

# Open Space and Recreation



# INTRODUCTION

Open Space and Recreation planning is crucial for preserving resources while enhancing recreational opportunities and experiences for the community. Policies and guidelines designed in conjunction with this Master Plan chapter provide a guide for future actions to ensure consistency with the preservation of open space and the enhancement of recreational uses. This chapter incorporates and builds off of the natural resources inventory included in the town's Open Space and Recreation Plan completed in 2011, and identifies, updates, and incorporates relevant information to the town's open space and recreation resources.

The Town of West Brookfield benefits from an extensive network of protected open space and popular active and passive recreational areas. However, key parcels and areas that contribute to the rural character of the town are not currently protected. Further, much of the land surrounding Lake Wickaboag, one of the central natural resources for the town, are vulnerable to new development. Such development could threaten the viability of the Lake as a water supply and recreation destination.



## Prior Planning and Engagement Efforts

Residents of West Brookfield have been actively engaged in the planning for the protection and preservation of vital land resources for many years now. Some of the past town planning efforts include:

### Community Development Plan (2004)

This report was prepared by the Community Development Planning Committee to guide the Town's future growth. Assistance was provided to the Committee under Executive Order 418, which supplies guidance and funding for the preparation of Community Development Plans (CDP). The four (4) elements addressed by the CDP included open space and resource protection, housing, economic development, and transportation. The 2004 West Brookfield CDP identified the preservation of West Brookfield's rural character, open spaces and environmental quality as goal towards natural resource protection. The CDP also identified five (5) objectives to meet this goal, including:

- Protect the health of lakes and brooks in Town
- Protect the Town's water supplies
- Preserve the Quaboag River Valley landscape between Route 9 and the River
- Protect scenic views
- Create greenway trails both within town and connecting with greenways in surrounding towns

### Reconnaissance Report, Heritage Landscape Inventory (2008)

This report identified and prioritized the landscapes that embody the community's character and its history. The report was prepared by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and its regional partners, the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) and the North Quabbin Regional Landscape Partnership (NQRLP), including members of the Town's Historical Commission. Recommendations include the potential for Smart Growth Zoning adoption, Local Historic District designation, and pursuit of additional protective measures on important natural and cultural areas through Conservation Restrictions and Agricultural Preservation Restrictions. The 2008 Reconnaissance Report identified three (3) primary goals for preservation of West Brookfield's heritage landscapes, including:

- Adoption of the Community Preservation Act (CPA)
- Adoption of a Demolition Delay Bylaw
- Establish a Local Historic District (LHD) for the West Brookfield Center Historic District, and include the Western Railroad Depot Area

### Open Space and Recreation Plan (2011)

The Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) provides an overview and analysis of the Town's significant natural and scenic resources, inventory of conservation and recreation lands, and concrete steps to improve open space and recreation opportunities. This plan was approved by the Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) in 2011 and requires an Update in 2018. Recommended objectives include water resource and land protection, preservation of the rural character, increased outreach and education, and developing connections between existing networks and already protected lands. The 2011 OSRP identified nine (9) goals for the protection and promotion of open space and recreational resources, including:

- Promote the preservation of West Brookfield's important water resources
- Promote the preservation of the important land resources in West Brookfield
- Provide recreational opportunities for all West Brookfield residents
- Promote the efficient management and maintenance of the open space and recreation areas of West Brookfield
- Promote opportunities for the linkage of West Brookfield's open space
- Increase educational awareness regarding resources
- Use regulations to balance development with the preservation of open space
- Promote preservation of West Brookfield's community character
- Promote the protection of Agricultural Lands within West Brookfield

### Open Space Residential Development Bylaw (2006)

In 2006, the Town of West Brookfield added a provision to their zoning bylaw covering Open Space Residential Developments (OSRD). The Bylaw was developed by the Stormwater Authority and the Planning Board, enacted through a vote at Annual Town Meeting. The Open Space Residential Development Bylaw applies to "major developments" which are defined in the bylaw as developments consisting of more than three (3) units. Developments of fewer than three (3) units can be considered, but only if the properties are contiguous and the planning board determines that the planned development meets the purpose of the bylaw. The law requires that a minimum of 50% of the total development lands be set aside as open

space. Open space must be reasonably accessible and earmarked for "wildlife habitat and conservation and the following additional purposes: historic preservation, outdoor education, passive recreation uses at the discretion of the planning board, aquifer protection, agriculture, horticulture, forestry, a combination of these uses, and shall be served by suitable access for such purposes."

#### Accomplishments since the completion of the 2011 Open Space and Recreation Plan:

- Revised the Stormwater Bylaw, 2014
- Participated in multiple land conservation initiatives
- Improved surface water quality, particularly at Lake Wickaboag
- Prepared dredging plan for north end of Lake Wickaboag (awaiting funding)

## Commissions and Active Groups

### Open Space Implementation Committee

The Open Space Implementation Committee is 6-member appointed board that oversees implementation and updates of the Open Space & Recreation Plan. The West Brookfield Open Space and Recreation Plan was completed in 2011 and requires a Plan Update in 2018. The members of the committee are also members of the town's Conservation Commission, Historical Commission, Planning Board, and the Lake Wickaboag Preservation Association.

### Conservation Commission

The Conservation Commission is comprised of a 7-member board that is charged with the protection and promotion of the Town's natural and watershed resources through review of permits, site visits, and meetings regarding the enforcement of the Massachusetts Wetland Protection Act. The Conservation Commission also reviews Forest Cutting Plans in order to notify local Board members about forest management activities. The Commission manages approximately 200 acres of permanently protected open space lands in Town. Commission meetings are held on the first Wednesday of every month.

### Stormwater Authority

The West Brookfield Stormwater Authority was created in 2006 at Town Meeting through adoption of the *Town of West Brookfield Stormwater Bylaw*. The purpose of the Bylaw and the Regulations are to protect public health, safety, and welfare of the community by establishing requirements and procedures to manage stormwater runoff and to prevent water pollution from new development and redevelopment.

Comprised of 7-member board, the Stormwater Authority is charged with enforcing the provisions of the Stormwater Bylaw, as well as remaining actively involved with issues around Lake Wickaboag. The Authority coordinates activities that promote the water quality and health of Lake Wickaboag because the lake is the receiving water body for a major portion of the Town's stormwater runoff. Therefore it is the Authority's role in ensuring that surrounding developments do not harm the already impacted lake system.

Although West Brookfield is not covered by the MS4 Permit<sup>1</sup>, the Stormwater Authority has taken great strides to ensure oversight and protection of stormwater throughout the town.

In 2008 and 2011, the Town of West Brookfield was awarded two *Section 319* Grants to control nonpoint sources of water pollution in Town. West Brookfield received \$62,400 from MassDEP in 2008 and raised \$41,600 for the required non-federal match. The *Section 319 Nonpoint Source (NPS) program* is a funding source offered by the EPA that helps communities control nonpoint sources of water pollution in order to achieve and maintain efficient uses of waterways. Enacted by Section 319 of the Federal Clean Water Act, the grant is awarded to projects that target the prevention, control, and abatement of NPS pollution within a watershed or sub-watershed. The 2008 grant funded an infiltration Best Management Practice (BMP) design near Wickaboag Valley Road involving the West Brookfield Highway Department, Stormwater Authority, and LWPA.

In 2011, the Stormwater Authority applied for and successfully received another 319 grant. The grant awarded in 2011 funded the “Two Ponds Project” which involved dredging of two adjacent ponds near the southeast region of Lake Wickaboag to include improved wet detention basins, sediment forebays, and vegetated swales on both sides of Lakeview Road. West Brookfield was awarded \$350,000 from MassDEP, and the town raised \$235,000 in a non-federal match. ESS Group Inc. was hired to design and execute both projects for West Brookfield.

Among the projects the Stormwater Authority has undertaken since 2015:

- Actively reviews new development proposals to ensure compliance with the bylaw
- Continuously review and update the bylaw (last update was in 2013)
- Working closely with the Lake Wickaboag Association to develop and pursue funding for the North Cove Lake Dredging Project
- Worked with civil engineering students from Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) to produce an updated water quality report for Lake Wickaboag (2014)

### Recreation Committee

The West Brookfield Recreation Committee is comprised of a 5-member volunteer board appointed by the Board of Selectmen. The Recreation Committee is tasked with monitoring and maintaining the Town Beach, maintenance of recreational sports facilities, coordinating movie nights and other events on the Town Common, and organizing youth summer activities and sports. Each summer, the Recreation Committee coordinates free summer recreation programs for youth residents including tennis lessons, swimming lessons, sports camp, and Camp SOAR. Camp SOAR is a weeklong summer camp available to children in grades 1-6 which takes place at the West Brookfield Elementary School. Camp SOAR has been successfully running for two (2) years, with day-to-day participation ranging from 40 to 60 total children. The Committee also worked to install an ice-rink in the Town Common in the winter of 2017-18. The Recreation Committee meetings are open to the public and all youth sports team Presidents are encouraged to attend.

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<sup>1</sup> A permit issued by the U.S. EPA to regulate management of Municipal Separate Stormwater Sewer Systems (MS4s) which diverts the flow of stormwater runoff into larger water bodies.

### Lake Wickaboag Preservation Association

The Lake Wickaboag Preservation Association (LWPA) is a non-profit organization “dedicated to the preservation and improvement of the water quality and surroundings of Lake Wickaboag.” The organization is a private membership association composed of “concerned citizens” and residents of West Brookfield. They are funded through annual membership dues and private funder-raisers. Moreover, the LWPA collaborates with the Stormwater Authority to identify and encourage stormwater improvement projects aimed at reducing the amount of non-point source pollutants entering the lake. The 12-member committee is actively engaged with preservation, planning, and educational activities around the lake.

### Brookhaven Lake Association

The Brookhaven Lake Association is an organization comprised of residents committed to the preservation and improvement of the water quality and surroundings of the Town’s secondary lake, Brookhaven Lake. The group coordinates activities on the Lake. The Brookhaven Lake Association is a listed member of the Massachusetts Congress of Lake and Pond Associations.

## Town Affiliated Groups

### Opacum Land Trust

Founded by volunteers in 2000, the Opacum Land Trust operates to protect natural, cultural resources with significant ecological and historical value in South-Central Massachusetts. The Land Trust serves 13 communities including Southbridge, Sturbridge, Charlton, East Brookfield, Brookfield, North Brookfield, West Brookfield, Warren, Brimfield, Wales, Holland, Monson, and Palmer. The Land Trust focuses on preserving priority habitat and ecosystems, promoting proactive conservation, and the creation of greenways and wildlife corridors. Opacum Land Trust permanently protects open space through donation or purchase of land, bargain sales, or through Conservation Restriction holdings.

### The East Quabbin Land Trust

The East Quabbin Land Trust (EQLT) began in 1994 because of concern for the loss of farmland and wildlife habitat to unplanned sprawl in and around Hardwick. Since 1998, EQLT has expanded its protection efforts to Barre, Petersham, New Braintree and other nearby towns. By working cooperatively with property owners, government agencies, conservation groups and other land trust organizations, the Land Trust has been able to protect over 4,000 acres since 1998. The EQLT worked with West Brookfield in 2013 to acquire the Pynchon’s Grist Mill Preserve, a 42-acre site located off Wickaboag Valley Road. The Town holds a Conservation Restriction on the land.

### The Trustees of Reservations

The Trustees of Reservations is a non-profit land conservation and historic preservation organization dedicated to preserving natural and historical places in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. As the oldest regional land trust in Massachusetts, the Trustees manages 89 properties statewide including the Rock House Reservation in West Brookfield, a 135-acre site located off Route 9.

# EXISTING CONDITIONS

West Brookfield contains an abundance of open space resources. Currently, there are over 2,100 acres of permanently protected open space and recreational lands in town. In addition, the town has nearly 3,600 acres of chapter land protected through MGL Chapter 61. The breakdown of open space lands in West Brookfield is as follows:

**Table 4-1 Open Space Inventory Summary**

Open Space Inventory Summary	
Permanently Protected Open Space	2,151 acres
Lands with Agricultural Preservation Restriction	966 acres
Lands with Conservation Restriction	322 acres
Chapter 61, 61A and 61 B Lands	3,597 acres
<b>Total Open Space Lands</b>	<b>7,036 acres</b>

## Agriculture

Farm land is an important resource for many community members in Town. Residents have cited West Brookfield’s rural character as a key attribute. The project team has identified the following in town:

- 966 acres of land have an Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR), which is permanently protects these lands from development.
- 3,597 acres of land are enrolled in the Chapter 61A program, which restricts the use of the land agricultural or horticultural use in exchange for significant reduction in taxes. Of these, 34 parcels (approximately 1,790 acres) are multiple-use properties.
- Over 950 animals in 2015: Beef Cows (311), Chickens (277), Horses (137), Swine (60), Goats (54), Turkeys (36), Dairy Cows (31), Waterfowl (30), Sheep (25)
- At least seven (7) farms and orchards with “for-sale” products

## Open Space Destinations

In addition to protected and semi-protected rural lands, West Brookfield is possessed of a number of open space and recreation destinations. These sites are noted for their active and passive recreational opportunities, natural beauty, as well as their contributions to preserving natural resources in the town.

## Town Common

The Town Common is the central location for community activities and leisure enjoyment. Numerous activities are held on the Common throughout the year including the Asparagus Festival in May, Annual Congregational Church tag sale in June, summer concerts, the Farmer’s Market during the summer and fall months, Annual Harvest Festival, and White Christmas. Not only is the Town Common a central hub for community enjoyment, it is an area that is maintained and promoted by multiple departments and committees. The Common Committee oversees activities and events while the Highway Department and Burial Grounds Commission maintains the landscape of the common. In 2014, the Town initiated a Lawn Fertilization Program with Casella Organics to revitalize the common’s landscape, which also included tree removal due to health and safety issues that were identified by the Tree Warden. There have ongoing efforts by the West Brookfield Little League and the Asparagus Festival Committee to redesign and construct a more functional ball field on the Town Common, which is frequently used by young athletes participating in T-ball and youth soccer. This past winter season, the Common also saw the addition of a new ice skating rink for the public to use and enjoy.

## West Brookfield Elementary School

West Brookfield Elementary School, located at 89 North Main Street, is a 20-acre campus equipped with an indoor gymnasium and several outdoor recreational facilities including two playgrounds designed for small children, two tennis courts, a basketball court, three baseball diamonds and three soccer fields. The playgrounds, tennis courts, basketball courts and one soccer field are on the level with the school and generally accessible by paved walkways. The baseball diamonds and two additional soccer fields are located at lower elevations. Access to the ball fields is through a sloping walkway. Access to the additional soccer fields is via a gravel walk or across the adjacent fields. There is a partially paved ½ mile long walking/running loop around the perimeter of the fields. The Recreation Committee uses the facilities at the West Brookfield Elementary School and the Quaboag Regional Middle-High School for their summer programs. The playground is only available outside of school hours and is the only playground in town. While these appear to be adequate facilities given the size of West Brookfield, additional recreational facilities may be needed to accommodate additional residents or to better meet the age demographics of the Town.

## Rock House Reservation

Rock House Reservation is a 196-acre tract with two spectacular geologic formations. This 135-acre parcel of forest and wetland is owned and maintained by the Trustees of Reservations. It is one of 96 properties operated by the Trustees. The Trustees maintain a parking area and trails so the public can enjoy the property year-round. The most popular trail on the property circles Carter Pond, a 2.5-acre spring-fed pond, constructed in the 1930’s by Arthur Carter, who dammed a spring-fed stream to create the pond and constructed a cabin overlooking the pond.

## Town Beach

Town Beach is a popular summertime destination for town residents. Owned by West Brookfield, the Town Beach is approximately a 7-acre site located on the southern shore of Lake Wickaboag on Lakeview Avenue. The beach offers opportunities for swimming canoeing and outdoor sports and is located across the street from a privately-owned athletic field. Parking is limited to residents with the appropriate permits.

## Public Beach Rules

Use of the public beach is by permit for residents only. All persons using public beach do so at their own risk. Visitors cannot swim beyond the ropes and buoys, and must obey lifeguard orders when a lifeguard is present. Visitors cannot litter or polluting the beach and must adhere to public beach hours (sunrise to 11:00 PM). Animals are prohibited on the beach from April through September. The use of loud or profane language, or the playing of amplified music at excessive volume, within the confines of the public beach, shall be considered a breach of the peace. Solid red flags displayed on lake indicates the lake is being treated for weeds or algae, or conditions are unsafe, and there is no boating or swimming allowed during that time. The West Brookfield Police, the Massachusetts Environmental Police, and the Lake Wickaboag Harbormaster all have the authority to enforce all lake and beach rules.

## Lake Wickaboag

Lake Wickaboag is the center-piece of West Brookfield's natural and open space resources. The lake is both a destination and water source for numerous residents and community members. It is managed by an active lake committee, the Lake Wickaboag Preservation Association (LWPA), which works to improve water quality for lake residents. A public boat ramp is located in the southeast corner of the lake and parking is available for boat trailers. The lake is both a destination and water source for residents and visitors, serving as a focal point to quality of life for many. The lake is heavily used for recreation on an annual basis, and its significance is evidenced by the sheer number of water-based recreational activity in the community. Lake Wickaboag is home to a majority of the town's water-based recreation and there are a wide variety of activities take place on the lake including waterskiing, ATVing, boating and fishing in the summer, and hockey and ice fishing in the winter. Development along the shore has also been extensive with seasonal, summer cottages and year-round homes. Recent plans include a dredging project which has been shovel ready for some time. The Association and the town are actively seeking funding for this project.

## Lake Wickaboag Winter Rules

All persons using the frozen lake do so at their own risk and are advised not to venture onto the ice until it is completely safe. Reckless driving and speeding is not allowed, and speed limits are posted for different vehicle types. All state and federal rules and regulations apply regarding minimum operator ages, operator certifications, licenses, accident reporting, etc. No deliberate spinning, sliding, or racing is allowed, and all must yield right of way to unpowered vehicles. Cleared ice skating/hockey rink areas are not allowed beyond 150 feet from shore. Littering or polluting of ice is not permitted, exposed fishing holes should not be left in ice, and piles of ice chips from drilled holes should be smoothed out, not left on ice. The West Brookfield Police, the Massachusetts Environmental Police, and the Lake Wickaboag Harbormaster all have the authority to enforce all lake and beach rules.

## Lake Wickaboag Boating Rules

All persons using the lake do so at their own risk. Hydroplanes or air-boats are not allowed except for official lake managing activities. Solid red flags displayed on lake indicate the lake is being treated for weeds or algae, or conditions are unsafe, and there is no boating or swimming allowed during that time. Reckless driving and speeding is prohibited. Boat and personal watercraft (PWC) speed limits are posted for different times of day. Water skiing within 150 feet of swimmers, other water skiers, other boats, piers, rafts, divers, or shore, is prohibited except when launching or returning to shore. Swimming more than 50 feet from shore is not allowed unless accompanied by a boat, in which case the swimmer must stay

within 25 feet of boat at all times. Towing skiers, boarders, or tubes are not allowed without an onboard observer. No boats engaged in fishing are allowed within 50 feet of piers or rafts, and a catch and release policy is preferred for all types of fishing on this lake. Navigation buoys should not be tampered with, and the use of loud or profane language, or the playing of amplified music at excessive volume, shall be considered a breach of the peace. No operating a boat or jet-ski under the influence of alcohol or drugs. No littering or polluting the lake. Visitors must clean weeds off their engine prop before launching, again when leaving, and dispose all in trash barrel near ramp, or on dry land away from lake. All state and federal safe boating rules and regulations must be adhered to. The West Brookfield Police, the Massachusetts Environmental Police, and the Lake Wickaboag Harbormaster all have the authority to enforce all lake and beach rules.

### Quaboag River

The Quaboag River runs through the heart of West Brookfield. As a piece of a larger river system, the river heads at Quaboag Pond and flows west, running through Warren down to Palmer and connecting to the mouth of the Three Rivers system. The river boasts canoeing and water sports opportunities. Over the years, the town has undertaken significant work on river trails. Additionally, community outreach efforts undertaken as part of the 2011 OSRP and this plan have identified continued community interest in establishing kayak and canoe landings along the river.

### Wickaboag Sportsmen's Club Property

The Wickaboag Sportsmen's Club rents space in a Town-owned facility located at 89 New Braintree Road. The Sportsmen's Club is a 44-acre tract with limited protection and is not publicly accessible. Sportsmen's Club members gain access to this site via a gated entrance on New Braintree Road. The Club is focused on outdoor recreation and education with emphases on hunting, shooting, and fishing. The club has been involved with an educational program at the Elementary School for the last seven years.

## Inventory of Open Space

### Regional Open Space

The amount of open space lands as designated by the available MassGIS datalayer shows a number of contiguous open space lands in towns adjacent to West Brookfield. In particular, there are wide spans of open space in Brookfield in close proximity to the Quaboag Wildlife Management Area. Additionally, there are a number of open space lands in Warren and Ware that are adjacent to the Coy Hill region of West Brookfield. These areas of open space create the potential for linkages of protected lands that could be used for both recreational and wildlife habitat protection.

### Land Protected from Development

Protected land owned by the Town and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in West Brookfield totals approximately 1,918 acres, and although it is entirely possible for governmental agencies to remove land from public ownership, this scenario is unlikely and would require considerable public scrutiny if proposed. Public land is identified by State land use codes to differentiate between the level of government that owns the property: Commonwealth of Massachusetts (901), Counties (902) and Municipalities (903). These codes are helpful when reviewing assessor's records.

In addition to publicly held parcels, privately owned land may also be protected from development. Examples of private non-profit conservation entities include The Trustees of Reservations, who own and manage the Rock House Reservation and Lucy Stone site (159 acres). The Rock House Reservation is a 135-acre parcel of forest and wetland, which is owned and maintained by the Trustees of Reservations. It is one of 96 properties operated by the Trustees.

Beyond privately held land, less than fee interests in land can keep land in an open state in perpetuity. For example, a property owner might be willing to sell or donate a conservation easement or restriction, which would prevent future development on the land. As is true in most places, this land is preserved but not available for public access. The use of these easements and restrictions is helpful in maintaining community character.

**Table 4-2 Public (Non-Profit) Open Space Lands**

Public (Non-Profit) Open Space Lands					
Site Name	Owner/Manager	Site Purpose	Public Access	Protection Level	Size (GIS Acres)
Lucy Stone Home Site	Massachusetts Land Conservation Trust	Conservation	Yes	Perpetuity	4.26
		Conservation	Yes	Perpetuity	9.07
		Conservation	Yes	Perpetuity	45.05
Rock House Reservation	The Trustees of Reservations	Conservation	Yes	Perpetuity	7.44
		Conservation	Yes	Perpetuity	1.50
		Conservation	Yes	Perpetuity	72.97
		Conservation	Yes	Perpetuity	50.03
Pynchons Grist Mill CR	East Quabbin Land Trust	Conservation	Limited	Perpetuity	42.55
<b>Total Size</b>					<b>232.89</b>

### Town Owned Land

Permanently protected Town lands include Conservation Commission holdings (approximately 251 acres) the Town Beach, cemetery, the Wickaboag Sportsmen’s Club, and water supply lands. Town-owned open space lands total approximately 272 acres. Several parcels present hiking and natural trails opportunities and should be considered for further investigation. Table 4-3 below describes the listing of state-owned lands and its accessibility and protection levels.



Table 4-3 Town-owned Open Space and Recreation Lands

Town-owned Open Space and Recreation Lands							
Site Name	Owner/Manager	Location	Site Purpose	Protect Status	Public Access	Lot Size	Notes
Ellis Property	Conservation Commission	20 Foster Hill Road	Conservation	Y	Y	5.4	Large amount of wetlands that could potentially be used for a nature study.
Ellis Property	Conservation Commission	14 Foster Hill Road	Conservation	Y	Y	2.15	
Howlett Property	Conservation Commission	20 Wickaboag Valley Road	Conservation	Y	Y	35	Although only a small portion of this property is not wetland, it provides hiking and nature trail study opportunities.
Dunham Tract	Water Dept	28 Ware Point Road					
Dunham Tract	Conservation Commission	31 Ware Point Road	Conservation	Y	Y	2.21	Hiking and nature trails opportunities
Corner of Snow Road/ Wickaboag Valley Road	Conservation Commission	166 Wickaboag Valley Road	Conservation	Y	Y	48	
Old Gas station (Gin Smith Inc.)	Conservation Commission	667 West Main Street at Ware line	Conservation	Y	Y	25	
Magnante/ Greelish property (former)	Conservation Commission	167 Wigwam Road	Conservation		Y	19.22	
Town Cemetery	Cemetery Commission	41 Church Street	Conservation Recreation	Y	Y	16	
Wickaboag Sportsmen's Club Property	Conservation Commission	89 New Braintree Road	Recreation	Limited	N	44.6	Public access via remote road, and used for hiking, scouting, hunting, and nature study.
West Brookfield Elementary School	West Brookfield Elementary School	89 North Main Street	Recreation	Y	Y	20.83	
Town Beach	Recreation Committee	12 Lakeview Ave	Recreation	Y	Y	6.8	Water based recreation opportunities.
Town Sanitary Landfill	Board of Health	74, 84 & 88 Wigwam Road	Utility/ Municipal Use	N/A	Y	47.06	Possible potential use since the landfill is closed and covered.
<b>Total Town-owned Lands</b>						<b>272.27</b>	

## Water Department and Public Works Lands

The Town Water Department maintains 19.1 acres on Leland and Ware Point Roads to protect the Town's Watershed. These holdings are meant to protect the current and future water supply and are protected from future development, but are not open to the public. The Board of Health owns 45 acres of land for the Town Landfill. Since the landfill is closed and capped, the potential exists for use of the site. The Cemetery Commission owns the 16-acre Town Cemetery, which has public access. The Recreation Committee owns the 6.8-acre Town Beach, which is open to the public as a bathing beach.

## State Owned Lands

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts owns roughly 1,647 acres of land in West Brookfield. These lands are largely owned by the State Department of Fish and Game, which manages approximately 1,428 acres, while 218 acres are managed by the Department of Conservation. The West Brookfield State Forest, located on Birch Hill Road, is comprised of approximately 143 acres and provides community members with hiking and nature study opportunities. Table 4-4 below describes the listing of state-owned lands and its accessibility and protection levels. Between 2011 and 2017, there has been a slight increase in overall state-owned lands. The DFG nearly doubled the amount of lands it manages in Town during this time period, while the amount of DCR-owned lands decreased from approximately 600 acres to 218 acres.

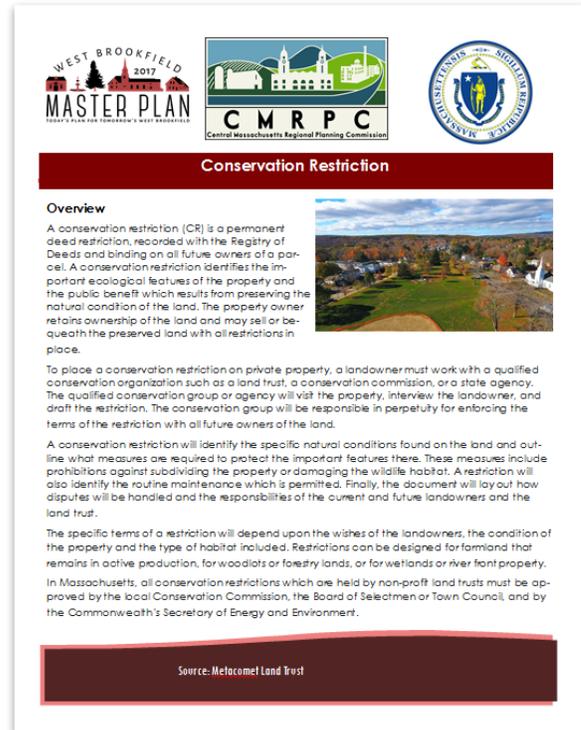
**Table 4-4 State-owned Open Space Lands**

State-owned Open Space Lands						
Site Name	Owner/Manager	Location	Site Purpose	Public Access	Protect Status	Size (GIS Acres)
Coy Hill WMA	Dept. of Fish and Game	466 West Main St.	Conservation	Yes	Perpetuity	660.44
Richardson WMA	Dept. of Fish and Game	0,25,41,49 George Allen Rd.	Conservation	Yes	Perpetuity	33.52
Whortleberry Hill WMA	Dept. of Fish and Game	264 and 289, Wickaboag Valley Rd; 147 Madden Rd	Conservation	Yes	Perpetuity	332.61
Quaboag River WMA	Dept. of Fish and Game	106, 130, 146 Long Hill Rd.	Conservation	Yes	Perpetuity	401.72
Sucker Brook Flood Control Site	DCR - Division of State Parks and Recreation	226 Shea Rd.	Conservation	Yes	Perpetuity	69.54
Lamberton Brook Flood Control Site	DCR - Division of State Parks and Recreation	53 Old Warren Road	Conservation	Yes	Perpetuity	5.81
West Brookfield State Forest	DCR - Division of State Parks and Recreation	134 Birch Hill Road	Recreation and Conservation	Yes	Perpetuity	142.96
<b>State-owned Open Space Total Size</b>						<b>1,646.61</b>

## Conservation Restrictions

A conservation restriction (CR) is a permanent deed restriction, recorded with the Registry of Deeds that binds all current and future owners of the property placed under a CR. The conservation restriction (or easement) is a restriction to particular specified uses or from development. The restriction runs with the land and is recorded in a deed instrument. Conservation Restrictions can be placed on a parcel of land for a specified number of years or in perpetuity. This restriction identifies the property's important ecological features and the public benefit derived from preserving the natural condition of the land. This tool aims to retain the property in its natural state or in agricultural, farming, or forest use; to permit public recreation; or to restrict development activities. The property owner retains ownership of the land and may sell or pass on the preserved land with all restrictions in place. Any title search of a property will reveal the existence of a CR and all future owners will be bound by it. Conservation restrictions, sometimes called development restrictions, must be granted voluntarily, however, the Conservation Commission and/or Planning Board can encourage this mechanism as a way of maintaining privately owned land in a natural state. When a landowner places a property under a CR, he or she has permanently protected that property and ensured that the CR last forever, legally known as "in perpetuity." The restrictions placed on the property through the CR allow the landowner to determine how the property will be used into the future. The CR allows the property owner to retain title, pass the property on to heirs or even sell the property.

A landowner can determine which part(s) of their property would be restricted in the future by the easement. It is quite possible, or even common, to withhold some land (i.e. 1-2 building lots for children from the easement, and yet protect the remainder of the property from development (this is an example of conservation-based development). The details of what rights are restricted and what are permitted, and where these restrictions will apply, are worked out between the landowner and the holder of the easement when drafting the CR. In addition to knowing the property will remain protected against development, the owner can derive tax benefits from the CR. These can include reduction of federal income taxes (if the CR is donated), reduction of estate or inheritance taxes, and possible deduction in real estate taxes. Detailed guidelines on how to apply for a CR and the related requirements are included in Appendix M4.



There are currently six (6) parcels in West Brookfield that contain conservation restrictions, totaling 322 acres of permanently protected conservation land. The majority of land is managed by private owners, however the Lucy Stone Home Site is managed by the State Land Conservation Trust and the East Quabbin Land Trust holds a 43-acre CR at Pynchon’s Grist Mill. The majority of lands in this category provide public access to some degree with the exception of three (3) privately-owned sites, one of which is designated for conservation and recreational purposes. Table 4-5 shows an inventory of permanently protected conservation lands in town. Since the completion of the OSRP, two (2) additional conservation restrictions were granted including the Lucy Stone Home Site and the DeWolf CR.

**Table 4-5 Open Space Lands with Conservation Restriction (CR)**

Open Space Lands with Conservation Restriction (CR)						
Site Name	Owner/Manager	Owner Type	Site Purpose	Public Access	Protect Status	Size (Lot Size)
Lucy Stone Home Site	Massachusetts Land Conservation Trust	Land Trust	Conservation	Yes	Perpetuity	4.26
			Conservation	Yes	Perpetuity	9.07
			Conservation	Yes	Perpetuity	45.05
Pynchons Grist Mill CR	East Quabbin Land Trust	Land Trust	Conservation	Limited	Perpetuity	42.55
Groeppe CR	Groeppe Kenneth and Genevieve F	Private (for profit)	Conservation	No	Perpetuity	37.71
DeWolf CR	Dewolf NT	Private (for profit)	Conservation	No	Perpetuity	85.28
Taylor CR	Taylor Jane	Private (for profit)	Recreation Conservation	No	Perpetuity	46.35
Fullam CR	Fullam Walter F	Private (for profit)	Conservation	Yes	Perpetuity	1.18
			Conservation	Yes	Perpetuity	1.53
			Conservation	Yes	Perpetuity	31.86
			Conservation	Yes	Perpetuity	17.31
<b>Total CR Lands</b>						<b>322.2</b>

## Agricultural Preservation Restrictions

The Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) program allows for farmland to be protected from future development. An APR is a specific type of Conservation Restriction that is administered by the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resource. The APR program pays farmers the difference between the "fair market value" and the "agricultural value" of their farmland in exchange for a permanent deed restriction, which precludes any use of the property that will have a negative impact on its agricultural viability. Established by the Legislature in 1977, this program is the cornerstone of the Commonwealth's farmland Protection efforts. This voluntary program which is intended to offer a non-development alternative to farmland owners of "prime" and "state important" agricultural land who are faced with a decision regarding future use and disposition of their farms. Towards this end, the program offers to pay farmland owners the difference between the "fair market value" and the "agricultural value" of their farms in exchange for a permanent deed restriction which precludes any use of the property that will have a negative impact on its agricultural viability. The main objective of the APR program is to protect productive farmland through the purchase of deed restrictions and revitalize the agricultural industry by making land more affordable to farmers and their operations more financially secure. Detailed guidelines on

how to apply for an APR and the related requirements are included in Appendix M1.

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**CMRPC**  
Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission

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### The Agriculture Preservation Restriction (APR) Program

The Agriculture Preservation Restriction (APR) Program, established by the Legislature in 1977 and administered by the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources, is the cornerstone of the State's farmland Protection efforts. This voluntary program which is intended to offer a non-development alternative to farmland owners of "prime" and "state important" agricultural land who are faced with a decision regarding future use and disposition of their farms. Towards this end, the program offers to pay farmland owners the difference between the "fair market value" and the "agricultural value" of their farms in exchange for a permanent deed restriction which precludes any use of the property that will have a negative impact on its agricultural viability. The main objective of the APR program is to protect productive farmland through the purchase of deed restrictions and revitalize the agricultural industry by making land more affordable to farmers and their operations more financially secure. Specifically the program seeks to:

- Save the best and most productive agricultural land remaining in the Commonwealth;
- Provide an opportunity for farmers to purchase farmland at affordable prices;
- Help farmland owners overcome estate planning and other personal issues such as age, health and retirement;
- Provide working capital for farm operations by releasing equity "locked-up" in land values;
- To develop a positive attitude among farmers, agribusiness, landowners, and urban residents that agriculture in Massachusetts makes an important contribution to the state's economy, food supply, and rural character.

When other program objectives are met, to protect scenic open space and environmentally sensitive lands.

Source: The Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs

There are presently 5 Agricultural Preservation Restrictions in the Town of West Brookfield, totaling approximately 966 acres. In 2011, there were three (3) APRS in town, totally an estimate of 813 acres (OSRP 2011). Between 2011 and 2017, residents acquired three (3) properties in town for enrollment into the APR program, totaling an additional 153 acres of protected farm land.

These properties include the Walker Farm along New Braintree Road. Table 4-6 shows an inventory of permanently protected agricultural lands in town, all of which are managed by private (for profit) owners. The majority of these properties do not offer public access with the exception of the Kibbe APR which provides limited access.

**Table 4-6 Open Space Lands with Agricultural Preservation Restriction**

Open Space Lands with Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR)					
Site Name	Owner/Manager	Owner Type	Public Access	Protect Status	Lot Size
<b>Richardson Farm</b>	Richardson Milton C and Charlotte R	Private (for profit)	No	Perpetuity	58.77
	Richardson Milton C and Charlotte R	Private (for profit)	No	Perpetuity	74.21
	Richardson Milton C and Charlotte R	Private (for profit)	No	Perpetuity	3.00
	Richardson Milton C and Charlotte R	Private (for profit)	No	Perpetuity	6.11
<b>Dorman APR</b>	Dorman Richard C and Dorothy Benedict	Private (for profit)	No	Perpetuity	39.36
<b>Fountain</b>	Fountain Enterprises Inc.	Private (for profit)	No	Perpetuity	32.56
	Fountain Enterprises Inc.	Private (for profit)	No	Perpetuity	3.49
	Fountain Enterprises Inc.	Private (for profit)	No	Perpetuity	17.55
	Fountain Enterprises Inc.	Private (for profit)	No	Perpetuity	19.67
	Fountain Enterprises Inc.	Private (for profit)	No	Perpetuity	4.44
	Fountain Enterprises Inc.	Private (for profit)	No	Perpetuity	64.44
	Fountain Enterprises Inc.	Private (for profit)	No	Perpetuity	30.81
	Fountain Enterprises Inc.	Private (for profit)	No	Perpetuity	1.00
	Fountain Enterprises Inc.	Private (for profit)	No	Perpetuity	27.46
<b>DeQuattro APR</b>	DeQuattro Pasco N and Sandra L	Private (for profit)	No	Perpetuity	108.09
	DeQuattro Pasco N and Sandra L	Private (for profit)	No	Perpetuity	133.81
<b>Walker Farms APR</b>	Walker Farms LLC	Private (for profit)	No	Perpetuity	51.31
<b>Edwards APR</b>	Edwards George L and Hanna S	Private (for profit)	No	Perpetuity	21.57
<b>DeQuattro APR</b>	DeQuattro Pasco N and Sandra L	Private (for profit)	No	Perpetuity	5.64
	DeQuattro Pasco N and Sandra L	Private (for profit)	No	Perpetuity	17.74
<b>Kibbe APR</b>	Kibbe Corydon W and Nancy N	Private (for profit)	Limited	Perpetuity	17.66
	Kibbe Corydon W and Nancy N	Private (for profit)	Limited	Perpetuity	52.80
	Kibbe Corydon W and Nancy N	Private (for profit)	Limited	Perpetuity	174.30
<b>Total APR Lands</b>					<b>965.8</b>

### Lands Not Protected from Development

Private open lands can be offered various levels of protection. The designation of private parcels as Forest lands (Chapter 61), Farm lands (Chapter 61A), or Private Recreation lands (Chapter 61B) restricts the use of land in exchange for significant reduction in taxes. Lands that are taxed under the exemptions allowed by M.G.L. Chapters 61, 61A, or 61B have extremely limited protection because it can be taken out of the program if the owner sell the property or if the owner changes their mind.

Should the owner decide to sell the property and take it out of restricted status, the Town has the right of first refusal to purchase the land. This right of first refusal lasts up to a year after removal from the Chapter programs. Land may be taken out of Chapter 61, 61A or 61B classification by notifying the Town and paying a withdrawal penalty tax. However, such land may not be sold for, or converted to, residential, commercial or industrial use while taxed under the classification without written notification of the municipality in which it is located. The Town has 120 days to exercise its right of first refusal option to purchase the land. Should this time period pass and/or the town states in writing that it will not act on its option, the land may be developed for alternative use(s), removing it from its "open" status as forest, farm or recreation land.

According to the 2011 OSRP, there were approximately 3,578 acres of total Chapter Lands (or 89 parcels). Between 2013 and 2014, West Brookfield acquired 99 total parcels of Chapter Lands which increased to 101 parcels in 2015, but later declined to 65 properties in 2016. Currently, there are 1,809 acres of land in West Brookfield that are classified as temporarily protected under this tax abatement program (or 64 total parcels), a significant decrease compared to the 2011 Land Inventory. The following section describes each type of Chapter Lands in Town.

### Chapter 61 Forest Lands

Forest Lands require a minimum of ten contiguous acres under a minimum 10-year management plan certified by the State Forester. Once the application has been received and approved, the classification statement functions as a lien upon the land for taxes levied under the provisions of M.G.L. Chapter 61.

The landowner must refile every ten years or the land shall be removed from classification by the Town Assessor. A much-reduced property tax is payable once per year during the management period. Currently there are about 996 acres of land classified as Chapter 61 Forest Lands. Of that total, 322 acres are permanently protected from development through a Conservation Restriction held by a Land Trust or private for-profit conservation organization. Table 4-7 describes the inventory of lands in the Chapter 61 Program and the locations of the lands are depicted on the Open Space Inventory Map (see Appendix N34).

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**Forest Tax Program Ch61**

Massachusetts current use programs (Ch. 61, Ch. 61A and Ch. 61B) were created to give preferential tax treatment to those landowners who maintain their property as open space for the purposes of timber production, agriculture or recreation. Chapter 61 was designed to classify forestland. Chapter 61A was designed to classify agricultural land which may include forestland and Chapter 61B was designed to classify recreational land which can also include forestland.

**Lowering Taxes**

Forestland may be enrolled in either the Ch. 61 or Ch. 61A program and is taxed at the same rate. Taxes for those properties enrolled in Ch. 61/61A are determined based on the current use of the property (i.e., the productive potential of your land for growing trees), instead of the fair market or development value.

Recommended current use values for forest land are set on an annual basis by the Farm Land Advisory Committee on or before February 1 of a given calendar year.

Forestland may also be classified under Chapter 61B in a managed forest condition. Taxes for Chapter 61B are calculated using 25% of the current assessed value.

Source: The Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs

**Table 4-7 Chapter 61 Forest Lands in West Brookfield**

Chapter 61 Forest Lands in West Brookfield			
Site Location	Site Owner	Lot Size	Protect Status
35 LONG HILL RD	BENOIT RONALD	2.07	N
11 WARFIELD RD	BENOIT RONALD	2.57	N
19 WARFIELD RD	BENOIT RONALD	68.68	N
180 TUCKER ROAD	BENSON GORDON L	120	N
0 OFF WICKABOAG VLY RD	BENSON GORDON L	11.32	N
123 WIGWAM ROAD	BENSON GORDON L	10.16	N
148 WIGWAM ROAD	BENSON GORDON L	9	N
164 WIGWAM ROAD	BENSON GORDON L	37	N
0 OFF WIGWAM ROAD	BENSON ROBERT E	4.22	N
0 OFF WIGWAM ROAD	BENSON ROBERT E	10.25	N
196 WIGWAM ROAD	BENSON ROBERT E	36.21	N
114 WIGWAM ROAD	BENSON ROBERT E	13.07	N
125 LONG HILL RD	DEWOLF GORDON P JR	92.92	N
199 RAGGED HILL ROAD	GRIFFITHS DANIEL J	83.59	N
159 NORTH MAIN STREET	GROEPPE KENNETH H & GENEVIEVE F	36	N
134 TUCKER ROAD	LUCIER RONALD D	30.95	N
234 WICKABOAG VLY RD	MCREVEY AGNES	8	N
0 OFF WIGWAM ROAD	NYE KENNETH C	16.76	N
379 WICKABOAG VLY RD	PHILLIPS CARL J	42.91	N
386 WICKABOAG VLY RD	PHILLIPS CARL J	13.18	N
52 GEORGE ALLEN ROAD	POST ROAD REALTY, INC	21.34	N
1 BRIDGES ROAD	ROBBINS JEFFREY R	81.12	N
55 PROUTY ROAD	ST CYR CHRISTINE M	95	N
70 COY HILL RD	SULLIVAN EDWARD F LLC	33.36	N
18 BEEMAN ROAD	SULLIVAN EDWARD F LLC	56.45	N
209 RAGGED HILL ROAD	TAYLOR JANE P	3.396	N
213 RAGGED HILL ROAD	TAYLOR JANE P REVOCABLE TRUST	47.713	N
199 TUCKER ROAD	THOMAS-VITRAC DOROTHEA	8.8	N
<b>Total Forest Lands</b>		<b>996.039</b>	

### Chapter 61A Farm Lands

Farm land requires a minimum of five (5) contiguous acres "actively devoted" to agricultural or horticultural use. These classifications include animals, fruits, vegetables, and forest products. To qualify as "actively devoted" a minimum of 500 dollars in gross sales income during the prior two years is required. One must apply to the Town Board of Assessors for consideration, and the status must be renewed every year. A reduced property tax is applied if approved. There are approximately 2,203 acres of land classified under Chapter 61A Farm Lands in West Brookfield. Of that total, approximately 966 acres is permanently protected from development through an Agricultural Preservation Restriction. Table 4-8 describes the

inventory of lands in the Chapter 61A Program and the locations of the lands are depicted on the Open Space Inventory Map (see Appendix N34).

**Table 4-8 Chapter 61A Farm Lands in West Brookfield**

Chapter 61A Farm Lands in West Brookfield			
Site Location	Site Owner	Lot Size	Protect Status
16 PROUTY ROAD	ANDREWES DAVID A	20.42	Limited
19 RICHARDSON RD	ANGILLY KATHLEEN M	9.97	Limited
0 OFF JOHN GILBERT RD	ARSENAULT KEITH R	5.75	Limited
94 JOHN GILBERT RD	ARSENAULT KEITH R	13.813	Limited
86 JOHN GILBERT RD	ARSENAULT KEITH R	33.058	Limited
29 HUNT ROAD	BENEDICT DOROTHY H	33.29	Limited
50 BIRCH HILL ROAD	BROOKS DAVID W	41.23	Limited
163 PIERCE ROAD	BURNHAM CHARLES M	9.99	Limited
286 WIGWAM ROAD	CALVERLEY SUE B	41.55	Limited
125 NORTH MAIN STREET	COY BROOK LAND TRUST	5.97	Limited
141 NORTH MAIN STREET	COY BROOK LAND TRUST INC	105.4	Limited
150 NORTH MAIN STREET	COY BROOK LAND TRUST INC	163.46	Limited
124 NORTH MAIN STREET	COY BROOK LAND TRUST INC	105.45	Limited
82 HUNT ROAD	DEREMIAN MICHAEL R	38	Limited
96 HUNT ROAD	DIMAIO FAMILY IRREVOCABLE TRUST	40.5	Limited
15 PROUTY ROAD	DORMAN JOHN GARY & JOANNE I	34.33	Limited
49 TUCKER ROAD	DORMAN JOHN GARY & JOANNE I	13.21	Limited
6 RICHARDSON RD	DUCHARME RAYMOND	51.19	Limited
17 OLD W BROOKFIELD RD	EDWARDS JANET M	20.26	Limited
99 RAGGED HILL ROAD	ELA DONALD E	28.12	Limited
167 RAGGED HILL ROAD	GRIFFITHS DANIEL J	8.01	Limited
0 OFF OLD W BRK RD	HANSON DAVID G & JOHN E	1.38	Limited
0 OFF WIGWAM ROAD	HANSON DAVID G & JOHN E	5.33	Limited
0 ALONG QUABOAG RIVER	HONEYBEE FARMS PROPERTIES, LLC	3.7	Limited
19 FREIGHT HOUSE ROAD	HONEYBEE FARMS PROPERTIES, LLC	51.53	Limited
108 EAST MAIN STREET	HONEYBEE FARMS PROPERTIES, LLC	31.55	Limited
107 EAST MAIN STREET	HONEYBEE FARMS PROPERTIES, LLC	94	Limited
46 FOSTER HILL RD	HONEYBEY FARMS PROPERTIES, LLC	27.4	Limited
11 LYON ROAD	JOHNSON LAWRENCE S	17.92	Limited
233 RAGGED HILL ROAD	JOHNSON LAWRENCE S	58.06	Limited
234 RAGGED HILL ROAD	JOHNSON LAWRENCE S	154.4	Limited
39 WOODS ROAD	LAPIN ELISABETH	33.05	Limited
70 MADDEN ROAD	MCREVEY FAMILY TRUST	9.955	Limited
77 KENNEDY ROAD	MORRELL MELISSA	12.738	Limited
89 KENNEDY ROAD	MORRELL TIMOTHY S	148.6	Limited

84 DAVIS RD	PISARSKI MICHAEL E JR	37.95	Limited
213 LONG HILL RD	SLOBODY ROGER	130.69	Limited
37 AVALON DRIVE	T C P ENTERPRISES INC	0.14	Limited
41 AVALON DRIVE	T C P ENTERPRISES INC	0.14	Limited
17 CUTLER ROAD	T C P ENTERPRISES INC	1.4	Limited
9 WEST SHORE ROAD	T C P ENTERPRISES INC	0.53	Limited
3 WEST SHORE ROAD	T C P ENTERPRISES INC	0.8	Limited
51 AVALON DRIVE	T C P ENTERPRISES INC	1.88	Limited
22 AVALON DRIVE	T C P ENTERPRISES INC	0.48	Limited
54 AVALON DRIVE	T C P ENTERPRISES INC	1.5	Limited
104 RAGGED HILL ROAD	T C P ENTERPRISES INC	57.26	Limited
187 WICKABOAG VLY RD	T C P ENTERPRISES INC	1.07	Limited
179 WICKABOAG VLY RD	T C P ENTERPRISES INC	29.8	Limited
112 RAGGED HILL ROAD	T C P ENTERPRISES INC	4.79	Limited
55 CUTLER ROAD	T C P ENTERPRISES INC	16.2	Limited
54 CUTLER ROAD	T C P ENTERPRISES INC	38.87	Limited
90 RAGGED HILL ROAD	T C P ENTERPRISES INC	11.86	Limited
79 FOSTER HILL RD	TOMASINO SUSAN	70.46	Limited
64 FOSTER HILL RD	TOMASINO SUSAN	46	Limited
9 GEORGE ALLEN RD	TOMASINO SUSAN N	7	Limited
0 OFF NEW BRAINTREE RD	WALKER FARMS, LLC	14	Limited
349 NEW BRAINTREE RD	WALKER FARMS, LLC	102.62	Limited
OFF MADDEN ROAD	WALKER FARMS, LLC	45.28	Limited
366 NEW BRAINTREE RD	WALKER FARMS, LLC	45.28	Limited
350 NEW BRAINTREE RD	WALKER FARMS, LLC	60.71	Limited
48 MILLER RD	ZIEMBA LEE A	3.92	Limited
<b>Total Farm Lands</b>		<b>2,203.21</b>	

### Chapter 61 B Private Recreation

Private Recreation land must have a minimum of five acres that is left wild and/or maintained for wildlife habitat or used for recreational purposes by the public or a private non-profit group. One must apply to the Town Board of Assessors for consideration and the status must be renewed every year. A reduced property tax results if approved. The amount of Chapter 61B Recreation Lands in town has grown since the completion of the Open Space and Recreation Plan. There are currently 398 acres of lands in West Brookfield that are classified as Chapter 61B Recreation Lands, compared to 148 acres in 2011. Table 4-9 describes the inventory of lands in the Chapter 61A Program and the locations of the lands are depicted on the Open Space Inventory Map (see Appendix N34).

**Table 4-9 61B Recreation Lands in West Brookfield**

Chapter 61B Recreation Lands in West Brookfield			
Site Location	Site Owner	Lot Size	Protect Status
0 OFF WARE ROAD	DUDULA PETER E.	70.6	Limited
32 BOSTON POST ROAD	FOUNTAIN CLIFFORD G	11.4	Limited
9 OLD BOSTON POST RD	FOUNTAIN CLIFFORD G	1.4	Limited
50 BOSTON POST ROAD	FOUNTAIN CLIFFORD G	82	Limited
31 BOSTON POST ROAD	FOUNTAIN CLIFFORD G	46	Limited
58 JOHN GILBERT RD	HIGHVIEW CAMPGROUND INC	91.32	Limited
57 KENNEDY ROAD	KULARSKI THERESA	53	Limited
7 MILLER RD	TECZAR RICHARD J & JANE	10.55	Limited
207 SHEA ROAD	WILLIAMS CARL D	32.19	Limited
<b>Total Recreational Lands</b>		<b>398.46</b>	

## Environmental Challenges

### Hazardous Waste and Brownfield Sites

According to data maintained by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, there is one property in West Brookfield with a reported Oil and/or Hazardous Material Site with Activity and Use Limitations, as updated by Mass GIS in June 2010. The Brookfield Wire Co., at 231 East Main Street had a reported spill on March 7, 2002. The Mass DEP Tier Classified Oil and Hazardous Material Sites data-layer updated in June 2010 showed no sites in West Brookfield.

### Landfills

West Brookfield has one solid waste facility. This was formerly known as the “Wigwam Road Landfill” and is now referred to as the Wigwam Road Drop-off Center. The landfill has been closed for several years and is capped.

### Erosion

There are no widespread erosion problems in West Brookfield; however, ongoing and future development poses a risk by exposing soils. Erosion caused by All-Terrain Vehicles (ATV’s) on state-owned recreation land is a concern among local residents on state-owned recreation lands, as well as erosion caused by lot clearing for new development. The Earth Removal Committee issues permits for earth removal based upon limits and standards set forth in a local Earth Removal By-Law passed in 2006. This Committee works in close cooperation with the Planning Board, Board of Health, Conservation Commission and/or Stormwater Management Committee as needed.

This comprehensive Earth Removal Bylaw limits amounts of topsoil, earth, sand, gravel or rock that can be disturbed on a per acre basis over a predetermined period of time without permitting. These limits, coupled with Best Management Practices (BMP's) responds to past and present concerns over development or clearing of forests which stresses the land through soil disturbance. Recommended BMP's include such controls as wetting to avoid dust in windy conditions, immediate placement of loose hay, synthetic matting or seeding with quick-growing grass to stabilize banks and exposed soils, and erosion control barriers such as hay bales and/or siltation fences staked in place to avoid downstream sedimentation.

### Chronic Flooding

The areas in West Brookfield that are at risk of flooding are those areas near water and wetlands. Development of lands listed as "Flood Plain" is regulated by the Flood Plain Bylaw. The lands that are most susceptible to being submerged from a storm event are the Quaboag River shorelands. Other key areas in Town that are under a flood threat are the banks of waters with adjacent wetlands such as the Mill Brook, Sucker Brook and Bradish Brook.

Generally, there is very little development in areas that are at risk of flooding because most of these low and wetlands are unsuitable for building. Areas of development in floodplains that may be more likely to be damaged by floodwaters are along the Quaboag River Valley. The Floodplain Bylaw limits building to the footprints of existing structures. New developments have to be related to agriculture or passive recreation.

### Sedimentation

Sedimentation problems in West Brookfield occur primarily during wet weather and storm conditions. The most flood-prone areas in Town are the floodplains along streams and the Quaboag River, which tend to be eroded when waters rise during heavy rainfall or rainfall coupled with snowmelt. Bank erosion also takes place on a less noticeable level along the shorelines of local ponds. Sedimentation contributes to non-point source pollution in the waterway and causes water quality problems by increasing the suspended solids in the water. The best way to prevent sedimentation is to monitor erosion problems in Town, and adhere to Best Management Practices (BMP's). Improvements to many pond and lakeside residential properties in recent years have reduced erosion and sedimentation risks but potentially at the expense of shore habitat. The Town has adopted a Storm Water Authority to control activities which contribute to erosion and runoff.

## ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The issues and opportunities in the following section were identified through a review and analysis of priorities identified in previous reports, current data, as well as needs expressed as part of the Master Plan public outreach efforts. The identification of these issues and opportunities is intended to encourage passive and active recreational opportunities and promote protection of existing open space resources.

### Summary of Public Outreach and Community Events

CMRPC facilitated a breakout group reviewing strengths and challenges of West Brookfield's Open Space resources. In general, participants appreciated the extensive open spaces in the town. There were, however, some conflicting opinions over use and access. Much of the open land is private hands and not protected. Additionally, much of the publicly accessible open space is scattered across town, limiting passive and active uses. Many private land holders were concerned about spill-over from abutting public space. Hunting and hiking were noted as particularly troubling encroachments from public space to private. Access was another consistent theme from the breakout conversations. Participants cited a lack of adequate infrastructure for alternative transit modes between open space destinations. Sidewalks in particular were singled out as either incomplete or inadequate for residents' needs. Similarly, participants voiced a need for more/improved biking options to and from open space destinations. While most of the infrastructure was identified as adequate for car travel, parking at destinations was noted as either missing or in need of improvement. Participants in the March 22<sup>nd</sup> event identified the following opportunities for capitalizing on their existing open space inventory.

- Solar on landfill
- Indian Trail
- Corset Factory - demolition
- Boat launch - Route 67 and 9 on Quaboag
- Advertise recreational

### Unprotected Unique and Natural Lands

Table 4-10 below describes six (6) unique or natural lands in West Brookfield that are presently unprotected and should be considered for protection. These lands were identified in both of the Town's 2002 and 2011 Open Space and Recreation Plans, as well as the 2004 Community Development Plan (CDP). The inventory categorizes the conservation, recreation and significant vacant lands in Town and identifies the name, location, lot area, owner, and includes available details potential uses or conditions. This expansion should be consistent with the Town's policies towards open space acquisition and community needs. Each of these key areas are identified and shown on the Open Space Opportunities map (see Appendix N35).

**Table 4-10 Locally Significant Unprotected Unique/Natural Lands**

Locally Significant Unprotected Unique/Natural Lands		
Name	Location	Potential Use and Condition
<b>Ragged Hill</b>	Northwest corner of Town	Nature trails, vistas, hiking, horseback riding are but a few of the potential future uses of the area.
<b>Mill Brook Valley Floodplain</b>	Headwaters are located in the Town of New Braintree in a marsh off the Ware River.	The floodplain potential for passive and active recreation includes the following: playgrounds, field sports, nature study, fishing, hiking, outdoor laboratory study areas, wildlife, and trails for horses and bicycles.
<b>Sucker Brook Drainage Area</b>	Originating in New Braintree, the brook flows south ending at Mill Brook.	Potential exists for its remaining in a natural state as a wildlife protection area. Hiking trails and nature study would be a feasible contribution to enjoy the natural beauty.
<b>Quaboag River</b>	The south bank of the Quaboag River	The south bank will provide opportunities for water resource protection.
<b>Land, within the right of way, at the intersection of rural roadways</b>	Ragged Hill and Wickaboag Valley Road	The land at the intersections of these roads will provide natural open areas.
	The 4 corners of Long Hill Road	
<b>Route 9</b>	Route 9 corridor from Coy Hill Road to the Ware Town line.	This stretch of Route 9 is a very scenic roadway.
<b>Athletic Field across Town Beach</b>	5 Lakeview Avenue	Municipal acquisition of this privately-owned athletic field would provide additional recreational opportunities for all residents, especially youth. The field ~1 mile from the Elementary School, across from the Town Beach, and adjacent to the proposed Old Baypath Indian Trail
<b>Quaboag WMA Trail Network</b>	Southeast corner of Town	Potential exists to connect the Richardson WMA Trail to the proposed Quaboag River Water Trail. Both trails located in or adjacent to the Quaboag WMA, a publicly accessible site.

## Lake Wickaboag

### Development Density

The Five-Year Stormwater Management Plan for West Brookfield, from 1999, identified that the increased density around Lake Wickaboag has impacted the Lake's water quality. The 2010 census recorded more than 800 housing units in the area immediately surrounding Lake Wickaboag, though only a small portion of these were recorded as occupied. This difference is explained by the high number of summer residences around the lake. About 4% of the area around the lake is Neighborhood Residential which required a minimum lot size of 45,000 square feet and 175 feet of frontage. Build out analysis conducted as part of this master planning process suggests that more than 250 acres of the land to the west of Lake Wickaboag has development potential; growth in this area could have serious negative impacts on water quality, from septic and run-off into the lake watershed.

### Pollution

The 2011 Open Space and Recreation Plan noted that Lake Wickaboag has been classified by the State as eutrophic, the advanced stage of a water body's transformation into a swamp or marsh. High nutrient levels in the lake have likely been caused by nutrient loading from surrounding development and exacerbated by the lake's shallow depths and long retention time. There is a current proposal to dredge a portion of the pond to control current sedimentation levels at the northern end of the pond. This plan has been completed by the town and is awaiting funding opportunities.

Another area of concern noted in both the 2011 OSRP and in public comment is the capped landfills along Wigwam Road. This site is located approximately 1,000 ft. from the aquifer that feeds both of the community water supply wells and approximately one mile from Lake Wickaboag. The 2011 plan encouraged the town to monitor this site periodically to ensure the safety of the town's current water supply. The town should continue to pursue this goal.

### Recreation and Use

Lake Wickaboag provides much of West Brookfield's recreation opportunities. Lake Wickaboag is heavily used for boating, fishing and swimming by both the town residents and surrounding communities.

The Town Beach is West Brookfield's primary water based recreation site and the Recreation Committee conducts swimming lessons during the summer. There is a public boat launching area on the Lake. There is also a small town-owned beach on the east side of Lake Wickaboag. Though water quality of the lake has improved in the past decade it continues to be monitored and improvements in storm water drainage and septic systems around the lake are encouraged. If these pollution problems get worse, the Town has indicated that it will limit the available use of its primary recreation destination.

Participants in the community outreach events also expressed concern about the current regulations around motorized boating, especially concerning non-resident use. Participants felt enforcement was not as robust as they would like it, saying that too many non-residents were utilizing the lake during the summer months.

The town relies on a combination of agencies to enforce use regulations at the lake. According to rules posted by the Lake Wickaboag Preservation Association on their website, the “West Brookfield Police, the Massachusetts Environmental Police, and the Lake Wickaboag Harbor Master all have the authority to enforce all lake and beach rules.”<sup>2</sup> The Town should take active measures to verify resident’s claim of over-use by non-residents. Such measures could include requesting the Harbor Master, town police, LWPA or some combination thereof, to monitor the number of out-of-state boaters

## Brookhaven Pond

Brookhaven Pond is an approximately 34 acre pond located on the north side of Route 9 in the western portion of the town. The area is comprised largely of small single family homes and cottages. More the 60 acres of land have been identified as potentially developable around Brookhaven pond. This area is currently zoned Rural Residential. The minimum lot size in this district is 90,000 square feet, with 225 feet of frontage. These dimensional requirements limit the development potential of the area. This being said, the area’s proximity to Route 9, and scenic nature of the area increases the potential desirability of the available land. With all new development comes increased potential for runoff and nutrient loading subsequent to septic system use and stormwater runoff.

## Current and Future Demand

Responses to community outreach activities indicated that demand is high among residents for passive and active recreational activities in West Brookfield’s open spaces. Survey responses showed that 85% of participants utilized the Town Beach at Lake Wickaboag and 86% utilized recreational opportunities at Rock House Reserve. More than half of participants engaged in some kind of recreational activity at the town’s major water bodies. Regarding future needs, respondents cited cycling, walking, hiking trails and kayaking facilities among the top needs. In sum, residents indicated a strong preference for more and more accessible recreational opportunities in town. This strongly suggests that demand for these opportunities will remain high in the immediate future.

## Trail Network

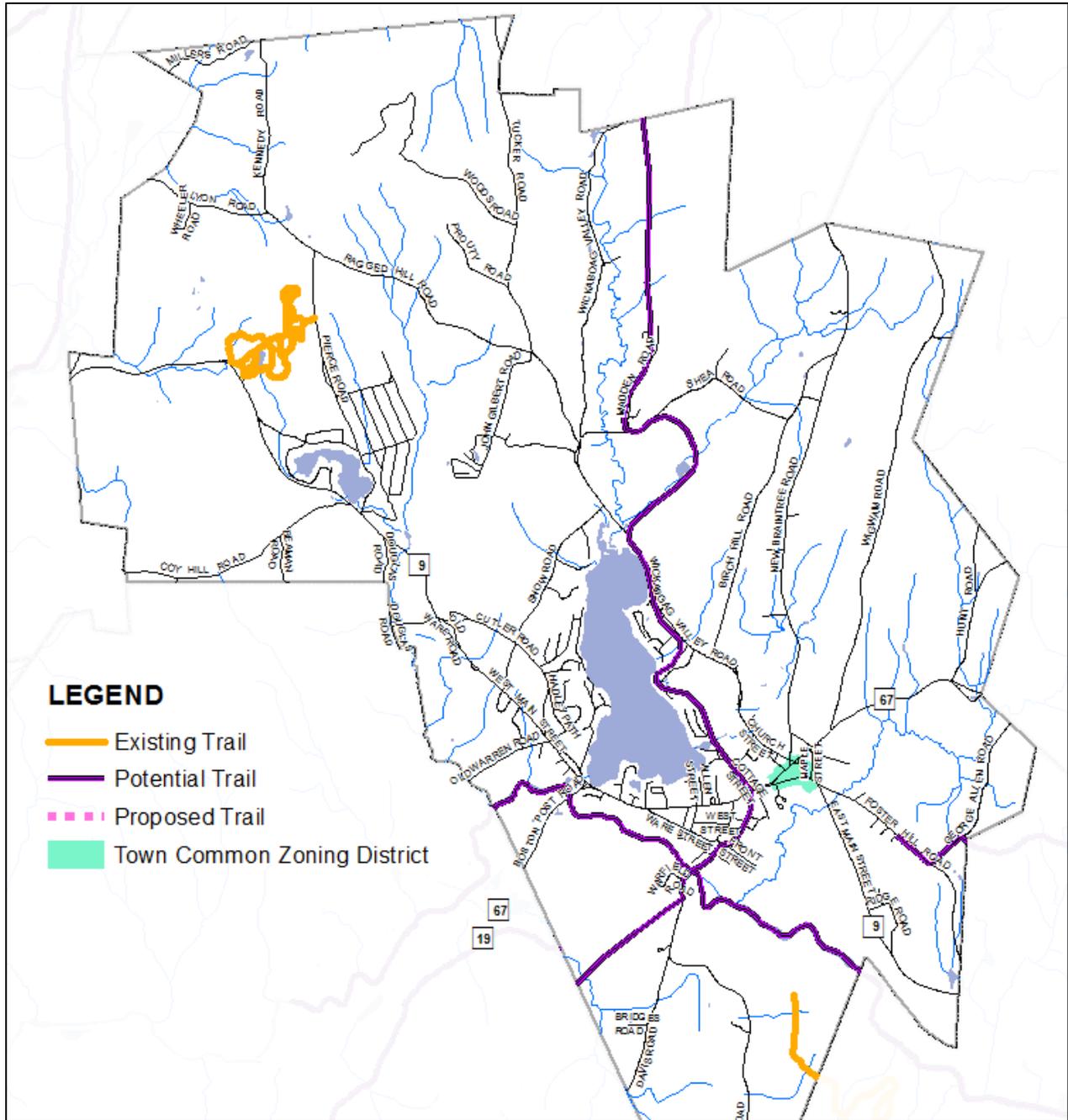
Among the issues most commonly cited by residents is the scatter-shot nature of the existing publicly accessible parcels. Improving connections for walking and biking between these parcels was a key goal for many residents. The Conservation Commission has been highly active in identifying priority parcels for town purchase and preservation. The Town should continue to work with the Commission and other organizations to expand the existing walking paths and hiking opportunities in Town to accommodate both leisurely and more advanced hiker and bikers, as well as to prevent overcrowding during peak season. Map 4-11 shows existing and potential trail connections.

<sup>2</sup> Lake Wickaboag Preservation Association website: <http://www.lakewickaboag.com/index/#/new-page-3/>

Potential linkages of protected lands for recreational and wildlife habitat protection may include the following:

- Large parcels of open space in Brookfield in close proximity to the Quaboag Wildlife Management Area.
- Number of open space lands in Warren and Ware that are adjacent to Coys Hill region.

Map 4-11 Trail Network



## Private Athletic Field across Town Beach

Across the street from the Town Beach is a privately-owned athletic field located at 5 Lake View Avenue. Due to its location and close proximity to nearby amenities and resources, municipal acquisition of this approximately 2-acre field would provide additional recreational opportunities for residents, particularly youth. The field is about 1 mile from the West Brookfield Elementary School, and is adjacent to Lake Wickaboag as well as the proposed Old Baypath Indian Trail. According to the Town's Assessors Records, the site was sold for \$250,000 in 1991 and its current value is \$57,800.

West Brookfield should explore the possibility of and consider a change in ownership of the privately-owned athletic field to the West Brookfield Department of Public Works. The parcel is depicted on the Open Space Opportunities map (see Appendix N35) and displays linkages to nearby amenities and recreational opportunities.

Privately owned recreational field



## Recreational Opportunities for Youth

The Community Forums and surveys conducted as part of the 2011 OSRP and 2017 Master Plan indicate that there is a strong desire for additional recreation opportunities for younger residents. Some additional suggestions that resulted from the public forums and surveys were additional ballfields, a public swimming location, additional hiking trails, and a trail map for recreation purposes. An Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Inventory Assessment of the West Brookfield Elementary School (WBES) as part of the 2011 OSRP revealed the following findings:

- There are two main access issues at the outdoor recreational facilities. The first is access to the baseball diamonds which are located down a slope from the parking areas. The second issue regards viewing bleachers which do not accommodate individuals with disabilities. Viewing areas for the upper soccer field can be easily made accessible, viewing areas for the second and third soccer fields will require extensive new paving and some regarding.
- Proposed improvements to remove architectural barriers include a ramp down to the baseball diamonds, paved areas adjacent to bleachers for viewers with disabilities +C42, and additional paved walkways to allow access to additional areas.

# GOALS AND ACTIONS – OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION

1. *Create a permanently standing Open Space and Recreation Advisory Committee to steer the development of the Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) Update*
  - a. Employ a full-time planner to maintain day-to-day operations and communications
  - b. Continue to work with the Conservation Commission and Stormwater Authority to prioritize remaining and ongoing action items identified in the 2011 OSRP
  - c. Facilitate agreements with developers to preserve open space and provide recreational facilities
  - d. Promote the efficient management and maintenance of the open space and recreation areas
  
2. *Identify priority open space parcels for permanent protection and/or future acquisition in order to establish a wider, more connected open space network*
  - a. Promote the preservation of important land resources
  - b. Coordinate the permanent protection and acquisition of the areas identified in the 2011 Open Space and Recreation Plan as unprotected “Unique or Natural Lands”
  - c. Encourage the use of Chapter 61, 61A, and 61B to maintain lands identified as priority conservation parcels
  - d. Identify key privately-owned open space parcels (including those with limited public access) and seek change in ownership to allow for increased recreational opportunities for residents
  - e. Purchase lands that are withdrawn from Chapter 61, 61A, or 61B through the process of first right of refusal, then place a permanent restriction on them to maintain their existing use
  - f. Acquire a change in ownership of the Town-owned lands along Route 9 to the Conservation Commission
  
3. *Promote the preservation of West Brookfield’s surface and groundwater as an important source for wildlife and recreational use*
  - a. Take actions to improve the water quality for recreational activities on Lake Wickaboag and Brookhaven Pond
  - b. Take active measures to verify residents’ claim of over-use by non-residents
  - c. Collect data about watershed quality on an annual basis
  - d. Identify areas of contamination and pollution loads

- e. Increase resident understanding of current water quality issues at Lake Wickaboag and their effects on recreational opportunities
  - f. Mitigate non-point source pollution runoff into rivers and lakes
  - g. Continue to monitor septic systems failures near well sites and within known aquifer areas, and in homes upgradient of Lake Brookhaven, Lake Wickaboag and tributaries to these lakes.
  - h. Continue to monitor bacteria and algae problems evident in Lake Wickaboag and provide viable solutions.
- 4. *Actively pursue funding through grants, state matching funds, or other programs for land purchase, resource preservation, and rehabilitation of existing facilities***
- a. Identify key priority recreation areas in need of upgrade, repair, or maintenance
  - b. Seek application of the Community Preservation Act to facilitate protection of conservation lands
  - c. Seek application of the Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities (PARC) grant to allow the development of a new public outdoor recreation facility or park
  - d. Seek application of the Local Acquisitions for Natural Diversity (LAND) grant to provide additional passive recreational opportunities
  - e. Continue to apply for the 604(b) Water Quality Management Grant to preserve the quality of the lake and the surrounding areas
- 5. *Enhance recreational opportunities and open space resources by encouraging multiple uses and by creating linkages between open space and recreational properties***
- a. Enhance West Brookfield’s natural environment by taking advantage of local and regional linkages of open space in the creation of greenways
  - b. Create a strategic prioritization plan for preserving certain key parcels within the Route 9/67 corridor
  - c. Provide additional passive and active recreational opportunities for all residents
    - i. Increase opportunities for passive recreation such as community gardens, walking and biking trails throughout town, and activities at the Town Beach. Create Devil’s Elbow trail.
    - ii. Increase opportunities for active recreation for youth through additional ballfields, additional hiking and biking opportunities on selected trails, a public swimming pool, playgrounds, and summer recreational programs
    - iii. Work with public and private landowners to identify a potential, designated area for off-road, dirt bike activities for residents

6. *Increase educational awareness and understanding of State-aid programs and local regulations and bylaws amongst community members*
  - a. Develop an education campaign or program to build awareness of the pollutants affecting Lake Wickaboag and best practices
    - i. Continue to instruct the public on non-pollutive land and water practices
  - b. Educate the public about the adopted scenic roads bylaw and the environmental impacts on local open space resources
  - c. Increase public understanding of the Community Preservation Act in regards to land acquisition through tax title takings