

## **Section 7 – Analysis of Need**

### **Summary of Resource Protection Needs**

The 1999 survey results found that the protection of Lake Quannapowitt and Crystal Lake was very important, and that remains true today. In addition, respondents felt that it was important for the Town to acquire open land and conservation areas, as well as to work to improve maintenance at existing areas. Wakefield residents have become increasingly concerned about the protection of open space and conservation issues as a result of increased housing development pressures since the 1980s. Part of the constraint in open space planning for Wakefield is the limited land available on which to develop more housing or more playing fields or simply to set aside for conservation purposes. Though many of the needs are clear and long-standing, how to go about addressing them is more complicated.

#### **Protect Natural Resource Areas in Town**

Wakefield has many outstanding natural resources, as has been highlighted throughout this text. The impacts of development and growth in the Town encroach upon these resources, however, and many residents believe it is necessary to continue to make improvements in the protection of lands in Town. For example, improving the health of the Mill River was noted as an area of importance. According to DEP's Water Quality Assessment, the Mill River was considered impaired because of an imbalance in its pH. Also, because the river flows through the industrial core of Wakefield and also through a residential area, it picks up various types of refuse along its path. These are just a few examples of concerns pertaining to the Mill River.

Further work to remediate problems of this nature is also needed on other natural resource areas in the Town. Lake Quannapowitt, for example, continues to be an area of great concern and interest for Town residents. The Friends of Lake Quannapowitt are still working to improve the water quality of the lake, and the community's interest in using the lake for recreational purposes is evident in the number of people walking, biking, or jogging the trail around it on any given day. Ensuring the continued use of the trail around the lake as well as working to improve the water quality in the lake through stormwater management, wetlands protection, and increasing public awareness remain priorities for Wakefield.

In addition, as noted in section 5, many of the open space and recreation areas in the Town are not protected. Therefore, as development pressure continues, they could be sold and built on. The Town Planner has suggested creating a land trust, which typically is “a nonprofit organization that, as all or part of its mission, actively works to conserve land by undertaking or assisting direct land transactions—primarily the purchase or acceptance of donations of land or conservation easements” ([Land Trust Alliance](#)). So far, this effort has not been successful but it

could be a valuable organizational means to begin to address Wakefield's resource protection needs from an education, organization, and acquisition standpoint.

### **Stormwater Management**

The issues with stormwater management in Wakefield continue to be a concern for the community. As was noted in section 4, a 1992 Water Supply Protection Plan Study noted that a drainage pipe discharged directly into Crystal Lake. This was noted by a resident during the May 4, 2004, forum as a continuing problem. In general, residents discussed their concerns about the impacts of stormwater runoff on lakes and rivers in Town. As noted in section 4, there are many concerns with flooding and draining problems in Town, a problem that underscores the importance of preserving wetlands and implementing a comprehensive stormwater management policy. In order to facilitate the improvement of stormwater drainage and polluted stormwater runoff, residents mentioned ideas such as developing parking with more permeable surfaces and creating a low-salt zone for Lake Quannapowitt.

### **Greenbelt**

One idea that was mentioned repeatedly at the May public forum was the importance of connecting resources, trails, and destination spots in the Town. Residents were interested in creating a greenbelt and/or bikeway to link existing open space areas in Town but also to connect other areas. The vision was to make it possible to safely walk or bike to many Town destinations. One resident noted that the infrastructure that already exists, such as sidewalks, though not "green" spaces, could be emphasized and/or redesigned to create a cohesive connector route to various trails, parks, and other areas.

The Town Planner recommended revisiting the streetscape design suggested in Wakefield's 1925 Master Plan as a guideline for re-greening Wakefield's streetscape. A print of the 1925 streetscape design can be viewed in Appendix 3. In addition, the Town of Reading is working on a [Downtown Streetscape Improvements Project](#) for their Main Street which could provide some ideas for what could be done in Wakefield. Also, the Town of Wakefield may wish to review the [City of Newton's Tree Preservation Ordinance](#) for an example of how they could mobilize and codify efforts at re-greening the streetscape.

### **Unified Design for Path around Lake Quannapowitt**

A related idea to the Town-wide greenbelt discussed above was an interest in creating a unified streetscape design for a path around Lake Quannapowitt.

## **Summary of Community's Needs**

### **Public Education/Increase Awareness of Resource Concerns and Benefits**

Forum attendees noted a lack of awareness on the part of many residents regarding Wakefield's open space and the importance of conserving and protecting various parcels in Town, both for recreational purposes and in order to protect water and watershed resources. Also, the importance of educating residents about the impacts of certain types of activities, such as using salt on roads, driveways, and sidewalks in the winter, on the environment and specifically on the health of the lakes in Wakefield, was noted.

### **Playing Fields**

Residents in the Town of Wakefield have remarked on a number of occasions about the need for more playing fields. The current fields are used constantly and there is no period of time in which they can be left to recover from their use because there is such high demand. The Town is looking into the feasibility of hiring a consultant to prepare a master plan for the redevelopment of playing fields in Town, in order to try to maximize the design and use of what they already own. In addition, one resident at the May forum mentioned that some Town-owned properties are underused and that these could be converted into playing fields or parks. One example was an unused detention basin at the Dolbeare School that could possibly be converted to a playing field. A second example was converting the now-closed Franklin School property into a park. These suggestions, though they may not be feasible after more detailed consideration, are examples of how the Town might work to creatively and strategically use its current resources to address demand issues.

### **Encourage a Variety of Transit Options**

As noted in an earlier section, Wakefield has been participating in discussions to create a Five-Town bike path. Should this path be completed, it would link Wakefield with adjoining Towns and would therefore facilitate both more fluid alternative transportation options and also a wider variety of recreation opportunities in the Town. During the May 4 forum, residents expressed interest in making it easier to choose to bike or walk to places than to drive. In order for this to be possible, the regional bike path needs continued support from the community and the region in order to gain necessary rights of way for use of the abandoned railway line. The regional bikeway is one major example of a way to begin connecting adjoining Towns and also open spaces within Town. The desire to connect open spaces, destination spots, and transit with safe cycling routes was expressed by residents, and these efforts would go a long way towards making Wakefield a cycling friendly community. In addition to these broader, design and visioning aspects of creating alternative transportation options, basic improvements in Town need to be made, such as placing more bike racks throughout Town.

### **Zoning/Town Design Changes**

As Wakefield strives to balance housing and development demand with open space, recreation, and environmental protection needs, new, creative solutions need to be developed in order to accommodate the demands on limited resources. Many of the residents who attended the May Open Space and Recreation Plan forum noted that issues of housing, economic development, and open space are inter-related. This understanding led to some suggestions regarding how broader planning issues impact open space. For example, residents discussed the importance of increasing density downtown in order to take pressure off other parts of Town so that open space is preserved.

In addition, some residents noted how useful it would be to rezone the sand and gravel and cement factory sites that are in Wakefield Center for eventual re-use. As was described in section 4, Wakefield is one of very few Towns that has an industrial area in the center of the downtown. This location creates a challenge for residents and businesses in Wakefield Center because of the number of trucks that, as a result, use the main thoroughfare through Town.

Other general design changes that would improve the aesthetic appeal of the Town included implementing traffic calming measures, such as etched crosswalks; working to improve the streetscape with more street trees, especially in sections of Town, such as Albion Street, where there are none; improving areas where there are vast expanses of uninterrupted asphalt, such as by the Lord Wakefield Hotel, by adding some green areas and thereby also contributing to assisting in stormwater drainage.

### ***The National Recreation and Parks Association Standard***

The National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) has developed the most widely used standards for park and recreation land. According to NRPA standards, a local park system should, at a minimum, be composed of a “core” system of parklands with a total of 6.25 to 10.5 acres of developed, “close-to-home” open space per 1,000 population. The local park system should include mini-parks, neighborhood parks and larger community parks. Based on this standard, Wakefield should have between 155 and 260 acres of open space for parks and recreation areas. Wakefield’s almost 228 acres of open space and recreation, which includes all of the DPW park and recreation land, Reedy Meadow, and Breakheart Reservation in this calculation is within this general goal. One must also acknowledge that some of the School Department’s 102 acres serve as “adjunct” parks and recreation areas, but there clearly is a need to increase the amount of developed park and recreation space.

### ***SCORP Relationship***

The Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) makes the following open

space and recreation recommendations for the Metropolitan Boston Region (which includes Wakefield):

- Improve water-based recreation opportunities for such activities as boating and fishing.
- Increase and improve opportunities for hiking, cross-country skiing and picnicking.
- Maintain a balance between acquisition and development of recreation and conservation areas.
- Improve maintenance of recreation facilities through the development of incentive programs.
- Improve opportunities for land-based recreation, particularly for golf, tennis, and field-based events.
- Offer incentives to recreation agencies that develop day care programs with recreational components.
- Examine the feasibility of extending outdoor recreation opportunities within wetland recreation areas for such activities as hiking, nature observation, photography and cross-country skiing.

Many of these recommendations also apply to Wakefield and provide some ideas that can be used to encourage new solutions to the resource and community needs facing the Town.

## **Management Needs**

### **Maintenance**

The 1999 Open Space survey indicated that many of the active recreational facilities were in need of immediate attention, a management concern that remains true today with the high demand for playing fields and other recreational areas. In addition, the survey indicated that many of the play facilities were degraded or of obsolete design. A more proactive management approach will need to be developed by the Town to ensure the improvement of these facilities. One resident suggested putting a moratorium on the sale of all Town-owned land until a plan that outlines explicitly what kinds of fields and recreation areas are needed is completed.

### **Funding**

The ability to pay for general maintenance of current properties, let alone for property acquisition, is always a concern. The Town of Wakefield is no exception. Section 10 – Implementation - outlines a variety of funding sources that may prove instrumental in aiding the Town in meeting some of the community, recreation, and management needs set forth in this plan.