990 acres were formerly portions of four early land grants. The two largest were: Major Simon Willard's Grant (known as Iron Work Farm), and the New Grant (Concord Village).

By 1730, there were at least two-dozen settlers scattered across the town and in 1735, Acton was incorporated as a town. A meetinghouse was built in the center of town, connected to outlying farms by roads. Although Acton was primarily an agricultural community in its early days, residents were involved in a range of other economic activities. These included sawmills, gristmills, barrel manufacture to store and ship foodstuffs, and a pencil factory. Centered on the Faulkner Mills in South Acton, a woolen industry was one

² Text and Map research in collaboration with Strong Bear Medicine from the Nashoba Praying Indian tribe, and from *The History of the Nashobah Praying Indians—Doings, Sufferings, Survival & Triumph*. Daniel Boudillion. Raven House Publishing. copyright 2012-2023.

of the first large-scale manufacturers of woolen cloth in this country. Remnants of that original mill still exist.

3

The railroad arrived in 1843, with the line running through South and West Acton. Only with the arrival of the railroad did the villages really begin to grow, especially West Acton Village. It was not until after the Civil War that the railroad finally went through East and North Acton. The rail beds remain today and are now utilized in the form of the Assabet River and Bruce Freeman Rail Trails.

Elnathan Jones and Francis Conant laid out the first Acton subdivision in 1860. It ran along Maple Street and referred to as "New England Village" with street trees (maples) and stone sidewalks. Many of the houses were rented to workers from South Acton businesses and industries.

The 1890s brought a shift in population towards South and West Acton, which caused the precincts and school districts to be realigned. The North and East District Schools were combined into the Center District. Although the school district was unified, the residents still viewed



Confluence of Butter Brook and Nashoba Brook seen from the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail in North Acton

the two villages of East and North Acton as distinct.

At the turn of the twentieth century, Acton was still an agricultural community, with five villages and a population of 2,120. Apples were Acton's main agricultural export, being shipped to Boston and as far as Europe. Before modern refrigeration, space in the cellar of the Town Hall was auctioned off for storage. Into the 1950s, apples were continually stored in the center of West Acton in this fashion. The Town

formed a water district in 1912 for West and South Acton (the Center was added later). In 1915 it created a Town Fire Department in West Acton, replacing independent fire companies.

The 1950s marked a shift from apples to houses in Acton, with most of that development in the southern half of the town. There were 3,500 people in Acton in 1950; by 1974 there were 17,000. The orchards and open fields turned into subdivisions; although Acton still kept its

agricultural ties, with apples a major crop into the 1960s. The town was then three villages: Acton Center, West Acton, and South Acton.³

C. POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

Population and income demographics

The total population of Acton according to the 2020 census was 24,021, reflecting a growth of 9.6 percent since 2010, or an annual growth rate of just under one percent. The Town's population has generally leveled off after considerable growth during the 1990s, when the population grew 14 percent. The number of inhabitants per household has remained the same since the 2010 census, staying steady at 2.66. Acton features an average population density of around 1,154 people per square mile. However, this density is notably concentrated in specific nodes clustered around Acton's village centers and along Great Road, reflecting the town's distinctive settlement patterns and community focal points. These areas of higher density play a crucial role in shaping Acton's social dynamics and local infrastructure needs. Acton continues to



Ceremonial Stone Pile within Nashoba Brook Conservation Land

have a higher median household income than the state. In 2021, the median household income was approximately \$138,162, while the median household income for the state was approximately \$89,026.

Draft projections developed by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) in 2023 indicate relatively slow growth through 2050. These figures are somewhat lower than the projections found in the last OSRP.

³ Modified Excerpts from The Acton 2020 Comprehensive Community Plan and the Acton Reconnaissance Report (2006) provide a history of Acton, which is provided here with amendments and additions. Additional information was obtained from the Acton Historical Society website.



Remains of stone-lined mill run within Nashoba Brook Conservation Land

Date	Population
2030	24,442
2040	24,964
2050	25,539

DRAFT MAPC Forecasts

Race demographics

The racial demographics of Acton have changed significantly since the start of the twenty-first century. In 2010, Acton's total population was 77.3% White alone; 8.6%

Asian; 1.8% Hispanic; and 0.7% African-American. The 2022 American Community Survey indicates a change in the racial demographics of Acton residents with the population estimated to be 63.2% White alone; 25.3% Asian alone; 3.6% Hispanic; and 3.7% African-American. As this census data shows, Acton has experienced significant growth in the Asian population in the last 10 years. Furthermore, 33% of Acton residents (over the age of 5)

speak a language other than English at home. Therefore, multi-lingual signage in recreation areas, as well as culturally relevant programming, would support the growing Asian community in Acton as well as those whose primary language is not English. The Town of Acton meets one criterion that qualifies the area of North Acton designated on the map as Environmental Justice (EJ) neighborhoods, as defined by the state. The designated area is where over 40% of the population is made up of minorities. The other categories that Acton does not meet as part of its EJ definition, include areas where: "the annual median household income is 65 percent or less of the statewide annual median household income; 25% or more of households identify as speaking English less than "very well"; minorities make up 25% or more of the population and the annual median household income of the municipality in which the neighborhood is located does not exceed 150% of the statewide annual median household income."

Age demographics

School-age population and school enrollment increased markedly during



Accessible Boardwalk, NARA

the 1900's and 2000's, peaking in 2009. Enrollment has declined since 2009. A general aging of the population, including a lower birth rate, coupled with lower housing turnover rates and fewer new homes, have contributed to decline in the school-age population. New housing construction in the form of 40B developments has occurred, however the number of school-age children in such developments is substantially smaller than in single-family homes. In addition, the birth rate in Acton has declined significantly. During the 1990s, the annual number of births in Acton averaged 252; by 2020 that number had declined to 182. Consistent with predictions, school enrollment in the Acton-Boxborough school district has continued to decrease over the past five years, with total enrollment in the district's nine schools falling from 5,588 students in 2017 to 5,133 in 2023. Despite this decline, the percentage of Acton's population under 18 years old remains almost six percent higher than the state's average (as of 2020). This indicates that the Town should continue to focus on offering active recreation opportunities for this younger population.

Contrary to previous projections in the 2014 OSRP, which predicted growth in Acton's senior population, the percentage of Acton's population that is 65 and older slightly declined from 17% in 2010 to 16% in 2020. However, it is clear many seniors desire to live in Acton given that over 1,800 seniors are on the waiting list for affordable senior housing. Therefore, new senior housing projects, including the newly-constructed Tavernier Place and the in-progress senior housing project at 362 Main Street, will likely lead to an increase in seniors coming to and staying in Acton. Across the state, the aging population is growing, with more residents over the age of 60 than under the age of 20, as of 2023. Therefore, recreational opportunities and improved transit options that accommodate the needs of seniors remain a high priority for the Town.

Housing demographics

Demand to use undeveloped land for residential development continues with the development of marginal parcels and as greater "infill" takes place. In total, there were 9,219 households in Acton with an average of 2.63 people per household according to the 2018-2022 American Community Survey data. The population

density of Acton has increased by just over 100 people per square mile, going from 1,098 people per square mile in 2010 to 1,209.2 people per square mile in 2020. The following information on Acton's housing supply and affordability are amended excerpts from the Acton Housing Production Plan published in May of 2020:

Nearly two-thirds of Acton's housing units are single-family homes, with three-quarters owner-occupied. However, Acton also has the highest percentage of renters among the comparison communities. Data finds that two-thirds of the people under age 35 are renters, dropping to 20% by aged 45, and then increasing to 43% for age 85 or older. The vacancy rates are low, indicating a tight housing market which likely pushes costs up.

Acton has more diversity in housing types and the highest rate of multi-family housing compared to all the similar communities. However, since 2010, Acton's housing development has been almost exclusively limited to single-family homes. Acton lags behind comparison communities (Andover, Bedford, Concord, Lexington, Sudbury, Wayland and Westford) in the development of multi-family housing since 2010. Twenty-four

percent of Acton households are cost burdened, paying 30% or more of their income on housing costs; the rate (36%) is particularly high among renter households.

Employment statistics

Over the past decade, Acton has experienced a diversification of its employment sector, with a growing emphasis on knowledge-based industries, technology, and professional services. Concurrently, traditional sectors such as agriculture and manufacturing continue to play a vital role in the local economy, reflecting the Town's commitment to preserving its historical roots. No single employer or industry dominates Acton's workforce. The highest employing industries in Acton are manufacturing (employing 2,156 people) and health care/social assistance (employing 1,964 people). The unemployment rate in Acton was 4.1% as of 2021, somewhat lower than the state average of 6.4%. Approximately 10,500 people live in Acton and commute to work outside of Town, while roughly 1,100 live and work in Acton, and 8,600 people commute into Acton for work. The primary mode of transit for commuting is driving



Town staff and community members tour Half Moon Hill

alone (64.7%) as of 2021. A majority of those in Acton work for private companies (approximately 64%) while the rest of the population is divided nearly equal as self-employed, governmental workers, and those working in the non-profit sector.

Businesses, including those in the manufacturing and industrial sectors, are distributed throughout the town, with service-oriented establishments primarily concentrated in village centers and commercial corridors. One of Acton's major employers, The Haartz Corporation has demonstrated its commitment to conservation. By placing a restriction on approximately 20 acres of forested uplands near Kelley's Corner in 1998 and in 2006, it aligned with the Town's broader goals for open space preservation.



As Acton continues to balance economic development with the preservation of its natural environment, the OSRP becomes instrumental in guiding sustainable growth and ensuring a high quality of life for residents.

D. GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

Population and housing

Acton's population grew most significantly from 1950 to 1970, with over 100 percent increases during each of those decades. Tied to this population growth, the Town

saw its largest increase in housing stock (approximately 40% increase) between 1960-1979 which began changing the landscape of the Town from a rural to a suburban community. This is similar to many suburban communities which had an influx of residents post-World War II as well as during the 1970s when many baby boomers began to form households.

The typical development pattern from the 1950s through 1970s consisted of single-family home subdivisions, with lot sizes ranging from half an acre to two acres, depending upon the section of Town. The 1960s and early 1970s saw a few years of growth of apartment buildings, principally along Great Road (Route 2A), and in isolated areas of West and South Acton. These developments were allowed within the zoning at the time. They are now the lowest cost housing opportunities in Town and require less land per dwelling unit.

Acton, among many other Massachusetts suburban communities and others nationwide, began changing local zoning in the 1960s to restrict multifamily housing. This in turn began limiting the stock of new housing units that were naturally

affordable. As a response, in 1969 the State enacted M.G.L. Chapter 40B to help address the shortage of affordable housing statewide, by reducing barriers created by local approval processes, local zoning, and other restrictions. The goal of Chapter 40B is to encourage the production of affordable housing in all cities and towns throughout the Commonwealth. The 40B standard is for communities to provide a minimum of 10% of their housing inventory as deed-restricted affordable.

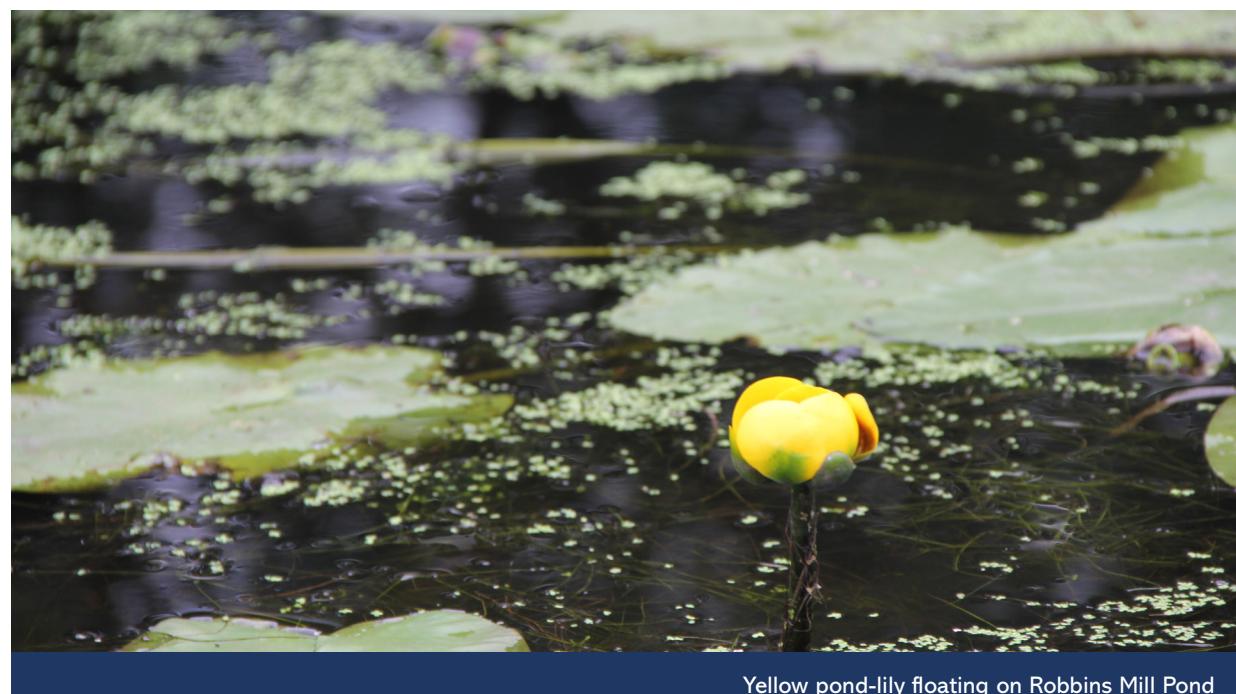
Residential development has also occurred in clustered developments in response to zoning that allows houses (and condominiums) to be closer together for such developments in return for preservation of open space. The open space is set aside as common land and can be used for conservation, historic preservation and education, outdoor education, recreation, park purposes, agriculture, horticulture, forestry, or for a combination of these uses.

Since 1979, the Town's housing production has declined. More recently housing production continued to decline with 26 new residential dwelling units permitted

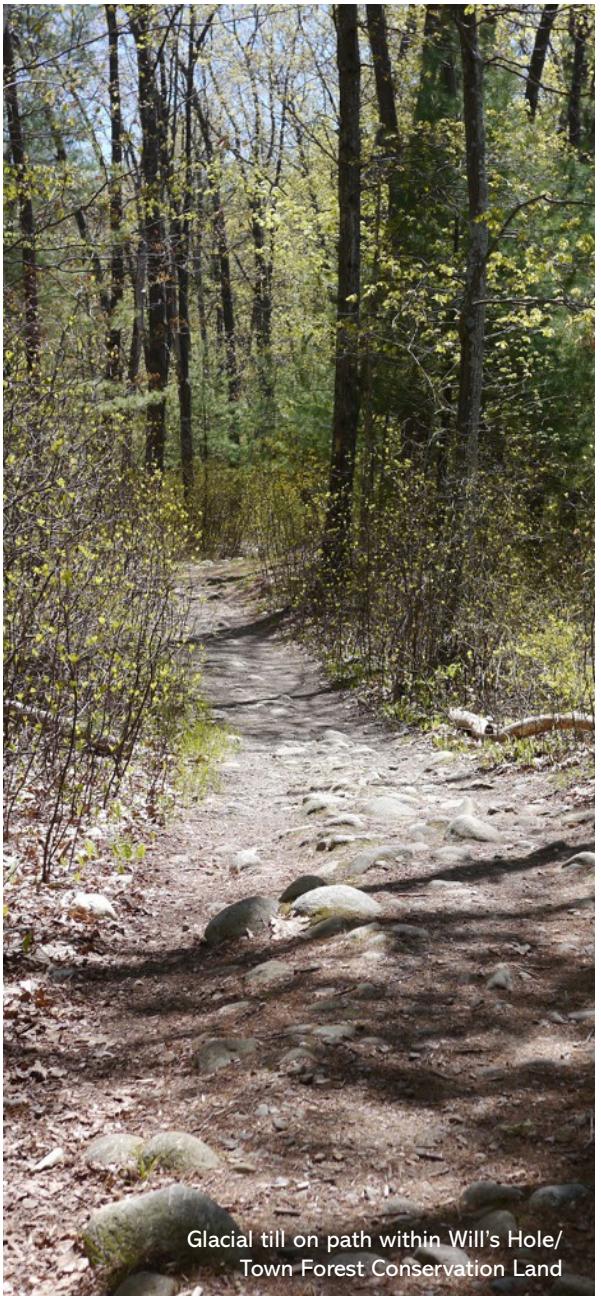
in 2019 and 9 building permits issued for single-family homes in 2020. That year, the construction of the Avalon Apartments through the process outlined by MGL Chapter 40B led to an unusually high number of multifamily units permitted, with 94 units of multifamily housing. Despite the permitting of the Avalon apartments, the majority of the residential development in Acton since 2000 was comprised primarily of single-family dwellings, requiring each to consume a minimum of 20,000 square feet to 100,000

square feet of land per house, due to zoning regulations.

The MBTA Communities Law, codified in MGL Chapter 40A, Section 3A, designated Acton as a commuter rail community. Acton must have a Section 3A-compliant zoning district with at least 50 acres zoned to allow for multifamily at an average density of 15 units per acre. Section 3A-compliant zoning districts were approved by voters at the 2024 Annual Town Meeting. The compliant districts



Yellow pond-lily floating on Robbins Mill Pond



could theoretically yield 1,655 units, helping Acton contribute to the significant housing shortage Massachusetts is experiencing.

In recent years, the average new single-family home constructed in Acton has increased in size and in value. The price of homes increased 16% in the past year alone with the median sale price of \$830,000 in October 2023. This year's median price also shows a significant rise in the cost of a home over the past decade, given that the median price of a single-family home in Acton in 2014 was \$530,610. The demand for housing continues to increase, as shown by the speed in which homes are purchased, on average spending only 14 days on the market in 2023 (8 days fewer than 2022).

Involved land trusts

Land trusts purchase open space for conservation. Acton Conservation Trust and Sudbury Valley Trustees are two of these that continuously preserve open space in Acton. Since Acton adopted the Community Preservation in 2002, residents have appropriated nine million dollars of Community Preservation Act (CPA) funding to protect the Town's natural resources by purchasing and supporting

open space land. Since 1960, Acton acquired more than 2,000 acres of protected land. This was made possible by the CPA, local fundraising, donations of land, and through cluster development zoning. The Conservation Commission is responsible for approximately 1,645 acres, and the Acton Water District oversees another 400 acres. In addition, the state owns just over 200 undeveloped acres, and there are over 700 acres in Chapter 61, 61A, and 61B which temporarily protect land that is in active forestry, agriculture, or recreation. In addition, the Acton Conservation Trust (the local land trust) holds and monitors 8 permanent conservation restrictions with at least 2 more expected in 2024. With the development of forests and farmland, the public has exerted pressure to keep such areas open, and to provide open space parcels adjacent to all major subdivisions. Consequently, conservation lands exist in nearly all parts of Town.

ACTON CONSERVATION TRUST (ACT)

ACT has stimulated efforts to protect open space and biodiversity in Acton and adjoining towns. Founded in 1962, ACT's mission is to pursue land protection opportunities that are consistent with ACT's mission of protecting natural areas

including farmland, woodland, natural habitat for wildlife, and historic landscapes for the enjoyment and benefit of the general public. Since 1998, ACT participated in the protection of over 350 acres of open space in Acton and typically makes first contact with landowners interested in preserving their land. In an effort to protect lands straddling multiple towns, ACT has met with the Littleton Conservation Trust, and reached out to Concord Land Conservation Trust and Stow Conservation Trust (with whom ACT partnered to help save Dunn Land straddling the Acton-Stow border).

SUDSBURY VALLEY TRUSTEES

The mission of the Sudbury Valley Trustees (SVT), a regional trust founded in 1953, is to conserve land and protect wildlife in the Sudbury, Assabet, and Concord river basins. SVT partners with Acton to provide permanent protection for open space parcels, particularly through its close and valued association with Acton's Open Space Committee. SVT aided in land acquisitions, notably the Anderson Parcel, and with ACT, holds conservation restrictions on the Donald Land and the Caouette/Simeone Lands.



Aerial photograph of Stonefield Farm, which has an Agricultural Preservation Restriction held by Sudbury Valley Trustees and the Town of Acton Agricultural Commission

Infrastructure

Given the suburban nature and historical development patterns of the Town, individual vehicles are the primary mode of transit in Acton. However, the Town is served by a Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) commuter rail as well as by an intermunicipal dispatch program and a bike share program. Public water is available in the majority of town and gas is available on about half the public roads.

Electricity and telephone service exist on virtually all public roads.

Waste water treatment is primarily through private septic systems, although the Town's sewer district serves a large portion of South Acton. In 1998, Acton voters approved the establishment and construction of the Middle Fort Pond Brook Sewer District in South Acton. Construction of the sewer system, including the wastewater treatment facility, concluded in 2001 and sewer

service began in 2002. The sewer system has the current capacity to treat almost 300,000 gallons of wastewater daily and serves 741 customers as of January 2024. The sewer system is self-funded by rate payers and residents in the sewer district and the wastewater treatment facility is currently undergoing a planned, twenty-year rehabilitation.

TRANSPORTATION

Acton has approximately 120 miles of public roads including 10 miles of major

state highways, approximately 50 miles of “historic” town roads, and about 60+ miles of subdivision roads built since the mid-1950s. Acton is bisected by Route 2, which provides a commuting route into Boston, as well as to the industrial areas along Routes 128 and 495. Limited pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure along Great Road has been a serious danger for roadway users. To address this issue, the Town has been working with the Massachusetts Department of Transportation to improve safety along the Great Road Corridor.



Native Cinnamon Fern grow abundantly within the wetlands of Acton

The town is also served by the MBTA commuter rail station in South Acton, connecting to the Fitchburg to Boston commuter line. In 2012, a study conducted by the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization showed that South Acton was the most heavily used station on the Fitchburg Line, excluding North Station, with 681 boardings each weekday. However, the COVID-19 pandemic led to a sharp decrease in ridership of public transit across New England. Prior to the pandemic in February of 2020, the average daily ridership of the commuter rail was 114,241. In April of 2020 ridership dropped by 98% with an average daily ridership of 2,397. Since 2020, ridership has steadily increased; however, it has not reached pre-pandemic levels, with average daily MBTA ridership at 91,259 in September 2023.

Beyond the MBTA Station, the Town of Acton's transportation services have multiple components:

- Shared Intermunicipal Dispatch
- Four types of services:
 - Fixed Route Shuttle Service (runs Monday-Friday within Acton)

- Curb to Curb Shuttle Service (runs Monday-Friday within Acton and to participating Towns)
- Specialized Shuttle Trips that go to the Food Pantry and grocery stores (runs 4 times a month)
- Livery Service (runs 7 days a week, anywhere within 25 miles of Acton)

Acton's Shared Dispatch Service Center spans three different municipalities including Littleton and Sudbury as well as Acton. This allows a cost-effective solution where no community needs to bear the cost of dispatching transportation services individually. Currently, all rides are provided free of charge. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the average ridership was nearly 18,879 riders per year or 75 trips per day, based on 252 operating days. In 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic, transportation services that were not operating full-time averaged approximately 31 trips per day. During 2022, ridership averaged 14,852 riders per year, 59 trips per day. As of May 2023, the program was on track to reach near pre-pandemic heights with 62 daily passenger trips.

The shared dispatch service prioritizes trips for elderly and disabled riders – especially to medical appointments. All services are accessible for those with mobility challenges. Once those spots are filled, other adults can ride if there is space. Additionally, Acton children ages 12-18 can ride with a parent's permission form completed.

Non-motorized transit also occurs along Acton's two rail trails: the Assabet River Rail Trail and the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail. The Town completed the Assabet River Rail Trail segment in Acton and Maynard and the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Phase 2A in 2018. In fall of 2023, the Town completed the bridge over Route 2. This created a connection for cyclist and pedestrians between East Acton and Concord along the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail. The bridge now provides increased recreation as well as commuting options to the West Concord MBTA Station from East Acton and residences on the north side of the Concord Rotary.

Acton piloted two bike share programs. The first bike share program was opened with three stations in the fall of 2018 and ended

during the COVID-19 pandemic largely due to the closing of the bike share provider, Zagster. This was a regional program that provided connections along the Assabet River Rail Trail between downtown Maynard and the Acton MBTA Station as well as West Acton Village. The second program began in summer of 2023 as a regional program connecting to Concord along the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail. The program included four stations in total, with 20 traditional bikes and 2 recliner bikes. It has the potential to continue and expand in 2024.

ACTON'S WATER RESOURCES

Since the publication of the most recent OSRP in 2014, there have been several noteworthy developments at the Acton Water District. Two new water treatment plants have been constructed and brought online, an existing source has been reactivated, and a new source exploration has occurred. In addition to these important system improvements, the District's operations have been impacted by a group of emerging contaminants known as Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances, or PFAS. Despite all that is "new", the District's commitment to protecting and preserving both the quality and quantity of



our community's water resources remains at the heart of all that the Acton Water District does.

The South Acton Water Treatment Plant (SAWTP), which filters about 40% of the District's water supply, was completed in June 2015; this facility represents the District's most productive water resources, the School Street and Assabet wells. The Central Acton Water Treatment Plant (CAWTP), which improves water quality by significantly reducing iron and manganese levels, was completed in February 2022; this facility currently treats water from the Conant I and II wells but has additional capacity to treat two nearby future bedrock wells. The acquisition of 549 Main Street in December 2023 will enable the District to permit and protect these two wells while also providing an opportunity to identify potential additional wells on the property. The construction of these two water treatment plants represents a significant investment in improving the quality, reliability, and resilience of the public water supply, both in the near and long term. Additional efforts to enhance the flexibility of the water supply include the reactivation of the Assabet 2 Well in

October 2020 and the connection of the Assabet 3 Well to the SAWTP in February 2023.

The increasingly complex water treatment and distribution system coupled with a growing customer base requires routine evaluation of existing conditions and planning for future growth. To accomplish this, the District worked with Wright-Pierce, an environmental engineering firm, to update the 2012 Water System Master Plan most recently in the fall of 2018. Work has begun on another 5-year update to the plan in 2024, which will speak to the impacts emerging contaminants have on our water supplies, identify our system needs, and characterize the constraints of our local supplies. This work will help inform whether the District needs to look outside the community to meet future water needs.

With limited opportunities for new source development, water conservation and efficiency efforts are essential to effectively managing water quality and quantity. The addition of staff in 2022 enabled the District to offer free Efficiency Evaluations once again, where residential customers

can learn more about site-specific opportunities to reduce their water use at home. The District continues to offer rebates for high-efficiency toilets, clothes washers, faucets, and showerheads, as well as free water-saving device giveaways like rain gauges, faucet aerators, and moisture meters. The District also participates in numerous education and outreach efforts, including public school programs, water treatment plant tours, ActonTV productions, and community events like the AB Farmers Market, Green Acton forums, and more. While each individual action taken to reduce water waste may seem small, together they are meaningful and aid in the preservation of Acton's water resources.

Preserving open space is another way to protect our local water resources. Areas of open space provide an opportunity for precipitation to infiltrate into the ground and recharge our local aquifer. As high-intensity rainfall events are projected to become more frequent, enabling the natural hydrology of the land to continue to function unaltered is of growing importance for this recharge. Infiltration can also reduce stormwater runoff, mitigate

flooding, reduce erosion potential, and even improve the quality of the water, as the ground acts like a natural filter and removes certain pollutants. When making land use decisions, it's essential to consider how a change in use might impact our water resources, including the following potential effects: reduced permeability of the land; increased water demand (i.e., when converting open space to a residential subdivision); and water quality degradation. While land use controls are helpful in limiting adverse water quality effects from activities and substances that are known to present a risk, they may not be sufficient to protect against emerging contaminants; the detection of PFAS throughout the community is a timely example of this. Preserving and protecting open space continues to be the best long-term tool available for protecting our water resources.

Long-term development patterns

Acton's land area is approximately 13,000 acres (20 square miles). Through all mechanisms listed below, the total amount of land conserved in Acton is 2,740.36 acres.

Note: land that falls into multiple categories is counted only once for the total.

Conservation-restricted areas acreage	305.89
Publicly owned land with conservation status	1,811.51
Land with agriculture preservation restriction	49.8
Land protected through cluster development/PCRC	1253.4*

* includes all buildings and open space land

In addition, 442.96 acres of land are currently protected through Chapter 61, broken down into 305.06 for Chapter 61, 40.94 for Chapter 61A, and 96.96 for Chapter 61B.

Currently, the majority of the residential land in Acton is zoned R-2 through R-10, zoning districts. These are single-family housing districts ranging from a lot size of 20,000 square feet to 100,000 square feet per dwelling unit. None of these districts have an open space requirement. On all conforming lots in these districts, land can be cleared and building could occur (hypothetically) anywhere other than

within the setbacks and protected wetlands and floodplain.

In line with the 2014 OSRP, in 2016 the Town began exploring by-right cluster development with additional natural resource protection. Continuing this effort, the Town received a grant in 2023 to conduct a public outreach process to bring forward future zoning changes to make cluster development with strong natural resource protection the by-right method for residential development.

Based on State law, building within 100 feet of a wetland requires approval from the Conservation Commission. Acton's local wetland regulations restrict building further, prohibiting the construction of any new structure within 75 feet of a wetland. Given the significant amount of land throughout the town that is designated as wetlands, this regulation conserves much of the Town's most sensitive ecological areas from development.

The Town proposes new zoning in South Acton and Powder Mill. These plans aim to encourage future development in currently developed areas of Town near transit and

commercial areas where infrastructure already exists. These zoning changes could lead to increased development of residential housing units as well as commercial spaces, in line with smart growth principles. Tied to the goals of this plan, a top priority in the zoning changes of the Powder Mill district is improved access and environmental quality of the Assabet River.

The last buildout analysis created for Acton 2020 (pages 191-192)*, shown in the Table 3.3, contains an estimate of undeveloped land in each zoning district that is not clearly undevelopable, due to open space protection or major regulatory factors such as significant wetlands. As noted in the table, this is a rough estimate because many factors may affect the feasibility of development for a specific parcel. Most of these factors cannot be ascertained from the "bird's eye view" of the town-wide land use analysis, such as land that is undevelopable due to lot shape, grade, or soil conditions.

* "A key point is that residential build-out is unlikely to be reached within 20 years. A more useful build-out analysis can be done

by considering scenarios for development, including the use of overlay districts, or even the “what-if” scenario of zoning changes, particularly aforementioned zoning changes currently being explored. This is a step that goes beyond the inventory phase of the Acton 2020 plan. It also must be kept in mind that a build-out analysis does not necessarily provide any information about the time that it would take to reach full development, and that development does not necessarily stop when no more buildable land remains, because redevelopment at a higher or lower density could ultimately occur.”

TABLE 3.3: ACTON ZONING

		Total Acres ¹	Percent of Town	Developable Acres Remaining ²	Percent of Total Acres
Residential Districts					
Residence 2	R-2	3,941.9	30.3%	454.8	11.5%
Residence 4	R-4	593.2	5.0%	68.2	11.5%
Residence 8	R-8	1,162.6	8.9%	187.0	16.1%
Residence 8/4	R-8/4	765.7	5.9%	342.8	44.7%
Residence 10	R-10	74.1	0.5%	7.8	10.5%
Residence 10/8	R-10/8	1,554.8	12.0%	669.2	43.0%
Residence A (multi-family)	R-A	225.2	1.7%	39.6	17.6%
Residence AA (multi-family)	R-AA	7.7	0.0%	0.5	6.5%
Village Residential	VR	62.6	0.5%	4.6	7.3%
Village Districts					
East Acton Village	EAV	31.1	0.2%	1.7	5.5%
East Acton Village 2	EAV-2	19.8	0.2%	0.3	1.5%
North Acton Village	NAV	43.0	0.3%	22.7	52.8%
South Acton Village	SAV	34.2	0.3%	7.0	20.5%
West Acton Village	WAV	22.9	0.2%	0.8	3.5%
Office Districts					
Office Park 1	OP-1	119.2	0.9%	64.2	53.9%
Office Park 2	OP-2	105.4	0.8%	22.1	21.0%
Business Districts					
Kelley's Corner	KC	47.0	0.4%	3.4	7.2%
Limited Business	LB	158.6	1.2%	9.6	6.1%
Powder Mill District	PM	72.8	0.6%	9.5	13.0%
Industrial Districts					
General Industrial	GI	135.1	1.0%	5.7	4.2%
Light Industrial	LI	39.1	0.3%	5.5	14.1%
Light Industrial 1	LI-1	191.5	1.5%	5.7	3.0%
Small Manufacturing	SM	119.0	0.9%	8.5	7.1%
Technology District	TD	302.6	2.3%	255.8	84.5%
Special Districts					
Agriculture-Recreation-Conservation	ARC	1837.0	14.1%	NA	NA
Planned Conservation Residential Community	PCRC	304.8	2.3%	0	0%

¹ Zoning Districts generally exclude major roads and highways, so the total of this column is less than the total acreage in the land use table.

² The acreages indicated as developable exclude public open space, private common land, and areas such as known wetlands that are clearly not developable. Those figures remain as rough estimates of development capacity, as many factors influence the feasibility of development of a land parcel.

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A. TOPOGRAPHY, SOILS, GEOLOGY, AND CLIMATE

Soils

The soils of Acton are predominantly moist, but rough and stony in character, with many areas of sandy loam. Wet soils are associated with the stream valleys, and certain areas of town have a number of ledge outcroppings.

The soil types identified in this report were compiled for the Town of Acton by the Natural Resources Conservation Service and reported in "Soil Survey of Middlesex County, Massachusetts", 2009 (See Map 4D: General Soil). These soils are described in the sections that follow. There are 643.2 acres of prime agricultural soils and a number of active farms in town. Much of the prime farmland is no longer in agricultural use. The general soil map shows broad areas which have a distinctive pattern of soils, relief, and drainage. Each map unit on the general soil map is a unique natural landscape, typically, consisting of one or more major soils or miscellaneous areas and some minor soils or miscellaneous areas, and is named for the major soils or miscellaneous areas. The

4



American Toad Photo by Ian Bergemann

components of one map unit can occur in another, but in a different pattern.

The general soil map can be used to compare large areas for general land uses. Areas of suitable and unsuitable soils for different uses can be inferred from the map. Because of its small scale, the general map is not suitable for planning the management of a farm or field or for

selecting a site for a road or building or other structure. More detailed mapping is available for those purposes. The soils in any one map unit differ from place to place in slope, depth, drainage and other characteristics that affect management. Any particular site can have a variety of soil types.

HINCKLEY-FREETOWN-WINDSOR

Nearly level to steep, very deep, excessively-drained sandy soils that formed in glacial outwash; and nearly level, very deep and very poorly-drained organic soils. Excessively-drained Hinckley soils are on glacial outwash plains and terraces. Nearly level, very poorly-drained Freetown soils are in large depressions and along streams. These typically have layers of muck, mucky peat and peat to a depth of about 65 inches. Excessively-drained Windsor soils are on glacial outwash plains, and the tops of terraces and deltas. Typically, the soils have an 8-inch surface layer of loamy sand. The 15-inch subsoil consists of loamy sand in the upper part and sand in the lower part. The substratum consists of gravelly sand and sand.

The dominant minor soils in this general map unit are the somewhat excessively-drained Merrimac soils on smooth-sloping plains, moderately well-drained Sudbury and Deerfield soils on low plains and in swales, and both poorly-drained Wareham and Raynham soils and very poorly-drained Scarboro soils in depressions and along drainage-ways. This map unit is mostly forested. Some areas are cropland. Many

areas are used for home sites. A few isolated areas are used as sources of sand and gravel. This map unit has severe limitations for onsite sewage disposal, as the Hinckley and Windsor soils readily absorb, but may not adequately filter and treat, the effluent from septic tanks and may contaminate ground water resources. This map unit is poorly suited to cultivated crops and pasture as the Hinckley and Windsor soils are droughty and require irrigation for optimum crop production. Freetown soils have severe limitations for urban use because they are wetlands.

PAXTON-MONTAUK-WOODBRIDGE

Nearly level to steep, very deep, well-drained and moderately well-drained loamy soils formed in glacial till on drumlins and smooth-sloping ground moraines.

Well-drained Paxton soils are on top slopes and side slopes of drumlins. Typically, the soils have a 7-inch surface layer of sandy loam. The subsoil has fine sandy loam in the upper part and sandy loam in the lower part. The approximately 43-inch substratum is firm sandy loam in the upper part and very firm fine sandy loam in the lower part.

Well-drained Montauk soils are on smooth sloping ground moraines and broad, irregularly- shaped drumlins. Typically, the soils have a 7-inch surface layer of fine sandy loam. The subsoil is about 22 inches thick and consists of sandy loam. The substratum is firm, gravelly loamy sand.

Moderately well-drained Woodbridge soils are in drainage swales and on top slopes, upper side slopes, and toe-slopes of drumlins. Typically, the soils have a 2-inch surface layer of fine sandy loam. The subsoil of fine sandy loam has distinct, brown and yellowish-red masses of iron accumulation. The substratum is firm, fine sandy loam with similar red masses of iron accumulation.

The dominant minor soils are moderately well-drained Scituate soils on drumlins and moraines, and poorly-drained Ridgebury and very poorly-drained Whitman soils in depressions and drainage-ways. Many small areas of very poorly drained Freetown and Swansea soils occur in depressions and small narrow valleys.

This map unit is mostly forest. Some areas are orchards, hay, or pasture. Some

areas are used for home sites. It has severe limitations for onsite sewage disposal because of restricted permeability and a seasonal high water table. Where slopes do not exceed 15 percent, this map unit is well suited to cultivated crops, orchards and pasture, and has good potential for conifer production. Areas with slopes in excess of 15 percent are suitable for orchards, but are subject to erosion.

URBAN LAND-MERRIMAC-UDORTHENTS

Soils are nearly level to strongly sloping, very deep, somewhat excessively-drained Merrimac soils on broad outwash plains and valleys, plus areas of urban land and udorthents (man-altered land).

Nearly level and gently sloping, somewhat excessively-drained Merrimac soils are in areas where less than 85 percent of the land is covered with impervious surfaces, and most areas are in intricate patterns with urban land. Typically, the soils have a surface layer of fine sandy loam about 9 inches thick. The subsoil is gravelly sandy loam in the upper 9 inches and gravelly loamy coarse sand in the lower 8 inches. The substratum is gravelly coarse sand in both the upper and lower parts. Urban land consists of areas where 85 percent or more

of the land is covered with impervious surfaces such as buildings and pavement.

Udorthents consist mainly of areas where soil has been removed and areas that have been filled. Where the surface soil has been removed, loamy or sandy subsoil and substratum layers are exposed. The fill consists of soil, rubble, refuse and spoil from dredging, and ranges from 2 to 20 feet thick.

The dominant minor soils are well-drained Canton, Charlton, and Paxton soils on uplands. Also included are moderately well-drained Sudbury soils in swales and depressions and excessively-drained Hinckley soils on knolls and low ridges. Freetown, Swansea, and Scarboro soils occur in isolated wetlands.

This map unit is mostly in residential, commercial and industrial developments. Because of the Merrimac soils, this map unit has severe limitations for septic tank absorption fields; but since most of these areas are served by municipal water and sewage disposal systems, there are few limitations for additional development,

as far as the major soil components are concerned.

Geology

Acton is underlain by old metamorphic rocks which were reshaped and covered during the continental ice ages (observed as grey on the Map 4E: General Bedrock Geology). The bedrock beneath Acton is the Nashoba Formation, an assemblage of metamorphic rocks (Hansen, 1956; Alvord, 1975). These rocks were originally sandstones and similar sedimentary rocks, but were altered by heat and pressure over geologic time into metamorphic rocks. The Formation is largely gneiss, a relatively coarse-grained rock which shows different layers of minerals, like mafic (observed in blue on the Map 4E: General Bedrock Geology), upon close examination. There is considerable variety in the mineral composition of the rocks in the Nashoba Formation, and numerous subdivisions have been identified. Most of the Formation in Acton is biotite gneiss, in which can be seen small plate-like crystals of the mineral biotite, a black form of mica. The Formation is relatively old, dating back to the Ordovician geologic period, which occurred between 430 and 500 million years ago.



Rock Slab Quarry at Nashoba Brook Conservation area Photo by Emily McDowell

The Nashoba Formation has been subjected to extreme forces over geologic time, during which at least one mountain range rose and was eroded away. As a result, the Formation is extensively folded and faulted (Goldsmith, 1991). The various subgroups within the Nashoba Formation are mapped as elongated bands stretching from northeast to southwest. Relic

faults separate the Formation from the neighboring rocks to the northwest and southeast. These faults are technically inactive and do not present a significant geologic hazard. Nonetheless, small magnitude earthquakes occur once every year or two. If residents even notice these earthquakes they often mistake them for a large truck passing on the road, although

sometimes they are accompanied by a sudden loud noise like a cannon shot.

The Nashoba Formation is punctuated in places by younger plutonic (volcanic) rocks, known as Acton granite (observed as red on the Map 4E: General Bedrock Geology). Granite deposits were formed when molten magma intruded from the subsurface into



Evidence of glacial striations from the last Ice Age Photo by Debra Simes

the Nashoba Formation. The intrusions, which are relatively small features, were mined in the past in several small quarries in Acton. Quarries are located in North Acton off Quarry Road and in the Acorn Park subdivision. The large foundation stones seen in colonial houses and barns around Acton are usually Acton granite.

The geologic character of Acton is largely determined by younger deposits that overlie the bedrock. These varied formations were deposited during the continental ice ages which ended 10,000 years ago, a very recent time geologically. During the ice ages, sheets of ice, over a mile thick in places, blanketed Canada, New England and the north-central United States. The glaciers formed, wasted away, and reformed, although only the effects of the most recent ice age are clearly discernible in the area's geology. During each ice age, massive sheets of ice moved over the landscape, scraping and re-depositing rocks and sediment. In Acton, the last glacier moved more or less due south. Glacial striations, marks scraped by the moving glacier and the rocks it carried, can still be seen on smooth rock outcrops.

The ice ages resulted in numerous and varied geologic deposits formed when the glacier passed, and also during the post-glacial period as the melting glacier produced torrents of water. Much of Acton is blanketed by glacial till, a compact mixture of sediment. Till is composed of a wide range of grain sizes, from very fine clay particles to large boulders. These various grain sizes were compressed under the moving glaciers into a poorly sorted mixture that is tight to water. The high-water tables and poor drainage that interfere with on-site wastewater treatment system performance in much of Acton are caused by these till deposits. The rocky soils that discourage farming in New England are also a consequence of the glacial till soils.

One striking manifestation of till is drumlins, elongated hills aligned with the direction of movement of the glacier. There are nine drumlins in Acton, ranging in height from 310 to 430 feet above mean sea level. They include Faulkner Hill in South Acton, Wright or Mead's Hills in West Acton, and Great Hill near the intersection of Routes 27 and 111.

The lower elevations are generally occupied by glacial outwash deposits of sand and gravel deposited in water running from the melting glaciers. Fine-grained clay and silt were washed from these deposits by the running water, and therefore these soils are more open and drain more readily than the till soils. All of Acton's public water-supply wells are located in sand and gravel outwash, and these deposits generally require greater protection from pollution than the areas covered by till.

The sand and gravel outwash deposits are punctuated by a variety of intriguing glacial features. Blocks of ice left by the wasting glacier eventually melted to create kettle-holes in the outwash. Grassy Pond and Will's Hole formed in such glacial kettle holes. Today, these two ponds have evolved into quaking bogs with mats of sphagnum moss floating on the water. With time, the floating mats will slowly close in on the open water and, eventually, the ponds will disappear and give way to meadows.

Eskers, long sinuous gravel deposits, are also found in Acton. These deposits were made in tunnels under the wasting glacier. Today, they stand as narrow causeways,

10 to 30-feet high, winding through the woods. Were it not for their tortuous path, one would mistake them for constructed road or railroad beds. Eskers are found in the Town Forest in North Acton and in the Acton Arboretum.

Other glacial deposits include kames, kame terraces, and kame deltas. Kames are relatively flat-topped hills that formed in holes in the ice sheet. Kame terraces were formed by glacial meltwater streams along the margin between the wasting ice sheet and higher valley walls. Where these streams flowed off the ice onto ice-free land they formed kame deltas. A large kame delta occupies the area south of Fort Pond Brook along the Concord town line and west to Parker Street. A kame terrace lies to the north of the brook along School Street. Forest Road runs on top of a kame west of Hosmer Street.

Acton's geology continues to change in present times, and there are geologic formations that postdate the ice ages. They include swamp deposits, which are forming in wetlands throughout the Town, and alluvium, which forms in stream beds.



Snow covered pines stand tall in Grassy Pond Conservation Land Photo by Mike Weinhold

Few commercial rock or mineral deposits exist in Acton. Historically, Acton granite was quarried and deposits of bog iron were used to produce a low-quality ore. Several gravel pits were recently active, producing aggregate from esker and glacial outwash deposits.

There are no features that pose significant geologic hazards or limitations on development. Perhaps the recent swamp

deposits are the only exception as they have poor bearing capacity for structures. These deposits generally occur within wetlands, which are precluded from development by Town bylaw and the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act.

Climate

Since 1895, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) has compiled temperature and precipitation

measurements for Middlesex County, Massachusetts. The annual average temperature from 1895 to 2022 for Middlesex County has increased nearly 4.9°F, while global surface temperatures have increased 33.08°F since 1865, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The 2022 Massachusetts Climate Assessment reported that summers are projected to be warmer in the future; by 2030 the average summertime temperature in the state will feel like summers in New York and by 2050 summertime temperatures will feel like summers in Maryland.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency measured global precipitation to have increased at a rate of 0.04 inches per decade since 1901 and nearly 0.20 inches per decade for the contiguous 48 states. The Massachusetts Climate Change Clearinghouse database determined that in the last 30 years, the State has received the highest amount of precipitation since records began. Winter precipitation has also increased and is predicted to continue to increase (by 4-35%, according to the Massachusetts Climate Change Clearinghouse) — by the end of the century

most of the precipitation in Acton is likely to fall as rain instead of snow.

B. LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

Ten thousand years ago, during an atmospheric warming period, North America's most recent continental glacier began its slow recession north, which marked the beginning of an evolution into the landscape of Acton as we know it today. Local topography is dotted with glacial features mentioned in the geology section. The early European settlers found the scant existing topsoil was acidic and densely mixed with glacial cobble. The results of their painstaking efforts to clear these marginal fields for crops can be seen in the many stone walls crisscrossing the landscape. While several successful farms still operate, most small subsistence farms were abandoned between 1860 and the 1930s; thus, many of the mature red oak and white pine forests are about 90 years old, some slightly older.

Acton's most noticeable landscape aspect has been its abundance of trees, although even newcomers are watching familiar woody lots being cut and developed. As noted elsewhere, the open fields, pastures,



Winter in Heath Hen Meadow Conservation Land Photo by Ian Bergemann

and orchards of Acton's farming past are rapidly becoming obscured by forest re-growth. The Town has run an active street-tree maintenance and planting program since the Depression Era. Acton has been recognized by the nation's Arbor Day Foundation as a "Tree City USA" since 1984. Tree City USA communities must have a tree board or department, a local tree ordinance, spend \$2 per capita and

promote Arbor Day. The Town celebrates Arbor Day every year on the last Friday in April by planting a tree.

Acton's center corridor, running east to west from Acton Center to the Littleton town line, is particularly woodsy, and contains two large conservation areas, including Nagog Hill and Grassy Pond. Nagog Hill Road is on Acton's scenic

road list. Grassy Pond, small and boggy, is important habitat. There are relatively few homes in this area, and development should be guided elsewhere.

Acton's heavy tree cover, which provides a beautiful, cool, leafy appearance to the streets and public areas, and a habitat for birds and small mammals, is a mixed blessing. Acton has very few long vistas. Its many hills disappear behind the trees, and many streams and small ponds are not visible from the road. Many structures that are noteworthy from an historic or architectural point of view are similarly obscured.

The landscape continues to evolve as beavers have created several beaver ponds, killing stands of trees and providing open areas and new ecosystems. To encourage diverse habitat and to provide aesthetic beauty, unforested open space should be preserved not only from development, but also from the encroaching forest.

C. WATER RESOURCES

Watersheds

Acton is located within Sudbury, Assabet, and Concord Rivers' Watershed, specifically



Summer in Heath Hen Meadow Conservation Land Photo by Ian Bergemann

within the Assabet River which is 117 square miles. Two major streams flow through the Town. Fort Pond Brook, fed by Grassy Pond; Guggins Brook and Heath Hen Meadow Brook, flow through the western and southern portions of Town; Nashoba Brook flows across the eastern portion of the Town; and Butter Brook, Will's Hole Brook, Conant Brook and Nagog Brook are its tributaries. Spencer Brook and its tributaries drains the extreme northeast

corner of Town. Since approximately 75 percent of the watershed areas for Fort Pond and Nashoba Brook are located in Acton, the quality of these brooks depends on how well we protect them. The streams and associated wetlands mentioned previously provide an estimated average of 65 percent of the recharge of the aquifers, the source of Acton's water. (See Map 6: Water Resources).



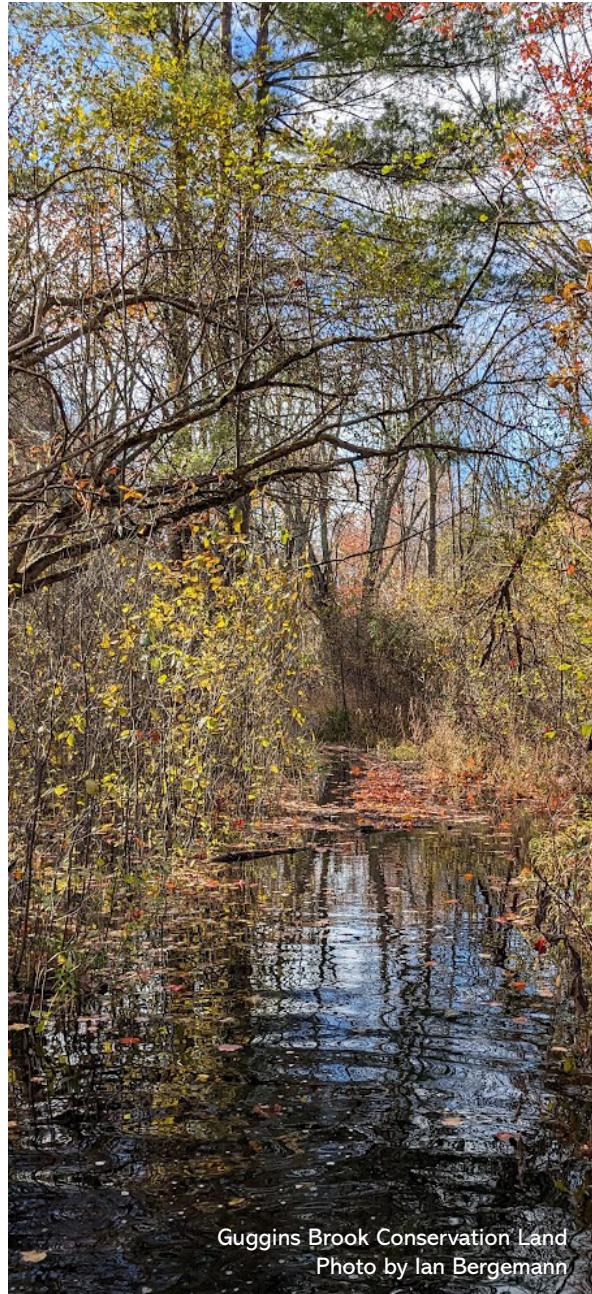
Native Virginia Creeper vine changes to bright red at Ice House Pond Photo by Mao Quiping

Other than the pond at NARA, the Town does not have any large ponds or lakes that are used for public swimming. Ice House Pond, located off Concord Road, was used as a source of ice for many years. Grassy Pond, with its bog-like characteristics, is home to many rare plants and a diverse wildlife population. Part of Nagog Pond is located in Acton (the other part is in Littleton), although water supply rights were assigned to Concord by the General Court in 1884.

Surface water

The state has classified all of Acton's surface waters, with the exception of Nagog Pond, as Class B waters. This classification indicates the waters are generally suitable for primary and secondary contact recreation, may be used for water supply with appropriate treatment, and will provide good wildlife habitat. Nagog Pond is classified as Class A water, reflecting its high quality and use by Concord for drinking water.

Excess nutrients are a problem in Acton's surface water bodies. During the summer and early fall, a green carpet of aquatic plants, indicating eutrophic conditions, can be seen on Robbins Mill Pond, an



Guggins Brook Conservation Land
Photo by Ian Bergemann

impounded section of Nashoba Brook. Ice House Pond has had problems with water chestnut overgrowth.

In addition to the nine-acre pond at NARA, Acton has numerous water-related recreational options, such as fishing, skating, boating, and wildlife observation. Many of the ponds and streams can only be accessed by hiking through Town conservation lands, but some, such as Ice House Pond, are adjacent to parking. The Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife stocks Fort Pond Brook and Nashoba Brook with rainbow, brown, brook, and tiger trout each spring. See Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game official website (www.mass.gov/dfwele/dfw/) for more information.

Aquifer recharge areas

The Acton Water District (AWD) is a community public water supply that manages and distributes high quality drinking water to nearly 95 percent of Acton residents. The water is supplied by eleven wells located within the Town with approximately 135 miles of water main, four storage tanks, and multiple treatment facilities which comprise the AWD's system. There are now six conglomerated

areas of Zone II in Acton – five of which protect the District's sources of supply and one that was recently adopted at the 2023 Town Meeting that protects Maynard's bedrock wells located just over the town boundary. AWD draws from 24 wells on seven wellfields throughout town. Zone II designation means that the areas surrounding these wells have restricted land use to prevent anything that could adversely affect water quality. In addition, there are roughly 30 areas designated as Zone I, which includes protectors for sources for the AWD, Maynard, and other small public water supplies (See Map 4F: Groundwater Protection Districts).

The ongoing collaboration of the AWD, the Open Space, and Water Resources Advisory Committees contributes to the protection of potential parcels for water resources. Three parcels of land near Main Street and Knox Trail were acquired for water supply purposes, with efforts continuing to acquire two additional parcels near Knox Trail. In 2021, the Acton Water District applied for new source approval to construct two bedrock wells in Acton Center. Since the District recently acquired the 56.85-acre 549 Main Street

parcel, final approval for these new sources of supply is expected. With final approval, the parcel would become permanently protected open space. Previously, just over 25 percent was classified as either Zone 1 or Zone 2 for the existing Conant I and II Wells. Now, nearly 99 percent of the parcel is classified as Town of Acton Zone 1 for protection of the future bedrock wells. At the 2023 Annual Town Meeting voters passed a Conservation Restriction for 549 Main Street. The Conservation Restriction should be recorded by March 2024. In 2023 the MassDEP presented the Acton Water District with an award for Outstanding Performance and Achievement in Water Conservation.

Flood hazard areas

Parts of Acton are vulnerable to flood damage because Acton's brooks tend to meander due to low descent rates that result in silty, broad flood plains. Approximately 20 percent of the Town's land are estimated to be flood plain. The lands estimated to be flood plain can be found on Map 6: Water Resources and are located primarily within the Southwestern portion of Acton following Fort Pond Brook and Heath Hen Meadow Brook. Flood plains are also found along Nagog

Brook and Conant Brook which intersect north of the center of Acton. The lands within Northeast Acton bordering Carlisle and Concord are relatively absent of flood plains. North Acton contains a relatively large flood plain due to Nashoba Brook and Butter Brook junction. Southeast Acton mainly has flood plains located along the Assabet River and Fort Pond Brook. The flood plains store water during peak wet periods and moderate the discharge rates of flood waters. The protection of these flood plain areas is critical for the safety of those in Acton and neighboring towns. In the past, when farming dominated Acton's economy, many wetlands and smaller streams were channeled to drainage systems for agricultural use. With the passage of time, many of these ditches have filled in, causing much slower drainage after storms. This delayed drainage is beneficial for flood control regionally, but may be detrimental locally if poorly-drained areas have been developed for residential use. In the past, development increased the rate of runoff generally, also worsening flooding and drainage in parts of Town. Through flood plain zoning and wetlands protection, virtually all new development in flood plains is prohibited.

Acton participates in the National Flood Insurance Program. The Town's Zoning Bylaw contains a flood plain overlay district that restricts development within flood plains. Acton's Zoning Bylaw also limits certain land use activities within the Groundwater Protection District to protect the Town's present and future drinking water supply.

It is important to note that in relation to flood hazard areas, precipitation has increased for all seasons in the Northeast United States, according to the 2023 Fifth National Climate Assessment produced by the U.S Global Change Research Program. As with increased precipitation, the Assessment details extreme precipitation events (events with the top 1 percent of daily precipitation accumulations) have increased about 60 percent in the Northeast. These increases in precipitation and extreme precipitation will continue to contribute to flooding.

Wetlands

Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) defines a wetland as an area where groundwater is at or near the surface, or where a significant part of the vegetative community is made



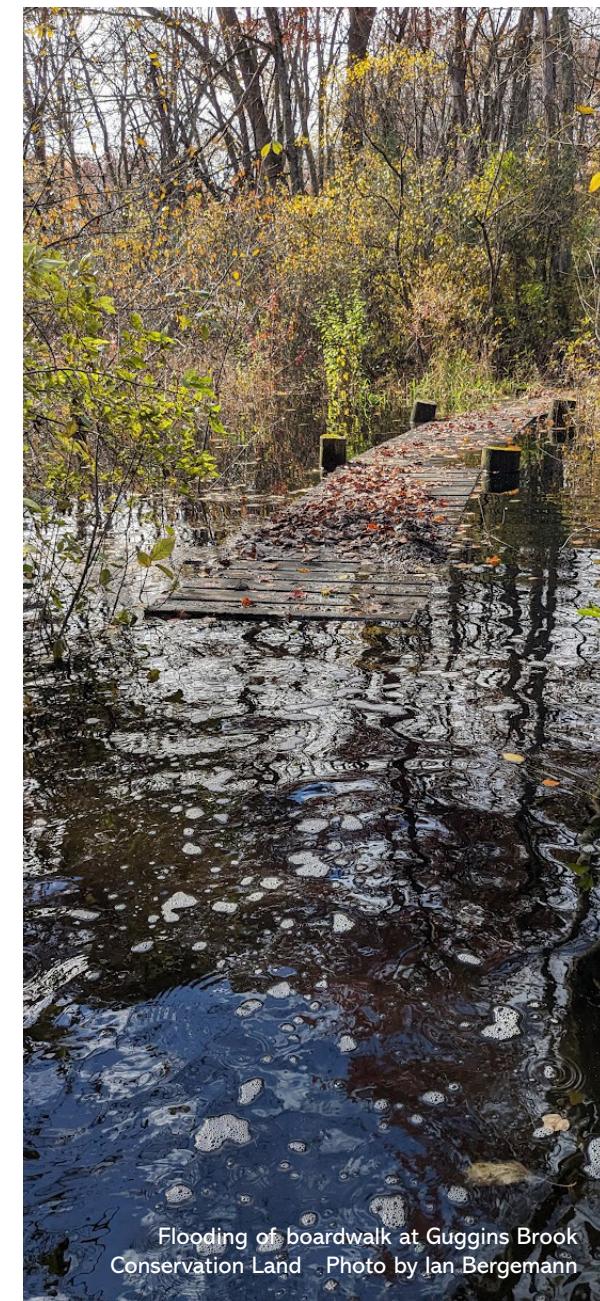
Autumn at Heath Hen Meadow Conservation Land Photo by Steve Long

up of plants adapted to life in saturated soil. They are integral environments because of the numerous ecosystem services they provide. These include protection and storage of floodwaters; treatment and improvement of water quality; habitat for fish and wildlife; and significant carbon storage. According to the Massachusetts BioMap Town Report (BioMap) for Acton, there are 278 acres of wetland core habitat, 505.7 acres of wetland core buffer, and 416.6 acres of local wetlands. Acton's wetlands are a part of the larger Assabet River watershed and the Nashoba & Fort Pond Brook watershed. Large swaths of Acton's watershed are glacial till/bedrock and sand & gravel. The Map 6: Water Resources, identifies a total of 1,918.2 acres of wetland in Acton. These wetlands are found primarily within similar locations as the lands with estimated flood plains; with a large concentration in the Southwestern to directly South portion of Acton. Large portions border Heath Hen Meadow Brook and Inch Brook in West Acton. The Southeast portion of Acton has some wetlands mainly located near the Assabet River and Fort Pond Brook with some exceptions just North of the Assabet River as it borders the Town of

Concord. Wetlands are gradually more disconnected throughout central Acton just North of Route 2 with Nashoba Brook, Conant Brook, and Grassy Pond containing or abutting the densest concentrations of wetlands. North Acton's wetlands mainly follow Nashoba Brook and Nagog Brook with some tributaries supporting wetlands within the Northeastern portion of Acton on the border of Carlisle. West of the Town of Concord's Northwest Acton contains a unique quaking bog wetland within Wills Hole/Town Forest Conservation Land. North Acton has a large concentration of wetlands at the junction of Nashoba Brook and Butter Brook.

The chart below breaks down the wetland categories by the MassDEP Wetland layers and their acreage:

MassDEP Wetland Categories	Acres
Deep Marsh	44.5
Open Water	242
Shallow Marsh Meadow or Fen	181.8
Shrub Swamp	178.6
Wooden Swamp Coniferous	1.1
Wooden Swamp Deciduous	1,19.1
Wooden Swamp Mixed Trees	72.1



Flooding of boardwalk at Guggins Brook Conservation Land Photo by Ian Bergemann

River and Wetland Protection

The Assabet River runs through a portion of the southeast corner of Acton. The Acton tributary to the Assabet River is Nashoba Brook. The Conservation Commission enforces the Wetlands Protection Act and Environmental Protection Bylaw which have specific protections on riverfront areas, referred to as "Resource Areas." All activity within 200 feet of the annual high-water mark of any river, stream, or brook requires proper procedural approval from the Conservation Commission. In addition to the Conservation Commission,

the Organization for the Assabet, Sudbury, and Concord Rivers (OARS) is a non-profit organization whose mission is to protect, preserve, and enhance the natural and recreational features of the Assabet, Sudbury, and Concord Rivers, their tributaries, and watersheds while increasing public awareness of the value of the Rivers as important natural resources.

D. VEGETATION

Historic overview

Acton's natural plant life still echoes the Town's agricultural past, and is typical

of vegetation elsewhere in the region. Acton, like most of Massachusetts, was essentially clear-cut during the Colonial era, and as late as 1900, over 90 percent of the Town was in open fields. As the Town was subdivided, starting in 1950, many developments were established in old orchards, fields, and areas that were just beginning to return back to forest. In 1990, those areas of Town that were not covered with structures, pavement, or maintained lawns, were approximately 90 percent forested (including treed house lots), with most trees between 35 and 80 years old. Conversely, MassGIS reports that of the approximately 13,000 acres in Acton, 68 percent was undeveloped land and 32 percent was developed land in 1971. In 1999, that had changed to 54 percent undeveloped and 46 percent developed. The 2022 Town of Acton Climate Action Plan includes results produced by the United States Department of Agriculture's Forest Service tool called i-Tree. This tool enables municipalities to estimate the canopy cover of a given geography and the carbon sequestered annually by its trees. The Town of Acton was estimated to have 61 percent tree/shrub cover, 15 percent grass/herbaceous cover, 11 percent impervious



Native High Bush Blueberry

road, 6 percent impervious building, 4 percent water, 2 percent soil/bare ground, and 1 percent impervious other.

The United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) 2023 Plant Hardiness Zone Map categorizes Acton as Zone 6a. This means the average annual extreme minimum temperature from 1991 to 2020 was -10°F to -5°F . This information provides valuable guidance on the changing climate of Acton.

We will need to continue to observe how local vegetation adapts to continuous changes in temperature.

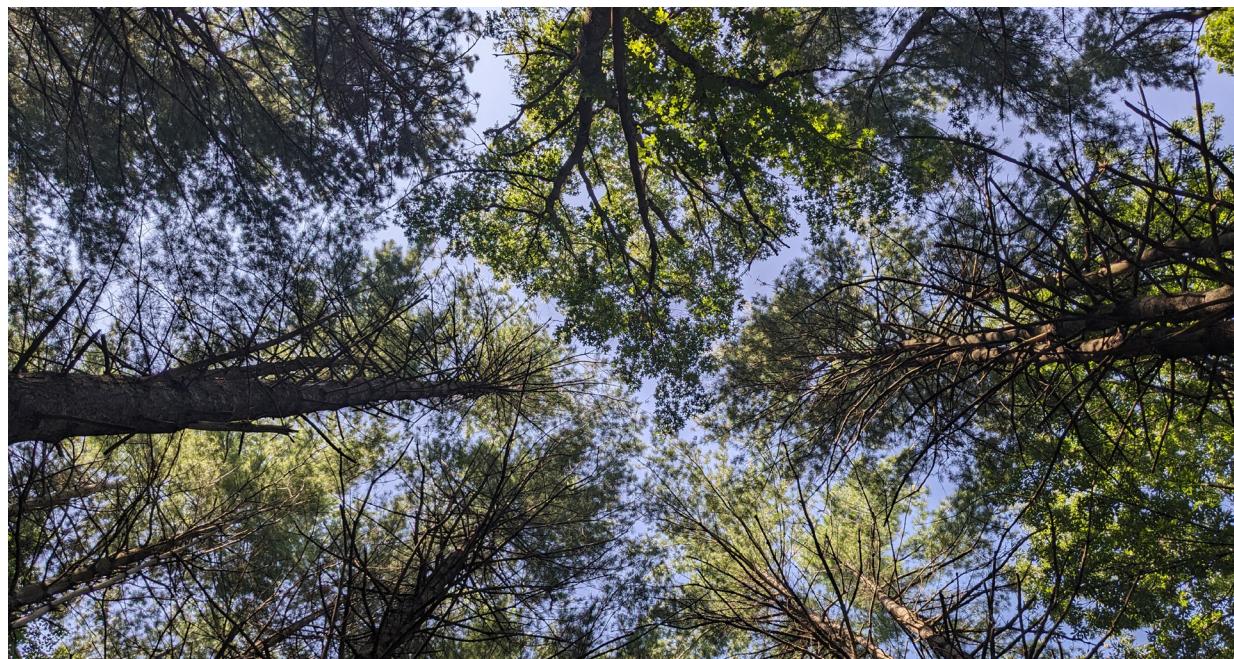
General inventory

The unique vegetation of Acton lies within the Southern New England Coastal Plains and Hills Ecoregion, and is comprised of grassy plains with a few low hills. The forests are mainly central hardwoods with some transition hardwoods and some elm-ash-red maple and red and white pine.

Acton's native forest, featuring red and white oak, hickory, and white pine in upland areas, has transformed with former floodplain hay meadows turning into a red maple monoculture, due to beaver-

induced flooding. This has created new habitats, attracting species like spotted turtles and herons. Isolated areas showcase beech, birch, and hemlock stands, as seen in the Spring Hill Conservation Area. Since 1900, factors like the chestnut blight and Dutch elm disease have limited woodland diversification. Acton vegetation faces recent challenges with invasive species like the hemlock woolly adelgid, emerald ash borer, Asian long-horned beetle, and the spotted lanternfly (not observed in Acton, but reported in neighboring towns in

2023). Despite losses, diverse plant species exist and persist. Roadside sugar maples and white ash trees are naturalizing into woodlands, despite the "ash decline." Non-native species are also naturalizing into the woodlands, contributing to the Town's evolving ecological landscape. Climate Change will play a significant role in altering the Town's general vegetation and will also have consequences for the animals that depend on these local ecosystems.



View from below of Pine stand at Wright Hill Conservation Land Photo by Ian Bergemann

Forest land

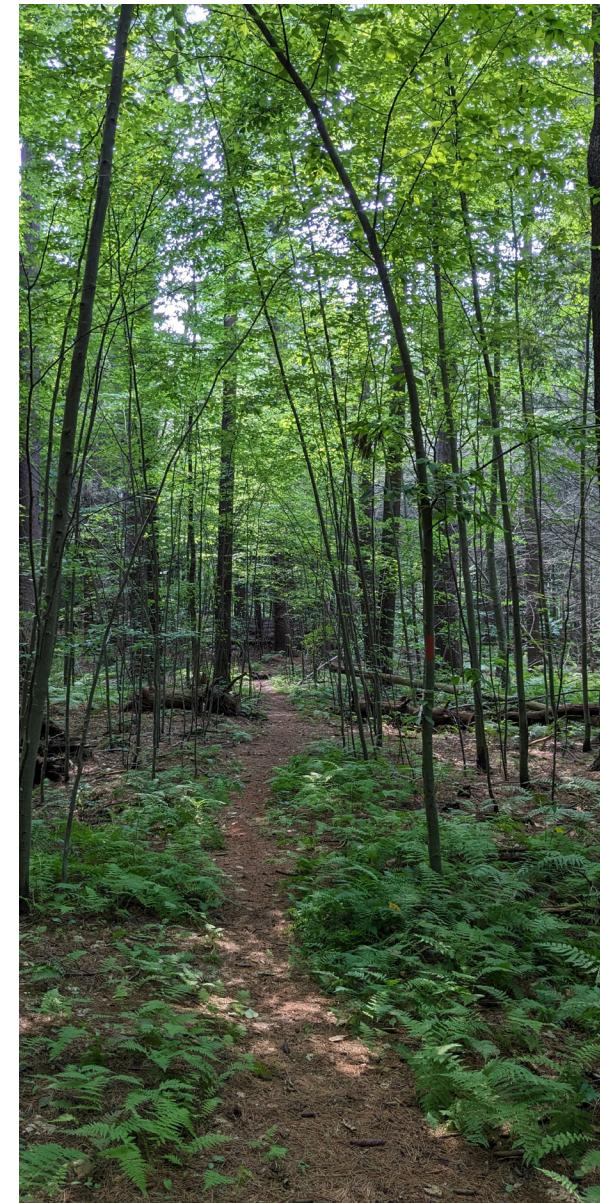
Acton has an abundance of forestland. More specifically, Acton has about 7,000 acres of forest, including forested wetlands, (about 60 percent of the Town's total area). A large forested area (720+ acres), in a principally roadless part of Town, is located in the northeast corner, east of Nashoba Brook. Part of this area is protected by Spring Hill, Nashoba Brook, Camp Acton, and Robbins Mill conservation lands. Another large forested area (400+ acres) is located south of Nagog Pond. Part of this area is protected by the Nagog Hill conservation land.

Mixed oaks dominate the upland areas, sometimes mixed with white pine, American beech, pitch pine, black birch, sassafras and pignut hickory. About 409 acres of Acton's privately-owned forests are in the State's Chapter 61 tax abatement program (Map 7: Inventory of Open Space). The program allows the owner to pay reduced taxes as an incentive to keep the land in forest and gives the Town first right to purchase the land when the owner wishes to sell.

Much of Acton's forest land is in small private holdings, including street-side trees and the back land of residential lots. Some of these areas are ecologically significant as wildlife habitat and movement corridors, and make important contributions to the Town's character.

In 2022, the Town of Acton received the DCR Urban and Community Forestry Challenge Grant. The award provided \$30,000 to support the Town's Public Shade Tree Inventory Assessment and Management Plan. The assessment will aid the Town in creating a more sustainable and robust tree program with special attention given to environmental justice areas and climate resiliency. Acton has a dedicated Tree Warden who is a certified arborist and is in the process of hiring a Deputy Tree Warden. Acton has enacted a local tree protection ordinance under the Scenic Roads Bylaw, and further protection is provided under MGL Chapter 87 for public shade trees.

Advocacy groups such as the Acton Garden Club and the Friends of the Acton Arboretum have been long established and provide a forum and co-stewardship

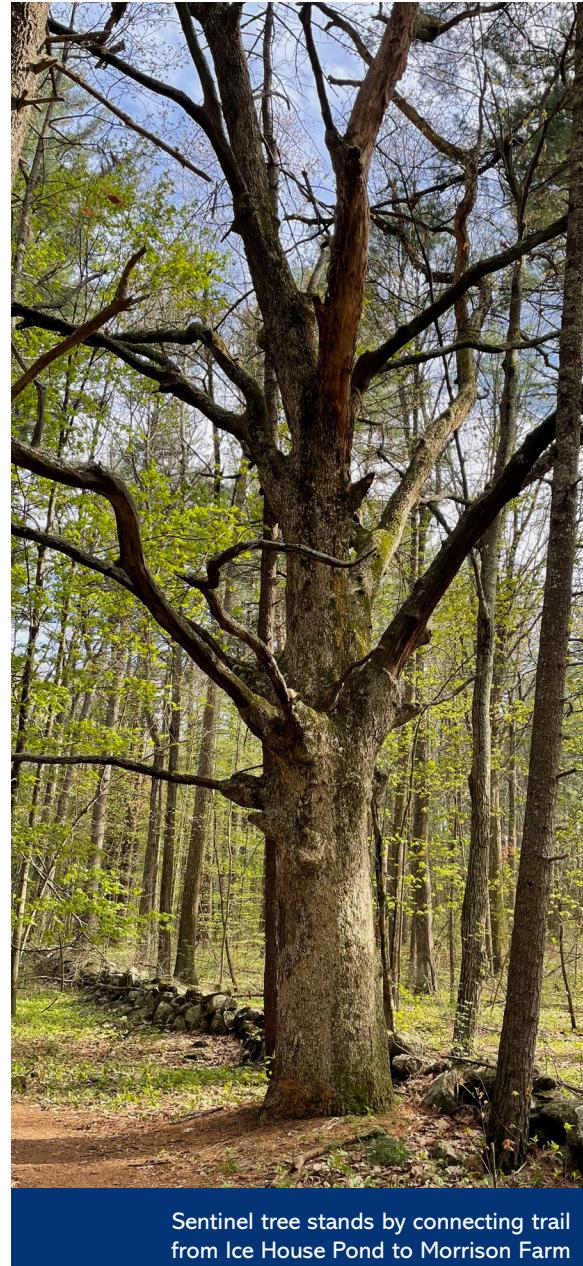


Shady woodland trail within Nagog Hill Conservation Land

for forest & vegetation management within the Town. The Town has good coordination between these groups and departments, as well as the Acton Conservation Commission and the Land Stewardship Committee of the Conservation Commission, which provides stewardship for the estimated 2100 acres of conservation lands.

In 2021 the Arbor Day Foundation awarded the Town of Acton with the 2021 Growth Award, and once again designated it as a Tree City USA. Communities receive this designation if they have demonstrated a high-level commitment to tree care and community engagement. Acton has been a Tree City USE for nearly 27 years. Acton continues to maintain the mission of enhanced tree care and engagement. In order to receive accreditation as a Tree City, the following four criteria must be satisfied:

- Have a tree board or department (such as an active Tree Warden)
- Possess a community tree ordinance (such as enforcement of MGL Chapter 87)
- Maintain an annual urban forestry budget of at least \$2 per capita



- Host an Arbor Day observance and proclamation

Public shade trees

Public shade trees include any publicly-owned and/or managed tree such as those along streets, in cemeteries and in parks. The Tree Warden oversees these trees under MGL Chapter 87. The Scenic Road Bylaw also protects street trees. In 2021, the Town adopted a policy of regulating the removal of non-hazardous public shade trees, specifically stating: "Public shade trees shall not be removed for a private purpose without suitable compensation to the Town for replacements." The policy also gives special attention to "unique" trees which may include trees with exceptional size or historic value, and/or rare or uncommon trees. The Town has run a tree-planting program since 1941, planting more than 2,000 trees under this program. To maintain diversity in street trees, the Town has attempted to plant no more than ten percent of any one species. Both funding considerations and a lack of suitable planting spots have prevented a "one for one" replanting program for street trees, although natural forest re-growth

is significant in the woods, and along roadsides.

The need to preserve and plant public shade trees is heightened by climate change. The 2022 Massachusetts Climate Change Assessment cites that by 2030 summer average temperatures could increase by 3.6°F above the average summer temperatures from 1950 to 2013. The U.S. Forest Service has produced extensive research that demonstrates tree canopy cover can reduce temperatures by 11-19°F compared to communities with no tree cover. Acton remains vigilant in its efforts to expand and enhance their public shade trees, especially in the face of an everchanging climate.

Agricultural lands

Acton's farms are a cherished landscape of the Town and are considered to be key rural and scenic features. The passion to preserve and promote local farming in Acton resulted in a 2019 adoption of the Right-to-Farm Bylaw. In 2020, the Acton Agricultural Commission was created to represent, advocate, and educate about Acton's agricultural interests. "Prime farmland" (PF) is land available for agricultural purposes (and not currently in

urban use) with a favorable combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oil seed crops. "State or locally important farmland" (SLIF) soils are those that fail to meet the requirements of prime farmland but are still important to the production of crops. Prime farmland can be observed in Map 4: Soils and Geologic Features.

For more information on the Acton's Agricultural Commission please visit <https://www.acton-ma.gov/699/Agricultural-Commission>

For more information on Acton's Right-to-Farm Bylaw please visit <https://www.acton-ma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/614/2022-General-Bylaws?bidId>.

In 2023, Acton's Agricultural Commission reported 979.5 acres of Acton were farmlands, nearly 7.5 percent of the Town's total acreage. Of the 979.5 acres of farmland, 758.22 are privately owned, 73.7 are Town-owned, and 147.6 are owned by the Commonwealth. The agricultural use of these farmlands varies from crops to forestry, and equestrian to mixed animals. Nearly a quarter of Acton's farmlands are

dedicated to crops, while roughly 5 percent are mixed animal such as chickens, cattle, and pigs. An estimated 13 percent are horse or equestrian farms while a 57 percent majority of farms are designated forestry.

Farmlands in Acton are currently protected under six different methods using local and state policies/tax programs. More than half of all Acton farms are protected under the Chapter 61-Forestry program. This program applies to land growing forest products including wood, timber, Christmas trees, and other products produced by forest vegetation. Additionally, properties subscribing to the Chapter 61-Forestry program are required to have an approved ten-year forest management plan.

Nearly 30 percent of Acton's farmlands fall under Chapter 61A protection which is defined by DCR as "land growing agricultural or horticultural products, including fruits, vegetables, ornamental shrubs, timber, animals, and maple syrup". This program requires a minimum of five acres which must have been used for agriculture for at least two years prior to applying.



Wetherbee Conservation Land Photo by Paul Villanova

Eleven percent of Acton's farmlands are protected under a Conservation Restriction (CR). A CR is defined by the Division of Conservation Services as "a legally enforceable agreement whose purpose is to ensure permanent protection of specific conservation values while permitting limited land uses consistent with the protection of said conservation values."

This form of protection is granted in perpetuity and requires two different parties be involved in its management: a grantee and a grantor. Additionally, a CR is a permanent deed restriction.

A small portion (0.08 percent) of Acton's farmlands subscribe to another form of agricultural protection known as Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR). The Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources states that APR is a "voluntary program" that enables agricultural land to remain preserved as its current land use and prevents the development of the land for non-agricultural purposes. The program offers to compensate farmers the "difference between the 'fair market value' and 'the agricultural value'" of their farmland in order to create a permanent deed

restriction that would prevent any uses of the land that negatively impact its present and future agricultural viability. Stonefield Farm is the only known farmland in Acton to have adopted such a protection which was a result of the 2014-2021 Open Space & Recreation Plan goal to conduct an appraisal for the property.

The last two forms of protection that Acton's farmlands fall under are: Planned Conservation Residential Community (PCRC) and Article 97 of the Public Lands Preservation Act. The latter is in relation to Wetherbee Conservation Land which has an allowed use of agriculture on 31 acres of its roughly 70 acres of land. The former refers to a subdivision in which a common space is established that can be used for agriculture following the decision of residents.

Based on the statistics provided above, nearly 57 percent of farmland in Acton has one or more of the above protections placed on their property. It is important to note that not all protections are permanent, but rather could leave a farmland unprotected if the current owner decides to remove its legal designation.

In reference to sustainable and best management practices for farming, farmers and farmland owners should follow local, regional, national, and globally endorsed and recognized entities for guidance.

The Massachusetts Audubon provides information on the importance of pollinators for farms and gardens.

The Mass Dept of Agricultural Resources provides multiple guides for Agricultural Best Management Practices (BMPs).

The USDA provides access to grants and support for sustainable agriculture.

Wetland vegetation

Massachusetts DEP's "Handbook for delineation of Bordering Vegetated Wetlands" describes the process for identifying wetlands and provides a list of common wetland plants from the Army Corps of Engineers National Wetland Plant List. Wetlands are considered sources of abundant biodiversity because they are home to both terrestrial and aquatic species. Among these inhabitants are species known as hydrophytes, which are specifically adapted plants that thrive in hydric soils (characteristic wetland soil).

In Acton, wetland habitat and vegetation are protected under the Town of Acton's Wetland Protection Bylaw. The Bylaw protects various vegetated wetland environments such as marshes, swamps, wet meadows, and bogs. According to BioMap, Acton has 278 acres of wetland core habitat, 505.7 acres of wetland core buffer, 463.5 acres of local wetland buffer, and 416.6 acres of local wetlands. Throughout the Town of Acton, wetland vegetation can be observed in numerous spaces, however, at the Acton Arboretum's

wetland species have been specifically cultivated and sustained as a model for visitors to view and learn from. These species include:

- boneset (*Eupatorium perfoliatum*)
- cinnamon fern (*Osmunda cinnamomea*)
- New York aster (*Aster novi-belgii*)
- blue vervain (*Verbena hastata*)
- grass-leaved goldenrod (*Solidago uliginosa*)
- Joe-pye-weed (*Eupatorium maculatum*)

- jewelweed (*Impatiens capensis*)
- reed-canary grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*)
- tussock sedge (*Carex crinita*)
- sensitive fern (*Onoclea sensibilis*)
- skunk cabbage (*Symplocarpus foetidus*).

Rare species (vegetation)

The Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP) lists only one plant in Acton as protected under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act

4



Hay-scented fern Photo by Peter Norton

(MESA). The dwarf mistletoe, *Arceuthobium pusillum*, a Species of Special Concern, was last observed in Acton in 1898. The 15th Edition of the Natural Heritage Atlas released in August 2021 features a map of Acton's priority habitats and estimated habitats of rare species and rare wildlife (Map 4A: Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program).

The Environmental Protection Agency lists federally endangered and threatened species for Middlesex County. Small whorled pogonia is the only plant listed as threatened. The United States Fish and Wildlife Service provides a list of species for the State of Massachusetts that are registered under the Endangered Species Act: American chaffseed (Endangered), Northeastern bulrush (Endangered), Sandplain gerardia (Endangered), Seabeach amaranth (Threatened), and the previously mentioned, Small whorled pogonia (Threatened).

Another relied upon resource for data on endangered species comes from the collaborative effort between The Nature Conservancy and the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife: BioMap.

This tool provides in-depth geographical information about critical species and habitat distribution throughout the Commonwealth. According to BioMap, Acton is home to 1,024.5 acres of rare species core and 1,746.6 acres of local rare species core (Map 4B: BioMap 1 - Critical Natural Landscape and Core Habitat Components & Map 4C: BioMap 2 – Regional and Local Level Components).

Town vegetation management

Vegetation management activities undertaken by the Town include programs geared to developed areas, such as roadsides, and also undeveloped areas, such as Conservation Lands. Management of vegetation in developed areas is performed by the Town of Acton Department of Public Works (DPW). Management of vegetation in Conservation Lands is overseen by the Conservation Commission and carried out by multiple parties including the Land Stewardship Committee, DPW, and/or the Conservation Division. In December 2020, the DPW released the *Town of Acton, Massachusetts Five Year Vegetation Management Plan 2021-2025*. A summary of the plan is provided below:

The Vegetation Management Plan (VMP) provides a 5-year program for managing vegetation within the Town of Acton's "municipal Rights-of-Way (ROW) as defined under 333 CMR 11.02. ROW is defined as "any roadway, or throughway, on which public passage is made and any corridor of land over which facilities such as railroads, powerlines, pipelines, conduits, channels or communication lines or bicycle paths are located and thus includes roads, curbing, sidewalks, medians, traffic islands, and bicycle paths within the Town". Within the VMP is a framework for an Integrated Vegetation Management (IVM) program. The IVM incorporates regulatory and industry standards to manage specific vegetation along with minimizing herbicide use, promoting public safety, and protecting the environment. The goal of the VMP is quoted as "to ensure that vegetation management along public ways is carried out in an effective, safe, and environmentally sound manner." For more information on the VMP please visit: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/town-of-acton-vmp-2021-2025/download>.

Other vegetation management activities undertaken by the Town include:

- Roadside mowing — Road shoulders are mowed on an annual basis, providing



Stoneymeade Conservation Land Photo by Nick Terry

- for traffic visibility while allowing wildflowers to flourish.
- Street tree maintenance — Public shade trees, as defined under MGL Chapter 87, are pruned and cared for, to provide for safety and aesthetic quality. Dead or structurally unsound trees are removed as public hazards. Acton's Department of Public Works oversees post-storm clean-up.
 - Trail Storm Clean-up — A group of volunteer land stewards, sawyers, actively mobilize following storm events and reports of trees blocking or posing a threat to trails. These volunteers are trained and supported by the Acton Conservation Division. Typically, Town Staff will aid whenever possible during the trail clearing process.
 - Poison ivy control — The Town conducts a very limited poison ivy spray program along the roadsides and hiking trails to allow the public to safely use those areas. Determination of herbicide use follows

the framework and process defined in the Vegetation Management Plan.

- Wildlife openings — Any open fields on conservation lands are mowed each fall with a brush hog to keep the fields open and provide a diversity of habitat. As time allows, new fields are also placed on the annual mowing schedule. Six meadows are co-managed by Conservation staff, DPW staff, and volunteers based on the 2013 Meadow Management Plans created by Oxbow Associates. These include meadows at NARA, Stoneymeade, Heath Hen Meadow, Grassy Pond, and Jenks conservation lands, as well as three areas at Morrison Farm. The two primary goals of these plans are to maximize diversity of native flora associated with early successional communities, and minimize or eradicate invasive flora. Other habitat goals of these plans are to establish and maintain the aesthetic appeal of the management area; provide recreational and/or agricultural activities; and establish a mosaic of different types of meadow habitats.
- Invasive Species Management — Management of invasive species continues to involve local knowledge and locally-led efforts by the Land



Red Tailed Hawk Photo by Bret Hekking

Stewardship Committee and Town Staff. The dynamic nature of invasive species has led to sporadic efforts to manage localized outbreaks or hotspots of dense populations of invasive species. Discussions of a unified approach to invasive species on Conservation Lands are ongoing. In 2023, a member of Acton's Conservation Division was elected to the SuAsCo CISMA Steering Committee to help coordinate and lead regional efforts to tackle invasive species. Aquatic invasive species such as the water chestnut, has prompted the Conservation Division and the Conservation Commission to work collaboratively with SuAsCo Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (CISMA) and OARS to schedule hand pulling for volunteer workdays. Hand-pulling of water chestnut began on Ice House Pond during the summer of 2011 and has continued as recently as September 2023 with the removal of an estimated 16,400 plants by 41 volunteers and staff. 2024 Water Chestnut pulls are being coordinated with OARS and the Acton Conservation Division.

E. FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE

General Inventory

The Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP) produced the first BioMap and Living Waters plans in 2001 and 2003. It is considered an ongoing inventory of critically important habitats and species distribution across the Commonwealth. BioMap 2 was issued in 2010 and the most recent BioMap was released in November 2022. BioMap is the result of data from the NHESP as well as a collaborative effort between MassWildlife and The Massachusetts Chapter of The Nature Conservancy (TNC). The data is displayed as an interactive mapping tool that highlights “Core Habitat” and “Critical Natural Landscape”, with the new addition of “Local and Regional Components,” which complement the data.

To read in-depth descriptions about the components please visit <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/collections/7ced005b87864d32987c1b48a6339d7?item=1>.

For an interactive view of the data layers please visit <https://gis.eea.mass.gov/portal/apps/webappviewer/index.html?>

[id=e2b6c291e0294c3281488621aaa095bf](#)
and search “ACTON”.

The 2022 BioMap provides acreage of each component for Core Habitat, Critical Natural Landscape, Local Components, and Regional Components in their “BioMap Town Report: Acton.” BioMap also provides the percentage of land that is protected for each component. The Town of Acton is a total 12,989.0 acres and BioMap reports 2,496.8 acres or 19.2% of that total area are “Open Space Protected”.

The BioMap Town Report: Acton can be access at this link: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/biomap-town-report-acton>. Each component is further detailed below:

Core Habitat is defined by BioMap as “areas that are critical for the long-term persistence of rare species, exemplary natural communities, and resilient ecosystems.” (Map 4B: BioMap 1 - Critical Natural Landscape and Core Habitat Components)

- Rare Species Core – areas vital to sustaining long-term conservation of the Commonwealth’s most vulnerable species and their habitats

- Forest Core – intact forested environments free from roads and development that act as refuges for animals and plants
- Aquatic Core – rivers, streams, ponds, and entire lakes with the highest native fish and freshwater mussel species diversity, rare-species habitat, as well as floodplains/wetlands which play an active role in supporting the rich ecosystem of freshwater species
- Wetland Core – composed of the most intact and least disturbed wetlands and buffers which provide unique habitat for specially adapted species which in turn create highly resilient and robust ecosystems
- Vernal Pool Core – the most interconnected clusters of small seasonal wetlands that swell with water in the autumn or winter and typically dry up by the end of summer; these provide critical species such as amphibians and invertebrates with breeding grounds free from fish predators
- Priority Natural Communities – habitats or environmentally specific locations that are rare and exemplary for both common and rare species which includes 106

types of upland, freshwater wetland, and coastal salt marshes/wetlands

Critical Natural Landscapes are large landscape blocks and buffers that are identified based on areas that are minimally impacted by development and support habitat, ecological processes and connectivity, and which provide ecological resilience (Map 4B: BioMap 1 - Critical Natural Landscape and Core Habitat Components). The overall Critical Natural Landscape parameter is composed of five elements: Landscape Blocks, Coastal Adaptation, Tern Foraging, Aquatic Buffer, and Wetland Buffer. For more information these elements please visit the BioMap Components website: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/collections/7ced005b87864d32987c11b48a6339d7?item=2>

Local and Regional Components are the newest addition to BioMap and are localized additions to the Core Habitat and the Critical Natural Landscape categories (Map 4C: BioMap 2—Regional and Local Level Components). This category is further separated into seven components to enhance conservation of habitats at the municipal scale. These include:



Slaty skimmer dragon fly Photo by Peter Norton

- Local Landscapes – Most intact natural areas within each city and town
- Local Wetlands – Resilient wetlands in less developed areas of each municipality
- Local Wetland Buffers – Intact habitat surrounding wetlands which supports connectivity and ecological systems
- Local Rare Species – Habitats within each municipality that provide for highly vulnerable and imperiled species
- Local Aquatic Habitats – Areas in each city and town with an above average population of native fish and freshwater mussel that contribute to species diversity
- Local Aquatic Habitats Buffers – Intact habitat surrounding Aquatic Habitats which serve biological functions and habitat connectivity
- Local Vernal Pools – Vernal pool clusters that enable critical breeding habitats with each city and town
- Regional Rare Species were included to demonstrate the regional or migratory

rare species that inhabit the environment and geography of Massachusetts and the Northeastern United States.

In the following charts is the reported acreage of each BioMap component and their corresponding percentage. The components can be viewed as layers for the Town of Acton on the map labeled "Map 4B: BioMap - 1 Critical Natural

Landscape and Core Habitat Components" and "Map: 4C: BioMap 2 – Regional and Local Components" in the Maps Section. Note that many of the components overlap therefore the grand total may not reflect the sum of the individual components.

BioMap Core Habitat

1,848.4 acres or 14.2% of Acton. BioMap indicates 808.6 acres or 6.2% of Core Habitat is currently protected.

BioMap Core Habitat	Acres
Rare Species Core	1024.50
Wetland Core	278.00
Vernal Pool Core	922.70
Aquatic Core	687.60
Priority Natural Communities Core	30.80

Biomap Critical Natural Landscape

4,233.3 acres or 15.2% of Acton. BioMap reports 764.8 acres or 5.9% of Critical Natural Landscape is currently protected.

Critical Natural Landscape	Acres
Aquatic Core Buffer	1,116.2
Wetland Core Buffer	505.7

BioMap Local Components

4,233.3 acres or 32.6% of Acton. BioMap shows 1,460.7 acres or 11.2% of Local Components are currently protected.

Local Components	Acres
Local Landscapes	2,244
Local Wetland	416.6
Local Wetland Buffer	463.5
Local Rare Species	1,746.6
Local Aquatic Habitats	412.3
Local Aquatic Habitat Buffer	852.7
Local Vernal Pools	152.7

BioMap Regional Components

119.8 acres or 0.9% of Acton. BioMap displays 10.7 acres of 0.1% of Regional Components are currently protected.

Regional Components	Acres
Regional Rare Species Core	119.8

Vernal pools

Vernal pools are small seasonal ponds that often are not connected to streams or other water bodies. Thus, they depend on groundwater, snowmelt, and rainwater, and usually become dry by late summer. Twenty-five NHESP Certified Vernal Pools and 142 "potential vernal pools" are identified on the *Map 4A: Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program*.

Vernal pools are critical habitats for a wide variety of wildlife, including salamanders and wood frogs, which migrate in the spring from surrounding forested uplands to these pools to breed. Ponds and vernal pools also provide preferred habitat for the following wildlife species: bullfrog, pickerel frog, eastern painted turtles, little brown bat, big brown bat, mink, and beaver.

Potential vernal pools are small topographic depressions or small pockets of suspected standing water identified from topographic maps and aerial photographs by NHESP as possible vernal pool candidates. A vernal pool is certified by NHESP following submission of documentation that demonstrates that an animal species that requires vernal pool habitat is present. As indicated previously,

the Town has, in the past, taken an active role in certifying vernal pools throughout the Town. Identification of these resources helps manage adjacent areas to protect these resources. Acton's wetland regulations provide protection for vernal pools, regardless of their certification status.

4

Wildlife migration corridors

The Nashoba Brook and Fort Pond Brook watersheds serve as the main wildlife migration corridors between Acton and adjoining towns. Several transportation corridors, most notably Routes 2 and 27, well as developed areas, serve as barriers to unrestrained migration.

Rare species

The Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP) lists nine species in Acton that have status under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act (MESA). The 2020 list of rare species published by NHESP lists the occurrences of rare or endangered animals in Acton with the date they were last noted. The 15th Edition Natural Heritage Atlas released August 2021 displays Estimated Habitats of Rare Wildlife and Priority Habitats of Rare Species, as indicated on

Map 4A: Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program. These areas are known sites for rare or threatened species and receive an extra degree of protection from the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act, administered by NHESP, and

the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act, administered by DEP and the Acton Conservation Commission. It is likely that there are other important wildlife species and habitats, and more vernal pools in Acton that are as yet unmapped.



Volunteers and Zoo New England staff help build habitat for the Wood Turtle, a species listed as Special Concern Status by the Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program



Vernal Pool at Bulette/Town
Forest Conservation Land
Photo by Ian Bergemann

There are 9 species found in Acton are either threatened (T) or special concern status (SC). The chart below provides the species name, last observed, and their current status.

Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP)		
Species	Last Observed	Status
Bald Eagle (<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>)	2019	T
Vesper Sparrow (<i>Pooecetes gramineus</i>)	2003	T
Blue-spotted Salamander (<i>Ambystoma laterale</i>)	2019	SC
Bridle Shiner (<i>Notropis bifrenatus</i>)	2000	SC
Eastern Dwarf Mistletoe (<i>Acreuthobium pusillum</i>)	1898	SC
Eastern Pondmussel (<i>Ligumia nasuta</i>)	1999	SC
Frosted Elfin (<i>Callophrys irus</i>)	2008	SC
Twelve-spotted Tiger Beetle (<i>Cicindela duodecimguttata</i>)	1930	SC
Wood Turtle (<i>Glyptemys insculpta</i>)	2018	SC

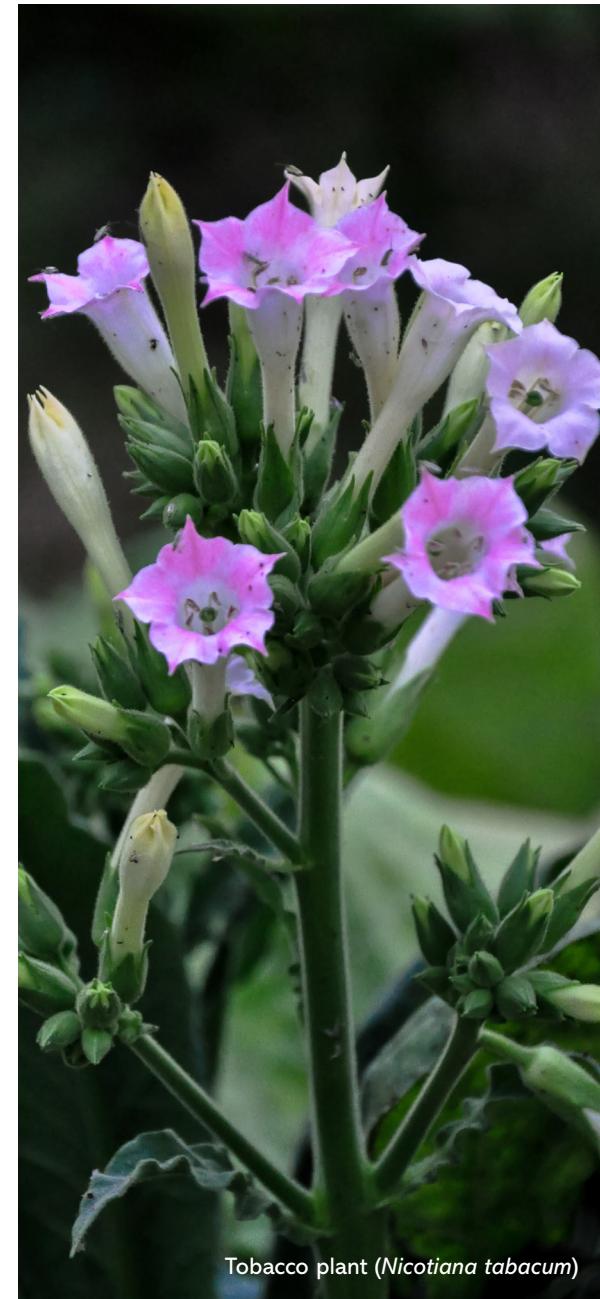


Female Eastern Bluebird at Wright Hill Conservation Area Photo by Peter Norton

According to the United States Fish and Wildlife Service there are 18 listed species within Massachusetts that have a status as either "Threatened" (T) or "Endangered" (E). The chart below provides the species name and status.

United States Fish and Wildlife Service

Species	Status
Piping Plover (<i>Charadrius melanotos</i>)	T
Bog Turtle (<i>Glyptemys muhlenbergii</i>)	T
Rufa Red Knot (<i>Calidris canutus rufa</i>)	T
Northeastern Beach Tiger Beetle (<i>Habroscelimorpha dorsalis dorsalis</i>)	T
Puritan Tiger Beetle (<i>Elliptoptera puritana</i>)	T
Seabeach amaranth (<i>Amaranthus pumilus</i>)	T
Small whorled pogonia (<i>Isotria medeoloides</i>)	T
American burying beetle (<i>Nicrophorus americanus</i>)	T
Northeastern bulrush (<i>Scirpus ancistrochaetus</i>)	E
Sandplain gerardia (<i>Agalinis acuta</i>)	E
Northern Long-Eared Bat (<i>Myotis septentrionalis</i>)	E
Hawksbill Sea Turtle (<i>Eretmochelys imbricata</i>)	E
Leatherback Sea Turtle (<i>Dermochelys coriacea</i>)	E
Rusty Patched Bumble Bee (<i>Bombus affinis</i>)	E
Plymouth Redbelly Turtle = Plymouth Redbelly Cooter (<i>Pseudemys rubriventris bangsi</i>)	E
Roseate tern (<i>Sterna dougallii dougallii</i>)	E
Dwarf wedgemussel (<i>Alasmidonta heterodon</i>)	E
American chaffseed (<i>Schwalbea Americana</i>)	E



F. UNIQUE FEATURES

Number (if applicable)	Name	Category	Address (if applicable)
	Acton's Villages: East Acton, North Acton, South Acton, West Acton	C&H	
	Rail Trail: Assabet River Rail Trail (ARRT) Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (BFRT)	C&H	
	Greenbelts: Fort Pond Brook and Nashoba Brook	E	
	Scenic Roads (Solid pink lines on map. See Town Bylaws Chapter J)	S	
	Historic Districts: Acton Centre, South Acton, West Acton	C&H	
1	"Gateway" Agricultural Fields	S	Route 2, School Street, Wetherbee Street intersection
2	Acton Arboretum	C&H and E	2 Taylor Road
3	Assabet River Blue and Green Trail	S	Across from 308 High Street
4	Cemeteries: Forest, Mount Hope, and Woodlawn	C&H	10 North Street, 166 Central Street, 104 Concord Road
5	Citizens' Library	C&H	21 Windsor Avenue
6	Erikson Grain Mill	C&H	113 Main Street
7	Exchange Hall	C&H	2 School Street
8	Faulkner Homestead	C&H	5 High Street
9	Geological Deposits - Eskers	E	Acton Arboretum, Bulette Land, Will's Hole
10	Grassy Pond	S and E	149 Newtown Road
11	Hosmer House	C&H	300 Main Street
12	Ice House Pond	E	120 Concord Road
13	Isaac Davis Trail	C&H	Begins at 31 Hayward Road
14	John Robbins House	C&H	144 Great Road
15	Jones Tavern	C&H	128 Main Street
16	Maple Street	C&H	Maple Street
17	Memorial Library	C&H	486 Main Street
18	Miracle Field	C&H	75 Quarry Road
19	Morrison Farm	C&H	116 Concord Road
20	Nagog Pond	S	Northwest Acton, bordering Littleton, MA
21	Nara Park	C&H	25 Ledge Rock Way
22	Pope Road, Strawberry Hill Road, and Esterbrook Road	S	East Acton
23	Quaking Bogs	E	Acton Arboretum, Grassy Pond, and Will's Hole
24	Stonefield Farm	C&H	91 Martin Street
25	Town Common	C&H	Main Street from approximately Newtown Road to Nagog Hill Road
26	Town Hall	C&H	472 Main Street
27	Trail Through Time (TTT)	C&H	9 Carlisle Road

Key C&H Cultural and Historical Features

S Scenic Features

E Environmental Features

Unique scenic features

STATE SCENIC LANDSCAPE INVENTORY

Acton has three areas listed as Distinctive or Notable on the state's Scenic Landscape Inventory. One is Nagog Pond and its shoreline. Another includes portions of Pope, Strawberry Hill, and Esterbrook roads. The third area is Grassy Pond, some of which is conservation land, but much of the shoreline is unprotected. For more details, see "The Acton Reconnaissance Report/Freedom's Way Landscape Inventory" online at <https://www.mass.gov/doc/acton/download>.

SCENIC ROADS

Acton has a number of legally-protected scenic roads. These roads were selected for aesthetic elements such as significant trees and stone walls that create unique experiences for visitors and residents alike. The numerous scenic roads in town can be seen on Map 5: Unique Features. For more information about how this unique scenic feature is protected please see Chapter J: Scenic Road Bylaw in the Acton General Bylaws available at this link: <https://www.acton-ma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/614/2022-General-Bylaws?bidId=>

ROUTE 2 GATEWAY AGRICULTURAL FIELDS

The large agricultural areas flanking Route 2 near the Concord line provide open vistas for those traveling on Route 2. These areas are a unique combination of agricultural, recreational, and scenic resources that create a gateway as drivers enter Acton from the east. Some of the fields have been protected. For instance, one field is Town-owned conservation land leased to the state to grow corn and alfalfa for the dairy herd maintained by the Department of Corrections farm. All of the fields are zoned conservation (ARC).

Aquatic overlooks

Throughout Acton, Conservation Lands and publicly-accessed properties provide scenic views of brooks, streams, wetlands, and rivers. These aquatic overlooks provide an immersive experience for visitors to observe the abundant wildlife supported by these highly dynamic ecosystems. Some notable scenic aquatic overlooks are the newly volunteer-built and CPC-funded Heath Hen Meadow boardwalk bridge; the nearly 425-foot Grassy Pond boardwalk bridge; and the one-mile-out-and-back Assabet River Blue & Green Trail. The Heath Hen Meadow boardwalk bridge provides a view of Heath Hen Meadow

Brook and the associated wetlands. There, visitors can view beaver activity, native wetland vegetation, and an array of native wildlife. The Grassy Pond boardwalk bridge enables individuals to enter a dense wetland surrounded by red maples, songbirds, and frogs. The Assabet River Blue & Green Trail spans both boardwalk bridges and river bank, allowing users to be exposed to species in open river water as well as those hiding in the riparian vegetation. An observant visitor could spot turtles basking on logs or herons stalking their next prey in the shallows. These aquatic overlooks are found in multiple locations throughout Town and all provide a unique scenic perspective into habitats that are typically difficult to access.

Unique cultural and historical features

ACTON ARBORETUM

The Town acquired the Acton Arboretum in 1976-77, formally established as an arboretum in 1986. The 65-acre area boasts numerous ecosystems including old apple orchards, forests, meadows, wetlands, and a bog. The Acton Arboretum attracts all members of the community for both recreation and volunteer opportunities, through the Friends of the Acton



Accessible Visitor Kiosk at the Acton Arboretum

Arboretum. The trails are a mix of rustic dirt paths within the forests and accessible paved and stone dust paths reachable from the parking area. In 2016, a collaborative community effort resulted in the creation of the China Trail Garden. This pathway enables visitors to view favorite floral specimens from Asia together with native

species in this popular new garden. In the summer of 2023, Dawn's Pond was completed through generous donations and dedicated volunteers in memoriam of Dawn Wang who was a devoted volunteer and member of the Friends of the Acton Arboretum Board. A small fish pond with native species of aquatic plants

and animals offers visitors a close-up experience of the inhabitants of Acton's waterways. The Acton Arboretum remains a centrally located and extremely popular space for residents and visitors to Acton.

HISTORIC DISTRICTS

In 1990 the Town voted to create three historic districts: one in the Town Center, West Acton, and South Acton. The Historic District Commission is charged with protecting "architecture and integrity" of the historic districts, which consist of residences and businesses of significant architecture. While each of Acton's three districts contain distinct features, they share qualities that create a cohesive sense of place and history across Acton.

ERIKSON GRAIN MILL

On the north bank of Fort Pond Brook lies the old sawmill lot for the current day Erikson Grain Mill. Since the 1700s this land has occupied milling operations which eventually ceased in the late 1940s. It is a small, grassy space used frequently by walkers, with foot access along a short path remaining from the original main road dating before 1703. It crosses the brook over a stone arch bridge dating from 1906.

FAULKNER MILL DAM

Faulkner Mill Dam was originally built in 1702. In 1848 the original dam was replaced. "The woolen industry centered around the Faulkner Mills; one of the first large-scale manufacturers of woolen cloth in this country. Parts of that original mill still exist."

—Isabella Choate,
Acton Historical Society

4



The John Robbins' House is now restored as Powers Gallery in East Acton

IRON WORK FARM

Located in South Acton, two unique historic and cultural features encompass the historic area known as Iron Work Farm: 1707 Faulkner Homestead and 1732 Jones Tavern. Iron Work Farm was the original name of the 1,000-acre operation and became the location of the first village settlement in Acton. The 1707 Faulkner Homestead was built for Ephraim Jones

who founded an early textile business and other mills in the area. This operation, as well as others, became the origin for settlers in Acton. The Faulkner Homestead went on to house the West Acton Militia during the Revolutionary War and was among the many places visited by alarm riders on April 18, 1775. Major Francis Faulkner of the Faulkner Homestead led the West Acton Militia to Concord's North Bridge to engage the advancing British soldiers. Jones Tavern was originally built as a home for Samuel Jones Jr. in 1732. By 1750, it became a tavern and general store. It is believed to be among the first stores in Acton and was considered the Town's longest established business, lasting 200 years under various owners and names. Both properties are owned by Iron Work Farm, a non-profit formed to rescue Jones Tavern from demolition in 1964. Today, Iron Work Farm hosts tours and reenactments for preservation as a unique geographic, cultural, and historical feature.

ISAAC DAVIS TRAIL

The Trail was listed on the National Register in 1972, and is part of the April 19, 1775 "Line of March." It runs along portions of Hayward Road, Musket Drive, Minuteman Road, Woodbury Lane, and

Main Street, as well as through some open land, into Concord. Vistas, stone walls, and roadside vegetation are a part of this trail's aesthetic.

JOHN ROBBINS HOUSE

Built in 1800, the country house exemplifies late Georgian and early Federal country architecture. It served as the farmhouse for one of the town's largest farms during the 19th century. Noteworthy for its well-maintained interior featuring original woodwork and stencil work by Moses Eaton, Jr., the house gained listing on the National Register of Historic Places in 2003. Originating from a lottery sponsored by Harvard College in the late 18th century, the house remains the best-preserved among four residences constructed in Acton through this initiative. Following extensive renovation, it now operates as Powers Gallery, welcoming visitors to appreciate its historical significance Tuesday through Saturday.

HOSMER HOUSE

Constructed by Jonathan Hosmer in 1760, Hosmer House is notable for its well-preserved saltbox architecture, characterized by a rear lean-to roof design and its rare double-house structure. It

exemplifies colonial architecture with elements such as high-style Georgian entries and multiple fireplaces crafted by Jonathan Hosmer, Jr. Throughout its history, the house has been associated with prominent figures like Francis Tuttle, who contributed to the town's development. Acquired by the Acton Historical Society in 1974, it now operates as a museum, preserving Acton's colonial and federal heritage for future generations. In 2002, it was listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

NATHANIEL ALLEN RECREATION AREA (NARA)

In the mid-70s, the Town of Acton purchased 40 acres of a former gravel pit in the northern part of town to be used for a back-up or second landfill. With increasing regulation from the Federal Government surrounding the development of landfills, this proposal never occurred. By 1987, the Town Engineering Department came up with the idea of transforming the land into a park and swimming hole. The Recreation Commission presented the idea to the Select Board and, with their endorsement, the Town pursued and completed the plan.

On September 18th, 1999, the grand opening of NARA was held with bands, food vendors, mural painting, boat races, and a grand display of fireworks. Since then, NARA has continued to be a destination for recreation. It has become a cultural hub for celebrations ranging from personal events like birthdays and weddings, to diverse community events like Chinese Cultural Day and Sri Lankan Day. In 2012, NARA was officially named Nathaniel Allen Recreation Area after a Civil War veteran and resident of Acton. That same year, the Joseph Lalli Miracle Field was completed, enabling children and



adults the opportunity to play on an ADA-compliant ball field. Today, NARA offers local opportunities for swimming, summer camps, concerts, fishing, soccer, and baseball. As the community's preferences evolve towards different types of recreation, NARA will evolve, with more opportunities for diverse community members to feel welcome to happily enjoy all that NARA offers.

4

RAIL TRAILS

The Town of Acton has two prominent rail trails that provide recreational and transportation opportunities for residents and visitors alike. The Bruce Freeman Rail Trail spans 6.8 miles through the town, offering a scenic route for walking, rolling, jogging, biking, and rollerblading. This multi-use trail follows the former rail bed of the New Haven Railroad's Framingham and Lowell line, providing a picturesque journey through woodlands, wetlands, and urban areas. Additionally, the Assabet River Rail Trail, extending 12.5 miles, traverses Acton, serving as a vital link in the regional trail network. Following the abandoned Marlborough Branch Line of the Boston and Maine Railroad, this trail offers varying natural scenery and recreational opportunities, including hiking, biking,



Acton Town Hall Photo by Nora Masler

TOWN COMMON

Town Common includes "Meeting House Hill," the site of the first meetinghouse in Acton, which is now a small park and wildflower garden maintained by the Acton Garden Club. The wide grass expanses, mature trees, historic homes and stone monuments complete the "New England

Acton Memorial Library was built in 1890. The architecture facing Main Street has remained the same since its original construction. In 1967, and again in 1996, the library was expanded to accommodate a growing population of curious readers and seekers of knowledge. Additionally,



Fungi on tree Photo Nora Masler

the small playground located behind the Library is a popular park that provides handicapped-accessibility. The library remains an historic icon of Acton's history as a town dedicated to its community members.

TOWN CEMETERIES

The Town Cemetery consists of three locations throughout Acton: Forest Cemetery, Woodlawn Cemetery, and Mt. Hope Cemetery. One of the Town's oldest burial grounds and listed on the National Register of Historic Places, Forest Cemetery, purchased in 1737, was probably established no later than 1750. It has more than 100 marked graves, with its oldest marked stone dating from 1758. Due to its half-acre size and historic significance, the Forest Cemetery is no longer used. Woodlawn Cemetery was established in 1737 with a half-acre of land donated by Nathan Robbins. By the 1890s, it had acquired 11.5 more acres. Today it contains just over 70 acres with an estimated 25 acres in use. The Woodlawn Cemetery features an historic stone chapel built in 1936 and its oldest marked stone is dated 1743. Mt Hope Cemetery was created in 1848 and has a total of 85.75 acres with roughly 15 acres in use. This is the youngest cemetery and

contains the largest acreage. Mt. Hope Cemetery also has an historic chapel built around the early 1900s, with its oldest marked stone dating from 1762.

TRAIL THROUGH TIME

The Trail Through Time (TTT) is a two-mile historic and bi-cultural heritage trail funded by the Community Preservation Act and completed in 2020. The TTT enables visitors to navigate a trail adjacent to Nashoba Brook and witness remnants of three periods of land use. The trail contains stone structures from pre-historic, colonial, and industrial times. Interpretive panels along the trail and a large-scale kiosk at the trail head on Wheeler Lane inform the public of the area's significance. This is also the site of the Thomas Wheeler, Jr. farmstead and cattle pens, 1730s grist mill, and saw mills. Along the trail, visitors encounter ceremonial stone piles with Native American origins, grouped into clusters. These are named Prince Pine Stone Piles Cluster, Blueberry Stone Pile Cluster, Plantain Stone Piles Cluster, and the Pipsissewa Stone Piles. The Nashoba Brook Stone Chamber, Pencil Factory Site, and the Pest House Foundation are also notable sites along the trail. For more information and a map on the Trail

Through Time please visit <https://trails.actonma.gov/trail-through-time/>.

Unique environmental features

QUAKING BOGS

There are three large quaking bogs, or peat lands, in Acton, located at the Arboretum, Grassy Pond and Will's Hole. These areas are home to many bog plants, including sphagnum moss, pitcher plants, sundew, black spruce and tamarack. The Arboretum's bog is owned entirely by the Town and is home to a wide variety of acid-loving plants. While several species of sphagnum blanket the bog, leatherleaf and northern pitcher plants are also common. This is one of only a few locations in Town where poison sumac can be found. A boardwalk traverses the bog and is a favorite stop for school groups and nature lovers.

Grassy Pond exhibits bog-like characteristics, and has been identified in the past by the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP) as being "worthy of protection". About one third of the shoreline is Town conservation land, and a considerable amount of the watershed for this pond is also Town-



Northern Green Frog spotted at Grassy Pond Conservation land Photo by Ian Bergemann

owned. With a pH of 5.5, the water is not extremely acidic, and has a considerable fish and aquatic flora population.

Completely on Town conservation land, Will's Hole looks very much like the classic quaking bog. Rather than springs, a small stream supplies a portion of the bog water. A mat of sphagnum moss surrounds the bog and the surrounding upland supports black spruce, larch, and swamp azalea.

ICE HOUSE POND

This historic millpond is an impoundment of Nashoba Brook and part of the Nashoba Brook greenbelt. Its unique history as one of the longest running ice harvesting operations in Acton is still observed today through a preserved foundation and informational kiosks. It's believed to have provided ice from the 1880s to the later 1950s, when home refrigerators began to dominate the market. The Town owns the pond bottom and the entire shoreline,

enabling public access to continue for this unique feature. Ice House Pond is located in a highly visible area close to the heavily-populated areas of Acton Center and the East Acton Village. Pond visitors may enjoy various recreational opportunities such as fishing, hiking, birding, picnicking, paddle boarding, kayaking, and canoeing. Ice House Pond is located adjacent to Morrison Farm which contains hiking trails and a community garden. Although it no longer produces ice for the residents of Acton, Ice House Pond is still a unique environmental feature that supports diverse wildlife and visitors.

GREENBELTS

The Town has identified two greenbelts associated with the major watersheds in Acton: Fort Pond Brook and Nashoba Brook (Refer to Section 4E on Wildlife for a complete description of these two water basins). These greenbelts extend the full length of each of these brooks. In the past, several parcels of land abutting Fort Pond Brook have been deeded to the Town for conservation, including the Cunningham land and Prescott land. In addition, the back section of the Morrison property which abuts Nashoba Brook is an important part of the Nashoba Brook greenbelt. The



Ice House Pond Photo by Terence Lobo

back of the property is currently classified as general municipal property.

GEOLOGICAL DEPOSITS

Acton has a rich history of utilizing its granite deposits to produce products shipped around the northeast for building construction. Throughout much of North Acton, evidence of these open pit gravel quarries can be seen. The largest of the

quarries, located off Quarry Road, was privately purchased. Granite there is once again being used in Acton, this time as material for sculpture. Rich gravel deposits resulting from the last continental glacial period 10,000 years ago may be found throughout Acton. Other gravel deposits in the form of eskers are also prevalent. Three notable eskers on publicly-owned



Walkway bridge over wetland area in the Acton Arboretum is used in every season

land are the esker at Wills Hole/Town Forest; the esker in the Acton Arboretum; and the esker on the Bulette land near Route 2. Acton's conservation lands feature numerous "egg rocks," or glacial erratics, which are large boulders deposited by receding glaciers.

G. ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES

The scales of climate change

Climate Change has been mentioned throughout this text in relation to specific section themes; however, this section will

focus on the environmental challenges of climate change on the Town of Acton's open space and recreational resources. To address the scope of climate change, the challenges are framed at various scales such as global, national/regional, statewide, and local. Though climate change impacts are accumulative and do not occur in insolation from each other, we discuss them individually here, to provide detailed context of the localized impact. The specific environmental challenges described are increased temperature,

precipitation and extreme weather events, as well as biodiversity loss.

Increased temperature, precipitation, and extreme weather events

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released the *Sixth Assessment Report* on March 2023 and global surface temperature was estimated to be 1.1°C above temperatures recorded during 1850-1900. The report confirmed that observed warming is directly related to greenhouse gases (GHG) concentrations in the Earth's atmosphere. As a result, both hot extremes and cold extremes are becoming more frequent and more intense since the 1950s, while cold extremes (including cold waves) have become less frequent and less severe.. The frequency and intensity of heavy precipitation events have also increased, along with extreme weather events. Droughts in some regions of the planet have similarly increased.

The United States' *Fifth National Climate Assessment* was released in November 2023 and reported a national increase in annual air temperature with most regions experiencing increases in annual and heavy precipitation. Similar to the JPCC report, the U.S. is experiencing increased

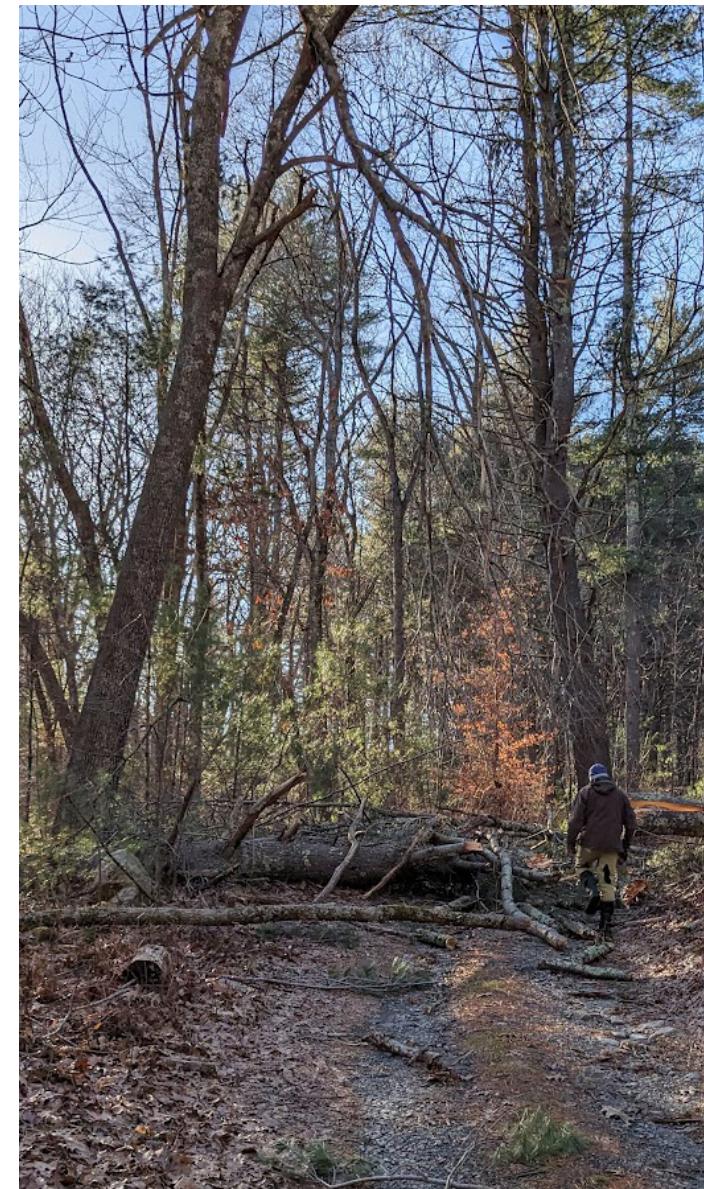
frequency, intensity, and duration of extreme heat while extreme cold events have declined. Extreme weather events like drought, flooding, wildfires, and hurricanes are also becoming more common and formidable across the country.

At a regional scale, the Northeast will be confronted with more extreme or heavy precipitation events and heatwaves. This has already led to severe and frequent flooding throughout the region, most recently observed in 2023 with devastating flood events in Vermont, Maine, and Massachusetts. Conversely, heatwaves within this region are lasting longer and are more intense, resulting in summertime droughts. These may have an adverse health impact on humans and drastic impacts on species relying on seasonal freshwater resources like vernal pools or wetlands.

The State of Massachusetts' Resilient Mass database about climate change impacts confirms the eight warmest years on record for the Commonwealth have occurred in the last 20 years. Due to warming, winter snow-fall will increasingly become rainfall which will cause decreases in

the spring snowmelt necessary to replenish aquifers and lower spring river flows for aquatic ecosystems. Seasonally, spring and winter months are expected to have increases in precipitation, while summer and fall will have more consecutive dry days. In the past 30 years, Massachusetts has seen the highest amount of precipitation on record since measurements began. The overall intensity and frequency of downpours is projected to increase and will lead to widespread flooding with significant impacts on both infrastructure and ecosystems.

At the local scale, the Town of Acton is likely to experience increased frequency of extreme weather events such as "25-year storm," "50-year storm," and "100-year storm." Local average annual air temperature will continue to rise, leading to less snow and therefore less capacity to store water. As a result, drought events may become more common. Seasonal changes will also be delayed as a result, which may cause delays in bloom times for local species and a



Storm debris blocks access road to Camp Acton Conservation Land

longer growing season. All together, these changes will have a significant impact on the human and wildlife communities of Acton. The Open Space and Recreation Plan highlights the challenges of a changing climate and aims to provide a path for the Town to mitigate and adapt to rising air temperatures, increased precipitation, and the frequency/intensity of extreme weather events.

Global and local biodiversity loss

The IPCC's *Sixth Assessment Report* explains global biodiversity loss as a result of increases in the magnitude of heat extremes and mass mortality events on land and in the ocean. Extreme weather events also drive mass mortality events as species are unable to escape increasing flooding, wildfires, tropical cyclones, coastal storms, and droughts. The Report also details the recent trend in species migration due to climate change such as species shifting polewards or higher for a cooler environment.

On a national level, the *Fifth National Climate Assessment* reports the same trends. Species are being impacted by increasing temperatures and intensifying extreme events which reduce biodiversity and cause

species to shift distribution ranges. Equally, stressors like habitat fragmentation and degradation combined with climate change are accelerating biodiversity loss, prompting species that cannot easily relocate or are highly temperature-sensitive to face extinction risks. Seasonal changes which indicate biological processes like hibernation or mating no longer match a dependent organism's needs like food or fresh water availability. Invasive species are also impacted by climate change both negatively and positively. Some invasive species are outcompeting natives because they tend to tolerate or more rapidly adapt to changing conditions. Two examples of invasive species observed in the Northeast and Acton that will benefit from climate change are hemlock woolly adelgid, and Eurasian watermilfoil. Hemlock woolly adelgid is an insect pest that will spread northward with warmer winters and threaten eastern hemlock tree populations. Eurasian watermilfoil tends to outcompete native aquatic plants in warmer conditions. However, many invasive plants and vertebrates may experience decreased ranges as a result of climate change.

In December 2022, the *Massachusetts Climate Change Assessment* was released and identified four major climate change impacts for the natural environment sector: Freshwater Ecosystem Degradation; Marine Ecosystem Degradation; Coastal Wetland Degradation; and Forest Health Degradation. The first impact mentions that the majority of cold-water habitats across the State are expected to change to warm-water habitats, at least seasonally. Warmer conditions within waterways, lakes, or ponds may lead to harmful algal blooms that can threaten native aquatic species and entire ecosystems. The second and third sectors are not relevant to the Town of Acton as they occur along marine and coastal environments; however, oceanic conditions will impact localized weather patterns. The fourth impact, Forest Health Degradation, warns of increasing temperatures and precipitation that will make forests vulnerable to increased pest occurrence, more frequent and intense storms, and increased wildfire risk, leading to decline in forest health/habitat and loss of critical carbon sequestration. Soil erosion was another identified impact as extreme precipitation may lead to increased erosion, in general, and along



Dedicated Sawyer, Dale Chayes, clears massive tree blocking trail at Great Hill Conservation Land
Photo by Ian Bergemann

stream and river beds. Erosion can dislodge native vegetation and spread invasive species such as the invasive phragmites.

The localized impacts of Climate Change relating to biodiversity within the Town of Acton presented in the July 2022 *ActOn Climate: The Road to a Resilient Net Zero Future* echo the observations of climate change impacts at the regional, national, and global scale such as increased annual air temperatures and number of hot days per year, increased annual precipitation, and extreme weather events. Changes in local environmental conditions will increase the risk of new species introductions, leading to more competition with native species. The consequence are losses in biodiversity and culturally important species. In 2023, the State's MDAR Invasive Pest Dashboard reported the invasive Spotted Lantern Fly in Middlesex County and neighboring towns of Acton. The biodiversity of Acton faces a cumulative change as both temperature and weather patterns will cause seasonal climatic observations to become less consistent. This will negatively impact species that rely on seasonal changes for their biological cycles, such as spawning or migration. This OSRP takes

into account the need to address climate change impacts through a list of actions including enhancing local biodiversity, managing invasive species, prioritizing and protecting open space, and educating and engaging the community about localized climate action.

Hazardous waste and brownfield sites

4 Hazardous material releases are reported to the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (Mass DEP) and the Town of Acton Board of Health per Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 21E and associated regulations (the “Massachusetts Contingency Plan”). The regulations define the assessment, reporting, and remediation requirements for releases of hazardous materials to the ground and subsurface. This includes the notification of abutters or other potential receptors.

All known hazardous materials release sites in the Town of Acton have been remediated or are currently undergoing evaluation and/or remediation. The Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs’ (EEA) “Waste Site and Reportable Release Look-up” database includes 147 listings for the

Town of Acton. These include all reported hazardous material releases dating back to 1985, from small surface spills, cleaned up immediately, to the ongoing investigations and remediation activities at the WR Grace site. Additionally, the online “Waste Site & Reportable Releases” tool includes a map of all the sites in Acton including: open sites, closed sites, and closed sites with use limitation. There are currently eight open sites in Acton. The largest (by several magnitudes) active hazardous materials release site is the WR Grace site.

W. R. GRACE

In September 2013, the Town sued W.R. Grace & Co. for shutting down a groundwater treatment system designed to address chemical contaminants from its hazardous waste site. Despite receiving conditional approval from the EPA, W.R. Grace opted for “natural attenuation” to address pollution. The Town’s lawsuit argues that the shutdown violates its groundwater cleanup standards bylaw, crucial for its reliance on groundwater for public drinking. Concentrations of vinylidene chloride, a potential carcinogen, exceeded by-law standards, extending the contamination restoration period. In 2014, the EPA conditionally approved Grace’s

shutdown request, requiring ongoing monitoring to ensure compliance with specified conditions.

In 2019, the EPA released a Fifth Five-Year Review Report for the W.R Grace superfund site. This review followed up on progress made since the last report released in 2014. The 2019 Report concluded that the two remaining Operable Units (OUs) are short-term protection. OU 1 possesses an Industrial Landfill that was closed with an impermeable cap. A deed was filed with the Registry of Deeds to regulate land use on the landfill area. OU 3 has no current exposure to contamination in groundwater or sediment. However, the Acton Board of Health has established an administrative hold on the installation of private wells within 500 feet of the current groundwater contaminant plume. A sixth five-year review report will be released in 2024-2025.

LANDFILLS

Located on Route 2, the only Acton Landfill site began operating around 1927 and closed in 1985. Part of the site is currently the Town’s transfer station. The original landfill area, stabilized, capped with clay, and compacted, was transformed into a 5.5-acre Solar Array installation in 2013.

The installation is comprised of over 6,000 panels that are producing over 32 megawatts of power in its 20-year lifespan. The total greenhouse gasses (GHG) avoided by the PV system on Acton's landfill over the same period is nearly 11,000 MtCO₂e (metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent). According to the Environmental Protection Agency GHG emissions calculator, this is the same amount of GHG used to power nearly 1,435 homes in the year 2021. It is also the same amount of carbon sequestered in one year by approximately 12,843 acres of forest in one year..

Erosion

Acton has no specific large-scale erosion issues. Localized erosion may be associated with construction sites, but these are generally overseen by local permitting requirements. Although large-scale erosion issues are not prevalent, increases in rainfall and a lack of snowfall may lead to significant flooding. As a result, erosion of riverbanks and streambanks may become more common. Trails may also experience more erosion as the intensity and frequency of downpours become more common throughout the Commonwealth.

Chronic flooding

Acton has periodic flooding issues caused by beaver dams but no chronic flooding to date. The impact of beaver activity on flooding is discussed in section 4.G –Wildlife Management: Beavers. As referenced previously, flooding events are likely to increase as a result of climate change impacts. Increased precipitation and intensity and frequency of downpours is expected to cause increased flooding throughout the town and its open space and recreational spaces. While beaver populations play a significant role in establishing wetlands, their dams can also cause flooding to spread, which will be exacerbated with increased precipitation. Winter flooding may also become an issue as snowfall is predicted to increasingly become rainfall during the season.

Sedimentation

Acton has not experienced a significant increase in the rate of sedimentation in its watersheds. In large part, this results from a rigorous catch basin cleaning program each spring. In recent years Acton has moved away from the use of untreated sand and Sodium Chloride (NaCl) for deicing roads during winter months. The Town is now using a sand-

and-salt mix that is pre-treated with a compound that significantly improves its effectiveness in treating road surfaces. The increased efficiency has allowed for a significant reduction in per-storm application tonnage.

In 2017, the Town of Acton's Select Board adopted the Stormwater Management and Erosion & Sediment Control Regulations Bylaw. Amended again in 2019, the Bylaw established a procedure for processing and administering Land Disturbance Permits with the intent to provide "design standards for erosion control and stormwater management for regulated land use activities." The purpose of this Bylaw was to add regulated protection of the Town's surface water, groundwater, and wetlands from stormwater run-off.

In addition, the Acton Water District performs a routine aggressive program of water main flushing to combat sediment buildup in the distribution system.

New development

New development can create a number of environmental challenges, including water quality and quantity issues, habitat loss and fragmentation, and reduced wastewater



Flooded boardwalk at Grassy Pond Conservation Land Photo by Ben Bluth



Marsh sedge in the changing season Photo by Adrienne Fishman

treatment capacity. In recent years, Acton has seen development in the form of subdivisions, infill, and the expansion of existing structures. This development can impact open spaces and the natural environment in town. Therefore, Acton has a number of mitigation measures to minimize and control these impacts. The Town has approved projects that maximize environmental protection through stormwater management and cluster

development, which considers a parcel's natural resources and preserves them for the benefit of the new development. This recent development strategy can be observed along Newtown Road on Genevieve Lane, a clustered subdivision that supports eight single family homes and is adjacent to two Town-owned Conservation Lands: Anderson and Bulette/Town Forest Conservation Land. It is expected, however, that development

pressure from both large and small projects will continue, highlighting the importance of establishing practices and processes that protect critical environments..

Ground and surface water pollution, point and non-point sources

The Acton Water District (AWD) produces a water quality report annually, detailing results of annual sampling for Acton's water supply. Acton's water comes from 24 different wells from seven wellfields located throughout town. Water is pumped and delivered to treatment facilities located in each wellfield. Then it is sent to the distribution system which provides clean water access to residents, government buildings, businesses, and schools. AWD tests for impurities and contaminants, including: microbiological, inorganic, pesticides, and herbicides, organic chemical, and radioactive. The testing frequency varies, depending on the contaminant, AWD "collects 29 samples for coliform bacteria each month, while more unusual contaminants, such as pesticides, are tested once every three years." Standards for water quality are based on the Environmental Protection Agency, Massachusetts' laws and policies, such as the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA). Most



Turtle found at Guggins Brook Conservation Land Photo by Ian Bergemann

recently, the Commonwealth has set a new maximum containment level for per- and polyfluoralkyl substances (PFAS).

Acton's Stormwater Management and Erosion & Sediment Control Regulations Bylaw creates a uniform procedure and process for administering Land Disturbance Permits which are designed to minimize and prevent interference of the Town's surface water, groundwater, and wetlands.

Impaired water bodies: surface water quality

In May 2023, the *Final Massachusetts Integrated List of Waters for the Clean Water Act 2022 Reporting Cycle* was released by the Watershed Planning Program, Division of Watershed Management, Bureau of Water Resources, Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection. Four waters located in Acton appear on the list and are listed below with their description, size, and uses attained:

1. Nashoba Brook —Is 1.40 miles and is a Category 2 waters, meaning it has some uses. Its attained use is “Fish, other Aquatic Life and Wildlife.” The aquatic life impairment classification of the brook, linked to low fish numbers at specific sampling points, is potentially influenced by factors such as proximity to Robbins Mill Pond, increased ponding by beavers, extreme low flows in the summer months, and its classification as a “high stressed basin” by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation. Notably, the presence of a pollution-intolerant fish species challenges the assumption that polluted water is solely responsible for the low fish counts.

2. Nagog Pond—Shared by Littleton/Acton. 278.00 acres. Currently listed under Category 3 waters with “no uses assessed.”

3. Assabet River—Route 27/62 to the Powdermill Dam. It is 1.20 miles. Currently under Category 5 waters requiring “one or more Total Maximum Daily Loads.” This suggests this waterbody may need pollutant reductions. Listed impairments for this waterbody are: curly-leaf pondweed,

fantwort, water chestnut, dissolved oxygen (meaning could be too low – approaching hypoxia), *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*), other organics, unspecified metals in sediment. The impaired classification of the Assabet River is attributed to water quality issues; noxious and non-native aquatic plants; nutrient/eutrophication problems; trash and debris, and the prevalence of fish species moderately-to-highly tolerant of pollution. Suspected sources of impairment include upstream point source discharges; sanitary sewer overflows; and discharges from multiple stormwater sewer systems. Ongoing efforts by the state, including the development of a total maximum daily load (TMDL) for nutrients, and initiatives by the Organization for the Assabet, Sudbury and Concord Rivers (OARS) contribute to river improvement through assessments, public education, and clean-up events.

4. Coles Brook—Headwaters are east of Francine Road and intersect with Fort Pond Brook. It is 2.00 miles. It is listed under Category 5 waters, meaning it is facing “one or more Total Maximum Daily Loads”. Listed impairments are Chloride and *Escherichia Coli* (*E. Coli*).

Invasive species

Invasive species management has consistently been major task for Acton's open space and recreational areas. Part of this effort is handled by dedicated volunteers of the Land Stewardship Committee, Friends of Acton Arboretum, OARS, community members, and staff from the Acton Conservation Division. In the past, these stakeholders have worked together to collaborate on educational opportunities, volunteer workdays, and long-term monitoring. Invasive species management has evolved into a more dynamic system in order to keep up with an expanding trail system, increased trail maintenance and acquisitions of open spaces. Some of those actions being taken are the following:

- Development of education and outreach programs on invasive species and their impacts to local ecosystems has begun with a 2024 planned release; in order to prepare community members with best practices for removing and identifying invasive species on their properties
- Land Stewardship Committee, Town Staff, and volunteers continue to work together on Conservation Lands identifying, tracking, and removing various invasive

species such as garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*), glossy buckthorn (*Frangula alnus*), Japanese knotweed (*Polygonum cuspidatum*), Norway maple (*Acer platanoides*), multiflora rose (*Rosa multiflora*), autumn olive (*Elaeagnus umbellata*), oriental bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*), Japanese barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*), the invasive bush honeysuckle species (such as *Lonicera tartarica*, *L. morrowii*, *L. x bella*) and others.

- Beginning in 2011 and as recently as 2023, dozens of volunteers, during multiple sessions per year, hand-pull water chestnut (*Trapa natans*) from Ice House Pond using canoes and kayaks.
- The Acton Conservation Commission endorsed a series of Meadow Management plans developed by Oxbow Associates produced in 2013. This involved targeting invasive plant species by mowing, pulling, cutting, digging and employing the “cut and dab” method of herbicide application (when feasible). This meadow management approach has been extended to multiple other meadows and continues to lead ongoing conservation efforts.



Sunrise Photo by Robyn Hall

- In 2023 the Conservation Commission and Acton Conservation Division rejoined the regional invasive management group called the SuAsCo CISMA (*Sudbury, Assabet, Concord Rivers Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area*) as a supporting member and member of its steering committee.

Wildlife management

DEER

The Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (DFW) estimates the deer population in the Commonwealth to be more than 150,000. Despite a new annual record in 2022 of 15,853 harvested deer, populations exceed the ideal range of 12-18 deer per square mile in most of central and western Massachusetts. In eastern Massachusetts, where Acton is located, 30 to 50 deer per square mile are observed, significantly exceeding the DFW management goal. This high population is causing over-grazing in local forests and fields, negatively impacting native plant diversity and promoting non-native and invasive species. The excessive browsing particularly affects certain plants like lady's slippers while sparing others such as European buckthorn. Overgrazing also

hinders tree regeneration and threatens ground-nesting birds and mammals that rely on the underbrush for protection.

The consequences of the large deer population extend beyond ecological impacts, including an association with the rise in Lyme disease, encroachment on residential yards and gardens, and an increase in automobile/deer collisions. DFW and other organizations are actively studying deer overpopulation effects and evaluating management methods. While deer hunting is permitted on private properties in Acton, some neighboring communities are considering limited hunting on conservation lands. Idylwilde Farm in West Acton has successfully used 8-foot high fencing to protect crops.

Despite localized successes, the broad geographical spread of high deer densities suggests the need for a coordinated, regional approach to deer management. A range of solutions, including hunting, fencing, and conservation efforts, may be necessary to address the complex challenges associated with deer overpopulation.

BEAVER

Since the amendment of trapping laws in 1996, Acton has experienced a remarkable surge in its beaver population, ushering in transformative changes in riverine ecosystems. The beavers' impoundments have had a positive impact on wildlife, converting forested red-maple swamps into open full-sun marshes. A notable example is Conant Brook, which now features over 15 acres of open marsh, showcasing the successional return facilitated by beaver engineering.

The significance for wildlife is evident as various species adapt to and thrive in these altered habitats. The open marshes provide unique ecological niches, supporting a rich diversity of flora and fauna. Birds, amphibians, and other wildlife find new habitats and food sources, contributing to increased biodiversity.

However, amidst these positive developments, there is a nuanced challenge linked to climate change. With increased precipitation and extreme weather events, and overwhelmed human-built stormwater management systems, beaver dams have contributed to widespread flooding. As

a result, expenses continue to rise from an increase of human-beaver conflicts. Solutions for these conflicts are various and often unsustainable; such as beaver trapping and the removal of dams from culverts. Despite experimenting with more sustainable methods like beaver deceivers or pond-leveler devices, the negative impacts, such as street and septic system flooding, require immediate action. Noteworthy success with beaver deceiver devices has been observed on conservation land. Likewise, many trails have also required re-routes or rebuilding to accommodate increased flooding. The Town continues to address challenges, recognizing the intersection of human infrastructure, increased beaver activity, climate change, and the imperative of maintaining sustainable ecosystems for the benefit of the diverse wildlife that calls these areas home.

H. ENVIRONMENTAL EQUITY

Environmental equity is a fundamental principle that underscores the Town of Acton's commitment to ensuring fair and just distribution of environmental benefits and burdens across all segments of the community. The Town recognizes the importance of addressing disparities

in access to natural resources, green spaces and recreational opportunities to create a more inclusive and resilient community where every resident, regardless of socioeconomic status or background, can enjoy the benefits of a healthy environment. In Acton, certain populations, such as low-income communities, people of color, and marginalized groups, may lack equitable access to green spaces and recreational opportunities. Through targeted policies and programs, the Town is working to bridge these gaps and ensure that everyone has the chance to benefit from our natural resources.

Conservation and recreational areas are generally distributed throughout town, providing access to open spaces and recreational opportunities for residents across Acton. However, Map 5A – Distance from Recreation Facilities shows the areas of Town which lay over 1 mile from a recreation facility. This map should be referenced when considering the location of new recreation offerings. When determining the location of any new facilities, the Town should consider



Volunteers help remove thousands of invasive Water Chestnuts from Ice House Pond in July 2024 Photo by Ian Bergemann

the walkability of such facilities from residential areas as well.

Another primary concern is the limited accessibility for individuals with disabilities. While the Town has made improvements in locations like NARA and

the Arboretum, there is a recognition that more comprehensive efforts are required to address accessibility challenges Town-wide. This includes prioritizing universal design principles, conducting thorough accessibility audits, upgrading facilities, and collaborating with advocacy groups

to ensure a more inclusive and accessible environment across all open space and recreation areas. For more information on the accessibility of open space and recreation areas as well as planned accessibility improvements see Section 12.

The Town's commitment to environmental equity extends beyond physical access to encompass meaningful engagement and participation in decision-making processes. This includes organizing culturally-inclusive events in these spaces, and consulting with cultural community groups to better understand their specific needs and desires for open space and recreation. Through this outreach the Town will be able to improve open space and recreation offerings, ensuring that the conservation and recreational areas are welcoming to residents from all cultural backgrounds. By integrating cultural inclusion into the broader enhancement efforts, Acton can create conservation and recreational areas that truly serve the needs of its diverse population.

SECTION 5: INVENTORY OF LANDS OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION INTEREST

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Ice House Pond Photo by Joseph Hora



A. INTRODUCTION

Table 5.1 is a summary rollup of the grouping of public and private open space lands in the Town of Acton. The sections that follow include detailed descriptions and a breakdown of component parcels.

B. PRIVATE PARCELS

Chapter 61, 61A, and 61B lands

In Fiscal Year 2021, a total of 606 acres of Acton's open space fell under Chapter 61, 61A and 61B tax classifications. These state statutes allow for reduced real estate taxes in exchange for keeping the land "open" for forestry, agricultural, or private recreational use. Chapter 61 applies to forestland; Chapter 61A applies to land in agriculture; and Chapter 61B applies to private recreational lands. These lands can be developed, but in the event of a change in use, the Town, in exchange for its having foregone the full taxation on the property, is afforded an opportunity to match a bona fide Purchase and Sale Agreement within 120 days. The 120-day right of first refusal may be exercised by the Town or a nonprofit nominee designated by the Town, such as the Trustees of Reservations, Sudbury Valley Trustees, the Audubon Society, or a local land trust. The owner or

Table 5.1 Inventory of Lands of Conservation and Recreation Interest

Private Parcels		Acres
Chapter 61	Forestry Land	409.92
Chapter 61A	Agricultural Land	164.41
Chapter 61B	Recreation Land	31.66
Conservation Restrictions		449.3
Public and Nonprofit Parcels		
Conservation Areas		1875.0
	NARA Park	40.0
	Athletic Fields and Playgrounds	30.0
	Morrison Farm	32.0
	Acton Town Common	10.0
Municipal Facilities	West Acton Village Triangle	0.1
	East Acton Village Green	0.6
	School Department Fields and Playgrounds	66.0
Water District Lands		476.89
Cemetery Lands	Woodlawn Cemetery	80.0
	Mount Hope Cemetery	94.0
	Forest Cemetery	0.5
State-owned Lands		203.0
Concord Lands		58.0
Total		3827.24

applicant must follow a fairly prescribed process, including the repayment of five years of back taxes, and the presentation of a contract of sale that must be non-contingent and without the need for any zoning relief, subdivision approvals, or variances from wetlands regulations as well as others.

These Chapter 61, 61A and 61B open spaces, although not owned by the Town, have a significant impact on the environment and aesthetics of the community. Maintaining their enrollment in the chapter programs is a desirable course of action for the Town.

In FY2021, the land enrolled in the Chapter 61/61A/62B programs includes:

- Chapter 61 (forestry land) – 409.92 acres
- Chapter 61A (agricultural land) – 164.41 acres
- Chapter 61B (recreation) – 31.66 acres

*Data is based on information provided by the Assessor Department, identified by tax classification.

The progressive diminishment of Chapter 61 lands over the past 16 years includes:

- 1995 – 1,255 acres
- 2002 – 940 acres
Notable conversions: Robbins Mill Pond land (housing development), DiDuca Farm (shopping center)
- 2011 – 706 acres
Notable conversions: Palmer land (Quail Ridge Golf course), Caouette land (town acquisition for conservation)
- 2021 – 606 acres

Private conservation restrictions

Conservation restrictions (CRs) are granted in perpetuity and list prohibited acts, including construction of buildings, excavation of materials, dumping, and cutting of vegetation. All conservation

restrictions must be approved by the Acton Select Board and by the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEEA). In Acton, two hundred fifty-five acres are currently subject to private conservation restrictions and 100.83 acres are currently subject to public conservation restrictions, with two in process of being accepted by the State as this document goes to publication.

Acton's Zoning Bylaw permits a Planned Conservation Residential Community to be proposed on a tract of land greater than eight acres. The Zoning Bylaw requires that 60 percent of the tract be set aside for conservation or other public purposes. If conveyed to a non-profit agency, a CR must be conveyed to the Town.

Agricultural preservation restrictions

Acton's purchase of its first Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) with \$1,230,000 funding from the Community Preservation Act was approved by voters at the June 21, 2021 Annual Town Meeting and placed on the 51.53-acre Stonefield Farm in South Acton. Boston Area Gleaners, Inc., a Massachusetts nonprofit corporation, granted the Town of Acton's Agricultural Commission and Sudbury Valley Trustees, Inc. exclusive rights, in perpetuity, to

use the six parcels of land located at the intersection of Liberty, Stow, and Martin Streets for agricultural and conservation purposes. To prevent the land from ever being used or changed in any way that would materially impair or interfere with its agricultural or conservation values, it is to be maintained in an undeveloped condition. Public access for passive recreation is also included in the values protected by the APR. In 2023, the Town completed a public trail adjacent to and accessible from the Assabet River Rail Trail.

C. PUBLIC AND NON-PROFIT PARCELS

Non-profit owned lands within the Town of Acton

The Acton Conservation Land Trust Inc. acquired 16 acres of critical wetland and a portion of Heath Hen Meadow Brook in 2006. This land located at 182 Willow St and commonly referred to as the Whitcomb Land provides access to the Dunn Conservation Land, although there are no trails currently located on either land. There is not a Conservation Restriction placed on this property. Ecologically speaking, this land is partially labeled as Core Habitat, Vernal Pool Core, Local Wetlands, and Local Wetlands Buffer by the

Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife's Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program and BioMap.

Public conservation lands owned by the Town of Acton

Acton has over 1,800 acres of designated Conservation and Town Forest properties. The Town of Acton owns the conservation lands and most are maintained by the Land Stewardship Committee (hereafter "LSC"). The LSC was previously under the direction of the Natural Resources Division of the Land Use Department and the Conservation Commission. With the 2022 retirement of Natural Resources Director, Tom Tidman, the Town replaced the "Natural Resources" Division with the Conservation Division, within the Land Use Department.

Conservation land divisions

- Division One, the largest, consists of all the properties actively managed

Table 5.2 Three Divisions of Conservation Lands

Division One	All Conservation Areas actively managed by LSC	1,880.5 acres	21 unique areas
Division Two	Conservation areas not yet actively managed by LSC	125.56 acres	8 areas
Division Three	Isolated parcels with minimal public access	16.67 acres	7 parcels
Total		2,022.73 acres	

by the LSC, and generally consists of two or more contiguous parcels with geologic, historic, wetland, or garden characteristics.

- Division Two consists of parcels not actively managed by the LSC.
- Division Three is a group of Town-owned, isolated parcels with limited public access, due to high water table.
- Table 5.2 is a summary of the three divisions of Conservation Lands.

CONSERVATION LANDS AND THE LAND STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE (LSC)

The current condition and public accessibility of our conservation lands can be attributed to the efforts of the Land Stewards who each take on responsibility for one of the conservation areas, as well as Morrison Farm and the Assabet River Blue and Green Trail. They also educate the public and advocate for the protection of

biodiversity of the lands under their care. The LSC is an all-volunteer committee made up of 15-20 members. Established in 1996. Stewards volunteer on workdays set up by other stewards to assist with larger projects like boardwalk or kiosk repair. Stewards recruit small groups for invasive plant removal workdays and supervise Eagle Scout projects, such as building new kiosks, bridges, and boardwalks through muddy areas. Land Stewards have also overseen special projects like the installation of bat houses and bluebird nesting boxes on conservation lands. Overall, The LSC's projects improve individual conservation areas and ensure consistency and standardization among the conservation areas Town-wide, helping the public understand and appreciate the meadows, woods, and wetlands of Acton.

The Town installed kiosks of standard design and color in most of the conservation areas. Kiosks are sturdily-built structures equipped with map boxes, roofs, and a notice-board surface. Standard information is posted on these surfaces, including the parcel's map, steward contact, and land use regulations. Eagle Scouts constructed most of these, with direction



Boardwalk over wetlands Photo by Emily McDowell

principal conservation areas are now marked with similar “Conservation Area” signs, including the name of the area, and in some places, prohibitions.

Acton’s conservation areas are complete with trail systems, often with one or more secondary trails, where appropriate, and one or more accesses. Major trails (yellow-blazed) are usually loop trails, unless the land configuration prohibits this. Secondary trails (blue-blazed) either bisect the loop or provide access to a more remote portion of the conservation area that is of special interest. All secondary trails leave and rejoin the major trail, access trails (red-blazed) provide either access to a loop trail through a narrow corridor or easement, or act as connectors between two contiguous or nearby conservation areas. Blazing has been done in both directions for the least intrusion. LSC members assigned to the task are responsible for refreshing the blaze markers.

Among its many accomplishments, LSC has installed bridges at stream crossings and extensive boardwalks in many of the perennially wet areas. They also installed nesting boxes for bluebirds and other

species and planted blight-resistant elm trees for future shade where appropriate. LSC also removed old farm equipment with no historical interest as well as heavy trash. Maintenance of special habitat areas, such as meadows, fields, old orchards, and a pine-barren (open land rare in Acton) was performed at the lowest level deemed necessary to preserve the unique character of the area. Otherwise, the Town limits management practices, to keeping trails open while allowing natural processes to occur. In addition, the Town directed attention to controlling invasive plant species such as bittersweet, Norway maple, Japanese barberry, and burning bush.

LSC continues to be assisted in its activities by Eagle Scout candidates, Cub Scout dens, and Girl Scout troops, ABRHS Senior Community Service Day participants, the Merriam School Service Learning Project fifth and sixth-graders, as well as by other public-spirited citizens.

SUMMARY LISTING OF CONSERVATION LANDS AND AREAS

TOWN FORESTS

Acton has two areas of historically-designated Town Forest: the Wills Hole

parcel, off Quarry Road, acquired in 1949; and Bulette Town Forest, acquired in 1926. The Bulette land was the first parcel to be designated Town Forest. It is comprised of two parcels, at 20 Bulette Road Rear, consisting of approximately 30 acres. The 20.7 acre "Anderson Land," at 13 Arlington Street, was acquired using Community Preservation Act funds in 2013. The developer donated 12.09 acres at 180 Newtown Road in 2021, as part of a new Planned Conservation Residential Community at that site. All of these together will have trails blazed and mapped by the Land Stewards, making Bulette/Town Forest and Anderson conservation land a 79.7-acre contiguous conservation area.

ACTON CONSERVATION LANDS

The sections below describe the conservation lands. For maps and in-depth descriptions of the conservation areas with trails please visit <https://trails.actonma.gov/>.

ACTON ARBORETUM

Located in the Town center, the Acton Arboretum consists of 65 acres of woods, meadows, ponds, old apple orchards, a glacial esker, and a bog. The land,



Perennial Garden at the Acton Arboretum

successively owned and improved by the Craigins, the Reeds, the Tuttles, and the Bridges, was acquired by the Town in 1976 and 1977. It was formalized as an Arboretum in 1986 when Town Meeting funded the purchase of plant materials and site improvements, and John Whittier amended the original warrant article to specify use of the property for an arboretum. Since then, the Arboretum has been developed through

the efforts of the Friends of the Acton Arboretum, Inc., and many volunteers.

In 2015, the Town created a new 22-space parking lot including two ADA spaces. A bioswale/rain garden was built adjacent to the parking lot to collect stormwater runoff. Specific plants filter and treat pollutants through natural biological processes before recharging groundwater. A winding boulder pathway, filled with



Anderson Conservation Land Photo by Ian Bergemann

striking flowers and shrubs, serves as a stone bridge. An educational information panel about rain gardens is adjacent to the kiosk walkway. A grant from the Community Preservation Act, with contributions from the Friends of the Acton Arboretum, funded the parking lot. In 2015, a new 271-foot boardwalk was installed across the bog at the southern end of the property, off Minot Avenue. The surface of the boardwalk is constructed of fiberglass sections, allowing 47 percent more light through than the previous wooden planking to the plants and animals below.. It was raised 18 inches above the water to allow wildlife passage beneath. The Highway Department built an accessible sidewalk from Minot Avenue down to the boardwalk trail. The Acton Arboretum received a 2019 Community Preservation Act grant for \$55,000 to improve accessibility at the main entrance. A 16-foot long by eight foot wide wooden pedestrian bridge over the rain garden, which leads to an ADA walkway made of concrete pavers around the information kiosk. An ADA-accessible picnic table is situated on the pavers.

ANDERSON CONSERVATION LAND

The Anderson Conservation Area is the newest parcel to be added to the Acton Conservation Lands. It was the result of a combined effort with the purchase of the Arlington Street 20.7-acre parcel during the 2013 Town Meeting. The Genevieve Lane 12-acre parcel was donated to the Town of Acton in 2021. A Planned Conservation Residential Community was created stemming from Newtown Road, which includes a trailhead for neighborhood access. A Conservation Restriction was placed on the land as a result of the Town of Acton's purchase of the Arlington Street parcel with Community Preservation Act funds. The Conservation Restriction will be held by the Acton Conservation Trust and is currently under review by the State. This raises the total acreage of Anderson/Bulette/Town Forest conservation land from 47 acres to almost 73 acres.

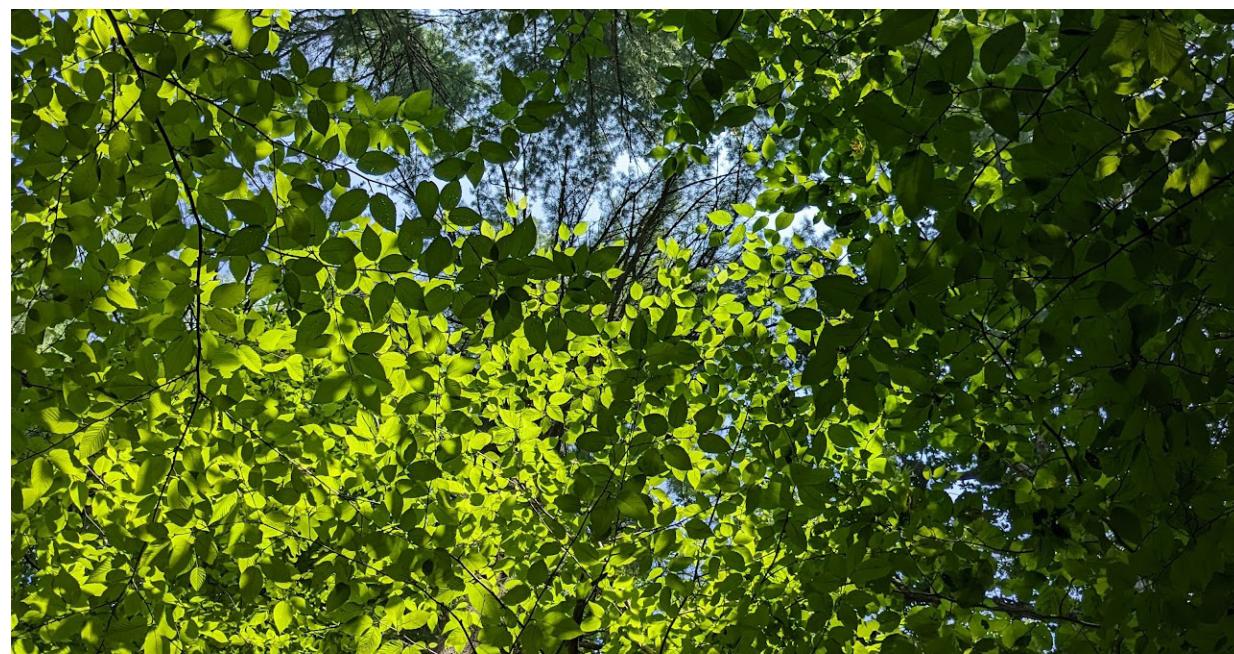
The trail system for the Anderson Conservation Area boasts a 1.4-mile trail leading to the Bulette/Town Forest Conservation Land and a smaller .3-mile loop. This is a relatively flat trail system with a total 55- foot elevation gain, spectacular views of Grassy Pond Brook

and adjacent wetlands. A public parking lot (fit for four vehicles) is available off of Arlington Street. Trail users will be able to visit Bulette/Town Forest Conservation Land directly, and extend their hike to Grassy Pond Conservation Land by crossing Newtown Road and entering the red access trail. The most notable features in Anderson Conservation Area are rocky outcroppings that emphasize the glacial past of the landscape and the numerous vernal pools with thriving amphibians, mosquitos and salamanders. A dense stand

of birch trees and thick populations of ferns complement the trails and highlight the prominent wetland ecosystem.

BULETTE/TOWN FOREST CONSERVATION LAND

The Bulette Conservation Area is the first parcel of land the Town of Acton acquired for conservation purposes. Its purchase was authorized at the March 1965 Annual Town Meeting. The land abuts Acton's first Town Forest which was purchased in 1926. Together, the two parcels total 38 acres, much of which is wetlands. For many



Bulette Town Forest Conservation Land Photo by Ian Bergemann



Camp site at Camp Acton Conservation Land for picnicking and overnight camping by permit Photo by Ian Bergemann

years, the only access into this area was on a fire road, annually cleared of vegetation and obstructions to assure passage for fire apparatus.

The first hiking trails were cut in 1974 as an Eagle Scout project. This area was overlooked in the years following while the Town focused development and maintenance resources on newer and larger conservation tracts. In 1999, the Town cut access and loop trails. The area is notable for its plentiful glacial features including a number of large erratics and an esker that may be seen from the trail that crosses the

wetlands. An easy bushwhack during dry periods takes the hiker to the top of this esker, which has an animal track along its top, with views of both hemlock forest and additional wetlands beyond.

CAMP ACTON CONSERVATION LAND

In 1996 the Town acquired the Camp Acton Conservation Area, formerly owned by the Boy Scouts, with the aid of a Self Help grant. This area is one of four contiguous conservation areas, the others being Spring Hill, Nashoba Brook Conservation and, the most recent addition, Robbins Mill.

Together, they comprise almost 500 acres of preserved conservation open space.

Camp Acton's unique feature is its suitability for a type of passive recreation that is not offered by any other presently-owned Town property. Picnicking, as well as individual or group day or overnight camping, may be enjoyed with a permit from the Recreation Department of the Town of Acton. There are seven large, backcountry campsites, established by the Boy Scouts, maintained free of poison ivy, brambles, and damp or stony ground. Each is located in a woodsy setting that allows some privacy, equipped with a rustic picnic table and crude stone-ring fireplace. A gated internal parking area provides easier access to these sites with camping gear. Close to the parking area is a large-stone masonry fireplace suitable for group gatherings. Wetlands comprise about twenty percent of the acreage in Camp Acton. Other natural features include two isolated vernal pools and an unnamed stream, which eventually flows into Spencer Brook.

In 2018, the Town of Acton received a Community Preservation Act grant for

\$10,000 to build an accessible camping area located at Camp Acton. This includes a wheelchair-friendly fire ring, a boardwalk, two level tent sites, and an accessible picnic table.

GRASSY POND CONSERVATION LAND

Grassy Pond Conservation Area is one of Acton's larger conservation areas, with over 100 acres located between Newtown Road and Nagog Hill Road, close to the adjacent Town of Littleton, and lying west of Acton Center. It is also one of the Town's most diverse conservation areas because of its varied habitats and ecosystems. These include the pond, extensive wetlands at the pond's outlet, two small streams, a boulder field, a large meadow, many stone walls, dense stands of eastern white pine, and open stands of northern hardwoods such as white ash and red and white oak. Mosses are prolific, coating many of the stones and tree stumps.

About half the land was acquired by the Town in 1968 and 1972 through two Self Help grants, with the remainder acquired in 1971 and 1984. It was one of Acton's first conservation areas to have a Master Plan. The stated purpose was to maintain the unspoiled serenity of the



Bee pollinates Water Lily at Grassy Pond Conservation Land Photo by Ian Bergemann

area while increasing its potential for use and enjoyment. The first trail, designed according to this plan, was built in 1978 as a Boy Scout Eagle project with assistance from the Young Adult Conservation Corps (YACC). It entered the property from Newtown Road. Gradually, the boardwalk across the wetlands, the pier at the pond's edge, the trail in from the Nagog Hill Road side, and the Willis Holden Drive trail were added. . Inmates of the Northeastern Correctional Center, as well as Boy Scouts

working on Eagle projects, carried out many of these improvements. In 1998, members of the Land Stewardship Committee modified the main trail into a loop.

There are three entrances to the Grassy Pond Conservation Area — from Nagog Hill Road, Newtown Road and Willis Holden Drive. Both Nagog Hill and Newtown Road entrances have designated parking facilities, while the entrance from Willis Holden Drive has on-street parking only.



Ceremonial Stone Piles at Grassy Pond Conservation Land Photo by Robert Houghton

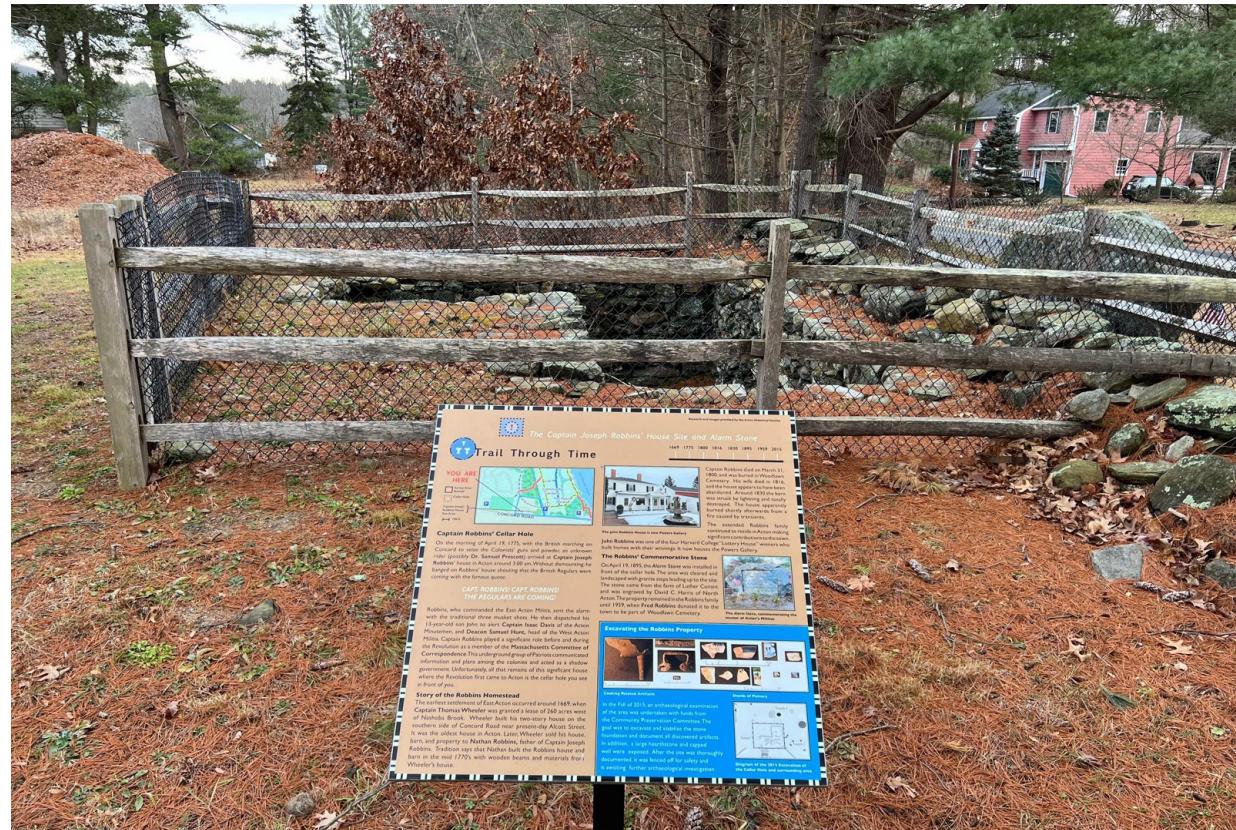
Grassy Pond is a naturally-occurring kettle hole exhibiting bog characteristics around its shoreline. Nowhere is the pond more than fifteen feet deep, although the level has fluctuated in recent years due to beaver activity. The gradual colonization of the perimeter areas by species of plants that thrive in very wet and highly acidic areas continues to shrink the open water through an ever-quickenning process. Leading this advance are sphagnum moss, pitcher plants, leatherleaf, highbush blueberries, larches, and red maples. A short side path off the loop trail leads to the pond's edge. A recently-constructed boardwalk leads through the wetland's boundary of the pond to an observation deck providing good views for an appreciation of the bog's characteristics.

In 2017, the Town of Acton spent \$800,000 of Community Preservation Act open space funds to purchase 10.9 acres at 165 and 159 Newtown Road to annex to Grassy Pond conservation land. The purchase was also made possible by donations from private citizens.

GREAT HILL CONSERVATION LAND AND RECREATION AREA

Great Hill Conservation and Recreation Area, located in a busy section of South Acton, is a large tract, diverse in topography, vegetation, natural features, and available recreational spaces for use by the public. This 203-acre conservation area is bounded on its southerly side by School Street, where there is a major access behind the South Acton Fire Station. The property's other boundaries are provided by Piper Road on the east, Massachusetts Avenue on the north, and Main Street on the west, with a minor access across from Oakwood Road. The Main Street access, located across from the intersection of Prospect Street and Main Street, is a second major access and also provides parking. A second minor access is from Francine Road. Kiosks are positioned at the top of the meadow beyond the fire station playing fields and the Main Street entrance.

The Town acquired the land with state and federal assistance in two phases between 1971 and 1975. It included the purchase of seven contiguous parcels that had no existing structures other than typical New England stone walls. Since then, the area just beyond the fire station entrance has



Captain Robbins Historic Site on the TTT Photo by Bettina Abe

been developed for limited recreational uses. A former marshy area was dredged in 1986 and made into a skating pond. A large open meadow beyond the playing fields creates a feeling of spaciousness, sloping up to the wooded areas where the trail system begins. In 2009, the Town appropriated an additional 5.5 acres of abutting land with Community Preservation funds.

The acquisition of a key, 6-acre parcel, and conservation restriction held by Acton Conservation Trust at 4 Piper Lane in 2020 completed the preservation of a critical portion of woods ringing Great Hill field. The 4 Piper Lane parcel directly abuts the 5.24-acre Gaebel Land at 6 Piper Road, which was a 2010 preservation project for Acton Conservation Trust, the grantee of

the conservation restriction. The Town purchased the parcel at 4 Piper Lane with a combination of Community Preservation funds and donations to Acton Conservation Trust's "Campaign for Great Hill."

GUGGINS BROOK CONSERVATION LAND

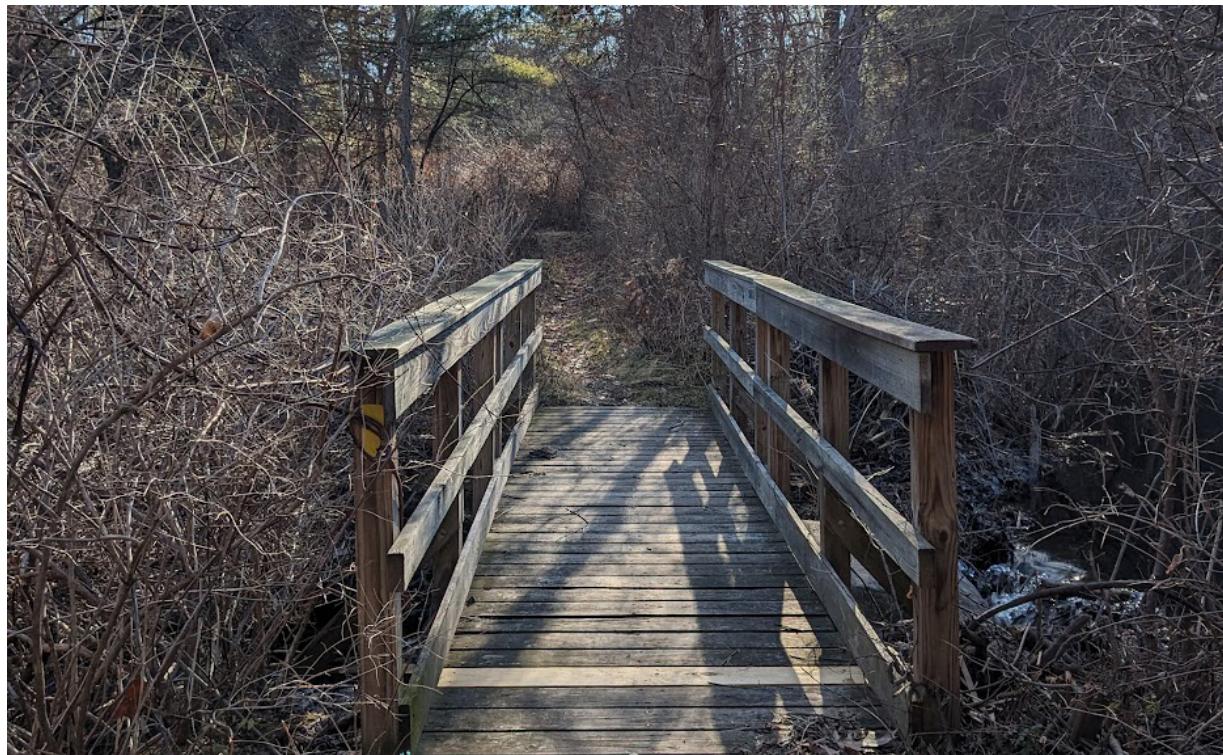
The 61-acre Guggins Brook Conservation Area, acquired in 1975 and 1976 through a Self Help grant, is predominantly a low-lying, frequently wet area through which

Guggins Brook and Inch Brook flow. The main access is from a small parking lot on the northerly side of Route 111 (opposite Birch Ridge Road) about 0.5 mile west of West Acton center. Here the conservation area abuts Water District land traversed by a fairly lengthy access trail, much of which consists of muddy ground before crossing Inch Brook on a short boardwalk into the main Guggins property. A secondary access,

also lengthy, is from Central Street by way of an easement granted by the New View Co-Housing community. Public parking for this entrance is in the playing field lot on nearby Elm Street, about 0.3 mile away. It is also possible to access the area from the Jenks Conservation property via a private trail across the back of Idylewilde Farm.

This conservation area is not suitable for either horses or mountain bicycles because of the wetness, but there are some very scenic areas, particularly along Guggins Brook where it flows through a canal bounded on one bank by a raised dike. Here the water calms and flows quietly through a straight streambed. Trees found in the parcel include white pine, red maple, oaks, hemlocks, quaking aspens, and occasional apple trees (remnants of the orchards that were once common throughout Acton).

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Bridge built by Troop 284 in Guggins Brook Conservation Land Photo by Ian Bergemann

Guggins Brook trails are notoriously low-lying with Guggins Brook, Inch Brook, and Fort Pond Brook all flowing within the parcel bounds. Aiming to provide hikers with a drier, less muddy experience, Scout troops and volunteers repaired or installed many more boardwalks and bridges since the last writing of the OSRP.

Additionally, recent trail connections between Guggins Brook, Jenks, and Wright Hill Conservation Lands were created as a result of the acquisition of Wright Hill Conservation Land and through public access easements on private property. This critical connection allows visitors to travel through multiple unique ecosystems from vast meadows at Jenks, teeming wetlands at Guggins Brook, to the wooded forestland and highland meadows of Wright Hill. While the multiple private properties surrounding the trails also enable visitors to observe long-term managed meadows and diverse neighborhoods.

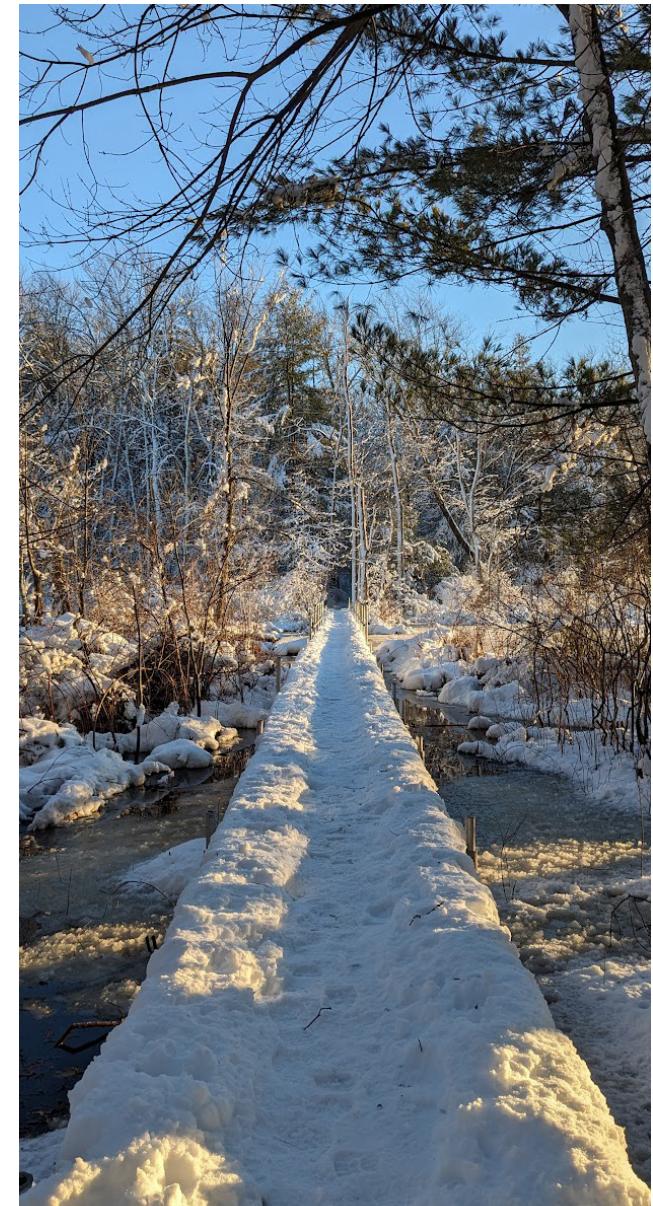
HEATH HEN MEADOW CONSERVATION LAND

Heath Hen Meadow Conservation Area in southwest Acton comprises 131.5 acres of streams, meadows, upland forest, and large tracts of wetlands. Only one-third of this conservation area is upland. The major portion of the property, almost 100 acres, was purchased using both town and state funds in 1974. The Town acquired smaller parcels in 1995, providing access corridors. Several stone walls crisscross the area, which serve as reminders of its use as farmland during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The conservation area is named for the Heath Hen Meadow Brook,

which rises in Stow and meanders through the property, picking up the Muddy Brook tributary, and eventually merging with Fort Pond Brook just beyond the property's border.

Heath Hen Meadow is home to a variety of wildlife including beaver, skunk, raccoon, opossum, deer, ducks, partridge, and an occasional blue heron. The meadows and surrounding woods provide habitat for numerous species of songbirds, as well as insects and amphibians.

In 2016 the Town acquired the Dunn land. This property, which spans the Acton/Stow line (6.5 acres in Acton and 24 acres in Stow) completes a significant protected land corridor. It will give the public access to a spectacular area adjacent to the Heath Hen Meadow Brook and the Heath Hen Meadow conservation area. It also provides connections to the Captain Sargent conservation area in Stow. As stated in the 2014-11-12 Special Town Meeting Warrant Article 19: "These purchases create a key link between the 100-acre Heath Hen Meadow conservation land in South Acton and the 154-acre Captain Sargent conservation land in Stow." The Dunn land



Heath Hen Meadow Conservation Land Photo by Ian Bergemann



Volunteers build new CPA-funded boardwalk at Heath Hen Meadow Conservation Land Photo by Ian Bergemann

provides key access to the Whitcomb Land, which is owned by Acton Conservation Trust. The purchase of the six-acre Dunn Land was funded with “free cash” in the amount of \$28,800, and closed on July 29, 2016.

At the April 2016 Town meeting, voters agreed to purchase twelve acres abutting Mount Hope Cemetery at the entrance to the Heath Hen Meadow Brook Conservation Land (176 Central Street). Purchased with a combination of Community Preservation Funds, donations from private citizens, and a gift from Acton Conservation Trust, this property completes a significant green belt along Heath Hen Meadow Brook, extending from the Dunn Land at the Stow line, through the Whitcomb Land owned by Acton Conservation Trust. It comprises significant wetlands and a large upland portion behind Mount Hope Cemetery. With this acquisition of 176 Central Street, the trails were extended and given greater access to this biodiverse area. The Acton Cemetery Commission gave permission for the commonly-used trails behind the cemetery to be blazed and maintained by the Land Stewards.

In 2022, Staff and volunteers received a Community Preservation Act Grant to rebuild the Heath Hen Meadow Boardwalk bridge. Work began in Fall 2022 and nearly finished in Fall 2023, with the exception of a handrail that will be installed in Spring 2024. This boardwalk is one foot higher than the old boardwalk and is constructed of aluminum frames and poles with (synthetic) Trex decking. The new boardwalk is open and connected to the Mount Hope side of Heath Hen Meadow. The old sections of the previous boardwalk were used to create ramps and navigate over chronically flooded sections.

JENKS CONSERVATION LAND

Jenks Conservation Area comprises 30 acres consisting primarily of a broad, sweeping meadow, once part of the apple orchards extensive throughout this area. To the west, however, the property is bisected by the MBTA commuter railroad line. Wedged between this railroad line and the Idylwilde Farm property is a 7-acre extension of the Jenks Land. This conservation area and the nearby Guggins Brook Conservation Area both serve the same immediate area of West Acton, and both lie within the same aquifer protection zone. The land

was purchased using town and state funds in 1975.

The main entrance to Jenks is from a small parking area just off Central Street. A barrier gate with a small notice board and map box, maintained by the Land Stewardship Committee, separates the parking area from the beginning of the access trail. This access leads slightly downhill through a narrow corridor bordered with tangled shrubs and berry bushes to a concrete and stone culvert, through which the Fort Pond Brook flows. The shrubby area along the corridor has been partially brushed out to provide visual access to two ponds just downstream from the culvert. A second minor entrance to the property comes into the seven-acre parcel on the westerly side of the railroad line, from private property beyond. There is also an access from the adjacent town of Boxboro, and a trail access from Idylwilde Farm that connects to Guggins Brook Conservation Area.

In 2023, the Town sought Building Resilient Communities (BRIC) hazard mitigation funds to study the undersized Fort Pond Brook culvert conveying the waters

underneath the trail, with future intent to replace. Recent flood events due to climate change have overflowed the banks proving hazardous for trail users, their pets, and wildlife.

NAGOG HILL CONSERVATION LAND

Nagog Hill Conservation Area comprises over 175 acres providing trails that are generally wide, well-marked, and in good condition. Much of the area was once cleared farmland, and there are many dry stone walls delineating the boundaries of the former farm fields. The Town acquired the property in a series of purchases between 1975 and 1980 using both state and town funds. An additional twelve acres was purchased by the town in 2007 from the Groener family using CPA funds.

A special feature that exists in this area is a large glacial erratic. Called Egg Rock it is on the south side of the main trail just north of the most easterly stream crossing. A large vernal pool, just south of the main trail where it crosses the open field beyond the horse corral, is home to many species that breed only in such habitats. Just outside of the conservation property is Nagog Pond, one of the Commonwealth's "great ponds," as defined under the State



Meadow habitat at Nagog Hill Conservation Land Photo by Ian Bergemann

Statutes. Rights to this pond, relinquished by Acton in 1886, were given to the Town of Concord, which continues to use it as a water supply.

In 2018, the Quail Ridge housing development provided public access trail easements into the conservation land trail system from Skyline Drive. A small, public parking area was created by the subdivision developer and an Eagle Scout built a trail kiosk there. A new public access trail leads from the subdivision into the

Nagog Hill conservation land trail system. There was a period of contention as the Concord Water Department was planning their new drinking water treatment plant adjacent to Nagog Hill conservation land and abutting housing developments. Acton Community members requested public trail access onto Concord Water Department land. The Concord Water Department has since relocated the new treatment plant to within Concord town boundaries.

NASHOBA BROOK CONSERVATION LAND

Nashoba Brook Conservation Area's 123 acres were donated to the town beginning in 1987 as part of the Arbors cluster development approval process, and as such they are exempt from further development. This conservation area is one of a group of three contiguous conservation lands—Nashoba Brook, Spring Hill, and Camp Acton—comprising almost 500 acres, each with its own trails and separate entrances.

This conservation area is probably the most scenic and varied of all the town's conservation lands, due in large part to the mostly unspoiled Nashoba Brook that runs through the land from north to south. The exceptional stonework, including the foundations of early mills, two earth fill dams, many stone walls, and the enigmatic corbelled stone chamber built into a hillside, together with a variety of riverine and upland habitats, make this conservation area a jewel of its kind. The Trail Through Time (TTT) is a two-mile, bi-cultural heritage trail funded by the Community Preservation Act and created by outdoor enthusiast, Linda McElroy, the first chairperson of the Acton Land Stewardship Committee. The TTT was

officially completed in 2020 with a solid oak kiosk gateway at the end of Wheeler Lane. Forming a loop around one mile of the Nashoba Brook, the TTT passes through or accesses twelve sites of structures where stone features from three periods of the land's history remains. Walking in either direction around the loop, hikers will encounter pre-historic, colonial, and industrial-era stone ruins, all within a localized area. While winding through diverse landscapes, the Trail crosses the brook twice on rustic footbridges. The walking is easy along most of the Trail as it meanders beside busy wetlands, through shady woodlands, and picks its way over a rocky section of an ancient Native American trail. The Trail Through Time lies mostly within the bounds of this Nashoba Brook Conservation Land, but there are several features on adjacent trails. A kiosk stands at the main "hub" entrance for the TTT at the end of Wheeler Lane. Three additional entrances providing access include one with parking at Davis Road, another with parking on Carlisle Road, and a third from Milldam Road in the Northbriar sub-division. Chosen as the hub for the TTT, the Wheeler Lane location preserves remains of the Thomas Wheeler,

Jr. farmstead and cattle pens, along with his 1730s grist and saw mills. Building these mills seems to have been the purpose for the North Acton settlement that arose here, originally known as Concord Village.

There are two parts of the TTT within Spring Hill conservation land: one accessible from Spring Hill Road (featuring Native American ceremonial stone piles) and one on the red connecting trail between Nashoba Brook and Spring Hill conservation land (named Pipsissewa) that leads to a quarried stone through an assortment of ceremonial stone piles. The "Roof Slab Quarry," thought to have been the source of the Stone Chamber roof slabs, is a large rocky outcropping along the red trail connecting Nashoba Brook conservation land to the Robbins Mill conservation land. Please visit <https://trails.actonma.gov/trail-through-time/> for maps, walking tours, and text of each information panel, as well as a listing of references and resources for further study. The nonprofit corporation, the Friends of Pine Hawk, sponsors annual archaeological walks, talks, and service work days about Acton's Native American history and ceremonial stone structures. The Friends

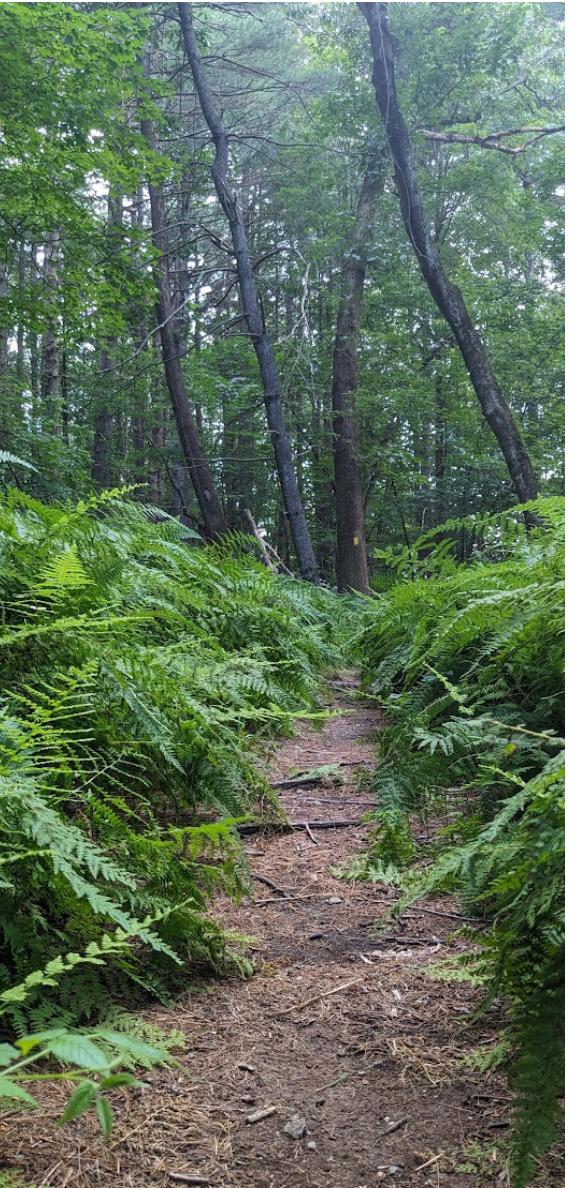


Pencil Mill Dam Run at Nashoba Brook Conservation Area

of Pine Hawk sponsor community service workdays on the TTT removing invasive plants, sprucing up trails, and cleaning information panels.

PACY CONSERVATION LAND

The 38.2-acre Pacy Conservation Area, acquired in 1975 and 1979, is tucked in between Central Street and the residential neighborhoods of Tupelo Way and Tuttle Drive. The land is bisected north to south, by a mature red maple swamp that takes



Fern path at Pacy Conservation Land
Photo by Ian Bergemann

up about one third of the entire Pacy area. A lovely vernal pool can be seen from the southern end of the loop trail. An unnamed feeder tributary in the middle of the swamp drains into Fort Pond Brook. The western uplands, near Tuttle Drive, have no trails. The eastern uplands have a single loop trail. There are two access points to this loop. The first is a cul-de-sac at the end of Tupelo Way, which provides room for parking, along with a kiosk and map box. The other entrance, on Central Street, opposite Martin Street has no room for parking and is for pedestrian access only. The loop provides a pedestrian connection between the commercial area near upper and lower Prospect Street and Martin Street, as well as access to Jones Field and beyond.

The upland has the appearance of a former early twentieth-century pasture land, abandoned when the surrounding areas were developed, and now provides habitat for deer. There are many forty-year-old and older canopy trees: white pine, sugar maple, white ash, hickory, red oak, and other hardwoods. But there are almost no saplings, young or small trees in the mid-story, and the understory is dominated by

small and young plants that have been able to grow in the shaded conditions, such as hay-scented ferns, mayflower, jewel-weed, Japanese barberry, and other plants that deer typically avoid.

PRATT'S BROOK CONSERVATION LAND

Pratt's Brook Conservation Area, located in South Acton in the area between Parker Street and High Street, has three accesses. The most heavily used is the Parker Street entrance, with parking near the railroad crossing. A second access is from the large parking area at the end of Brewster Lane, off High Street. A minor access at the end of Valley Road, also off High Street, was the one most recently opened.

This conservation area, formerly belonging to Frank and Zillah Averett, was purchased in 1980 for \$88,000 through a combination of town and state funds. It comprises 60 acres of wetlands, forested uplands, Pratt's Brook, a small pond and vernal pool, and a pine barren, unique to this part of Massachusetts. The brook bisects the property, entering as a briskly flowing stream that soon spreads into a broad wetlands area with multiple channels. It then plunges down a rocky slope to join with Fort Pond Brook, just beyond the

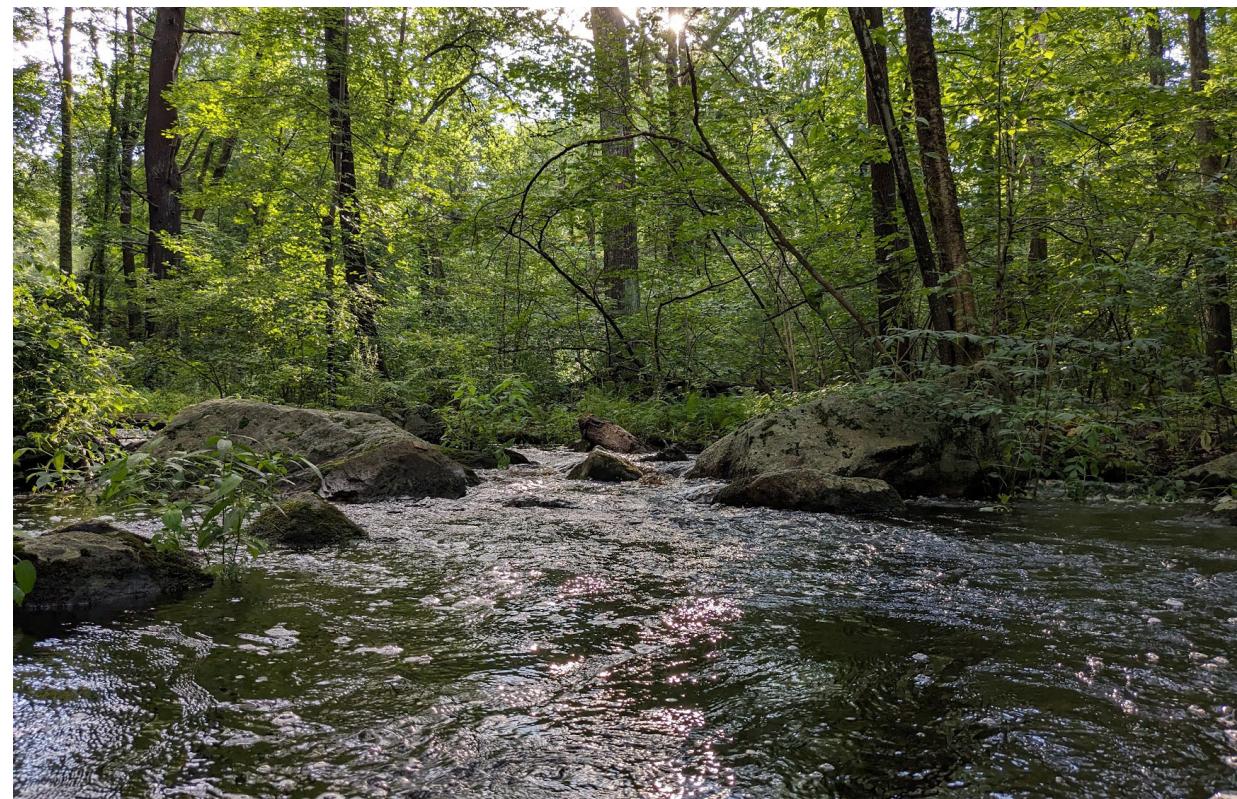
conservation land's southeastern boundary. A smaller stream, the outlet from Tenney Circle Pond, meanders across the southern portion of the land.

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The parcel is suitable for hiking and cross-country skiing, as well as enjoyment of several different habitats. South of the wetlands is an area of uplands, forested with white pine, red oak, and pitch pine and characterized by a series of hilly shoulders that reach down to the wetlands. This is the area most suitable for cross-country skiing. Adjacent to the Brewster Lane parking area, a two-acre park was created for enjoyment by residents of the contiguous Audubon senior community. This area has been enhanced, with the help of Eagle Scout projects with the introduction of wild grasses, native wildflowers and ground covers, an elm tree for shade, birdhouses, and rustic benches. An attractive, gently-graded, woodchip-covered trail has been cut leading down into the pine barrens area.

ROBBINS MILL CONSERVATION LAND

Robbins Mill Conservation Land, consists of 2 parcels acquired by the Town of Acton in 2011. The acquisition was a result of conditions stipulated when the



High water flow seen at Pratt's Brook Conservation Land Photo by Ian Bergemann

Town approved the Robbins Mill Estates subdivision in 2004. The Planning Board required that the developer must offer several common land parcels to the Town for acceptance as public land concurrently with the acceptance of the subdivision's street and public ways.

The land features a mix of deciduous trees such as maples and oaks, coniferous trees,

and numerous stone walls. The area is relatively flat but can become quite wet during the Spring or after heavy rain. The main loop trail, marked with yellow blazes and about 1 mile long, is complemented by several red-blazed access trails. Bridges built by Boy Scout volunteers and the Land Stewardship Committee help navigate the wet conditions. This section connects to nearby conservation lands, including

Spring Hill Conservation Land on the western side and Ben's Woods Conservation Land in Carlisle, MA, on the southeastern side. The trail crosses a natural gas pipeline easement, where bog bridges manage particularly wet areas.

The smaller parcel, just under 20 acres, is a narrow strip accessible from Carlisle Road, running adjacent to Robbins Mill Pond and the Boy Scouts Land. This section offers a more secluded hiking experience. The larger tract also features a short blue-blazed loop trail near a small pond, providing additional hiking options. Hikers should be mindful of privacy as some trails run close to private properties and should respect these boundaries.

SPRING HILL CONSERVATION LAND

Home to a variety of natural features, wildlife, and recreational opportunities, the 213 acres of Spring Hill Conservation Area was acquired by the Town of Acton between 1966 and 1995 through a series of purchases and donations. Its major entrance is along a short access from the Spring Hill Road cul-de-sac off Pope Road. A secondary (red-blazed) access to the Spring Hill loop trail (yellow-blazed) enters through the Hearthstone Hill Land from

its entrance on Jay Land off Strawberry Hill Road.

Spring Hill is covered with a deciduous forest of mostly red and white oak, red maple, and black and white birch. A scattering of beech, larch, hemlock, and white pine are found throughout. On the forest floor there is a distinct community of ground covers and low-story vegetation. These include mosses, partridgeberry, princess pine, and several other members of the clubmoss family, all of which are indigenous to wet or heavily shaded areas of New England. The understory vegetation is dominated by highbush blueberry and swamp azalea.

The Hearthstone Hill Land, now an integral part of Spring Hill's southeast corner, is a 32-acre parcel extensively covered with a hemlock swamp. The Hearthstone Hill access trail, one mile in length, leads from the cul-de-sac at the end of Jay Lane off Strawberry Hill Road, and skirts the swamp along its westerly edge. The trail, which follows a predominantly upland area through a stand of beech extending down into the hemlock lowlands, crosses a boardwalk in a low area before joining the



5

Bees pollinating asters Photo by Nora Masler

main Spring Hill loop trail close to its main entrance. The entire Hearthstone Hill Land is contained within a rectilinear stone wall.

STONEYMEADE CONSERVATION LAND

Stoneymeade Conservation Area was donated to the town in 1989. Located off Pope Road in East Acton, this conservation area borders conservation land in the town of Concord. Stoneymeade's 44.5 acres, a mix of biodiverse meadows, small streams and bordering woods, preserves one of the largest remaining open fields in Acton. The distant vistas seen from the main field encompass a small pond surrounded by marshy growth, more fields beyond, a horse farm with corrals, and forestland on the far edge. The privately-owned open fields seen from Strawberry Hill Road are all in Acton and end at the Concord town line. The landowners keep the fields open by mowing late each fall to prevent forest succession. Concord's Annursnac Conservation Land begins at the transition of open field to forest.

Stoneymeade's main entrance is from the far side of Stoneymeade Way, off Pope Road, where a prominent sign marks the beginning of an access trail. A short walk along this pleasant, tree-shaded

path connects with the large open field that makes up most of the Stoneymeade Conservation Area. A large, stately oak tree surrounded by ledge stands in the center of the field. The other access is from the town of Concord, across the Annursnac Conservation Area. The distance from the main entrance to the boundary with Concord is only one quarter mile.

Stoneymeade Conservation Area is home to many species of birds. Among those that can be observed raising their young are scarlet tanagers, red-winged blackbirds down beside the marshy margin of the

pond, and tree swallows. Year-round resident species such as chickadees, robins, and titmice also make Stoneymeade their summer home. The Acton Bluebird Recovery Group's concerted efforts to encourage bluebirds to reestablish after years of decline, resulted in a successful nesting pair in 1999. Several pairs of bluebirds now nest here annually, as well as a pair of bobolinks.

WETHERBEE CONSERVATION LAND

The Wetherbee Conservation Area is located in East Acton and totals just over 72 acres. The property is bounded by



Clouds clearing over Wetherbee Land cornfields



September 27, 2023 Commemoration of the East Acton Village Green Historic site

Wetherbee Street to the east, Route 2 to the south, state property/Berry Lane to the west and Alcott Street/Moritz Land to the north. It currently has a single formal entrance located on Wetherbee Street where it runs beside the farm field. Parking is available along the western edge of this road.

This conservation land was purchased from the state in 1982 for \$108,000. The state acquired it in 1898 from the Heywood/

Sellors family. Before that, it had been part of the Wetherbee Farm. Wetherbee Conservation Land's eastern section is one of two actively-farmed agricultural fields that belongs to the town of Acton, the other being the Caouette Simeone Farmland in South Acton. The gently rolling terrain is used by the state for rotating silage crops. Just northwest of the farm field is a small, sloping, short-grass meadow, accented with crabapple trees. South of and below this meadow lies a

marshy habitat that feeds a tiny north/south stream and collection pool that separate the woods from the field's edge. The property's back section, to the west, is wooded and typical of New England upland secondary growth. It features red maple, black and red oak, and white pine, with a scattering of ash, sassafras, and hawthorn. In the woods, old stone walls still define early boundaries. One of these, running north/south, is ancient, the others are more recent. This property is considered one of the conservation areas most conducive to initiating a forest management program, currently under consideration.

The area generally is suitable for cross-country skiing, as well as walking, horseback riding, snowshoeing, and tracking/birding. After harvest, the fields themselves are used for a variety of activities, including Scout meets, dog obedience training, rocketry contests, kite-flying, sky-watching/photography and stargazing during unusual celestial events.

Another ten-year lease/land exchange was signed in 2016 with the State of Massachusetts so that the State can farm corn on Wetherbee conservation area

fields, and the Town of Acton Recreation Department can use the State fields on School Street for recreation games.

WILLS HOLE/TOWN FOREST CONSERVATION LAND

The Wills Hole Conservation Area and the contiguous Town Forest, located in North Acton near NARA Park, have been combined into one conservation area that comprises 90 acres. The 49 acres of the Town Forest was purchased in 1943 for \$490 and was intended for the harvesting of timber and firewood by Acton residents. It is covered with stands of red oak, white oak, red maple, and white pine. Abutting properties contain former quarries. The remaining property includes 24 acres assembled from two land parcels purchased in 1969 and 1971 for conservation purposes. In 1999, the Captain Handley Road subdivision granted another 17 acres along its perimeter, which provides a conservation corridor from Harris Street into the Wills Hole area.

There are three entrances to the area: Captain Handley Road entrance, Quarry Road, off Route 27, and Nagog Park Drive cul-de-sac, off Route 2A. Wills Hole is a classic quaking bog. A 170-foot boardwalk, completed in 2000 by LSC volunteers, leads

from the esker to the open water edge of the bog. At its center it is an open pond, but ringing the open water is a mat of floating sphagnum moss. The sphagnum mat is, in turn, ringed by a more upland zone of dense shrubs and trees. Carnivorous plants found at Wills Hole bog include pitcher plant and sundew. Other non-carnivorous plants on the sphagnum mat include American cranberry, leatherleaf, sheep laurel, and swamp loosestrife. Shrubs and small trees, including black spruce,

North American tamarack, and swamp azalea are just a short distance upland from the sphagnum mat, all visible from the boardwalk

WRIGHT HILL CONSERVATION LAND

Originally known as Mead Farm, Wright Hill conservation land (fourteen acres) at 330 Central Street is one of the highest points in Acton. On a clear day, looking west, Mount Wachusett, the highest point of the state east of the Connecticut River is visible from the top of Wright Hill. In



Colonial era oxen droving corridor at Nashoba Brook Conservation Land



an outstanding example of neighborhood advocacy, in 2014, the neighbors formed the “Wright Hill Association” to purchase the property with the goal of conserving the open space. Working with Acton Conservation Trust and the Town Open Space Committee, a proposal was made to sell the land to the Town using Community Preservation /Funds. This proposal was accepted and the resulting Town Meeting article passed unanimously in April 2014.

There are four entrances to Wright Hill with one stemming from a trail connecting directly to Guggins Brook Conservation Land. The other three entrances are from Wright Terrace, Mead Terrace, and Central Street. The main yellow loop is roughly one half to .8 miles. Visitors are able to view a biodiverse meadow thriving with wildlife as well as a tall mixed hardwood forest stand. There is clear evidence of former land use with old stone foundations, farm equipment, an old cart path, and the traditional stone walls of the past. Two trails allow users to expand their hike to visit nearby Guggins Brook Conservation Land. The first trail is easily accessible via the yellow loop through an enchanting stonewall entrance. The second entrance

involves leaving the yellow loop at the Central Street trail head and walking across the adjacent street entrance for the New View Condominiums. A wooden sign for Guggins Brook Conservation Land marks the red access trail.

MISCELLANEOUS AND ISOLATED PARCELS

Approximately 150 acres of conservation areas are in this category. They comprise a number of parcels that can be grouped together but have not yet been taken under the management of the Land Steward Committee. Some are not suitable for public access, such as the extensive flood plain wetlands that border Flint Road and West Acton. The 10.22-acre Caouette-Simeone Conservation Land, purchased in 2011, has a renewable ten-year lease to a local farmer. The land has a public trail system and is adjacent to the Assabet River Rail Trail (ARRT). Because the land is actively farmed, few people hike around the farm fields, though they are welcome to. There are gorgeous views of Fort Pond Brook and the agricultural fields from the ARRT. These prime farmlands are protected in perpetuity. The same families who sold these 10.22 acres also sold Stonefield Farm in July 2021. These additional 51.53 acres of prime farmland were purchased

by the Boston Area Gleaners, a non-profit organization that collects surplus produce for donation to local food pantries. Acton voters approved a \$1.2 million-dollar agricultural preservation restriction (APR) on Stonefield Farm, essentially buying future development rights. Use of an APR, held by an outside agency such as a land trust, is an effective land conservation strategy, supplementing what a buyer can afford to pay for farmland.

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Two non-contiguous Arborwood Road parcels contain a tiny piece of upland pine stand with a pond and a red maple swamp. The Monson property is an open, marshy bog into which an unnamed stream running through Pacy Land drains into Fort Pond Brook. The Putnam Land consists of open marsh flood plain adjacent to Conant Brook, originally created by beaver activity. These, like the Flint Road and West Acton parcels, may prove to be unsuitable for public access.

Marshall Crossing, a sixteen-and-one-half-acre parcel that buffers two large developments, Marshall Crossing and Robbins Mill, has potential as a public access facility. It is accessible from either



Youth play soccer at NARA

the Marshall Crossing development or the Robbins Mill development, and consists of sloping, forested, rocky uplands. Similarly, two Patriot's Hill parcels are comprised of adjacent vacant lots accessible from Washington Street, with Conant Brook running through the middle of those fifteen acres. The Steinman & McGloin parcels are 40 acres of forested wetlands bordering the Town of Maynard. These three areas will be assessed in the future for potential trail access, vegetative population, and suitability for inclusion in the group of managed conservation areas.

In 2016 Mark Donohoe donated an 8.27-acre parcel of land at 501 Massachusetts Avenue.

The Town purchased an adjoining 3.57-acre parcel from Mr. Donohoe at the rear of 505 Massachusetts Avenue. Both are designated as conservation land and are adjacent to the Fort Pond Brook floodplain. The Town mows the wet meadow at 505 Mass. Ave. to maintain meadow habitat for wildlife value. The parcels are underlain by a sewer easement.

The remaining seven parcels of conservation lands total just over twelve acres, but their value for passive recreation use is minimal, due to their location, size, and characteristics. The lots at 5 Samuel Parlin Drive Rear and 2 Minot Avenue Rear are surrounded by residences and have no

TABLE 5.3 INVENTORY OF RECREATION DEPARTMENT FIELDS AND PLAYGROUNDS

Number	Recreation Facility	Address	Amenities
1	Acton Recreation Department	50 Audubon Drive	2 indoor multiuse recreational rooms
2	Camp Acton Conservation Land	362 Pope Road	Campground with 7 sites
3	Concord Road Field	104 Concord Road	Multi-purpose field, one 11 v. 11 soccer field
4	Elm Street Field	19 Elm Street	Playground, 2 tennis courts, 4 pickleball courts, one softball diamond, and sheltered picnic area
5	Gardner Field/Playground	530 Massachusetts Avenue	Playground, Multi-purpose field
6	Goward Playground	486 Main Street	Playground, basketball hoop
7	Great Hill Field	54 School Street	Multi-purpose fields
8	Hart Field	80 Taylor Road	Multi-purpose field
9	Hebert Farm Community Garden	76 Prospect Street	Organic community garden
10	Jones Field	54 Martin Street	Playground, multi-purpose field, 3 beach volleyball courts
11	Joseph Lalli Miracle Field	75 Quarry Road	ADA baseball diamond
12	MacPherson Field	80 Taylor Road	Baseball diamond
13	Morrison Farm Community Garden	116 Concord Road	Organic community garden
14	NARA Park	25 Ledge Rock Way	Playground, 4 sheltered picnic areas, multi-purpose fields, 2 beach volleyball courts, amphitheater, softball diamond, swimming and boating beach area, mountain bike pump track
15	North Acton Community Gardens	845 Main Street	Community garden
16	Robbins Mill Recreation Area	61 Canterbury Hill Road	Multi-purpose field, full basketball court, playground, picnic shelter
17	School Street Fields	323 School Street	Multi-purpose fields, 3 cricket fields
18	T.J. O'Grady Memorial Skate Park	66 Hayward Road	Skateboarding and rollerblade park
19	Veterans' Field	655 Main Street	2 baseball diamonds, playground

public access. The parcel at 915 Main Street is an open marsh adjacent to Nashoba Brook. The Stow Street parcel is a red maple swamp adjacent to Fort Pond Brook. The Harris Street parcel is still to be explored, and the small Tuttle Drive parcel, adjacent to an old railway bed, has not yet been characterized. The Martin Street parcel, a

small piece of wooded upland also next to Fort Pond Brook, may have some potential for inclusion in the managed parcels, but this is yet to be determined.

Municipal facilities and open spaces

The following sections describe areas owned and/or managed by the

Acton Recreation Department or Cemetery Division.

The Town of Acton provides approximately 30 acres of town-owned athletic fields, in addition to the facilities provided by the local and regional schools that are frequently used for non-school activities.



Amphitheatre performance at NARA Park

The location, sizes, and most common uses of these fields are detailed in Table 5.3 Inventory of Recreation Department Fields and Playgrounds, and reviewed below. Most areas are suited to a variety of athletic uses, with some areas capable of supporting multiple simultaneous uses. However, others are restricted by field and infrastructure limitations. Jones Field and Great Hill Field, for example, are often too wet in the spring to be playable, and Gardner Field was taken offline in 2000 due to lack of parking. Hart, MacPherson, and Little Great Hill fields are all limited in their utility due to their size and geometry. In each case, only certain levels of play are possible. The difficulty of parking

near some of the fields makes them less desirable for their targeted age groups, as the very young players are required to walk on the side of, or across, busy town streets. These issues are discussed in detail in Section 7, and the Recreation Department's comprehensive five-year plan is presented in Section 9.

The scheduling of field use is the responsibility of the Recreation Department. In addition to use by athletic leagues, many community groups and companies reserve the athletic areas for games and picnics. Families and groups of children also put athletic fields, and their

associated picnic and playground areas, to intensive use.

The Recreation and Highway Departments are responsible for the maintenance of the Town athletic fields. The Town's Highway crew provides routine trash removal and weekly mowing for the athletic fields, and the Recreation Department has instituted regularly-scheduled field seeding, fertilization, and aeration, utilizing the services of outside contractors and funds accumulated from field and picnic reservations. Some leagues provide their own lining of fields, and materials such as silt or stone mix and amenities, and Youth Baseball and Soccer frequently re-sod or reseed worn areas of fields. The leagues that use the illuminated fields at Elm Street and 2A/27 provide their own funding for lights. Fields and playgrounds are itemized in Table 5.3 with individual descriptions in the sections that follow.

NATHANIAL ALLEN RECREATIONAL AREA (NARA)

NARA, a 40-acre park, opened to the public in 2000 on the site of a former granite quarry. The south side of the park is located at 25 Ledge Rock Way off Route 27 (Main Street), and the north side of NARA is located at 75 Quarry Road. The

Recreation Department runs a summer camp utilizing the nine-acre swimming pond, and a summer concert series on the premises. The park has a playground, manmade pond, sandy beach, and a paved one-mile walking trail. There is an irrigated softball field, multipurpose fields, picnic areas, and an outdoor amphitheater stage. The Recreation Department provides three stations with dog waste bags. Individual and family beach memberships are available for purchase.

The NARA fields are used extensively by the High School sports programs and other



youth and adult leagues. A regular program of fertilization, aeration, and reseeding keeps the playing surfaces in good shape. The one-mile loop trail around the property is popular with people who work in nearby businesses who can access the NARA loop trail from Nagog Park through the Woods Hole/Town Forest conservation land trail for lunch break walks and many seniors use the trail for daily exercise. The neighborhood is expanding with new home construction along Ledge Rock Way.

NARA features six and a half acres of (irrigated) playing fields; a 3,000-seat

amphitheater with stage and snack bar; accessible playground; paved, accessible walking trail; swimming and boating beach areas; bathhouse pavilion with picnic tables, and snack bar; volleyball courts; and a picnic pavilion with a dance floor. On the north side, there is a second parking area adjacent to the Joseph Lalli Miracle Field. This facility consists of a fenced baseball field with a cushioned rubberized surface, and accessible ramps and dugouts. Managed by Acton Recreation, the Miracle Field is home to the Miracle League of Massachusetts.

NARA hosts many community events such as a July 4th celebration, LGBTQ+ Pride Festival, multiple cultural events, and concerts, among other events. Acton Recreation offers classes and summer camp at the park. Picnic facilities are available for rent. Many individuals and companies use the facilities for corporate picnics, weddings, and other private and public events. A ten-year NARA Master Plan was written in 2016 and may be viewed here: <https://www.acton-ma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/5616/NARA-Master-Plan-2016-to-2026?bidId=>

The NARA Sports Plaza was completed in 2022. Comprised of two buildings, “North” and the “South,” this facility provides fully-accessible family restrooms for Miracle Field athletes. The sports plaza buildings were originally two single-family modular homes, donated by a local contractor and moved to the site. The Sports Plaza provides much-needed recreation and summer camp office space, storage space, restroom facilities, and a snack bar. Other updates include a paved ramp onto the field for vehicle access and concert parking; a storage building behind the amphitheater stage; LED lighting around the park and stage; and the fully-accessible Picnic Pavilion, completed in 2014. The Picnic Pavilion is a post and beam structure with a roof, dance floor, electricity, and audio-visual capability. The Picnic Pavilion has a stunning view of the pond and a rain garden filled with perennials and flowering shrubs.

JONES FIELD

Jones Field is located on Martin Street at the intersection of Stow Street, Liberty Street, Martin Street, and Maple Street. The 3.3- acre parcel consisted of a full-sized baseball field and diamond and a playground immediately adjacent to

the banks of Fort Pond Brook. The Town eliminated the baseball diamond due to lack of use. Funded by CPA and with community fundraising efforts, a new, universally- inclusive playground was installed in 2020 with a rubber surface and dedicated parking. Shade trees were planted on Arbor Day 2021. In 2023, Eagle Scouts constructed and installed a kiosk outside the playground to post local events and happenings. The same year, the Town added sand next to the playground to provide three new volleyball courts for the community.

CONCORD ROAD FIELD

Concord Road Field (a.k.a. Woodlawn Field) is located on Concord Road, between Ice House Pond and the Woodlawn Cemetery entrance. It is an irrigated, multiuse field. There is a lease agreement between the Recreation Commission and the Cemetery Commission, and the site will eventually be used for burial purposes.

HART FIELD

Located at the Conant Elementary School, Hart Field was taken off line from regular use due to its inaccessibility, small size, and lack of demand.

MACPHERSON FIELD

MacPherson Field is located at the Conant Elementary School. It consists of a baseball diamond and shaded dugouts, constructed with grant funds from the Melanoma Foundation.

GREAT HILL FIELD

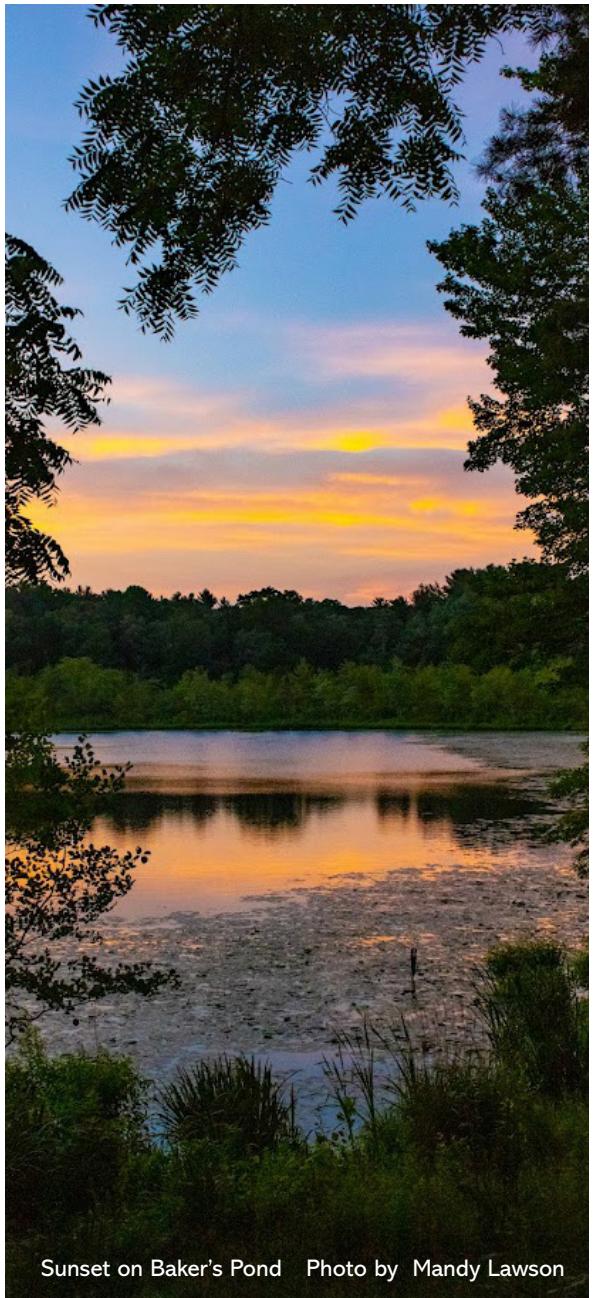
Great Hill is located on School Street behind the South Acton Fire station. It has space for two soccer fields, but they have not been used in the past ten years primarily because of the high-water table and the presence of dogs and dog waste.

LITTLE GREAT HILL FIELD

Little Great Hill is located off School Street behind the South Acton Fire Station and to the left of the Great Hill Field. It contains small soccer fields. This area has not been used in the past ten years for the same reasons as the Great Hill Field.

ELM STREET FIELD

The Elm Street playing fields are located in West Acton. The facility includes a picnic shelter, two tennis courts, four pickleball courts, and a lighted softball diamond. The lighting of the field is automatically scheduled by the use of Musco's Control-Link computer system. A new playground



Sunset on Baker's Pond Photo by Mandy Lawson

was constructed in 2015 with donated equipment from a local preschool.

VETERANS MEMORIAL FIELD (ROUTE 2A/27)

Veteran's Field is located at the intersection of Route 2A and Route 27. This field consists of two irrigated Little League diamonds, and a playground. This is a tournament-quality lighted field. Acton-Boxborough Youth Baseball (ABYB) has invested time, materials and funds in its upkeep. The turf was re-sodded in 2021. There are shaded dugouts and an Eagle Scout built wooden floors to cut down on the mud in the dugouts. A wood turtle habitat restoration project was undertaken in cooperation with Zoo New England and Natural Resources in 2020. An area behind the baseball bleachers was cleared of invasive plants and volunteers replanted the area with native plants that the turtles browse on during their summers on land. The wood turtles spend part of the year in Nashoba Brook adjacent to Veterans' Field. An Eagle Scout created an educational info panel and installed it at the habitat site in 2022.

SCHOOL STREET

The School Street fields are located at the end of School Street Extension off

Route 2 East. There is a lease agreement between the Massachusetts Department of Correction and the Conservation Commission whereby the State may farm the 31-acre Wetherbee Conservation Area crop field in exchange for the Town of Acton to use the "multiusefields." Two cricket pitches were added in 2017. Cricket has become very popular and more cricket pitches are in demand.

GOWARD PLAYGROUND

Goward playground is located behind the Acton Memorial Library at 486 Main Street in Acton Center. The land behind Memorial Library known as Goward Field was purchased from the Acton Agricultural Fair in 1961 for the site of the Highway Department. That operation was moved in 1960 and the parcel is now used as a playground. The entire playground was replaced in 2014 with funding from Annual Town Meeting and a Friends of the Playground community group fundraiser.

GARDNER PLAYGROUND

Gardner Field and playground are located on Route 111 (Massachusetts Avenue) near Kinsley Road. The field consists of a fully inclusive playground and field area. A small parking lot was installed in 2023 and there



The Pam Resor Organic Orchard ribbon cutting ceremony at Morrison Farm

is on street parking in West Acton Village. This newly installed playground (2023) was funded by CPA and fundraising efforts by the Friends of Gardner Field.

T.J. O'GRADY MEMORIAL SKATE PARK.

This facility located at 66 Hayward Road was opened in 2005 and was finally completed after several construction phases in 2021. It is free and open to the general public during daylight hours. The park is dedicated to a boy

named T.J. O'Grady who was killed while skateboarding in Boxborough in 1998. T.J.'s mother, Lori O'Grady, along with many of T.J.'s friends and families formed a T.J. O'Grady Memorial Skate Park Committee to construct a safe place for people to skateboard and inline skate. Many generous community members made the park possible with donations. A skate bowl was built in 2021, followed by a newly renovated skate plaza.

ROBBINS MILL RECREATION AREA

In 2011, the Town of Acton accepted this facility as a gift from the Robbins Mill Estates Subdivision. It consists of a playground, picnic shelter, water fountain, basketball court, small multiuse field, and 40-space parking lot provided by the developer, Pulte Homes. There is a trail kiosk adjacent to the playground with maps of the Robbins Mill conservation land trail system. This trail system is contiguous with the "North Acton Woods" trails including Nashoba Brook, Spring Hill, and Camp Acton conservation lands, over 500 acres of conservation land and 7 miles of trails.

MIRACLE FIELD

In 2009, Lauren and Andy Richardt formed the Miracle League of Boston, a local franchise of a nationwide organization, Miracle League, which sponsors baseball opportunities for children with disabilities. It was the first such franchise formed in Massachusetts. Natura Resources Director, Tom Tidman, suggested the current location adjacent to NARA and worked with local engineers, architects, and contractors, who donated valuable support and secured funding. Local philanthropist Steven Steinberg matched \$100,000 in

donations by naming it the Joseph Lalli Miracle Field in honor of his business partner. The fully accessible field was completed in 2012.

OTHER RECREATIONAL AND OPEN SPACE PUBLIC AREAS

The following section describes the miscellaneous properties belonging to the Town of Acton not fully covered in the above listings.

THE MORRISON FARM PROPERTY

Located at 116 Concord Road in East Acton, the 32-acre Morrison Farm property lies between the Woodlawn Cemetery and Ice House Pond, an impounded portion of Nashoba Brook. The southern, front portion (about 17 acres) on Concord Road is open field with a farmhouse, garage, barn, three out-buildings, and the rear, forested portion (about 15 acres). In 2005, the Massachusetts Historical Commission determined that both the Morrison farm and the Ice House Pond properties are eligible for placement on the National Register of Historic Places.

Town Meeting voted to acquire the property for \$1.3MM in 1997 for General Municipal. The Morrison Farm

Reuse Committee developed a plan to accommodate citizens' desires, taking into account the land's historic and rural value. Since purchasing the land, the former farm fields of Alfalfa have been converted to biodiverse meadows which are maintained through the eco-mowing program. These fields support a wide variety of grassland-dependent bird, mammal, and insect species. The property along Concord Road is conjoined with four other historic sites: the East Acton Village Green; the site of the former Concord Ice Company at Ice House Pond; the Captain Robbins

historic cellar hole and alarm stone site; and the Woodlawn Cemetery with historic gravestones and stone chapel.

In honor of former State Senator Pam Resor, in 2012, State Senator Jamie Edridge commemorated the the Pam Resor Organic Orchard. The orchard has a collection of ten fruit trees including apple, peach, pear, and cherry maintained by volunteers and Conservation staff and is located northeast of the farmhouse. In 2018, the Town obtained a Community Preservation Act grant to install a private well for



Accessible pathway at the Acton Arboretum Photo by Nora Masler

Morrison Farm Community Garden. A local corporation donated a small shed, installed at Morrison Farm. Its primary use is for Land Stewardship Committee tools and equipment storage as well as the water tank and power supply for the well.

Morrison farm has a popular trail system through and around the fields and meadows, along Nashoba Brook/Ice House Pond, and into the woods. Parking is located at 120 Concord Road at a paved parking lot (with pervious pavement). An ADA trail, completed in 2021, comprised of Zeager "Wood Carpet" leads over several boardwalks along the brook. A kiosk with historic information panels in the same style as the Trail Through Time stands at the trailhead. There is a picnic area with benches adjacent to the parking lot. The Acton Land Stewardship Committee has a designated steward, who monitors and cares for the trails and kiosk at Morrison Farm.

COMMUNITY GARDENS

Three areas of the town offer opportunities for residents and non-residents to rent a small garden plot each season for a nominal fee, managed by the Cemetery Department:



Owl Perch Photo by Nancy Hunton

- North Acton Community Gardens located at 845 Main Street (conservation land) – 46 plots
- Morrison Farm located at 116 Concord Road (municipal land) – 38 plots.
- Hebert Farm Community Garden located at 88 Prospect Street (Town of Acton leases small portion of private property) – 32 plots.

Please visit <https://actonma.myrec.com/info/default.aspx> for more information on Community Gardens.

THE ACTON TOWN COMMON

The Acton Town Common includes the open space and buildings that constitute the civic center of Acton. The various parcels that make up the land were purchased and assembled over many years beginning in 1735 when the property now known as Meeting House Hill at 510 Main Street (on the corner of Nagog Hill Road and Main St.) was established as the first meeting house (then a combined church and town hall), a prerequisite for Acton to split from Concord and become incorporated as a town. In 1802 the town hall property at 472 Main Street was purchased. There were numerous unsuccessful attempts



Ice House Operations on Ice House Pond in the 1950's Photo courtesy the Acton Historical Society

to make the Common a public livestock grazing area. In 1851 the Davis Monument was erected on the Common in memory of Capt. Isaac Davis, Abner Hosmer, and James Hayward, all killed at the Battle of the North Bridge on April 19, 1775, and their remains are entombed in the monument. In 1889 a small parcel was added to allow the construction of the Acton Memorial Library, which was donated by William H. Wilde as a library, Civil War monument, and meeting room for the Grand Army of the Republic. In 1901 in compliance

with the Massachusetts Shade Tree Law, the Town appointed a Tree Warden and formalized the care of the public shade trees.

In the 1960's the Acton Center School, which had occupied the site of the first meeting house, was torn down and Meeting House Hill became landscaped open space maintained by the Town of Acton and the Acton Garden Club. In 1996 Town Meeting voted to use part of Goward Field for an expansion to the Memorial Library and at

the same time approved funds to purchase the residence at 17 Woodbury Lane, the historic Asa Parlin House. Plans are ongoing to renovate the Asa Parlin House for use as public meeting space.

The Common now consists of approximately ten acres including the Monument Triangle, the Town Hall/ Memorial Library Complex, Center Fire Station, Municipal Properties office at 468 Main Street, Goward Field Playground, Meeting House Hill, and the "front lawns" of the buildings along Main Street from Newtown Road to Nagog Hill Road. This property is the true geographical, civic center of Acton. On the Common and on the surrounding structures are monuments and remembrances of the Revolution, the War of 1812, the Civil War, the Spanish American War, the First World War, the Second World War, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War.

The grounds of the Common are maintained primarily by Acton Municipal Properties and the Department of Public Works with assistance from the Acton Garden Club. Any formal activities on the Common are regulated by the Select Board.

Table 5.4 School Properties Land Use Analysis

Property ID	Location	School/Campus	Total Area	Forest/Wet/ Undeveloped	Open	Playground	Athletic Field	Parking/Roads/ Building
137	80 Taylor Rd	Conant	24.4	7.29	6.5	0.64	1.76	8.21
E2-247	7 Elm Street	Gates / Douglas	33.9	14.72	1.86	1.26	4.62	11.44
F3-74-1	312 Main st	Charter Rd. Campus	4.24	4.24	0	0	0	0
F3-15	70 Hayward Rd rear	Charter Rd. Campus	15.92	9.35	0	0	6.57	0
F3-6	88 Hayward Rd	Charter Rd. Campus	0.74	0.74	0	0	0	0
F3-16-1	68 Hayward Rd	Charter Rd. Campus	0.33	0.33	0	0	0	0
F3-31-1	23 Charter Rd rear	Charter Rd. Campus	3	0	0	0	3	0
F3-31	9 Charter Rd	Charter Rd. Campus	25.15	9.71	0.5	2.73	1.89	10.32
F2-109	441 Mass Ave	Charter Rd. Campus	7.32	0.85	0.92	0	0.73	4.82
F2-101	12 Charter Rd	Charter Rd. Campus	16.59	3.7	0.53	0	4.88	7.48
F2-49	108 Hayward Rd rear	Charter Rd. Campus	9.09	3.96	0	0	0	5.13
F2-50	92 Hayward Rd rear	Charter Rd. Campus	8.76	0	0	0	0	8.76
F3-27	23 Charter Rd	Charter Rd. Campus	9.1	0	0	0	5.12	3.98
E3-8	24 Arlington St rear	n/a	24.94	24.94	0	0	0	0
Totals			183.48	79.83	10.31	4.63	28.57	60.14

(Estimated areas in acres)

The Common is the site of events such as plant sales, book sales, reenactments, and parades. It is a passive recreational space accessible to all. In 2023 changes were made to Concord Road making each side of the fork that intersects with Main Street one way.

WEST ACTON VILLAGE OPEN SPACE

West Acton Village has several very small parcels of publicly-owned land that have

significance as historical and cultural open spaces. These are reviewed below.

EDWARDS SQUARE

Edwards Square is a small (1,000 SF +/-) green triangle at the confluence of Massachusetts Avenue, Arlington Street and Central Street. It is dedicated to the memory of Sidney Edwards who was killed by hostile fire in France during World War One while serving in the Canadian Army. This parcel serves as the terminus of the

Memorial Day parade every other year, and was the site of peace vigils during the Vietnam War. It is just a bit of grass with three Ash trees and a c. 1900 horse trough that is planted by the Acton Garden Club, but it acts as a bit of relief to the dense urban core that represents other portions of West Acton Village.

WINDSOR BUILDING

The Windsor Building is the current name for the 1904 West Acton Fire Station. That



Remains of historic features within Acton's woods
Photo by Emily McDowell

building was spun off for other uses, such as a Teen Center, a meeting area for the "Acton Minutemen," and the Food Pantry. The building is currently support space to the West Acton Citizens' Library book sales. The Municipal Properties office has been conducting historic preservation on the building using Community Preservation Funds.

WEST ACTON CITIZENS' LIBRARY

The West Acton Citizens' Library on Windsor Avenue is Acton's original and oldest library dating back to c.1884. The building dates back to c. 1840 and is the oldest town-owned building. The grounds have been landscaped in period fashion by the Municipal Properties and the Acton Garden Club. Citizens' Library has joined the Minuteman Library network enabling people to search and request books through the system to be picked up in West Acton. The library is cozy with a large selection of best seller fiction and nonfiction, holiday cookbooks and current magazines. They offer book sales, story time, and a seed library, where gardeners borrow seeds from the library and return a portion of their own seeds at the end of the growing season.

EAST ACTON VILLAGE GREEN

Located on the corner of Great Road and Concord Road is a small park, named the East Acton Village Green. There is an accessible walkway, picnic table, bench, pollinator garden, and small lawn area. The Green commemorates three Acton citizens: Micki Williams, Mary Michelman, and Carol Holley. All three women were dedicated to the community and were champions of environmental and civic causes. The tiny park was completed and commemorated in 2023. Construction was paid for by a grant from the Community Preservation Fund. The gardens are maintained by volunteers.

Prior to European contact, Massachusetts Native Americans lived in this area. Native fishing and hunting occurred around Nashoba Brook along a well-worn Native American trail that later became Great Road (Route 2A). There are six panels displayed on the East Acton Village Green site adjacent to Nashoba Brook with many color photographs depicting historical information about the Native American presence, the industrial mills, transportation, railroads, and ice production. There is a man-made



"The Regulars are Coming" from Inscription on the Captain Robbins Monument Stone, East Acton Village

impoundment underneath Concord Road, which creates Ice House Pond.

East Acton Village Green sits on the site of the East Acton railroad station, originally built in 1871 for the Framingham and Lowell ("F&L") Railroad connecting the Lowell mills to Framingham and the Boston to Albany mainline. A second set of tracks existed for the Nashua, Acton, and Boston ("NAB") line, which also passed through here. The NAB opened in 1873

and ran from Nashua, NH to Middlesex Junction near the Concord State Prison and West Concord. Acton mill owner Daniel Wetherbee was instrumental in lobbying for the railroads and saw these routes as directly opening markets for his business and for local farmers. There is another information panel dedicated to protecting Acton's streams and water supply based on Mary Michelman's Stream Teams and environmental education initiative.

The train tracks were removed and Phase 2A (5 miles connecting Acton, Carlisle and Westford) of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Acton section was completed 2018. The East Acton Village Green is a convenient pocket park for travelers along the rail trail seeking a good place for a picnic.

ICE HOUSE POND MINI-PARK, TRAIL TO MORRISON FARM, AND PARKING AREA

The Community Preservation Act funded a 27-car permeable parking lot for visitors to the Ice House Pond public fishing and boat launch area. An oak, post and beam kiosk stands at the trailhead of an ADA trail that runs along Nashoba Brook/Ice House Pond. The trail surface is made of permeable and accessible Zeager "Wood Carpet." The green has several labeled specimen trees, a picnic table and memorial bench. The parking lot is popular for Bruce Freeman Rail Trail visitors. There are 4 information panels in the kiosk using the Trail Through Time style and formatting, informing readers about the history of Morrison Farm and the ice business, as well as a map of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail.

CAPTAIN JOSEPH ROBBINS' HOUSE SITE AND ALARM STONE

Located at 112 Concord Road (Town Parcel ID G4-9) is the Captain Robbins' Cellar

Hole. The house that once stood on the existing granite block foundation burned down around 1830. Robbins commanded the East Acton Militia and on the morning of April 19, 1775, marched with Captain Isaac Davis of the Acton Minutemen to battle the British Regulars in the famous battles in Concord and Lexington at the start of the American Revolution. On April 19, 1895 the "Alarm Stone" was installed in front of the cellar hole. The area was cleared and landscaped with granite steps. An educational information panel telling the story of this historic site was installed in 2022.



Acton-Boxborough Regional High School seniors volunteer to remove invasive species from Town pollinator gardens for the Senior Community Service Day

SCHOOL DEPARTMENT FIELDS AND PLAYGROUNDS

The Acton-Boxborough Regional School District owns approximately 66.6 acres of land, and the Acton School District controls 121.77 acres of land which is under town ownership. Although there are buildings on most of this acreage, the school campuses and grounds provide valuable recreation space. In addition, almost 80 acres are forest, wetland or undeveloped open space. In 2014 the Towns of Acton and Boxborough at their respective annual town meetings voted to officially amend their Agreement for a Regional School District to establish a

pre-school through grade 12 regional school district and regional school committee. The new agreement allows pupils to attend an elementary school in either Acton or Boxborough regardless of which town they reside in.

In 2023 a new triple school building named the Boardwalk Campus School was completed. The old CT Douglas and Paul P. Gates School buildings, as well as their playgrounds and ball fields on Elm and Spruce Streets (respectively), were demolished in phases. The new triple school building houses the Carol Heubner Early Childhood Program, Douglas and Gates Elementary Schools, each on their own separate floor. The former Douglas and Gates campuses are connected by an ADA, covered boardwalk over Fort Pond Brook. There are newly constructed playgrounds, ball courts, playing fields, and parking areas within the refurbished, 31-acre campus.

In addition to those parcels directly associated with the various school campuses, the District owns a separate, undeveloped 25-acre parcel of particular interest as a potential conservation parcel. This parcel is located at 24 Arlington Street

and was acquired in 1962 as a potential school site. However, the soils were subsequently determined to be unsuitable for construction. In addition, the parcel contains two centrally-located vernal pools protected under the local and state wetland regulations.

SCHOOL PLAYGROUNDS AND PLAYING FIELDS

There are a number of playgrounds and playing fields located on the various school campuses in town. These include the following:

- Playgrounds
- Luther Conant School, 80 Taylor Road
- The Boardwalk School (Gates School's former campus), 75 Spruce Street
- The Boardwalk School, (Douglas School's former Campus) 21 Elm Street
- Merriam School, 11 Charter Road
- McCarthy-Towne School, 11 Charter Road Playing Fields
- R.J. Grey Junior High School, 16 Charter Road

Acton-Boxboro Regional High School, 36 Charter Road

INTERMUNICIPAL AGREEMENTS

- Intermunicipal Agreements between the Town of Acton and the Acton-Boxborough Regional School District have created expanded recreational opportunities at school facilities for all of the Acton community, beyond their routine school usage. These agreements were forged as a key piece of several funding initiatives for active recreation projects through the Community

Preservation Act (CPA). To date, the projects funded via this method include:

- 2005 High School Synthetic Turf Football Field—Leary Field, ABRHS
- 2006 Douglas School Basketball Courts—Douglas School
- 2007 High School Baseball and Tennis Court Sports Lighting, ABRHS



Members of the community, Friends of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail, and Town staff welcome visitors to the Minuteman Bike Share Program



Wintergreen Photo by Emily McDowell

- 2012 (Proposed) Lower Fields Project (sports lighting, parking, skating bowl), ABRHS and T.J. O'Grady Skate Park

Water-based recreation

This section provides a review of the water-based recreation areas in Acton.

NARA

NARA Beach provides the only public swimming area in town and serves over 600 seasonal members, in addition to selling over 4,500 daily passes each season. Fishing and boating are enjoyed by patrons.

GREAT HILL RECREATION AREA SKATING POND

The pond is a $\frac{3}{4}$ -acre impoundment created by excavating an old, silted-up farm pond that was reverting into a red maple swamp. Completed in 1986, the pond is used for skating, fishing and wildlife viewing.

MILL POND RECREATION AREA

This half-acre site is located between Main Street and the Fort Pond Brook Mill Pond, above the 1848 stone dam near the site of Faulkner Mills. The site has a half-acre of grass, and is open to the water for fishing and related activities. This area's use is somewhat limited by lack of on-site parking. The ARRT near this site improved access. This location also houses a pumping

facility for Acton's wastewater treatment system.

ROBBINS MILL POND

This is a man-made impoundment in the Nashoba Brook Conservation Area. The pond, approximately three acres in size, is the site of mill foundations and an earth fill dam that dates back to pre-Colonial times. In 1990, the town, using funds for materials donated by the Acton Conservation Trust, rebuilt the dam extensively. The restored impoundment is suitable for fishing, canoeing and wildlife study. Additional reconstruction was undertaken in 1995, utilizing an eight-man crew from the Northeastern Correctional Facility in Concord. The State Office of Dam Safety and the Acton DPW monitor the safety of the Town-owned dam.

GRASSY POND

The boardwalks and trails leading to Grassy Pond, in the Grassy Pond Conservation Area, provide access into the pond for fishing, canoeing and wildlife study. This large pond covers about 20 acres.

ARBORETUM POND

A 4,000-square-foot pond was excavated at the Arboretum in 1991. This small pond

provides an open water habitat for birds and other wildlife that reside in, or migrate through, the Arboretum.

ARBORETUM BOG BOARDWALK

There is a 100-yard-long boardwalk across the quaking bog located at the Arboretum. This boardwalk, which includes an observation bench, allows close study of bog plants and related wildlife. Many elementary classes study the bog and its inhabitants each year during outings hosted by the Conservation Division.

WILL'S HOLE BOG BOARDWALK

The boardwalk into Will's Hole, a kettle-hole pond and associated quaking bog, provides safe access to the pond for wildlife and plant observation.

ICE HOUSE POND

This is a four-acre impoundment of Nashoba Brook, located on town-owned land at the intersection of Concord Road and Great Road. Since management activities (including yearly draining) related to ice harvesting stopped in the 1950s, the pond was very rapidly filling with floating and emergent vegetation that cut into the recreational potential of the site. In 1995 the pond was de-watered and

dredged to restore its value as a boating and fishing area. Because of the proximity of the parking area to the water's edge, this site has the potential for handicapped access for water recreation. Ongoing invasive plant removal is necessary to control eutrophication and maintain the pond an open water resource.

SANDY POND

In 1988 a contractor dredged a two-acre pond located near Sandy Drive, off of School Street, that is located on town conservation land. This impoundment is accessible to the public for fishing and nature study.

53 RIVER STREET HISTORIC MILL PARK

Town Meeting voters approved the Town to purchase the 7.26-acre industrial property in 2017 using free cash with an eye to ecological restoration of riparian habitat and recreation. Local, State and Federal permits were acquired to begin construction in 2023 to remove the unsafe dam across Fort Pond Brook and the old machine shop. A historic, neighborhood park with gardens, trails, and access for fishing and wildlife viewing is expected to be complete for public use in the near future.

Bike trails

Two paved bike trails built on former rail road lines run through portions of the town, the Assabet River Rail Trail, passing through South Acton, and the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail, passing through North Acton. Both rail trails are very popular with joggers, walkers, bicyclists, roller bladers, skaters, and strollers. The rail trails are ADA-accessible. The portions that are within Town of Acton borders are owned and maintained by the Acton Department of Public Works.

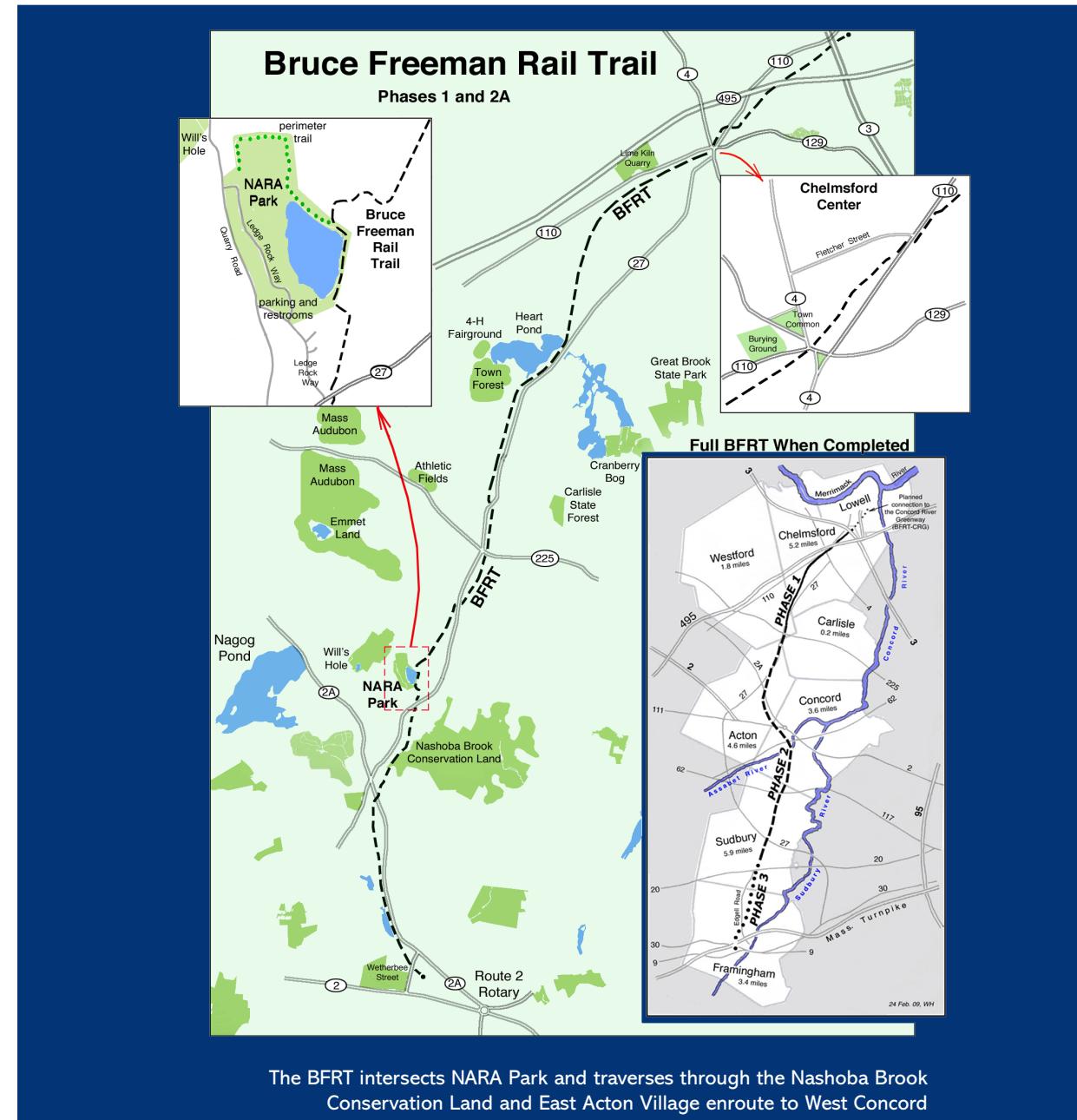
ASSABET RIVER RAIL TRAIL (ARRT)

The ARRT is a 12.5 mile, paved, multi-use recreational rail trail that passes through the communities of Marlborough, Hudson, Stow, Maynard and Acton. The trail is built along the abandoned rail bed of the former Marlborough Branch of the Fitchburg Railroad, which was active from 1850 until 1979. The right-of-way parallels the Assabet River in the trail's midsection. At the north end it veers to the South Acton MBTA train station. As of June 2020, the southwest 5.1-mile portion of the trail from Marlborough to Hudson and the northeast 3.4-mile portion running from the South Acton MBTA station to the Maynard-Stow border are complete.

Approximately 1.1 miles of the trail runs through Acton. The trail's alignment follows the railroad right-of-way (ROW) from the Maynard-Acton town line on Route-27. It runs parallel to the Stonefield Farm crop fields. There is a small parking area at the end of Sylvia Street. After it crosses Mill Pond on an existing 37-foot-long timber trestle bridge, the trail reaches the edge of the adjacent Caouette-Simeone Conservation Land farm fields. The trail exits out the property's access to Maple Street, where there is on-street parking and an information kiosk. This is the limit of the ARRT in South Acton Village.

Trail users are able use a crosswalk across Maple Street to reach the south platform of the Acton MBTA station, where bike racks are located. The trail head is less than a half mile from Great Hill Recreation Area and the Acton Discovery Museum and just over a mile from Acton-Boxborough school campus at Kelley's Corner. Historic buildings are close by in South Acton Village – Exchange Hall, Jones Tavern and Faulkner Homestead.

The southernmost portion of the ARRT in Acton is flanked on each side by a red



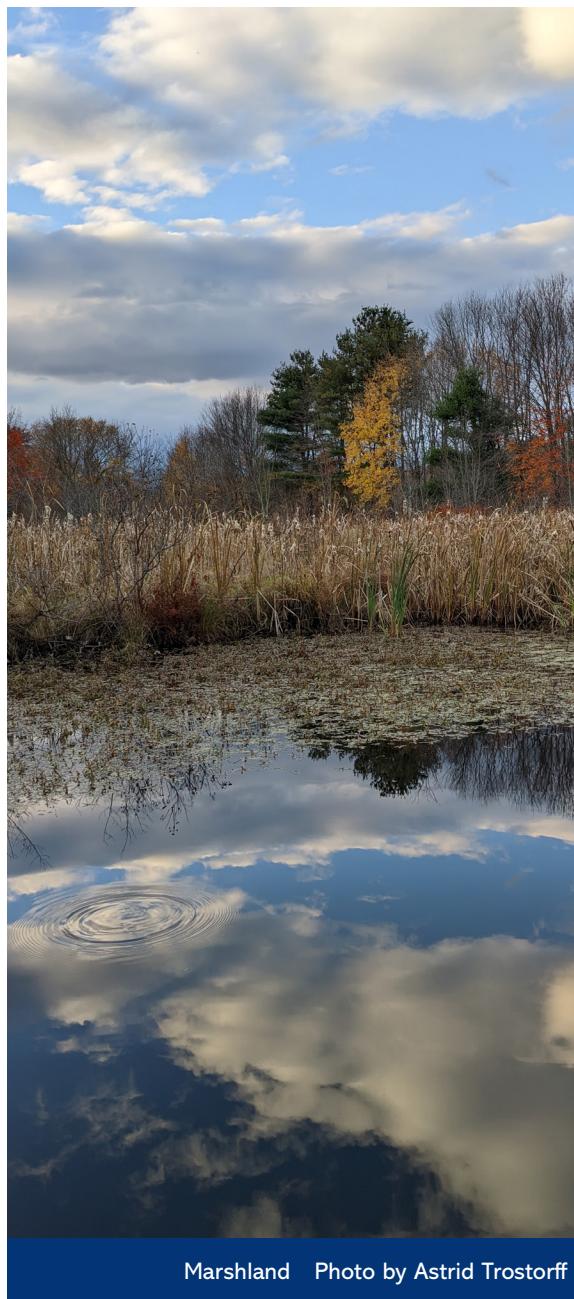
maple swamp. These wooded wetlands give rise to a brook that flows under the trail and under Route 27, eventually joining Pratt's Brook. This section of the ARRT is within a Groundwater Protection District Zone 3, and the 100-year flood plain.

The trail runs through wetlands once again as it nears Mill Pond, which was created by damming Fort Pond Brook. The Mill Pond and its surroundings are strikingly beautiful. The trestle crossing the pond offers a prime viewpoint. Rail trail users may observe waterfowl including great blue heron, wood duck, osprey and mallards.

BRUCE FREEMAN RAIL TRAIL (BFRT)

The Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (BFRT), a linear path, provides a 4.9-mile accessible pedestrian and bicycle route within Acton, connects to an additional 20 miles of the trail to the north (Carlisle, Westford, Chelmsford, and Lowell) and the south (Concord, Sudbury, and Framingham).

- The BFRT is a 25-mile multi-modal trail running from Lowell to Sudbury via the dormant Penn Central Railroad (a/k/a New Haven Railroad Framingham & Lowell line) right-of-way now owned by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts



(just south of Crosspoint Towers, Lowell to ~Route 20 in Sudbury) and by the transportation firm CSX (~Route 20, Sudbury to ~Route 30, Framingham). Trail development was segmented into the following phases:

- Phase 2B is 0.8 miles continuing in Acton to the Concord Border at Route 2, then crossing Route 2 via a bridge terminating at Commonwealth Avenue in Concord (Approximately 0.3 miles of Phase 2B are in Acton).
- Phase 2C is 3.0 miles and continues on the ROW to the Concord border.
- Phase 2D continues 4.6 miles on the ROW to approximately Route 20 in Sudbury. As of January 2024, this segment was still under construction, nearing completion.
- Phase 3 continues 4.7 miles on the ROW to approximately Route 30 in Framingham.
- There will be two rail trails in Sudbury: The Bruce Freeman Rail Trail and the Mass Central Rail Trail. They will intersect at the "diamond" just north of Route 20 near Union Ave.
- Sudbury's segment of the Mass Central Rail Trail features 4.6 miles of paved path

Table 5.5 Lands Owned by the Acton Water District

PLATE	PARCEL	LOCATION	Deed (Book/Page)	ACQUISITION DATE	ACRES
B-5	035-01	924R Main Street	18548/226	1987	2.1
B-6	1	960-962R Main Street	19375/003	1988	33.33
B-6	001-01	960-962 Main Street	19375/003	1988	24.37
B-6	2-3	962 Main Street	51709/210	2008	0.2
B-6	11	954-956 Main Street	19375/003	1988	0.43
B-6	012-01	941-959 Main Street	LC997/172	1985	10.92
B-6	13	942 Main Street	01067/015	1991	4.28
C-3	8	283-295 Nagog Hill Rd.	12582/076	1974	26.5
D-4	30	629-639 Main Street	14500/437	1981	1.48
D-4	34	619-627 Main Street	14500/437	1981	2.98
D-5	13	013 Wyndcliff Drive	14044/050	1980	7.29
E-1	2	693-699 Mass Ave.	LC652/167	1961	10.58
E-1	3	677-683 Mass Ave.	LC654/074	1961	10.34
E-1	4	687-689 Mass Ave.	unknown	unknown	5
E-4	4	599-615 Main Street	8681/282	1956	
E-4	4	599-615 Main Street	08737/531	1956	
E-4	4	599-615 Main Street	8619/590	1955	13.67
E-4	4	599-615 Main Street	8681/280	1956	
E-4	11	585 Main Street	71989/125	2018	11.27
E-4	47	549 Main Street	82287/346	2023	56.85
E-4	47-1	Behind Post Office Square	25911/36	1995	24.25
F-1	1	693 Mass Ave.	LC652/167	1961	0.5
F-1	4	680-700 Mass Ave.	12621/663	1974	40.44
F-1	7	001 Birch Ridge Rd.	12621/663	1974	0.76
F-1	11	005 Birch Ridge Rd.	12621/663	1974	0.46
F-1	19	007 Birch Ridge Rd.	12621/663	1974	0.47
F-1	27	009 Birch Ridge Rd.	12621/663	1974	0.53
F-1	39	011 Birch Ridge Rd.	12621/663	1974	0.48

PLATE	PARCEL	LOCATION	Deed (Book/Page)	ACQUISITION DATE	ACRES
F-2	110	494 Mass Ave	20848/244	1990	2.75
F-2	121	500R Mass Ave.	19703/504	1989	5.29
F-2B	31	504 Mass Ave.	15915/301	1984	5.5
F-2B	031-10	514 Mass Ave.	15915/301	1984	1.45
G-1	102	009R Ticonderoga	13226/656	1977	11.39
G-1	141	051R Ethan Allen	10384/195	1963	2.04
G-1	322	37 Squirrel Hill Rd.	59038/398	2012	0.08
G-2	139	211 Main Street	3776/120	1913	4.9
H-4	76	315 School Street	11816/511	1970	29.12
H-4	113	028 Lawsbrook Rd.	11828/413	1970	13.9
H-4	114	064R Lawsbrook Rd.	11828/413	1970	9.4
H-4	119	056R Lawsbrook Rd.	11803/266	1970	13.3
H-4	126	064 Lawsbrook Rd.	11828/413	1970	5.3
H-4	130	044 Lawsbrook Rd.	11828/413	1970	5.3
H-4	134	052R Lawsbrook Rd.	LC791/049	1970	0.85
H-4	135	052R Lawsbrook Rd.	11824/156	1970	1.51
H-4	139-01	060R Lawsbrook Rd.	11280/135	1967	0.96
I-3	135-01	39-41R Independence	19427/393	1988	0.45
I-3	136-01	104-106R Powder Mill Rd.	18980/054	1988	4.78
I-3	145	25-27R Independence Rd.	19427/393	1988	1.83
I-3	145-1	25-27R Independence Rd.	19427/393	1988	0.45
J-3	21	082R Powder Mill Rd.	LC831/084	1973	9.6
J-3	21-3	30 Knox Trail Behind	1015/189	2008	0.81
J-3	34	284-290 High Street	11919/434	1970	56
J-3	34-5	16 Knox Trail	62821/180	2013	4.1
		Total Acres			480.54

Table 5.6 Lands Owned by the Commonwealth Of Massachusetts

PLATE	PARCEL	LOCATION	Deed (Book/Page)	ACQUISITION DATE	ACRES
C-5	89	066-070 Harris Street	8181/354	1953	1.4
C-5	090-02	066R Harris Street	10928/156	1965	0.5
E-3	81	60R Washington Drive	7866/367	1952	3.98
D-4	23	592 Main St. Rear		1993	8
D-4	24	592 Main St. Rear		1993	2
E-4	3-1	600 Main St.		1992	25
F-3	90	349R Main Street	unknown	unknown	2.5
G-3	12	332-338 Mass Ave.	12449/652	1973	1
G-4	176	99 Mass Ave.	11703/603	1969	2.22
G-4	184	60 Hosmer Street	12717/213	1974	0.92
G-4	185	135-139 Mass Ave.	12731/213	1974	0.78
G-4	187	105-125 Mass Ave.	unknown	unknown	4
G-4	197	70-88 Hosmer Street	7751/053	1951	13
G-4	198	92-126 Mass Ave.	unknown	unknown	21
G-4	209	58-76 Wetherbee Street	unknown	unknown	16
G-5	95	66R Wetherbee Street	unknown	unknown	4.6
G-5	96	25 Keefe Road Behind	unknown	unknown	1.1
H-3	38-1	5 River St. and rear	unknown	unknown	3
H-4	5	320-346 School Street	unknown	unknown	42
H-4	6	323-347 School Street	unknown	unknown	50
					Total 203

from the Sudbury/Hudson town line to the Sudbury Substation.

Both the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail and the Mass Central Rail Trail estimated completion dates are mid-2024. For up to date information visit <https://brucefreemanrailtrail.org/>

Approximately 4.9 miles of the BFRT is located in Acton. The trail surface is bituminous concrete (blacktop) and for the vast majority is 12 feet wide with 2 feet shoulders. In addition, much of the BFRT in Acton is bordered by a parallel 6 feet wide soft surface path that may be preferred by runners, and cross-country skiers. Access

is restricted to pedestrians, and non-motorized vehicles with the exception of wheelchairs and emergency vehicles.

Starting in the north at the Carlisle border just to the east of Main Street (Route 27) the trail travels south through woods.

Just south of the Carlisle border is a large parking lot at 1013 Main Street. This section first parallels and then crosses Main Street at grade about 0.4 miles south of the Carlisle border.

West of Main Street the trail follows a causeway over wetlands of Butter Brook, crossing the Nashoba Sportsman's Club driveway, and continues behind the Robbins Brook development. It deviates off the ROW to the west of Rex Lumber, and then hugging the Rex Lumber property it enters NARA. Just south of NARA it again crosses Main Street at grade. This section is approximately 1.3 miles.

After crossing Main Street, the trail enters the Nashoba Brook Conservation Area. It parallels Nashoba Brook through woods and then over a causeway until crossing Great Road (Route 2A) via a bridge after approximately 1.1 miles. This section



The Bruce Freeman Rail Trail Photo by Nora Masler

of the trail passes close to the historic Pencil Factory site and Nashoba Brook Conservation Area.

The BFRT continues south on the west side of Great Road and travels behind Gould's Plaza until reaching Brook Street for an at-grade crossing after approximately 0.3 miles. The Trail can be accessed from Brook Street and from behind Gould's Plaza. The Town acquired an easement for BFRT parking.

South of Brook Street the trail parallels Great Road for 1.1 miles until reaching Concord Road. This section crosses Nashoba Brook twice as well as the Isaac Davis Trail (for which there is partial pedestrian access only twice yearly: Patriots Day and July 4th). Much of the trail abuts commercial properties along Great Road. Access to the eastern section of Great Road at the Brookside Shops stop light was provided by an easement at Powers Gallery at 144 Great Road. Just to the south of 144

Great Road access to the Morrison Land is possible via an old cart path. There is a path perpendicular to the BFRT which leads to a causeway. A small bridge will be needed to cross Nashoba Brook and enter the Morrison property. Just before reaching Concord Road the trail enters the East Acton Village Green area with access to the Ice House Pond portion of Nashoba Brook.

After crossing Concord Road, the trail continues southeast behind Bursaw's Oil and first parallels and then crosses Nashoba Brook again until reaching Wetherbee Street for an at-grade crossing after 0.3 miles.

After crossing Wetherbee Street, the trail passes behind Teamworks. The final portion of the trail in Acton follows the ROW southeast 0.3 miles until reaching the Concord Border with a bridge crossing of Route 2 opened in the summer of 2023.

Updated information can be found at the Friends of the Bruce Freeman Trail site www.brucefreemanrailtrail.org

Regional hiking trails

BAY CIRCUIT TRAIL

The Bay Circuit Trail (BCT) is a two-hundred-mile-long corridor of connected publicly accessible open spaces running between the north shore and the south shore of Massachusetts Bay and touching fifty Massachusetts towns. The concept behind this "Outer Emerald Necklace" dates back to 1929.

5

To Acton has been a part of the Bay Circuit Trail for over thirty years, and both the Conservation Commission and the Board of Selectmen have dedicated our portion of the trail corridor that runs through the Nashoba Brook, Spring Hill, Camp Acton and Stoneymeade conservation areas. The trail dedication was made possible by the purchase, in 1995, of Camp Acton. The Conservation Division Staff serves as the local liaison of the Bay Circuit Alliance. Acton's LSC is maintaining the trail and signs within Acton's boundaries.

Water district lands

The Acton Water District, a municipal entity separate from the Town of Acton, owns just over 480 acres of land in town. Many of these parcels were purchased to

protect the District's existing groundwater wells, which are used to supply about 95 percent of the community with public water. Other parcels were purchased to protect water resources, including potential future well sites, to support District operations, or for the District's four storage tanks. While they do hold value for wildlife and open space preservation, recreational use of these lands is not generally permitted except for 549 Main Street.

While most potential shallow aquifer well sites have been identified, the District continues to actively evaluate land purchase opportunities to expand watershed protections. These lands do not generate tax revenue but are protected from most development that is not related to the operation of the public water system.

Cemetery lands

There are three cemeteries in Acton. Woodlawn, located on Concord Road in Acton Center, was established in 1738, and comprises 80 acres, of which 31 are developed. Located on Central Street in West Acton, the Town established Mount Hope in 1848, with 94 acres, eleven of which are developed. Forest Cemetery, a half-acre in size, located on Carlisle Road in North

Acton, was established in 1750. It is now fully developed and retired.

These three municipal cemeteries have value as open space, both in their undeveloped and developed conditions. The undeveloped land provides wildlife habitat and is useful for the type of passive recreation commonly occurring on conservation lands. The developed areas of the cemeteries provide beautifully-landscaped grounds and wide, paved roadways that are often used for walking and bird watching. Finally, the cemeteries provide an aesthetically-pleasing, peaceful setting for quiet contemplation and study of the social and cultural history of the town.

The Recreation Department has an agreement with the Cemetery Department to use a portion of Woodlawn as a soccer field.

At the present rate of use, the two active cemeteries will provide sufficient room for at least 100 years. Even when fully developed, some areas will be left untouched, such as wetlands and flood plains that have value as conservation land.

The value of the developed cemeteries will only increase in the years to come.

Acton's Land Stewardship Committee, with support from the Cemetery Commission, has improved undeveloped land behind Mount Hope Cemetery in West Acton. In 2023, the Conservation Division, Land Stewards, and volunteers rebuilt a 210-foot long footbridge. It spans Heath Hen Meadow Brook, linking the Heath Hen Meadow Conservation Land to the Mount Hope property. This provides a connection between West Acton and the Acton-Stow border.

State owned lands

The State owns 202 acres of land in Acton, including 159 acres identified as land with high conservation and/or recreation value. The State-owned land falls into four major categories of open space: land that is part of the Department of Corrections Farm (about 100 acres containing active farm fields); a 16-acre parcel containing the State Police horse barn and fields; parcels that were taken when Route 2 was built but that lie outside of the actual right-of-way; and the Whittier land (25 acres), under the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife.



Water on Moss Photo by Nick Terry

The Corrections Department land is significant to the Town because the open fields abutting Route 2 add aesthetic value to Acton's rural image. If the State were to dispose of these lands, the Town would consider them as a high-priority purchase, as it did when given the opportunity to buy the Route 2 Conservation Area (now the Wetherbee Conservation Area section 5.C.2.18) from the State in the early eighties.

On August 14, 2008 the Massachusetts legislature authorized Chapter 313 of the Acts of 2008 "An Act Designating Certain Land in the Towns of Acton and Concord for Conservation, Agricultural, Open Space, and Recreational Purposes." Chapter 313 essentially designated approximately 106 acres of DOC land in Acton, and a similar area of land in Concord, to be "held solely for the purpose of open space protection,

management and conservation, agriculture, forests, and limited public access for passive and specified active recreation and enjoyment."

Currently, the town of Acton has a ten-year lease agreement with the Commonwealth to use 14 acres of open space that runs along Route 2 and School Street. This agreement has effectively given the Commonwealth leasing rights to farm a portion of the Wetherbee parcel in return for the use of the 25 acres of School Street property for recreation playing fields. The current negotiations have added an additional requirement for the Town to institute a forest management program to protect the forested component of the remaining Wetherbee property, not in agricultural use.

Lands owned by the town of Concord

The Town of Concord owns 58 acres in Acton. This land abuts Nagog Pond, one of Concord's Acton's and Littleton's principal water supplies. This land provides a significant wildlife corridor, greatly contributes to the rural character of that part of Town, and has both active and passive recreation potential. If the Town of Concord should ever consider public walking trails on this land, Acton should help develop an inter-town trail system.

Land owned by Local Land Trusts

In 2008, the local land trust, Acton Conservation Trust, acquired the 16-acre Whitcomb land located at 182 Willow Street. The land provides protection of a key corridor to Heath Hen Meadow Brook, a well-known biodiverse wetland for local native species.



Hawk by Acton MBTA Station Photo by Janet Munson

Table 5.7 Conservation Land Owned by Local Land Trusts

FY	Common Title or Reference	Owner	ACRES	PROTECTION	BOOK	PAGE	GIS PARCEL ID	LOCATION	COMMENTS
2006	Whitcomb Land	Acton Conservation Trust Inc.	16	P	46962	100	G1-319	182 Willow St	Provides protection of key connection of Heath Hen Meadow brook

D. CONSERVATION RESTRICTIONS ON LANDS WITHIN THE TOWN OF ACTON

FY	Common Title Or Reference	Grantor/Owner	Grantee	Acres	Protection	Received	Approved	Book	Page	Gis Id	Location	Comments
1979	Breezy Point/ Buxton	Harold & Devena Buxton	Town of Acton	13.9	P	12/12/78	12/27/78	13615	339	C4-15 & C4-17	484-486 Great Road	Adjacent to Water Dept. land; CR extened in 2007 to ensure perpetuity
1990	Audubon Hill	R.Smith Associates, Inc.	Restricted	49.77	P	10/2/89	2/2/90	20065	415	H2A-51-101; H3B-19-10	10 Brewster Lane	Conservation Commission was granted an easement for inspection purposes, and for public access from High St., over Audubon Drive and Brewster Lane to Pratt's Brook Conservation land.
1998	Haartz Property	The Haartz Corp.	Town of Acton	14.5	P	10/15/96	9/9/97	27757	537	E3-101	Charter Road & 87 Hayward Rd	Industrial District Buffer
2002	James & Mary Donald	Gifted to Town: 2001	SVT/ACT	11.2	P	3/15/00	12/13/01	11456	403	F3-78-1	33 Minot Ave	Land donated by Mary and James Donald with a public easement across their private land. Primarily swampland, mixed forest with trail.
2005	Canoe Landing	Leo F. Bertolami	Conserv-a-tion Commis-sion	4.56	P	4/15/04	10/27/04	16728	584	J3-49 & J3-59-6	67 Powder Mill Rd and 50 - 56 Powder Mill Rd.	Canoe access for public/CR requ. As part of DEP 85-707 wetlands permit; 3.59 and .97 acres
2005	Wagner Land/ Lawsbrook	Paul & Alan Wagner, Lexington Sand & Gravel	Acton Water Supply	0.13	P	7/21/04	5/25/05	11822	511	H4-126-1	66 Lawsbrook Rd., Acton	Groundwater protection/ 3.8 acre portion at 49B Lawsbrook Rd., belongs to Concord. ACT is back up holder
2006	Haartz Property	The Haartz Corp.	Town of Acton	6.3	P	3/27/06	5/3/06	50696	555	E3-85 & F3-1	Charter Road & 87 Hayward Rd	Industrial District Buffer; added 6.3 acres to restricted area
2010	Woodlands at Laurel Hills	Aria @ Laurel Hills	Town of Acton	6.67	P	10/5/06	8/27/10	55334	311	B5-11 & B5-7	50 Nagog Park Beside and Avalon Drive	Acton/Westford Border

FY	Common Title Or Reference	Grantor/Owner	Grantee	Acres	Protection	Received	Approved	Book	Page	Gis Id	Location	Comments
2007	Kingman Land	William & Nancy Kingman	Acton Cons. Trust	6.41	P	10/30/06	12/7/06	48652	563	F5-15-2 & F5-15-1	63 & 67 Esterbrook Road	Two parcels on either side of 65 Esterbrook Rd. Property contains a tributary to Nashoba Brook.
2008	Valentine Land	John and Elizabeth Valentine	Carlisle Cons. Foundation	14.19	P	10/29/08	12/29/08	22622	245	B6-20	West St., Acton St.; Acton/Carlisle border	Ground water protection for Acton Water supply. Part of 119 acres of protected land granted to the Town of Carlisle
2010	W.R.Grace	W. R. Grace & Co. - Conn	Town of Acton	15.3	P	6/21/10	8/15/19	73560	127	I4-2	50 Independence Road	Preserving natural, scenic value, and serve as a buffer for any future development of Grantor's remaining land.
2010	Groener Land	Town of Acton	Acton Cons. Trust	12.5	P	5/18/07	1/10/14	50251	161	D4-37-6	193 Nagog Hill Road	Deeded to town 10/19/2007; CR approved January, 2014
2011	Gaebel/ Piper Road	Town of Acton	Acton Cons. Trust	5.24	P	4/13/11	4/20/12	63269	471	H3A-4	6 Piper Road Rear	Deeded to town 2/20/2009
2011	90 Martin Street	Ross Israel	Conservation Commission	3.68	P	1/19/12	1/20/12	58324	328	H2-95	90 Martin Street	Privately held property adjacent to the CR land, partially farmed.
2011	Caoette/ Simeone Land	Town of Acton	ACT/SVT	8.5	P	7/25/11	6/10/13	56002	381	H2A-62	2 Stow Street, Acton, MA	Caouette/Simeone Irrevocable Trust
2012	2 Skyline Dr	Pulte Homes (residence at Quail Ridge)	Town of Acton	92.14	P	9/17/15	4/18/16	67065	439	D4-9	354B Great Road	Premise is currently an active golf course with the Conservation Restriction stating that when the golf course ceases, the property will be returned to a natural state

FY	Common Title Or Reference	Grantor/Owner	Grantee	Acres	Protection	Received	Approved	Book	Page	Gis Id	Location	Comments
2012	6 Piper Road	Town of Acton	Acton Cons. Trust	0.2	P	3/12/12	4/20/12	58934	314	H3A-4-1	6 Piper Road	Small portion of lot forming connection between Piper Road easement and Great Hill Conservation Land
2013	Anderson Land	Town of Acton	Acton Cons. Trust	32.77	P	7/29/13				D3-10	180 Newtown Road	Town purchased about half of 39 acre parcel abutting Bullette Conservation Land using CPC funds
2014	Wright Hill	Town of Acton	Acton Cons. Trust	14.5	P	11/24/14	11/16/16	1463	105	F2-A-1-2	330 Central Street	CR approved by EOEEA 1/2017
2016	176 Central St	Town of Acton	Acton Cons. Trust	11.94	P	3/12/18	4/6/18	70840	90	G2-200	176 Central Street	Recorded 4/6/2018
2017	Grassy Pond West	Town of Acton	Acton Cons. Trust	10.86	P	12/22/17	10/19/18	71765	260	D3-11-1, D3-11-2	159 & 165 Newtown Rd, f/k/a 161 Newtown	Deeds Book 70432, Page 393
2020	Piper Lane	Town of Acton	Acton Cons. Trust	5.7	P	11/2/20				H3-A-3	4 Piper Ln Rear	Submitted to EOEEA for review
2021	Stonefield Farm	Boston Area Gleaners	SVT/ToA	51.5	P	7/30/21	7/22/21	78366	376	H2-101	91 Martin Street	Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR). Non-profit to support food insecurity
2023	549 Main Street	AWD	ConCom/ SVT	56.85	P	12/7/23	7/18/24	83021	237	E4-47	549 Main Street	Purchased by the AWD in 2023 - Town of Acton contributed \$1,000,000 for CR on property
Total Acres				449.31								

E. CONSERVATION LAND OWNED BY THE TOWN OF ACTON

The table below states for each parcel: Name, Total Acres; Usage, Facilities; Parcel ID; Address; Zoning; Acquisition Date; Level of Protection; Funding Source and additional comments. Facilities are coded: H = Handicap Accessible; K = Information Kiosks; P = Parking; T = Trails are blazed.

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Managed Conservation Areas										Component Parcels							
	Current use	Public Access	Facilities	Recreation Potential	GIS ID	Address	Parcel Acres	Zone	Acq. Date	Deed Book	Deed Page	Source of Funding	Level of land protection	Managing Agency	Comment	Condition	
Total Conservation Managed Areas, Acres: 1727.45w			T=Trails P=Parking K=Kiosks A: Accessible	B=Biking C=Camping E=Education F=Fishing G=Gardening H=Horseback W=Walking								Gift to town; Gift w/CR; Town purchase; CPA funds; Self-help funds; Em. Domain	0. None 1. By Use 2. Zoning 3. Article 97 4. CPA 5. CR	Municipal ConsCom Land Trust: ACT SVT		N/A=Not Applicable F=Fair G=Good E=Excellent	
Acton Arboretum	Passive		T, P, K, A	E, W,G											Pedestrian access from Town Center	E	
Total Acres: 65.86					F3-78-1	33 Minot Ave	11.20	R-2	6/5/2002	35623	499	GIFT/CR	5	ConCom/ SVT and ACT	Donald Land; CR held by SVT and ACT		
			Main Entry		F3A-76	2 Taylor Rd	14.81	ARC	12/27/1977	13361	526	SH 31	3	ConCom	Bridges Land; taken for conservation purposes - \$60K		
			Corridor		F4-28	47 Wood Ln	30.00	ARC	11/1/1976	13085	558	SH 30	3	ConCom	Easement between 41 & 49 Wood Ln		
					F4-41-1	81 Wood Ln	1.03	R-2	9/13/2013	62628	89	Town	3	ConCom	Purchased by Town from ACT		
			Wood Lane Entry		F4-44	17 Minot Av	6.42	ARC	12/16/1976	13112	231	SH 30	3	ConCom	Bean Land; held by ConCom		
			Corridor/ Access from Concord Rd.		F4-45	86 Wood Ln	2.01	ARC	9/28/1976	13065	198	GIFT	3	ConCom	Wheeler Land, deeded to ConCom		
Anderson Conservation Land	Passive		T, P, K	W, H, B											Adjacent to Bulette Conservation Land/ Town Forest	G	
Total Acres: 32.78		Main Entry			D3-10-1	13 Arlington St	20.69	R108	11/1/2013	62873	193	CPA	5	ConCom/ ACT and SVT	Purchased in 2013, CR held by SVT and ACT		
		Corridor			D3-10	180 Newtown Rd	12.09	R108	9/2/2022	80666	454	GIFT	5	ConCom/ ACT and SVT	Gifted to the Town by the developer of the PCRC at Genevieve Lane (formerly 180 Newtown Rd).		

Managed Conservation Areas					Component Parcels											
	Current use	Public Access	Facilities	Recreation Potential	GIS ID	Address	Parcel Acres	Zone	Acq. Date	Deed Book	Deed Page	Source of Funding	Level of land protection	Managing Agency	Comment	Condition
Bulette Conservation Land - Town Forest	Passive		T, K	W, H, B											First conservation parcell	G
Total Acres: 47.35		main entry			D2-10	20 Bulette Rd Rear	13.33	ARC	8/13/1965	10900	136	SH 1	3	ConCom	to ConCom; ATM 1971 64 picnic tables; Pacy Land	
		Town Forest/Veteran's Memorial Rec. Area			D3-12	20 Bulette Rd Rear	18.80	ARC	3/23/1926	04950	435	Town	2	ConCom	3/8/25: TM approved \$200 for land purchase for purpose of a town forest; Durkee Lot	
		Town Forest			D3-16	20 Bulette Rd Rear	12.00	ARC	3/23/1926	04950	435	Town	2	ConCom	3/8/25: TM approved \$200 for land purchase for purpose of a town forest; Durkee Lot	
					D3-22-4	53 Arlington St	3.22	ARC	12/21/1979	13863	336	Gift/CR	5	ConCom	Gifted to Town with early CR; McGloins	
Camp Acton Conservation Land	Passive/Camping		T, P, K	B, C, H, W											Only Public Camping Ground in Acton; permit required	E
Total Acres: 56					D5-31	362 Pope Rd	15.00	R108	3/7/1996	26115	336	SH 34	3	Rec/Con-Com		
		Main Entry			E6-7	362 Pope Rd	41.00	R108	3/7/1996	26115	336	SH 34	3	Rec/Con-Com		
Community Gardens	Agriculture	Directly off of 27	P, K	G											Taylor Land	F
Total Acres: 5.38					C5-41	861 Main St	0.88	ARC	12/23/1975	12913	6	SH 23	3	Rec/Con-Com	ConCom and Rec.	
					C5-51	845 Main St	4.50	ARC	12/23/1975	12913	6	SH 23	3	Rec/Con-Com	ConCom and Rec.	
Grassy Pond Conservation Land	Passive		T, P, K	B, H, W											Viewing platform constructed in 2013	G
Total Acres: 106.72		Entry			D3-14	149 Newtown Rd	28.95	ARC	10/30/1968	11594	514	SH 4	3	ConCom	ConCom; Parlin Pond Development, Charbonneau Land	
		Corridor			D3-14-5	13 Willis Holden Dr	0.24	R-8	11/2/1984	15861	102	GIFT	2	ConCom	Willoughby Land: for conservation to be kept in open & natural state	
					D3-14-27	22 Samuel Parlin Dr	16.82	R-8	11/2/1984	15861	102	GIFT	3	ConCom		
		Island Lot			D3-14-34	12 Willis Holden Dr	1.05	R-8	11/2/1984	15861	102	GIFT	3	ConCom		
		Island Lot			D3-14-41	13 Samuel Parlin Dr	0.23	R-8	11/2/1984	15861	102	GIFT	3	ConCom		
		Corridor			D3-14-47	14 Samuel Parlin Dr	0.52	R-8	11/2/1984	15861	102	GIFT	3	ConCom		
		Island Lot			D3-23-9	5 Samuel Parlin Dr Rear	4.20	ARC	1/8/1971	11942	74	GIFT	3	ConCom	ConCom; Parlin Pond Devel., Charbonneau	
		Main Entry			D4-1-2	236 Nagog Hill Rd	43.60	ARC	6/11/1974	12646	305	SH 22	3	ConCom	Young Land: Conservation and recreation; Grantee: ConCom	
					D3-11-2	159 Newtown Rd	5.85	R108	12/22/2017	70432	393	CPA	5	ConCom	"West Grassy Pond"	
		Corridor			D3-11-1	165 Newtown Rd	5.26	R108	12/22/2017	70432	393	CPA	5	ConCom	"West Grassy Pond"	

Managed Conservation Areas				Component Parcels												
	Current use	Public Access	Facilities	Recreation Potential	GIS ID	Address	Parcel Acres	Zone	Acq. Date	Deed Book	Deed Page	Source of Funding	Level of land protection	Managing Agency	Comment	Condition
Great Hill Conservation Land	Mixed use		T, P, K	B, F, W												E
Total Acres: 197.07					G2-124	219 Main St	14.71	ARC	7/17/1972	12246	280	SH 15	3	ConCom	Town, ConCom grantee; Flanagan Land	
		Corridor			G2-152	199 Main St	16.79	ARC	7/20/1972	12249	46	SH 14	3	ConCom		
		Corridor			G3-10-1	264 Mass Av	38.52	ARC	12/18/1974	LC475	89	SH17	3	ConCom	Abraham & Ruth Katz Land for conservation	
		Corridor			G3-68	Kelley Rd End	13.44	ARC	1/11/1973	LC830	39	SH 19	3	ConCom	Conservation purposes	
		Corridor			G3-79	18 Stoney St	13.52	ARC	12/29/1972	12355	195	SH 20	3	ConCom	ConCom grantee; Colloins, Wold Land	
					G3-111	46 Piper Rd	33.00	ARC	2/8/1973	12376	554	SH 18	3	ConCom	ConCom grantee; Tinkler Land	
					H3-11-1	36 Piper Rd Rear	2.00	ARC	8/22/1975	12848	237	SH 27	3	ConCom	ConCom grantee, Reed Land	
		Main Entry			H3A-1-1	34 School St Rear	53.62	ARC	11/21/1972	12333	412	SH 12	3	ConCom	ConCom grantee; Merriam Land	
					H3A-4	6 Piper Lane Rear	5.50	R-2	2/20/2009	52270	164	CPA	4	ConCom/ ACT	Land partitioned and house lot sold. Portion of house lot, granting permanent easement, has a CR. CR for town-owned parcel in process.	
					H3A-2	4 Piper Lane	0.27	R-2	2/11/2020	76052	303	GIFT/CPA	5	ConCom/ ACT		
					H3A-3	4 Piper Lane Rear	5.70	R-2	2/11/2020	76052	303	GIFT/CPA	5	ConCom		
Guggins Brook Conservation Land	Passive		T, P, K	B, W											Pedestrian access from W. Acton	G
Total Acres: 61		Main Entry			F1-5	667 Mass Av	55.50	ARC	12/24/1975	LC870	90	SH 28	3	ConCom	Conservation & outdoor rec purposes; Cacciatore Land	
		Wetland			F1-2	659 Mass Av	5.50	ARC	1/25/1978	13381	6	Town	2	Municipal	Considered part of Conservation Area though Municipal Property	

Managed Conservation Areas					Component Parcels											
	Current use	Public Access	Facilities	Recreation Potential	GIS ID	Address	Parcel Acres	Zone	Acq. Date	Deed Book	Deed Page	Source of Funding	Level of land protection	Managing Agency	Comment	Condition
Heath Hen Meadow Conservation Land	Passive		T, K	W, B											Pedestrian access from S. Acton and also W. Acton via Mt. Hope Cemetery	E
Total Acres: 131.31					H1-1	Willow St Rear	2.00	R-2	7/29/2016	67698	460	Town	2	ConCom	Dunn Land 2014-11-12 Special Town Meeting Warrant Article 19 Land Purchase, paid for with free cash in the amount of \$28,000	
		Corridor			G2-200	176 Central St	11.94	R-4	6/15/2016	67431	134	GIFT/CPA	5	ConCom/ACT		
					H1-5	182 Willow St Behind	4.00	R-2	7/29/2016	67698	460	Town	2	ConCom	Whitcomb Land 2014-11-12 Special Town Meeting Warrant Article 19 Land Purchase, paid for with free cash in the amount of \$28,000	
					G2-184	19 Overlook Dr. Behind	1.99	ARC	10/25/1995	25759	239	GIFT	3	ConCom	Gifted to town for Conservation Purposes	
					G2-184-1	17 Overlook Dr Behind	1.39	ARC	10/25/1995	25759	239	GIFT	3	ConCom	Gifted to town for Conservation Purposes	
		Corridor			G2-193-14	19 Overlook Dr. Beside	0.07	ARC	10/25/1995	25759	239	GIFT	3	ConCom	Gifted to town for Conservation Purposes	
					G2-194-1	15 Overlook Dr. Behind	3.11	ARC	10/25/1995	25759	239	GIFT	3	ConCom	Gifted to town for Conservation Purposes	
					G2-194-1	13 Overlook Dr Behind	2.64	ARC	10/25/1995	25759	239	GIFT	3	ConCom	Gifted to town for Conservation Purposes	
					G2-194-2	11 Overlook Dr Behind	1.59	ARC	10/25/1995	25759	239	GIFT	3	ConCom	Gifted to town for Conservation Purposes	
					G2-194-3	9 Overlook Dr Behind	0.61	ARC	10/25/1995	25759	239	GIFT	3	ConCom	Gifted to town for Conservation Purposes	
					G2-194-4	7 Overlook Dr Behind	0.82	ARC	10/25/1995	25759	239	GIFT	3	ConCom	Gifted to town for Conservation Purposes	
		Main Entry			H2-1	Robbins St End	84.00	ARC	7/19/1974	12670	362	SH 21	3	ConCom	Gifted to town for Conservation Purposes	
					H2-7-5	3 Overlook Dr Behind	0.51	ARC	10/25/1995	25759	239	GIFT	3	ConCom	Gifted to town for Conservation Purposes	
					H2-7-11	1 Overlook Dr Behind	0.70	ARC	10/25/1995	25759	239	GIFT	3	ConCom	Gifted to town for Conservation Purposes	
					H2-7-16	5 Overlook Dr Behind	1.14	ARC	10/25/1995	25759	239	GIFT	3	ConCom	Gifted to town for Conservation Purposes	
					H2-36	123 Stow St	14.80	ARC	5/14/1974	12630	111	SH 16	3	ConCom	Gifted to town for Conservation Purposes	
Jenks Conservation Land	Passive		T, P, K	B, W											Meadowland, great birding area	G
Total Acres: 28		Main Entry			E2-20	396 Central St.	22.00	ARC	12/2/1975	12902	200	SH 24	3	ConCom	ConCom Grantee	
					E2-60	396 Central St Rear	6.00	ARC	12/2/1975	12902	200	SH 24	3	ConCom	ConCom Grantee	

Managed Conservation Areas
Component Parcels

	Current use	Public Access	Facilities	Recreation Potential	GIS ID	Address	Parcel Acres	Zone	Acq. Date	Deed Book	Deed Page	Source of Funding	Level of land protection	Managing Agency	Comment	Condition
Nagog Hill Conservation Land	Passive		T, P, K	B, H, W												G
Total Acres: 176.54					D4-1-3	257 Nagog Hill Rd	53.89	ARC	12/2/1975	12902	197	SH 29	3	ConCom	Young Land; for Cons. And Rec.; ConCom listed as Grantee	
		Main Entry			D4-6	221 Nagog Hill Rd	88.14	ARC	1/2/1980	13871	233	SH 33	3	ConCom	ConsComm; Quin Land	
					D4-14	568 Main St Rear	6.00	ARC	12/6/1985	16619	567	TM	3	ConCom	ConCom Grantee	
					D4-15	568 Main St Rear	5.00	ARC	12/6/1985	16619	567	TM	3	ConCom	ConCom Grantee	
					D4-21	288 Main St. Rear	5.00	ARC	12/6/1985	16619	567	TM	3	ConCom	ConCom Grantee	
					D4-22	558 Main St. Rear	6.00	R108	3/23/2004	42294	359	TM	3	ConCom	New access coming from Quail Ridge	
					D4-37-6	193 Nagog Hill Rd	12.51	R-8	10/19/2007	50251	161	CPA	4	ACT	Groener; gifted w/CR to Town for Open Space	
Nashoba Brook Conservation Land	Passive		T, P, K, A	B, W											Trail Through Time runs through this area	E
Total Acres: 123.29					D5-6	Wheeler Ln Rear	1.80	PCRC	11/22/1971	12114	415	Town	3	ConCom		
					D5-11-18	21 Milldam Rd	0.53	R-2	10/27/1989	20163	11	GIFT	3	ConCom	North Briar access; ConCom is grantee	
					D5-11-33	17 Sawmill Rd Rear	2.26	R-2	9/26/1988	19361	363	GIFT	3	ConCom	ConCom Grantee	
		Main Entry			D5-22	1-17 Blue Heron Way	112.00	PCRC	11/10/1987	18682	0183	GIFT	3	ConCom	ConCom Grantee	
					D5-25	Davis Rd Rear	6.70	PCRC	11/10/1987	18682	0183	GIFT	3	ConCom	ConCom Grantee	
Pacy Conservation Land	Passive		T, K	B, W											Pedestrian access from S. Acton	G
Total Acres: 38.32		Corridor			G2-123-37	39 Tuttle Drive Behind	0.25	ARC	1/23/1979	13631	143	GIFT	3	ConCom	ConCom; Moulton Gift 39,850 sq ft	
					G2A-17	55 Central Street Rear	30.30	ARC	12/23/1975	12913	178	TM	3	ConCom	ConCom Grantee	
		Corridor			G2A-17-1	43 Central Street	1.13	ARC	12/23/1975	12913	178	TM	3	ConCom	ConCom; Arnold Levitt dba Eastern Mortgage Co. Land	
		Main Entry			G2A-18	30 Prospect St./Tupelo Way End	6.64	R8/4	5/3/2001	32802	136	GIFT	1	Municipal	Municipal Property considered part of conservation area	
Pratt's Brook Conservation Land	Passive		T, P, K	B, W											Blueberry Barrens	G
Total Acres: 59.39		Main Entry			H3-237	95 Parker St	26.54	ARC	4/18/1980	13948	187	SH 32	3	ConCom	Averett Land; ConCom Grantee	
					I3-2	108 Parker St Rear	31.00	ARC	4/18/1980	13948	187	SH 32	3	ConCom	Averett Land; ConCom Grantee	
		Corridor			I3-5	16 Broadview St	1.75	ARC	10/20/1970	LC797	165	GIFT	3	ConCom	J&E Co., ConCom grantee	
		Corridor			I3-20	15 Broadview St	0.10	R-2	10/20/1970	LC797	165	GIFT	3	ConCom	J&E Co., ConCom grantee	

Managed Conservation Areas					Component Parcels											
	Current use	Public Access	Facilities	Recreation Potential	GIS ID	Address	Parcel Acres	Zone	Acq. Date	Deed Book	Deed Page	Source of Funding	Level of land protection	Managing Agency	Comment	Condition
Robbins Mill Conservation Land	Passive		T, P, A	B, W											Newest area, viewing platform planned	E
Total Acres: 132.59					B6-20-5	2 Marshall Path	0.97	R108	5/15/1997	27294	343	GIFT	1	Municipal	Municipal Property considered part of conservation area	
		Main Entry			C5-115	9-17 Carlisle Rd.	19.73	ARC	8/18/2011	57315	205	GIFT	5	ConCom	Deeded as permanent conservation land	
					C6-8	13 Carlisle Rd.Rear	2.99	R108	10/6/1947	7197	290	TAKEN	1	Municipal	Municipal Property considered part of conservation area	
					C6-9	3-19 Carlisle Rd Behind	12.86	R108	5/15/1997	27294	350	GIFT	1	ConCom	corrected page no.	
		corridor			C6-11	Canterbury Hill Rd.	0.30	R108	8/18/2011	57315	205	GIFT	5	Rec/Con-Com	Deeded for Recreation	
		corridor			C6-14-14	22 Blueberry Path	0.31	R108	8/18/2011	57315	205	GIFT	5	Rec/Con-Com	Deeded for Recreation	
		corridor			C6-19	27 Marshall Path	0.17	R108	5/15/1997	27294	343	GIFT	1	Municipal	Municipal Property considered part of conservation area	
					D6-2	Canterbury Hill Rd. Behind	95.26	ARC	8/18/2011	57315	205	GIFT	5	ConCom	Deeded as permanent conservation land	
Spring Hill Conservation Land	Passive		T, K	B, H, W											Native Artifacts on site	G
Total Acres: 213.2					D5-23	Wheeler Ln End	2.43	ARC	8/19/1971	12058	587	SH 10	3	ConCom	ConCom grantee; Martin Land	
					D5-24	Wheeler Ln	7.99	ARC	6/10/1971	12012	564	SH 11	3	ConCom	ConCom; Hollowell Land	
					D5-29	Spring Hill Rd End	36.20	ARC	11/22/1971	12114	415	Town	3	ConCom	Conservation Land, applied for grant	
					D5-30	Spring Hill Rd	9.67	ARC	5/31/1967	11331	359	SH 3	3	ConCom	Richardson Land for conservation	
					D5-30-1	320 Pope Rd	0.45	ARC	5/31/1967	11331	359	SH 3	3	ConCom	Deeded for Conservation	
		Main Entry			D5-35	Spring Hill Rd End	49.81	ARC	11/22/1971	12114	415	Town	3	ConCom	Conservation Land	
					D5-36	308 Pope Rd Rear	5.82	ARC	12/23/1966	11270	552	Town	3	ConCom	Grantee: ConCom; transferred from BOS	
					D5-37	Spring Hill Rd	7.94	ARC	11/1/1971	12101	686	SH 13	3	ConCom	Deeded for Conservation	
					D5-37-1	Spring Hill Rd Rear	7.92	ARC	11/1/1971	12101	686	SH 13	3	ConCom	deeded for conservation purposes	
					D5-38	Wheeler Ln	2.34	ARC	6/10/1971	12012	564	SH 11	3	ConCom	to be controlled by ConsComm; Hollowell Land	
					E5-4	Spring Hill Rd	12.13	ARC	11/22/1971	12114	415	SH 3	3	ConCom	Taken for conservation purposes	
					E5-16-2	10 Jay Lane	31.70	R108	12/4/1998	29450	341	GIFT	1	ConCom	deed also describes right of public to use a parcel to access conservation land described in this deed... you have to read the deed carefully; Parcel A is conveyed as PCRC land	
					E5-45	21 Spring Hill Rd Behind	22.76	ARC	9/19/1966	11214	347	SH 2	3	ConCom	deeded for conservation purposes	
					E5-7	Spring Hill Rd Rear	16.04	ARC	5/31/1967	11331	359	SH 3	3	ConCom	deeded for conservation purposes with easements	

Managed Conservation Areas				Component Parcels												
	Current use	Public Access	Facilities	Recreation Potential	GIS ID	Address	Parcel Acres	Zone	Acq. Date	Deed Book	Deed Page	Source of Funding	Level of land protection	Managing Agency	Comment	Condition
Stoneymeade Conservation Land	Passive		T, K	B, H, W											Abuts Concord Conservation land	E
Total Acres: 44.51					F5-12-11	93 Pope Rd	44.51	R8	3/24/1989	19719	283	GIFT	3	ConCom		
Wetherbee Conservation Land	Passive/ Agri		T, K	W											Agricultural field & Managed Forest	E
Total Acres: 72.68		Main Entry			G4-173	65 Mass Av	72.68	ARC	2/8/1982	14534	117	TM	3	ConCom	Actively farmed	
Wills Hole Conservation Land - Town Forest	Passive		T, P, K	B, H, W											Bog area, pedestrian access from NARA Park	E
Total Acres: 121.41					B5-33	Off Quarry Rd	20.80	ARC	10/8/1969	11749	734	SH 5	3	ConCom	Britt Land aka the Grant Lot	
		Town Forest			B5-34	Off Quarry Rd	49.00	ARC	12/31/1943	06734	596	TM	2	ConCom	"Texas Lot" Town Forest purchased about 1940	
		Main Entry			C5-3	70 Quarry Road	5.03	ARC	2/27/1976	12940	132	GIFT	2	Municipal		
					C5-10-1	12 Harris St Rear	3.25	ARC	8/03/1971	12047	586	SH 8	3	ConCom	ConCom; Plamondon Land	
					C5-10	12 Harris St	15.07	R108	5/5/1999	30137	563	GIFT	1	Municipal	Municipal Property considered part of conservation area	
		corridor			C5-10-18	1 Capt Handley Rd	2.03	R108	5/5/1999	30137	563	GIFT	1	Municipal	Municipal Property considered part of conservation area	
					C5-24	22 Alexandra Way	19.61	R108	9/21/2004	43751	66	GIFT	3	ConCom	Deeded for conservation, recreation, agriculture (ARC)	
					C5-45	3 Alexandra Way	6.62	R108	9/21/2004	43751	66	GIFT	3	ConCom	Deeded for conservation, recreation, agriculture (ARC)	
Wright Hill Conservation Land	Passive		T	W												E
Total Acres: 14.05		Main Entry			F2A-1-2	330 Central St	14.05	ARC	11/24/2014	1463	105	CPA/GIFT	5	ConCom	Conservation Restriction	
Miscellaneous Parcels																
Total Acres: 119.56															Areas currently not actively managed	
Arborwood Conservation Land	Passive			W											Separate, non-contiguous parcels	N/A
Total Acres: 8.78					H3-38	Robinwood Road (end)	1.57	R2	12/6/1985	16619	565	GIFT	3	ConCom	Upland pine stand	
					H3-80-6	11 Sandy Drive	7.21	R2	12/6/1985	16619	565	GIFT	3	ConCom	Pond surrounded by red maple	
Caouette Simeone Farm Land	Agri.			W											Leased from town for farming	N/A
Total Acres: 10.22					H2A-62	20 Maple St	10.22	R8/4	12/7/2010	56002	381	CPA	4	ACT		

Managed Conservation Areas							Component Parcels									
	Current use	Public Access	Facilities	Recreation Potential	GIS ID	Address	Parcel Acres	Zone	Acq. Date	Deed Book	Deed Page	Source of Funding	Level of land protection	Managing Agency	Comment	Condition
Flint Road and West Acton Conservation Land	Wetland														Flood plain wetlands, adjacent to Fort Pond Brook	N/A
Total Acres: 23					F2-122	492-496R Mass. Avenue	4.50	R2	6/8/1993	23276	0559	GIFT	3	ConCom	Deeded for Conservation	
					F2-128	488-492R Mass. Avenue	6.00	R2	10/2/1987	18589	160	GIFT	3	ConCom	Deeded for Conservation	
					F2-149	494 MASS Ave. Behind (39 Flint Rd Rear)	3.00	R2	10/27/1989	20163	0013	GIFT	3	ConCom	Deeded for Conservation	
					F2-150	494-500R Mass. Avenue	1.50	R2	6/8/1993	23276	0559	GIFT	3	ConCom	Deeded for Conservation	
					F2-151	482-500R Mass. Avenue	8.00	R2	10/2/1987	18589	160	GIFT	3	ConCom	Deeded for Conservation	
Monsen Conservation Land	Wetland														Large Bog area	N/A
Total Acres: 15.76					G2-178	86-104 Central Street	9.76	ARC	6/7/1971	12010	0058	TM	3	ConCom	ConCom grantee	
					G2-185	84 Central Behind	6.00	ARC	2/14/1980	13902	0236	TM	2	Municipal	Municipal Property considered conservation land	
Patriot's Hill Conservation Land	Passive														Contiguous lots	N/A
Total Acres: 6.06		Corridor			E3-87-54	36 Washington Drive	0.56	R2	4/8/1974	12612	0024	State	3	ConCom	ConCom Grantee	
					E3-87-64	22 Musket Drive (rear)	5.50	ARC	5/29/1974 4/8/1974	12637 12612	0474 25	State	3	ConCom	ConCom Grantee	
Putnam Conservation Land	Wetland														Flood plain open marsh	N/A
Total Acres: 15.3					E3-80	65-67 Newtown Road	15.30	ARC	1/21/1976	12924	0635	Town	3	ConCom	refers to maint. under Mass Gen'l Law Ch 40 Sec 8C	
Steinman and McGloin Conservation Land	Wetland														Borders Maynard	N/A
Total Acres: 40.44					I2-71	66 Conant Street	17.76	ARC	12/27/1978	13614	120	GIFT	3	ConCom	Refers to maint. under Mass Gen'l Law Ch 40 Sec 8C	
					I3-127	48 Conant St. Behind	1.40	R-4	5/11/2000	31392	195	GIFT	1	Municipal	Municipal Property considered conservation land	
					I3-132-1	7 Putter Drive Rear	8.63	ARC	7/21/1970	11863	640	GIFT	3	ConCom	Fletcher land off Parker St.	
		Corridor			I3-132-29	14R Robert Road	0.10	R4	2/25/1982	14547	245	GIFT	3	ConCom	ConCom grantee	
					I3-148	14R Conant Street	10.00	ARC	12/23/1966	11270	552	Town	3	ConCom		
					I3-150	30 Carlton Dr. Behind	2.20	R-4	5/11/2000	31392	195	GIFT	1	Municipal	Municipal Property considered conservation land	
		Corridor			I3-153	31 Carlton Dr	0.35	ARC	5/11/2000	31392	195	GIFT	2	Municipal	Municipal Property considered conservation land	

Managed Conservation Areas				Component Parcels												
	Current use	Public Access	Facilities	Recreation Potential	GIS ID	Address	Parcel Acres	Zone	Acq. Date	Deed Book	Deed Page	Source of Funding	Level of land protection	Managing Agency	Comment	Condition
Isolated Parcels																
Total Acres: 28.51															Unclassified parcels	
915 Main Street	Wetland				C5-9	915 Main Street	0.65	R2	10/19/1970	11905	0673	TM	3	ConCom	An open marsh adjacent to Nashoba Brook. Controlled by ConCom; Clapp Land	
505 Mass Av	Wetland				F2-75-26	505 Mass Av	3.57	Zone 1?	1/6/2016	66638	241	GIFT	2	ConCom		N/A
501 Mass Av Behind	Wetland				F2-75-14	501 Mass Av Behind	8.27	R-2	1/6/2016	66638	238	TOWN	2	ConCom	2015 Fall Town Meeting, Article 13	N/A
52 Harris St. Rear	To be evaluated				C5-74	52 Harris St. Rear	1.00	ARC					2		Area to be evaluated. In aerial photo has buildings on it. No sale date on GIS.	N/A
145 Great Road Rear	Cons. & Rec				F4-37-5	145 Great Rd Rear (Esterbrook Rd)	5.82	R8	4/3/2002	35208	334	GIFT	3	ConCom	for conservation and recreation with easement deed and amended easement deed; off Esterbrook Rd	N/A
2 Minot Avenue Rear	Isolated Forest				F4-47-1	2 Minot Avenue Rear	0.70	R2	5/29/1984	15594	551	Town	1	Municipal	Municipal Property considered conservation land	N/A
									11/7/1977	13327	695				taken for taxes	
41 Tuttle Drive	To be evaluated				G2-123-25	41 Tuttle Drive	0.91	ARC	1/23/1979	13631	143	GIFT	3	ConCom	To be evaluated	N/A
53-73 Stow Street	Red Maple Swamp				H2-41	53-73 Stow Street	4.70	R2	5/7/1992	22013	592	GIFT	3	ConCom	Red maple swamp adjacent to Fort Pond Brook; for conservation; Prescott Paint Land	N/A
46-54 Martin Street	Cons.				H2A-41-3	46-54 Martin Street	0.50	R2	8/31/1993	23604	0448	GIFT	3	ConCom/ Rec	Deeded for Conservation	N/A
133 River St	Cons.				H3-238	133 River Street	2.39	L1	12/20/2003	41699	377	GIFT	2	ConCom	Deeded for Conservation	N/A
Total Isolated Parcels	28.51															
Total Miscellaneous Properties	119.56															
Total Managed Conservation Areas	1727.45															
Total all conservation property	1875.52					Total Municipal parcels	50.05		Require more protection							

F. CHAPTER 61 LANDS WITHIN ACTON

Owner Name	Property Address	Parcel	Use Code	Chapter Land	Acreage
Bramhall Mark H Trustee	Quarry Rd Rear	B5-10	6010	61	1.09
Bramhall Mark H Trustee	Quarry Rd End	B5-14	6010	61	3.64
Bramhall Mark H Trustee	Quarry Rd End	B5-21	6010	61	4.06
Bramhall Mark H Trustee	Quarry Rd End	B5-21-1	6010	61	4.02
Bramhall Mark H Trustee	Quarry Rd Rear	B5-26	6010	61	2.30
Bramhall Mark H Trustee	Quarry Rd Rear	B5-27	6010	61	2.02
Conant Phoebe M Trustee	281 Nagog Hill Rd	C4-24	6010	61	52.86
Skyline Golf + Recreation Corp	2 Skyline Dr	D4-9	8050	61B	91.15
Idylwilde Farms, Inc	356 Central St	E2-143	7120	61A	21.78
Idylwilde Farms, Inc.	352 Central St	E2-143-1	7120	61A	3.39
Conant Phoebe M	115-143 Nagog Hill Rd	E4-9-2	6010	61	72.55
Conant Brewster Jr	210 Great Rd	E4-60	6010	61	12.83
Nicholson Frank E Trustee	98 Strawberry Hill Rd	E5-6	6010	61	5.69
Nicholson Frank E Trustee	98 Strawberry Hill Rd	E5-10	6010	61	5.19
Nicholson Frank E Trustee	82 Strawberry Hill Rd	E5-15-1	6010	61	5.06
Nicholson Frank E Trustee	74 Strawberry Hill Rd Behind	E5-51-1	6010	61	17.74
Whitcomb Douglas W	116 Summer St	F1-109	7120	61A	9.54
Donald James C	46 Taylor Rd	F3-78	8010	61B	5.81
Napoli David + Maria Trustees	49 Nagog Hill Rd	F3A-89-1	7170	61A	1.89
Harring Vaughn F Trustee	60-66 Esterbrook Rd	F5-10-1	6010	61	14.63
Moritz Clement & Elizabeth, Tr	19 Wetherbee St	G4-174	6010	61	29.47
Moritz Clement & Elizabeth Tr	35 Wetherbee St	G4-189	6010	61	5.39
Fletcher Bruce E.	129 Stow St Rear	H1-4	6010	61	2.07
Fletcher Realty Trust	127 Stow St	H1-6	6010	61	5.41
Parks Craig J Trustee	133 Stow St	H2-80	6010	61	2.24
Simeone Paul R	36 Liberty St	H2-100	7120	61A	4.34
TOTAL ACRES					386.15



Heath Hen Meadow Photo by Mark Wessel

SECTION 6: COMMUNITY VISION

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B. Statement of Open Space and Recreation Goals	166



Nashoba Brook Photo by Alissa Nicol

This section provides insight into how the Town established the four goals of the plan with a concise description of the content of each goal.

A. DESCRIPTION OF PROCESS

The achievements of the previous plan are the foundation for the Town of Acton's Open Space and Recreation Plan 2024-2031. These demonstrate a commitment to thoughtful land stewardship and community well-being. This new plan represents an evolution that continues the previous plan's commitments while incorporating new information that responds to the changing needs of a dynamic and growing community.

To establish these goals, the Town Staff Working Group (Working Group) analyzed results from the Town-wide survey described in Section 2. The Working Group integrated feedback from the community into draft goals based on the goals of the OSRP 2014-2021. A Liaison Group including representatives from board committees and commissions, and Acton Conservation Trust, attended a Goal Workshop. The Group honed, adjusted, and augmented the draft goals. After these initial improvements, the Liaison

Group conducted feedback sessions with the Agricultural Commission, Acton Conservation Trust, Conservation Commission, the Green Advisory Board, Land Stewardship Committee, Open Space Committee, and the Water Resource Advisory Committee to explore further improvement. The Working Group then presented the goals at the second forum on December 6, 2023. This iterative feedback process, including insights from different stakeholder groups, ensured the creation of goals that reflect the diverse needs of the Town.

B. STATEMENT OF OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION GOALS

The 2024-2031 Open Space and Recreation Plan aims to create a diverse, interconnected network of open spaces and recreational opportunities for Acton's residents and visitors, prioritizing sustainable choices to ensure long-term environmental and community well-being.

In Spring 2022, Acton conducted a town-wide survey that garnered over 500 responses. The insights from this survey significantly influenced the development



Heron flying Photo by Jennifer Thomas



Nagog Hill Conservation Land Photo by Paul Villanova

of the goals of the 2024-2031 OSRP. Key findings include:

1. A strong desire to improve and expand sidewalks.
2. High value placed on the development and maintenance of trails.
3. A call for enhanced communication regarding Open Space and Recreation initiatives.
4. Recognition of the importance of water resources for both recreational and practical uses.

When determining the new goals for the 2024-2031 Open Space and Recreation Plan, the Working Group looked to the previous plan, the 2014-2021 Open Space and Recreation Plan. Its primary goals included:

1. Preserving the existing elements of Acton's rural character.
2. Protecting critical environmental resources.
3. Improving and expanding recreational opportunities.

Through the survey and public meetings, it became clear there was a need for additional focus on sustainable decisions for the future. The Working Group looked to the Town's inaugural Climate Action Plan, adopted in 2020, which outlined specific focus areas crucial for addressing climate change:

- **Building:** Commercial and industrial buildings and homes in Acton are built and retrofitted to be energy efficient, net zero carbon, healthy, affordable, and resilient. Acton actively influences policies at the state and federal level to support rapid and affordable building decarbonization.
- **Energy:** Acton's electricity is fossil-fuel free, renewable, reliable, and affordable. Acton's residents, businesses, and municipal government use locally owned renewable energy from New England whenever possible.
- **Mobility:** All community members have access to safe and affordable transportation choices that will result in zero carbon emission, reduce Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT), and lead to healthier and stronger communities. Acton neighborhoods, commercial, and

community centers are interconnected through infrastructure improvements and redesign that allows reliable and multiple modes of transportation. Acton actively influences programs and policies that support zero emission, affordable, accessible, and reliable regional transportation systems.

- **Nature-Based Solutions:** Acton's natural resources are protected, managed, connected, and restored to increase carbon sequestration, equity, resilience, and biodiversity. Local land use policy encourages affordable, diverse, transit-oriented and net zero housing while also enhancing nature-based solutions.
- **Solid Waste:** Acton increases its waste diversion rate through town-wide programs, bylaws, and policies to streamline, prevent, reduce, reuse, compost, and recycle waste.
- **Resilience:** Acton prepares for climate impacts, including drought, flooding, more frequent and/or severe storms, extreme heat, biodiversity loss, and local supply disruptions.

Acknowledging the alignment between these diverse sources of guidance, the Town Working Group, supported by the Liaison

Group during the Goal Workshop, refined the existing goals from the 2014 OSRP. The updated goals for the 2024-2031 OSRP now incorporate:

1. **Preserve and Protect the Historic, Cultural, and Scenic Features of Acton:** Continue efforts to protect and celebrate Acton's rich history, cultural heritage, and scenic landscapes.
2. **Protect Critical Environmental Resources, Including Ground and Surface Water, Wildlife, Diverse Habitats and Ecosystems:** Acton aims to maintain a healthy environment that sustains biodiversity and supports the overall wellbeing of its residents
3. **Improve and Expand Recreation Opportunities for Everyone:** By focusing efforts on increased outreach, programming, and access to facilities, Acton seeks to ensure that residents of all ages, abilities, and identities feel welcome and able to actively engage in recreation activities.
4. **Incorporate Sustainability in Current and Future Open Space and Recreation Decisions:** Incorporate the principles of the Climate Action Plan into

decision-making processes to promote environmental sustainability and resilience.

Acton is committed to preserving its natural beauty and ecological stability while addressing the urgent issue of climate change. By aligning the new goals with both past achievements and future needs, the town aims to foster a vibrant, sustainable, and inclusive community.

SECTION 7 ANALYSIS OF NEEDS

A. Summary of Resource Protection Needs		
Protection of water to support basic human needs, recreational opportunities, and ecological systems	170	Increase communication and education surrounding Town programming and facilities
Preservation and enhancement of Acton's natural beauty and valuable wildlife habitats	171	Improve and expand existing recreation facilities to meet the needs of the community
Support local farms and farming	171	Create new facilities and programming to meet the changing needs of the community
Identify new land to protect and place permanent protections on existing Town land	172	
B. Summary of Community Needs		
Improving offerings for teens	173	C. Management Needs, Potential Changes of Use
Access and offerings for aging residents	174	Coordination between Town departments (Recreation, Conservation, Planning, Sustainability, Public Works, GIS, etc.)
Expand and improve access to active and passive recreation areas	174	Consider sustainability and climate resilience when making open space and recreation decisions
		Focus efforts on inclusion, diversity, and celebrating Acton's historic and cultural heritage



Compost piles at Morrison Farm Community Garden

Acton strives to closely align with the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). Traditionally, the Town has prioritized protection of open space and availability of recreational opportunities for all. Since 2014, the Town has made enormous progress towards achieving the goals and objectives of the previous OSRP. With that said, the needs of the community continue to grow and evolve.

There is still work to be done to properly address the needs of the community,



Native grasses and meadow species at NARA

specifically relating to Acton's natural resources, community vision, and management/implementation. The Town conducted a thorough public process to establish the needs of the community, including a Town-wide survey, two public forums, a goal workshop, and multiple public meetings with various Town committees. Key takeaways included the need for continued water resource protection, accessibility improvements, increased communication, and the continued creation and maintenance of trail connections.

In summary, through the public engagement process, together, the Town Staff Working Group and the community developed the goals and objectives of this plan.

A. SUMMARY OF RESOURCE PROTECTION NEEDS

The adoption of the Community Preservation Act (CPA) has opened up opportunities to secure open space parcels. It also heightened awareness for the need to permanently protect vulnerable properties already owned by the Town. Protecting ground and surface water resources remains a priority, not only as a basic human need, but also for ecological and recreational purposes.

Land conservation now extends beyond purchasing properties to include resource protection. It also includes the control of invasive species; preservation of shrinking agricultural land resources; developing active management programs for forests and meadows; managing deer and beaver populations; and understanding the complexity of wildlife corridors and significant habitat properties.

Protection of water to support basic human needs, recreational opportunities, and ecological systems

In Acton, water protection is a vital concern that extends beyond regulatory compliance. Across the State, efforts are being made to combat the stressors caused by climate impacts and PFAS-contaminated water supplies. The community's well-being relies on clean water for public health to support diverse ecosystems and for sustaining key sectors like agriculture and industry. Groundwater, a primary water source, necessitates special attention. Climate change underscores the importance of resilient water management. To safeguard water resources, collaborative efforts, public awareness, and sustainable practices are crucial for ensuring the Town's long-term resilience.

Protecting high-priority groundwater zones and the proper recharge of groundwater facilitates healthy water management. It is critical that Acton coordinates with the Acton Water District while also taking a regional approach that considers the Town's impact on nearby communities.

Emphasizing water is an important step in line with open space protection. It can



Nagog Pond on a clear day

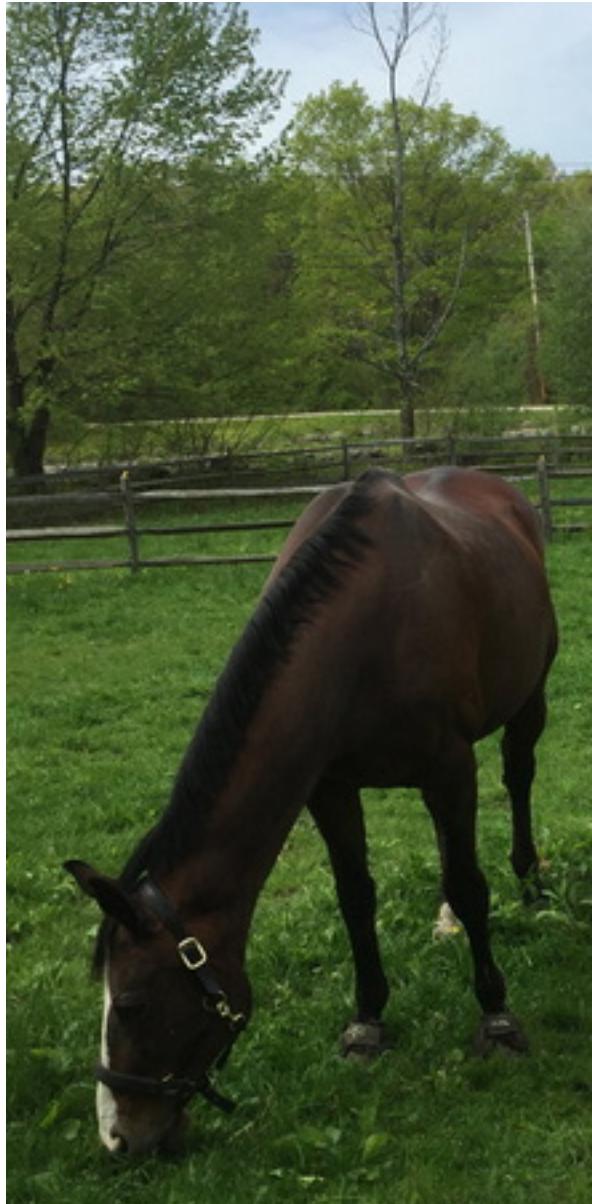
ensure the preservation of valued water habitat, such as riparian corridors and vernal pools, while securing potential well sites. Protection of open space should also consider recreational opportunities and water access.

Preservation and enhancement of Acton's natural beauty and valuable wildlife habitats

Part of Acton's attractiveness as a community is its natural beauty. Through well-maintained parks and trails, residents can explore Acton's scenic waterways and lush woodland assets. Beyond recreation, the community's commitment to environmental conservation ensures the enduring legacy of green spaces. In Acton, nature is a vital component of the community, where residents actively

preserve and participate in environmental stewardship with a shared appreciation.

The community has emphasized the desire to continue to preserve nature through the purchase of land in Town, while taking steps towards enhancing it to ensure these scenic and natural features thrive. One way this can be facilitated is through the protection and management of trees and forests. As Acton continues to experience updated infrastructure and development, the Town has expressed an appetite to implement bylaw changes that prevent tree clearing. Additionally, many of the Town forests struggle with a lack of biodiversity due to similarity of tree species and maturity. Forest management could



Horse grazing at local Lythrum Farm

enhance habitat biodiversity and the long-term health of the forests.

As in many adjacent towns, Acton has an ever-growing number of non-native species naturalizing in our various ecosystems. These species include Norway maple, European and common buckthorn, oriental bittersweet, burning bush, autumn olive, Japanese honeysuckle, Japanese knotweed, and multiflora rose. In Acton's wetlands, purple loosestrife and water chestnut have become significant intruders. Acton will need a comprehensive plan and continued management to safeguard a healthy ecosystem.

There are approximately 18 actively managed meadowlands in Acton, most held under Chapter 61A. A meadow management program, developed and managed by the Conservation Division working through the Land Stewardship Committee, is critical to maintain the meadowlands on existing conservation properties. The plan would include frequency and timing of mowing, removal of invasive species, and introduction of native species.

Support local farms and farming

Increasing popularity of farmers markets in the area places renewed focus on the value of locally-grown produce. The availability of locally-grown produce contributes to the health and wellbeing of the residents of the Town. In addition, local farms preserve the rural features that are valued by so many of its visitors and residents. Therefore, preserving remaining farms, providing opportunities for new farms, and promoting community gardens are all priorities in Acton.

The creation of the Agricultural Commission and implementation of a Right-to-Farm Bylaw has produced a forum for local farmers to share ideas and push initiatives that will continue to support local farming. Zoning and bylaw changes can create new opportunities for future local farming.

Identify new land to protect and place permanent protections on existing Town land

Historically, the Town of Acton has been enormously supportive of land acquisition for the purposes of the conservation and passive recreation. The Open Space Committee monitors environmentally

valuable land throughout Town, prioritizes parcels, and acts as an advisory committee for the Select Board to assist in potential land deals for Acton. The continued effort of the Open Space Committee to work with key landowners and apply for CPA funds is essential to protecting open space.

Through Self-Help grants, Acton purchased many parcels throughout Town for conservation purposes. In addition, some lands gifted to the Town came with the explicit condition that the land be maintained in perpetuity for conservation purposes only. Subsequently, the acquisition of open space lands with the use of CPA funds automatically secures a permanent conservation restriction and the assignment of a permanent custodian, such as the Acton Conservation Trust, for overseeing and monitoring the property. However, approximately 50 acres of Town-owned property that are considered part of conservation areas are actually municipal parcels, not technically protected conservation land. The Town could consider rezoning these parcels and adding permanent restrictions to their deeds to prevent future alterations. This



Volunteers plant pollinator garden of native species at 468 Main Street

is particularly important for parcels that serve as corridors into conservation areas.

Additionally, there are a number of permanently protected parcels in Town that are not currently monitored. The implementation of a conservation restriction monitoring program will guarantee that conservation lands are maintained for their intended purpose.

B. SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY NEEDS

Acton strives to closely align with the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) and has

traditionally prioritized protection of open space and availability of recreational opportunities for all. The results of the community survey yielded a need for more water-based recreation offerings, improving and upkeeping Acton's extensive trail system, enhance existing parks and create new ones as needed, and generating specific opportunities for Acton's Environmental Justice populations. These needs were also highlighted during the community forums. Meeting these needs is directly in line with the major goals outlined in the 2023 SCORP.

Improving offerings for teens

Teens are often a challenging demographic to gather explicit, direct information from, as they may be less inclined to participate openly in formal data collection efforts. However, to gain valuable insights into their preferences and priorities, the Working Group made an important decision to visit Acton-Boxborough Regional High School and engage with students directly. This unique approach allowed them to obtain clear, firsthand feedback from the students about their community needs and aspirations.

Acton currently has limited gathering spaces specifically designed for teens, which can make it difficult for young people to find suitable areas to congregate and socialize, relax, or engage in activities tailored to their interests. Many teens expressed a desire for places where they can freely meet friends, participate in recreational activities, or spend time independently in a welcoming, teen-oriented environment. These spaces are vital for fostering a sense of community among youth and encouraging self-expression. In terms of access to places, the students voiced a keen interest in

improved walkability, with emphasis on creating safer and more convenient paths between key areas within the community. This walkability would make it easier for them and other residents to connect with different parts of the town.

Access and offerings for aging residents

Many recreational spaces in communities are primarily designed with younger age groups in mind, leaving limited options that cater specifically to seniors. Playgrounds, for instance, are typically designed for children, with features like slides, swings, and climbing structures, while few areas are dedicated to low-impact exercise or quiet enjoyment suitable for older adults. Seniors often find that outdoor spaces lack accessible pathways, adequate seating, and shaded rest areas, all of which are crucial for comfort and safety.

Acton has design plans for a Senior park that is envisioned as a small, informal, universally accessible space that is open to all. The park will include social and passive recreational opportunities and features such as level walkways, generous seating, accessible equipment, and shaded gathering spaces. While this park is a step in the right direction, consistent progress

is needed to provide additional recreational resources to Acton's steadily growing, aging population. The Conservation Division is striving to identify suitable locations for accessible trails and placement of benches at scenic locations.

Expand and improve access to active and passive recreation areas

Acton's recreational and conservation areas need to meet minimum accessibility requirements, as dictated by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Meeting these minimum standards does not ensure, however, that all Acton citizens are equally able to enjoy the Town's resources. The Recreation Department and Recreation Commission are committed to improving access in every feasible way so that recreation and conservation areas can be enjoyed by all interested individuals.

Along with the Land Stewardship Committee, the Conservation Division continues to evaluate parking lots, access roads, and trail networks to ensure their safety. The Land Stewardship Committee monitors the trails, removes trees blocking access, and constructs boardwalks and bridges in flooded areas.



Acton Conservation Trust and Acton Conservation Division lead weekly guided hike through Nagog Hill Conservation Land

Increase communication and education surrounding Town programming and facilities

One of the key takeaways from the community engagement process was the need for increased communication about recreational opportunities. Making residents aware of the many wonderful opportunities the Town offers for passive and active recreation will enhance utilization. In addition, with greater participation comes greater awareness of facility improvement and maintenance requirements, enhancing buy-in as fiscal needs arise. In order to effectively reach the Town's population, the Recreation Department and Conservation Division are exploring new and improved communication options

The Conservation Division has plans to be more active in the community, participating in public programming, and developing educational curricula. It is imperative to find effective ways to inform the public of these events, by first learning the communication preferences of the population. These methods might include increased presence on social media and coordination with local newspapers.

Improve and expand existing recreation facilities to meet the needs of the community

With the number of recreational facilities in Town, there is almost always a need to be updating or maintaining existing facilities. This includes increasing accessibility while also ensuring that all facilities are up-to-date and meet recent safety standards.

Demand for the use of Acton fields has grown consistently, diminishing turf quality and creating scheduling conflicts. With the increasing pressure on existing resources, it is important that all fields be maintained in top condition to maximize their ability to meet recreational needs. The Recreation Commission and Recreation Department are determined to identify alternate sites for creating additional field space while optimizing the use of existing fields, with the ultimate goal of accommodating all participants.

At many facilities such as NARA and Jones Field, there is a need for updating infrastructure. For example, lighting in parking lots and clear signage for specific rules for each location are needed. Additionally, resilience features, including sunshade, should be considered.



Community garden in Spring at Morrison Farm

7

Create new facilities and programming to meet the changing needs of the community

As the demographics of Acton continue to change over time, the Town must make sure to consider and address the needs of all community members. Differences across demographics make this a particularly challenging objective. The Town could create different facilities to address varying needs, such as a park specifically designed for the senior population.

Additionally, as the needs of the community continue to change especially

as new recreational opportunities grow in popularity, it is important for the Recreation Department and Recreation Commission to stay current with the times. For example, with sports like disc golf and pickle ball growing in popularity, the community has expressed a desire to add facilities for these types of activities. There has also been increased momentum to add a dog park in Town.

As climate concerns increase, resilience solutions for recreation facilities become more important. Providing water access on particularly hot days is an important

step to address this. There are limited opportunities in Town where park users can directly access the water. A new park along River Street could provide additional opportunities for this critical access. Town Residents have expressed an interest in a Town water spray park, another creative solution for addressing the need for cooling during periods of extreme heat. Focusing efforts on developing pocket parks is another way to increase Town green space. Pocket parks are small, easily accessible areas of open public space that offer an informal gathering place for people of all ages. They can be naturalized settings, gardens, small playgrounds, or simply attractive and inviting areas for public enjoyment. Pocket parks that incorporate shaded seating areas can also be an important resilience measure by providing relief from heat.

C. MANAGEMENT NEEDS, POTENTIAL CHANGES OF USE

Coordination between Town departments (Recreation, Conservation, Planning, Sustainability, Public Works, GIS, etc.)

To effectively address the multifaceted needs of the community and successfully accomplish the goals and objectives outlined in this plan, it is crucial for

Town staff to engage in continuous coordination across various departments. The complexity of identified needs underscores the reality that no single department can independently fulfill them; hence, a collaborative and concerted effort is essential for the comprehensive success of the Plan. Specifically, the Recreation Department and Conservation Division rely significantly on the Department of Public Works for critical tasks such as facility maintenance and mowing. Establishing a comprehensive plan and maintaining an open line of communication among departments will foster a spirit of teamwork while resulting in the development of an efficient and effective schedule of work.

Furthermore, close collaboration with the Planning Division and the Sustainability Department is paramount for meeting the community's needs in relation to climate resilience, advancing net-zero efforts, and implementing necessary bylaw and zoning updates. By aligning with these key stakeholders, the Town can proactively address emerging challenges and opportunities, thus propelling the goals of this plan forward in a manner that is both sustainable and community-centric.

Through these collaborative efforts, we can strengthen our capacity to respond to the evolving needs of our community and collectively work towards a more resilient and sustainable future.

Consider sustainability and climate resilience when making open space and recreation decisions

The effective integration of this plan with the Town's Climate Action Plan is critical for making sure decisions related to recreation and open space align with the overarching community climate goals. The preservation of open space for conservation

emerges as a keystone strategy, holding profound implications for climate resilience. As the Town progresses in its decision-making processes regarding open space, the commitment to conserve these areas becomes not only an environmental imperative but also a proactive response to the evolving impacts of climate change.

Simultaneously, the expansion and modernization of recreation facilities provides an opportune moment to embed climate-conscious practices within the Town's recreation offerings. Beyond merely addressing the recreational



Ducks on NARA Pond Photo by Narci Wood



Trees in Fall Photo by Nora Masler

needs of the community, these facilities should be designed with climate resilience at the forefront. The strategic incorporation of green infrastructure, sustainable landscaping, and innovative water management systems is essential for enhancing the environmental sustainability of these spaces. Moreover, a concerted effort towards electrification, wherever feasible, emphasizes the commitment to reducing the carbon footprint associated with recreation facilities. This contributes to the broader community's journey toward a more sustainable and resilient future.

Focus efforts on inclusion, diversity, and celebrating Acton's historic and cultural heritage

Engaging the Town's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Office is not just a recommended practice; it is essential for fostering an inclusive community where every member's voice is heard and acknowledged. By consulting with this office, we can proactively identify strategies and initiatives to address the diverse needs and perspectives of our community. This collaborative approach aligns with the principles of equity and inclusivity, working towards creating an environment

where everyone feels represented and valued in decision-making processes. As we strive to build a stronger and more connected community, the insights and expertise provided by the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Office will be instrumental in shaping policies and practices that promote fairness and equal opportunity for all.

Moreover, in our pursuit of enhancing recreational facilities and preserving our conservation lands, it is imperative to take a thoughtful approach to integrating and safeguarding the rich history and culture of Acton. This involves finding creative and respectful ways to incorporate elements that celebrate the Town's heritage and acknowledge the cultural diversity that contributes to its vibrancy. By weaving these historical and cultural aspects into the fabric of our recreational spaces and conservation lands, we pay homage to Acton's unique identity while creating environments that resonate with the community on a deeper level. This intentional integration can foster a sense of pride and connection, reinforcing the idea that these public spaces truly belong to everyone in Acton.



SECTION 8: GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goal #1: Preserve and Protect the Historic, Cultural, Agricultural, and Scenic Features of Acton	180	Improve access to and use of managed conservation areas	186
Preserve and protect forests and trees	180	Goal #3: Improve and Expand Recreation Opportunities	187
Manage and protect existing and new open fields and meadows	181	Expand universal accessibility to open space and recreation sites	187
Support local farms and farming	181	Expand public outreach to better inform the public of available passive and active recreation opportunities	187
Maintain communication with key landowners	182	Improve and expand the facilities at the Nathaniel Allen Recreation Area (NARA Park)	188
Continue focusing efforts on celebrating Acton's historic and cultural heritage	182	Create additional facilities to meet the diverse needs of the Town	188
Goal #2: Protect Critical Environmental Resources, Including Ground and Surface Water, Wildlife, Diverse Habitats and Ecosystems	183	Improve and update existing facilities to ensure they are safe, accessible, and current	189
Preserve and protect Acton's water supplies and conservation values	183	Enhance the quality of Acton's athletic fields	189
Ensure permanent protection status of all conservation parcels and other parcels of ecological importance	184	Goal #4: Incorporate Sustainability in Current and Future Open Space and Recreation Decisions	189
Manage invasive species on town-owned parcels	184	Integrate climate resilience in open spaces and recreation facilities	189
Develop, extend, and maintain trail networks	185	Improve the energy efficiency of recreation buildings and include clean energy upgrades, where possible, to reach net-zero emissions	190
Improve, create, and protect wildlife corridors	185		
Increase public outreach, education, and communication regarding conservation and environmental protection	186		

This Section sets forth four high-level goals as the guiding principles of Acton's efforts to preserve and protect open space and enhance recreational opportunities for the enjoyment of all residents. This section also summarizes the importance of each overarching goal and reflects the discussions, analyses, and input from the many contributors to this Plan. Tasks are closely aligned with the needs presented in Section 7 and are intended to preserve critical features, protect environmental resources, provide adequate recreational outlets, and incorporate sustainability.

Goal #1: Preserve and Protect the Historic, Cultural, Agricultural, and Scenic Features of Acton

Preserve and protect forests and trees

Protecting forests and trees is crucial for maintaining biodiversity, mitigating climate change, and preserving essential ecosystems. In 2022, the voters at Town Meeting passed a non-binding resolution to have the Select Board bring forth a bylaw that addresses land and tree-clearing limits. In 2023, the Select Board published their short and long-term goals. This included bringing this bylaw to Town

Meeting. Implementing a thoughtful tree protection bylaw could contribute to preservation of environmental quality and sustainable development.

Additionally, the Town is committed to preserving forested open space using CPA funding. Town conservation lands and Town Forests that lack species and age diversity could benefit greatly from an investment in targeted forest management. By implementing sustainable forestry practices, the Town can maintain a biodiverse ecosystem that supports a variety of plant and animal species. This includes the protection of native flora and fauna, such as rare or endangered species, which contribute to overall biodiversity and ecological balance. Well-managed forests act as carbon sinks, playing a vital role in mitigating climate change by absorbing and storing carbon dioxide. Acton's commitment to sustainable forest practices can contribute to the Town's carbon sequestration efforts, making it an integral part of broader climate resilience strategies.



Agricultural harvest in Acton

Manage and protect existing and new open fields and meadows

Maintaining and mowing existing meadows prevents invasive plant species from outcompeting native species in the natural habitat. The Town mows these meadows annually in the fall, prior to the first frost. The Department of Public Works staff assist by mowing: Morrison Farm, the Arboretum, Grassy Pond, Heath Hen Meadow, Stoneymeade, Wright Hill, Guggins Brook, and Pratt's Brook. Conservation staff contract out the mowing of the remaining meadows: Jenks, Knowlton, Anthem Village, and Nagog Hill. It is critical to ensure that these valuable areas are maintained each year in accordance with meadow management plans.

In addition to protecting existing meadows, the public has pushed for an effort to increase meadow habitats for birds and pollinators. These habitats, rich in wildflowers and native plants, provide crucial foraging and nesting sites for bees, butterflies, and other pollinators. By supporting diverse insect populations, these meadows contribute to the pollination of flowering plants, ensuring the reproduction of many species and



Dandelions preparing to disperse seeds in Wetherbee Conservation Land

promoting overall ecosystem resilience. Furthermore, these meadows serve as essential corridors for wildlife, fostering biodiversity and creating a balanced and sustainable environment. Therefore, the Town aims to promote and revitalize meadow habitats wherever possible.

Support local farms and farming

The community has emphasized that farming and agriculture are a priority for the Town. In 2019, the voters at Town Meeting approved the Right-to-Farm Bylaw. The following year, the Town established

an Agricultural Commission to conduct outreach to local farms and focus efforts on preserving farmland. Later in 2020, the Agricultural Commission assisted in the permanent protection of Stonefield Farm. The Agricultural Commission is now in the process of drafting a Comprehensive Agriculture Plan. As part of this plan, the Agricultural Commission will look to identify areas with prime agricultural soils, parcels that may be suitable for an Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR), and a consistent path for establishing APRs.



Native Swallowtail butterfly perched on native Milkweed, a host species for the butterfly

The Agricultural Commission is dedicated to educating the community on the need for local farming and the various ways of protecting farmland, such as Chapter 61 and cluster developments. They are also exploring additional creative ways of encouraging local farming such as transfer of development rights and zoning changes that would allow for small-scale farming.

Maintain communication with key landowners

One of the most important factors in acquiring open space is availability. Maintaining communication with key landowners helps foster a strong relationship that allows the Town to be aware of valuable parcels that may become available. The Open Space Committee works closely with the Acton Conservation Trust and Sudbury Valley Trustees to maintain communication with key landowners for options to acquire attractive parcels. The Open Space Committee and the Acton Conservation Trust continue to purchase open space. Most recently, the Town coordinated with Sudbury Valley Trustees and the Acton Water District to facilitate the acquisition of the land at 549 Main Street (now owned by the Acton Water District). The Town

helped facilitate permanent protection of this land via a Conservation Restriction held jointly by the Acton Conservation Commission and Sudbury Valley Trustees.

Additionally, the Town has recently acquired or protected 180 Newtown Road; 549 Main Street; 13 Arlington Street (Anderson Land); Newtown Road Rear; 330 Central Street (Wright Hill); 176 Central Street (Heath Hen Meadow); 161 Newtown Road; and 4 Piper Lane.

Continue focusing efforts on celebrating Acton's historic and cultural heritage

Acton has a rich historic and cultural heritage that tells a story about the Town's unique background and the diverse influences that have shaped its identity. Through the public process, the Town expressed an appetite to continue building on the progress made by various groups and committees to ensure the recognition and preservation of the Town's historic and cultural heritage.

The Friends of Pinehawk assisted in the creation of the Trail Through Time, a two-mile bi-cultural heritage trail which showcases a journey into the past. In 2023, the Town completed the East Acton Village

Green, including informational signage about the Nashoba Praying Indians. The official opening of the park included a special ceremony led by Strong Bear Medicine and his family. Efforts should be made to continue this mission and to create similar initiatives throughout Town.

In 2022, an Archeology Bylaw, sponsored by the Historical Commission, was passed at the Annual Town Meeting. It ensures that archaeologically-significant features can be documented prior to land disturbance in large areas. Plans to evaluate and preserve such features on Town land can be based on this bylaw.

Goal #2: Protect Critical Environmental Resources, Including Ground and Surface Water, Wildlife, Diverse Habitats and Ecosystems

Preserve and protect Acton's water supplies and conservation values

Water protection is vital for preserving ecosystems, supporting agriculture, and ensuring access to clean drinking water, all of which are critical for human well-being and environmental stability. In 2023, the Town worked with the Acton Water District to protect 549 Main Street as a

critical water supply. The Conservation Commission and Open Space Committee should continue to work jointly with the Acton Water District to identify and acquire parcels with potential to further conservation interests, protect wells, and allow for passive recreation. Pursuing state and federal funding for Zone 1 and 2 protections aids this effort. The Water Resources Advisory Committee developed a draft bylaw, Chapter U, regulating storm water runoff. Its passage will help to reduce surface water pollutants that contaminate groundwater.

At the 2023 Town Meeting, the groundwater protection zones were updated to reflect potential future wells and to add Maynard's groundwater protection Zone 2 in South Acton. Additionally, in 2017, the Stormwater Management and Erosion Control Regulations were adopted at Town Meeting. Continuing these efforts to update and ensure implementation of groundwater and stormwater protections is essential to achieving this objective.



Strong Bear Medicine, a Nashoba Praying Indian at the recently installed TTT East Acton Village Native American interpretive panel, that he and Dan Boudillion provided the text and images for. Neil Horsky drew the map. Photo by Bettina Abe.



Pileated Woodpecker hotel, Ice House Pond

Ensure permanent protection status of all conservation parcels and other parcels of ecological importance

Over the years, the Town has dedicated significant resources to ensure the protection of valuable open space. Taking appropriate measures to protect these parcels is critical for maintaining their conservation value. A number of the Town's vital conservation areas lack permanent protection status. These comprise more than fifty acres in total, many functioning as important corridors. Placing conservation restrictions on the more vulnerable parcels is crucial to their permanent protection. (*See Section 5, Land Chart.)

The Conservation Commission currently holds seven Conservation Restrictions that do not have baseline documentation and are not regularly monitored. The Town received funding in 2023 to begin developing a program for appropriate protection for these parcels. The program will need to be implemented and additional funding will be required in the future.

Manage invasive species on town-owned parcels

Invasive species pose multifaceted threats to the local environment. These threats include habitat disruption, loss of biodiversity, and impact on water bodies. Their presence can displace native fauna, affect recreational activities, and complicate restoration efforts. Addressing these dangers requires collaborative efforts to detect, monitor, and effectively manage invasive species to safeguard the ecological balance and well-being of the local community. Protective actions against invasive species include:

- Continuing to assist the Land Stewardship Committee in the ongoing removal of targeted species on conservation land
- Continuing efforts to recruit hand-pickers and educate gardeners and landscape managers on how to avoid and remove invasive plants
- Coordinating annual efforts to remove invasive water chestnut from Ice House Pond and Robbins Mill Pond

The Land Stewards address non-indigenous species issues on conservation lands through volunteer work- days. A tractor

is used to mow meadows, minimizing the spread of undesirable plants. Volunteers also remove garlic mustard at the Arboretum and other conservation lands. The Land Stewards educate themselves and the public on best removal practices. These efforts need to be continued, including identification of priority areas and development of management plans.

Develop, extend, and maintain trail networks

Trail network extension is a priority, as it enhances community health and well-being by providing accessible outdoor spaces for increased physical activities and social connection. Linking communities through trails fosters unity by connectors and shared recreational spaces.

Over the last seven years, the Town added multiple trail systems to conservation lands:

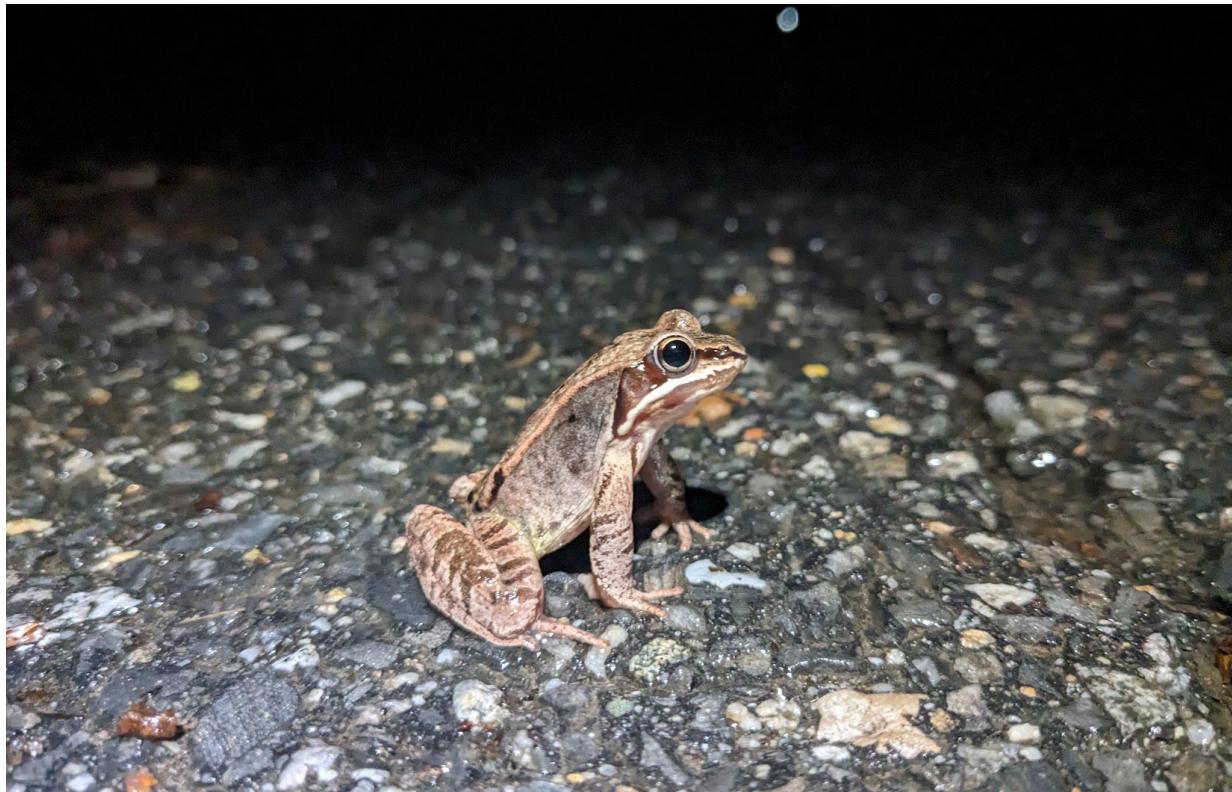
- Grassy Pond West Trail
- Anderson parcel added to Bulette Town Forest
- Trail Through Time and Robbins Mill Trail
- Assabet River Blue and Green Trails
- Wright Hill Conservation Land

In addition to continuing to maintain existing trails, the Conservation Division, in collaboration with the Open Space Committee, plan to focus efforts on looking for opportunities for new trail connections.

Improve, create, and protect wildlife corridors

Wildlife corridors connect habitats, promoting biodiversity by enabling species movement. They maintain genetic

diversity, aid migration, and help species adapt to climate change. Corridors prevent habitat fragmentation, mitigate human-wildlife conflicts, and support ecosystem functionality. Additionally, they play a crucial role in sustaining healthy ecosystems, contributing to the conservation of endangered species while offering economic and recreational benefits. To create and protect wildlife corridors, regional planning within Acton,



Wood Frog Photo by Ian Bergermann



Native Plantings of Joe Pye weed at the Morrison Farm meadow

as well as with abutting towns is essential. Open space parcels are valuable as wildlife habitat. Space for human activity is also important. These can both be accomplished by protecting critical open space parcels that facilitate habitat connections, while also developing strategies to sustainably co-exist with wildlife.

Increase public outreach, education, and communication regarding conservation and environmental protection

Public outreach and education are vital for creating awareness, fostering sustainable practices, and inspiring positive behavioral change. By engaging communities, empowering advocacy, and instilling environmental stewardship, these efforts contribute to a more conscious and sustainable society. This prepares

communities for environmental challenges while promoting global collaboration.

Feedback from the public outreach process called for increased programming and communication. In order to achieve this, an educational curriculum could be developed, including a focused presence on social media to help distribute the information.

Improve access to and use of managed conservation areas

To ensure that individuals of all abilities can enjoy outdoor activities, accessibility on trails is crucial. Accessibility fosters inclusivity and promotes physical and mental well-being, while providing equal opportunities for everyone to experience nature's beauty.

Over time, the Acton Arboretum has seen improvements in accessibility, including a new entrance and boardwalk. To make the Arboretum a universally accessible park, the Conservation Division needs to continue to focus on it. Throughout Acton's conservation lands, replacing boardwalks and maintaining parking lots requires a similar focus.

Goal #3: Improve and Expand Recreation Opportunities

Expand universal accessibility to open space and recreation sites

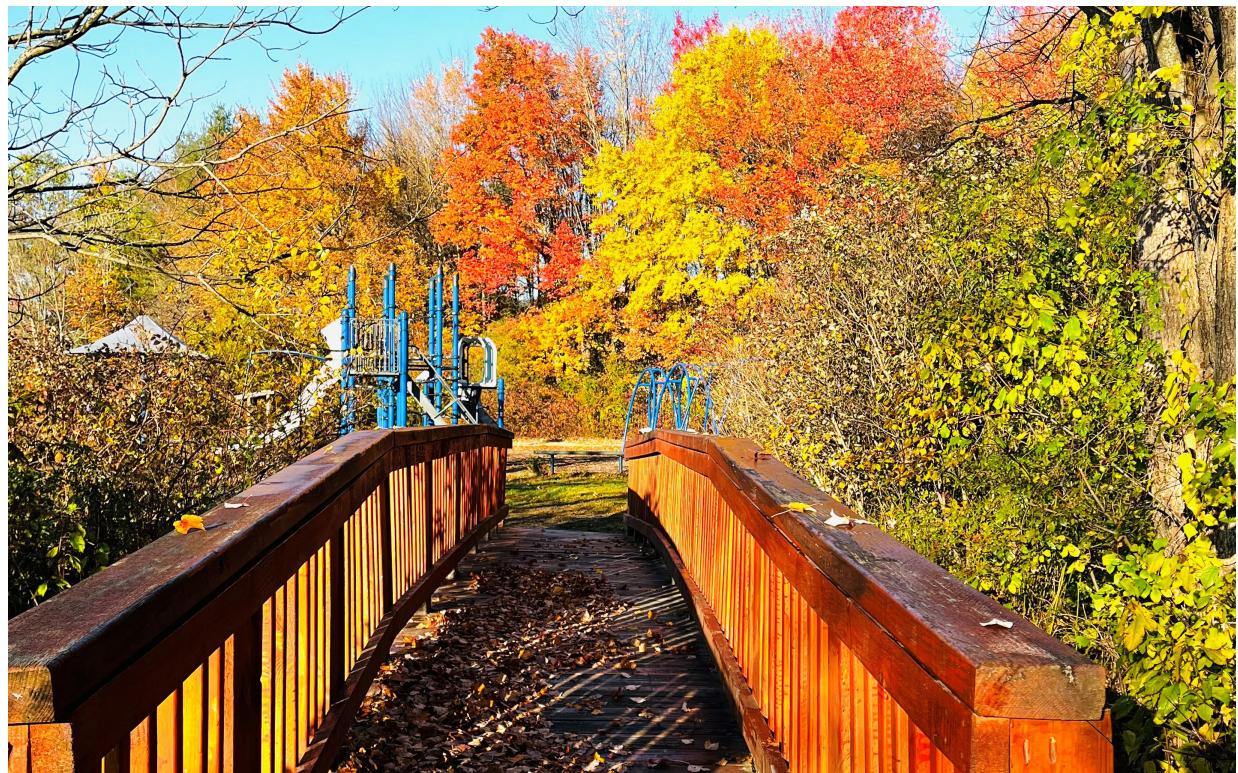
It is essential to provide universal access to recreational facilities. This ensures that children and adults of all abilities can engage in activities that foster social inclusion, physical development, and emotional well-being, promoting equality and understanding among peers. As a major focus, the Recreation Department introduced accessibility improvements to Gardner Playground (2023); Goward Playground (2013); Elm Street Playgrounds (2014 and 2023); and Jones Playground (2020). Although the Recreation Department made significant progress, it will still need to stay ahead of this ongoing objective, including work at Veterans Field and Great Hill.

Expand public outreach to better inform the public of available passive and active recreation opportunities

Successful recreation programing requires building awareness of the opportunities provided. The Recreation Department has made this a priority; however, ongoing improvement is vital. Currently, Recreation

utilizes several channels for disseminating information including social media, the Town website, and posted flyers. Major communication enhancements could include paper and web-based accessibility brochures for the conservation land trail system and each recreation facility. These could detail trail conditions and other components of accessibility. In addition, to encourage the use of Acton's open

space resources, we could add information to guidebooks about trail suitability for passive recreation. These activities could include hiking, horseback riding, and cross-country skiing.



Boardwalk to recreation area Photo by Mao Quiping



Beachgoers at NARA Park

8 Improve and expand the facilities at the Nathaniel Allen Recreation Area (NARA Park)

NARA's facilities have become the center of summertime recreational and cultural activities in Acton. The Town recently improved NARA with the addition of the Miracle Field, Sports Plaza, concession stand, and bike pump rack. Developing the Master Plan for NARA is an important step in systematically enhancing and improving this major recreational resource. Section 9, the Rollout Plan for NARA, lists activities

planned to enhance its use as a recreational and cultural facility.

- Add shade structures at the NARA Sports Plaza.
- Add sidewalk extensions linking Veterans Field to NARA
- Improve universal accessibility
- Add signage along Route 2
- Add new signage at NARA
- Renovate NARA playground

Create additional facilities to meet the diverse needs of the Town

The needs and desires of the community continue to evolve as demographics and interests change. It is important to stay updated and ensure that the Town's efforts address the desires of all community members. Resident requests for additional recreational facilities abound. These include requests for a skating rink, splash pads, dog park, pickle ball courts, disc golf, a senior park, and more parking at all facilities. Acton has limited aquatic resources and NARA is the only public swimming facility in Town. Use of Nagog Pond in some recreational capacity would be a major benefit. There is now a preliminary architectural design drawing for a proposed senior park, targeted at our senior population. This project, along with the Acton Community Dog Park, would be located with the McManus Senior Housing Project as part of the planned Main Street Campus. Another focus of the community is to develop pocket parks and green spaces throughout Town villages.

Improve and update existing facilities to ensure they are safe, accessible, and current

Although adding new recreational facilities is an important objective, it is equally critical that existing facilities be maintained and kept up-to-date. The Town rolls out such improvements based on priority and feasibility. Some future improvements include new or extended parking lots for some of the playground and conservation areas and shade structures for Jones and Gardner Playgrounds. Other playgrounds are monitored and addressed as needed. Improving and enhancing existing facilities to maximize usability are Town priorities. Several playgrounds are either overdue or are scheduled for replacement within the next four years: Veterans Field Playground (due in 2-3 years) and NARA (with within 5-7 years). The design and construction of these playground facilities will ensure universal accessibility for all.

Enhance the quality of Acton's athletic fields

Maintenance of athletic fields, with a focus on safety and quality, is an ongoing priority. The Town aims to be environmentally responsible, while

ensuring well maintained surfaces for youth activities. To extend the use of the fields while minimizing maintenance, the Town installed artificial turf fields at Acton-Boxborough Regional High School. This demonstrated the benefit of this approach, and the Town will explore additional installations. Employing environmentally-responsible maintenance techniques requires an investment in educating the Town maintenance staff. This includes using environmentally-sound approaches to turf management while engaging qualified outside contractors to augment Town resources.

Goal #4: Incorporate Sustainability in Current and Future Open Space and Recreation Decisions

Integrate climate resilience in open spaces and recreation facilities

Climate-resilient outdoor spaces are essential for communities, providing adaptable environments that withstand climate change impacts. Beyond aesthetics, they promote well-being, biodiversity, and community cohesion. By integrating sustainable practices, these spaces contribute to environmental and social



Flox and trumpet vine, perennial garden at the Acton Arboretum

resilience, emphasizing the importance of sustainable design in our changing climate.

The Town's Climate Action Plan highlights the need to protect open space and integrate climate-resilient facilities.

Pairing the protection of vital ecosystems with infrastructure that can improve preparedness against a changing climate is a priority for the Town.

Improve the energy efficiency of recreation buildings and include clean energy upgrades, where possible, to reach net-zero emissions

Vital for environmental sustainability, opting for energy-efficient buildings reduces greenhouse gas emissions and lowers utility costs. They promote occupant health and well-being by enhancing indoor comfort and air quality. Investing in energy-efficient construction not only saves resources but also sets a precedent for responsible building practices, contributing to a more sustainable future.

As the Town works towards its goal of net zero by 2030, focusing efforts on recreation facilities will be a key factor. In 2023, the Town started to install electric vehicle chargers at various recreation

facilities, such as Veterans Field and NARA and aims to find additional suitable locations. Additionally, the Town can continue to move away from fossil fuel use in infrastructure and maintenance equipment.



Snowfall at the Acton Arboretum. picnic site

SECTION 9: SEVEN YEAR ACTION PLAN

Goal #1: Preserve and protect the historic, cultural, agricultural, and scenic features of Acton	192	Goal #3: improve and expand recreational opportunities for everyone	196
Preserve and protect forest and trees	192	Expand universal accessibility to open space and recreation sites	196
Manage and protect existing and new open fields and meadows	192	Expand public outreach and communication to better inform the public of available passive and active recreation opportunities	196
Support local farms and farming	192	Improve and expand the facilities at the Nathaniel Allen Recreational Area (NARA)	196
Maintain communication with key landowners	192	Develop and implement an integrated Main Street Campus plan	197
Continue focusing efforts on celebrating Acton's historic and cultural heritage	193	Create additional facilities and programming to meet the diverse needs of the town	197
Goal #2: Protect critical environmental resources, Including ground and surface water, wildlife, diverse habitats and ecosystems	193	Improve and update existing facilities	198
Preserve and protect Acton's water supplies and conservation values	193	Ensure playground facilities are made up-to-date, safe and accessible	198
Ensure permanent protection status of conservation parcels and other parcels of ecological importance	193	Enhance the quality of Acton's athletic fields	198
Manage invasive species on Town owned parcels	194	Acquire and develop pocket parks/commons in Acton Villages	198
Develop, extend and maintain trail networks	194	Goal #4: Incorporate sustainability in current and future open space and recreation decisions	199
Improve, create and protect wildlife corridors	195	Integrate climate resilience in open spaces and recreation facilities	199
Increase public outreach, education and communication regarding conservation and environmental protection	195	Improve the energy efficiency of recreation buildings & include clean energy upgrades where possible to reach net zero emissions	199
Improve access to and use of managed conservation areas	195		



Action	Funding	Responsible	Est. Date	Priority
Goal #1: Preserve and protect the historic, cultural, agricultural, and scenic features of Acton				
Preserve and protect forest and trees				
Identify locations that may benefit from forest management techniques and/or a forest management plan.	Town of Acton	Conservation Division	2027	2
Find a suitable location and begin a street-tree nursery on municipal land	Town of Acton	Conservation/Department of Public Works	2029	3
Continue working in conjunction with the Tree Warden, continue a tree planting and replacement program along Acton's streets	Town of Acton	Conservation/Department of Public Works	Ongoing	2
Replace dead apple trees in the Arboretum with new apple trees	Friends of Acton Arboretum	Friends of Acton Arboretum	Ongoing	2
Explore bylaw changes that seek to encourage the protection of trees	Town of Acton	Land Use Department	2025	1
Manage and protect existing and new open fields and meadows				
Implement the Meadow Management Plans for NARA, Morrison Farm, Grassy Pond, Heath Hen, Stoneymeade, and Jenks conservation areas	Town of Acton	Conservation Division/Land Stewardship Committee	Ongoing	1
Develop a plan to ensure proper and timely mowing of meadows on conservation lands	Town of Acton	Conservation Division/Land Stewardship Committee	2025	1
Apply for local, state and federal grants for land and water protection	n/a	Conservation Division/Open Space Committee/Agricultural Commission	Ongoing	2
Re-establish the healthy meadow habitat at Nagog Hill Conservation Area	Town of Acton	Conservation Division/Land Stewardship Committee	2026	2
Identify new locations for potential pollinator meadows and gardens	n/a	Conservation Division/Land Stewardship Committee	2025	3
Support local farms and farming				
Implement zoning changes to support smaller commercial agricultural operations	n/a	Planning Division/Agricultural Commission	2026	1
Identify parcels that would be good candidates for agricultural preservation restrictions	Community Preservation Act	Agricultural Commission/Acton Conservation Trust	Ongoing	2
Work with the State, Land Trusts, and individual property owners to effectively establish CRs/APRs on State owned land within Acton.	n/a	Open Space Committee/ Agricultural Commission/ Acton Conservation Trust	Ongoing	3
Explore broader use of Transfer of Development rights to prevent large land parcels from becoming fragmented	n/a	Land Use Department/ Agricultural Commission/ Acton Conservation Trust	2028	2
Maintain communication with key landowners				
At the monthly meetings with the Open Space Committee and Acton Conservation Trust, continue discussions regarding additional open space protection for all of Acton's conservation parcels.	n/a	Open Space Committee/Conservation Division/ Acton Conservation Trust	Ongoing	2

Action	Funding	Responsible	Est. Date	Priority
Continue focusing efforts on celebrating Acton's historic and cultural heritage				
Maintain communications with local tribe members	n/a	Town of Acton/Friends of Pine Hawk	Ongoing	1
Increase education surrounding cultural and geological history of parcels	n/a	Town of Acton/Friends of Pine Hawk	Ongoing	1
Develop a strategy for evaluating and preserving existing historic features, such as stone walls and archaeological artifacts on Town land	Community Preservation Act	Planning Division/Historical Commission	2028	2
Develop a walking route with informational kiosks at strategic locations telling the story of the Acton Minutemen as they marched to Concord	Town of Acton	Historical Commission/Conservation Division	2029	3
Initiate an archeological survey of the sewer property on Adams street	Town of Acton	Conservation Division/Friends of Pine Hawk	2029	3
Goal #2: Protect critical environmental resources, including ground and surface water, wildlife, diverse habitats and ecosystems				
Preserve and protect Acton's water supplies and conservation values				
Work with the Water District to identify and purchase protected open space parcels with value for existing well-field protection, new well potential and conservation value	Community Preservation Act	Open Space Committee/Acton Water District	Ongoing	1
Work with surrounding towns for a regional approach to water protection	n/a	Water Resource Advisory Committee/Acton Water District	2027	3
Review the condition of municipal parking lots and develop a plan to address storm water runoff	Town of Acton	Municipal Properties/Engineering Department	2027	2
Focus education efforts toward property owners who abut critical water supplies	n/a	Water Resource Advisory Committee	Ongoing	3
Facilitate the review and update of models used for groundwater protection zones	Town of Acton	Water Resource Advisory Committee/Acton Water District	Ongoing	2
Identify partnerships that can help leverage resources to protect land and water supply	n/a	Water Resource Advisory Committee/Acton Water District	Ongoing	3
Ensure that development and maintenance plans for new recreational facilities are in alignment with the goal of groundwater protection	n/a	Water Resource Advisory Committee/Recreation Department	Ongoing	2
Ensure permanent protection status of conservation parcels and other parcels of ecological importance				
Rezone and place permanent restrictions on properties considered part of the Conservation Areas but are municipal properties with no permanent protection status	Community Preservation Act	Conservation Commission/Conservation Division	2029	3
Create baseline documentation for existing conservation restrictions held by the Town and implement an annual monitoring program	Town of Acton	Conservation Commission/Conservation Division	Ongoing	2

Action	Funding	Responsible	Est. Date	Priority
Explore bringing a proposal to Town Meeting to permanently protect Morrison Farm with a conservation restriction	Acton Conservation Trust	Agricultural Commission	2027	2
Explore zoning changes that pairs new housing with targeted open space protection	n/a	Land Use Department	Ongoing	1
Manage invasive species on Town owned parcels				
Continue to update the invasive plant species plan, and implement its recommendations	Town of Acton	Land Stewardship Committee/ Conservation Division	Ongoing	1
Evaluate various invasive species management strategies	n/a	Land Stewardship Committee/ Conservation Division	Ongoing	3
Continue efforts to recruit hand-pickers, and to educate gardeners and landscape managers on how to avoid and remove invasive plants	n/a	Land Stewardship Committee/ Conservation Division	Ongoing	2
Install "Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers" signs at regularly-paddled waterways such as the Canoe Launch off Route 62, Ice House Pond off Concord Road in North Acton, and Mill Pond in South Acton	Town of Acton	Conservation Division	2026	3
Periodically publicize and make available to the general public informational articles and handouts regarding invasive species recognition and control techniques	Town of Acton	Conservation Division	Ongoing	2
Coordinate annual efforts to remove invasive water chestnuts from Ice House Pond and Robbins Mill Pond	Town of Acton	Conservation Division	Ongoing	1
Develop, extend and maintain trail networks				
Develop a trail system in West Acton Center, from Arlington Street to Route 111 on parcel F-2, 75-14, 8 Knowlton Drive	Community Preservation Act	Land Stewardship Committee/ Conservation Division	2027	2
Develop a trail system on the 20 acre Anderson Land, on Arlington Street near Newtown Road purchased in 2013	Town of Acton	Land Stewardship Committee/ Conservation Division	2024	1
Initiate discussions with the Concord Water District to secure access to land running along the shore of Nagog Pond, creating a permanent corridor through the Nagog Hill property to the Sara Doublet property in Littleton	n/a	Conservation Division	2027	2
Develop a trail from Knox Trail to the W.R. Grace property	Town of Acton	Land Stewardship Committee/ Conservation Division	2027	3
Build boardwalk and expand trail network to the north side of Pacy land	Town of Acton	Land Stewardship Committee/ Conservation Division	2029	2
Explore opportunities to connect existing trails to the abandoned rail bed in North Acton which extends into Westford	Town of Acton	Conservation Division/Open Space Committee	2029	3

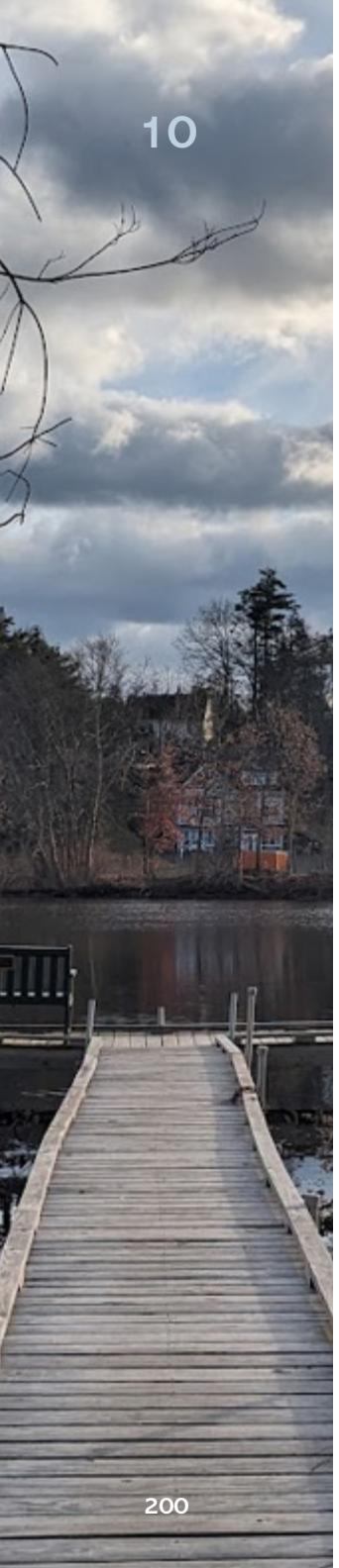
Action	Funding	Responsible	Est. Date	Priority
Improve, create and protect wildlife corridors				
Install "Caution: Turtle Crossing" signs at Route 2A/27 and Route 111 (Fort Pond Brook) and Newtown Road (Conant Brook)	Town of Acton	Conservation Division	2025	2
Create wood turtle nesting habitat at mill dam road parcel	Town of Acton	Conservation Division	2027	2
Organize annual events to facilitate the safe crossing of amphibians during migration	Town of Acton	Conservation Division	ongoing	1
Develop a plan to protect riverine habitat along Grassy Pond Brook and the vernal pools located in adjacent properties	Town of Acton	Conservation Division	2027	2
Improve existing wood turtle nesting habitat at veterans field	Town of Acton	Conservation Division	2024	2
Develop a beaver management program to sustainably address flooding caused by beaver damming	Town of Acton	Conservation Division/ Conservation Commission	2026	1
Increase public outreach, education and communication regarding conservation and environmental protection				
Develop a seasonal educational curriculum focused on environmental awareness, including workshops, awareness campaigns and nature walks	Town of Acton	Conservation Division/Recreation Department/ Acton Conservation Trust	Ongoing	1
Develop updated trail guides and informational pamphlets for all Conservation Land	Town of Acton	Conservation Division	2025	2
In collaboration with Friends of the Acton Arboretum, initiate seasonal public walks at the Arboretum	n/a	Conservation Div./Friends of Acton Arboretum	Ongoing	
	Ongoing	2	Ongoing	
Upgrade Conservation Land Maps to include better electronic options, including moving the trail data to publicly available mapping sources, such as Open Street Maps or Google Maps	Town of Acton	Land Stewardship Committee/ Conservation Division	Ongoing	2
Increase social media presence including monthly posts about conservation lands and environmental education				
Install additional stream signs at the following locations: Assabet River – Route 62, Inch Brook- Route 111, Nashoba Brook – Route 2, Fort Pond Brook – Route 111, Mary's Brook – Minot Ave. and Spencer Brook – Pope Road	Town of Acton	Conservation Division	2027	3
Create a plan and obtain funding to replace the culvert at Jenks Conservation Land	Town of Acton/ grants	Conservation Division/Land Stewardship Committee	2026	1
Regrade access road and replace culvert at Camp Acton	Community Preservation Act	Conservation Division/Land Stewardship Committee	2024	1

Action	Funding	Responsible	Est. Date	Priority
Improve and maintain the parking lot at the Nagog Hill Conservation Area	Town of Acton	Conservation Division/Land Stewardship Committee	2027	2
Improve and maintain the parking lot at Grassy Pond Conservation Areas on Nagog Hill road	Town of Acton	Conservation Division/Land Stewardship Committee	2027	2
Improve and maintain the parking lot at the Jenks Conservation Area	Town of Acton	Conservation Division/Land Stewardship Committee	2024	2
Goal #3: Improve and Expand Recreational Opportunities for Everyone				
Expand universal accessibility to open space and recreation sites				
Continue to improve Acton Arboretum universally accessible trails	Town of Acton/ Friends of Acton Arboretum	Conservation Division/Friends of Acton Arboretum	Ongoing	1
Ensure universal access at existing facilities such as NARA beach, picnic areas, and playgrounds	Community Preservation Act/ Grant	Recreation Department	Ongoing	1
Add sidewalk extensions to popular recreation sites, particularly from north of Route 2A on Route 27 (Main Street), linking Veterans Field to NARA	Town of Acton	Recreation Department/Engineering Department	Ongoing	2
Provide universal accessibility to Veteran's Field	Community Preservation Act	Recreation Department	2025	
Pave a universally accessible trail at Great Hill along the western edge of the playing field to the pond	Community Preservation Act	Recreation Department/Conservation Division	2029	3
Create accessible trail at meeting house hill	Town of Acton/Grant	Land Use Department	2030	3
Complete the trail connection through Valentine property from BFRT to Carlisle Road	Town of Acton	Land Use Department	2029	3
Expand public outreach and communication to better inform the public of available passive and active recreation opportunities				
Continue to provide opportunities for educational nature walks	n/a	Recreation Department	Ongoing	3
Promote all forms of recreation, both passive and active, through informational brochures and informed Recreation staff	Town of Acton	Recreation Department	Ongoing	1
Research, establish, post, and maintain rules and regulations to promote safe park use	Town of Acton	Recreation Department	Ongoing	2

Action	Funding	Responsible	Est. Date	Priority
Improve and expand the facilities at the Nathaniel Allen Recreational Area (NARA)				
Add Signage: "NARA" to large sign on Route 2 near Route 27 exit.	Town of Acton	Recreation Department	2026	2
Install a NARA Ledge Rock Way entrance sign to be composed of a stone base and wrought iron arch	Grant	Recreation Department	2026	1
Add lighting to parking lots	Town of Acton	Town of Acton	2030	2
Install solar panels to support energy sustainability	Grant	Town of Acton	2030	2
Install lighting around upper fields to extend usability	Community Preservation Act	Recreation Department	2029	2
Install solar lighting along pond path, and around upper and lower parking areas	Grant	Recreation Department	2031	2
Replace failing trees and plant new trees in strategic areas such as the playground and beach, to ensure shade for future generations of park patrons	Town of Acton	Recreation Department	Ongoing	1
Set up a bicycle rental and storage area for Bruce Freeman Rail Trail users	Grant	Recreation Department	2027	2
Develop and implement an integrated Main Street Campus plan				
Identify funding sources and secure funding for the dog park's design, construction, and ongoing maintenance	CPA/Grant	Recreation Department/Dog Park Committee	Ongoing	1
Oversee the design, construction and maintenance of the dog park with the Friends of the Acton Community Dog Park	CPA/Town of Acton / Grant	Recreation Department/Dog Park Committee	2025	1
Develop the initial landscape architectural plan for a Senior Park located between the Acton Community Dog Park, the McManus Manor Senior Living complex	American Rescue Plan Act	Recreation Department	2024	1
Create a plan for the long-term oversight and maintenance of the dog park	n/a	Recreation Department /Dog Park Committee	2026	1
Create additional facilities and programming to meet the diverse needs of the town				
Identify properties that can support new recreational uses, such as pickleball and disc golf	Community Preservation Act	Recreation Department	2025	1
Find a site and begin planning for a water spray park in recognition of residents' interest	Community Preservation Act	Recreation Department	2026	2
Create new or expanded parking lots at Morrison Farm and Great Hill Conservation Area off Piper Rd	Town of Acton/Community Preservation Act	Land Use Department	2029	3

Action	Funding	Responsible	Est. Date	Priority
Work with the Town of Concord and the Commonwealth to develop non-motorized boat and recreation agreement for the recreational use of Nagog Pond	ToC/ MA / Town of Acton	Recreation Department	2029	3
Increase programming efforts to meet the changing needs and desires of the community	Town of Acton	Recreation Department	Ongoing	1
Develop community gardens in West Acton	Community Preservation Act / Grant	Land Use Department	2029	2
Improve and update existing facilities				
Veterans Field: expand parking capacity and install tiered spectator seating	Community Preservation Act	Recreation Department	2031	3
Install Sunshade at Jones Field	Community Preservation Act	Recreation Department	2025	1
Install sunshade at Nara Sports Plaza replacing season tent rentals	Community Preservation Act	Recreation Department	2025	1
Build a bridge over Nashoba Brook to link the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail to this expanded recreation area	Community Preservation Act	Historical Commission/Land Use Department	2031	3
Ensure playground facilities are made up-to-date, safe and accessible				
Install new playground at the Recreation Center	Community Preservation Act	Recreation Department	2027	2
Renovate NARA Playground	Community Preservation Act	Recreation Department	2027	2
Enhance the quality of Acton's athletic fields				
Seek qualified outside contractors to augment Town staff	Town of Acton	Town of Acton	Ongoing	1
Provide education and training to maintenance staff in environmentally sound approaches to turf management	Town of Acton	Conservation Division	Ongoing	3
Renovate Goward basketball court	Community Preservation Act	Recreation Department	2028	2
Acquire and develop pocket parks/commons in Acton Villages				
Design and construct West Acton Village – Fort Pond Brook loop trail from Arlington Street to Route 111 trail at Knowlton land	Community Preservation Act	Land Use Department	2031	3
Map out short, safe and accessible walks within the villages	Community Preservation Act	Land Use Department	2028	2

Action	Funding	Responsible	Est. Date	Priority
Finish construction of 53 River Street Park	Community Preservation Act	Land Use Department	2026	1
Develop a pocket park on Patriot's Road, and loop the accessible boardwalk to Newtown Road	Community Preservation Act	Land Use Department	2028	2
In conjunction with Acton Water District, create a loop trail at Knox Trail	Community Preservation Act	Land Use Department	2028	3
Goal #4: Incorporate sustainability in current and future open space and recreation decisions				
Integrate climate resilience in open spaces and recreation facilities				
Preserve Open Spaces that contribute to carbon sequestration	Town of Acton/grants	Open Space Committee	Ongoing	2
Ensure Town-wide resilience planning takes into consideration biodiversity and natural ecosystems	Town of Acton/grants	Sustainability Department/Land Use Department	Ongoing	1
Create or rehabilitate parks with climate resilience considerations (i.e. plan green infrastructure around the protection of water resources; consider shade trees to address the heat island effect)	Town of Acton/grants	Sustainability Department/Recreation Department	Ongoing	2
Pair by-right housing with the protection or creation of open space, prioritizing the preservation of critical ecosystems	Town of Acton/grants	Land Use Department	2025	1
Improve the energy efficiency of recreation buildings & include clean energy upgrades where possible to reach net zero emissions				
Install Level 2 and Level 3 EV Chargers in recreation parking lots	Town of Acton/grants	Sustainability Department	2026	1
Replace gas-powered vehicles and mowers with efficient electric	Town of Acton/grants	Sustainability Department/Land Use Department	Ongoing	2
Assess and provide retro-commissioning services to ensure building equipment is operating at peak efficiency and pursue all cost-effective energy upgrades	Town of Acton/grants	Sustainability Department	2026	2
Electrify all heating equipment	Town of Acton/grants	Sustainability Department	2030	2



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TOWN OF ACTON

472 Main Street

Acton, Massachusetts 01720

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www.actonma.gov

Acton Select Board

To: Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) Working Group From: Acton Select Board
Date: April 29, 2024
Re: Town of Acton 2024—2031 Open Space and Recreation Plan

Members of the OSRP Working Group,

The Acton Select Board is very pleased to affirm our support of the 2024—2031 Open Space and Recreation Plan (Plan). The board voted unanimously on April 29, 2024 to endorse the Plan.

This Plan reflects an impressive multi-year public engagement process, and significant contributions of staff from many departments, including Recreation, Planning, Conservation, GIS, Sustainability, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Economic Development, and Finance.

The Plan reiterates Acton's commitment to protecting the historical, cultural, agricultural, and scenic features that contribute to the community's identity and quality of life. It also affirms Acton's dedication to improving and expanding recreational opportunities for everyone in deliberate and positive efforts to include residents and visitors regardless of ability, income, age, ethnicity and language competency.

For the first time, the Plan incorporates a clear focus on action items that address the impacts of climate change. It also strengthens the focus on surface and groundwater protection. Use of the data-supported Sudbury Valley Trustees Land Prioritization model, combined with local knowledge of unique features of the various properties in town, made for an objective analysis of the parcels and has resulted in a stronger and much more transparent scoring process/ rubric. The incorporation of local knowledge allows the value of parcels to be measured for diverse attributes: recreation potential, water protection, agricultural use, conservation, and flood control.

Working in concert with Acton's current Housing Production Plan, Climate Action Plan, the OSRP Plan will serve as an invaluable tool to inform the upcoming efforts to create an Economic Development Plan and to update the town's Comprehensive Community Plan. It will also inform the update of Acton's Hazard Mitigation Plan, the development of our Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Plan, and the update of our Vegetative Management Plan. The Plan will also prove useful as a guide for future proposed zoning changes.

We commend all the Plan contributors for such a stellar outcome, and offer our sincere gratitude,

Jim Snyder-Grant, Chair
Fran Arsenault, Vice Chair
Dean Charter, Clerk
David Martin
Alissa Nicol



Planning Board

Open Space and Recreation (OSRP) Working Group
May 21, 2024

Re: Town of Acton 2024-2031 Open Space and Recreation Plan

Dear OSRP Working Group,

The Planning Board is pleased to offer this Letter of Review for the 2024-2031 Open Space and Recreation Plan.

A tremendous amount of gratitude to all the people involved in creating such a comprehensive and well-organized document. The residents of Acton will benefit from the many ways this Open Space and Recreation Plan outlines and strategizes how to best prepare for the next generation of our small but vibrant town.

Each section within the plan is full of specific ideas and up-to-date analysis focusing on the manner in which Acton will be best prepared, not only for the moment, this year, but also for the future. In addition, within the pages of the plan are beautiful photographs, insightful charts, and a wide variety of maps that further explain the written content.

In particular, I noted the plan's astute attention to detail regarding these four important areas that require our collective attention: the extreme weather fluctuations, the need for ongoing sustainability, advancing accessibility and access, and the many ways to preserve and honor Acton's unique place in history.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jon Cappetta".

Jon Cappetta
Chair, Planning Board

TOWN OF ACTON
472 Main Street
Acton, Massachusetts 01720
Telephone (978) 929-6631
planningboard@actionma.gov



Melissa Cryan
Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs
100 Cambridge St. – Suite 900
Boston, MA 02114

Dear Ms. Cryan:

The Town of Acton's 2024 "Open Space and Recreation Plan" was recently submitted to the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) for review. The Division of Conservation Services (DCS) requires every community in the Commonwealth to submit their Open Space and Recreation Plan to their respective regional planning agency (RPA) and receive a letter of review. This review is advisory and only DCS has the power to approve a municipal open space plan. While your office reviews open space plans for compliance with your guidelines, MAPC reviews these plans for their attention to regional issues generally and more specifically for consistency with [**MetroCommon 2050**](#), the regional policy plan for the Boston metropolitan area.

Consistency with MetroCommon 2050 – MetroCommon 2050 is the official regional plan for Greater Boston. Adopted in 2021, in accordance with Massachusetts General Law, the plan seeks to expand equity throughout the region and envisions a more prosperous, resilient, and sustainable Greater Boston for existing and future residents. This vision is embodied in and supported by 11 goals, 5 action areas, 20 recommendations, 68 strategies, and over 200 policy actions. We encourage all communities within the MAPC region to become familiar with the plan by visiting www.mapc.org/get-involved/metrocommon-2050.

We are pleased to note that Acton's OSRP aligns with several key goals and action areas outlined in *MetroCommon2050*. The plan includes goals focused on expanding safe mobility infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists, enhancing connectivity to Acton's parks and open spaces. It also emphasizes the protection of ecologically significant land, not only for the benefit of the local community but also for the broader ecosystem of Greater Boston, contributing to climate change mitigation and resilience efforts.

Additionally, the OSRP highlights recent planning initiatives the Town has undertaken in partnership with MAPC and neighboring communities within the Minuteman Advisory Group on Interlocal Coordination (MAGIC) subregion. A regional approach to open space planning helps create a more integrated and sustainable open space network across the Commonwealth, enhancing mobility, livability, environmental resilience, and ensuring equitable access to recreational opportunities for all.



Surrounding Communities – The OSRP emphasizes the significance of regional open space resources in Acton, including the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail, which connects Acton to neighboring towns such as Chelmsford, Westford, and Concord. It also highlights the Bay Circuit Trail, a 200-mile corridor that stretches between the North Shore and South Shore of Massachusetts Bay, passing through 50 towns across the state.

The Acton Open Space and Recreation Plan is very comprehensive and should serve the Town well as it continues its efforts to preserve open space and provide for the recreational needs of its residents.

Thank you for the opportunity to review this plan.

Sincerely,

Andrea Harris-Long

Andrea Harris-Long, AICP
Director, Department of Land Use



Conservation Commission

April 30, 2024

Re: Town of Acton 2024-2031 Open Space and Recreation Plan

Dear OSRP Working Group,

Thank you for forwarding the final draft of the 2024-2031 Open Space and Recreation Plan. Permit me to say that that this is a sensational document, one that will set a standard for the State of Massachusetts and every city and town that complies with the requirement to produce such a study every seven years. This study builds on the 2014-2021 publication of Acton's ground-breaking OSRP that proved to be such a triumph. I can only echo what the poet said so long ago: "A thing of beauty is a joy forever." At least if the "forever" can be interpreted as being seven years, when the next OSRP iteration will be due.

One of the most impressive aspects of this plan appears on the inside cover flap. This is the list of contributors: editors, designers, photographers, authors and town staff who logged untold hours, on top of the town's regular business, on this project. There are some 60 names and departments listed, which is a testament to the volunteer spirit of Acton. This is a town that relies on volunteers to serve on its many boards and commissions, about 250 positions in all. You and your colleagues worked tirelessly to assemble the information and data packed in here, establishing a Working Group to oversee the workload and a Liaison Group to interact with contributors. And whereas in the prior publication there are lovely photographs somewhat randomly assembled, in this plan the working group put out a call for photos to the town. The result is great as the photos are thoughtfully placed and have captions and photographer identification. Thus, a host of contributors can proudly point to their participation in the process.

As to data, there is enough here to feed the appetite of any geek. There are charts and tables aplenty: town-owned land, conservation land, conservation restrictions, chapter lands, school parcels and open space usage, accessibility to public lands, Water District land, reports from the Land Stewards, Commonwealth-owned land, newly built or refurbished playgrounds so on. There is also a new perspective on issues such as DEI, and environmental justice.

So, I offer my congratulations on a job spectacularly well done and I look forward to delving into my very own copy of this encyclopedic of all things Acton.

Sincerely yours,

Terence Maitland

Terence Maitland
Chair, Conservation Commission



TOWN OF ACTON
472 Main Street
Acton, Massachusetts, 01720
Telephone 978-929-6634

Town of Acton Staff OSRP Working Group

Acton Town Hall

472 Main Street

Acton, MA 01720

Dear Town Staff OSRP Working Group -

It is my great pleasure to read and savor the 2024 - Town of Acton Open Space and Recreation Plan. This rich document is the product of hundreds of hours of volunteer and staff efforts. At first glance, the sheer beauty of the photos and layout makes an impact. Then, upon reading the details of the Open Space and Recreation Plan, we are hooked - the depth of information is outstanding.

The Town conducted a thorough public process to establish the needs of the community, including a Town-wide survey, two public forums, a goal workshop, and multiple public meetings with various Town committees. Key takeaways included the need for continued water resource protection, accessibility improvements, increased communication, and the continued creation and maintenance of trail connections.

The Town of Acton 2024-2031 Open Space and Recreation Plan is a roadmap that prioritizes sustainability, inclusivity, environmental stewardship, and cultural preservation. This plan is a compendium of rich details on all aspects of the town: conservation land, municipal land, Chapter 61, Chapter 61 A and 61B lands, water, history, recreational facilities, community gardens, species of concern, the impact of our changing climate, environmental justice, dog parks, newly created Agricultural Commission, and so much more.

We are fortunate to live in Acton, a town with an abundance of public spirit with residents who are willing to support The Open Space and Recreation Plan, Community Preservation funds and volunteer efforts, these many acquisitions and accomplishments.

In summary, with the public engagement process, together, the Town Staff Working Group and the community developed the goals and objectives of this plan.

My personal thanks and appreciation go out to every person who worked on this Open Space and Recreation Plan, as well as to the approximately 250 town residents who serve as appointees on various boards and commissions and all the volunteers who turn out for conservation projects.

My congratulations to all!



Karen O'Neill

Chair, Open Space Committee



Acton Dog Park Committee
Town of Acton
472 Main Street
Acton, Massachusetts 01720

To: Open Spaces and Recreation Plan (OSRP) Working Group
From: Acton Dog Park Committee
Date: May 22, 2024
Re: Town of Acton 2024 Open Space Recreation Plan

Members of the OSRP Working Group,

The Acton Dog Park Committee is happy to give our support for the 2024-2031 Open Space and Recreation Plan (Plan). The committee voted unanimously on May 22, 2024 to endorse the Plan.

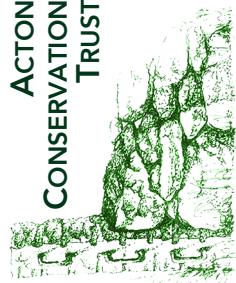
The Acton Dog Park Committee (ADPC) applauds the working group for developing a clear vision and pathway for expanding open space and recreational opportunities for the Acton community and all its constituents. The Plan clearly identifies the interests of residents in having a dog park and the commitment of a small but dedicated committee to ensure a dog park is built. In addition, the Plan articulates the goal of a Main Street Campus Plan to tie a dog park, Senior Park, and the McManus Manor senior housing, into a unified entity. This approach will ensure an attractive and functional space for all.

The Plan clearly articulates in Goal #3 how the dog park will improve and expand recreational opportunities through universal accessibility for humans and dogs. The park will provide physical space, social inclusion and promote emotional well-being.

We endorse the work of the Plan contributors for a thoughtful and detailed plan for the future of Open Space and Recreation in the town of Acton for years to come.

Sincerely,

Tom Gillespie, Chair
Karen Martin, Vice Chair
Dean Charter, Selectboard Liaison
Fred Kinch
Clare Siska
Nadia Byrnes

**A NON-PROFIT LAND TRUST**

April 29, 2024

Board of Trustees:
Susan Mitchell-Hardt, *President*
Joe Cooney, *Vice President*
Hart Millett, *Treasurer*
David Hardt, *Clerk*
Joanne Bissetta
Leona Burgess
Jody Harris
Pam Resor

Dear Nora:

P.O. Box 658
Acton MA 01720
www.actonconservationtrust.org

The Acton Conservation Trust wishes to thank the Planning Department, the Acton Conservation Commission, and the Open Space Committee for producing this beautiful report of which we all can be very proud. This is a marvelous document and continues the tradition of outstanding OSRP reports from Acton. We appreciate the tremendous effort it has taken to create this plan and look forward to contributing to the goals it has laid out.

Thank you also for acknowledging the role of the Acton Conservation Trust for protecting open space since the last plan was published.

Attached please find the comments approved by our Board of Trustees.

Sincerely,

Susan Mitchell-Hardt

Attached: "OSRP Comments from ACT"

Page 8:

ENSURE PERMANENT PROTECTION STATUS OF ALL CONSERVATION PARCELS

– to be complete this list of recent CRs, it should include:

- 2009 Conservation Restriction placed on the Cadouette-Simeone farmland
- 2010 Conservation Restriction placed on the Groener Land by Nagog Conservation Land
- 2011 Conservation Restriction placed on the Gaebel Land at Great Hill off Piper Road

Also note that the Stonefield Farm entry is repeated.

Page 16:

LIAISON AND COMMISSION MEETINGS:

2nd paragraph. 3rd sentence, please add that "Feedback sessions were conducted with ...Open Space Committee, **Acton Conservation Trust**, Land Stewardship..."

Page 36:

INVOLVED LAND TRUSTS

3rd sentence:

Since 1960, Acton acquired more than 2,000 acres of permanently protected land.

This is not technically correct since only land subject to a conservation restriction is considered permanently protected. Perhaps simply drop "protected" since these lands include those with CRs, those protected under Article 97, and the special protection given to the DOC lands adjacent to MCI Concord back in 2001.

3rd to the last sentence:

In the last few years, the Acton Conservation Trust (the local land trust) pursued conservation restrictions to protect land.

Please change to:

In addition, the Acton Conservation Trust (the local land trust) holds and monitors 8 permanent conservation restrictions with at least 2 more expected in 2024.

Page 37:

ACTON CONSERVATION TRUST

ACT has stimulated regional efforts to protect open space and biodiversity. Founded in 1962, ACT's goal is to continue to pursue regional land protection opportunities that are consistent with ACT's mission of protecting natural areas including farmland, woodland, natural habitat for wildlife, and rural character for the enjoyment and benefit of the general public. Since 1998, ACT participated in the protection of over 350 acres of open space in Acton. In an effort to protect lands straddling multiple towns, ACT has met with the Littleton Conservation Trust and continues to be optimistic about achieving joint land protection.

Please change to:

ACT has stimulated efforts to protect open space and biodiversity in Acton and adjoining towns. Founded in 1962, ACT's mission is to pursue land protection opportunities that are consistent with ACT's mission of protecting natural areas including farmland, woodland, natural habitat for wildlife, and historic landscapes for the enjoyment and benefit of the general public. Since 1998, ACT participated in the protection of over 350 acres of open space in Acton and typically makes first contact with landowners interested in preserving their land. In an effort to protect lands straddling multiple towns, ACT has met with the Littleton Conservation Trust, and reached out to Concord Land Conservation Trust and Stow Conservation Trust (with whom ACT partnered to help save Dunn Land straddling the Acton-Stow border).

Page 40:

Typo - Please change covid-19 to Covid 19 or COVID-19

Page 105:

Last full sentence:

A Conservation Restriction was placed on the land as a result of the Town of Acton's purchase of the Arlington Street parcel with Community Preservation Act funds.

NB: The CR is still in process, so we suggest:

*A Conservation Restriction **will be** placed on the land as a result of the Town of Acton's purchase of the Arlington Street parcel with Community Preservation Act funds. The Conservation Restriction **will be held by the Acton Conservation Trust and is currently under review by the State.***

[This is accurately reflected in the table on page 151, and delays for CR reviews at DCS are so long we cannot be sure when the CR review will be completed.]

Page 112:

*The Dunn land provides key access to the **16 acre** Whitcomb Land, which is owned by Acton Conservation Trust.*

Page 115:

*Nashoba Brook, Spring Hill, and Camp Acton—comprising almost **400 acres***

Please change to over 500 acres

P 188- 119:

STONEYMEADE CONSERVATION AREA

*Stoneymeade's 4.5 acres, a mix of fields, small streams and bordering woods, preserves one of the largest remaining open fields in Acton. The distant vistas seen from the main field encompass a small pond surrounded by marshy growth, more fields beyond, a horse farm with corrals, and forestland on the far edge. **Much of what can be seen here lies in Concord, but the boundary between the two towns is seamless, enabling both towns to enjoy this tranquil open area. On the Acton side, the field is kept open by mowing late each fall to prevent forest succession.***

This is not correct – in fact all of the open meadows, the horse pastures and the pond are in Acton not Concord. As seen on this GIS map, the meadow ends at the Concord line. [We feel it is very important to acknowledge this!]



Suggested change:
Stoneymeade's 44.5 acres, a mix of fields, small streams and bordering woods, preserves one of the largest remaining open fields in Acton. The distant vistas seen from the main field encompass a small pond surrounded by marshy growth, more fields beyond, a horse farm with corrals, and forestland on the far edge. The privately owned open fields seen from Strawberry Hill Road are all in Acton and end at the Concord town line. The landowners keep the fields open by mowing late each fall to prevent forest succession.



Page 119:

WETHERBEE CONSERVATION AREA

Wetherbee Conservation Land's eastern section is the only actively-farmed agricultural field that belongs to the town of Acton.

The town also owns the Caouette Simeone Farmland (since 2009) and it is actively farmed by the Boston Area Gleaners under a lease agreement with the town, so we suggest:

Wetherbee Conservation Land's eastern section one of two actively-farmed agricultural fields that belongs to the town of Acton, the other being the Caouette Simeone Farmland in South Acton.

Page 129:

(Corrected spelling) ROBBINS MILL RECREATION AREA

Please change 700 Acres to “over 500 acres” and add Robbins Mill to the list of conservation lands.

Page 131:

Typo: Land SteWardship Committee... last sentence, first paragraph

Page 162:

A. DESCRIPTION OF PROCESS

A Liaison Group including representatives from board committees and commissions attended a Goal Workshop.

ACT was a participant, so please change to:

A Liaison Group including representatives from board committees, commissions, and Action Conservation Trust, attended a Goal Workshop.

NB: Also include ACT in the participant list in the “feedback sessions”.

Page 188:

Goals #1 table

(Unless “responsible” is meant to only include official town entities.)

Under “Support local farming”

Please add ACT to the last three entries

Under “Maintain communication with key landowners”

Again add ACT to this.

Page 191:

Increase public outreach, education and communication regarding conservation and environmental protection.

Add ACT to Conservation Division/Recreation Division in the first entry, “Develop a seasonal educational curriculum focused on environmental awareness, including workshops, awareness campaigns and nature walks.”

(ACT provides annual outreach with up to 20+ events/year including walks, talks, tabling at different town events. We have approximately 350 members and send a weekly e-newsletter to 650+ subscribers)



SECTION 11: REFERENCES

SECTION 1

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SECTION 2

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SECTION 7

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SECTION 8

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SECTION 9

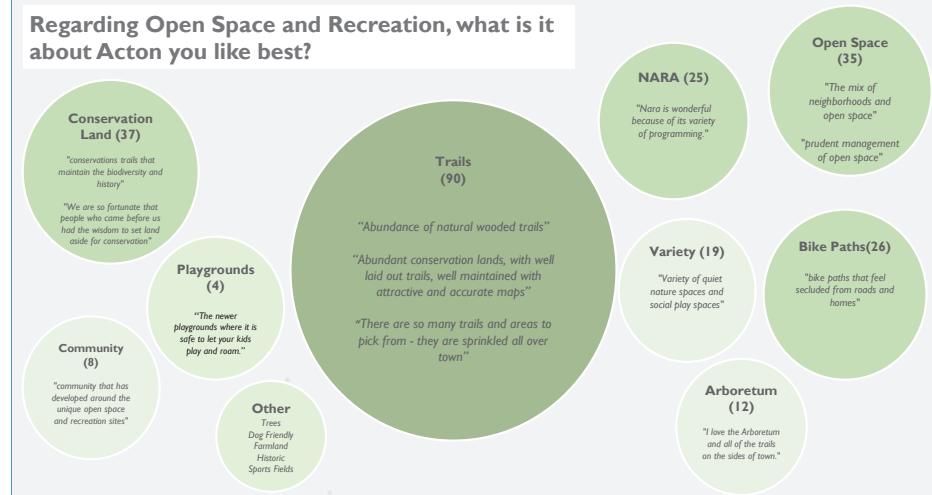
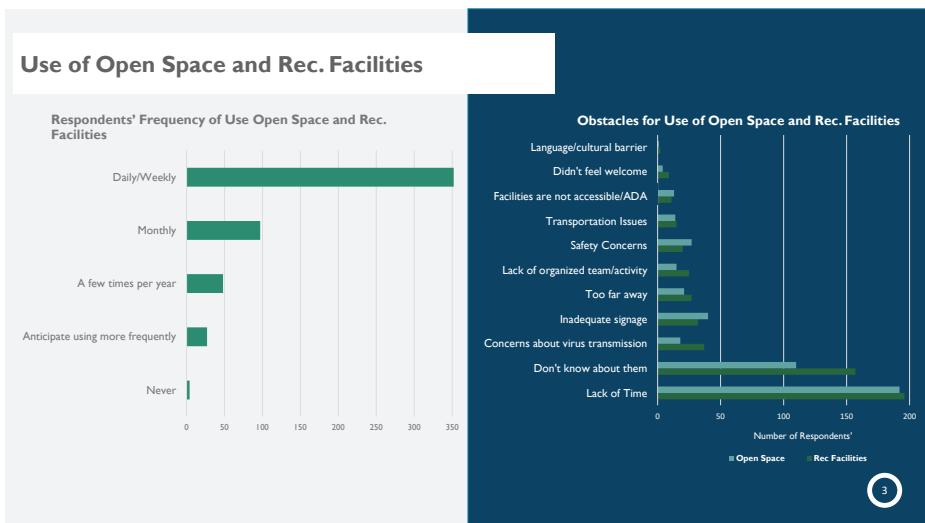
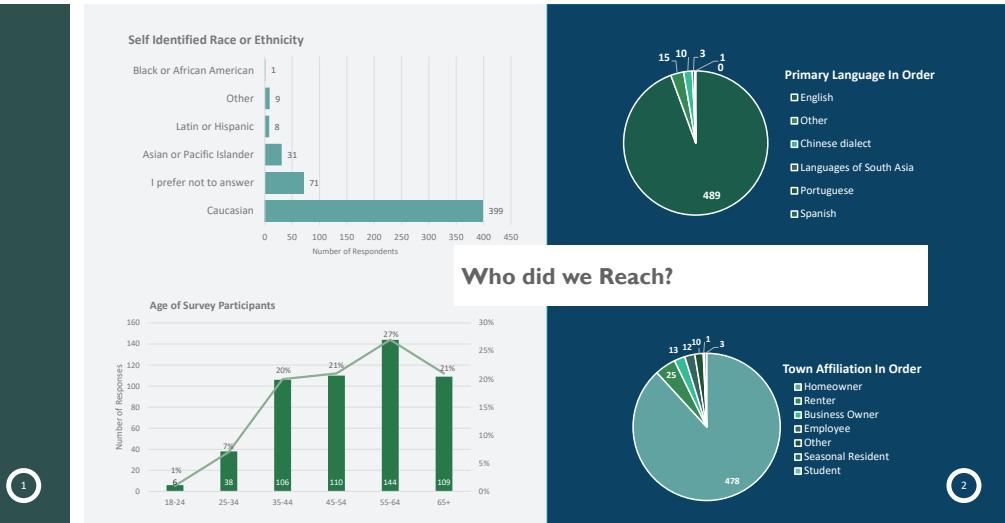
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SECTION 12: APPENDICES

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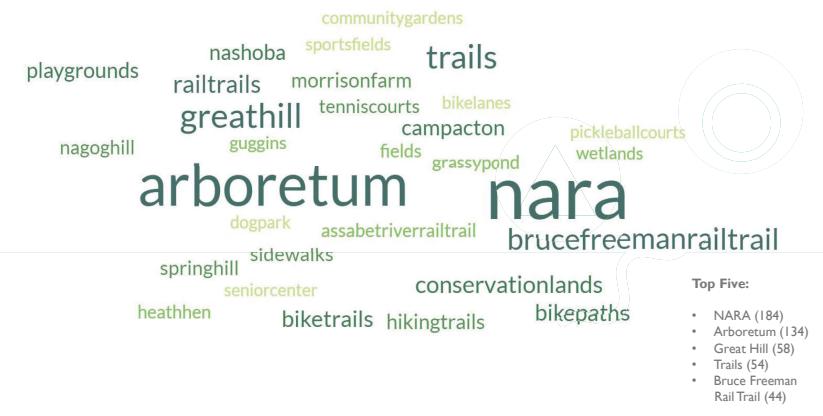
2022 - Open Space and Recreation Survey Results



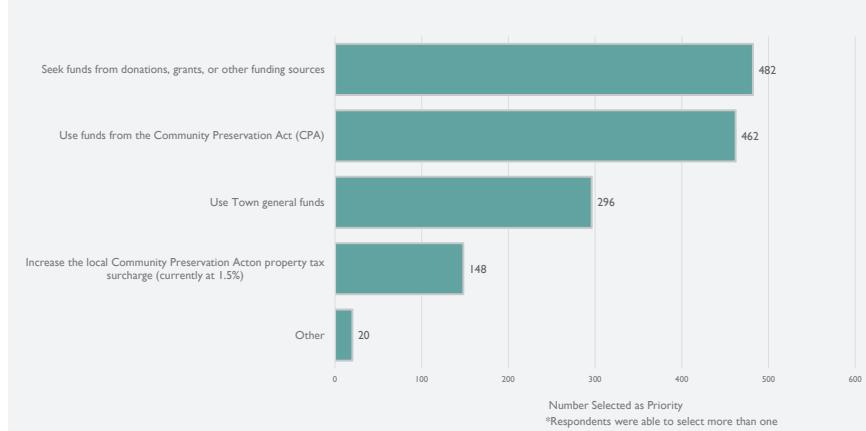
Which open space and/or recreation facilities/resources do you make use of most frequently?



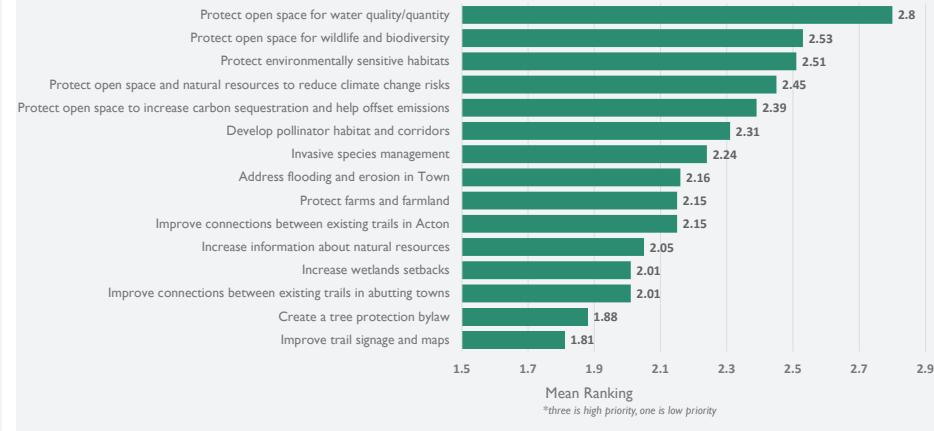
Which in your opinion are the top three most important open space and recreational areas/facilities to the Town of Acton as a whole?



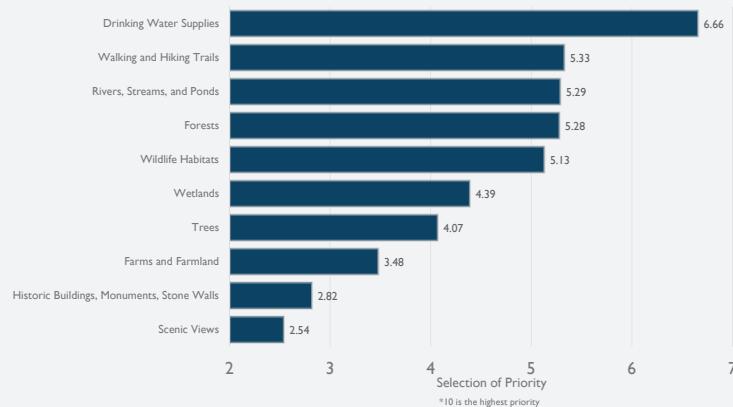
Preferred Methods for Funding Open Space Protection



Projects Ranked by Priority



Prioritizing Protection of Natural and Scenic Resources in Acton



Listed Recreational Resources

- ADA Accessible Trails
- Amphitheater
- Baseball Diamonds
- Basketball Courts
- Bike Lanes
- Bike Paths
- Bird/Wildlife Viewing
- Bocce Courts
- Community Center
- Community Gardens
- Cricket Fields
- Cross-Country Skiing Trails
- Disc Golf
- Dog Park
- Drinking Fountains
- Family Picnic Areas
- Fitness/Walking Track
- Hiking Trails
- Horseback Riding
- Hunting Areas
- Ice Skating Rink
- Kayak/Canoe/Small non-motorized boat launch
- Mountain Biking Trails
- Multi-Purpose Fields (Soccer, Lacrosse, Football, Ultimate Frisbee, etc. Athletic Fields)
- Neighborhood Parks
- Outdoor Exercise Areas for Seniors
- Pavilion for Group Events (with tables, grills, etc.)
- Pickleball Courts
- Playgrounds
- Pocket Parks
- Public Art
- Public Restrooms
- Riverside Boardwalks
- Sidewalks
- Skateboard Parks
- Sledding Hills
- Snack Bar
- Snowmobiling Trails
- Snowshoeing Trails
- Softball Diamonds
- Spray Ground or Splash Pad
- Swimming Pool
- Tennis Courts
- The Recreation Center at 50 Audubon Drive

Top 10 Responses for "Would like to Expand"

- ADA Accessible Trails
- Amphitheater
- Baseball Diamonds
- Basketball Courts
- **4. Bike Lanes (187)**
- **2. Bike Paths (240)**
- **8. Bird/Wildlife Viewing (102)**
- Bocce Courts
- Community Center
- **5. Community Gardens (123)**
- Cricket Fields
- Cross-Country Skiing Trails
- Disc Golf
- Dog Park
- Drinking Fountains
- **9. Family Picnic Areas (93)**
- Fitness/Walking Track
- **3. Hiking Trails (225)**
- Horseback Riding
- Hunting Areas
- Ice Skating Rink
- Kayak/Canoe/Small non-motorized boat launch
- Mountain Biking Trails
- Multi-Purpose Fields (Soccer, Lacrosse, Football, Ultimate Frisbee, etc. Athletic Fields)
- **10. Neighborhood Parks (92)**
- Outdoor Exercise Areas for Seniors
- Pavilion for Group Events (with tables, grills, etc.)
- Pickleball Courts
- Playgrounds
- Pocket Parks
- **7. Public Art (104)**
- **6. Public Restrooms (106)**
- Riverside Boardwalks
- **1. Sidewalks (244)**
- Skateboard Parks
- Sledding Hills
- Snack Bar
- Snowmobiling Trails
- Snowshoeing Trails
- Softball Diamonds
- Spray Ground or Splash Pad
- Swimming Pool
- Tennis Courts
- The Recreation Center at 50 Audubon Drive

Top 10 Responses for "Would like to Improve"

- **4. ADA Accessible Trails (158)**
- Amphitheater
- Baseball Diamonds
- Basketball Courts
- **7. Bike Lanes (120)**
- Bike Paths
- **1. Bird/Wildlife Viewing (282)**
- Bocce Courts
- Community Center
- **9. Community Gardens (111)**
- Cricket Fields
- Cross-Country Skiing Trails
- Disc Golf
- Dog Park
- Drinking Fountains
- **10. Family Picnic Areas (110)**
- Fitness/Walking Track
- **3. Hiking Trails (166)**
- Horseback Riding
- Hunting Areas
- Ice Skating Rink
- Kayak/Canoe/Small non-motorized boat launch
- Mountain Biking Trails
- **6. Multi-Purpose Fields (Soccer, Lacrosse, Football, Ultimate Frisbee, etc. Athletic Fields) (122)**
- **5. Neighborhood Parks (150)**
- Outdoor Exercise Areas for Seniors
- Pavilion for Group Events (with tables, grills, etc.)
- Pickleball Courts
- **2. Playgrounds (172)**
- Pocket Parks
- Public Art
- Public Restrooms
- Riverside Boardwalks
- **8. Sidewalks (111)**
- Skateboard Parks
- Sledding Hills
- Snack Bar
- Snowmobiling Trails
- Snowshoeing Trails
- Softball Diamonds
- Spray Ground or Splash Pad
- Swimming Pool
- Tennis Courts
- The Recreation Center at 50 Audubon Drive

Top 10 Responses for “Would like to Expand”

- ADA Accessible Trails
 - Amphitheater
 - Baseball Diamonds
 - Basketball Courts
 - Bike Lanes
 - Bike Paths
 - **1. Bird/Wildlife Viewing (144)**
 - Bocce Courts
 - Community Center
 - Community Gardens
 - Cricket Fields
 - Cross-Country Skiing Trails
 - Disc Golf
 - **5. Dog Park (112)**
 - Drinking Fountains
 - Family Picnic Areas
 - Fitness/Walking Track
 - Hiking Trails
 - Horseback Riding
 - Hunting Areas

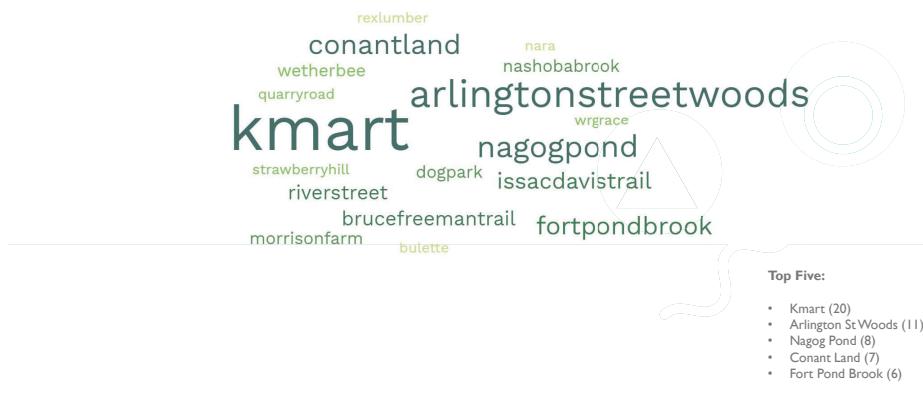
- **4. Ice Skating Rink (113)**
 - **2. Kayak/Cano/Small non-motorized boat launch (137)**
 - Mountain Biking Trails
 - Multi-Purpose Fields (Soccer, Lacrosse, Football, Ultimate Frisbee, etc. Athletic Fields)
 - Neighborhood Parks
 - **10. Outdoor Exercise Areas for Seniors (93)**
 - Pavilion for Group Events (with tables, grills, etc.).
 - Pickleball Courts
 - Playgrounds
 - **9. Pocket Parks (94)**
 - Public Art
 - **8. Public Restrooms (101)**
 - **6. Riverside Boardwalks (104)**
 - Sidewalks
 - Skateboard Parks
 - Sledding Hills
 - Snack Bar
 - Snowmobiling Trails
 - Snowshoeing Trails
 - Softball Diamonds
 - **7. Spray Ground or Splash Pad (101)**
 - **3. Swimming Pool (116)**
 - Tennis Courts
 - The Recreation Center at 50 Audubon Drive

Top 10 Responses for “Would like NO Change”

- Top 10 Responses for
“Would like NO Change”**

 - ADA Accessible Trails
 - Amphitheater
 - 7. Baseball Diamonds (438)**
 - Basketball Courts
 - Bike Lanes
 - Bike Paths
 - Bird/Wildlife Viewing
 - 6. Bocce Courts (442)**
 - Community Center
 - Community Gardens
 - 4. Cricket Fields (471)**
 - Cross-Country Skiing Trails
 - 9. Disc Golf (431)**
 - Dog Park
 - Drinking Fountains
 - Family Picnic Areas
 - Fitness/Walking Track
 - Hiking Trails
 - 3. Horseback Riding (471)**
 - 1. Hunting Areas (504)**
 - Ice Skating Rink
 - Kayak/Canoe/Small non-motorized boat launch
 - Mountain Biking Trails
 - Multi-Purpose Fields (Soccer, Lacrosse, Football, Ultimate Frisbee, etc. Athletic Fields)
 - Neighborhood Parks
 - Outdoor Exercise Areas for Seniors
 - Pavilion for Group Events (with tables, grills, etc.).
 - Pickleball Courts
 - Playgrounds
 - Pocket Parks
 - Public Art
 - Public Restrooms
 - Riverside Boardwalks
 - Sidewalks
 - 5. Skateboard Parks (451)**
 - Sledding Hills
 - 8. Snack Bar (438)**
 - 2. Snowmobiling Trails (503)**
 - Snowshoeing Trails
 - 10. Softball Diamonds (431)**
 - Spray Ground or Splash Pad
 - Swimming Pool
 - Tennis Courts
 - The Recreation Center at 50 Audubon Drive

Are there specific properties in Acton that the Town should try to purchase, access, develop or otherwise protect for Open Space and/or Recreation?



How can Acton improve our parks and recreational programming to make them more welcoming for all community members?



Take-aways from the 2022 Open Space and Recreation Survey

ONE:
Site to improve and
crease sidewalks

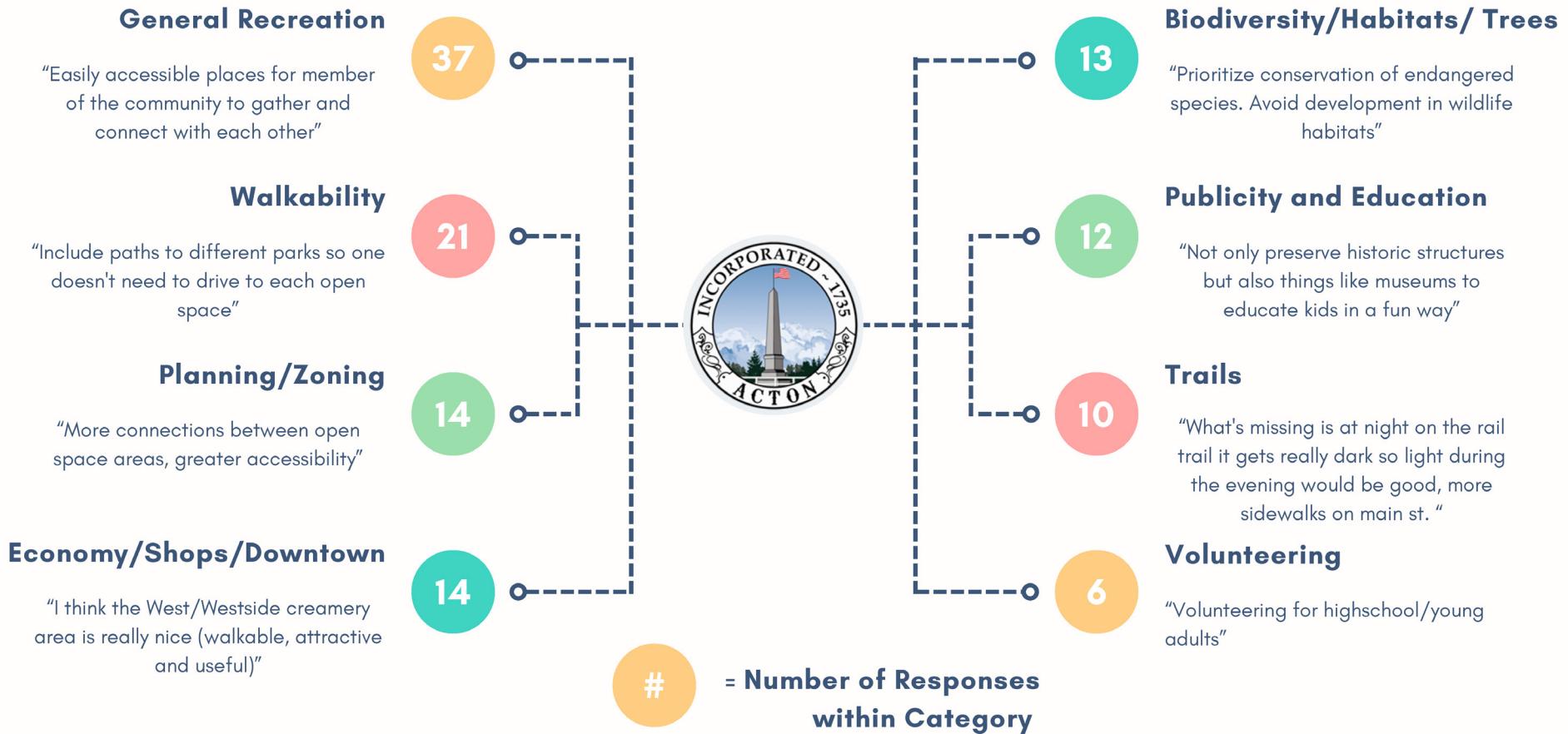
TWO:
Emphasis placed on the
value of trails

THREE:
Desire for increase
communication around
Open Space and
Recreation

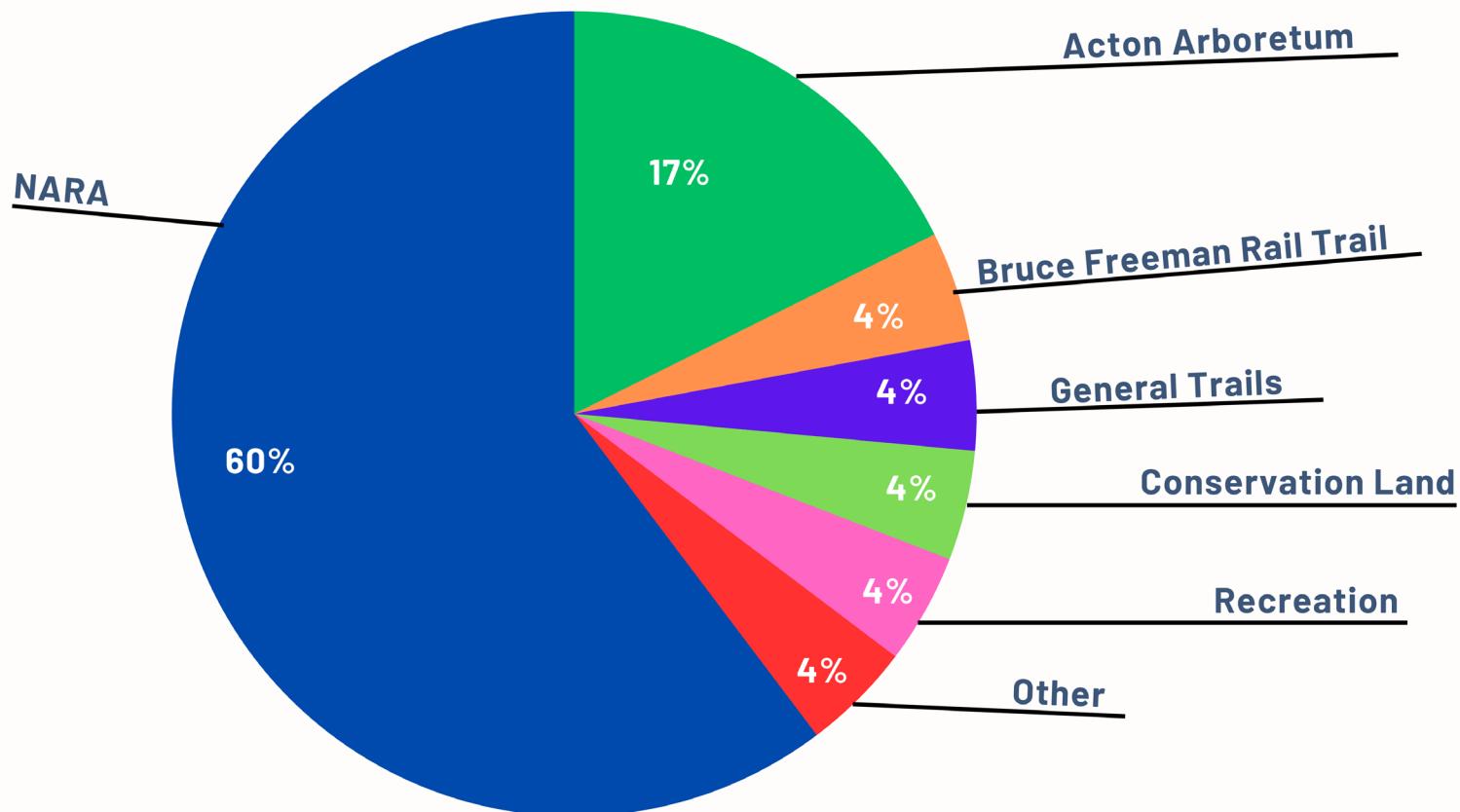
FOUR:
Value of water highlighted
both for use and
recreation

Acton-Boxborough Regional High School

Student's Desires for Acton



Acton-Boxborough Regional High School Favorite Open Space and/or Recreation Feature





Open Space and Recreation Plan

Public Forum

Meeting Minutes

November 10, 2022

7:00 PM

Virtual Meeting

Hosts: Melissa Settipani-Rufo, Kaila Sauer, Nora Masler, Bettina Abe, Mike Gendron, Kristin Alexander

Introduction

Melissa Settipani-Rufo, the Town's Recreation Director, explained the importance of an Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) and what the objectives of the public forum were. Melissa also showed examples of recreation projects that had been completed since the 2014 version of the OSRP including: NARA Park Picnic Pavilion, NARA Park Sports Pavilion, Skate Park Plaza and Jones Playground.

Bettina Abe, representing the Conservation Department, introduced a number of the open space projects that have been completed since the 2014 version of the plan including: Heath Hen Meadow Boardwalk, Stonefield Farm, Arboretum entrance and China Trail and East Acton Village Green.

Survey Results

Kaila Sauer, representing the Planning Department, explained the timeline of events that have occurred since the OSRP working group was established in October 2021, including the survey that was publicized in March 2022. Kaila explained that the working group has analyzed the survey results (528 responses) and has created a presentation to represent the findings.

Kaila went on to present the survey results and collected more data using an interactive poll. (These survey results and poll results can be found in Enclosure 1)

Kaila explained that based on the survey results, the working group developed the following “key takeaways”:

1. Appetite to improve and increase sidewalks
2. Emphasis placed on the value of trails
3. Desire for increased communication around Open Space and Recreation
4. Value of water was highlighted for both use and recreation



Public Comment

Kaila explained that the final portion of the forum will be for public comment and specifically attempting to answer the following questions:

1. Do the results of the survey reflect your priorities?
2. What else should be considered in Acton's OSRP?

Below are the summarized comments/feedback to these questions:

Terra (Mass Ave): *Would like to see a goal established to calculate a total percentage of land to be preserved by 2030. Offered the suggestion of a “5 minute walk goal” that would position open space/parks in a way to allow any resident to be able to walk to a park from their house in 5 minutes. Pointed out that you do not always have to buy land to preserve it (ie change bylaws, limit development, etc).*

Kim Kastens (Pope Road) – representing Green Acton Water Committee: *There was no category for “water resource protection” when ranking the parcels in the last OSRP; This should be included in this plan. Additionally, the ranking system should be made more clear, inclusive and transparent.*

Patrick Hearn: *To what degree does the OSRP consider the “ultimate” build out of town when uses are completely determined. Recommended a very long-term vision of what the town should look like; may be useful to bring in experts in the field to help consider this vision.*

Alissa Nicol (South Acton): *The 2002-2007 version of the OSRP had an emphasis on water protection but the most recent plan did not; would like to see this return in the 2023 version. There should be an opportunity for the public to comment on the draft text of the plan. Protection of farmland/agriculture should be featured prominently in the OSRP.*

Geoff Manlet: *The land we call open space provides more public benefit than just recreational uses; is an essential environmental resource and supports the water cycle and carbon cycle. Would like to see this plan invest in taking care of environmental resources and focus on sustainability.*

Catherine Hatfield (Mohawk Drive): *Would like to see larger zoning protections; consider changing zoning of certain parcels. Emphasized that conservation lands aren’t always as protected as people think.*

Kim Kastens (Pope Road): *The last OSRP has no mention of climate change; since than we have become much more aware of climate change and it should be included. There should be a focus placed on flood protection and energy efficiency. Also, turf fields have toxic properties and should not be included in the plan.*



Erika Amir-Lin (Old Stonebrook): Acton water district has already offered comments and hopes to have more input. Wants to see more visibility for water in the OSRP.

Joe Cooney: Emphasis should be placed on respecting the past, including agriculture, historic infrastructure, stonewalls and Native Americans. Also, we should think using a timeline view to protect land for future generations.

Susan Mitchell-Hart (Pope Road): Does not want to lose sight of the goal to protect the rural elements of Acton.

Alissa Nicol (South Acton): Appreciates the commitment to rethinking the term "rural character" and hopes the OSRP can find new ways to describe that goal. Also, with sidewalks being emphasized in the survey results, wanted to point out that sidewalks impact flooding and increase impervious surface, which can have an impact on climate change. Would like to see thought put into only putting sidewalks where they are necessary.

Terra (Mass Ave): Would like to see environmental justice considered as part of the plan; making sure that all residents have access to open space parcels. Also, would like to find ways to reach people without access to computers, such as paper surveys. Finally, would like to find ways to preserve without buying it, such as extending wetland setbacks.



Open Space and Recreation Plan

Public Meeting

Meeting Minutes

December 6, 2023

6:00 PM

Virtual Meeting

Hosts: Nora Masler, Mike Gendron, Kaila Sauer, Melissa Settipani-Rufo, Andrea Becerra,
Kristin Alexander

Introduction

Nora Masler, Planner for the Town, explained the importance of an Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) and what the objectives of this meeting were. Nora described the engagement planning process that has occurred over the past two years that informed the creation of the. Nora highlighted the four key take-aways from the 2022 OSRP survey that were critical in determining the goals, objectives, and action items:

1. Appetite to improve and increase sidewalks
2. Emphasis placed on the value of trails
3. Desire for increased communication around open space and recreation
4. Value of water highlighted both for use and recreation

Kaila Sauer, Senior Planner for the Town, highlighted the 2014-2021 OSRP goals and some of the accomplishments that have occurred that stemmed as direct action items from the 2014 plan:

Goal 1: Preserve Existing Elements of Acton's Rural Character

Established an Agricultural Commission, created community gardens in South Acton, and Agricultural Preservation Restriction was placed on the Stonefield Farm property

Goal 2: Protect Critical Environmental Resources

Assabet River Blue and Green Trail was constructed, replaced the Bog Boardwalk at the Acton Arboretum, protected the vernal pool and riparian habitat on the Anderson Property

Goal 3: Improve and Expand Recreation Opportunities

Renovated Jones Playground, constructed a new plaza and skating bowl at TJ O'Grady Skate Park, and constructed the NARA Sports Plaza



Goals, Objectives, and Action Items

Mike Gendron, Conservation Manager for the Town, unveiled the four goals for the 2024-2031 edition of the OSRP.

1. Preserve and Protect the Historic, Cultural, Agricultural, and Scenic Features of Acton
2. Protect Critical Environmental Resources including Ground and Surface Water, Wildlife, Diverse Habitats, and Ecosystems
3. Improve and Expand Recreation Opportunities for Everyone
4. Incorporate Sustainability in Current and Future Open Space and Recreation Decisions

Mike highlighted specific objectives and action items that were directly correlated to feedback received through the public engagement process (the entire list of objectives and action items were made available prior to the meeting and a direct link was sent to all attendees of the meeting).

Parcel Prioritization and Process

Mike then went on to explain the new process used for parcel prioritization in this iteration of the OSRP. The Sudbury Valley Trustees Parcel Prioritization Model has four categories in which each parcel is ranked in each category. The four categories are: Natural Services, Habitat for Biodiversity, Community Conservation, and Farmland. Mike also noted that there are additional criteria, referred to as Local Knowledge, that was formulated using a small working group to make notes on items that the model doesn't consider.

Public Comment

Nora explained the next steps for drafting the plan with the goal for the plan to be complete in Spring of 2024.

Nora then opened up the meeting to public comment. Below are the summarized comments/feedback to these questions:

Alissa Nicol: *Would like to know the size of the street lights proposed in one of the action items at the Town Forest trail around NARA. Is interested in wildlife impacts with lighting around the NARA fields and pond, and if the lighting would extend NARA's hours.*

Terra: *Appreciates the substantial effort of this plan in regards to climate and justice. Suggests that justice should be its own category instead of a sub-category. Would like to see a percentage of how much land should be preserved at the end of buildout. Notes that there are ways other than zoning to help protect open space such as general bylaws.*



Susan Mitchell-Hart: Wondering the best ways to address potential parcel additions to the parcel prioritization list.

Erika Amir-Lin – on behalf of the Acton Water District Board of Commissioners:
Appreciated using the Sudbury Valley Trustees model for parcel prioritization for a clear methodology. Wants to know how the groundwater protection zones are incorporated into the model.

Amy Green: Wonders if the parcel prioritization has any evaluation piece for a multi-use parcel, such as conservation and housing, or conservation and agriculture.

Franny Osman: Is interested in looking at combining open space with the potential for natural burials.

Alissa Nicol: Would like clarification on the ranking scores on the parcel prioritization model.

Kim Kastens: Notes that an active OSRP is needed to be eligible for state grants and wants to know what types of grants and what grants have been applied for during the 2014-2021 OSRP timeframe.

Open Space Parcels to Preserve & Protect

An important component of the Open Space & Recreation Plan, is having a tool that that can help guide the Town when making decisions about land purchases. The following list is a collection of parcels, identified by a working group comprised of Open Space Committee, Conservation Committee, Agricultural Commission, Action Conservation Trust and town staff. This list represents parcels that could potentially have value to the Town.

Based on feedback received during the public outreach process, the working group focused on finding a system that objectively analyzed individual parcels. In order to achieve this, the list uses data pulled from Sudbury Valley Trustee's (SVT) parcel prioritization model. This model assigns a value using a collection of data inputted into a GIS layer which can assist in comparing one parcel to another. SVT divided this data into four categories: Natural Services (NS), Habitat, Community Conservation (CC) and Farmland (Farm). These categories and how the data is collected for each is described more in SVT's guidance. The list is ordered by the sum of the four categories, however the list is designed to allow each category to be used independently of each other.

Each category is calculated using various data layers that were specifically selected by SVT and the associated working group. Each category has a different maximum point total and these were also strategically designed to properly weigh the significance of the data (NS - 45 max, Habitat - 80 max, CC - 85 max, farm - 15 max). It is important to know that although habitat and CC have much larger maximum potential, there is not a parcel in the SuAsCo region that has a parcel higher than 52 and 60 respectively.

Although the SVT model does a very good job of identifying valuable parcels, it does not replace critical local knowledge. For this reason, the working group has added in notes for each parcel and used a key to identify why a particular parcel may be valuable. That key is found here:

Key	Local Importance
EXP	Expands Cons. Land
AG	Agriculture
FP	Flood Plain
WP	Water Protection
REC	Rec Potential and NARA

As a final note, it is important to view this list a collection of data to inform future decisions rather than a chronological list of how and when parcels should be acquired. There are a lot of factors that go into open space purchases and the specific need for a parcel of land may not be known at the time of this list being published. In fact, one of the most important factors is not shown on this list: availability. This list can be used to compare one parcel to another, identify a parcel for a specific need (ie agriculture) or as data to justify future grants/funding.

SuAsCo Regional Prioritization Plan Process Documentation

Compiled by Dan Stimson, Assistant Director of Stewardship, Sudbury Valley Trustees
September, 2022 (updated May, 2023)

Project Summary

Sudbury Valley Trustees (SVT) received funding through the 2021 Land and Climate Program, which provides tools, resources, and training to help land trusts adopt climate adaptation and mitigation practices into their conservation work. The program is administered by the Land Trust Alliance and includes technical assistance from the Open Space Institute.

Through a working group of SVT's Regional Conservation Partnership—the Metrowest Conservation Alliance (MCA)—we sought to bring a collaborative approach to the work of developing updated regional priorities for conservation. A survey of the MCA and SVT members helped to guide the values that would be included in the prioritization work. Based on the results of this survey, the working group identified four themes of focus: Natural Services, Habitat for Biodiversity, Community Conservation, and Farmland.

The following documentation details the Geographic Information System (GIS) processes and datasets used to map the priorities in each of these themes. We acquired data to support the values identified for the prioritization work. Tables identifying each individual dataset, the source of the data, and the scoring system we used are found below. Each table is followed by a description (and link for more information when available) for each dataset.

GIS Process

The project area is the 36-town region of the Sudbury, Assabet, and Concord Rivers watershed. To consider context near the outer boundaries of the region, our study area included a ring of additional towns adjacent to the perimeter of the project area.

- We created each thematic map by combining multiple datasets.
- Scoring: Features in each dataset were assigned a score of 0 through 5, with 5 being the highest value and 1 being the lowest present value. Areas lacking data were given a score of 0.
- All datasets were converted to raster datasets with a cell (or pixel) size of 30 x 30 meters.
- Weighting: We assigned a multiplier weight to each dataset to further emphasize datasets of higher perceived value in the analysis. This weight, either 1 or 2, was used to multiply the cell score of an individual dataset.
- We used the Spatial Analyst Tool “Weighted Sum” to combine all input datasets in each thematic map. This tool uses each cell’s score value and the weight multiplier in each dataset to sum all the values of every cell in the study area.
- The resulting raster for each thematic map includes a score for every cell in the study area, ranging from 0 to the maximum value in each thematic map. Maximum values can be found at the end of each section below.

Natural Services

This theme focuses on carbon storage, connecting core habitats for biodiversity, protection of water quality, and flood storage capacity.

Dataset	Source	Scoring	Weight
Active River Area		5: input water cells 4: Material Contribution Zone (3cell), wetflat 3: Material Contribution Zone (3cell), non-wetflat 2: Base Zone, wetflat 1: Base Zone, non-wetflat	
Habitat Fragments, Parcels with 10+ acres	TNC ESRI	1: Base Zone, non-wetflat 5: Presence/Absence 1	1
Potential Carbon Sequestration	TNC	5: 18-27 metric tons/acre 4: 14.929412 - 18 metric tons/acre 3: 11.964706 - 14.929412 metric tons/acre 2: 7.941176 - 11.964706 metric tons/acre 1: 2.964706 - 7.941176 metric tons/acre 2	
Aquifers	MassGIS	5: High Yield 3: Medium Yield 1: Low Yield	1
Outstanding Resource Waters	MassGIS	5: Presence/Absence 1	1
Public Water Supply Protection Zones	MassGIS	5: Zone 1 3: Zone 2 1: Zone 3 (WPA)	1
Surface Water Protection Zones	MassGIS	5: Zone A 3: Zone B 1: Zone C	1
Conserve for Inland Flood Resilience	TNC	5: Presence/Absence	1

Active River Area - The active river area framework offers a more holistic vision of a river than solely considering the river channel as it exists in one place at one particular point in time. Rather, the river becomes those lands within which the river interacts both frequently and occasionally. (April 2015)

Habitat Fragments - This layer represents modeled habitat fragments, or small minimally disturbed natural areas. It was created as part of ESRI's Green Infrastructure Initiative and is one of five companion layers that can be used for Green Infrastructure Planning. We further limited these data by removing any fragments with an area of less than 10 acres contained within a single Tax Parcel. (July 7, 2017)

Potential Carbon Sequestration - Estimates of 2010 forest carbon stock and components (above ground, coarse woody debris, and soil/other) are from Williams et al. (2021b) following methods described for the Southeast US in Gu et al. (2019). To estimate carbon stock, attributes were determined for all

forested 30-m pixels in the continental United States. A forest carbon cycle model trained to match Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) data was used to predict carbon stocks for 2010 based on site-level attributes of forest type group, years since disturbance, and site productivity class. Results were iterated backward in time to provide continuous, annual reporting of forest carbon dynamics for each pixel.

Most prior studies lacked spatial detail on the age of forest stands that persisted in a forested condition during the satellite data era, but this study used remotely sensed biomass to estimate the stand age condition of these persisting, intact forests, distinguishing relatively young stands (e.g., 30 to 50 years old) from older stands.

Future Forest Carbon Stock & Potential Sequestration: The method used to calculate the 2050 carbon stocks was the samePote, except that the model assumed no disturbances to the forests after year 2010. Because the modeled forests grow undisturbed from 2010 onward, the results can be used to estimate the potential carbon sequestration if the forest were free of harvest, fire, or conversion. While conservation efforts can limit harvest and conversion, it is difficult to predict future disturbances and users should be aware that the actual sequestration may be less than predicted. The Total Potential Sequestration is estimated as: (2050 stock - 2010 stock). (Based on 2010 data)

Aquifers - Underground water sources of high, medium, and low yield are in this layer. (July 2007)

Outstanding Resource Waters - This datalayer delineates areas in which certain waters are afforded Outstanding Resource Water (ORW) protection under the Massachusetts Surface Water Quality Standards, 314 CMR 4.00 (WQS). According to 314 CMR 4.04(3). (March 2010)

Public Water Supply Protection Zones - Wellhead protection areas are important for protecting the recharge area around public water supply (PWS) groundwater sources. (March 2022)

Surface Water Protection Zones - These Surface Water Supply Protection Areas delineate those areas included in 310 CMR 22.00, the Massachusetts Drinking Water Regulations, as Surface Water Supply Protection Zones. (April 2017)

Conserve for Inland Flood Resilience - Part of TNC's Nature Based Solutions datasets, this layer identifies as conservation opportunities the remaining undeveloped and unprotected lands >5 acres within the floodplains and adjacent areas mapped in an "inland flood hazard" layer. Natural cover slows, spreads, and dampens inland flood hazards. (2020)

The highest possible score for a cell on this map is 45. The maximum score received for a cell on this map is 45.

Habitat for Biodiversity

This theme focuses on significant blocks of aquatic, wetland, vernal pool, and forest habitat; areas of uninterrupted interior forest; priority natural communities; natural communities that are under-

represented in preserved lands; rare and endangered species habitat; migration corridors; and climate resiliency.

Dataset	Source	Scoring	Weight
Habitat Cores	ESRI	5: Better (3.31 - 4.12) 1: Good (1.599999 - 3.31)	1
BioMap2 Aquatic Cores	MassGIS	5: Presence/Absence	1
BioMap2 Wetlands Cores	MassGIS	5: Presence/Absence	1
BioMap2 Forest Cores	MassGIS	5: Presence/Absence	1
BioMap 2 Priority Natural Communities Cores	MassGIS	5: Presence/Absence	1
BioMap2 Species of Conservation Concern Cores	MassGIS	5: Presence/Absence	1
BioMap2 Vernal Pool Cores	MassGIS	5: Presence/Absence	1
Interior Forests		5: (3)Interior Forest	
		3: (4)Adjacent Non-forested Wetland	
	MassGIS	1: (20)Adjacent Open Water	1
	Mass Audubon	5: 3 (Grid code) 3: 2 (Grid code) 1: 1 (Grid code)	2
Under-represented Settings	MassGIS	5: Presence/Absence	1
		5: Most resilient	
	TNC	3: More resilient 1: Slightly more resilient	2
Resilient Sites		5: input water cells	
		4: Material Contribution Zone (3cell), wetflat	
		3: Material Contribution Zone (3cell), non-wetflat	
	TNC	2: Base Zone, wetflat	
Active River Area		1: Base Zone, non-wetflat	1
		5: 2,000.000001 - 9,999,999 (permeability)	
	TNC	3: 1,000.000001 - 2,000 (permeability) 1: 500.0000001 - 1,000 (permeability)	2
Climate Flow	TNC		

Habitat Cores - This layer represents modeled Intact Habitat Cores, or minimally disturbed natural areas. It was created as part of ESRI's Green Infrastructure Initiative and is one of five companion layers that can be used for Green Infrastructure Planning. (July 7, 2017)

BioMap2 Aquatic Cores - Aquatic core contains integrated and functional ecosystems for fish species and other aquatic Species of Conservation Concern. (Feb. 2011)

BioMap2 Wetlands Cores - BioMap2 Wetlands identifies important wetland habitat. It is a combination of the Wetland Core analysis that identified the most intact wetlands in Massachusetts, the wetlands

present within the Priority Natural Communities data layer, and several Oxbows identified as important wetland habitat. A detailed description can be found in the summary document. Wetland Cores and Priority Natural Community wetlands sometimes overlap. (Feb. 2011)

BioMap2 Forest Cores - Forest Core identifies the best examples of large, intact forests that are least impacted by roads and development, providing critical habitat for numerous woodland species. (Feb. 2011)

BioMap2 Priority Natural Communities Cores - This data set is maintained by MassWildlife's Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP). It consists of polygons that represent the extent of various natural communities of biodiversity conservation interest. Scientists classify and delineate natural community polygons by analyzing "on-the-ground" field data and available information about the landscape (particularly topographic maps and aerial photographs). (Feb. 2011)

BioMap2 Species of Conservation Concern Cores - This layer contains the combined BioMap2 footprint of all species listed under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act in combination with all non-listed species present in the State Wildlife Action Plan that were mapped. Individual species information is not identified in this layer. (Feb. 2011)

BioMap2 Vernal Pool Cores - The BioMap2 team used a GIS model developed by the University of Massachusetts Landscape Ecology Program to identify the top 5 percent most interconnected clusters of Potential Vernal Pools within each ecoregion. Each cluster of pools was then buffered to create vernal pool habitat areas to target for conservation that include the pools themselves and the surrounding habitat to allow for successful breeding, dispersal, overwintering, foraging, and migration. (Feb. 2011)

Interior Forests - This Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife interior forest GIS dataset identifies extensively forested portions of the Massachusetts landscape where forest cover is relatively un-fragmented by human development. (Oct. 2009)

Under-represented Settings - In 2013, the Open Space Institute identified a set of landscapes/settings (i.e., unique combinations of geology and topography, each of which supports unique and important biodiversity over long time frames) in the Northeast US that were under-represented in the portfolio of protected lands regionally.

The under-represented geophysical settings that were part of The Nature Conservancy's Resilient Sites for Terrestrial Landscape Conservation were assessed and prioritized regionally. MassAudubon analysts were interested in conducting an equivalent search restricted to Massachusetts. To do this, they used the geophysical settings layer that the Massachusetts chapter of TNC maintains to identify the distribution of these settings throughout the state. They then overlaid protection onto these settings to identify those settings that are under-represented in the network of protected lands in Massachusetts. (Based on 2016 open space data)

Priority Habitats of Rare Species - Areas delineated as Priority Habitats by NHESP are protected and can include wetlands, uplands, and marine habitats. (Aug. 2021)

Resilient Sites - A site's Resilience Score estimates its capacity to maintain species diversity and ecological function as the climate changes. It was determined by evaluating and quantifying physical characteristics that foster resilience, particularly the site's landscape diversity and local connectedness. The score is calculated within ecoregions based on all cells of the same geophysical setting and is described on a relative basis as above or below the average. For example, cells of granite bedrock were compared with all other cells of granite bedrock, and coastal plain sands were compared with other coastal plain sands. Our goal was to identify the places most resilient to climate change for each geophysical setting within each ecoregion. (Oct. 2016)

Active River Area - The active river area framework offers a more holistic vision of a river than solely considering the river channel as it exists in one place at one particular point in time. Rather, the river becomes those lands within which the river interacts both frequently and occasionally. (April 2015)

Climate Flow - Corridors or flow zones that facilitate plant and animal movement for climate adaptation. (Oct. 2016)

The highest possible score for a cell on this map is 80. The maximum score received for a cell on this map is 52.

Community Conservation

This theme focuses on smaller minimally disturbed natural areas, designated Environmental Justice Areas, access points to regional trail links and areas connecting them, access points to existing preserved lands, areas in and around the most severe summer heat, protection of water quality, and flood storage capacity.

Dataset	Source	Scoring	Scoring	Weight
Habitat Fragments	ESRI	5: Presence/Absence	2	
		5: MIE (Minority, Income, and English Iso.)		
		3: MI (Minority and Income)		
		3: ME (Minority and English Isolation)		
		1: M (Minority)		
		1: I (Income)		
Environmental Justice Communities	MassGIS	1: E (English Isolation)	2	
		5: 200'		
		4: 400'		
		3: 600'		
		2: 800'		
Regional Trail Links and Buffers	SVT	1: 1000'	2	
Access to Open Space, Frontage Parcels	SVT	5: Presence/Absence	2	
		5: 83.81176472 - 137 (relative heat severity)		
		4: 52.6509804 - 83.81176471		
Heat Severity	ESRI	3: 28.47450981 - 52.65098039		

		2: 8.596078432 - 28.4745098	
		1: 0 - 8.596078431 (relative heat severity)	2
		5: 500'	
	SVT	1: 1000'	2
Aquifers	MassGIS	5: High Yield	
Outstanding Resource Waters	MassGIS	1: Medium Yield	1
	MassGIS	5: Presence/Absence	1
		5: Zone 1	
		3: Zone 2	
Public Water Supply Protection Zones	MassGIS	1: Zone 3 (IWPA)	1
		5: Zone A	
		3: Zone B	
Surface Water Protection Zones	MassGIS	1: Zone C	1
Conserve for Inland Flood Resilience	TNC	5: Presence/Absence	1

Habitat Fragments - This layer represents modeled habitat fragments, or small minimally disturbed natural areas. It was created as part of ESRI's Green Infrastructure Initiative and is one of five companion layers that can be used for Green Infrastructure Planning. (Jul. 7, 2017)

Environmental Justice Communities - Environmental Justice Population Data, based upon three demographic criteria developed by the state's Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA). (June 2021, based on 2020 census)

Regional Trail Links and Buffers - We started with MAPC's 2021 Shared Use Pathway Inventory from their LandLine Greenway Network Map. This includes existing, under-construction, and envisioned significant trails. We then created buffers of distances from 200'-1000', with the highest score being assigned to the tightest buffers. (July 2022)

Access to Open Space, Frontage Parcels - We identified Tax Parcels with 2 acres or more of undeveloped area, with frontage (on public roadways and waterways) adjacent to existing Protected Lands. (July 2022)

Heat Severity - This map contains the relative heat severity for every pixel for every city in the United States. This 30-meter pixel raster was derived from Landsat 8 imagery band 10 (ground-level thermal sensor) from the summers of 2019 and 2020. (March 28, 2022)

Heat Severity Adjacency - We started with the ESRI Heat Severity data and applied buffers of 500' and 1000', assigning more points to the closer areas. (March 28, 2022)

Aquifers - Underground water sources of high, medium, and low yield are in this layer. (July 2007)

Outstanding Resource Waters - This datalayer delineates areas in which certain waters are afforded Outstanding Resource Water (ORW) protection under the Massachusetts Surface Water Quality Standards, 314 CMR 4.00 (WQS). According to 314 CMR 4.04(3). (March 2010)

Public Water Supply Protection Zones - Wellhead protection areas are important for protecting the recharge area around public water supply (PWS) groundwater sources. (March 2022)

Surface Water Protection Zones - These Surface Water Supply Protection Areas delineate those areas included in 310 CMR 22.00, the Massachusetts Drinking Water Regulations, as Surface Water Supply Protection Zones. (April 2017)

Conserve for Inland Flood Resilience - Part of TNC's Nature Based Solutions datasets, this layer identifies as conservation opportunities the remaining undeveloped and unprotected lands >5 acres within the floodplains and adjacent areas mapped in an "inland flood hazard" layer. Natural cover slows, spreads, and dampens inland flood hazards. (2020)

The highest possible score for a cell on this map is 85. The maximum score received for a cell on this map is 60.

Farmland

This theme focusses on existing farmland identified through local knowledge and land cover analysis, and designated Prime Farmland Soils.

Dataset	Source	Scoring	Weight
SVT Agricultural Priorities (2016)	SVT	5: Presence/Absence	1
Agricultural Land Cover	MassGIS	5: Presence/Absence	1
Prime Farmland Soils	MassGIS	5: Prime 3: Statewide 1: Unique	1

SVT Agricultural Priorities (2016) - Parcels identified by SVT in our 2014-2016 priorities work. Parcels were identified by land cover, identifications made by municipal open space plans, and conversations with conservation partners. (2016)

Agricultural Land Cover - Selections from the 2016 Land Cover/Land Use data based on the following land cover - land use categories: 6 (Cultivated Crops) - ALL, 7 (Pasture/Hay) - ALL, and 8 (Grassland/Herbaceous) - 7 (Agriculture). Identified areas were further limited by selecting only features over 5 acres. (May 2019, based on 2016 land cover analysis)

Prime Farmland Soils - The layer comprises three important farmland categories. Urban built-up land and water are excluded from all three categories, but forested lands are included in all three categories if they meet the appropriate criteria. (Nov. 2021)

- *Prime Farmland*: Land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for economically producing sustained high yields of food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops, when treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods.
- *Farmland of Statewide Importance*: This is land, in addition to prime and unique farmlands, that is of statewide importance for the production of food, feed, fiber, forage, and oil seed crops, as determined by the appropriate state agency or agencies. Generally, these include lands that are nearly prime farmland and that economically produce high yields of crops when treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods.
- *Farmland of Unique Importance*: Land other than prime farmland or farmland of statewide importance that might be used for the production of specific high-value food and fiber crops. Examples of such crops are tree nuts, cranberries, fruit, and vegetables. In Massachusetts, Unique soils are confined to mucks, peats, and coarse sands. Cranberries are the primary commercial crop grown on these soils. The presence of other crops on these soils is usually, possibly always, limited to small, incidental areas.

The highest possible score for a cell on this map is 15. The maximum score received for a cell on this map is 15.

Visualizing the Data in the StoryMap

For communicating the results of the project, a data viewer for each of the four thematic maps is provided in an ESRI Story Map. These data viewers allow a user to zoom and pan to an area of interest and identify the score of a particular cell on the map, as well as an ownership parcel's average score. Values are broken into standard deviations and a color ramp is applied to allow for visual analysis of the differing scores. Darker colors indicate higher scores, lighter colors indicate lower scores.

When a user clicks on an area of the map, a singular 30x30 meter pixel/cell is identified and a table of values is returned at the left of the map. This data includes identification of the ownership parcel that contains the identified cell, the overall score of the identified cell (0-Max), the average overall score of all cells within that highlighted ownership parcel, and the individual score of every component dataset that contributed to the overall score (0-5). The weight of the component dataset (1 or 2) is noted in the table. The parcel that contains the identified cell is also highlighted on the map.

A user can also view the results as parcels ranked by average score. To turn on this layer, select the “Layers” icon on the left of your computer screen or bottom of mobile device screen (a series of stacked diamonds). Tap the item “MassGIS SVT Parcels with Model Symbology” to turn on the layer. This layer will be visible when you zoom in to approximately a town-wide view (or closer). Darker colors indicate parcels with higher average scores, lighter colors indicate parcels that have lower average scores.

Questions and comments

Contact Dan Stimson: dstimson@svtweb.org

Open Space Parcels to Preserve & Protect								
Parcel	Address	Acres	Notes	Local	NS	Habitat	CC	Farm
B5-41	Main Street Rear	1.34	Acton Water District priority land	WP	22.00	5.80	37.00	0.00
I3-135	39 Independence Behind	2.92	Acton Water District priority land	WP	22.42	6.43	34.67	0.00
H2-100	36 Liberty Street	4.44	Simeone Farmland	AG	17.50	17.00	17.25	6.25
H2-58	84 Stow Street	3.00	Wetlands floodplain	FP	18.78	6.00	22.00	0.00
E4-60	210 Great Road	12.50	Abuts BFRT and Nashoba Brook	WP	19.18	12.00	14.21	0.16
B5-15	Quarry Road End	19.00	Nashoba & Butter Brook, North of NARA	REC, WP	13.99	20.96	10.00	0.00
C4-14	339 Nagog Hill Road	55.85	Concord Water District - Nagog Shoreline	WP	16.30	16.00	11.40	0.00
B5-16	Quarry Road End	2.20	Spur Trail to Westford; old RR	REC	18.33	24.85	0.00	0.00
I2-3	30 Liberty Street Rear	8.00	Abutting Stonefield Farm	AG	14.71	4.56	21.50	2.26
D6-3-4	20 Triangle Farm Lane	29.26	Abuts Spring Hill Cons. Land	EXP	13.50	12.76	15.44	1.08
H2-63	124 Stow Street	8.00	Forested wetlands	WP	19.31	8.80	13.00	1.53
H3-A-38	5 River Street	1.50	MBTA, Abuts Ft. Pond Brook	FP	18.00	11.00	13.00	0.00
E2-143	356 Central Street	21.40	Idylwilde	EXP, AG	8.50	11.90	16.80	4.20
I4-1	42 Independence Road	4.04	W.R. Grace		14.19	11.00	15.00	0.00
I3-1-1	112 High Street Behind	0.90	Abuts Pratts Brook Cons. Land	EXP	15.00	5.50	19.67	0.00
H2-A-41	17 Stow Street	2.00	Wetlands floodplain on Ft. Pond Brook	FP	12.33	9.33	16.78	0.56
B4-10-1	532 Great Road	2.23	On Nagog Pond; Structures	WP	15.60	7.80	11.30	2.20
I3-136	104 Powdermill Rear	18.2	Acton Water District priority land	WP	16.63	4.00	16.00	0.11
E2-151-9	10 Kennedy Lane	2.46	Acton Water District priority land	WP	10.25	6.18	19.00	0.00
B5-17-1	960-962 Main Street behind	13.97	Acton Water District priority land	WP	11.19	18.40	4.29	1.16
B6-3	1012 Main Street	2.29	Acton Water District priority land	WP	9.36	10.09	14.64	0.55
E2-151	86 Arlington Street	10.20	Wetlands Grassy Pond Brook	WP	14.87	5.20	13.37	0.00
H2-80	133 Stow Street	2.00	Stow Border, abuts HHM	EXP	20.64	8.29	4.50	0.00
E5-15-1	82 Strawberry Hill Road	5.07	Mixed wooded		7.25	8.46	15.33	1.96

G5-96	25 Keefe Road Behind	1.10	Nashoba Brook; State land	AG	12.10	7.90	12.40	0.30
G4-174	19 Wetherbee Street	27.70	Abuts Wetherbee Cons. Land	EXP	16.35	2.67	13.00	0.50
H2-62	129 Stow Street	1.92	Stow Border, abuts HHM	EXP	18.00	9.33	0.00	5.00
H1-2	133 Stow Street Behind	4.00	Stow Border, abuts HHM Cons. Land	EXP	13.67	9.00	9.20	0.45
G4-176	99 Mass. Ave.	2.22	Abuts Wetherbee	EXP	8.80	10.00	8.80	4.40
G4-49-4	121 Concord Road	0.50	Across from Ice House Pond; forested		9.33	12.33	10.00	0.00
E5-36	85 Esterbrook Road	5.40	85 Esterbrook Road; Structures		6.09	8.96	14.50	1.83
E4-8-5	130 Nagog Hill Road	1.15	Acton Water District priority land	WP	16.80	0.86	13.69	0.00
H4-6	323 School Street	50.00	State Owned Farmland	AG	8.90	9.60	7.20	4.80
B5-25-4	108 Nonset Path	6.29	Back of Nonset - Abuts Wills Hole	EXP	17.26	9.67	3.00	0.44
E5-3-3	108 Strawberry Hill Road	2.29	Open meadow, abuts SH CL; Structures	EXP	6.89	8.27	15.09	0.00
J4-5-1	36 Knox Trail	0.3	Acton Water District priority land	WP	11.00	11.56	7.33	0.00
B5-17-3	976 Main Street Beside	21.19	Acton Water District priority land	WP	15.06	10.00	2.46	1.15
H1-6	127 Stow Street	4.50	Stow Border, abuts HHM	EXP	15.35	9.52	0.00	3.70
F4-1-13	Nagog Hill Road	1.04	Acton Water District priority land	WP	7.67	4.50	16.21	0.00
E4-9-2	151 Nagog Hill Road	72.55	Acton Water District priority land	WP	11.11	12.87	2.00	2.12
F2-A-1-1	11 Mead Terr	4.23	Abuts Wright Hill Cons. Land; Structures	EXP	6.59	9.05	12.00	0.00
I4-2	50 Independence Road	24.25	W.R. Grace		9.60	5.40	11.40	1.20
D2-15	6 Wampanoag	5.59	Rear Lots, Wetlands; Structures	WP	8.92	8.93	9.44	0.00
F4-11	22 Grasshopper	9.26	Acton Water District priority land	WP	17.41	8.56	0.67	0.63
C5-38	9 Ledge Rock Way	5.50	Potential Rail Trail	REC	15.53	9.00	1.11	1.50
E5-6	98 Strawberry Hill Road	5.00	Deciduous forest abuts SH Cons. Land	EXP	8.29	11.27	7.50	0.00
C5-97	Wheeler Lane End	15.75	Scoutland; Abuts Robbins Mill Open Space	EXP	10.51	15.96	0.00	0.37
F3-A-89-1	49 Nagog Hill Road	1.91	Open Meadow		8.38	10.00	8.33	0.00
F2-B-6	516 Mass. Ave	0.24	Acton Water District priority land	WP	13.00	9.00	1.33	3.00
I3-1-2	106 High Street Behind	1.44	Abuts Pratts Brook Cons. Land	EXP	14.00	4.60	7.50	0.00

E6-9-1	1 Duston Lane	6.07	Equestrian and Agricultural Field	AG	2.41	9.38	13.75	0.56
H1-4	129 Stow Street Rear	1.75	Stow Border, abuts HHM Cons. Land	EXP	13.10	10.40	1.00	1.50
H3-A-38-1	5 River Street	0.50	MBTA, Abuts Ft. Pond Brook	FP	17.63	0.67	7.50	0.00
I2-20	16 Main Street Behind	6.00	Abuts Stonefield Farm	EXP, AG	11.21	3.81	9.50	1.11
F5-12-56	139 Strawberry Hill Road	9.90	Pond, pasture, vista, abuts Stoneymeade	EXP	7.60	11.91	0.00	6.11
E4-8-6	126 Nagog Hill Road	6.56	Conant Brook	WP	16.52	8.03	1.00	0.00
B4-16	5 Breezy Point	3.61	On Nagog Pond, Structures	WP	17.53	5.00	0.00	2.94
B5-31	Quarry Road Rear	8.50	Wellfield Protection	WP	14.16	6.67	2.00	2.64
B5-35	924 Main Street	33.90	Wellfield Protection, adj. AWD. Structures	WP	15.91	8.93	0.00	0.45
E4-9	562 Main Street	73.65	Conant Brook, forest, wetlands, meadows	WP	10.88	5.67	7.45	1.24
I2-22	31 Conant Street	12.80	wetlands flood plain	WP	20.89	2.00	2.00	0.05
D6-3-2	21 Triangle Farm Lane	12.10	Abuts Spring Hill Cons. Land	EXP	11.71	6.00	7.00	0.00
G4-49-13	4 Horseshoe Drive	0.51	Forested, lawn across from Ice House Pond		8.00	11.00	3.50	2.00
F4-2	10 P.O. Square	6.94	Acton Water District priority land	WP	12.61	5.00	6.67	0.00
E5-14-11	11 Lady Slipper Lane	9.55	Woods behind Gabriel La		14.36	7.00	0.00	2.50
H4-109	271 School Street	6.21	Fort Pond Brook, Structures	FP	14.75	6.00	2.00	1.11
H4-128-4	5 Lawsbrook Road	6.20	Abuts Fort Pond Brook	FP	18.00	5.33	0.00	0.09
D6-3-3	10 Triangle Farm Lane	11.86	Forest, wetland, abuts Camp Acton	EXP	11.29	12.09	0.00	0.00
I2-1	2 Apple Valley Drive	10.56	Woods; Abuts Stonefield Farm; Structures	AG	11.65	4.83	5.60	1.10
E2-237	110 Arlington Street	0.95	Acton Water District priority land	WP	16.00	6.25	0.64	0.00
F3-78	46 Taylor Road	5.80	Abuts Arboretum; Structures	EXP	12.48	6.00	1.89	2.35
G5-95	66 Wetherbee Street	4.60	State Owned, hay field, Nashoba Brook	AG, FP	2.50	5.50	11.80	2.80
C5-38-1	9 Ledge Rock Way	9.16	Rex Lumber, Abuts NARA Park; Structures	REC	2.10	10.00	10.00	0.07
G4-184	60 Hosmer Street	1.00	State owned, Rt. 2, Near Wetherbee CL	EXP	8.00	10.00	0.00	4.00
E6-6-1	12 Spring Hill Road	5.19	Forested wetland abuts SH cons. land	EXP	11.70	10.00	0.00	0.00
E5-14-10	1 Lady Slipper Lane	5.48	Forested Open Space	EXP	7.04	0.00	12.50	1.93

H4-5	316 School Street	42.00	Commonwealth Owned, ag, Route 2	AG	3.70	6.60	2.80	8.10
H2-A-74	86 Martin Street	1.08	Part of old Stonefield Farm; Structures	AG	6.60	3.14	11.00	0.00
D3-26	111 Newtown Road	4.80	Wetlands	WP	12.90	5.00	2.62	0.00
E5-46	Davis Road Behind	8.20	Detention Pond	WP	10.80	6.00	1.60	2.00
G4-189	35 Wetherbee Street	5.39	AWD Priorty Land, abuts wetherbee land	WP, EXP	6.88	8.44	4.00	1.08
G4-185	135 Mass. Ave.	0.79	State owned, Rt. 2, Near Wetherbee CL	AG	5.30	10.00	0.00	5.00
F4-1-14	39 Old Village Road Rear	0.8	Acton Water District priority land	WP	4.00	8.00	7.60	0.00
H3-226-1	105 River Street	2.00	Wetlands on Ft. Pond Brook	FP	14.40	5.00	0.00	0.00
D3-7-3	171 Newtown Road	1.54	Abuts Grassy Pond/Bog habitat	EXP	8.67	3.00	7.71	0.00
B5-17	960 Main Street Behind	36.35	Acton Water District priority land	WP	10.20	2.50	5.00	1.04
H3-A-2	64 School Street	3.80	Abuts Great Hill Cons. Land, Structures	EXP	8.33	10.33	0.00	0.00
E4-86	41 Nagog Hill Road	21.19	Acton Water District priority land	WP	11.53	6.88	0.00	0.00
G4-209	58 Wetherbee Street	16.00	State Equestrian Facility, Barn, pasture	AG	0.46	9.60	0.00	8.18
H4-152	37 Lawsbrook Road	37.52	Acton Water District priority land	WP	10.07	5.28	1.67	1.20
B6-6	991 Main Street	4.25	Acton Water District priority land	WP	15.94	2.00	0.00	0.00
H3-5	6 Arborwood Rd	0.56	Off Brucewood - Wetlands	WP	7.00	10.75	0.00	0.00
E5-51	74 Strawberry Hill Road	4.59	Meadow, abuts Spring Hill; Structures	EXP	4.10	5.50	6.60	1.50
H2-A-41-1	70 Maple Street Behind	0.20	Abuts Ft. Pond Brook Jones Field	FP	16.00	0.00	1.67	0.00
H2-66	116 Stow Street	4.46	Farmland; Structures	AG	11.86	4.62	0.00	1.14
G4-198	96 Mass Ave	21.00	State owned, part forest, part ag, Rt. 2	AG	2.50	5.70	2.40	6.70
D2-15-1	48 Nashoba Road	3.68	Rear Lots, Wetlands	WP	5.76	5.29	6.07	0.00
E5-15	76 Strawberry Hill Road	36.02	Mixed wooded; Structures		7.18	8.95	0.00	0.62
H2-103	85 Liberty Street	2.30	Forested wetlands town line; Structures		13.67	1.00	0.00	1.91
I4-5	50 Independence Road	130.00	W.R. Grace		9.55	5.40	0.00	1.24
F4-1-12	37 Old Village Road Rear	0.75	Acton Water District priority land	WP	9.50	5.00	1.67	0.00
E4-86-1	525 Main Street	1.83	Acton Water District priority land	WP	10.00	6.00	0.00	0.00

G4-187	Mass Ave	4.00	Farm field abutting Wetherbee	AG	0.80	8.50	1.00	4.50
F5-12-6	145 Strawberry Hill Rd	15.83	Pasture, Vista	AG	2.49	0.00	4.00	8.04
C3-22	215 newtown Road	2.30	Open Orchard/Hardwood Forest		8.36	6.00	0.00	0.00
B5-30	Quarry Road Rear	32.60	Parcel Abutting NARA; AWD Wellfield	REC	7.23	3.00	2.50	1.36
C4-24	281 Nagog Hill Road	59.98	Abuts Nagog Hill Cons. Land	EXP	8.82	5.00	0.00	0.13
G2-137-3	97 Central Street	2.12	Lowell, Acon, Maynard Railway Co.		8.73	0.00	5.00	0.00
F5-12-5	181 Pope Road	14.23	Pasture, Vista; Structures	AG	2.90	3.50	0.00	6.44
H3-A-6	76 School Street	1.80	Abuts Great Hill Cons. land	EXP	10.14	2.00	0.00	0.00
E5-51-1	74 Strawberry Hill Road	17.74	Mixed wooded		7.08	3.53	0.00	1.41
C5-46-1	9 Granite Road	14.19	Rec Facility near NARA; Structures	REC	4.06	6.95	0.00	0.00
I4-7	47 Independence Road	1.35	W.R. Grace		2.86	4.29	2.57	0.00
G4-197	70 Hosmer Street	2.52	State Parcel near School St Fields	AG	5.54	2.67	0.00	1.50
E2-143-1	352 Central	3.60	Farmfield abutting Idylwilde	FP,AG	6.93	0.67	0.00	1.69
G2-109	88 Prospect Street	16.55	Hennesey Farm; Structures	AG	0.00	3.75	0.00	4.38
G4-143	13 Wetherbee Street	2.45	Rail Trail Parking lot; Structures		7.90	0.00	0.00	0.00
E2-120	89 Arlington Street	8.31	Acton Water District priority land	WP	2.27	3.08	1.33	0.57
F2-102	Deacon Hunt Drive	0.51	Acton Water District priority land	WP	2.00	4.00	0.00	1.00
F2-105	Deacon Hunt Drive	0.57	Acton Water District priority land	WP	2.00	1.00	2.00	1.50
I4-6	47 Independence Road	0.28	W.R. Grace		0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00

Key	Local Importance
EXP	Expands Cons. Land
AG	Agriculture
FP	Flood Plain
WP	Water Protection
REC	Rec potential and NARA

APPENDIX D: ADA SELF-EVALUATION AND COMPLIANCE SUMMARY

Summary

The accessibility of Town conservation and recreational facilities was determined through a self-evaluation process for the OSRP by members of the Conservation Division, the Recreation Department, the Land Stewardship Committee, and the Commission on Disabilities (COD). The Recreation Department Director who surveyed the playgrounds is Playground Safety certified by the National Recreation and Playground Association. The Board of Directors of the Friends of the Acton Arboretum, Inc. assisted in compiling the Arboretum inventory. On April 16th, 2024 the Commission on Disabilities reviewed the ADA Transition Plan along with staff from the Planning Division and Recreation Department. During this presentation and discussion, comments were scribbled and an additional opportunity to provide feedback over email was encouraged. Conservation, Recreation, and Planning staff noted and integrated comments provided by email and via the COD's April 16th meeting.

Current Accessibility in Acton

Acton continues to improve access at its open space and recreation facilities. The Town continues to improve bike lanes and sidewalks according to its “Complete Streets” policy. The goal of Complete Streets is to design and operate streets to provide safety, comfort and access for users of all ages and abilities for users of the roads, trails and transit systems, including pedestrians, bicyclists, Other Power-Driven Mobility Devices (OPDMs) and wheelchairs. Several trails at the Acton Arboretum have been improved since the last OSRP. Three of the oldest boardwalks at the Arboretum have been replaced. There is an ADA sidewalk from Minot Ave. to provide access to the bog boardwalk. When NARA Park was created in 1999, a paved trail circumnavigating the park was installed for maximum usability by park patrons. A new boardwalk at NARA is now under construction and will be complete by the time this document is published.

Many other improvements have occurred in the past 10 years. After the Miracle Field was completed next to NARA, an adjacent, universal Sports Pavilion was completed in 2022 to provide ADA restrooms for all visitors to the Miracle Field and other NARA amenities. A new ADA campsite was added at Camp Acton Conservation Land. The Acton Arboretum has an ADA parking lot, entry trail, informational kiosk and $\frac{1}{2}$ mile of ADA trails around the Upper Grounds. The Conservation Division, Planning Division, Recreation Department, and the Friends of the Acton Arboretum, Inc. strive to include persons of all ability levels in conservation and recreational programming. All buildings used for programs are ADA accessible. Public meetings for the Recreation Commission, Land Stewardship Committee, Open Space Committee and Conservation Commission are all held in ADA accessible buildings, such as the Acton Town Hall, Acton Memorial Library, and the new Recreation Department building headquarters at 50 Audubon Drive.

Potential for Water Access

NARA Park has a paved, universal, $\frac{1}{2}$ mile trail around the pond, and a one mile, paved, loop trail around the perimeter of the park. This trail includes a universally accessible wooden boardwalk with railings where persons in wheelchairs can fish and enjoy the pond views. The beach is accessible via paved trail and the facility lends a beach wheelchair, which is free for use by patrons. The NARA Pond has an ADA compliant boat ramp with railings and a dock for aquatic activities. The dock has toe bumpers to prevent wheelchairs from rolling off the edge.

The Town has a public swimming pool at the high school. It is ADA compliant with an automated lift to accommodate persons with limited mobility. It is available to citizens through publicly noticed hours

(<http://comed.ab.mec.edu/openswims.shtml>) and a nominal fee. The Community Education program offers a full Red Cross Swim Program at this pool throughout the year. Parking lots at NARA, the Miracle Field, and the Acton Arboretum have the appropriate number of handicap accessible parking spaces in proportion to the total number of spaces. Information kiosks and signage at NARA, the Miracle Field and the Acton Arboretum are also accessible.

There are 4 ADA boardwalks with views of wetlands and streams at the Acton Arboretum. The two rail trails, Bruce Freeman and Assabet River, pass through ponds, streams, and swamps offering up close-up vistas of flowing water, ducks, and wetland plant species. Ice House Pond has an ADA trail adjacent to Nashoba Brook. The up-and-coming River Street park that is currently under construction will have accessible fishing and water views of Fort Pond Brook.

Improvements Despite Impediments

There is room for accessibility improvement at our conservation lands, however there is limited funding. Trails are subjected to the weather extremes caused by climate change that include torrential rain. These downpours cause extensive erosion that is expensive to repair. The Town of Acton is building a new municipal park adjacent to Fort Pond Brook on River Street in South Acton, which will have ADA walkways. This ecological restoration project has cost millions of dollars in state, federal, and local grants to fund, and involved removal of a 14-foot tall concrete dam. The River Street Park project site is within walking distance to the MBTA, EJ neighborhoods, and will eventually have a sidewalk connecting it to Main Street and the Assabet River Rail Trail. In extreme weather, trails can become submerged. The Town of Acton applied for a Building Resilient Communities (BRIC) grant to replace an undersized culvert at the Jenks Conservation Land. This culvert has been overwhelmed by flood water several times in the past 3 years. The cost for Phase I to study the hydrology of the brook will cost \$90,000. The construction costs for these types of projects make it challenging to improve access on remote, wooded trail systems.

Fortunately, several large projects with excellent accessibility in the Town of Acton have occurred in the past 10 years since the last OSRP was completed. Many of them have gorgeous water features. Large scale parking lot paving requires adequate drainage according to storm water regulations. Paving does have environmental impacts and is generally limited to areas where visitors can use an ADA trail with vistas. Ice House Pond adjacent to Morrison Farm now has an ADA trail and boat launch with views of the pond. Visitors in wheelchairs regularly fish there. All conservation land kiosks are equipped with QR (“Quick Response”) codes that direct users to a live location maps when scanned by a smart phone. Kiosks have maps stapled to them. The universally accessible Bruce Freeman Rail Trail and the Assabet River Rail Trail now provide many miles of exploration during all months but the deepest, coldest, icy, winter periods.

Signage

Conservation land trail systems utilize rectangular “blazing” on trees along the trail. Kiosks at trail heads explain the color-coded system with colored maps and notices. Trails are generally well-marked and cleared of large obstructions. A few of the more complex trails have “You Are Here” notice boards at confusing trail junctions. Some trail systems have large wooden signs that indicate the distance to a parking lot or a major road. Most trails have painted arrows indicating the direction the trail may take a sharp turn. A dedicated group of land stewards work with the Town’s I.T. Department to design better maps. The Town’s www.trails.actonma.gov website now has interactive web pages that can give more detailed trail information to visitors. The East Acton Village Green is a new pocket park with an ADA trail, universally accessible picnic table, pollinator garden and historical info panels a short distance from the Ice House Pond parking lot and adjacent to the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail.

Interpretive programs and Alternative Experiences

The Conservation Division, the Recreation Department, and the Community Education programs in Acton all provide interpretive programs, hikes, outings and events. Every effort is made to be sensitive and inclusive of interested participants of all abilities. Programs are adapted as needed and requested by the public to provide universal access. The Conservation Staff visit the public schools to teach about Acton's nature and ecology. This program is universally accessible. The Acton Conservation Trust and the Friends of the Acton Arboretum provide events, speakers and meetings at the Acton Town Hall, a fully ADA compliant building. The Town works hard to make all programs more accessible for individuals with a range of disabilities through trained interpreters, technologies, and devices as necessary and appropriate.

Other Power-Driven Mobility Devices

The Town of Acton invites all OPDMDs to be used on trails wherever their operators feel their particular device is best equipped. Trails at the Acton Arboretum, NARA Park, the Miracle Field, Ice House Pond, the Assabet River Rail Trail and the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail all accommodate OPDMDs. Campers who wish to stay overnight or visit Camp Acton may drive their OPDMD at the first campsite adjacent to the parking lot, which also has an ADA portable toilet on site.

Communication

Acton publicizes its designations of the ADA Coordinator, notices, policies and procedures for use by all citizens and employees in the Open Space and Recreation Plan, on the Town website, and all Town Meeting Warrants and Town publications. Town staff and volunteers regularly reach out and include citizens with disabilities in programs and activities. All public meetings are held at universally accessible venues and all efforts are made to accommodate requests for technology that will improve public participation.

Individuals Involved in the Self-Evaluation Process

Jim Snyder-Grant, Select Board Liaison

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Leslie Johnson

Pesha Kokis

Melissa Wingfield

John Gianetto

Joan Burrows, Associate

Wanjiku Gachugi, Direction of Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion

Bettina Abe, Friends of Acton Arboretum Board Member & member of the Land Stewardship Committee

Nora Mastler, Planner

Melissa Settipani-Rufo, Recreation Director

Ian Bergemann, Community Conservation Specialist



Acton Select Board

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manager@actonma.gov

March 6, 2024

RE: Designation of ADA Coordinator

To Whom it May Concern,

This letter shall serve as notice that Town Manager John S. Mangiaratti has been duly designated and appointed as the Town ADA Coordinator for the purpose of compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Please feel free to contact this office with any questions.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. S. Snyder-Grant".

Jim Snyder-Grant
Chair, Acton Select Board



Americans with Disabilities Act Grievance Procedure for Employees

G3-1. *Policy.* The Town of Acton does not discriminate on the basis of disability in the admission or access to, or treatment or employment in, its programs or activities. The Town's ADA Coordinator has been designated to monitor compliance with the non-discrimination requirements in the Section 504 regulations and the Americans with Disabilities Act regulations as implemented by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the Department of Justice.

G3-2. *Grievance Procedure.* The following grievance procedure is established to meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. It may be used by any employee who wishes to file a complaint alleging discrimination on the basis of disability in employment practices and policies or the provision of services, activities, programs, and benefits by the Town of Acton.

- a) The complaint should be in writing and contain information about the alleged discrimination such as name, address, telephone number of complainant and location, date and description of the problem. Reasonable accommodations, such as personal interviews or a tape recording of the complainant, will be made available for persons with disabilities who are unable to submit a written complaint.
- b) The complaint should be submitted by the grievant and/or his/her designee as soon as possible but no later than 60 calendar days after the alleged violation to the Acton Board of Selectmen and the ADA Coordinator.
- c) Within fifteen calendar days after receipt of the complaint, the ADA Coordinator will meet with the complainant to discuss the grievance and possible resolutions. The ADA Coordinator will inform the complainant about the existence of and the contact information for the *Acton Commission on Disabilities*, should the complainant wish to discuss their grievance with that Commission.
- d) Within 15 calendar days after the meeting, the ADA Coordinator will respond in writing, and where appropriate in a format accessible to the complainant such as audiotape. The response will explain the position of the Town of Acton and offer options for substantive resolution of the complaint.
- e) If the response of the ADA Coordinator does not satisfactorily resolve the issue, the complainant and/or his/her designee may appeal the decision of the ADA Coordinator within 15 days after receipt of the response to the Board of Selectmen or their designee.
- f) Within 15 calendar days after the receipt of the appeal, the Acton Board of Selectmen or their designee will meet with the complainant to discuss the complaint and possible resolutions. Within 15 calendar days after this meeting, the Board of Selectmen or their designee will respond in writing, and where appropriate in a format acceptable to the complainant, such as audiotape, with a final resolution of the complaint.
- g) All complaints received by the ADA Coordinator, appeals to the Acton Board of Selectmen or their designee, and responses from the ADA Coordinator and the Acton Board of Selectmen or their designee will be kept by the Town of Acton for at least three years.

Grievance Procedure for All Employees**8.9 Grievance Procedure -****A. Classification:**

1. Information:
 - a. All Steps preceding Appeal to Select Board have been followed, in accordance with the Personnel Administration Plan.
 - b. Decision of the Town Manager is not satisfactory to the complainant. Reasons therefore will be clearly stated in the appeal; the appeal will be in writing.
 - c. Case file regarding basis for classification has been developed and a copy furnished to the complainant by the Town Manager.
 - d. Complainant cannot advance a classification appeal unless it is personal to that individual.

- e. Complainant's case must have been completely stated to the Town Manager - (No new information will be introduced into the appeal by the complainant, which has not been fully considered by the Town Manager).

2. Process:

- a. Select Board may designate one of its own members to review the appeal and the entire case file and make a recommendation to the full board as to the disposition of the appeal.
- b. Decision of the Select Board will be communicated to the appellant in writing not later than 30 days following date of receipt of the appeal by the Chairperson of the Select Board. This decision will be final and subject to no further consideration.
- c. Except in the case of a unanimous vote to do so by the Select Board, a formal hearing on the employee's appeal of his/her job classification will not be held. If an appeal results in a hearing it will be conducted by a quorum of the Select Board as a separate public meeting, chaired by the chairperson.

B. General Working Conditions -

The Town Manager is the final deciding official on all grievances based on general working conditions. C. Disciplinary or other actions involving adversity, including: suspension, demotion, reassignment or removal for performance reasons or for good and cogent management reasons.

1. Criteria:

- a. All pertinent procedural steps preliminary to an appeal to the Select Board, as contained within the Personnel Administration Plan, have been observed by the complainant

2. Process:

- a. Within 14 calendar days of receipt of an adverse decision by the Town Manager involving the disciplinary measure, the complainant may appeal, in writing, to the Chairperson of the Select Board requesting reconsideration of the disciplinary /adverse action taken. The complainant will state the specific basis for the appeal and resolution sought.

- b. The Town Manager will establish and furnish to the Select Board a complete case file reflecting all pertinent aspects of the action taken by management and all responses/statements provided by the complainant in the process leading to the decision of the Town Manager.
 - c. If a hearing is desired, the complainant must specifically so request in their appeal to the Select Board. In the absence of this request, the Select Board will consider the appeal in Executive Session on the basis of a review of the record and the complainant's written appeal. The Select Board may request any information or testimony which will assist in rendering a decision. The Select Board will attempt to reach a decision within 30 calendar days or less. The decision will be communicated to the complainant by the chairperson of the Select Board within 10 calendar days of the completion of the deliberations by the Select Board. At all times, the complainant's rights to privacy will be observed by the Select Board.
 - c. In the event that the complainant requests a hearing in connection with their appeal, the Chairperson of the Select Board will designate a member of the Select Board to hear the appeal. The hearing proceedings will be recorded. The hearing officer will conduct the hearing giving full consideration to the complainant's expressed desires regarding rights to privacy. Both the complainant and the office of the Town Manager will be represented throughout the hearing. The complainant will be entitled to representation at his/her own expense, except that no supervisor or manager in the Town of Acton may be chosen to act as the complainant's representative.
 - d. The hearing officer will communicate their findings, conclusions, and recommendations to the Select Board, in Executive Session, within 21 days of the completion of the hearing. The Select Board will immediately consider the recommendations and take one of the following actions:
 - 1) By majority vote, accept the recommendations of the hearing officer and render a decision which adopts these recommendations, in total.
 - 2) By unanimous vote, render its own decision;
 - 3) Remand the case to the hearing officer for further, specific inquiry.
 - e. The hearing officer, although an elected member of the Board, will not be permitted to vote on the above deliberations in view of their involvement as the hearing officer.



TOWN OF ACTON

472 Main Street
Acton, Massachusetts 01720
(978) 929-6611
www.actonma.gov
manager@actonma.gov

Office of the Town Manager

March 6, 2024

RE: Designation of ADA Coordinator

To Whom It May Concern:

As Town Manager/ADA Coordinator for the Town of Acton, I hereby attest to the fact that the Town's employment practices are in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act with respect to the following: Recruitment, Personnel Actions, Leave Administration, training, testing, needed exams/questionnaires, social and recreational programs, fringe benefits, collective bargaining agreements and wage and salary administration.

Additionally, I have attached to this statement a copy of the Town's Personnel Policy regarding Equal Employment Opportunity.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John S. Mangiaratti".

John S. Mangiaratti
Town Manager

Equal Employment Opportunities - The Town of Acton has and will provide equal employment opportunities for all applicants. Every individual, regardless of race, color, national origin, religion, age, genetic information, marital status, sexual orientation, military service, disability, arrest record, gender identity or sex, applying for employment in the Town will receive equal treatment. The Town's policy with respect to Equal Employment opportunity is set forth in the Town of Acton Equal Employment Opportunity Affirmative Action Plan.

Affirmative Action Policy Statement

The Town of Acton recognizing the right of an individual to work and to advance on the basis of merit, ability and potential - without regard to race, sex, color, disability, religion, national origin, national ancestry, age, sexual orientation, genetic information, military service, or any other protected class under applicable federal, state, or local laws - resolves to take Affirmative Action measures to ensure equal opportunity in the areas of hiring, promotion, demotion or transfer, recruitment, layoff or termination, rate of compensation, or training programs, and all terms and conditions of employment.

Non-discrimination and equal opportunity are the policy of the Town of Acton in all of its programs and activities. To that end, all Town of Acton employees shall rigorously take affirmative steps to ensure equality of opportunity in the internal affairs of the Town as well as in their relations with the public, including those persons and organizations doing business with the Town of Acton. Each department, in discharging its statutory responsibilities, shall consider the likely effects which its decisions, programs and activities, shall have in meeting the goal of equality of opportunity.

Affirmative action requires more than vigilance in the elimination of discriminatory barriers on the grounds of race, sex, color, disability, religion, national origin, national ancestry, age, sexual orientation, genetic information, military service, or any other protected class under applicable federal, state, or local laws. It must also entail positive and aggressive measures to ensure equal opportunity in internal personnel practices and in those programs which can affect persons outside of town government. This affirmative action shall include efforts necessary to remedy the effect of present and past discriminatory patterns, and any action necessary to guarantee equal opportunity for all people.

**Town of Acton
Conservation Agent
Division of Natural Resources**

February 23rd, 2022

The Town of Acton is seeking applicants for a full-time, benefitted Conservation Agent. The incumbent will assist with environmental efforts for the town including the enforcement of the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act; will participate in creating plans for the town conservation and open space projects and working closely with the Acton Conservation Commission. The Conservation Agent will work on special projects, obtaining permits, writing grants, and creating documentation for maps, education programs, and pamphlets for the town's conservation and environmental areas.

General Duties and Responsibilities:

- Provide technical and administrative support for the Natural Resources and Planning Divisions of the Land Use Department in relation to conservation and environmental planning
- Enforce the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act; including site visits and inspections to ensure new builds and current locations are in compliance with the Act and bylaw
- Create and assist with planning efforts for town conservation projects
- Work closely with the administrative staff to prepare Conservation Commission agendas, coordinate site walks for Commissioners, write, review and publish minutes
- Work on special projects, write grants, permits, and create documentation for the town's conservation and environmental areas
- Act as liaison for town and citizens on environmental efforts with regional, state, and federal and non-profit agencies
- Provide technical assistance to the Open Space Committee, Agricultural Commission, and other committees as assigned
- Keep detailed records and reports of all inspections, meetings, and projects

Minimum Entrance Requirements: Bachelor's Degree in Environmental Science or related field, with at least two (2) years of experience in wetlands protection through understanding of Massachusetts Wetland Protection Act, land conservation, land use or municipal planning, environmental planning, or in a related field or any equivalent combination of education and experience.

Preferred Qualifications: Experience working with the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act. Proficiency in Microsoft Office Suite. Strong working knowledge of Geographic Information Systems and ability to read and interpret plans. General working knowledge of municipal terms, rules, and regulations. Experience in community planning, writing grants and permits; conduct of inspections.

Special Requirements: Valid driver's license. Required to visit sites for regular inspections. Availability for evening meetings.

Pay Rate: Starting range: \$77,377 - \$87,089/year

Applications:

Submit resume and cover letter to Human Resources at jobs@actonma.gov

Deadline: Applications must be received by March 18th, 2022

Acton is an Equal Opportunity Employer

**Town of Acton
Land Stewardship Coordinator
Land Use Department
February 2023**

The Town of Acton is seeking applicants for this full-time, benefitted position in our Land Use Department. If you are passionate about the environment and want to make a difference within the community this is a great position working with our Conservation Agent.

General Duties and Responsibilities: This position will report to the Conservation Agent and will provide staffing for the Land Stewardship Committee, Agricultural Committee, the Friends of the Acton Arboretum Inc., and be the land manager for Acton's conservation land. This position will partner with the schools for outreach and education programs and assist the conservation agent with special projects and programming when needed. This position will recruit and oversee volunteers for the Arboretum and manage scouts' projects. This position will oversee the Arboretum landscape contract, and the upkeep of town conservation lands. The Land Stewardship Coordinator will coordinate building and installing trail signs and build boardwalks. This position will organize workdays, schedule time for trail walks, monitor bodies of water in the parks, and oversee volunteer events and trainings including invasive plant removal. The position will work with the Conservation Agent on grants and state procurement and may conduct research and analysis of conservation related issues pertaining to resource enhancement and protection. The Coordinator will attend meetings for the Land Stewardship Committee and Agricultural Commission. This position will perform any other tasks or duties as assigned by the supervisor as needed. The Land Stewardship Coordinator will attend periodic meetings and collaborate with local and state conservation groups like MACC, OARS, land trusts, and the MetroWest Conservation Alliance on regional conservation efforts., as well as field general wildlife questions from the public.

Minimum Entrance Requirements: Valid Driver's License required. High School diploma or equivalent. Three (3) years of work experience in the field of Conservation and Land management. One (1) year experience in volunteer coordination. Bachelor's degree in Environmental Science may be substituted for three (3) years of work experience or a combination of credits towards a degree and years of experience.

Preferred Qualifications: Municipal government experience.

Special Requirements: Some nights and possibly weekends. Experience using building tools and supplies. General knowledge of local plants and wildlife.

Pay Rate: H-8; starting at \$24.53 - \$27.61 /hour; \$51,028.38 - \$57,432.44 /annually

Benefits: Hybrid work schedule is available, \$425 fitness club reimbursement program (if enrolled in Town Health Insurance plan), and free transportation from the commuter rail station to Town Hall. Health, Dental, Vision, and Pet insurance are just some of our competitive insurance benefits.

Applications:
Submit application, resume, and cover letter to Human Resources (e-mail jobs@actonma.gov).
Acton is an Equal Opportunity Employer.
Applications available on Town website: www.actonma.gov, Human Resources

Deadline: First consideration being given to applications received by February 24th, 2023



TOWN OF ACTON

472 Main Street

Acton, Massachusetts 01720

(978) 929-6611

www.actonma.gov

manager@actonma.gov

Office of the Town Manager

Dear Employee,

Attached is the Town's Professional Standards of Conduct policy including Anti-Harassment and Anti-Discrimination.

Any harassment, including sexual harassment, is a behavior that is unacceptable in the work place. All employees of the Town should work in an environment free from any form of illegal harassment. Employees should have a safe and positive environment in which to be productive.

If you think that you have been a victim of harassment, please inform us immediately and action will be taken. Section IV of this policy provides information regarding sexual harassment. Distribution to and acknowledgement by each employee of the sexual harassment policy is required annually by the state.

If you need further assistance, please contact the Human Resources Department at 978-929-6613.

Best Regards,

A blue ink signature of John S. Mangarati, Town Manager.

John S. Mangarati
Town Manager



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Best Regards,

A blue ink signature of John S. Mangaratti, Town Manager.

John S. Mangaratti
Town Manager

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS OF CONDUCT POLICY INCLUDING ANTI-HARASSMENT AND ANTI-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

I. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to define a Code of Conduct for Town employees, including the Town's Anti-Harassment and Anti-Discrimination Policy. This policy applies to all Town employees.

II. GENERAL POLICY REGARDING HARASSMENT IN THE WORKPLACE

It is the policy of the Town of Acton to maintain a work place that is free of all forms of harassment. Harassment includes behavior that is personally offensive, lowers morale and interferes with work effectiveness. It also undermines the integrity of the employment relationship and will not be tolerated, and may be subject to corrective action up to and including termination. Moreover, as a part of the overall nondiscrimination policy, as stipulated by State and Federal law, the Town of Acton prohibits all forms of harassment.

Harassment is a form of employment discrimination that violates state and Federal law. Harassment is unwelcome conduct that is based on race, color, religion, religious creed, sex (including pregnancy), sexual orientation, national origin, ancestry, age (40 or older), disability, genetic information, military service or any other category protected under applicable federal, state or local law. Harassment becomes unlawful where 1) enduring the offensive conduct becomes a condition of continued employment, or 2) the conduct is severe or pervasive enough to create a work environment that a reasonable person would consider intimidating, hostile, or abusive. Anti-discrimination laws also prohibit harassment against individuals in retaliation for filing a discrimination charge, testifying, or participating in any way in an investigation, proceeding, or lawsuit under these laws; or opposing employment practices that they reasonably believe discriminate against individuals, in violation of these laws.

Petty slights, annoyances, and isolated incidents (unless extremely serious) will not rise to the level of illegality. To be unlawful, the conduct must create a work environment that would be intimidating, hostile, or offensive to reasonable people.

Offensive conduct may include, but is not limited to, offensive jokes, slurs, epithets or name calling, physical assaults or threats, intimidation, ridicule or mockery, insults or put-downs, offensive objects or pictures, and interference with work performance. Harassment can occur in a variety of circumstances, including, but not limited to, the following:

- The harasser can be the victim's supervisor, a supervisor in another area, an agent of the employer, a co-worker, or a non-employee.

- The victim does not have to be the person harassed, but can be anyone affected by the offensive conduct.
- Unlawful harassment may occur without economic injury to, or discharge of, the victim.

Unwelcome harassing conduct will not be tolerated. Employees are encouraged to inform the harasser directly that the conduct is unwelcome and must stop. Employees should also report harassment to the Director of Human Resources to prevent its escalation. Please see the Complaint Procedure, below, for specifics.

III. CODE OF CONDUCT

Employees are expected to conduct themselves in their dealings with internal and external customers in a manner that will enhance respect for, and confidence in, the employee and the Town. Employees must not only perform their duties with integrity, but must avoid conduct which gives a reasonable basis for creating the impression of acting otherwise. In addition, it is expected that visitors of all Town facilities will comply with the “Visitors – Code of Conduct” policy which is attached to this policy (attachment A).

IV. SEXUAL HARASSMENT

It is unlawful to harass a person (an applicant or employee) because of that person’s sex. Harassment can include “sexual harassment” or unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical harassment of a sexual nature. Harassment does not have to be of a sexual nature, however, and can include offensive remarks about a person’s sex. For example, it is illegal to harass a woman by making offensive comments about women in general.

Both victim and the harasser can be either a woman or a man, and the victim and harasser can be the same sex.

Although the law doesn’t prohibit simple teasing, offhand comments, or isolated incidents that are not very serious, harassment is illegal when it is so frequent or severe that it creates a hostile or offensive work environment or when it results in an adverse employment decision (such as the victim being fired or demoted).

The harasser can be the victim’s supervisor, a supervisor in another area, a co-worker, or someone who is not an employee of the employer, such as a client or customer.

As defined by federal law, “sexual harassment” means any unwelcome sexual advances or requests for sexual favors or any other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature where:

- 1) submission to such advances, requests or conduct is made either implicitly or explicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment;
- 2) submission to or rejection of such advances, requests or conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting the individual; or
- 3) such advances, requests or conduct have the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment.

Sexual harassment includes any type of sexually-oriented conduct, whether intentional or not, that is unwelcome and has the purpose or effect of creating a work environment that is hostile or offensive, interferes with work effectiveness or is coercive to a reasonable woman or man, as the case may be. The following are examples of conduct that, depending upon the circumstances, may constitute sexual harassment: (a) unwelcome and unwanted sexual jokes, language, epithets, advances or propositions; (b) written or oral abuse of a sexual nature, sexually degrading or vulgar words to describe an individual; (c) the display of sexually suggestive objects, pictures, posters or cartoons; (d) unwelcome and unwanted comments about an individual's body, sexual prowess or sexual deficiencies; (e) asking questions about sexual conduct; (f) unwelcome touching, leering, whistling, brushing against the body, or suggestive, insulting or obscene comments or gestures; and (g) demanding sexual favors in exchange for favorable reviews, assignments, promotions or continued employment, or promises of the same.

V. COMPLAINTS

The Town is committed to maintaining a productive work environment free from discrimination, including harassment. It will not tolerate harassment of employees by anyone, including members of the public. Harassment will not be tolerated in Town buildings, on Town property or in other settings in which employees may find themselves in connection with their employment.

Retaliation against employees for reporting or complaining of discrimination, harassment or sexual harassment (or for supporting an employee in making such a report or complaint, or for cooperating in the investigation of a report or complaint) is unlawful and will not be tolerated.

It is the responsibility of all employees of the Town to ensure that we work in an environment that is free from discrimination and harassment. If you are concerned about something, you may talk about it with any of your supervisors or with the Director of Human Resources. If, after discussion of the behavior in question, either party believes that this Policy may have been violated, then that party must proceed with the Complaint Procedure outlined in this section.

Complaint Procedure

To file a complaint or report an incident of discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, or retaliation, please contact the Director of Human Resources. If that is difficult in the circumstances, you may talk with the Town Manager. An investigation of all complaints will be undertaken immediately, and corrective action will be taken when warranted. No person will be subject to any form of retaliation for filing a complaint or cooperating in its investigation. Information will be handled with the highest degree of confidentiality possible under the circumstances and with due regard for the rights and wishes of all parties. To the extent that the Town is permitted to do so by law, the Town will inform the person filing the Complaint regarding resolution of the Complaint once the investigation is completed.

After an investigation, any employee who is found by the Town of Acton, depending upon the circumstances of the situation, to have harassed another in the workplace will be subject to appropriate discipline up to and including termination.

In addition, if any employee believes that he or she has been subjected to discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment or retaliation in violation of law, he or she also may file a formal complaint with the appropriate federal or state government agencies, including the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) (800-669-4000) and the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination (MCAD) (617-994-6000). The contact information for those offices is provided below:

Massachusetts Commission
Against Discrimination
One Ashburton Place
Sixth Floor, Room 601
Boston, MA 02108
Phone: 617-994-6000
TTY: 617-994-6196

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
John F. Kennedy Federal Building
475 Government Center
Boston, MA 02203
1-800-669-4000
617-565-3196 - FAX
1-800-669-6820 - TTY

VI. BULLYING

Bullying will not be tolerated in the workplace. Bullying cuts across boundaries of status group membership. It must be distinguished from illegal varieties of harassment. Bullying may happen when harassment is same-gender or same-race or when the bully enjoys potential legal protection because he or she is a member of a status-protected group.

Bullies can be cruelly innovative. They often vary their tactics hour to hour, day to day. Bullying includes, but is not limited to, verbal abuse (i.e. shouting, swearing, name calling, malicious sarcasm, threats to safety), behaviors/actions (i.e. public or private that are threatening, intimidating, humiliating, hostile, offensive, inappropriately cruel), abuse of authority (i.e. undeserved evaluations, denial of advancement, stealing credit, tarnished reputation, arbitrary instructions, unsafe assignments), interference with work performance (i.e. sabotage, undermining, ensuring failure) or destruction of workplace relationships (i.e. among co-workers, bosses, or customers).

VII. WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

Violence in the workplace will not be tolerated. For purposes of this policy, workplace violence is any behavior which is intended (or which a reasonable person may perceive is intended) to abuse or injure a person or damage or destroy property in the workplace including, but not limited to bullying, threats, physical, verbal, written or visual attack, or property damage. The following definitions are incorporated to assist employees to more fully understand the nature of the behavior prohibited by this policy. However, workplace violent behavior is not limited to only these descriptions:

A threat – expression of intent to cause physical or mental harm regardless of whether the person communicating the threat has the present ability to carry out the threat, and regardless of whether the threat is contingent, conditional or future;

Physical attack – intentional hostile physical contact with another person or an object such as hitting, fighting, pushing, shoving, or throwing;

Verbal attack – intentional hostile communication (including recorded messages) with another person such as abusive outbursts, verbal tirades intended to offend, offensive comments, or use of obscene or threatening language;

Written attack – the use of printed, electronic or social media, including notes, letters, drawings, pictures, or computerized mail, to threaten, abuse, ridicule, or harass people or to threaten property;

Visual attack – the use of bodily gestures that are threatening, obscene, or abusive;

Property damage – intentional damage (as a reasonable person may presume by the nature of the damage) to property which includes property owned by the Town, employees or others.

VIII. SAFETY-RELATED SEARCHES

For legitimate safety purposes when there is a credible threat of workplace violence, the Town reserves the right to search the possessions of employees, vendors, contractors, and subcontractors upon entering or leaving Town property, and at any time while on Town property without prior announcement. At such times, all vehicles, briefcases, purses, portfolios, lunch boxes, toolboxes, and other articles and containers may be subject to inspection. Employees refusing to submit or interfering with such searches may be subject to disciplinary action, up to an including termination.

IX. EMPLOYEE TRAINING

The department/division manager, or his/her designee, will orient all new employees to this policy and departmental/divisional procedures regarding reporting incidents of violence or retaliation, what to do if the employee is threatened and/or if an incident of violence actually takes place, and dealing with the after effects of an act of violence or retaliation.

X. EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

An Employee Assistance Program is available to all employees of the Town. Should an employee become the victim of an incident of workplace violence, the department/division manager should make sure the employee is aware of services available through the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and may offer additional referral services to assist the employee and/or affected work group in coping with any effects of the incident.

Should it be determined in the investigation of a reported incident that an employee did commit a violent act, the employee shall at a minimum be referred to the EAP by the department/division manager. In these cases, failure by the employee to keep an initial appointment with the EAP shall result in disciplinary action.

XI. ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Massachusetts Fair Employment Practices Act, Chapter 151B requires employers to provide all employees an individual written copy of the policy against sexual harassment annually. It also requires that new employees be provided with a copy at the beginning of employment. The attached acknowledgment form is provided to ensure compliance.

TOWN OF ACTON

ACKNOWLEDGMENT FORM

(Please complete and return to Human Resources)

This is to certify that I have been provided an individual copy of the Town of Acton's Professional Standards of Conduct Policy Including Anti-Harassment and Anti-Discrimination Policy (which includes the Sexual Harassment Policy).

Employee Name (Please print)

Signature

Date



HUMAN RESOURCES
 Town of Acton 472 Main Street
 Action, Massachusetts, 01720
 Phone: 978-929-6613
 Email: jobs@actonma.gov

TOWN OF ACTON **APPLICATION FOR EMPLOYMENT**

(Please Print or Fill Out Digitally)

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

We are an equal opportunity employer, dedicated to a policy of non-discrimination in employment on any basis including age, sex, gender identity, color, race, creed, national origin, religious persuasion, marital status, political belief, or disability that does not prohibit performance of essential job functions.

Position(s) Applied For: _____ Date: _____

I. Personal Information

Last Name: _____ First Name: _____ Middle Initial: _____
 Optional: Pronoun (i.e. she, he, they): _____ Optional: Chosen Name (e.g. nickname): _____
 Street Address: _____
 Town/City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____
 Primary Telephone: _____ Alternative Telephone: _____
 E-Mail: _____

II. Educational History *Fill all applicable rows*

	School Name	Year Completed
High School		
College		
Tech Training		
Other (i.e. Grad)		

III. Employment Record Please include all employment history or attach resume. If you have more than 5 entries please attach resume.

1. Organization: _____ Position: _____
Start Date _____ End Date: _____
2. Organization: _____ Position: _____
Start Date _____ End Date: _____
3. Organization: _____ Position: _____
Start Date _____ End Date: _____
4. Organization: _____ Position: _____
Start Date _____ End Date: _____
5. Organization: _____ Position: _____
Start Date _____ End Date: _____

IV. Attestations

Federal law prohibits the employment of unauthorized aliens. All persons hired must submit satisfactory proof of employment authorization and identity (valid driver's license, birth certificate, Green Card, etc.) within three days of being hired. Failure to submit such proof within the required time shall result in immediate employment termination.

- Are you legally eligible for employment in this country? Yes No
If you are under 18, and it is required, can you furnish a work permit? Yes No N/A
Do you have any relatives who are presently (or have formerly been) employed by the Town of Action? Yes No

How were you referred to the Town: _____

I UNDERSTAND THAT IF I AM EMPLOYED, ANY MISREPRESENTATIONS OR MATERIAL OMISSION MADE BY ME ON ANY DOCUMENTS I HAVE PROVIDED WILL BE SUFFICIENT CAUSE FOR CANCELLATION OF THIS APPLICATION OR IMMEDIATE DISCHARGE FROM THE EMPLOYER'S SERVICE, WHENEVER IT IS DISCOVERED.

I GIVE THE EMPLOYER THE RIGHT TO CONTACT AND OBTAIN INFORMATION FROM ALL REFERENCES, EMPLOYERS AND EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND TO OTHERWISE VERIFY THE ACCURACY OF THE INFORMATION CONTAINED IN ANY OF THE DOCUMENTS PROVIDED. I HEREBY RELEASE FROM LIABILITY THE EMPLOYER AND ITS REPRESENTATIVES FOR SEEKING, GATHERING AND USING SUCH INFORMATION AND ALL OTHER PERSONS, CORPORATIONS OR ORGANIZATIONS FOR FURNISHING SUCH INFORMATION.

IT IS UNLAWFUL IN MASSACHUSETTS TO ADMINISTER A LIE DETECTOR TEST AS A CONDITION OF EMPLOYMENT. AN EMPLOYER WHO VIOLATES THIS LAW SHALL BE SUBJECT TO CRIMINAL PROSECUTION OR CIVIL LIABILITY.

THE TOWN OF ACTON DOES NOT UNLAWFULLY DISCRIMINATE IN EMPLOYMENT AND NO QUESTION ON THIS APPLICATION OR IN SUBSEQUENT INTERVIEW IS USED FOR THE PURPOSE OF LIMITING OR EXCUSING ANY APPLICANT FROM CONSIDERATION FOR EMPLOYMENT ON A BASIS PROHIBITED BY LOCAL, STATE, OR FEDERAL LAW.

I UNDERSTAND THAT IT IS THE TOWN'S POLICY NOT TO REFUSE TO HIRE A QUALIFIED INDIVIDUAL WITH A DISABILITY BECAUSE OF THAT PERSON'S NEED FOR A REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION AS REQUIRED BY THE ADA.

I ALSO UNDERSTAND THAT IF I AM HIRED, I WILL BE REQUIRED TO PROVIDE PROOF OF IDENTITY AND LEGAL WORK AUTHORIZATION.

I REPRESENT AND WARRANT THAT I HAVE READ AND FULLY UNDERSTAND THE FOREGOING AND SEEK EMPLOYMENT UNDER THESE CONDITIONS.

Signature of Applicant _____

Date _____

APPENDIX G: Recreation Commission: Grievance Policy: Equal Access

ACTON RECREATION COMMISSION GRIEVANCE POLICY FOR THE GENERAL PUBLIC

Equal Access to Facilities and Activities

1. The Recreation Commission is committed to providing maximum opportunity to receive resident comments, complaints and to resolve grievances or inquiries.

Administrative Level

2. The Recreation Director and/or other Recreation Administrative Staff will be available during office hours to meet with residents and employees to discuss complaints.
3. When a complaint, grievance or request for program policy interpretation or clarification is received either in writing, through a meeting or telephone call, every effort will be made to create a record regarding the name, address, phone number, nature of the complaint, and program policy interpretation, clarification or resolution.
4. All complaints, grievances or request for program policy interpretation will be responded to by telephone or in writing within ten working days.
5. If the issue is not resolved at this level, it will progress to the Commission level.

Recreation Commission Level

6. Complaints can be forwarded to any member of the Recreation Commission either in writing or by telephone. The Recreation Commission will respond to the complaint either by telephone or in writing within ten days. If the issue is not resolved at this level, it will progress to the Select Board level.

Select Board Level

7. If the grievance is not satisfactorily resolved, citizens will be informed of the opportunity to meet and speak with the Select Board of their complaint.

Recreation Facility or Conservation Land	Entrance	Parking	Entry Path	Toilets	Tables	Benches	Water Features	Alternative Programs	Responsibility	Abuts	Comments
	<i>If more than one</i>	On street (O), Unpaved (U), Paved (P), ADA	Bumpy (B), Unpaved (U), Paved (P), Steep->10% (S), ADA	Yes, ADA	Total number; Number ADA compliant	Distance to nearest; Total number	Obstacles to access or Special accomodations	Focused on needs of some disability community	Recreation, Conservation, Other Municipal, Schools	Adjacent Conservation or Recreation land	Other Accessibility Features or Issues
Anderson	Arlington Street	U	B/U/S				Two boardwalks crossing streams and wetlands		Conservation	Bulette/Town Forest	
	Genevieve Lane	N/A	B/U/S								
Arboretum	Concord Road Sidewalk	O	B/U/S				Wet areas with and without boardwalks; Boardwalk over bog.		Conservation		
	Minot Avenue	O	P/ADA			20 ft, 1					
	Taylor Road	U	ADA	Yes, ADA	7, 1 ADA	75 feet E, 10+,					
	Wood Lane	O	U			600 feet S, 1					
	Main Street	O	P/ADA	Yes		300 feet E, 10+					
	Assabet River Blue and Green Trail	U	B/U			500 feet	Boardwalk to scenic view		Conservation		
Assabet River Rail Trail		ADA	ADA						Department of Public Works		Connection to Maynard
Bruce Freeman Rail Trail		ADA	ADA						Department of Public Works		
Bulette/Town Forest	O	B/U/S					Wetlands Crossing		Conservation	Anderson	
Boardwalk Campus-Main Building Playspace	Spruce St	P, ADA	P, ADA	ADA in school			ADA Marsh Boardwalk	yes	Schools		Connects to Elm St Playspace via Bordwalk
Boardwalk Campus- Playspace	Elm St	P, ADA	P, ADA				ADA Marsh Boardwalk	Yes	Schools	Elm Street facilities	Access to boardwalk via Stabalized crushed stone (ADA)
Camp Acton	Pope Road	U	B/U/S	Yes, ADA	8				Conservation	Spring Hill	
Cauette/Simeone	O	U							Other Municipal		
Canoe Launch	U	U/S					Canoe Launch		Conservation		
Conant School: Hart Field	Taylor Road	P / ADA	U	No	No	Bleachers only			Recreation		
Conant School: MacPherson Field	Taylor Road	P / ADA	B/U/S	No	No	Bleachers only			Recreation		in the woods
Concord Rd Field	Concord Road	U / ADA	U	No	No				Recreation	Morrison Farm	sidewalk to field
Douglas School Field		ADA	P	ADA in school		20 ft, 4	Marsh Boardwalk		Schools	Elm St. facilities	
East Acton Village Green		ADA	ADA		1	1	Grass trail to pond edge		Department of Public Works	Bruce Freeman Rail Trail	
Elm St: Fields, Playground, Basketball and Tennis Courts	Elm Street	P / ADA	B/P/ADA	Yes, ADA		100 ft, 7	Marsh Boardwalk, Drinking Fountain		Recreation	Douglas School Field, Gates School Field	ADA boardwalk to Gates School
Gardner Field and Playground	Mass Ave	O/P/U/ADA	P			10 ft, 4	Drinking Fountain		Recreation		
Gates School Field		ADA	P	ADA in school	2	2	Marsh Boardwalk	Yes	Schools	Douglas School Field, Elm Street facilities	School playgrounds
Goward Playground	Woodberry Lane	P/ADA	P	ADA, in library	ADA	10 ft, 5			Recreation	Library	
Grassy Pond	Nagog Hill Road	U	U			0.5miles S, 1	Dock for viewing or fishing,bridge over wetlands, wetlands crossing		Conservation	Nagog Hill	
	Newtown Road	U	B/U/S			0.7 miles N, 1					
Great Hill	School Street (Recreation Entrance)	P/ADA	P				Ponds, streams, bridge over stream		Recreation/ Conservation		
	Kelley Road	O	B/U/S						Conservation		
	Main Street	U	B/U/S						Conservation		
	Piper Road North	O	U						Conservation		
	Piper Road South	O	U/S						Conservation		
Recreation Facility or Conservation Land	Entrance	Parking	Entry Path	Toilets	Tables	Benches	Water Features	Alternative Programs	Responsibility	Abuts	Comments
	<i>If more than one</i>	On street (O), Unpaved (U), Paved (P), ADA	Bumpy (B), Unpaved (U), Paved (P), Steep->10% (S), ADA	Yes, ADA	Total number; Number ADA compliant	Distance to nearest; Total number	Obstacles to access or Special accomodations	Focused on needs of some disability community	Recreation, Conservation, Other Municipal, Schools		Other Accessibility Features or Issues
Guggins Brook	Central Street	U	B/U				Stream, Wetlands crossing		Conservation	Jenks	
	Mass Ave	O	U								
Heath Hen Meadow	Billings Street	O	B/U				Boardwalks over wetlands		Conservation		
	Mt Hope Cemetery	U	U								
	Robbins Street	O	B/U								
	Prescott Road	O	B/U/S								
High School Ball Fields (1 Softball, 1 Baseball)		P, ADA	U, B			10ft, 4			Schools		

Arboretum

- Construct additional ADA accessible parking area on 46 Taylor Road, a parcel identified for land acquisition in the OSRP parcel prioritization chart
- Construct accessible trail connecting the potential ADA accessible parking area located on 46 Taylor Road to the accessible Wildflower Loop
- Pave the 100' long Orchard Loop Trail
- Repair connection from China Trail Garden boardwalk to Fragrance Garden trail
- Create a ADA accessible surface underneath the ADA accessible picnic table in the Fragrance Garden
- Repair lumps and bumps in asphalt along the Wildflower Trail caused by frost heaves
- Create additional ADA accessible surfaces underneath ADA accessible picnic tables

Camp Acton

- Create ADA accessible loop connecting to the ADA accessible campsite

Jenks Conservation Land

- ADA accessible parking space at Central Street parking lot.
- Construct ADA accessible trail from parking area to scenic overlook site over Ft. Pond Brook, with bench.

Pratt's Brook

- Brewster Lane entrance: create universal pathway to grassy lawn area.
- Install ADA accessible picnic table and ADA accessible surface

Fort Pond Brook Municipal Park

- Install ADA accessible trails with brook access for viewing and fishing
- Build sidewalk in order to connect this park to Main Street, the MBTA, and the Assabet River Rail Trail

Red House Pocket Park

- Install an ADA accessible "Little Climate Resilience Library"
- Install ADA accessible picnic tables
- Install ADA accessible raised garden beds

Meeting House Hill

- Create ADA accessible trail from Main Street sidewalk to gardens at Meeting House Hill
- Create an ADA accessible parking space for volunteers who tend the gardens

Morrison Farm

- Install 2 ADA raised garden beds at the Community Gardens

Ice House Pond

- Construct an ADA accessible loop around Ice House Pond and connecting to the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail
- Construct ADA accessible fishing pier

Wetherbee Conservation Land

- Construct ADA accessible parking and trail connecting the Bruce Freedman Rail Trail to the 27-acre 19 Wetherbee St parcel, which abuts Wetherbee Conservation Land and listed for land acquisition on the OSRP parcel prioritization chart

Will's Hole/Town Forest Conservation Land

- Create an ADA accessible trail along the old cart path connecting Nagog Park Drive to NARA

Across Conservation Lands

- Improve and maintain at least 3 miles of ADA accessible trails
- Install benches at least 30 ft from trail heads
- Improve and increase access to trail heads via parking areas
- Increase awareness of accessible trails by offering guided walks/hikes
- Increase universal access to scenic vistas
- Create and install ADA accessible natural and cultural interpretive panels for conservation education

Acton Arboretum Accessibility Inventory

NOTE: trails are not maintained in winter.

Trails can be icy, muddy, snow-covered, slippery. Trails are generally not accessible in winter or after extreme weather events. Call the Conservation Office for up to date trail conditions 978-929-6634.

SITE/ACCESS/ENTRANCES – Existing Conditions

- a.  The main entrance from the Taylor Road parking lot is ADA accessible, having any of the following surfaces: wood, concrete paving stones, stone dust, asphalt.
- b. The entrance from Wood Lane is not accessible. This 500-foot entrance trail has natural ground, with large roots and/or rocks.
- c. The entrance from Main Street is ADA level, with a paved asphalt sidewalk.
- d. There is a 600-foot entrance trail from Concord Place, called the "Billings Trail," which is an unmaintained, natural trail.
- e. There is a 150 foot, ADA paved sidewalk down to the Highland Bog trail from Minot Ave. near the bog boardwalk and the intersection of Forest Road. The bog boardwalk itself is ADA with a wheelchair turnaround at the esker end. There is public parking at Conant School with a 500-foot paved walkway, sidewalk and crosswalk to the Minot Ave. sidewalk entrance. The bog loop trail is not ADA, has roots, rocks, steep inclines, mud, poison ivy and other natural hazards.

PARKING – Existing Conditions

The Arboretum has 3 main entrances and two have parking.

- 1.  Taylor Road Main entrance has a paved parking lot with space for approximately 22 cars, with 2 **ADA Van** parking spots. These two spots are 20 feet from entrance gate into park. The parking lot surface is paved asphalt, which is plowed, but can be icy in winter.
- 2. Wood Lane entrance is not handicap accessible and there are no designated parking spots. Visitors park at the end of a dead-end street. The mature, undulating, densely-wooded entrance is occasionally blocked by large, storm damaged trees. There is an informational kiosk.
- 3. Main Street/Taylor Road sidewalk entrance is ADA and for pedestrians. There is a sidewalk along Main Street and a wooden, carved *Acton Arboretum* sign.

*Remote parking may be found behind the fire station on Concord Road, the Acton Memorial Library and the Acton Town Hall. It is approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ mile to the Arboretum entrance from those buildings.

TRAILS – Existing Conditions

There are 3 main trails at the Arboretum. Two are **H/A**, but are affected by the **harsh outdoor environmental seasonal conditions**. They are not passable, nor maintained in winter, nor after heavy seasonal rains. Stone dust has occasional weeds growing in it. Asphalt may have cracks or small lumps. Use caution at all times.

- 1. ***The Orchard Loop*** is approximately 0.2 mile long. It is mostly level and consists of either packed stone dust with granite cobble edges, grass interspersed with gravel, or asphalt edged with grass. A 224' portion is rough, packed gravel and would be bumpy in a wheelchair, with occasional

rocks protruding at surface. There are 3 mini-trails of 100' or less within this loop through a hosta garden and grape arbor on packed stone dust. There are generally few roots or rocks. Use caution. **Not passable in winter or early spring due to mud, ice and snow.**

 a. **Orchard Loop trail to Fragrance Garden and back** (from main entrance) is 0.6 mile. Trail is mostly level with packed stone dust surface; some granite, and some grass edging. **Trail is not passable or maintained in winter or after heavy seasonal rain.**

 b. **Rhododendron trail:** From the main entrance, head down the paved trail and go 300 feet. This paved portion of trail has between 5% and 10% slope. A stone dust trail on the left after the pond leads 440 feet around a rhododendron garden and through a wooden arbor; emerging back onto the main trail. The trail is narrow and has a <5% slope. **The China Trail Garden** was built in 2019 and has a wooden, accessible 150' boardwalk over a gently-sloped, red bridge, connecting the Fragrance Garden with the Rhododendron Garden. A 30' section of stone dust trail at the Fragrance Garden end has eroded and will be resurfaced using concrete pavers. The slope of this 30-foot section of trail is 5%. An ADA picnic table is adjacent to the trail with a stone dust spur.

 2. **The Wildflower Loop** is approximately 0.5 mile in length and contains the Orchard Loop within it. The surface is packed stone dust or asphalt. There are several H/A wooden boardwalks. The Fern boardwalk measures 200 ft. long, has a maximum slope of, 5% and has double hand rails. The Wildflower Boardwalk measures 150' long, has <5% slope and also has double handrails. Approximately 225' of this trail has a maximum slope of 10% with two avoidable, embedded rocks and two 2" high roots. However, a 100-foot "wheelchair or stroller shortcut" wooden boardwalk with toe bumpers, without handrails, was built in 2018. There is a 265' Fragrance Loop trail spur off the Wildflower Loop with a packed stone dust surface.

3. **Highland Bog Loop** is approximately 1.5 miles long when starting at the main entrance at Taylor Road. **The bog loop is not accessible and has numerous tripping hazards and poison ivy near the trail.** [One can reach this trail and the bog boardwalk via sidewalk via sidewalk for 500 feet from Minot Ave. and/or Conant School.] The trail surface is stone dust, paved asphalt, and natural ground. One mile of this trail is rocky, has many large roots and is steep in several sections. There is a narrow, winding 300' wooden boardwalk through a bog and numerous other wooden walkways through wetlands. The bog boardwalk structure has toe bumpers. There are handrails at the observation platform portion only.

SIGNS – Existing Conditions

Trails are blazed yellow, blue or red according to the Town of Acton Land Stewardship Committee trail standards. Yellow denotes the main loop, red the access from parking and blue is interconnecting trails. Blazes are painted, dollar-bill sized rectangles on trees. There are wooden carved, painted blocks with arrows directing hikers along the trail. The signs do not give distances. A large map at the main entrance kiosk shows points of interest, trail colors and scale.

Plans for Improvement- the 30-foot section of stone dust trail connecting the China Trail Garden boardwalk to the Fragrance Loop will be refurbished with concrete pavers. The ADA picnic table in the Fragrance Garden will be refurbished with concrete pavers.

SERVICES/TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE/ PROGRAMMING

There is a large map on a kiosk at the main entrance parking area. There is a QR code that can be scanned to download the trail map or an audio tour. We provide guided tours to groups of citizens with special needs. Topics can be birds, plants, habitats, environmental protection, gardening, trees, etc. Please contact conservation@acton-ma.gov to request a custom tour or program.

Plans for Improvement: Continue to repair and improve trails each year as budget allows.

RESTROOMS

There is a  H/A portable toilet at the edge of the Taylor Road parking lot on site from May – November.

BENCHES

There are wooden benches installed at least every 200' around the Wildflower Loop and Orchard Loop Trails. Benches are adjacent to packed stone dust trail surface.

PICNICKING

There are a total of 6 ADA picnic tables randomly dispersed around the upper lawn area. This area is generally level, though bumpy/grassy. One ADA picnic table is on an accessible walkway adjacent to the main entrance kiosk at the Taylor Road parking lot. There is an ADA picnic table in the Fragrance Garden.

PLAY AREAS

The upper grounds of the Orchard Loop are grassy and mostly level. The trail abuts the lawn area. A stone reading circle is located 20' from the paved trail. Several ponds may be viewed from adjacent trails.

RAMPS

The Wildflower Loop trail passes over three, ADA accessible wooden boardwalks, all with either level ramps or with less than 5% grade change. There is a 20' long wooden bridge near the hosta garden and a 10' long wooden bridge near the sun pond. All have railings at 18" and 36" high and <5% slope. The China Trail Garden has ramps accessing the boardwalk and bridge. The red painted bridge has handrails but the boardwalks have toe bumpers. All are fully accessible.

FRAGRANCE GARDEN

This garden was designed for the sight impaired. Most plant species may be touched and smelled.

NO DRINKING FOUNTAINS

There is no potable water at the Arboretum. Visitors are should bring reusable bottles of water especially in hot weather. Please pack out what you bring in and "Leave No Trace." Accessible trash barrels are located at main entrance.

NARA and Miracle Field Accessibility

Assessments Performed 2/2024

SITE/ACCESS/ENTRANCES – Existing Conditions

 NARA's main entrance, the lower parking lot, with ADA parking is at 25 Ledge Rock Way off Main Street, and has paved, level sidewalks and walkways. Universal entrance to a paved trail around the pond is from two points in this parking lot.

 NARA has a second paved entrance, the upper parking lot, with ADA parking, at 71 Quarry Road. It is 0.3 mi north on Quarry Road off Main Street.

 There is a 0.1 mile bituminous sidewalk on a steep hill (10% slope) connecting Ledge Rock Way to Quarry Road. There is no sidewalk on Quarry Road.

 The **Miracle Field** entrance is just past the upper parking lot, heading north on Quarry Road, at 75 Quarry Road. This facility may also be entered via paved trail from adjacent NARA.

There is a wide, paved trail from the upper parking lot down to the amphitheater. The amphitheater is abutted by level lawn area. It is approximately 75' from the nearest ADA parking spaces to the amphitheater. The slope is 5%.

PARKING – Existing Conditions

NARA has two main parking areas. The **Miracle Field** has one.

 NARA's main entrance, the lower parking lot at 25 Ledge Rock Way has approximately 75 spaces with 8 ADA parking spaces.

 NARA's upper parking lot is located 0.3 mi up Quarry Road from Main Street. It is paved and level with 4 ADA parking spaces.

 The **Miracle Field** is adjacent to NARA. Its paved driveway and parking lot are at the end of Quarry Road. It has 8 ADA parking spaces. There is a 260' paved perimeter trail surrounding the baseball diamond, primarily <5% slope connecting to the **NARA** loop trail.

TRAILS – Existing Conditions

 **NARA** Pond Perimeter Loop – paved, 0.5 mile with a 280' level wooden boardwalk with railings and 2 benches on bridge. There are many more benches along trail installed at least ever 200'.

 **NARA** Perimeter Loop – 1 mile, mostly 5% slope. There are 3 sections of this trail where slope is 10%-15% for 50'-130'.

 **Miracle Field** Perimeter Loop – 700' long.

NARA Amphitheater trail – paved, 200' from Quarry Road parking lot to Amphitheater, which is surrounded by lawn. There is a rustic, stone amphitheater 200' away. The surface terrain is mostly level, grass or packed stone dust. There are two stone bridges 100' apart over a stream and beside two storm water treatment-created impoundments, with viewing areas and informational panels.

Plans for Improvement:

- Re-paving and fixing any trails that have damage from wear-and-tear over the years.
- Adding pavement or cement from the NARA Amphitheater trail to the front of the stage for universal accessibility.
- Adding more kiosks with information about the trails and park.

SIGNS – Existing Conditions



ADA Parking signs at all 3 parking lots. Braille on all public restroom doors and office space.

SERVICES/TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE/ PROGRAMMING – Existing Conditions

- There is an ADA beach wheelchair at **NARA** on loan to beach guests. Staff install interlocking plastic ramp panels for easier beach and water access via wheelchair.
- Staff can provide guided tours to park users.
- Please contact recreation@actonma.gov to request a custom tour or program.
- ADA trike program for guests to ride on the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail.

Plans for Improvement:

- Adding more signage with multiple languages about the programming and services at the park.

WATER ACCESS – Existing Conditions

NARA Beach – there are paved ADA walkways connecting the parking and trails to the beach. There is a beach wheelchair, for free use by beach patrons. Staff install interlocking plastic panels for wheelchair access to beach or water. The beach is 200' from the **ADA** parking spaces at 25 Ledge Rock Way lower parking lot.

NARA Pond Dock – ADA ramp and 30'x8' dock with toe bumpers for fishing and water viewing. Dock surface is 1' above water line.

NARA Pond Boardwalk – 280' ADA zig-zag design boardwalk with railings is part of the 0.5 mile pond loop trail. There are 2 benches installed near the center of the boardwalk.

NARA Wildlife Pond – Access is from perimeter park loop trail. Surface is 5% grade or less, packed stone dust or grass. The ground is slightly uneven with small lumps and bumps across a stone bridge. There are two educational info panels and a wildlife sculpture in the center of the pond. The associated wetlands were developed with grant funding, designed to treat storm water and to provide wildlife habitat.

RESTROOMS - Existing Conditions

-  An **ADA** portable toilet at the edge of the upper Quarry Road parking lot is on site, year-round.
-  The **NARA** bathhouse is adjacent to and 20' away from the Ledge Rock Way parking lot. It has **ADA** men's and women's restrooms. Open May-August. Signs on doors are also in Braille. There are two accessible outdoor showers at the bathhouse.
-  The **NARA** Sports Plaza has **ADA** men's and women's restrooms, plus a universally accessible family restroom, complete with an adult changing table.

BENCHES - Existing Conditions

There are benches installed at least every 200' around the **NARA** Pond perimeter Loop trail. Most of the benches are installed on accessible cement pads.

Plans for Improvement:

- Installing accessible paths to access every bench.
- Landscaping around the benches to make sure the vegetation is not overgrown and causing access issues.

PICNICKING - Existing Conditions

Two picnic tables located at the bathhouse area are **ADA**.

A total of twenty picnic tables are located at the Picnic Pavilion, and two are **ADA**.

A total of eighteen picnic tables are located at the Sports Plaza, and two are **ADA**.

Plans for Improvement:

- Adding more **ADA** picnic tables to all the picnic areas.

NARA PLAYGROUND - Existing Conditions

There is a playground at **NARA** accessible via paved trail from the 25 Ledge Rock Way lower parking lot. The playground has engineered wood fibers as its surfacing. Please see playground inventory for details in **Appendix G-16**.

RAMPS Existing Conditions

-  There is an **ADA** ramp behind the **NARA** Amphitheater for access to the stage.
-  There is an **ADA** ramp at the **Miracle Field** from the parking lot to the field and bleachers.
-  At **NARA** Pond there is a 30' **ADA** ramp connecting the walkway to the dock.
-  There is an **ADA** ramp to access the Sports Plaza restrooms.

DRINKING FOUNTAINS - Existing Conditions

All water fountains are seasonally operational from May-October.

- ⌚ One ADA water fountain at the **Miracle Field**.
- ⌚ One ADA water fountain adjacent to the upper Quarry Road parking lot.
- ⌚ One ADA water fountain adjacent to the **NARA** playground.
- ⌚ One ADA water fountain attached to the snack bar building at the **NARA** bathhouse lower parking lot.

PLAYING FIELDS

⌚ The **Miracle Field** is a Little League-sized baseball field designed to accommodate all levels of ability. The **Joseph Lalli Miracle Field** opened in September 2012 and is located at 75 Quarry Road adjacent to **NARA** in Acton, MA. It has a completely rubberized surface that allows for safe and easy mobility for all. There are no raised surfaces to interfere with wheelchairs, walkers or crutches. In addition, the field is completely enclosed by a fence which provides a safe environment for those players who tend to wander or have no sense of danger. Please see <http://www.miracleleagueofma.com/> for more information.

There is one regulation size softball field at **NARA**.

There is a large, level playing field at **NARA** that can accommodate many games simultaneously. It is run by the Acton Recreation Department in cooperation with several local nonprofit sports organizations.

AMPHITHEATER

⌚ The performing stage at **NARA** is surrounded by lawn. It sits on a level surface between the paved park loop trail and a large, grassy, elevated amphitheater bowl. It is wheelchair accessible by paved walkway. There is universal access to the snack bar. The lawn area in front of the stage is level, compact grass.

SNACK BARS

⌚ There are three snack bars at **NARA**. Their locations include: the bathhouse, amphitheater, and sports plaza. At **NARA** there are two “beach” volleyball courts with sandy surfaces, located 50' from the Ledge Rock Way parking lot.

VOLLEYBALL COURTS

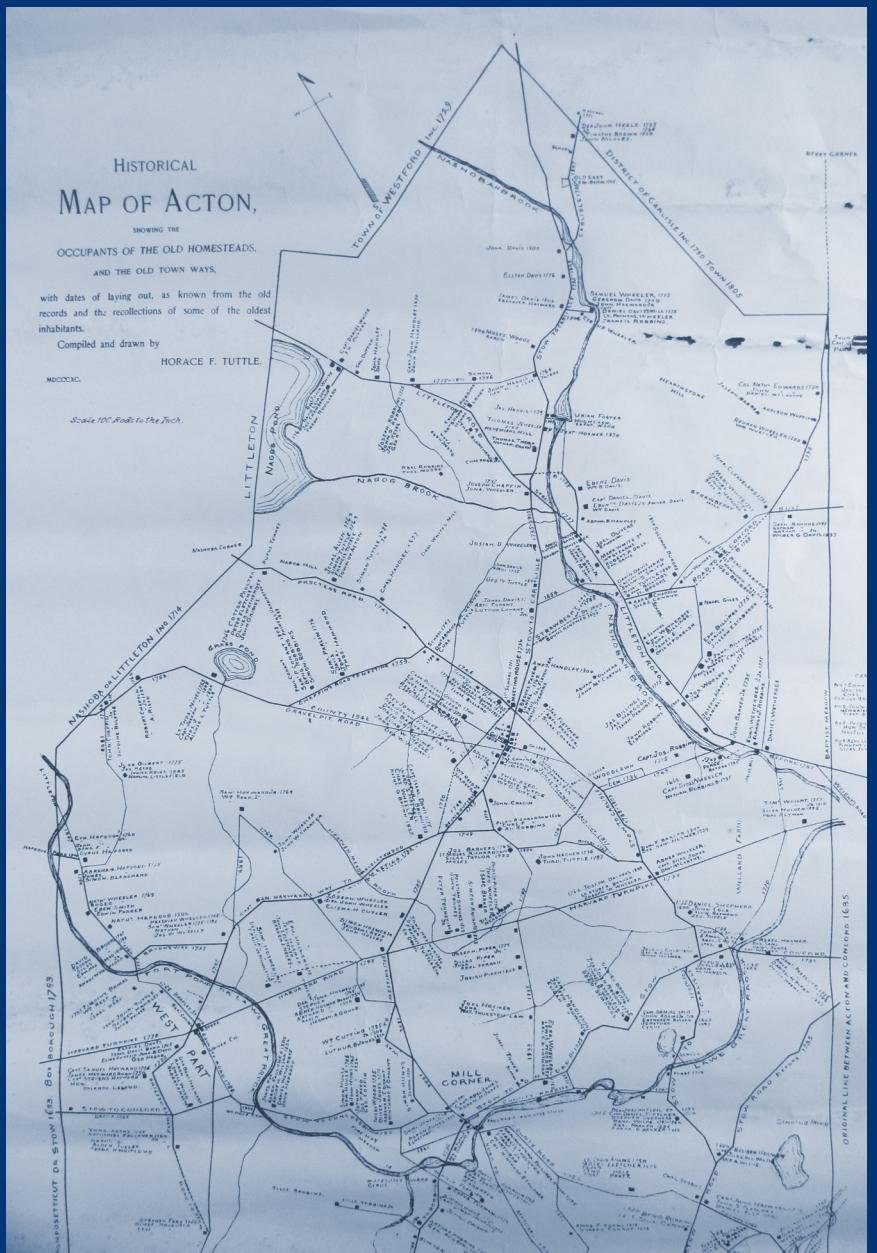
The Town of Acton Open Space and Recreation Plan 2024-2031



Section 13: Maps



1830-31



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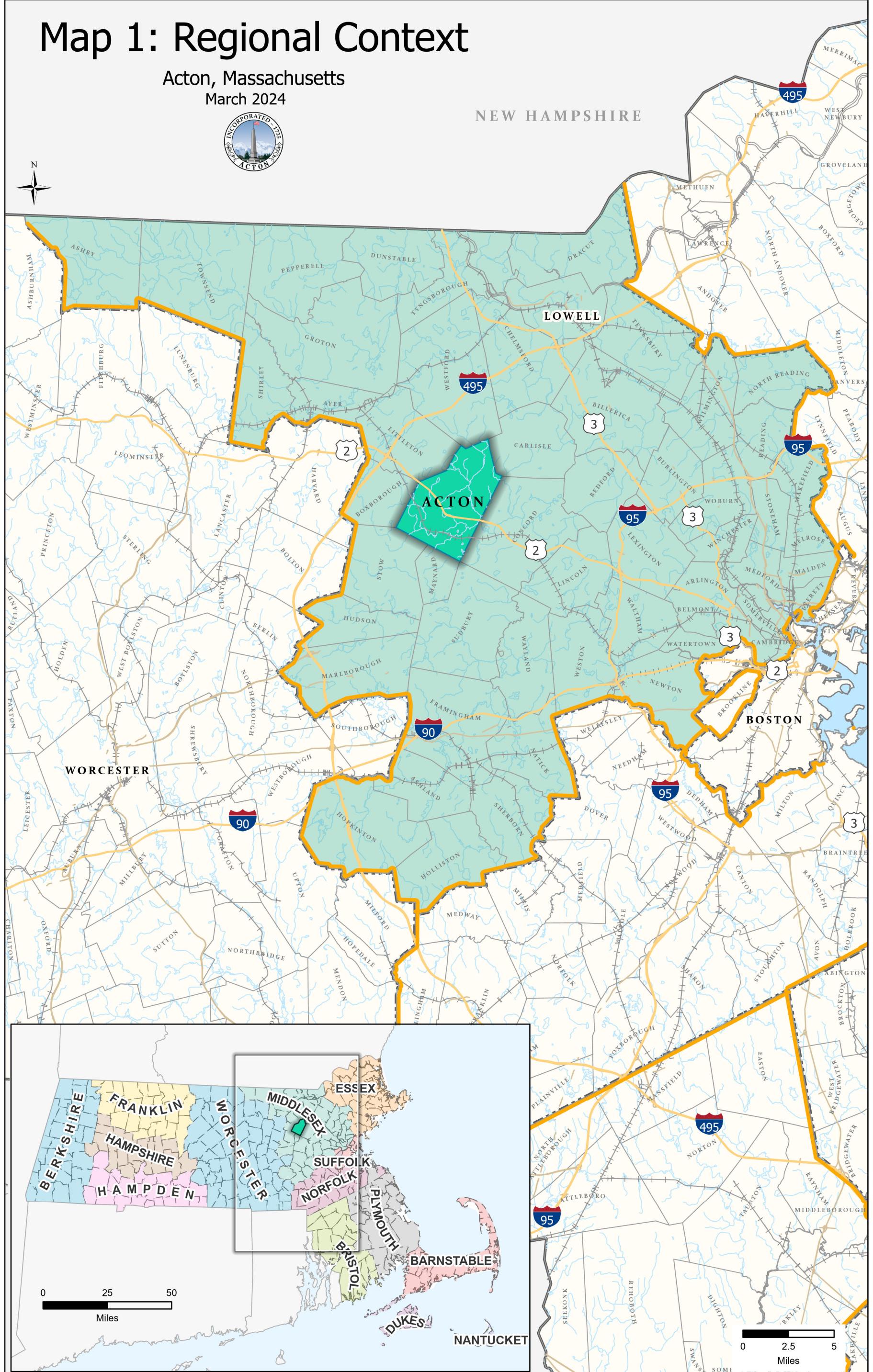
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Map 1: Regional Context

Acton, Massachusetts
March 2024



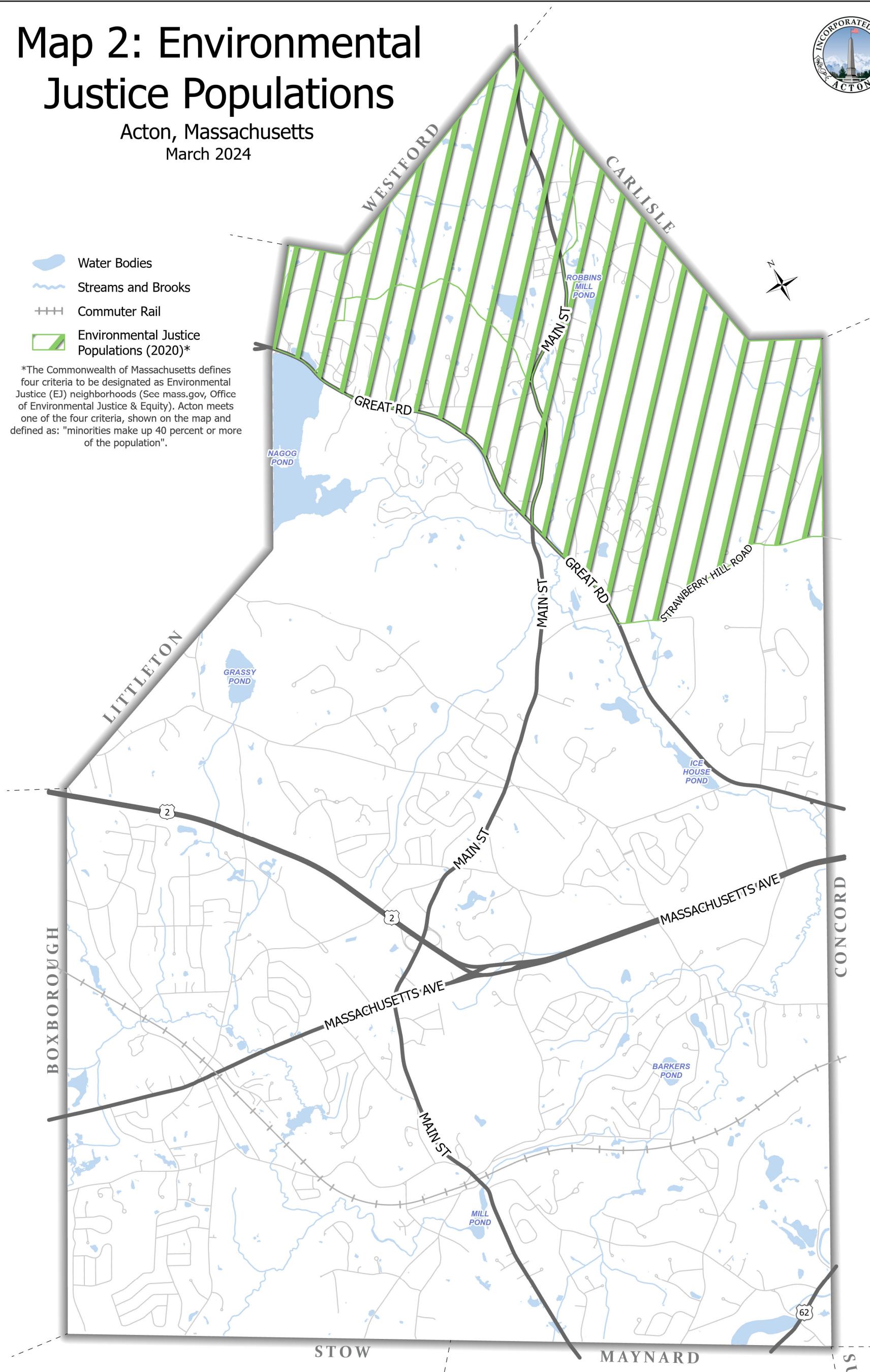
Map 2: Environmental Justice Populations

Acton, Massachusetts
March 2024



- Water Bodies
- Streams and Brooks
- Commuter Rail
- Environmental Justice Populations (2020)*

*The Commonwealth of Massachusetts defines four criteria to be designated as Environmental Justice (EJ) neighborhoods (See mass.gov, Office of Environmental Justice & Equity). Acton meets one of the four criteria, shown on the map and defined as: "minorities make up 40 percent or more of the population".



Data provided by MassGIS and the Town of Acton, MA.

This map, and the information herein, is intended to be a reasonably accurate representation, but is not guaranteed. The Town of Acton shall not be held responsible for the accuracy or misuse of this data.

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Miles

Map 3: Zoning

Acton, Massachusetts

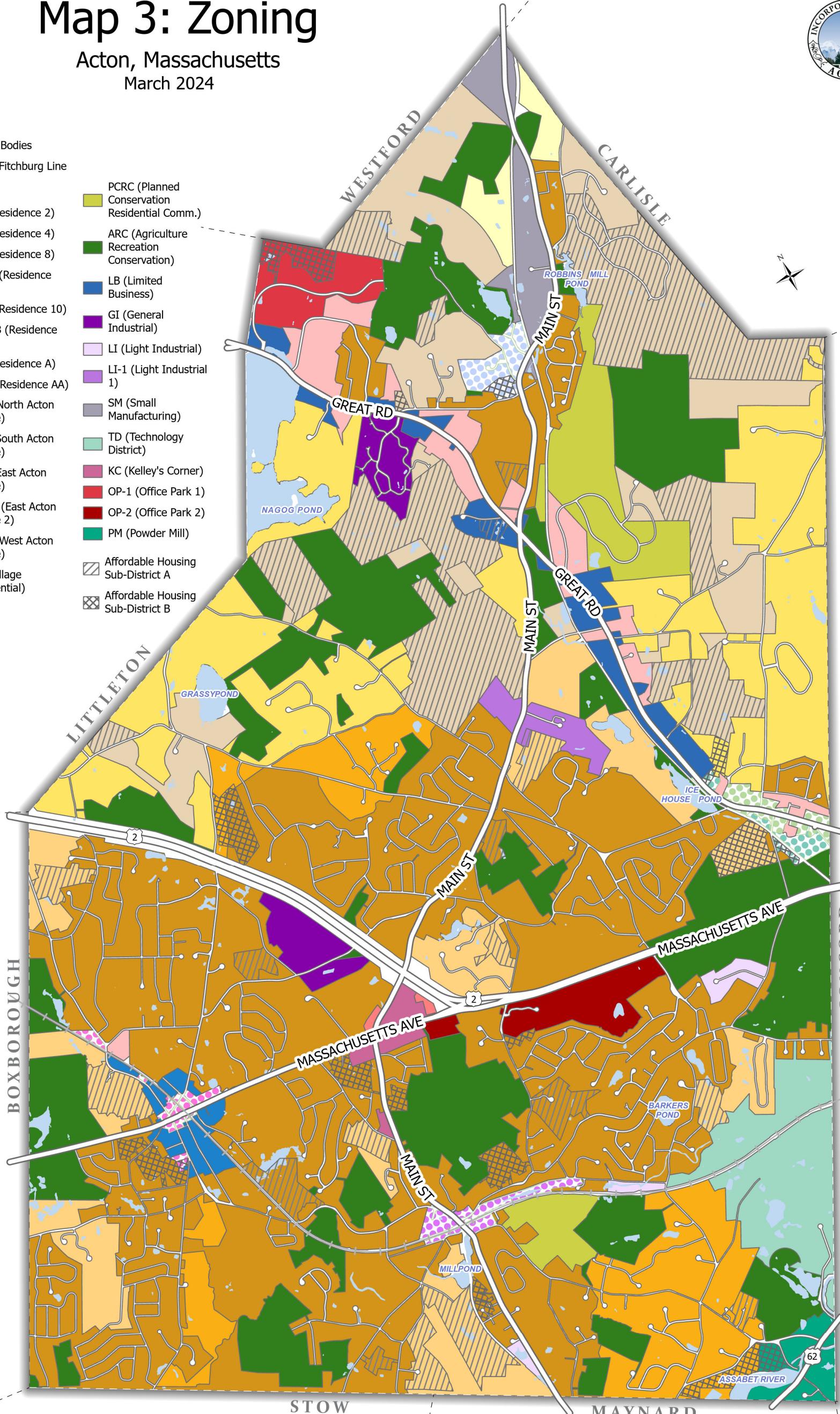
March 2024



- Water Bodies
- MBTA Fitchburg Line

Zoning

- R-2 (Residence 2)
- R-4 (Residence 4)
- R-8 (Residence 8)
- R-8/4 (Residence 8/4)
- R-10 (Residence 10)
- R-10/8 (Residence 10/8)
- R-A (Residence A)
- R-AA (Residence AA)
- NAV (North Acton Village)
- SAV (South Acton Village)
- EAV (East Acton Village)
- EAV-2 (East Acton Village 2)
- WAV (West Acton Village)
- VR (Village Residential)
- PCRC (Planned Conservation Residential Comm.)
- ARC (Agriculture Recreation Conservation)
- LB (Limited Business)
- GI (General Industrial)
- LI (Light Industrial)
- LI-1 (Light Industrial 1)
- SM (Small Manufacturing)
- TD (Technology District)
- KC (Kelley's Corner)
- OP-1 (Office Park 1)
- OP-2 (Office Park 2)
- PM (Powder Mill)
- Affordable Housing Sub-District A
- Affordable Housing Sub-District B



Data provided by MassGIS and the Town of Acton, MA.

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Map 4: Soils and Geologic Features

Acton, Massachusetts
March 2024

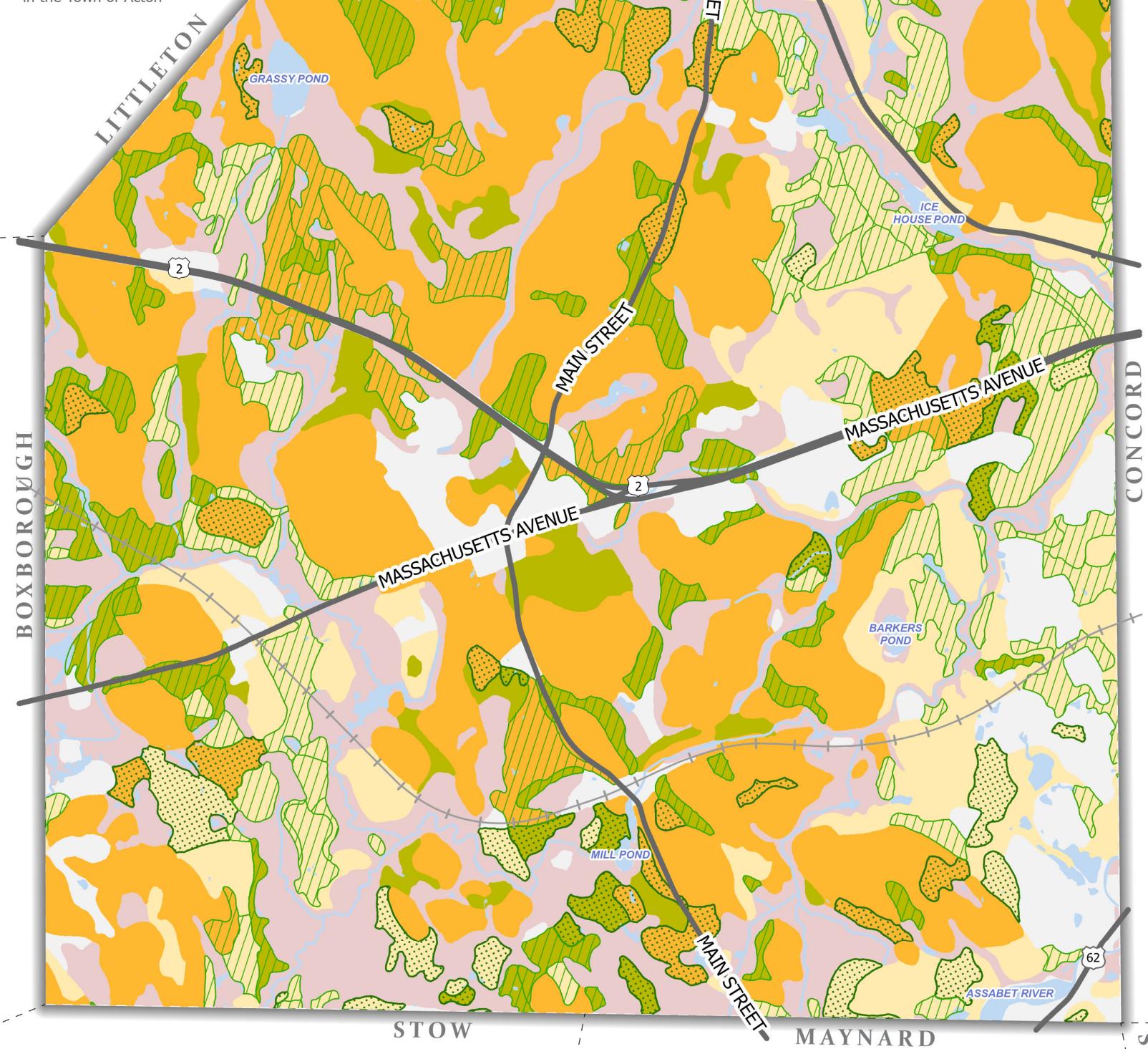


- Water Bodies
- Streams and Brooks
- Commuter Rail
- Prime Farmland
- All areas of prime farmland
- Farmland of statewide importance

MassGIS: National Resource Conservation Services (NRCS) approved, Soil Survey Geographic Database (SSURGO) - Certified Soils

- Excessively drained
- Well drained
- Moderately well drained
- Poorly to very poorly drained
- N/A

No slope more than 25% in the Town of Acton



Data provided by MassGIS and the Town of Acton, MA.

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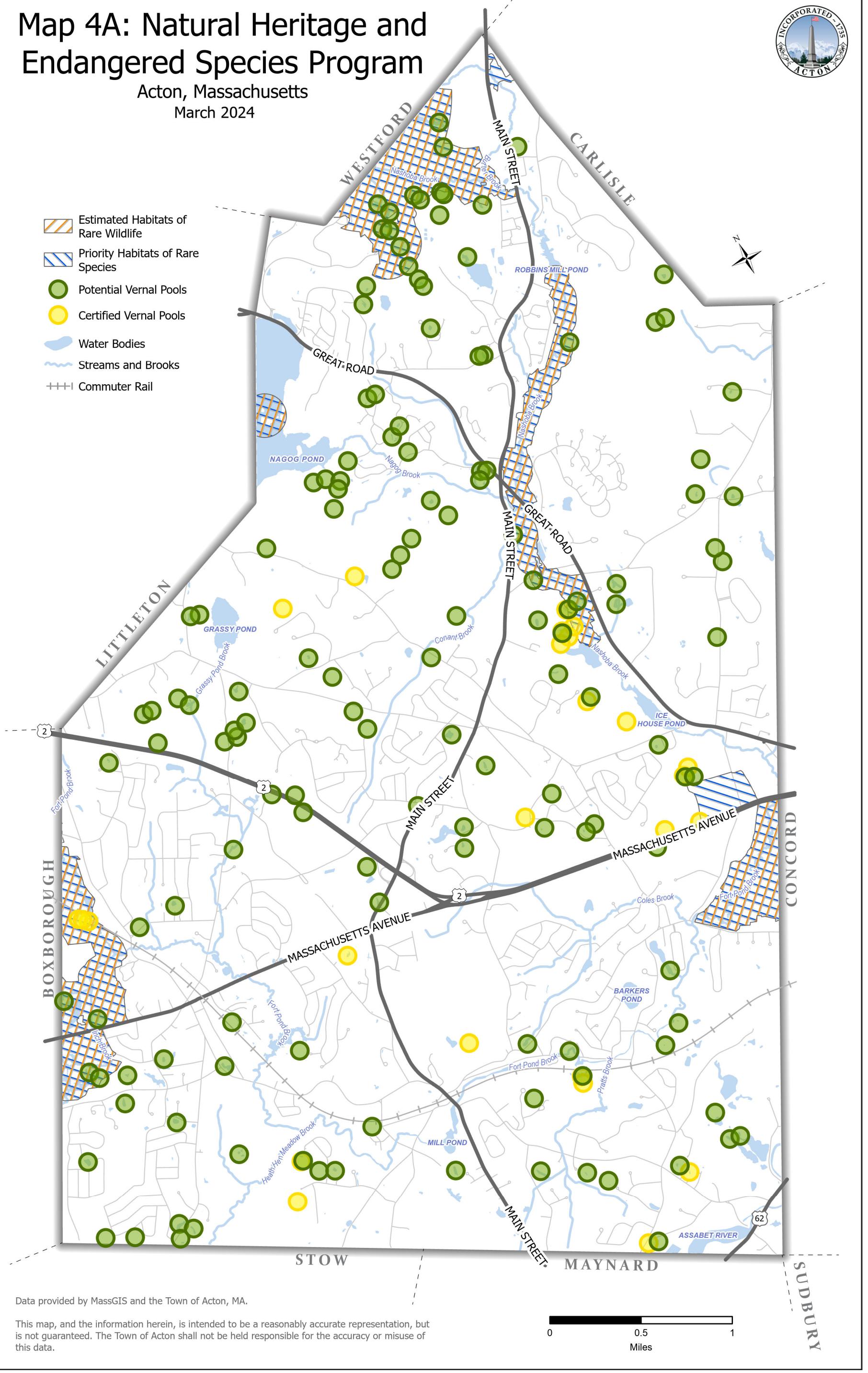
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Map 4A: Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program

Acton, Massachusetts
March 2024



- Estimated Habitats of Rare Wildlife
- Priority Habitats of Rare Species
- Potential Vernal Pools
- Certified Vernal Pools
- Water Bodies
- Streams and Brooks
- Commuter Rail



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Map 4B: BioMap 1 - Critical Natural Landscape and Core Habitat Components

Acton, Massachusetts

March 2024

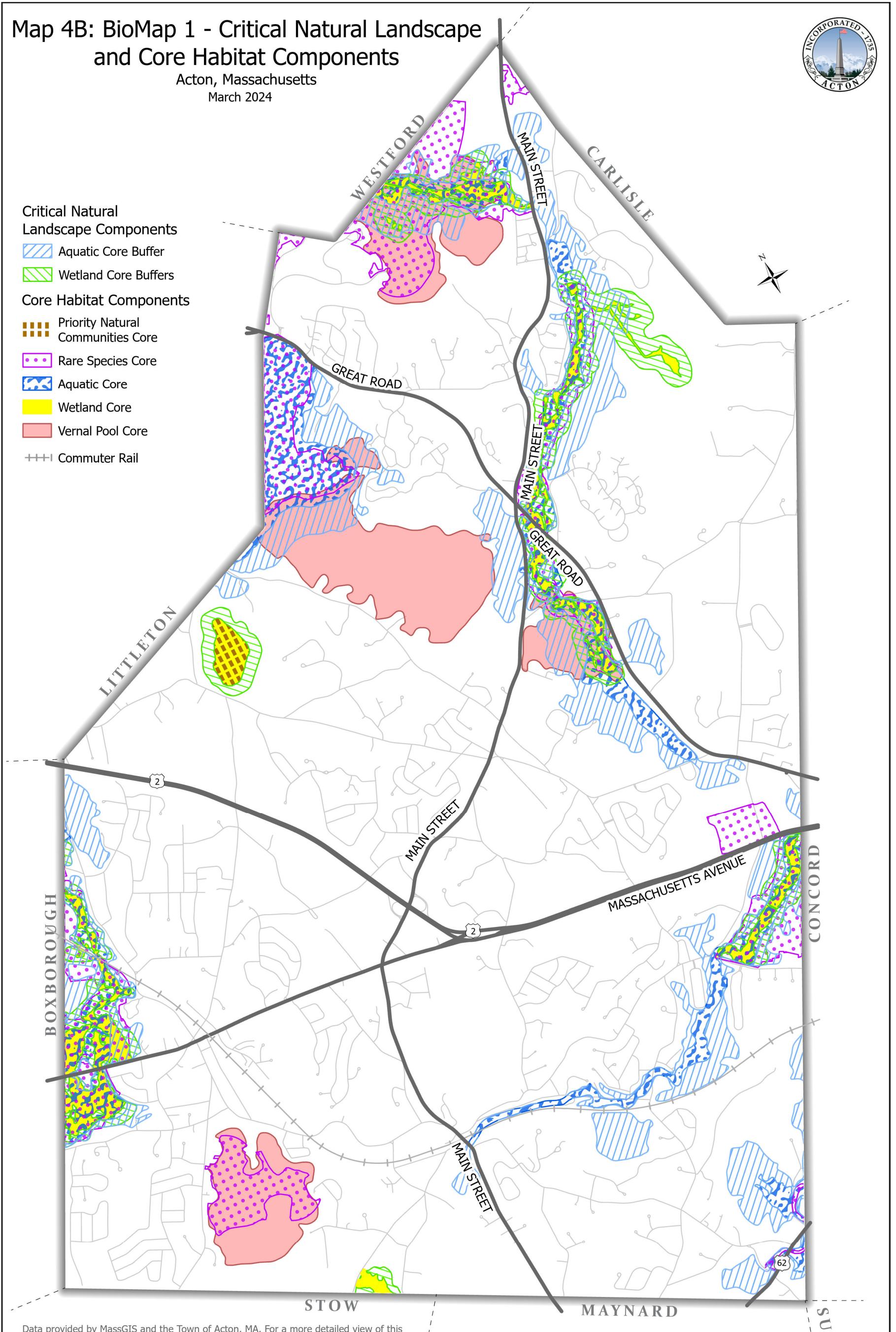


Critical Natural Landscape Components

- Aquatic Core Buffer
- Wetland Core Buffers

Core Habitat Components

- Priority Natural Communities Core
- Rare Species Core
- Aquatic Core
- Wetland Core
- Vernal Pool Core
- Commuter Rail



Data provided by MassGIS and the Town of Acton, MA. For a more detailed view of this map and its layers, please refer to "MassGIS Data: BioMap: The Future of Conservation" on Mass.gov.

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Map 4C: BioMap 2 - Regional and Local Level Components

Acton, Massachusetts
March 2024



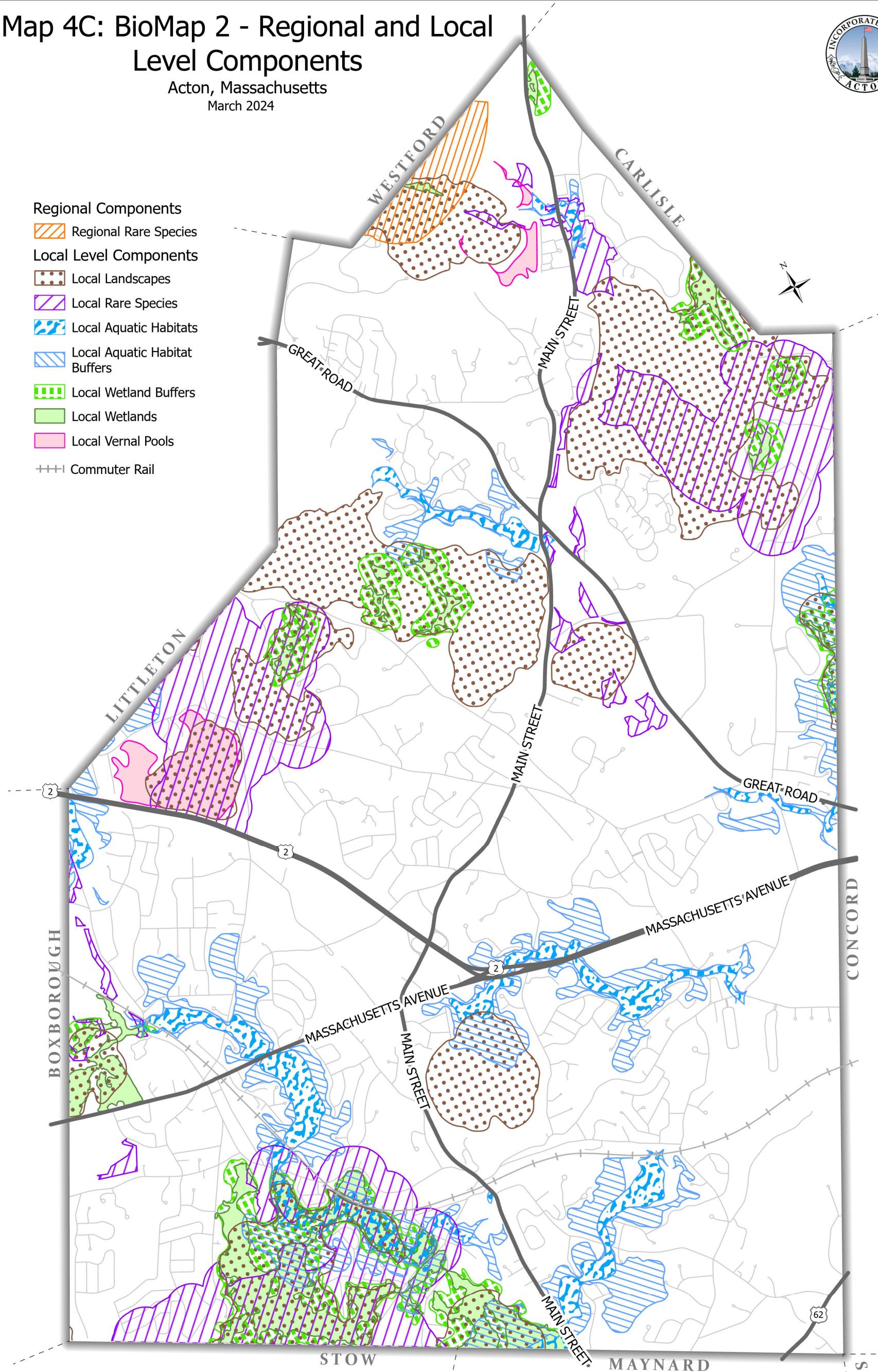
Regional Components



Local Level Components



Commuter Rail



Data provided by MassGIS and the Town of Acton, MA. For a more detailed view of this map and its layers, please refer to "MassGIS Data: BioMap: The Future of Conservation" on Mass.gov.

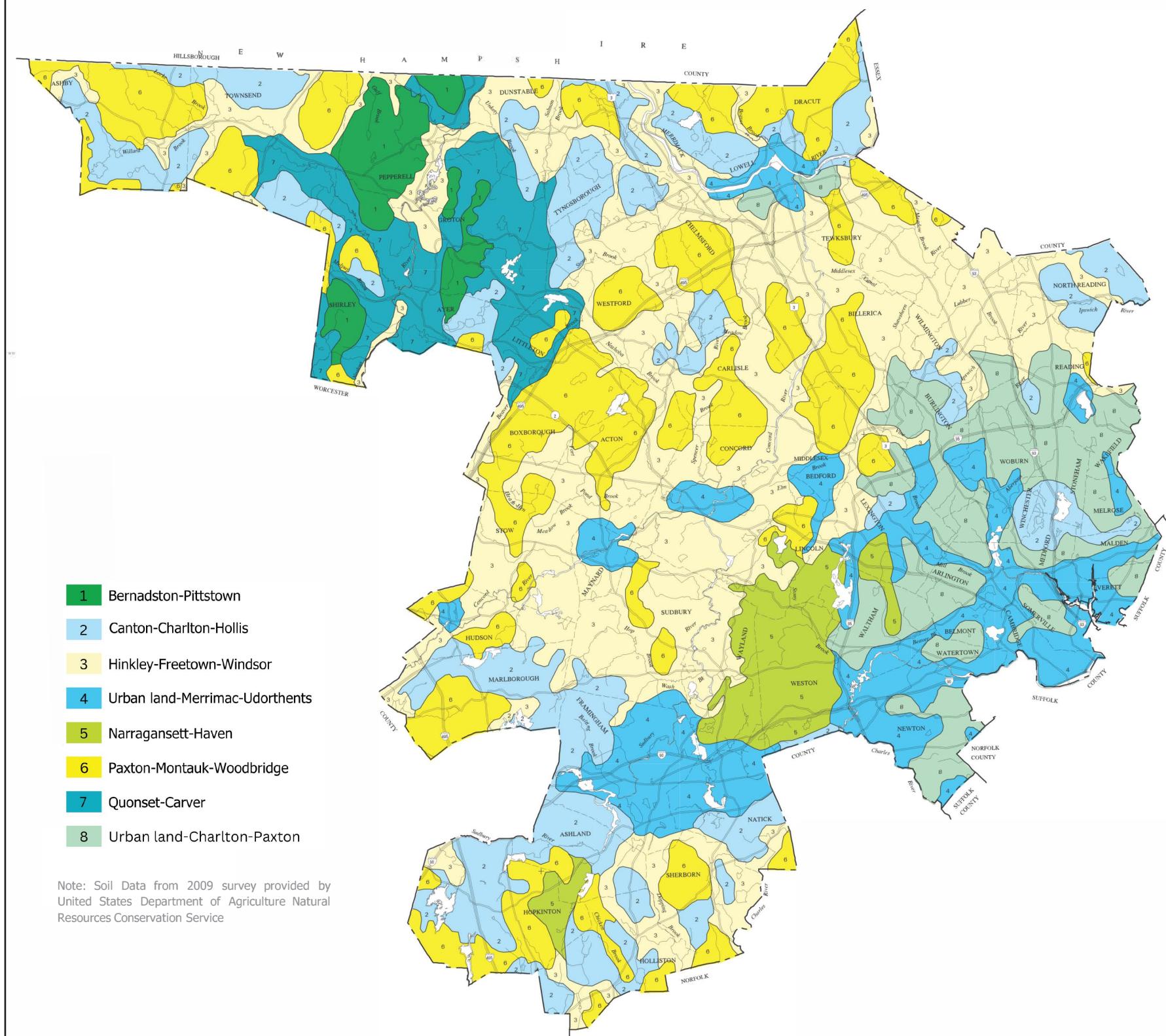
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Map 4D: General Soil

Acton, Massachusetts

March 2024



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE
MASSACHUSETTS AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION

GENERAL SOIL MAP MIDDLESEX COUNTY, MASSACHUSETTS

No scale available

Map 4E: General Bedrock Geology

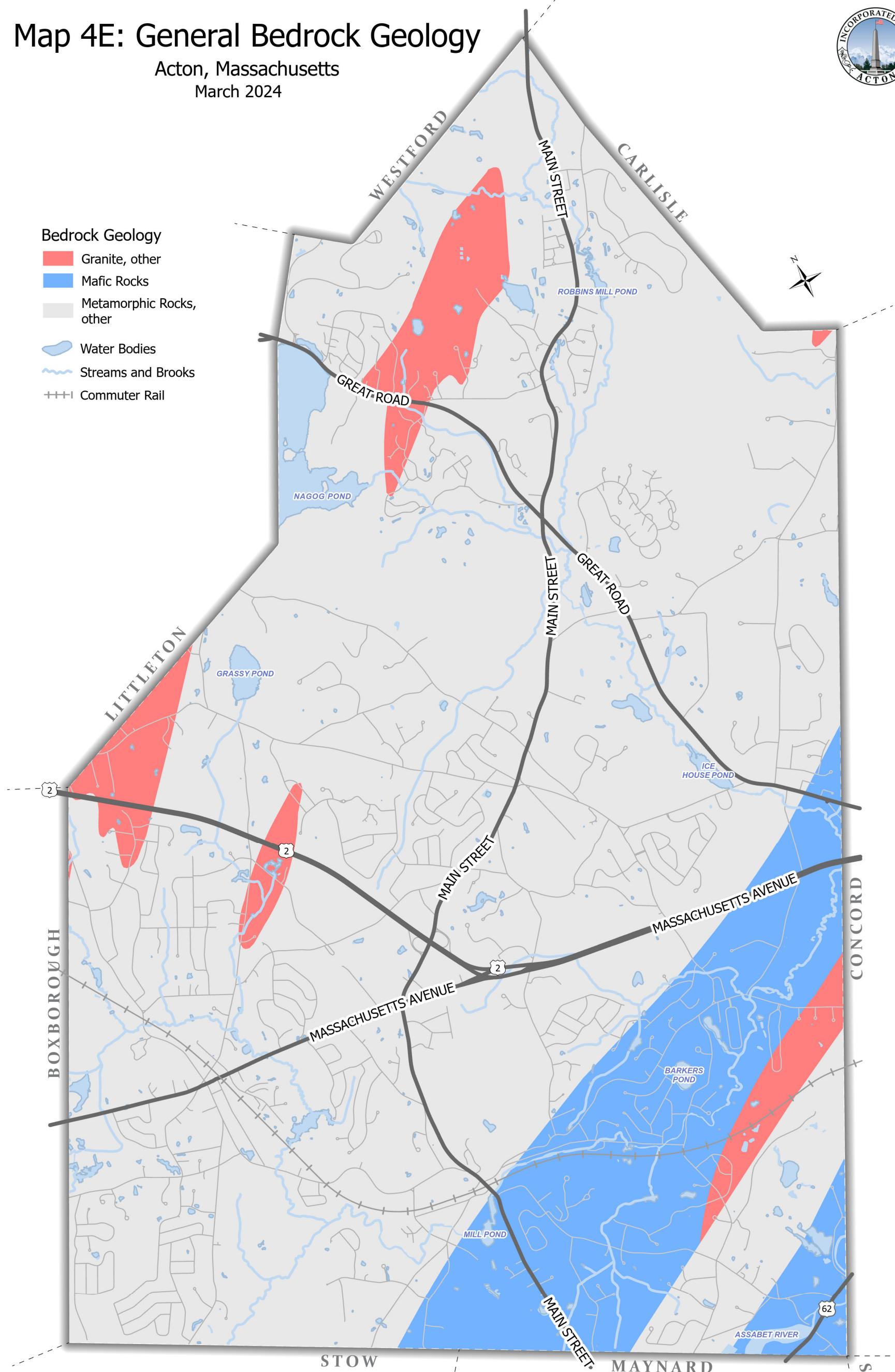
Acton, Massachusetts

March 2024



Bedrock Geology

- Granite, other
- Mafic Rocks
- Metamorphic Rocks, other
- Water Bodies
- Streams and Brooks
- Commuter Rail



Data provided by MassGIS and the Town of Acton, MA.

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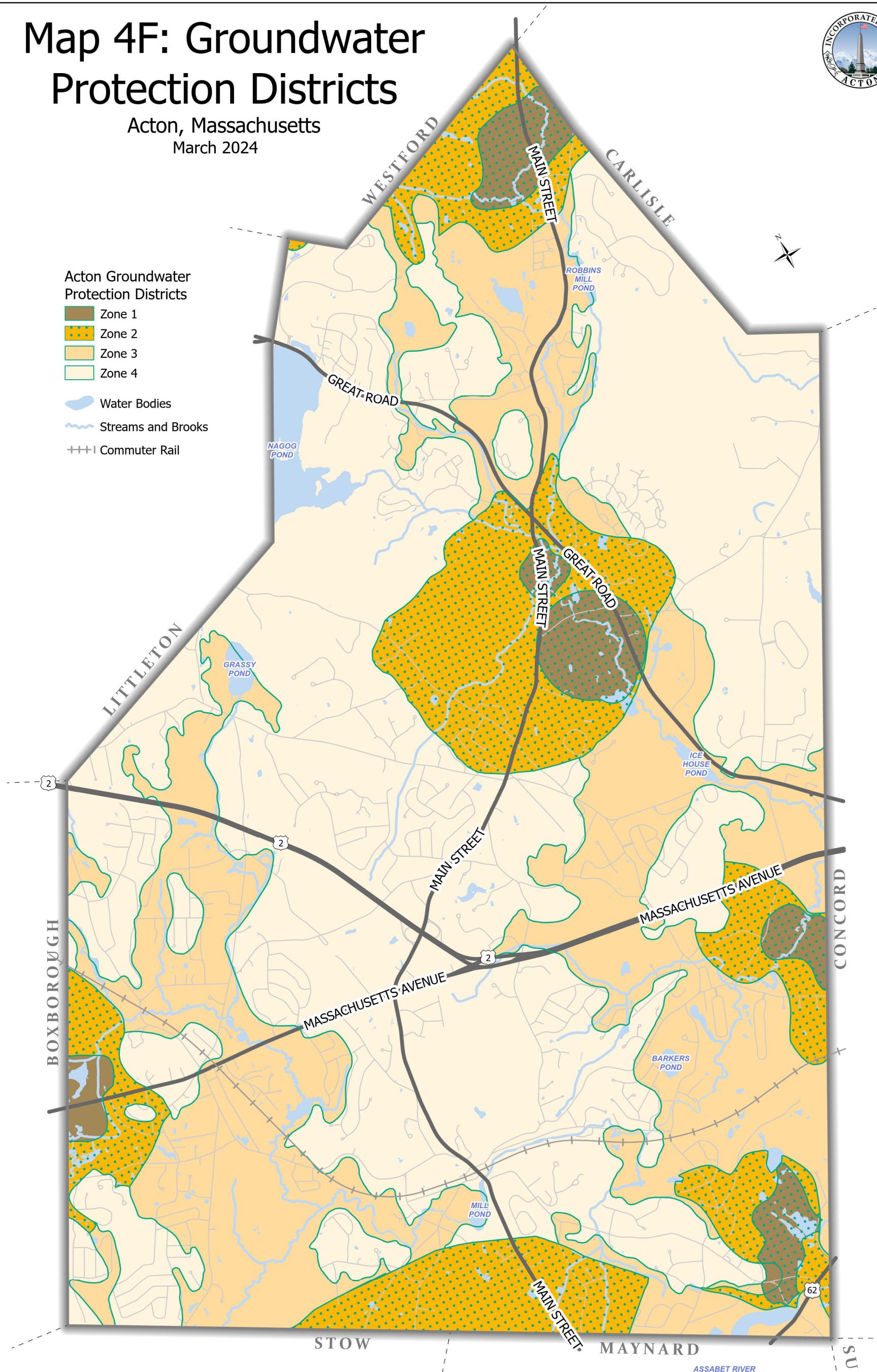
Map 4F: Groundwater Protection Districts



Acton, Massachusetts
March 2024

Acton Groundwater Protection Districts

- Zone 1
- Zone 2
- Zone 3
- Zone 4
- Water Bodies
- Streams and Brooks
- Commuter Rail



Data provided by MassGIS and the Town of Acton, MA.

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Map 5: Unique Features

Acton, Massachusetts

March 2024



- ++++ Commuter Rail
- Water Bodies
- Streams and Brooks
- Conservation and Town Forest

Unique Features

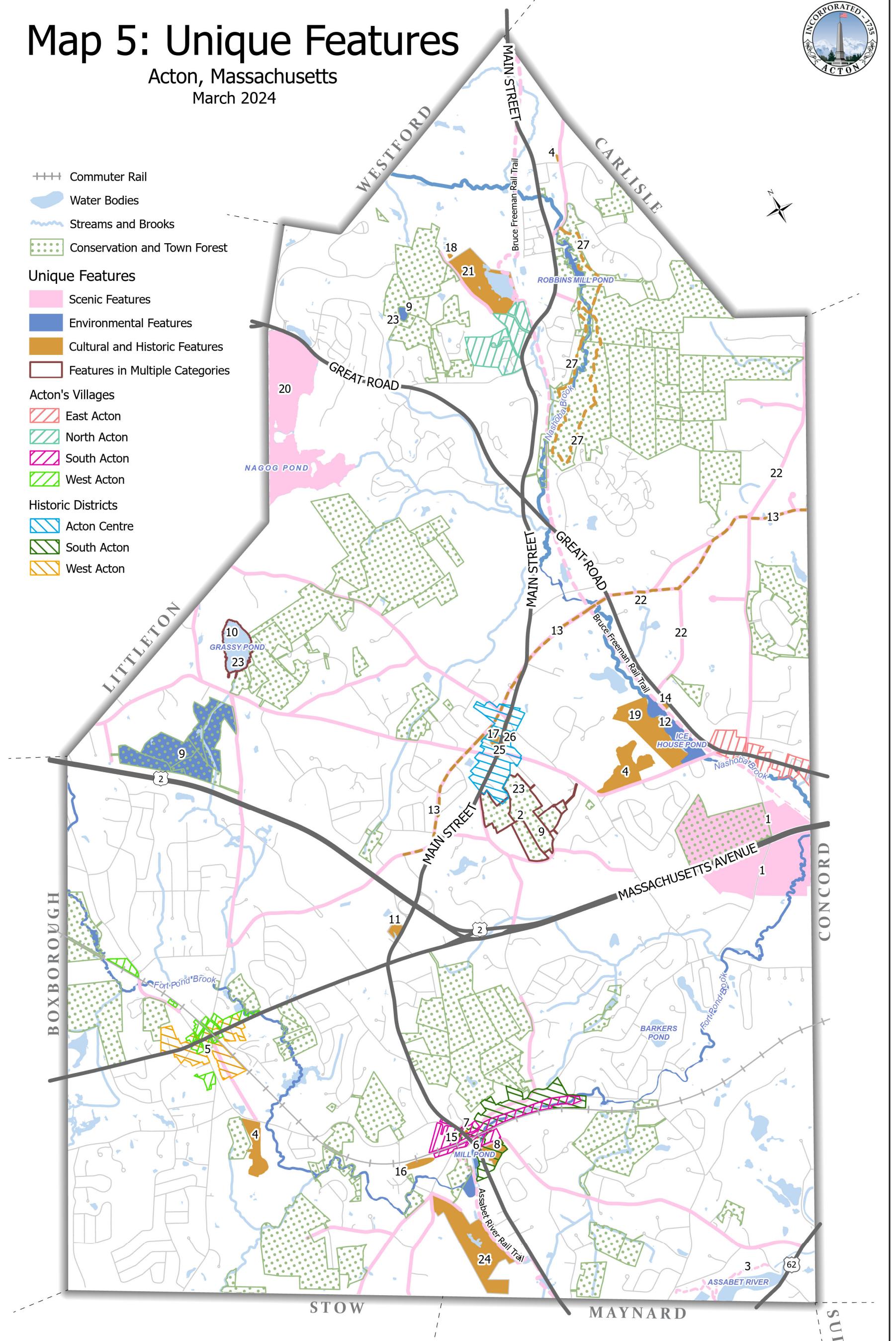
- Scenic Features
- Environmental Features
- Cultural and Historic Features
- Features in Multiple Categories

Acton's Villages

- East Acton
- North Acton
- South Acton
- West Acton

Historic Districts

- Acton Centre
- South Acton
- West Acton



Data provided by MassGIS and the Town of Acton, MA.

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MAP 5: UNIQUE FEATURES

Number (if applicable)	Name	Category	Address (if applicable)
	Acton's Villages: East Acton, North Acton, South Acton, West Acton	C&H	
	Rail Trail: Assabet River Rail Trail (ARRT) Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (BFRT)	C&H	
	Greenbelts: Fort Pond Brook and Nashoba Brook	E	
	Scenic Roads (Solid pink lines on map. See Town Bylaws Chapter J)	S	
	Historic Districts: Acton Centre, South Acton, West Acton	C&H	
1	"Gateway" Agricultural Fields	S	Route 2, School Street, Wetherbee Street intersection
2	Acton Arboretum	C&H and E	2 Taylor Road
3	Assabet River Blue and Green Trail	S	Across from 308 High Street
4	Cemeteries: Forest, Mount Hope, and Woodlawn	C&H	10 North Street, 166 Central Street, 104 Concord Road
5	Citizens' Library	C&H	21 Windsor Avenue
6	Erikson Grain Mill	C&H	113 Main Street
7	Exchange Hall	C&H	2 School Street
8	Faulkner Homestead	C&H	5 High Street
9	Geological Deposits - Eskers	E	Acton Arboretum, Bulette Land, Will's Hole
10	Grassy Pond	S and E	149 Newtown Road
11	Hosmer House	C&H	300 Main Street
12	Ice House Pond	E	120 Concord Road
13	Isaac Davis Trail	C&H	Begins at 31 Hayward Road
14	John Robbins House	C&H	144 Great Road
15	Jones Tavern	C&H	128 Main Street
16	Maple Street	C&H	Maple Street
17	Memorial Library	C&H	486 Main Street
18	Miracle Field	C&H	75 Quarry Road
19	Morrison Farm	C&H	116 Concord Road
20	Nagog Pond	S	Northwest Acton, bordering Littleton, MA
21	Nara Park	C&H	25 Ledge Rock Way
22	Pope Road, Strawberry Hill Road, and Esterbrook Road	S	East Acton
23	Quaking Bogs	E	Acton Arboretum, Grassy Pond, and Will's Hole
24	Stonefield Farm	C&H	91 Martin Street
25	Town Common	C&H	Main Street from approximately Newtown Road to Nagog Hill Road
26	Town Hall	C&H	472 Main Street
27	Trail Through Time (TTT)	C&H	9 Carlisle Road

Key

C&H Cultural and Historical Features

S Scenic Features

E Environmental Features

MAP 5A: DISTANCE FROM RECREATION FACILITIES

Number	Recreation Facility	Address	Amenities
1	Acton Recreation Department	50 Audubon Drive	2 indoor multiuse recreational rooms
2	Camp Acton Conservation Land	362 Pope Road	Campground with 7 sites
3	Concord Road Field	104 Concord Road	Multi-purpose field, one 11 v. 11 soccer field
4	Elm Street Field	19 Elm Street	Playground, 2 tennis courts, 4 pickleball courts, one softball diamond, and sheltered picnic area
5	Gardner Field/Playground	530 Massachusetts Avenue	Playground, Multi-purpose field
6	Goward Playground	486 Main Street	Playground, basketball hoop
7	Great Hill Field	54 School Street	Multi-purpose fields
8	Hart Field	80 Taylor Road	Multi-purpose field
9	Hebert Farm Community Garden	76 Prospect Street	Organic community garden
10	Jones Field	54 Martin Street	Playground, multi-purpose field, 3 beach volleyball courts
11	Joseph Lalli Miracle Field	75 Quarry Road	ADA baseball diamond
12	MacPherson Field	80 Taylor Road	Baseball diamond
13	Morrison Farm Community Garden	116 Concord Road	Organic community garden
14	NARA Park	25 Ledge Rock Way	Playground, 4 sheltered picnic areas, multi-purpose fields, 2 beach volleyball courts, amphitheater, softball diamond, swimming and boating beach area, mountain bike pump track
15	North Acton Community Gardens	845 Main Street	Community garden
16	Robbins Mill Recreation Area	61 Canterbury Hill Road	Multi-purpose field, full basketball court, playground, picnic shelter
17	School Street Fields	323 School Street	Multi-purpose fields, 3 cricket fields
18	T.J. O'Grady Memorial Skate Park	66 Hayward Road	Skateboarding and rollerblade park
19	Veterans' Field	655 Main Street	2 baseball diamonds, playground

Map 5A: Distance from Recreation Facilities

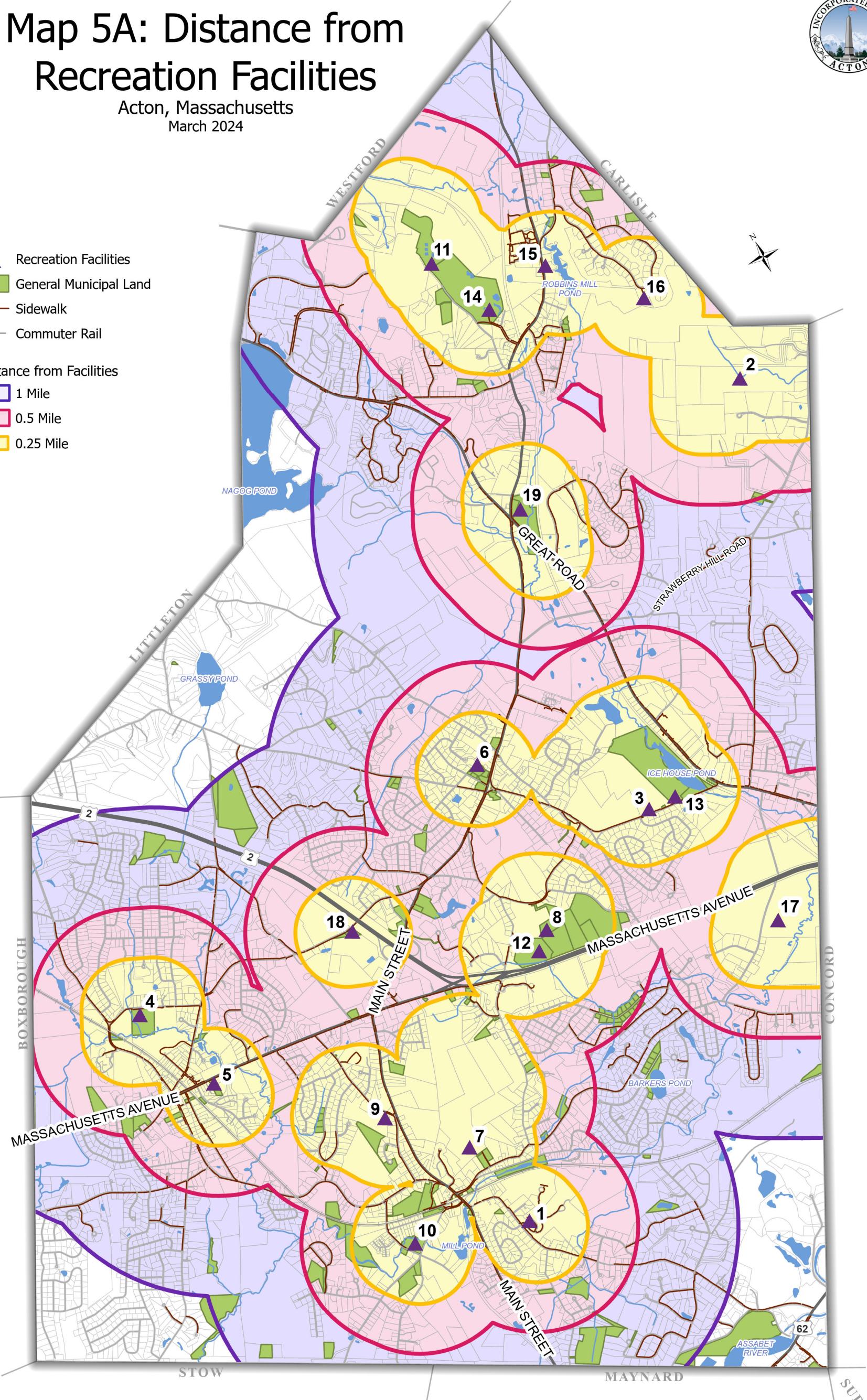
Acton, Massachusetts
March 2024



- Recreation Facilities
- General Municipal Land
- Sidewalk
- Commuter Rail

Distance from Facilities

- 1 Mile
- 0.5 Mile
- 0.25 Mile



Data provided by MassGIS and the Town of Acton, MA.

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Map 6: Water Resources

Acton, Massachusetts

March 2024



FEMA Floodway

FEMA Flood Zone - 100 year flood zone

FEMA Flood Zone - 500 year flood zone

Town Atlas Wetlands

Field Surveyed Wetlands

Wells

Water Bodies

Streams and Brooks

Commuter Rail

Acton Groundwater Protection Districts

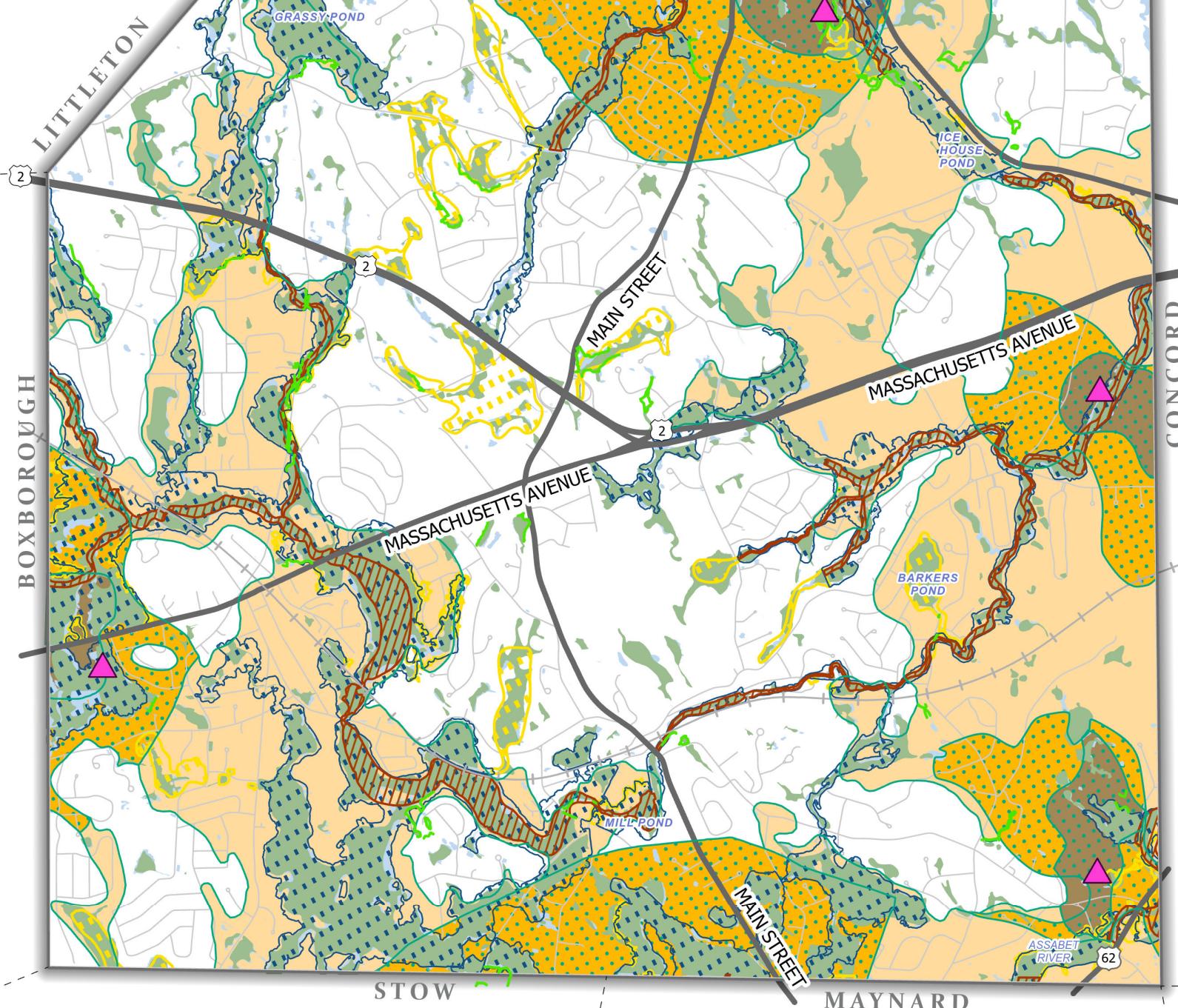
Zone 1

Zone 2

Zone 3



NOTE: THE TOWN OF ACTON IS LOCATED IN THE SUASCO WATERSHED.



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Map 7: Inventory of Open Space

Acton, Massachusetts

March 2024



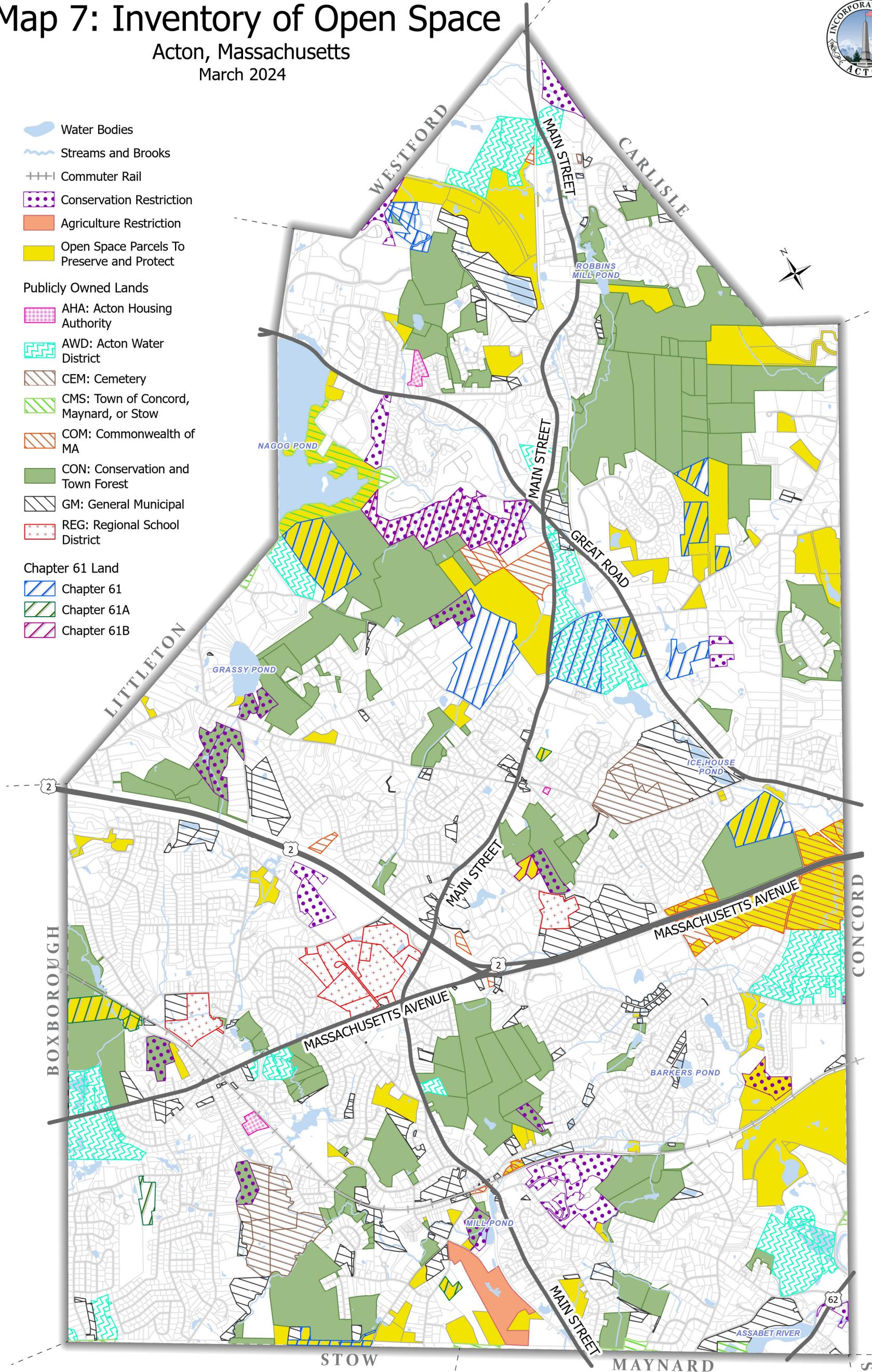
- Water Bodies
- Streams and Brooks
- Commuter Rail
- Conservation Restriction
- Agriculture Restriction
- Open Space Parcels To Preserve and Protect

Publicly Owned Lands

- AHA: Acton Housing Authority
- AWD: Acton Water District
- CEM: Cemetery
- CMS: Town of Concord, Maynard, or Stow
- COM: Commonwealth of MA
- CON: Conservation and Town Forest
- GM: General Municipal
- REG: Regional School District

Chapter 61 Land

- Chapter 61
- Chapter 61A
- Chapter 61B



Data provided by MassGIS and the Town of Acton, MA.

For more information regarding the Massachusetts Chapter 61 Current Use Tax Programs, please see Massachusetts General Law or speak with the municipal Assessor's Office.

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Map 8: Action Plan

Acton, Massachusetts

February 2024



This map shows the locations for a sample of action items in the 2024-2031 OSRP. For a comprehensive list of action items please see Section 9 of Acton's 2024-2031 OSRP. Many important action items will occur throughout Town and outside of physical locations.

GOAL #1: Preserve and Protect the Historic, Cultural, Agricultural and Scenic Features of Acton

- ★ Replace dead apple trees in the Arboretum with new apple trees.
- ★ Implement the Meadow Management Plans for NARA, Morrison Farm, Grassy Pond Heath Hen, Stoneymeade, and Jenks conservation areas.

GOAL #2: Protect Critical Environmental Resources, Including Ground and Surface Water, Wildlife, Diverse Habitats and Ecosystems

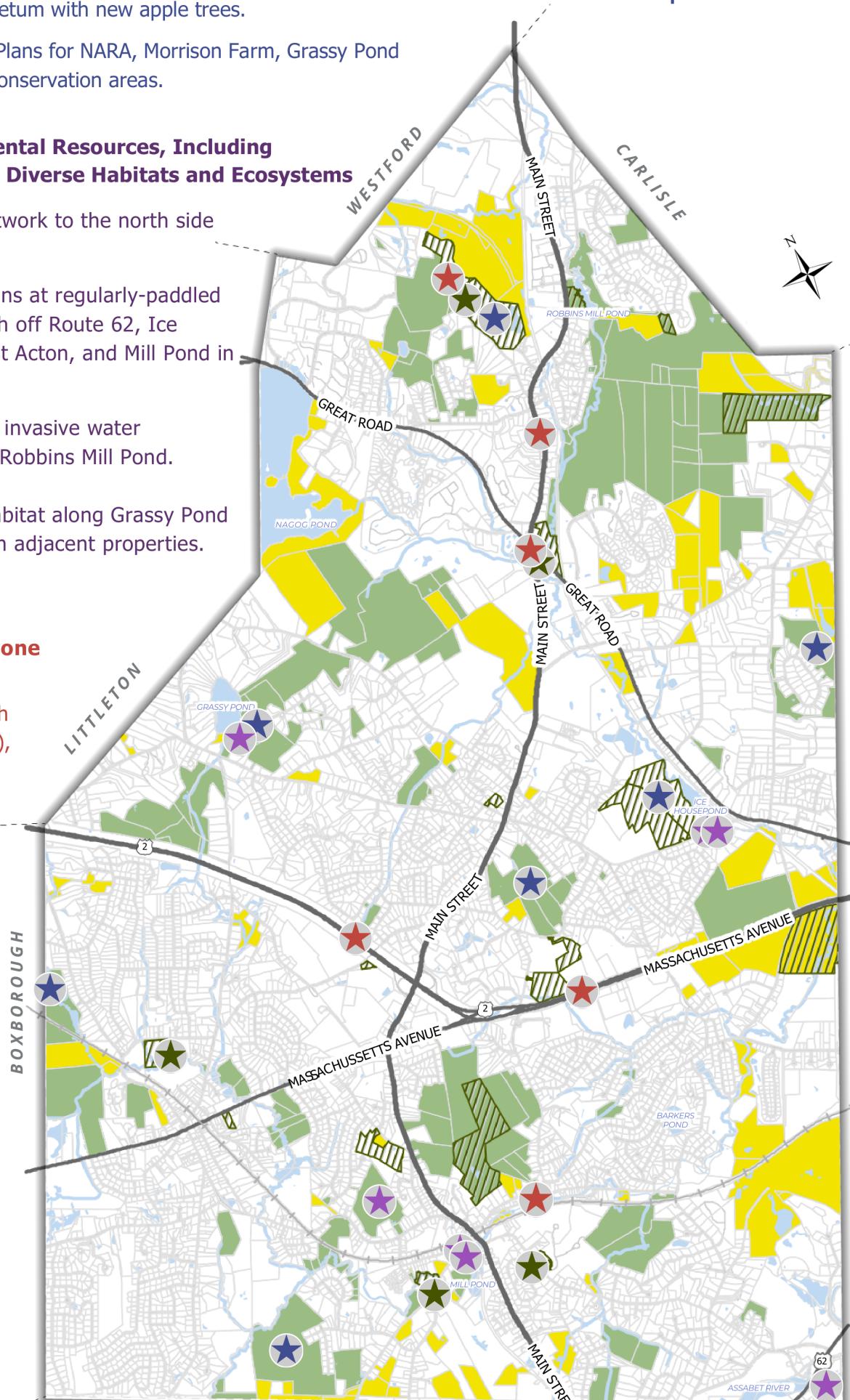
- ★ Build boardwalk and expand trail network to the north side of Pacy land.
- ★ Install "Stop Aquatic Hitchhikers" signs at regularly-paddled waterways such as the Canoe Launch off Route 62, Ice House Pond off Concord Road in East Acton, and Mill Pond in South Acton.
- ★ Coordinate annual efforts to remove invasive water chestnuts from Ice House Pond and Robbins Mill Pond.
- ★ Develop a plan to protect riverine habitat along Grassy Pond Brook and the vernal pools located in adjacent properties.

Goal #3: Improve and Expand Recreation Opportunities for Everyone

- ★ Add sidewalk extensions to popular recreation sites, particularly from north of Route 2A on Route 27 (Main Street), linking Veterans' Field to NARA.
- ★ Provide universal accessibility to Veterans' Field.
- ★ Add Signage: "NARA" to large sign on Route 2 near Route 27 exit.
- ★ Finish construction of 53 River St. Park.

Goal #4: Incorporate Sustainability in Current and Future Open Space and Recreation Decisions

- ★ Install Level 2 and Level 3 EV Chargers in recreation parking lots.



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+++ Commuter Rail

Yellow box: Open Space Parcels to Preserve and Protect

Hatched box: Parcels with Recreation Facilities

Green box: Conservation and Town Forest

The Town of Acton Open Space and Recreation Plan 2024-2031



Nagog Pond Photo by Ivan Troy