

2 INTRODUCTION

A. Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this plan is to guide citizens and town officials in efforts to protect open space and to continue to provide recreational services in Hadley. This plan analyzes current conditions, anticipates future needs, and recommends strategies for achieving community goals. The protection of open space is an essential component in preserving and enhancing the quality of life for the residents of Hadley. Open space of any kind, suburban, urban, or rural, serves a wide range of purposes that support local economies and promotes a high quality of life. Open space can be defined as land that, for the most part, is free of buildings and other impervious areas.

This plan, like the original 1998 Open Space and Recreation Plan and subsequent 2007 plan, includes background information and analysis for Hadley, which will help to inform the public of the status of open space and recreational resources in the town. The plan also includes goals, objectives, and an action plan that charts a course of action for preserving Hadley's future and utilizing Hadley's limited resources, such as time and money, in the most efficient way possible.

The 2007 Open Space and Recreation Plan was used as a basis for the 2014 plan. The 2014 plan represents a renewed commitment to adapt to the growing and changing open space and recreational needs of Hadley's residents. The Open Space and Recreation Plan built on the work of others by utilizing pertinent data and recommendations found in previous open space and recreation planning studies of Hadley. The 2014 Seven-Year Action Plan was reviewed, noting which efforts have been completed and those which have not. A community survey in 2013 and public meeting offered valuable insight and guidance for this plan edition.

Overall, protection of open space and recreation is important in Hadley in order to maintain and enhance wildlife habitat and biodiversity, flood storage, promote conservation of important agricultural land, soils and wetlands, protect natural streams and water supply, increase public recreational opportunities, preserve historic sites and scenic vistas and promote sustainable development.

This plan was prepared according to the requirements and guidelines of the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA), Division of Conservation Services (DCS), which requires communities to plan for their open space and recreational needs by updating and receiving approval for their open space and recreation plans in seven-year planning horizons. DCS previously required action plans spanning a five year period but have since updated this requirement, extending the horizon to seven years. DCS' guidelines require that specific information be included in the plan while also affording communities the flexibility to include other relevant information. By updating this plan Hadley also becomes eligible for federal and state grants such as Self-Help, Urban Self-Help, and Land and Water Conservation Funds, which, in turn, will help implement the new plan.

B. Planning Process and Public Participation

The original Open Space and Recreation Plan in 1998 was written over a period of three years. The 1998 plan was started in 1995 when the Kestrel Trust offered the town a small grant to fund the creation of the plan. This project was managed on a volunteer basis by Jennifer Dempsey, secretary of the Conservation Commission (now staff for American Farmland Trust) and David

Ziomek, Executive Director of the Hitchcock Center, under the guidance of Commission Chair Alexandra Dawson. By the Spring of 1995 an Open Space and Recreation Plan Committee had been formed. This committee made strong efforts to gather the necessary open space and recreation information, and solicit in-put from local residents through public meetings and a town-wide survey. The 1998 Open Space and Recreation town-wide survey was distributed to 1,641 households in June of 1996. Approximately three hundred residents responded to the survey. Based on the background information gathered, the survey, and the public meetings, the Committee was able to write the 1998 plan.

The 2007 OSRP was developed by a team of students from the University of Massachusetts Regional Planning Department. The initial steps included monthly meetings with Commission Chair Alexandra Dawson, and consulting with David Ziomek, now President of the Valley Land Fund land trust. The student group reviewed the 1998 original plan and its open space and recreation survey. It examined the 2003 Hadley Town Survey distributed by the Long Range Committee in Hadley which had many questions pertaining to open space and recreation. The group also reviewed the Hadley Master Plan prepared in 2005 by the town's Long Range Planning Committee, and incorporated useful information from all of these sources and documents in the updated version.

The current 2014 plan was initiated by the Conservation Commission, with assistance from Conservation Works LLC. A public workshop was held in May 2013, and a concurrent community survey was mailed to Hadley residents. Additionally, outreach and data collection was conducted with Town departments, boards and committees to assess progress since 2007 and current priorities and initiatives. The draft plan was issued for public comment in August 2014, and final edits made thereafter.