

SECTION 6: COMMUNITY VISION

A. Description of Process

The Town of Essex Long Term Planning Committee (“LTP”) completed its “Plan to Preserve the Town of Essex¹.” in July 2015. The project included several community-wide surveys to identify Essex’s community defining resources several which relate to open space and recreation including:

- The Great Marsh and Essex River (Ranked #1 out of 18 resources)
- The Town’s Water Resource District (#2)
- Scenic byways (#8)
- Water access and recreational opportunities (#10)
- Clamming and fishing (#13)
- Woods (#14)
- Agriculture (#16)
- Chebacco Lake (#17)

The scenic resources of the town are clearly central to the character of Essex. The 2010 town survey identified open space and environment as residents’ number one priority. Three-quarters of survey respondents agreed that there should be an “increased focus on environmental protection and the preservation of natural resources”

For the Great Marsh, Essex River, Watershed Protection District and Scenic byways the greatest threats include invasive species, inappropriate commercial & residential development and erosion.

Development also ranks as a high risk to agriculture. “Of the pasture, hayfields, and woods along the south side of John Wise Avenue, only 70 acres of Alprilla farm is under agricultural restriction. The Hardy farm, 95 acres of Alprilla farm, and the Storey farm remain unprotected.”

Water pollution scored a great risk to water recreation, clamming and fishing. Surveys of residents have reinforced the desire to continue and strengthen the shell fishing industry here in Essex. The most important way to ensure this is to maintain and improve the health of the shellfish beds. Invasive species ranked high risks for the Essex Woods and Chebacco Lake as well.

¹ Town of Essex Long Term Planning Committee, July 2015 Report to the Board of Selectmen “Planning to Preserve the Best of Essex”.

B. *Statement of Open Space and Recreation Goals*

The residents of Essex – be they humans, animals, or plants – will derive the greatest benefit from living here in the future if the town’s unique landscape and history is preserved while, at the same time, enough contiguous open space remains to create valuable habitats that can protect and preserve its flora and fauna.

Essex’s rich shipbuilding past and the small-scale, independent agricultural endeavors of many of its residents have shaped its landscape in numerous ways. Since people have largely moved away from these pursuits and Essex’s scenic landscapes and sweeping marsh vistas have become a tourist destination, it is vital that our overall vision both provides for the recreational needs of our citizens and visitors *and* protects the many truly unique and vulnerable ecosystems of Essex’s forests, wetlands, streams, river and lake.

The geography of Essex encompasses the confluence of river systems, watersheds and wetlands, and contains a remarkably as-yet undisturbed forest that provides crucial habitat for many species, including some that are rare and endangered. The marsh and forest each serve as a filter and a nursery for the young of many species, and Chebacco Lake is the only remaining natural anadromous fish run in the state. These features make Essex a keystone for the health of a large percentage of the North Shore’s habitats, and emphasize the importance of the good stewardship our town can provide.

Such rich resources also draw many people to enjoy and explore their beauty, and a robust system of trails, facilities, security, and other amenities would serve to increase this type of activity, while boosting economic activity in the town’s shops and restaurants.

An ideal open space system for Essex would preserve as much contiguous, high-quality, and undeveloped habitat as possible, in order to provide buffer zones between areas of human activity and the town’s natural settings that are so often fragile and vulnerable to disturbances. It would also provide for the many recreational activities that our town’s natural resources afford, many of which take place in the very same fragile areas mentioned above. The combination of contiguous habitat and accessible recreational features would allow the town to enjoy the economic benefits of well-attended recreational areas while protecting the assets that make Essex so attractive.

There is a difference between habitat protection and scenic resource protection, yet an ideal system would address both of these distinct needs in Essex. There are landscapes in Essex that simply cannot be replaced, should they be slated for development. Some of these, such as the fields and farms along John Wise Avenue, can be described as scenic resources, while others, such as the Essex Woods, are more appropriately deemed habitats for important species of plants and animals.

An ideal system also has built-in flexibility for town officials and boards to choose from a pool of prioritized sites depending upon the funding sources available (e.g., matching grants, public support, private/nonprofit funding, etc.). To have such a pool of sites with

varying characteristics and features allows those in positions of authority to select or approve site(s) for specific projects that have been “pre-qualified,” which can significantly reduce last-minute efforts when grants or proposals are due.

SECTION 7: ANALYSIS OF NEEDS

A. *Summary of Resource Protection Needs*

As detailed in Section 4, Essex is fortunate enough to contain within its boundaries some of the most valuable plant and wildlife habitat yet identified in Massachusetts, as defined by the Nature Conservancy. Essex's portions of the Great Marsh and the Manchester-Essex Woods provide some of the last remaining habitat on the north shore for several rare and endangered species such as the Blanding's Turtle. Less fortunately, much of this habitat remains in private hands without protection restrictions such as conservation easements. Chebacco Lake's watershed is also a major target for preservation, as it is the last remaining alewife breeding ground on the North Shore, and perhaps on the entire eastern shore of Massachusetts.

For this reason, from an environmental standpoint, the following areas have been prioritized for protection:

1. Parcels providing adjacent and connective land to the Manchester-Essex Conservation Trust and Essex County Greenbelt properties in southern and western Essex.
2. Parcels providing upland buffer around large freshwater wetlands (20 acres+) such as those found off of Apple Street and near Chebacco Lake.
3. Parcels containing certifiable vernal pools and adequate (1500 linear feet) buffer zones.
4. Parcels adjacent to the saltwater marsh system that provide meaningful water quality protection buffer, as defined in the Section 4 of this report.

In terms of biodiversity, rare habitat, and presence of threatened and endangered species, the Essex portion of the Manchester-Essex Woods is of highest priority for preservation

By prioritizing parcels providing adjacent and connective land to the Manchester-Essex Conservation Trust and Essex County Greenbelt properties in southern and western Essex, this open space protection strategy aims work towards protecting large core habitat areas, linked via riparian and upland corridors that will maintain and restore Essex's ecological network. The success of such a strategy is evidenced by the ACEC designation and subsequent protection of the Great Marsh, which stretches beyond Essex all the way to Rockport to the east, and Salisbury to the northwest.

From a scenic context, priorities for open space preservation (mainly through conservation easements and facilitation of private nonprofit acquisitions) include the preservation of the large agricultural parcels along Southern Avenue and John Wise Avenue, as overwhelmingly supported by the Open Space survey results.

B. Summary of Community's Needs**1. MetroFuture Regional Plan**

In 2008, the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) completed the MetroFuture Regional Plan that includes 65 goals for creating better the lives of the people who live and work in Metropolitan Boston between now and 2030. Several of those goals directly relate to open space and recreation needs:

- # 4 In suburban municipalities, most new growth will occur near town and village centers.
- #7 Cities, towns, and neighborhoods will retain their sense of uniqueness and community character.
- #9 The region's landscape will retain its distinctive green spaces and working farms.
- #11 The region to be prepared for and resilient to natural disasters and climate change.
- #23 All neighborhoods will have access to safe and well-maintained parks, community gardens, and appropriate play spaces for children and youth. Along with ballfields and playgrounds, they'll find tot lots, greenways, riverwalks, green alleys, urban orchards, and community gardens.
- #32 Seniors will remain active members of their communities.
- #42 The region's agricultural economy will grow through a focus on sustainable farming and by bringing more locally produced foods to the market.
- #47 Most people will choose to walk or bike for short trips.
- #61 Water resources will be carefully budgeted and sustainably managed so that clean water is available for appropriate uses and development. Alteration of local hydrology by water withdrawals will be slowed or reversed.

MAPC's projection² of the town's population for 2030 predicts increases in the 25-39 and 65+ age brackets, accompanied by marked drops in the population of those aged 0-24 and 40-64. Essex's actual population differed in the past decade from MAPC's 2003 projection for population decline; Essex's population actually grew slowly, at about ½ percent, over the past decade. The 2010 census numbers indicated that more late-age parents with children moved to Essex than predicted, perhaps to take advantage of high quality schools and the small town setting to raise their kids.

This Open Space and Recreation Plan considers MAPC's projects and the goals of the MetroFuture Regional Plan in the following ways:

Prioritize improving existing recreational facilities and providing better access for seniors and the disabled over creating new facilities: MAPC's population statistics indicate that while the town may not necessarily have a need for more active recreational settings, such as soccer and baseball fields, since the population of 0-14 year olds could decrease, past experience indicates that maintaining and updating current assets should be a goal.

To meet the projection of an increase in residents 65+, these factors suggest a two-pronged approach reflecting the need for more passive and trail-based recreational opportunities, such as hiking and bird watching, and the need for affordable senior housing. Both of these approaches require a focus on accommodating the needs of people with disabilities, improved for ADA-accessible trails with bathroom facilities if practicable.

Protect existing open space by focusing development in the Town center.

Siting senior housing (affordable and otherwise) in areas that are walkable to the downtown and the school, and already serviced by the town's infrastructure of roads, water/sewer lines, and sidewalks would ensure that the infrastructure needs for such housing could be more easily met than in more outlying areas. This would also mesh well with the local economy's focus on river-related activities, such as tourism, boating, clamming, and shopping or dining along the scenic causeway, especially since the lack of readily available public transportation in the town could be a factor for an aging population and/or people with disabilities if housing were not centrally located.

Preserving agricultural lands and farming

Essex's farmlands and marshes form the rural, coastal landscape so unique to our town. Preserving these lands maintains our community character, protects our water supply and fishing resources and helps preserve the natural resiliency to disaster these lands provide.

2. Statewide Open Space Plan

In the Statewide Comprehensive Open Space and Recreation Plan (SCORP) published in 2012, survey respondents at a state level most frequently mentioned that they would like

² published in January 2014

to see more beach and hiking facilities; women preferred beaches twice as often as men. Youth indicated a desire to explore new opportunities for kayaking, rafting, tubing and camping as well as team sports. Popular current activities include gardening, road biking and hiking. Swimming in pools, ponds or the sea were also popular. Youth preferred swimming, kayaking and winter sports while adults preferred golf and bird/wildlife viewing as popular. Nearly $\frac{3}{4}$ of those surveyed spent at least one day along the Massachusetts coast in the past year. Residents of Eastern Massachusetts tend to use local facilities over state facilities as compared to residents of Central and Western Massachusetts, perhaps due to the larger number of state facilities in those areas of Massachusetts.

The SCORP highlights the Mass in Motion program that encourages residents to be more active and eat healthier. Essex is part of Mass in Motion – Cape Ann, along with Gloucester, Manchester-by-the-Sea and Rockport. Mass in Motion – Cape Ann plans to work with local trail groups to develop a Cape Ann Trails base map that will seek to create a set of regionally-linked trails.

Farmers' markets are mentioned as a growing trend helping to bolster local farm products. Many farmers' markets take place on public space such as Essex Farmer's Market in Memorial Park or the Cape Ann Farmer's Market at Stage Fort Park in Gloucester.

The top three values residents see beyond recreation in their outdoor areas include protecting wildlife habitat, improving water quality and protecting drinking water supplies.

C. Management Needs, Potential Change of Use

When speaking of “management” in the town of Essex, it's important to remember that we refer to a *very* small, dedicated professional staff, assisted by a number of volunteer community members who together coordinate and oversee the town's business. Communication between twenty-some departments, commissions and committees is a challenge under the best of circumstances; we recognize that a successful two-way dialog with all these entities, about the objectives, benefits and concerns of this Open Space Plan are essential and will require an ongoing commitment of time and energy from Open Space Committee members.

On the plus side, Essex is truly fortunate to have an abundance of exemplary non-profit organizations in our literal and figurative backyard. Essex County Greenbelt, TTOR, and MECT not only have significant interests in the town's natural assets, but also lend their own scarce manpower/human resources to help manage those properties. As has been noted elsewhere, citizens of the town have ranked these properties at or near the top of the list of Essex's most important attributes, as well as providing free or inexpensive recreation for residents and attracting tourism.

However, improved communication among and between the various town committees to achieve an understanding of how each one affects, and is affected by growth and development in and around our community is very important. In all these matters, it would be greatly helpful to have the services of a conservation agent available to the town to educate all of us and help us prioritize our open space assets

This Open Space Plan affords the town with an excellent lens through which to view and evaluate the competing interests of such diverse projects as the state highway, community preservation act, development, and the like.

SECTION 8: GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The uniting theme of the Town of Essex’s open space preservation goals and objectives is the ideal of maintaining and increasing residents’ connection with, investment in, and understanding of its invaluable natural resources and history. The best way to achieve this is through an action plan with built in flexibility, based on established science and public input, and implemented with substantial public participation.

With this in mind, the following list contains the specific goals and objectives envisioned by this Open Space Plan. Obviously some goals are overlapping. For example, Goal C: Improving Public Awareness, certainly contributes to Goal A: Protect and Preserve Open Space. However, this breakdown of goals and objectives most clearly delineates the distinct areas that need to be addressed for successful implementation of the Open Space Plan.

Goal A. Protect and Preserve Essex’s Open Spaces, particularly the Essex Woods and the scenic vistas of the Route 133 Scenic Byway

Objectives:

A-1: Preserve and protect the singular and threatened habitats of Essex, in particular:

- a. The critical habitats contained within the Essex Woods, including prioritizing preservation of parcels adjacent or connective to land in that area currently preserved by the Manchester-Essex Conservation Trust, Essex County Greenbelt and the Essex Conservation Commission
- b. Chebacco Lake, the last anadromous fish breeding lake on the North Shore of Massachusetts, including preserving additional upland buffer near the lake
- c. The Great Marsh/A.C.E.C. including preserving adjacent parcels that provide a meaningful water quality protection buffer.
- d. Large freshwater wetlands (20+ acres) such as those found off Apple Street and Atwater Avenue
- e. Certified vernal pools including surround land (1500 linear feet) to create buffer zones.

A-2: Preserve and protect the unique scenic open spaces of Essex, particularly the agricultural parcels adjacent to Scenic Roads, using tools such as Chapter 61A

A-3: Preserve and protect the unique scenic open spaces of Essex, by enacting a scenic agricultural, residential zoning overlay district to preserve woodlands, agricultural land and other scenic land along John Wise and Southern Avenues

A-4: Work to create a wildlife corridor, or “emerald necklace” of contiguous parcels that protect or provide buffer for the major habitat types represented in Essex (saltmarsh, freshwater wetlands and vernal pools, old growth forest, meadows, transition environments, woods, streams and lakes), and which

provides enhanced recreational access to protected parcels throughout Essex and in adjacent towns

A-5: Support the acquisition of Sagamore Hill on the Essex / Hamilton line and adjoining parcels that will create a continuous open space corridor along the Essex / Hamilton town line from Western Avenue to Choate Street

A-6: Preserve, protect, and enhance Essex's parks, playgrounds, and other recreational spaces

A-7: Work to improve the Town's capacity to preserve and protect open space strategically and proactively (see Goal D)

A-7: Support implementation of recommendations related to open space proposed by the Great Marsh Coastal Adaptation Plan, expected to be completed by December 2016

Goal B. Support and Improve Recreational Opportunities and Access to Open Spaces for All Essex Citizens

Objectives:

B-1: Improve non-vehicular access to recreational opportunities and open spaces through bike, canoe/kayak, and walking trail improvements

B-2: Improve recreational opportunities and access for all demographic groups in Essex, including the elderly, low-income, and the disabled

B-3: Continue to improve and expand the two town playgrounds and playing fields as needed, including support to create and implement a Master Plan for Memorial Park

B-4: Improve recreation bicycle connections through Essex including adding bicycle lanes where feasible on roads such as Southern Avenue heading towards Manchester

B-5: Support plans for the Essex River Walkway along Main Street and research the feasibility of extending the Essex River Walkway from Main Street to Landing Road along the former Essex Rail Right-of-Way

B-6: Participate with Mass in Motion – Cape Ann in the development of a regional hiking trails map.

B-7: Improve the nature trail along the side of Conomo Point Road

Goal C. Improve Public Education and Awareness of the Unique Nature of Essex's Natural Resources and Challenges to Preservation

Objectives:

C-1: Update and promote the brochure guide to the open spaces of Essex that effectively educates the public regarding the truly unique resources of the Town

C-2: Use creative outlets, such as town festivals, to disseminate information of challenges and opportunities to protect Essex's character and natural resources

C-3: Work with the Manchester-Essex Public Schools to re-establish and strengthen environmental education based on Essex's open spaces, including the Manchester-Essex Regional High School Green Team

C-4: Participate in the Great Marsh Coastal Community Resiliency & Adaptation Project occurring in 2015-2016.

Goal D. Strengthen the Town of Essex's capacity for preserving and protecting open space strategically and proactively

Objectives:

D-1: Improve communication among and education of Town Boards regarding open space issues and goals in Essex

D-2: Obtain training for Open Space Committee members on topics such as vernal pool certification, land conservation techniques, and grant writing

D-3: Work towards the adoption and use of the regulatory and legal tools available to aid open space preservation including supporting the increase of the Community Preservation Act surcharge from 0.5% to 1.5%

D-4: Identify grant opportunities and apply for funding to purchase parcels, development rights, or conservation easements

D-5: Continue to foster strong relationships with the superb local land conservation NGO's including Essex County Greenbelt, Trustees of Reservations, and the Manchester-Essex Conservation Trust

D-6: Evaluate and update the Town's Open Space Plan in a timely and efficient manner to ensure effective guidance of the open space protection process

D-7: Recruit and train enthusiastic Open Space Committee members to create as robust and effective a committee as possible.

SECTION 9: SEVEN YEAR ACTION PLAN

All actions contained in the seven-year plan will be initiated and led by the Open Space Committee unless otherwise noted.

Goal A. Protect and Preserve Essex's Open Spaces**Objective A-1. Preserve and protect the singular and threatened habitats of Essex**

<i>Action</i>	<i>Schedule</i>	<i>Funding Source</i>
Meet with MECT representatives to gain clear understanding of the current Essex Woods conservation campaign and what the Town's role should be	Spring of 2016	N/A
Meet with the Chebacco Lake Watershed Association and identify opportunities for buffer preservation	Spring of 2016 and ongoing	N/A
Research ownership, co-ordinate with MCET and negotiate gift, sale or deed restrictions for Woods parcels lacking frontage.	Ongoing	CPA
Educate the public and bring to town vote a proposal to conserve the 114+ acres of Town-owned tax-title woodlots within the Woods.	2016	N/A

Objective A-2. Preserve and protect scenic open spaces

<i>Action</i>	<i>Schedule</i>	<i>Funding Source</i>
Meet with Selectmen, NGO representatives, and Planning Board to review properties under Chapter 61, 61A and 61B protection, discuss prioritized lands as determined by this Plan, and plan strategy in case of chapter program refusal	Spring-Fall of 2016	N/A
Continue to ensure Open Space & Recreation are priorities for implementation of the Strategic Plan	2016	N/A
Designate Lufkin and Island Roads to the Scenic Road By-law	2016	N/A
Request Special Legislation to allow Town regulation of John Wise Avenue as a Scenic Road	2016	N/A

Objective A-3. Work to Create Scenic Zoning Overlay Districts along John Wise and Southern Avenues.

<i>Action</i>	<i>Schedule</i>	<i>Funding Source</i>
Work with the Strategic Planning Committee to ensure successful adoption of proposed new zoning overlay districts to protect scenic vistas	By Fall 2016	N/A

Objective A-4. Work to create a an “emerald necklace” of contiguous parcels that protect or provide buffer for the major habitat types represented in Essex, and which provides enhanced recreational access to protected parcels

<i>Action</i>	<i>Schedule</i>	<i>Funding Source</i>
Work with Essex County Greenbelt, Trustees of Reservation and Manchester – Essex Conservation Trust to identify “necklace” corridors	Produce plan by Spring of 2017	N/A
Implement strategic plan to create and enhance the necklace	2017-ongoing	Apply for CPA and EOEAA Open Space grant funding

Objective A-5. Support Acquisition of Sagamore Hill

<i>Action</i>	<i>Schedule</i>	<i>Funding Source</i>
Support Essex County Greenbelt Association’s funding applications for purchase of Sagamore Hill	2016	CPA, other
Support acquisition of adjoining parcels as opportunities arise	Ongoing	CPA, other

Objective A-6. Preserve, protect, and enhance Essex’s recreational spaces

<i>Action</i>	<i>Schedule</i>	<i>Funding Source</i>
Work with the Strategic Planning Committee to ensure the ongoing implementation of mutual objectives to preserve, protect and enhance open space	Fall of 2016	N/A
Work with Manchester Essex High Green Team and Cape Ann Trail Stewards to maintain and improve the Chebacco Lake Nature Trail	2016 -2017	Apply to Essex County National Heritage Program for trails maintenance grant and CPA funds

Objective A-7. Work to improve the Town's capacity to preserve and protect open space strategically and proactively – please see the five-year action plan for Goal D.

Goal B. Support and Improve Recreational Opportunities and Access to Open Spaces for All Essex Citizens

Objective B-1. Improve non-vehicular access to recreational opportunities and open spaces through bike, canoe/kayak, and walking trail improvements

<i>Action</i>	<i>Schedule</i>	<i>Funding Source</i>
Work with Mass in Motion – Cape Ann, MECT and Cape Ann Trail Stewards to create accurate trail maps of the Essex, using GPS technology	2016	N/A
Identify grant sources for trail mapping, expansion and improvements and apply as appropriate	Ongoing	

Objective B-2. Improve recreational opportunities and access for all demographic groups in Essex

<i>Action</i>	<i>Schedule</i>	<i>Funding Source</i>
Meet with representatives from the Essex Council on Aging to identify opportunities for improving elderly access to open space and recreation areas in Essex	2016	N/A
Form and subcommittee to develop a plan for improving and promoting passive, water-based recreation as recommended in the SCORP	2016	N/A

Objective B-3. Continue to improve and expand the two town playgrounds and playing fields as needed

<i>Action</i>	<i>Schedule</i>	<i>Funding Source</i>
Ask the Memorial Park Committee for an update on the development of a park master plan.	2016	N/A
Apply for grants to implement the Master Plan	By July 2016	CPA, PARCs small community program

Objective B-4. Implement Bicycle Lanes

<i>Action</i>	<i>Schedule</i>	<i>Funding Source</i>
Work with DPW, Mass in Motion – Cape Ann and MassBike to determine the feasibility of implementing bicycle lanes on Southern Avenue and other location in Essex	2016	N/A
Implement re-striping plan	When scheduled by DPW	Regular maintenance and/or Complete Streets Grant

Objective B-5. Support the Creation of the Essex River Walkway

<i>Action</i>	<i>Schedule</i>	<i>Funding Source</i>
Support Town efforts to fund design, permitting and construction of the Main Street section of the River Walkway	Ongoing	Complete Streets Grants, CPA or other
Determine Feasibility of extending the River Walkway from Main Street to Landing Road	2016	MiM – Cape Ann and Memorial Park Master Plan

Objective B-6. Continue to improve and expand the two town playgrounds and playing fields as needed

<i>Action</i>	<i>Schedule</i>	<i>Funding Source</i>
See B-1		

Objective B-7. Improve the nature trail along the side of Conomo Point Road

<i>Action</i>	<i>Schedule</i>	<i>Funding Source</i>
Do a field survey / walk of existing conditions	2017	
Establish feasibility of improvements	2018	CPA

Goal C. Improve Public Education and Awareness of the Unique Nature of Essex's Natural Resources and Challenges to Preservation**Objective C-1. Publish and promote a brochure guide to the open spaces of Essex**

<i>Action</i>	<i>Schedule</i>	<i>Funding Source</i>
Identify funding sources and obtain printing moneys	2016	N/A
Draft brochure and circulate among Town Boards and interested individuals	Fall of 2016 – Spring of 2017	N/A
Publish, publicize and distribute brochures	Spring of 2017	Open Space Committee Budget and apply for grants (to be identified)

Objective C-2 and C-3 Use creative outlets to disseminate information of challenges and opportunities to protect Essex's character and natural resources

<i>Action</i>	<i>Schedule</i>	<i>Funding Source</i>
Brainstorm and list events and forums	Spring 2016	N/A
Recruit volunteers and set event schedule	2016 and ongoing	N/A
Work with public schools to conduct environmental education around Essex's unique open spaces and rare and endangered species	Begin in Fall of 2016 and ongoing	Apply for grants if needed

Objective C-4. Public Forum on Climate Change

Action	Schedule	Funding Source
Work with Conservation Commission to create forum planning committee	Spring 2016	N/A
Develop forum agenda	Spring/ Summer 2016	N/A
Hold forum	Fall 2016	N/A

Goal D. Strengthen the Town of Essex's capacity for preserving and protecting open space strategically and proactively**Objective D-1. Improve communication among and education of Town Boards regarding open space issues and goals in Essex**

Action	Schedule	Funding Source
Meet with Selectmen, Conservation Commission, and Planning Board to discuss moving forward with OSP objectives and strategies to improve communication	Spring 2016	N/A
Publish quarterly updates and send to other town boards via email, memo and social media	Ongoing	N/A

Objective D-2. Obtain training for Open Space Committee members

<i>Action</i>	<i>Schedule</i>	<i>Funding Source</i>
Set schedule and obtain member commitments to attend trainings at the Putnam Institute, annual MACC conference, and other trainings as they are identified	Ongoing	N/A
Create a subcommittee for member training and recruitment	Ongoing	N/A
Continue to earmark money for training of OSC members	Ongoing	Open Space Committee Budget

Objective D-3. Adopt and use the regulatory and legal tools available to aid open space preservation

<i>Action</i>	<i>Schedule</i>	<i>Funding Source</i>
Designate a member to work with the Selectmen to facilitate amendment of the CPA	Ongoing	N/A

Objective D-4. Identify grant opportunities and apply for funding to purchase parcels, development rights, or conservation easements

<i>Action</i>	<i>Schedule</i>	<i>Funding Source</i>
Attend Land Conservation Grant and grant writing workshops at Putnam Institute	Spring 2016	Open Space Committee Budget
Designate member to research grants and make recommendations	2016	N/A
Work with local NGO's to write successful grant applications	Ongoing	N/A

Objective D-5. Continue to foster strong relationships with the superb local land conservation NGO's including Essex County Greenbelt, Trustees of Reservations, and the Manchester-Essex Conservation Trust

<i>Action</i>	<i>Schedule</i>	<i>Funding Source</i>
Meet with representatives from local NGO's to discuss final OSP goals, objectives and action items, and set process for regular communication with Essex Boards	Ongoing	N/A

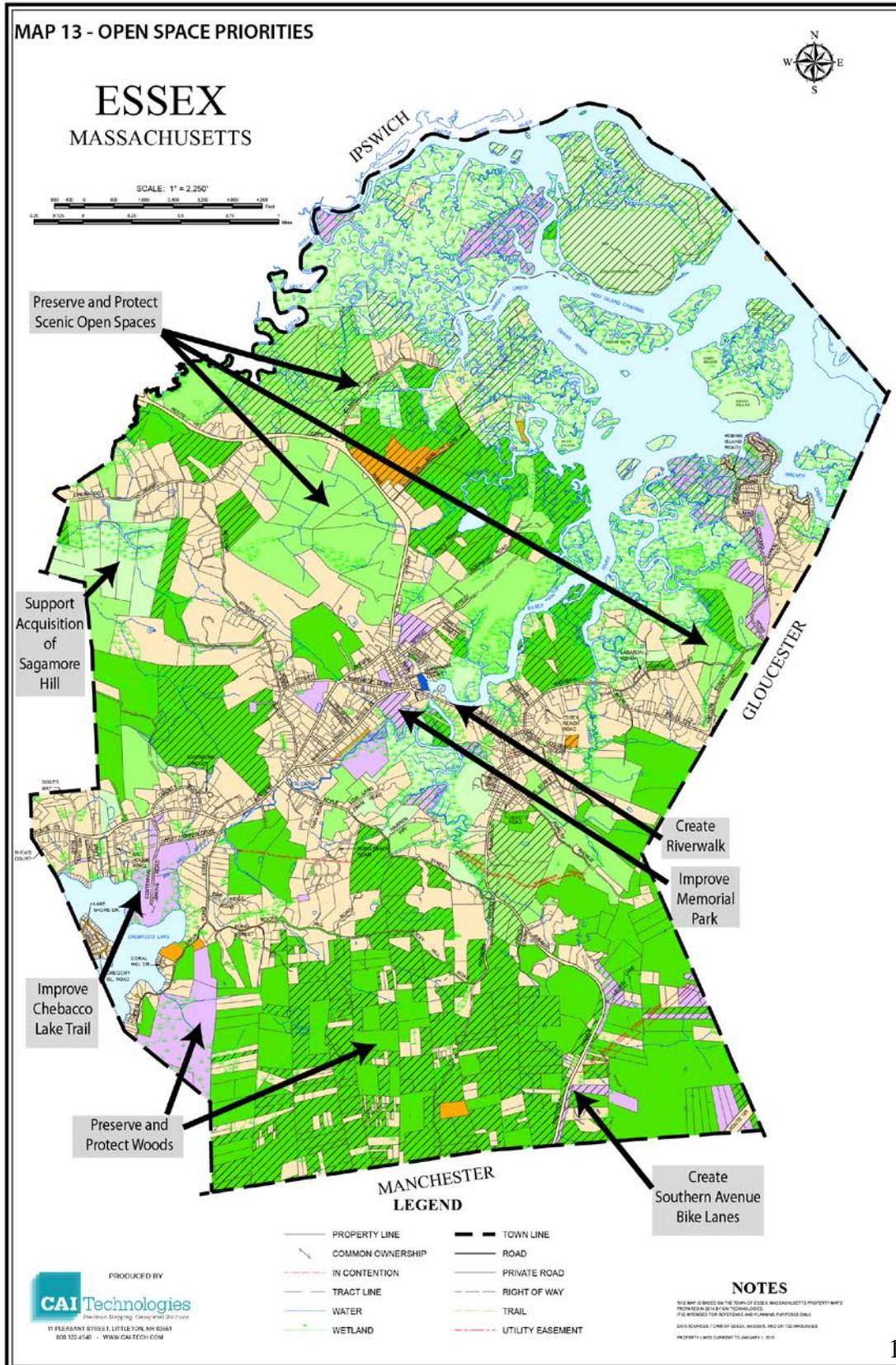
Objective D-6. Evaluate and update the Town's Open Space Plan in a timely and efficient manner to ensure effective guidance of the open space protection process

<i>Action</i>	<i>Schedule</i>	<i>Funding Source</i>
Create a subcommittee to manage the evaluation and update process, including oversight of submissions to EOEA	Ongoing	N/A

Objective D-7. Recruit and train enthusiastic Open Space Committee members to create as robust and effective a committee as possible

<i>Action</i>	<i>Schedule</i>	<i>Funding Source</i>
Brainstorm a list of potential members	2016	N/A
Create a subcommittee for member training and recruitment. Recruit representatives from community groups such as Memorial Park Committee, ECB, MECT, Cape Ann Trail Stewards, youth sports	2016	N/A

MAP 13 – OPEN SPACE ACTION PLAN MAP



SECTION 10: PUBLIC COMMENTS

Public Outreach

The Essex Board of Selectmen and the Essex Open Space and Recreation Committee held a joint public hearing on the draft 2016 – 2023 Open Space and Recreation Plan on Monday November 30, 2015 and the Essex Senior Center. The meeting had been publicized through out Essex and surrounding communities via: (1) a press release to the Gloucester Daily Times, (2) a posting in the Good Morning Gloucester blog which is seen by 30,000+ people each day (3) a public meeting notice on the Town’s website and (4) direct e-mail to various Town boards, commissions, key staff and community organizations. Approximately 20 people were in attendance at the meeting including the three members of the Board of Selectmen, Town Administrator Brendhan Zubricki, former members of the Long Range Planning Committee, Shellfish Advisory Board and Open Space and Recreation Committee with the balance being members of the public.

Lead authors, Julie Scofield, Chair of the Open Space & Recreation Committee and Stephen Winslow, Mass in Motion – Cape Ann Project Manager, made a presentation on the key findings and recommendations contained in the draft plan. After the presentation members of the Board of Selectmen and public asked questions and provide comments as follows:

- Essex / Gloucester Border: One member of the public asked how the plan would address the use of an area along the Essex / Gloucester border along a natural gas pipeline easement. This person noted that the “Mass Mudders” a local 4-wheel drive off-road vehicle group had been using the area along the pipeline. Damage to vegetation and vernal pools appears to be happening as a result. Would there be an effort to have the pipeline company monitor use and access gates?

Mr. Winslow noted that a similar question arose at a recent meeting held by the Gloucester Department of Public Works regarding trail access in West Gloucester. He also noted that on the draft Essex Open Space and Recreation Resources Map the area along the pipeline to Southern Avenue was unprotected woodlands that neither the Town nor any local conservation group had targeted for preservation.

An audience member commented that there were many owner unknown parcels in that area.

- Co-ordination with Strategic Planning Committee: One person noted that the Essex Strategic Planning Committee had been completed its report and included definitive proposals for new zoning overlay districts to protect scenic vistas. He suggested the implementation of those zoning overlays should be added as an action item.

- Zoning and Article 61A lands: One person asked how zoning overlays would affect land already subject to Article 61A agriculture protections and whether those owners would have input on the development of the zoning overlays.

Ms. Scofield noted that the action plan was only a recommendation. Property owners and the public would have additional opportunity to comment on any zoning overlays when Town Meeting considers them.

- Memorial Park: A question arose as to what committees had been asked to review the plan, particularly those that may be informal committees rather than official committees of the Town such as the Memorial Park Committee.

Town Administrator Zubricki noted that the Memorial Park Committee was not an officially designated Town Committee. That Committee had initiated a survey of the Park with CPA funds but had not done any planning for the park rehabilitation. The Community Preservation Committee is expected to reconsider whether to continue to dedicate further CPA funds towards future planning for the Park.

- Future Development: One member of the public asked whether the plan was intended to stop all future development in the Town.

Ms. Scofield responded that an Open Space and Recreation Plan seeks to identify and priority areas for preservation to help ensure that economic development will occur in an intelligent way that preserves the character of the community .

- Great Marsh ACEC: An attendee commented that drafting and implementing a resource management plan for the Great Marsh with adjoining communities should be an action item. Without a resource management plan any development activity within the ACEC is restricted even those which could potentially benefit the resource such as the placement of a wharf where people now drag boats across a marsh

The public comment period remained open until the Open Space and Recreation Committee's February 18, 2016 meeting. Comment and support letters were received from:

Nancy Dudley of the Shipbuilding Museum commented that the nature trail that goes along the side of Conomo Point Road should be improved to better allow kids on bikes and people with strollers better access to this area without having to walk along a sometimes dangerous street.

Hello –

The following are the comments from MAPC regarding the draft Essex OSRP. Some are from MAPC's perspective as it relates to the letter we will write that will be included in the final plan. Other comments are based on my experience in writing and reviewing OSRP's, as well as a from a recent meeting I had with Melissa Cryan at DCS. These comments are meant to assist you in completing the plan so that it includes the information that Melissa is looking for when she reviews the plan for approval.

MAPC-related comments:

- On page 6, at the end of section 3A of the plan, regional open space priorities should be identified. You should reference the MAPC MetroFuture Regional Plan here. The plan includes goals and objectives as well as 13 detailed implementation strategies for accomplishing these goals. We encourage all communities to become familiar with the plan by visiting the web site at <http://www.mapc.org/metrofuture>.
- It may be worthwhile to highlight key recommendations from the plans of adjacent communities as they relate to regional resources and the efforts to protect them.
- Mass-in-Motion is mentioned several times, but it would be helpful to have a brief description of the program as it relates to Cape Ann.
- In the Section 9 Action Plan, show where the goals and objectives are consistent with MAPC's MetroFuture.

General comments flagged for DCS review:

- You may get some comments from DCS on the inventory. For municipally-owned parcels, there are a number of columns that are left blank for particular parcels. DCS has told me that they would still like to see something entered on the matrix, even if the information is not known or not applicable.
- DCS will probably want to see the Chapter 61, 61A and 61B lands listed in more detail than a single row.
- Sec. 9 – aside from the schedule, if the action items have been prioritized, you should indicate that.
- Appendix – DCS will ask that you include the ADA required documents and assessment.

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the Essex OSRP. It is a document that is very thorough and it should serve the town well as it continues its efforts to preserve open space and provide for the recreational needs of its residents.

I hope this is helpful, but let me know if you have any questions.

Ralph

Ralph R. Willmer, FAICP
Principal Planner
Metropolitan Area Planning Council
60 Temple Place
Boston, MA 02111
617.933.0734
617.894.7598 (cell)
rwillmer@mapc.org

SECTION 11: REFERENCES**Websites:**

Essex County Greenbelt Association website (www.ecga.org), Spring 2015.

Essex Shipbuilding Museum website (<http://www.essexshipbuildingmuseum.org>). 2015.

Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs website (www.mass.gov/envir). 2015.

Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, Division of Conservation Services website (<http://www.state.ma.us/envir/dcs/openspace/default.htm>). 2015.

Massachusetts Office of Geographic Information (MassGIS): Website and on-line mapping (2015)

Massachusetts Heritage Landscape Inventory Program website (<http://www.essexheritage.org/heritagelandscapes/essex.pdf>). May 2006.

Publications:

Flint, Richard Foster. *Glacial and Quaternary Geology*. John Wiley and Sons, Inc., New York, NY, 1971.

Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation and The Essex National Heritage Commission. *Essex Reconnaissance Report: Essex County Landscape Inventory*. May 2005.

Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs. *Open Space Planner's Workbook*, Section 5.

SCORP, *2012 Regional Perspective*, Northeastern Region Section.

Soil Conservation Service. *Soils and Their Interpretations for Various Land Uses: Town of Essex, Massachusetts*. U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1973.

Sonder, Erika. *Vascular Plant Survey of the Manchester-Essex Woods (Wilderness Conservation Area)*. June 2005

Teal, John, and Mildred Teal. *Life and Death of the Salt Marsh*, 1969.

Thorburn, Gary W., *The Essex River Basin: Base Line Studies and Future Choices*, Dec. 1975.

Town of Essex Annual Town Reports, 1997 to 2014.

Town of Essex Open Space and Recreation Plan, 1997 and 2007.

Wells, Daniel. *2005 Rare Species and Vernal Pool Survey: Wilderness Conservation Area, Essex and Manchester, MA*. January, 2006.