

TOWN OF WALPOLE

1996 OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN

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- Assessor's Office
- Building Inspector
- Conservation Commission
- Conservation Agent
- Board of Health
- Isaacs Land Study Committee
- Parks, Recreation and Cemeteries Superintendent
- Planning Board
- Department of Public Works
- Recreation Committee
- Recreation Director
- Board of Selectmen
- Town Administrator's Office
- Town Clerk
- Town Engineer
- Town Planner
- Water and Sewer Commission

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PLAN SUMMARY

This 1996 Walpole Open Space and Recreation Plan represents an update of the 1987 Plan. This update was prepared as Walpole is undergoing its most rapid population growth since the 1960's. This is putting increasing stress on the natural resources and infrastructure of the Town, as well as its character. This plan contains the following major elements:

- o A description of the public input utilized in developing the plan;
- o A demographic profile of the Town's residents;
- o A summary of recent growth trends;
- o An environmental portrait of Walpole;
- o An inventory of existing open space and recreation parcels;
- o An analysis of open space and recreation needs;
- o A statement of community goals
- o A statement of goals and objectives;
- o A five-year action plan;
- o Public comments;

INTRODUCTION

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this plan is to help ensure that Walpole's open space and recreation resources are protected and its needs met to the maximum extent practicable. The 1987 Open Space and Recreation Plan, the 1985 Master Plan Update, the original Master Plan, and other previous planning initiatives have contributed to creating the quality of life that exists in Walpole today. There are still large areas of open space, much rural character, relatively compact development, and a vital Town Center.

However, development is now progressing at a rapid rate. Approximately 750 lots have been approved and will likely be built on over the next five to ten years. Other large subdivisions (including Bird Estates, with about 200 lots, and Adams Farm, with about 170 lots) are in the planning stages. This development will have a dramatic impact on the Town's character, infrastructure, environment, and fiscal condition.

This 1996 Open Space and Recreation Plan is an update of the 1987 version. Much of the environmental data is still valid. Many of the goals and objectives of the previous plan are also still valid, and some progress toward them has been achieved. Fiscal constraints have inhibited progress.

It should also be noted that this Plan is dynamic. Conditions change and new information constantly becomes available. The Plan should be reviewed and adjusted as needed. By 2001, it will expire and a major update will again be necessary.

Planning Process and Public Participation

This plan update was coordinated by the Town Administrator's Office with substantial assistance from the Town Engineer (who produced all the color maps among his other contributions), Town Planner, Conservation Agent, and Director of Parks, Recreation and Cemeteries. Input from Town officials and the general public was a critical component of this Open Space and Recreation Plan. Town officials and residents have first-hand knowledge of Town needs, problems and opportunities that need to be addressed. Their input is essential to establish goals and objectives, and to ensure that any recommendations are feasible and will draw sufficient support to warrant a reasonable chance for implementation. Therefore, input from Town officials and the general public was a significant component of the process used to prepare this Plan.

The first step of the process was updating demographic data and growth trends. Next, an initial series of meetings were held with the Planning Board, Selectmen, Conservation Commission, Isaacs Land Study Committee, Town Department Heads, and the Recreation Committee. At these meetings, the updated demographic information was presented along with the goals and objectives from the 1987 Plan. Input was solicited on the goals and objectives in particular, but also on any areas that needed to be addressed and opportunities that needed to be explored.

Next a public meeting was held on March 20 (see Appendix for information about this meeting). Again at this meeting, the demographic data and 1987 goals and objectives were presented and input solicited.

Based on the comments received, a revised set of goals and objectives was drafted, and a "preliminary draft" report was prepared which included a set of recommendations as well as the demographic data, environmental inventory and analysis, abbreviated needs analysis, and inventory of lands of conservation and recreation interest. The preliminary draft was circulated to departments, boards and commissions for comments. Comments that were received in time were then incorporated into this "draft report." A second public meeting was held on June 5 to receive comments on the draft report (See Appendix). This second round of comments was also addressed and incorporated into this final version as appropriate. Copies of this report are available in Town Hall, at the Walpole Library, and on the "Walpole Web" Home Page on the World Wide Web.