



# **TOWN OF WESTWOOD OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN**

**ADOPTED BY THE WESTWOOD PLANNING BOARD  
FEBRUARY 8, 2000**



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## **SECTION 1 PLAN SUMMARY**

The Town of Westwood Open Space and Recreation Plan is the first comprehensive effort to prioritize open space and recreation goals, objectives and actions in over twenty years. Two earlier plans completed in the 1970's were the Town's first efforts to protect its natural resources and enhance the recreational opportunities for its residents. This Plan builds upon this valuable effort.

Westwood's challenge to preserve open space and provide active and passive recreational areas, however, is greater than ever. The pace of residential growth is accelerating. Proposition 2½ continues to place strong fiscal constraints on Town government. The balance of public interest and private rights has shifted, demanding increased sensitivity and creativity in shaping regulatory efforts. Historic farms and estates are steadily being converted into housing developments and the price for the diminishing supply of raw land is escalating. Still, community expectations for recreational opportunities and the protection of natural and cultural resources are as high as ever. In that context, sound planning is critical.

This Open Space and Recreation Plan begins with an overview of the community setting: the region, Town history and recent growth trends (Section 3). This is followed by an inventory of the Town's environmental resources (Section 4) and a detailed inventory of the Town's protected and unprotected parcels (Section 5). Section 6 provides an overview of the goals and objectives for open space and recreation efforts. Section 7 outlines needs for resource protection, recreational facilities and management needs. Section 8 then details more specific goals and objectives based on these needs. The Plan concludes with a five-year action plan for addressing these goals and objectives.

## SECTION 2 INTRODUCTION

In the past twenty years, the Town of Westwood has developed two plans to guide their open space and recreation efforts:

*Conservation/Recreation Master Plan* Westwood Conservation Commission (1977)

*This is Your Land...* Westwood Conservation Commission (1978)

The Conservation Commission's 1978 plan includes an inventory of conservation land acquired by the Town from the late 1940's until 1977 and a "wish list" of additional land the Commission wanted to acquire. Today, much of the "wish list" land remains undeveloped, albeit privately owned. In fact, because of the constraints of Proposition 2½, which was passed in late 1979, the Town's efforts to acquire land for conservation and recreational activities came to a virtual 20-year halt. In fact, between 1969-1977, the Town acquired 263 acres or approximately 67 percent of all its conservation land to date. From the late 1970's until this past year, the Town had added only a few additional acres to its land inventory, none of which has been used for conservation or recreational purposes. However, in 1998, the Town overwhelmingly approved the purchase of a 68-acre parcel known as the Lowell Woods property for conservation purposes. The price of this property was \$1.68 million.

The scarcity of the Town's financial resources—and increased competition for these scarce funds—had been the primary reason for the 20-year suspension of municipal conservation and recreation acquisitions. However, presently, the real estate market is in a strong rebound from a long recession and demand for residential development has increased. New subdivisions have been developed in the past several years and the price for building lots has skyrocketed. As scenic lands important to the Town's rural character are vanishing—and the municipal costs associated with development are increasing—the Town has now responded with a renewed commitment to acquire undeveloped land and utilize other non-regulatory and regulatory means to preserve open space and scenic character. The recent Lowell Woods purchase is strong evidence of this commitment.

The Town has also recently completed a comprehensive review of its recreational needs.<sup>1</sup> As part of this review, a survey of current users of the Town's recreational fields was conducted, indicating that there is a need for an additional 11½ fields to meet current demand, and demand is expected to continue to increase at an accelerated rate. An analysis of the most appropriate sites to meet these demands was also part of the review.

This Open Space and Recreation Plan has been prepared as one element of a Comprehensive Plan for the Town. Funding to support preparation of this plan was appropriated at the Annual Town Meeting in May 1996. Herr & James Associates have been retained to provide professional planning assistance with this effort.

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<sup>1</sup>Archetype Architecture, Inc. *Westwood Services and Facilities*, Boston, revised 1995.

To guide the development of the Comprehensive Plan, a 32-member Steering Committee comprised of residents, businesses, landowners and Town officials was appointed by the Board of Selectmen. The Committee ensured broad-based participation throughout the process, including facilitating coordination, providing policy guidance and serving as a sounding board for proposed actions. The draft Comprehensive Plan was completed in April 1999, and is now undergoing an extensive review by Town boards and commissions. The Plan will be presented to the Steering Committee, Planning Board and Board of Selectmen for final approval in Fall 1999.

The planning process began officially with a vision workshop on December 7, 1996. Over 70 residents, business people and Town officials, attended the event. Participants were divided into eight groups, five based on geographic area, a business group, a large landowners' group and a high school student group. For the first half of the day these teams worked independently to develop their own ideas about the future of Westwood and how their visions might be achieved. The groups then convened as a whole and each team summarized its discussion, identified issues, proposed goals and recommended short- and long-term actions. From this, a list of priority topics to be addressed by the Comprehensive Plan were developed.

The goal described as "preservation of open space and creation of additional recreation facilities" was identified at the workshop as the top priority for the Town. In response, the Steering Committee committed to prepare an open space and recreation plan as the first element of the Comprehensive Plan. A subcommittee was established, co-chaired by members of the Conservation Commission and the Recreation Commission, and comprised of citizens who expressed interest (at the workshop or in response to a newspaper solicitation) in open space and recreation issues. In addition, residents from the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee were asked to participate in an effort to coordinate the development of the open space and recreation plan within the broader effort of the comprehensive planning process. Finally, a task force of Town staff from various departments and the planning consultants (Herr & James Associates) provided the technical support.

Open Space and Recreation Task Force

Nora Loughnane, Conservation Commission,  
Co-Chair  
Dana Schock, Recreation Commission, Co-Chair  
Sue Aries  
Ben Beale  
Felicity Botwinik  
Frank Citrone, Fields Committee  
Jim Earley  
Elaine Giurleo  
John Gottschalk, School Committee  
Tom Hanley  
Joanne Kelleher  
Margaret Lynch, Historical Commission  
Jim O'Sullivan

Technical Subcommittee

Diane Beecham, Planning and Land Use  
Administrator  
Jane Murphy, Director, Recreation  
Department  
Joe Champagne, Town Engineer  
Maureen Bleday, Business Liaison  
Phil Herr, Herr & James Associates  
Sarah James, Herr & James Associates  
Joe Carroll, Herr & James Associates

Steve Olanoff, Planning Board  
Joe Previtera  
Steve Rafsky, Planning Board  
Peter Schuler  
Kate Stewart  
John Walsh  
Jack Wiggin, Planning Board

Others who have made important contributions to the development of this open space and recreation plan include Rod Haywood, GIS consultant for Westwood, and Gretchen Schuler, preservation consultant working with the Westwood Historical Commission.

The many goals and recommendations identified at the public workshop were reviewed and refined at a series of public meetings of the Open Space and Recreation Subcommittee and then presented to the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee. The following is a list of the meetings of the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee, Open Space and Recreation Task Force and Open Space and Recreation Technical Subcommittee and related meetings (all open to the public) held in 1997 in support of this Plan:

- January 6: Open Space and Recreation Task Force meeting
- January 13: Presentation of planning process to Recreation Commission
- January 17: Open Space and Recreation Task Force meeting to assign plan preparation responsibilities
- January 22: Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee meeting on open space recommendations from the visioning workshop
- January 27: Open Space and Recreation Task Force meeting
- February 3: Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee meeting
- February 14: Open Space and Recreation Technical Subcommittee meeting
- March 21: Open Space and Recreation Technical Subcommittee meeting to plan for April 15th Open Space Public Forum
- March 25: Special Town Meeting; approval of Planning Board article (initiated by Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee) to establish a \$100,000 fund to purchase options on land to preserve as open space)
- April 6: Historical Commission public meeting to present survey of historical structures (information incorporated into the Plan)
- April 10: Open Space and Recreation Technical Subcommittee meeting
- April 14: Open Space and Recreation Technical Subcommittee meeting
- May 6: Master Plan Steering Committee meeting regarding open space acquisition priorities
- May 14: Status update with Conservation Commission and determination of final conservation goals and objectives for the Plan
- May 28: Open Space and Recreation Technical Subcommittee meeting
- June 19: Open Space and Recreation Technical Subcommittee
- July 9: Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee meeting to confirm policy direction and refine recommendations

In addition to the December visioning workshop, two other major public workshops were held during the planning process to educate the public, present preliminary findings and obtain feedback and direction for the Plan:

- February 19: Open Space Public Forum. Presentation by William Constable, President of the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, on the experiences of Lincoln, Massachusetts, open space conservation techniques (especially limited development) and the role of the MAPC.
- April 15: Open Space and Recreation Public Forum. The Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee, Open Space and Recreation Subcommittee and the public provided feedback and direction on goal statements, objectives and recommendations.

Thus, this Open Space and Recreation Plan is the culmination of a strong community participation process to prioritize the acquisition of land for open space purposes and to meet the Town's passive and active recreation needs. The emphasis of this planning process has been on identifying strategies to achieve the Plan's goals using creative and innovative actions given the Town's limited budget and competing priorities.



## SECTION 3 COMMUNITY SETTING

### A. REGIONAL CONTEXT

The Town of Westwood, with a population of approximately 14,000, is located just outside of the Route 128/Interstate 95 circumferential highway and just west of the terminus of Interstate 93 to Boston. This access to three major highways and its proximate location to downtown Boston (approximately 12 miles) has played an important role in the Town's historical development. Two commuter rail lines and Amtrak passenger service between Boston and New York City also enhance this locational advantage. Westwood is a member of the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) and the Three Rivers Interlocal Council (TRIC), a subregion of MAPC which includes the southwestern Boston suburbs, stretching from Needham to Foxborough.

Between 1980 and 1995, Westwood's employment growth surpassed that of the surrounding southwestern suburban communities, contributing 4,349 jobs, or 35.3 percent, to the 12,288 regional jobs created during this time period. As shown in Table 1, Westwood's share of new regional employment growth far outpaced Canton and Dedham, the second and third ranked communities, which contributed 2,347 and 2,463 jobs, or 19.1 percent and 20.0 percent, respectively.

Total employment for the region as a whole increased by almost 16 percent for this fifteen-year period; the State's employment growth was approximately 2.4 percentage points lower (13.6 percent). The addition of 4,349 jobs in Westwood represents an increase of almost 86 percent for the Town, from a total of 5,060 jobs in 1980 to 9,409 in 1995. The employment growth rate in the other communities was significantly lower, ranging from a 5.5 percent growth rate in Walpole to 26.5 percent in Dover.

**Table 1**  
**NUMBER OF JOBS , WESTWOOD SUBREGION (by place of work)**

Municipality	1980	1985	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	Change 1980-1995	
									Number	Percent
Canton	13,705	15,013	19,068	17,511	17,278	17,105	17,679	16,052	2,347	17.1
Dedham	12,184	13,016	14,050	13,669	12,575	13,313	14,086	14,647	2,463	20.2
Dover	653	617	620	585	566	592	652	826	173	26.5
Needham	14,755	19,670	18,449	17,116	16,526	15,317	15,268	15,925	1,170	7.9
Norwood	22,654	21,523	22,927	22,916	22,294	22,635	22,608	23,990	1,336	5.9
Walpole	8,182	7,853	7,598	7,076	7,429	7,587	8,217	8,632	450	5.5
Westwood	5,060	8,846	9,157	8,773	8,480	8,722	9,460	9,409	4,349	85.9
Subregion	77,193	86,538	91,869	87,646	85,148	85,271	87,970	89,481	12,288	15.9
MA (1,000s)	2,571	2,760	2,903	2,730	2,715	2,766	2,849	2,921	350	13.6

SOURCE: MA Department of Employment Training

Between 1980 and 1994, the number of housing units within the southwestern suburban region increased by 13.7 percent, or 6,275 units. This growth rate is slightly lower than for the State (15.4 percent). The Town of Walpole contributed the largest share to this regional growth, adding 1,639 units, or 26.1 percent, to the regional housing supply. Canton, Needham and Norwood also all added over 1,000 units during this fourteen-year period. The number of new housing units in Westwood, Dedham and Dover lagged far behind, with 406, 384 and 321 units, respectively (Table 2).

**Table 2**  
**NUMBER OF HOUSING UNITS, WESTWOOD SUBREGION**

Municipality	Housing Units			Change 1980-1994	
	1980	1990	1994	Number	Percent
Canton	5,798	6,789	7,178	1,380	23.8
Dedham	8,409	8,750	8,793	384	4.6
Dover	1,510	1,696	1,831	321	21.3
Needham	9,489	10,405	10,540	1,051	11.1
Norwood	10,604	11,584	11,698	1,094	10.3
Walpole	5,785	7,022	7,424	1,639	28.3
Westwood	4,222	4,551	4,628	406	9.6
Subregion	45,817	50,797	52,092	6,275	13.7
MA (1,000s)	2,208	2,473	2,549	341	15.4

SOURCE: Herr Associates data files

Between 1980 and 1994, the population growth in the southwest suburbs did not keep pace with the increase in the regional housing supply; in fact, some of the individual communities experienced absolute declines during this period. As shown in Table 3, the region's population increased by 3,107 persons or 2.3 percent, as compared to 5.4 percent for the State. The disparity in population change in the individual communities ranged from +3,013 (Walpole) to -1,752 (Dedham); Westwood's population grew by 117 persons. The apparent contradiction between a 2.3 regional population growth rate and a 14 percent increase in the number of regional housing units can be attributed to the declining number of people per household, which is now less than three people per household.

**Table 3**  
**POPULATION, WESTWOOD SUBREGION**

Municipality	Population			Change 1980-1994	
	1980	1990	1994	Number	Percent
Canton	18,182	18,530	20,039	1,857	10.2
Dedham	25,298	23,782	23,546	-1,752	-6.9
Dover	4,703	4,915	5,500	797	16.9
Needham	27,901	27,557	28,080	179	0.6
Norwood	29,711	28,700	28,607	-1,104	-3.7
Walpole	18,859	20,212	21,872	3,013	16.0
Westwood	13,212	12,557	13,329	117	0.9
Subregion	137,866	136,253	140,973	3,107	2.3
MA (1,000s)	5,734	6,016	6,041	307	5.4

SOURCE: Herr Associates data files

There are numerous reservations and parks in Westwood and the surrounding communities. The Town lies at the western edge of the 7,000-acre Blue Hills reservation, which is managed by the Metropolitan District Commission (MDC). Westwood is also part of the Fowl Meadow reservation which is actually part of both the MDC reservation and privately held land. This reservation, which contains extensive wetlands, extends through Dedham, Canton, Milton and Westwood. Other reservations include the Dedham Town Forest located in the median strip of Route 128, the Wilson Mountain reservation in Dedham and Needham's Cutler Park reservation and its extensive wetlands along the Charles River. Additionally, there is the Rocky Woods reservation, located in Medfield and owned by The Trustees of Reservations (TTOR), and the Noanet Woodlands in Dover which adjoins the Hale Reservation and Grossman Camp (located in both Westwood and Dover).

## **B. HISTORY OF THE COMMUNITY**

Until its incorporation in 1897, Westwood was a part of the Town of Dedham and known as West Dedham. During the 1600's, West Dedham was primarily an agricultural area, with most of the farms concentrated near Rock Meadow Brook, Pond Plain Brook and Buckmaster Pond. The primary transportation routes were Medfield Road (now High Street), Road to the Meeting House (now Fox Hill Street), Road to the Clapboard Trees (now Clapboardtree Street), Cedar Swamp Road (now Dover Road) and Hartford Street. The first houses were built in the "Clapboard Trees" in the 1680's, which was within the maximum two mile distance from the meeting house. A sawmill was built on Purgatory Brook in the early 1700's and became the center of what is now Islington.

The Ellis Tavern on High Street was established in 1732 and served as a center for political, military, social and business life for the community and for those using the well-traveled Hartford Street. The first church on High Street was erected in 1731 and a new meeting house was established in 1809 in the southwest section of the Clapboard Trees Parish.

During the mid-1800's, the influx of Irish fleeing the potato famine in Ireland became the impetus for a major increase in the housing stock along High Street. Also during this time, small industries developed near the Town's major brooks, particularly saw and paper mills. Most of these industries eventually closed or relocated to "South" Dedham and West Dedham remained a rural community while "South" Dedham became increasingly industrialized. In 1897, the people of West Dedham separated from Dedham and formed the present day Town of Westwood. Several reasons have been given for the separation, including the distance from the Dedham town center, lack of transportation and the fact that Dedham gave the Buckmaster Pond water rights to Norwood in 1885. The fact that Westwood broke away from Dedham accounts for its irregular shape and the lack of a traditional New England town center or village green.

The turn of the century marked the beginning of the migration of affluent families from Boston into Westwood, often called the "Estate Era." Large homes and mansions were built on Summer, Canton, Fox Hill, Gay and High Streets. The arrival of the street railway during this time also had a significant impact on the Town's development, including the introduction of relatively dense and affordable housing near Buckmaster Pond.<sup>2</sup>

## C. POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

### Population

As shown in Table 4 and Chart 1, the population of the Town of Westwood increased substantially from 1940 to 1970, followed by a period of significantly more moderate change. During World War II and post-war era (1940-1950), Westwood's population increased almost 73 percent as veterans returned, established families and purchased homes with newly established GI benefits. This population boom continued during the next decade: between 1950 and 1960, the population grew by 77.4 percent, from 5,837 to 10,354 residents. During the 1960's and 1970's, population growth was significantly less than in the previous two decades, with increases of 23.1 and 3.7 percent, respectively. In the 1980's, Westwood exhibited an actual decline in population from 13,212 to 12,557, a decrease of almost five percent. Since the early 1990's, the Town's population growth has again experienced moderate growth (6.1 percent).

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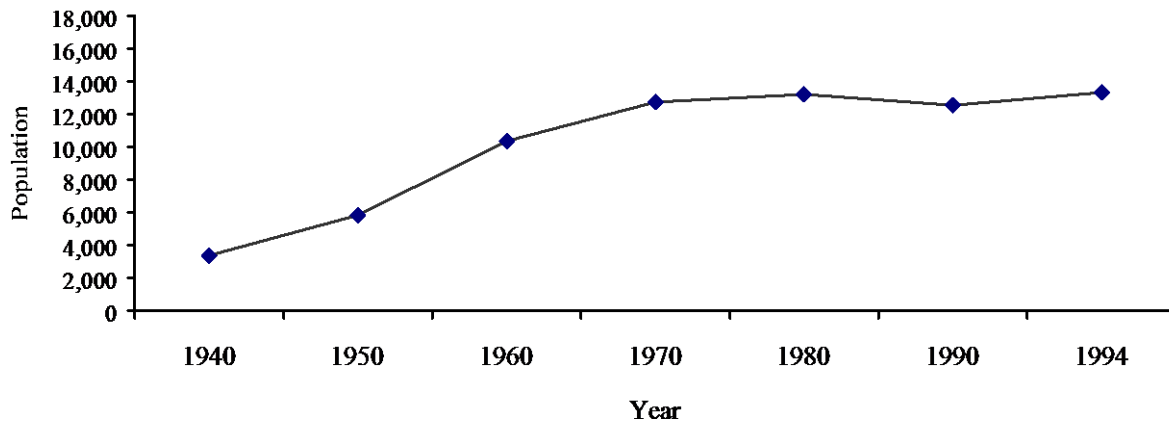
<sup>2</sup>Fenerty, Marjory R., *West Dedham and Westwood: 300 Years*, 1972.

**Table 4**  
**WESTWOOD POPULATION CHANGE**

Year	Population	Change 1950-1994	
		Number	Percent
1940	3,376		
1950	5,837	2,461	72.9
1960	10,354	4,517	77.4
1970	12,746	2,392	23.1
1980	13,212	466	3.7
1990	12,557	-655	-5.0
1994	13,329	772	6.1

SOURCE: U.S. Census

**Chart 1**  
**WESTWOOD POPULATION CHANGE, 1950-1994**



SOURCE: U.S. Census

Westwood's aging population structure suggests that either older residents remained after retirement and/or a higher proportion of younger residents move away from the community. As shown in Table 5, the Town has a larger share of its population in the 65 and older classification (16.0 percent) as compared to the State (13.6 percent). This relatively high concentration of elderly population in Westwood is also reflected in its older median age (39.3 years) relative to the State (33.6 years). The senior population has recreational needs that typically differ substantially from the other populations, which are often overlooked or not addressed in a community's recreational planning process. Also, the fact that 27 percent of the Town's population is concentrated in the 25-44 year old category—as well as continuing the current trend of large-home subdivisions—suggests that Westwood will continue to experience growth

pressures. In fact, even though the Town has experience moderate population growth since the 1980's, the projected student enrollment in Westwood is expected to increase by over 26 percent from 1996 to 2001 according to the New England Development Council (1996).

**Table 5**  
**POPULATION AGE STRUCTURE (1990)**

Age	Westwood Number	Westwood Percent	Massachusetts Percent
Under 5	779	6.2	6.9
5 – 18	1,890	15.1	15.6
19-24	1,211	9.6	11.8
25-44	3,477	27.7	33.6
45-64	3,191	25.4	18.5
65 and older	2,009	16.0	13.6
TOTAL	12,557	100.0	100.0

SOURCE: U.S. Census

## Housing

As shown in the previous Table 2, Westwood had 4,616 residential units in 1994, an increase of 394 units since 1980, or 9.3 percent. This growth rate was comparable to Needham and Norwood, but lagged significantly behind the growth rates in Canton (24 percent), Dover (21 percent) and Walpole (28 percent). The large disparity between the Town's rate of housing development (9.3 percent) and employment growth (85.9 percent) since 1980 suggests a strong in-commuter pattern: workers who live in neighboring communities commute to Westwood to work.

As shown in Table 6, the vast majority of Westwood's residential units are single-family dwellings (89.1 percent) with most of the remaining units concentrated in structures with 10 or more units (6.8 percent). This is accounted for by the three relatively large elderly housing developments in Town (Highland Glen, Westwood Glen and Foxhill Village). There are a total of 3,848 owner-occupied housing units in Town, which accounts for 86.6 percent of the total number of occupied units. Renter-occupied residences constitute the remaining 13.4 percent. There are also a total of 107 vacant housing units (Table 7).

**Table 6**  
**NUMBER OF UNITS IN STRUCTURE (1990)**

Number of Units in Structure	Westwood Number	Westwood Percent
1 unit, detached	4,055	89.1
1 unit, attached	30	0.7
2-4 units	112	2.5
5-9 units	26	0.6
10 or more units	310	6.8
Mobil home, other	18	0.4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4,551</b>	<b>100.0</b>

SOURCE: U.S. Census

**Table 7**  
**HOUSING OCCUPANCY (1990)**

Occupancy Status	Westwood Number	Westwood Percent
Occupied Units	4,444	97.6
Owner-Occupied	3,848	86.6
Renter-Occupied	596	13.4
Vacant Units	107	2.4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4,551</b>	

SOURCE: U.S. Census

## Employment

Tables 8 and 9 provide information on Town and State employment by industry patterns. Consistent with post-industrial trends, Westwood's industrial mix has shifted from manufacturing to the retail and service sectors. Manufacturing, which provided approximately one-quarter of the Town's employment in 1980, now represents only 10 percent of the Town's total number of jobs in 1995. The State also shows a similar trend: in 1980, over 25 percent of the work force was employed in manufacturing jobs. This number decreased to 15 percent in 1995. While manufacturing employment has declined in Westwood, there has been an explosive growth in service-related employment, from 944 in 1980 to 2,681 in 1995. This represents a 184 percent increase and an increase in the relative share of total employment from 18.7 percent to 28.5 percent.

**Table 8**  
**NUMBER OF JOBS, WESTWOOD (by place of work)**

Industry	1980		1985		1990		1995	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Manufacturing	1,275	25.2	1,083	12.2	929	10.1	968	10.3
Trade*	1,651	32.6	3,166	35.8	2,811	30.7	3,033	32.2
Misc. Services	944	18.7	2,956	33.4	3,340	36.5	2,681	28.5
All Other	1,190	23.5	1,641	18.6	2,077	22.7	2,727	29.0
TOTAL	5,060	100.0	8,846	100.0	9,157	100.0	9,409	100.0

SOURCE: Massachusetts Department of Employment and Training

\* Includes wholesale and retail

**Table 9**  
**NUMBER OF JOBS, MASSACHUSETTS (by place of work)**

Industry	1980		1985		1990		1995	
	Number (1000s)	Percent	Number (1000s)	Percent	Number (1000s)	Percent	Number (1000s)	Percent
Manufacturing	673.3	25.4	649.7	22.2	521.2	17.4	446.1	15.0
Trade*	576.6	21.7	684.2	23.4	700.0	23.4	687.2	23.1
Misc. Services	604.0	22.8	786.4	26.9	915.6	30.6	1,024.9	34.4
All Other	798.3	30.1	807.5	27.6	851.5	28.5	817.9	27.5
TOTAL	2,652.2	100.0	2,927.8	100.0	2,988.3	100.0	2,976.1	100.0

SOURCE: Massachusetts Department of Employment and Training

\* Includes wholesale and retail

### Future Population

Projections of future growth in Westwood are shown in Table 10 and Chart 2. The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) projects a total population of 13,087 residents in Town in the year 2000, a decrease of 242 residents or 1.8 percent from the U.S. Census population estimate for 1994. In 2010 and 2020, the MAPC projects that the Town's population will increase to 13,545 and 14,040, which represents increases of 3.5 percent and 3.6 percent from the previous decade, respectively. These fairly moderate growth projections generally represent a continuation of the population trends since approximately 1980. However, trends revealed from the data in previous sections and other observations may suggest that these population projections may be low. First, Westwood's explosive employment growth—an

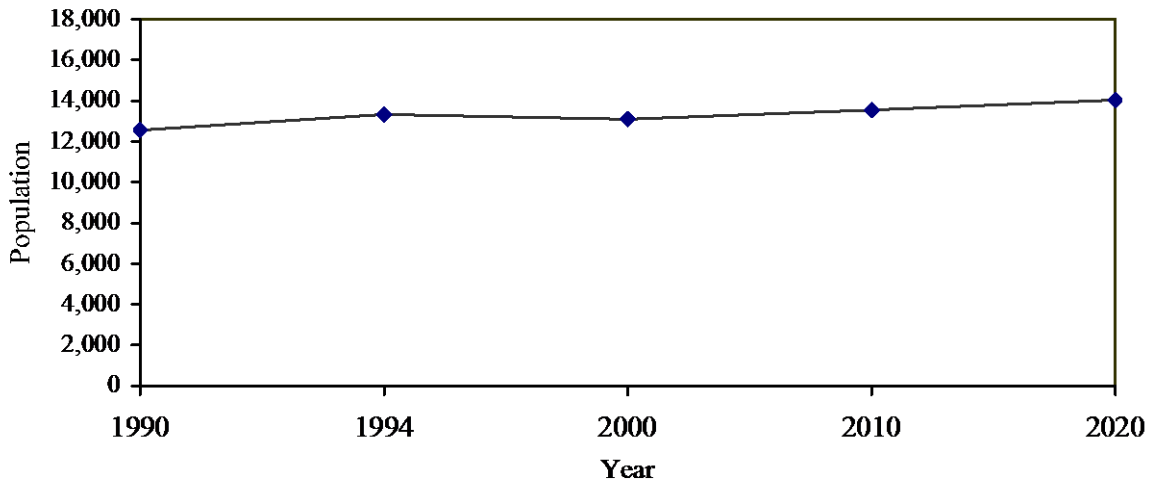


increase of over 85 percent from 1980 to 1995—will likely attract new residential development to accommodate those people who wish to be closer to their employment. Secondly, Westwood’s most recent housing developments have generally contained large, expensive homes with large numbers of bedrooms that are more likely to attract younger families with children. With the cost of raw land continuing to increase, it is expected that this trend of expensive housing developments will continue. Thirdly, Westwood’s school system has a superior reputation, which is again a strong magnet for families with young children.

**Table 10**  
**WESTWOOD POPULATION PROJECTIONS**

Year	Population	Source
1990	12,557	U.S. Census count
1994	13,329	U.S. Census estimate
2000	13,087	MAPC projection
2010	13,545	MAPC projection
2020	14,040	MAPC projection

**Chart 2**  
**WESTWOOD POPULATION PROJECTIONS**



SOURCE: U.S. Census, MAPC

***Implications***

Westwood’s continuing growth in population and residential development have created an increasing urgency for the acquisition of open space and recreational lands. As demand for additional and varied recreational alternatives increases as the population increases, the land suitable for these purposes becomes increasingly competitive for other types of development,

particularly residential development. The Town is now at a critical juncture as there are relatively few large private parcels of land suitable for conversion to active recreation or available for preservation as open space. The Town understands this urgency and is now taking active steps to establish its land use priorities through the development of a comprehensive plan and subsequent implementation actions.

## **D. GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS**

### **Land Use Patterns and Trends**

The Town of Westwood was originally the western part of Dedham, which accounts for its irregular shape and the absence of a traditional New England town center. Until World War II, the Town's landscape was dominated primarily by large dairy farms and open land holdings. Residential development was scattered among these farms as well as along the major roadways, including High and Hartford Streets.

The end of World War II marked the first wave of suburban development in Westwood. For the first time, large farms were subdivided into residential developments. Initially, these developments were concentrated in the middle of the Town, within easy access to High Street. The Fieldstone Road/Farm Lane, Pond Plain Road and the Martha Jones Road/Oak Street neighborhoods are examples of the typical developments during this time period. In subsequent years, as farms farther out from High Street became available, they would also be converted to residential uses.

The more intensively-developed residential and commercial uses in Islington were developed by one property owner during the 1950's and 1960's. The industrial park, southeast of Islington, was built in the 1960's, soon after the completion of Route 128. The majority of commercial and industrial uses are still concentrated along Route 1 and 1A (Washington Street) in Islington and in the University Avenue Industrial Park.

The trend of farm land conversion to residential land use continues today. Foxfield Village, a 24-lot subdivision located in the southern part of Town, was formerly the McLeod family farm. It was sold under a stipulation that it be subsequently developed under the cluster provision in the zoning bylaw. High Ridge Estates and Stevens Farm, located in the northern area of Town, were both originally part of the 177-acre Lee Family farm. They are now expensive subdivisions with 67 and 37 building lots, respectively. The Town also has two subdivisions developed under the M.G.L. Chapter 121A Local Initiative Plan program which provides a combination of market-rate and affordable housing. These two developments (Chase Estates and Cedar Hill Estates) will have a combined total of 151 lots, of which 39 will be affordable units.

A review of the Planning Board files reveal that the following definitive subdivisions were approved from approximately 1980-1995:

**Table 11**  
**APPROVED SUBDIVISIONS 1980-1995**

Subdivision Name	Approval Date	Total Number of Buildable Lots
Blue Hill Estates	1986	17
Bubbling Brook Estates	1982	3
Carroll Avenue/Debra Way	1995	7
Cedar Hill Estates*	1994	56
Chase Estates*	1993	100
Currier Lane	1992	2
Dela Park Estates	1987	19
Dover Square	1997	2
Foxfield Village	1984	24
Foxwood Estates	1995	3
Green Mountain Park	1984	14
Glacier Drive	1981	2
High Ridge Estates	1986	67
Louise Estates	1993	2
Jessica Estates	1993	2
Manor Lane	1988	4
Morgan Farm Road	1985	5
Pallis Subdivision	1986	3
Pettees Pond (Walpole)	1993	4
Pinewoods	1988	1
Phillips Estates	1989	6
Plummer Subdivision	1989	4
Stevens Farm	1995	37
Strasser Avenue Extension	1985	7
Winslow Park	1990	3
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>394</b>

SOURCE: Planning Board files

\* M.G.L. Chapter 121A Local Initiative Plans

Note: This analysis does not include “Approval Not Required” plans (a.k.a. 81P plans).

As the average price for a building lot in Westwood continues to climb, there will always be an attendant threat to its undeveloped land inventory. This potential loss of land is further exacerbated by the fact that the largest remaining parcels of undeveloped land are in residential zoning districts, contiguous to some of the most desirable neighborhoods in Town. With very few exceptions, these parcels are not enrolled in even temporarily protective programs, such as M.G.L. Chapter 61A or 61B.

The attributes that make Westwood a desirable place to live—proximity to downtown Boston, acclaimed school system, high quality of life—are the same attributes that are threatening the development of these last large parcels of raw land. In fact, there was a 1.0 and 1.1 percent increase in 1995 and 1996, respectively, in the number of single-family residential building permits issued which represent the highest annual percentage increases since this information was first tracked in 1980 (Table 11). (The units in Foxhill Village, a residential retirement community, were permitted separately, accounting for the 8.2 percent increase in 1988).

**Table 12**  
**RESIDENTIAL UNITS AUTHORIZED**

Year	1980	1981	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988
Westwood units	8	13	28	30	21	30	22	392
Annual % increase	0.2	0.3	0.7	0.7	0.5	0.7	0.5	8.2
MA units	15,503	16,707	22,616	29,366	39,395	45,225	40,472	30,482
Annual % increase	0.7	0.7	1.0	1.3	1.7	1.9	1.7	1.2

Year	1989	1990	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
Westwood units	17	12	23	26	31	47	56	75
Annual % increase	0.4	0.2	0.5	0.5	0.6	1.0	1.1	1.5
MA units	21,283	14,290	16,411	19,151	9,460	9,409	17,261	
Annual % increase	0.9	0.6	0.6	0.8	0.4	0.4	0.7	

SOURCE: Herr Associates data files

There are no signs that this trend will abate in the near future. In fact, there was an abundance of preliminary subdivision plans filed immediately prior to the May 1998 Annual Town Meeting, some on the most scenic and historic land in Town. It is assumed that almost all these plans were submitted in order that they be exempt from the Planning Board's proposed changes to the Zoning Bylaw, in particular a special permit review process for residential developments of four or more lots. These plans initially proposed a total of 105 new lots, or almost over a quarter of all the lots that have been approved in the past 18 years. Below is a table of these pending applications:

**Table 13**  
**PRELIMINARY SUBDIVISION APPLICATIONS FILED, 1998**

Subdivision Name	Acreage	Total Number of Proposed Buildable Lots
Autumn Estates, Phase II	8.7	5
Canton Square	2.3	4
Colpitts Estate	25	7
Conifer Lane	13.6	3
Gregory Property	85	16
Holbrook Farm	31	24
Morgan Farm Estates	20	14
Powissett Estates	22	10
Presidential Heights	17	15
Town Line Estates	10	7
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>234.6</b>	<b>105</b>

SOURCE: Planning Board files

***Implications***

The result of the farm land conversion has been a hodgepodge of subdivision development throughout Westwood, interspersed with pockets of undeveloped land. This ad hoc development pattern has had a negative effect on almost every facet of community life, particularly on transportation and community cohesiveness. Specifically, there is relatively poor transportation access through Town: new streets are developed within the new subdivisions and connect to the main roads, but are often not built to connect one subdivision to another. As a result, the newer subdivisions are generally isolated, which may contribute to the sense that Westwood lacks a strong sense of community. This is further exacerbated when Town planners have to weigh the benefits of increasing transportation access with the disadvantages of permanently altering the character of older, established neighborhoods. However, Westwood’s sense of community among its residents can be enhanced by preserving the last pockets of open space and by providing recreational areas to be shared by all members of the community.

Historically, the Town has managed its growth primarily through its zoning bylaw. In the 1960’s, the northern area of Town—where the largest areas of open space are located—was rezoned to require a minimum of two acre lots. Although large lot zoning will not necessarily preserve open space, it can minimize some of the problems associated with more intensively developed residential areas. There is also a cluster development provision in the zoning bylaw that provides for reductions in frontage and lot size requirements for areas over 10 acres, in return for common open space to be conveyed to the Town or a non-profit association. Unfortunately, property owners have only utilized this provision twice since it was adopted in the early 1980’s.

The Town-wide comprehensive planning process has identified open space preservation and the aesthetic quality of residential development as two of its most important goals. To implement these goals, the Planning Board developed a “Major Residential Development” zoning article, which was approved by the Town at its 1998 Annual Town Meeting. This innovative article provides flexibility in dimensional requirements and incentives to encourage superior subdivision design based on the characteristics of the parcel. Developments requiring a Major Residential Development special permit would submit at least two different concept plans early in the process, typically a “conventional” plan and one resembling a cluster approach. It is expected that these plans will provide for the permanent preservation of open space.

## **Infrastructure**

### *Transportation*

Westwood is linked to the rest of the metropolitan region by excellent highway and rail facilities. Three major highways are located east of Town: an interchange onto Route 128/Interstate 95 lies just over the Town line in Dedham and the terminus of Interstate 93 South/Interstate 95 North is just east of the Town line.

Commuter rail service to South Station and Back Bay Station in Boston is available on the Franklin line from a small station in Islington and the South Attleboro line from the Route 128 station, located in Dedham and Westwood. The Route 128 station, which originally had parking for 800 vehicles, is currently being expanded to accommodate over 2,670 vehicles. A portion of these spaces will be available starting in Winter 1999. Peak commuter travel times to Boston from these stations range from 12-20 minutes from Route 128 and 24-25 minutes from the Islington station. Traditional Amtrak passenger service between Boston and New York City is available at the Route 128 station. The new Amtrak electric high-speed rail service is scheduled to begin on this route in Spring 2000.

Commuter bus service from Milton to Boston via Route 109 is also available, with a scheduled 8:00 a.m. stop at the Westwood Town Hall. In addition, the Neponset Valley Transportation Management Association sponsors peak-hour shuttle bus service linking the Franklin line commuter rail service in Islington to the University Avenue Industrial Park.

### *Water Supply and Sewage Disposal*

The Dedham-Westwood Water District provides water service to all residents in Westwood and Dedham. Currently, the District has four well fields (White Lodge, Bridge Street Rock Meadow and Fowl Meadow.) The existing well fields are comparatively shallow water-bearing formations ranging from 42 to 95 feet in total depth. They are composed of glacial outwash material consisting primarily of porous sand and gravel grading to sizable boulders resting on an impervious bed of solid rock and overlain with a surface deposit of peat varying in thickness from three to more than fifteen feet.

The White Lodge Well Field, consisting of four wells, is located in the University Avenue Industrial Park. This well field is located within the Fowl Meadow and Ponkapoag Bog Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), a state designation given to areas with unique, overlapping natural resources. The well field consists of four gravel-packed wells installed between 1955 and 1966. A new treatment plant was placed in service in 1987 to remove organic, iron and manganese contaminants that were found in two of the four wells as a result of activities from businesses in Canton.

Yields from some of the four Bridge Street wells have been declining in recent years. The Bridge Street wells are hydrologically connected to the Charles River, which has been experiencing unacceptably low flows in recent years, subsequent to the installation of the Elm Bank Well Field for the Town of Natick. Because of this, there is little potential for drilling new wells in this location. The Rock Meadow Reservation well field, which has one well, was installed in 1979 and is located on Dover Road.

The new Fowl Meadow Field is located on Metropolitan District Commission (MDC) land in the Fowl Meadow area. This well, and the four White Lodge wells, are hydrologically connected to the Neponset River. The water withdrawal permit issued for this new well requires monitoring of stream depth in the Neponset River and if it drops below a predetermined level, the Water District is required to stop withdrawals from that well.

The Town currently has the water resources to meet existing average daily demand and most peak demands. Summer water demand is approximately double that of demand in the winter months. With the addition of a new well, which is expected to yield one million gallons per day, the Town will be able to meet future average and peak demands projections that were made in 1992. However, these projections did not account for the Town's recent acceleration of population growth, residential development and the recent drought occurring across the Atlantic Seaboard.

The Dedham-Westwood Water District is unlikely to be granted additional water withdrawal permits. All potential well sites are hydrologically connected to either the Charles or Neponset Rivers which are both already oversubscribed in terms of water withdrawal.

Westwood has taken several important steps to protect its groundwater supply from contamination. In 1995, the Town revised its Water Resource Protection District bylaw to more closely track the state's model regulations. In 1986 (with revisions made in 1997), the Town adopted a Hazardous Materials bylaw to provide clearer and stricter requirements for the use and storage of hazardous materials by commercial and industrial establishments. Additionally, the Town has made substantial repairs to the sewerage system within the ACEC as well as continues its stringent groundwater monitoring system. In 1998, The Town adopted a zoning bylaw to encourage the development of multiple level parking facilities in the Industrial Park, which covers less impervious surface than traditional surface parking lots. Additionally, stormwater drainage requirements were amended to conform to the Department of Environmental Protection's new stricter standards.

Currently, approximately 77 percent of all buildings within the Town are connected to the 79-mile public sewerage system. The next expansion phase is set for two significantly large areas of Town: the Hartford Street area (14,600 linear feet) and a portion of the Islington area (5,000 linear feet). Approximately 700 residences continue to utilize on-site septic systems and cesspools for sewage disposal. Although there have not been widespread septic system failures, the Town is now developing a Comprehensive Septic Management Plan to identify the location of all septic systems and develop a plan to promote the upgrading of these systems.



## MAP 1 Zoning

## **SECTION 4 ENVIRONMENTAL INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS**

### **A. GEOLOGY, SOILS AND VEGETATION**

The Town of Westwood is approximately 10.97 square miles and located in the northern area of Norfolk County, bordered by Dover on the west, Needham on the north, Dedham on the east and northeast and Norwood and Walpole on the south. The Town is completely underlain by Pre-Carboniferous bedrock of which granite predominates, especially in the western side of Town. Most of the exposed bedrock is found in the northwestern area of Town.

Landforms are the result of the erosion of an uplifted valley floor during the Cretaceous Period. Some of the exposed bedrock to the west of High Street is part of the original valley wall. Two other valleys are buried beneath Purgatory Brook and the Neponset River.

Most of Westwood sits on ground moraine (material deposited beneath a glacier), but many other depositional landforms also created by glaciers occur. Around Buckmaster Pond there is an extensive area of outwash plain (sand and gravel carried by streams flowing out of a glacier and deposited over an extensive area). The area around Town Hall is located on a kame terrace (linear deposit of sand and gravel formed between the edge of the glacier and the wall of the valley in which it sat). Most of the eastern area of Town is kame or kame plains (mounds of sand and gravel deposited against or upon ice at the lower end of a glacier). An esker (an elongated ridge created from sand and gravel deposited by streams flowing either under, in or upon a glacier) runs southward from the junction of Route 128 and Canton Street to the Norwood line. Most of the esker is gone as it was mined for its sand and gravel.

The Soil Conservation Service (now known as the Natural Resource Conservation Service) has identified eight soil associations within the Town of Westwood, the majority of which are considered unsuitable for most types of residential and commercial development. The Hollis-Whitman soil association is concentrated along the northern border of the Town and constitutes approximately 25.7 percent of the Town's land area. The soil is characterized by a very to extremely rocky fine sandy loam which severely constrains urban development, but has few limitations for woodland, wildlife or recreational uses. The Canton-Woodbridge soil association is found primarily in the southwestern area of Town, from Buckmaster Pond south to Bubbling Brook. Well-drained Canton soils also have a fine sandy loam surface soil and contain many stones and boulders. It constitutes approximately 11.1 percent of the Town's land area and also moderately limits development potential because of its stony surface.

The Paxton-Hollis association is found primarily in the northern part of Town and constitutes approximately 4.9 percent of the land area. Well-drained Paxton soils have a fine sandy loam surface soil and subsoil and the underlying olive-colored glacial till is dense and compact. Because of a slowly permeable hardpan, this soil has severe limitations for residential, commercial and industrial uses where on-site sewage disposal is necessary. The Hinckley-Made Land-Gravel Pit association is a sandy and gravelly soil which comprises 19.2 percent of the Town. This soil, in comparison to the other soil types, has fewer limitations for more intensive

urbanized development. The largest tracts of this soil association can be found in the southeastern area of Town.

The Woodbridge-Whitman soil association occupies approximately 19.2 percent of the land area in Town, primarily between Nahatan and Winter Streets. These are moderately well-drained soils that have a fine sandy loam surface soil and subsoil. The wetness of this soil and the hardpan present in much of the area moderately restricts most types of development. The Sudbury-Merrimac association is concentrated around Buckmaster Pond and is a moderately well-drained sandy and gravelly soil that occupies about 10.4 percent of the land area. The well-drained parts of this soil area have few limitations for urban uses although a seasonal high water table in the wetter parts of the area will limit the density of development.

The Millis-Woodbridge-Hollis association occupies approximately 4.2 percent of the total land area in Westwood and is characterized by well-drained soils that have a fine sandy loam surface underlying a coarse hardpan. This soil also has severe limitations for more intensive development because of the hardpan. The Muck-Scarboro-Fresh water marsh soil is found in the wetland areas and is characterized by very poorly drained bog soils formed in accumulations of organic materials that are in an advanced state of decay. It makes up approximately 5.3 percent of the Town and because of the wetlands, places the most severe limitations for residential, commercial or industrial uses.<sup>3</sup>

## **B. LANDSCAPE CHARACTER**

The Town of Westwood lies within the Seaboard Lowland physiographic region, which extends along the coastline from Salisbury to Westport, excludes Cape Cod, and then continues from Plymouth to Marion. Its western boundary extends from Chelmsford to Milford. The *Massachusetts Landscape Inventory* (Massachusetts DEM, 1982), surveyed each of the physiographic regions and categorized the most scenic landscapes (which constitute approximately nine percent of the Commonwealth's land area) as "distinctive", "noteworthy" and "common". In Westwood, two areas in the northwestern section of Town near the Charles River are classified as "noteworthy".

## **C. WATER RESOURCES**

The Town of Westwood is split by two large watersheds: the Neponset River watershed drains the southern two-thirds of the Town and the Charles River drains the remaining northern one-third of the Town. In the southern part, Mill Brook and Bubbling Brook are joined at Pettees Pond from which they flow through Willet Pond into Ellis Pond. There they are joined by Germany Brook which drains Buckmaster Pond and Pine Swamp, which then empties into Hawes Brook and eventually reaches the Neponset River. Another major tributary, Purgatory Brook, flows through Slab Pond and is eventually joined by South Brook and Plantingfield Brook before reaching the Neponset River. To the north, Rock Meadow Brook flows through

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<sup>3</sup>U.S. Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service, *Soils and Their Interpretations for Various Land Uses*, Dedham, 1967.

Rock Meadow, Stevens and Lee Ponds before draining into the Charles River. The Powissett Brook drains Dunklin's Hole, Cedar Swamp, Noanet, Worthington and Storrow Ponds before reaching the Charles River.

Bodies of water and wetlands occupy approximately 155 and 464 acres of the Town's area, respectively. Buckmaster Pond, located near the intersection of High and Pond Streets, is the Town's largest body of water (approximately 28 acres). Since 1885, it has been available as a public water supply for the Town of Norwood. Other significant surface water bodies include Pettees Pond, Lee Pond, Stevens Pond, Martha Jones Pond, Willett Pond, Haslam Pond, Lymans Pond and Noanet Pond.

Buckmaster, Lymans and Martha Jones Ponds are accessible for recreational purposes on lands managed by either the Town or the Conservation Commission. Buckmaster Pond is often used for hiking, bird watching, picnics and fishing. The Town sponsors an annual fishing derby in the spring and band concerts along its banks during the summer. Lymans Pond is a blue heron rookery that attracts bird watchers from across the region. Foot paths allow access to the pond and it is now being used as an outdoor classroom by middle school and high school classes.

Noanet Pond is located on the Hale Reservation, which encompasses 1,200 acres of wooded lands, streams, ponds and meadows in Westwood and Dover. The pond, which is restricted to use by Hale Reservation members only, is used for instructional and recreational swimming, canoeing, sailing, rowing, fishing and hiking.

Surface water quality in the Neponset River water basin is generally poor. The most widespread problem is fecal coliform contamination resulting from malfunctioning sewers and septic systems, although other major problems in some areas include high metal concentrations, low dissolved oxygen, high in-stream temperatures, storm water pollution and eutrophication.

In 1994, the Neponset Watershed Project was chosen as the first test case of the Massachusetts Watershed Initiative, a newly created program emphasizing collaborative partnerships between citizens, businesses, non-profit organizations and government officials to restore and protect the state's 27 major watersheds. To implement its established priorities of public education and inter-community/inter-agency communication, the Neponset Watershed Project established local "stream teams" to develop and implement local action plans for each tributary in the Neponset River basin. In Westwood and Norwood, the Purgatory Brook Stream Team's priorities include minimizing water withdrawals and storm water impacts and the cataloguing and protection of rare and endangered species.

The Zone I Recharge Areas for the Dedham-Westwood Water District wells have not yet been determined. Eight of the ten wells are located in highly developed areas with significant potential for both point and non-point groundwater pollution. The new Fowl Meadow well is located within 500 feet of Route 128, making it susceptible to pollution from automobile accidents.

Map 2 General Soils

## Map 3 Soil Limitations

Map 4 Water Resources

## D. VEGETATION

Westwood's vegetative features are characteristic of the region. Generally, there is an interspersing of woodlands, cleared agricultural lands and suburban property. The largest expanse of uncleared, undeveloped land lies in the north central section of Town north of Gay Street between Farm Lane and Route 128. A large portion of this land is either in Town ownership or protected by the Conservation Commission, although a significant portion remains in private ownership.

Wetlands are common in Westwood. Most are wooded by a complex of red maple and thick undergrowth and support a varied selection of wildlife. On the western side of Town, wetlands appear as small areas filling in low spots among the rock outcroppings. Extensive wetlands of this type also cover much of the southern and central portion of Town. The only open wetland lies along the Neponset River. The vegetation in this area is predominantly chest-high and perennial.

Westwood lies on the border of two major forest zones. The hemlock-northern hardwood zone to the north meets a mixed hardwood forest from the south in which the oak-hickory strains predominate. This is characteristic of the mosaic pattern of forests in Westwood. Since large areas of Town are sprout lands, forest growth is generally young, often only 60 to 70 years old. The largest trees in Town are found along streets, occasionally in the woods along stone walls and at the junction of these walls. Street trees are all varieties of hardwoods and fence marker trees are generally white pine or oak.

Eleven communities of vegetation are noteworthy:

1. Oak-hickory forest is commonly found on warm, dry upland sites where bedrock is close to the surface, the hickory drops out and forest composition is limited almost exclusively to oak and blueberry (as found in Pleasant Hill). Associates are blueberry and occasionally white pine.
2. Red maple forest is found in low, wet areas and wet pastures. The trees are generally 25 to 40 feet tall and can include such types as sassafras, pepperbush, ferns and bullbriar. Good examples of this classification are located around Lymans Pond and Germany Brook.
3. A few small stands of hemlock occur on the cooler, north-facing slopes in Baker Reservation and on the High Ridge Estates and Gillette properties.
4. Several extensive stands of white pines, probably planted and now gone to seed, occur on drier sites since they have little or no ground cover other than patches of Canada Mayflower. One such stand grows along the western edge of the Martha Jones Conservation Area.
5. An increasingly noticeable pattern of growth is the suburban lawn arrangement which can include maples, oaks, ashes, hickories and pines, in addition to the indigenous trees. There are also a wide variety of ornaments including Blue Spruce, Catalpa, Tulip trees and



Magnolia. An equally common, but more picturesque type of planting, is being threatened by indiscriminate trimming and outright removal of street trees, which are often the largest trees found in Westwood. These street trees are usually maples, ashes, oaks, lindens and horse chestnuts.

6. "Old field" and roadside communities commonly have Junipers, Red Maples, Grey Birch, Sweet Fern and Poison Ivy. Examples are found on the Currier Conservation Area and the easement running behind Westwood High School.
7. The Pitch Pine found behind the Westwood Lodge (off Clapboardtree Street) is a fire-controlled type of community and may include scrub oak, black cherry, blueberry, grasses and other "old field" successional species.
8. Bubbling Brook is the only site where a tussock and brush swamp exist. The brush is 15 to 20 feet tall alders which do not quite achieve a closed canopy and the tussocks of grass are approximately a foot high and a foot in diameter and randomly spaced throughout the swamp.
9. Some pastures remain, including a stretch of Gay Street which is lined with them and to the south of Clapboardtree Street.
10. The only bit of marsh is located along the Neponset River. It is a chest-high growth in a variety of perennial wet-site plants and although the soil is firm enough to walk on in midsummer, it shows signs of having been previously immersed.
11. Shallow water vegetation is common to all but a few ponds. Common species are lily pads, pickerel weed, duckweed and sedges and can be found in ponds located on Baker Reservation, Martha Jones, Rice and Wentworth Conservation Areas.

## **E. FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE**

Westwood is home to squirrels, raccoons, chipmunks, opossum, skunks, turtles, coyotes and deer, as well as a wide variety of birds, including cardinals, nuthatches, turkey vultures and many species of hawks and ducks. Bubbling Brook still supports a cold water fishery and river otter and Lyman's Pond is an outstanding blue heron rookery. Portions of Mill Brook continue to support a variety of bird life including belted kingfishers, great blue herons, red winged blackbirds, eastern phoebes, northern orioles and northern flickers.

The Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program lists one "Habitat of Rare Wetlands and Certified Vernal Ponds" in Westwood, near the Town's border with Dover, south of Noanet Pond. The Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program also list two areas of "High Priority Sites of Rare Species Habitats and Exemplary Natural Communities." The largest of these two sites surrounds Purgatory Brook in the Islington section of Town. The other site is near the aforementioned Noanet Pond site.

## **F. SCENIC RESOURCES AND UNIQUE ENVIRONMENTS**

In April 1997, Town residents were asked to help develop a “scenic inventory” by identifying those places that define Westwood as a unique and special place. These places, which could be located anywhere in Town, are considered to be a critical part of Westwood’s character and way of life, either because of their special appearance (a special view or landscape), or because of their historic value (an old building or archeological site) or even their social role (a busy ice cream or pizza parlor). Residents were asked to take photographs of the areas they believe are valuable components of the scenic landscape of the Town. Some of these areas include:

- The Old Cemetery, and its annual Memorial Day ceremony;
- The historic Bubbling Brook restaurant, which heralds the beginning of spring in the community with its annual opening in April and signals the official end of the summer with its closing in October;
- Town Hall, the central place for community life in Westwood;
- Youlden’s Hobbies, in a charming building across from Town Hall, fits in with the ambiance of a small town and has been a fixture in the community for decades [since closed];
- The Shuttleworth property on Dead Swamp Road, which provides a 180 degree panoramic view of nature;
- The unpaved section of Sandy Valley Road with its scenic views and historic stone walls;
- Gay Street, a scenic road that provide glimpses of open fields, wooded areas and old stone walls;
- The corner of Summer and Grove Streets, which provide scenic views of rolling fields, an abandoned orchard and an old, majestic home.

### **Areas of Critical Environmental Concern**

The Fowl Meadow area and Ponkapoag Bog, a freshwater wetland area of approximately 8,350 acres, was designated as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) in 1992. An ACEC contains concentrations of highly significant environmental resources, ranging from wetlands and water supply areas to rare species habitats and agricultural areas. To be eligible for designation, an area must contain at least four resource categories or features listed in the ACEC regulations and the resources and area must be of regional or statewide significance. The Fowl Meadow/Ponkapoag Bog ACEC contains seven of these listed categories.

Approximately 70 percent of the ACEC is located in two communities: Canton (3,575 acres or 43 percent) and Norwood (2,187 acres or 26 percent). In Westwood, the ACEC consists

of a 169-acre segment (2 percent) extending west of University Avenue to the Neponset River, bisected by the MBTA/Amtrak railroad tracks. The area west of these tracks is located in Westwood's industrial park, which contains warehouses, office space, retail operations and the Route 128 MBTA station and parking facility. The Dedham-Westwood Water District also operates four wells within this area. To the east of the tracks lies non-developable floodplain.

The resources within the ACEC are summarized as follows:

*The central resource features of the Fowl Meadow and Ponkapoag Bog ACEC are the Neponset River and the Ponkapoag Pond and Bog. The Neponset River and its tributaries, the adjacent wetlands and floodplains, the associated aquifers and public water supplies, and the diverse habitats form the core resources of the Fowl Meadow area. Ponkapoag Pond and Bog flow into the Neponset River to the west. The pond, bog, and the natural community and habitats form the core resources of the Ponkapoag Bog area. Historical and archeological resources, and the recreational and educational values within these areas contribute to the overall significance of the ACEC to the people and communities of the region. ...The habitat resources of both the Fowl Meadow and Ponkapoag Bog areas include a diverse wildlife population, important natural communities and state-listed rare species. These resources are all the more significant and remarkable due to the proximity and density of the urban development that surrounds the ACEC.<sup>4</sup>*

The Westwood portion has been identified as a particularly important area of concern within the ACEC because of the often conflicting land uses that overlap in this area: fresh water wetlands, public water supply well fields and intensive commercial development in the industrial park. Westwood has taken numerous steps, including the adoption of Water Resource Protection District and Hazardous Materials bylaws and the continuation of a strong monitoring system, to ensure that the redevelopment of the industrial park and the expansion of the Town's commercial tax base does not endanger this fragile ecosystem.

## **Historical Resources**

The Westwood Historical Commission has completed an extensive survey of the historically significant buildings and sites in Westwood. The survey is a predecessor to the *National Register of Historic Places* approval process and makes the Town eligible to apply for state and federal grant funds. At this time there are no Westwood properties on the *National Register*.

The first phase of the historic survey process was submitted to the Massachusetts Historical Commission in February 1998. It identifies two proposed historic districts along High

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<sup>4</sup>Metropolitan Area Planning Council, *Municipal Land Use Regulation in the Fowl Meadow and Ponkapoag Bog Area of Critical Environmental Concern: Assessment and Recommendations*, May 1997.

Street (the Colburn School High Street District and the Fisher School High Street District), which have been submitted for *National Register* status. These two proposed districts include a total of 68 historically contributing properties and sites.

The Historical Commission and preservation consultant worked closely with students in the Advanced Placement History class at Westwood High School who completed many of the historic building surveys. This was the first time students were used in this process, according to state officials.

In the second phase, the survey was expanded to include historic and cultural sites in all areas of the Town. Ultimately, a total of over 300 sites (which include eleven areas) were inventoried. In addition, a detailed historical narrative of the Town was developed, referencing the architectural styles of each distinct development period from the colonial period to the post-1950 era. Lastly, a comprehensive listing of properties eligible for listing on the *National Register of Historic Places* was compiled from the survey. All properties and the areas of the proposed historic districts are shown on Map 3.

### **Prehistorical and Historical Resources**

In addition to the historic structures described above, the Town's other historic assets include the remains of activities from the time of the Town's settlement and development as well as from earlier prehistoric occupation. Information on these assets are collected at the Massachusetts State Archives.

Historic sites include a number of mill sites scattered throughout Town on the banks of streams and ponds. These include the Ellis Saw Mill on Mill Street, the Dedham Sugar Refinery at Stevens Pond, a sawmill on Purgatory Brook in the area of Everett Street and the Colburn Cabinet Shop at the outlet of Mill Brook off of High Street. These historic resources and others are described in detail in Marjory Fenerty's *West Dedham and Westwood: 300 Years*.

Prehistoric archeological sites are also cataloged in the Massachusetts State Archives. This information comes from finds of amateur collectors and professional surveys, often conducted at the time land is to be altered by major development projects, as was the case for the Stevens Farm and High Ridge Estates subdivision developments.

The existing records indicate a number of important known and probable prehistoric archeological sites. The Town is rich in those environmental and topographical settings that are considered to have high sensitivity for the presence of prehistoric resources: fresh water bodies, streams and wetlands, well-drained soils and rock outcroppings where prehistoric groups obtained materials to make tools and use as shelter. Known sites are located, in particular, in the north, northeast and northwestern portions of Town, in areas that have not been developed (e.g., Hale Reservation and the Sandy Valley Road area) or where studies done in conjunction with recent development revealed evidence of prehistoric activities. Sites in Westwood are recorded in the archives as the following: 19 NF 175, 19 NF 131, 19 NF 146, 19 NF 86, 19 NF 197, 19 NF 166, 19 NF 289. The Massachusetts State Archives identifies archeologically-significant

sites by number only as a security measure to deter trespassing and excavations by amateurs and collectors.

## **G. ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS**

The increasingly intensive development of the Town's land—and the locations of these uses—is the primary cause of Westwood's environmental problems. Residential development, in particular, has consumed vast amounts of open space, displaced wildlife habitats and is a constant danger to the Town's underground water supply.

This intrusion of residential development shows no sign of abating and will likely accelerate in the near future. Specifically, the skyrocketing amounts paid for building lots in Westwood (the average price now is approximately \$250,000) makes the few large parcels of open land increasingly vulnerable to development pressures, even though these parcels are primarily located in residential zones that require a minimum lot size of 80,000 square feet.

In addition to encroaching on long-established open areas, the urbanization of Westwood and the surrounding communities of Norwood and Canton have had a negative impact on the quality of the Town's water supply. Approximately 80 percent of the Town's water source is located within the industrial park area, and thus susceptible to both point and non-point groundwater pollution stemming from industrial and commercial development. In fact, water from two of the four wells in this area have been contaminated with organic solvents and must be specially treated to remove the contaminants. The newest well is located within 500 feet of traffic-clogged Route 128 making it susceptible to contamination associated with motor vehicle accidents. Additionally, the Germany Brook aquifer at Buckmaster Pond and the Purgatory Brook aquifer at Everett Street, two potentially productive aquifers, both suffer from existing unmediated pollution problems.

Lastly, growth pressures are exacerbated by the fact that the vast majority of the Town's soils are unsuitable for urban development due to the depth of the underlying bedrock or hardpan, rocky outcrops or ledge, steep slope gradients and/or high water tables. These characteristics may require intensive corrective measures including stone removals, bedrock blastings or land leveling. These measures, in turn, can have a detrimental effect on the surrounding habitat and water supply if effective mitigation procedures are not implemented.

Additionally, many of these soils have poor percolation which necessitates the need to extend public sewerage to these areas. However, even though the sewerage extension may solve certain problems, it is often a strong invitation to more intensive residential and commercial development. This, in turn, creates a greater vulnerability to additional environmental problems.

map 5 scenic resources/unique environments

## **SECTION 5**

### **INVENTORY OF LANDS OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION INTEREST**

The following is an inventory of public and private lands that are important to the Town due to their conservation and/or recreation use. The parcel inventory is divided into two main categories based on the Massachusetts Division of Conservation Services' definitions of *protected* and *unprotected* lands. Protected lands are public or semi-public parcels which are committed in perpetuity for conservation purposes. In Westwood, all land managed by the Conservation Commission and the Dedham-Westwood Water District is protected. The unprotected land category includes all Town-owned land that is not in the protected category and all private land that is enrolled in M.G.L. Chapter 61, 61A and 61B programs. Privately owned parcels that contribute to the quality of the Town's open space and recreational areas are also included in the unprotected category. It is important to note that even though many parcels in this inventory of publicly and privately owned unprotected sites may have been open or recreational space for as long as anyone can remember, there is no guarantee that they will remain so in the future.

The unprotected lands are divided into the following six categories:

- Public Recreation Land
- Multi-Purpose Open Space Land (General Town-owned land, Cemeteries and Libraries)
- Private, Non-Profit Land
- Private Forestry Land (Chapter 61)
- Private Agricultural Land (Chapter 61A)
- Private Recreation Land (Chapter 61B)

#### **PROTECTED LANDS**

Conservation and Water District Lands The Town has 33 protected parcels, totaling 428 acres. This represents approximately 6.3 percent of the total land area. All of these sites are protected through public ownership by the Conservation Commission or the Dedham-Westwood Water District. The Grimm and Mulvehill Conservation Areas and the newly purchased Lowell Woods parcel in the northern area of Town constitutes the largest area of protected contiguous land, with over 190 acres.

#### **UNPROTECTED LANDS**

Public Recreation Land There are ten public recreation sites in Town, almost all located on public school grounds. The total acreage for these sites is 97 acres, which represents 1.5 percent of the Town's land area. These sites provide primarily active recreational activities, including playgrounds and playfields.

Multi-Purpose Open Space Land There are 44 parcels in this category, which includes general Town-owned land, cemeteries and libraries. The general Town-owned category includes

municipal properties such as Town Hall and the two fire stations, as well as some relatively large properties such as the Shuttleworth land (37 acres) located directly east of the Mulvehill Conservation Area. There is a total of 180 acres in this category, which represents approximately 3.7 percent of the Town's total land area. The recreational activities offered at some of these sites, which are scattered across the Town, are generally passive (as compared to the mostly active recreation uses in the Public Recreation Land category).

Private Forestry Land There are portions of five sites assessed under M.G.L. Chapter 61 (Forest Lands and Forest Products Assessment Program), for a total of 29.5 acres. These contiguous sites are under the same ownership and are in the proximity of High, Hartford and Mill Streets.

Private Agricultural Land There are six sites assessed under M.G.L. Chapter 61A (Farmland Assessment Program), totaling 46 acres. The largest of these sites (25 acres) is located at the corner of Grove and Summer Streets and the other site is located on Clapboardtree Street, near the Norwood town line. While this designation indicates a current commitment to retain the land as farmland, there is no legal assurance that a landowner will continue to participate in this program indefinitely.

Private Recreation Land The Dedham Country Club and the Norfolk Golf Club are the only two properties in Westwood currently enrolled in M.G.L. Chapter 61B (Recreation Land Assessment Program). The land area of these two clubs is 106 acres. Again, while enrollment in this program signals a present commitment to preserve recreational space, there is always the chance that the present or future owners may change their priorities and discontinue their participation.

Private, Non-Profit Land The Hale Reservation, a private non-profit corporation, is currently the only property in this category. The Reservation is located in both Westwood and Dover and encompasses a total of 1,200 acres, of which approximately 400 acres are located in Westwood. It provides a variety of passive and active recreation uses, including swimming, sailing, fishing, canoeing, hiking and cross-country skiing. Although Hale has been an important recreation resource for the Town and surrounding region for the past 75 years, it should be noted that this land is technically designated as unprotected and so there is always a chance that unforeseeable circumstances may arise.

## **INVENTORY**

For each parcel in the following inventory, the assessors' map and lot number, location, owner, manager, acreage and zoning are noted. In Westwood, there are 11 zoning districts: five single-family Residential Districts (A-E), General Residence (GR), Special Residence (SR), two Local Business Districts (LBA and LBB), Industrial (I) and Administrative-Research-Office (ARO). There are also two overlay districts: Water Resource Protection District (WR) and Adult Uses (AU).



open space inventory page 1





map 6 open space land

## **SECTION 6 COMMUNITY GOALS**

### **A. DESCRIPTION OF PROCESS**

The public planning process for identifying open space and recreation goals began formally with a workshop in December 1996. The event was attended by over 70 residents, business people and Town officials. Participants were divided into eight groups, five based on geographic area, a business group, a large landowners group and a high school student group. For the first half of the day these teams worked independently to develop their own ideas about the future of Westwood and how their visions might be achieved. The groups then convened as a whole and each team summarized its discussion, identified issues, proposed goals and recommended short- and long-term actions.

The workshop identified open space and recreation as the important priorities for the Town. Participants drafted preliminary goals, objectives and action recommendations. Goals and objectives were also identified by the Conservation Commission, the Recreation Commission and the Fields Advisory Committee. The latter two groups have completed a comprehensive analysis of the capacity and condition of the recreational facilities in the Town.<sup>5</sup>

An Open Space and Recreation Task Force was formed to provide policy guidance throughout preparation of the Open Space and Recreation Plan. This Task Force was co-chaired by representatives of the Conservation Commission and Recreation Commission and comprised of citizens who expressed interest (at the December workshop or in response to a newspaper solicitation) in assisting with preparation of the Plan. A series of public forums and meetings were hosted by the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee and the Open Space and Recreation Task Force during the planning process to obtain input and feedback from community members. At each meeting, information and data were presented to discuss and evaluate the evolving goals, objectives and recommendations. An annotated list of the meeting schedule is presented in Section 2.

### **B. STATEMENT OF OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION GOALS**

As the Town has come to recognize and appreciate in recent years, most of the open space considered characteristic of Westwood is privately owned. Generally, this land had never been subject to development because of constraints such as wetland resources, ledge or slope. However, as regional growth continues to accelerate, the value of this land continues its upward climb, placing it under tremendous residential development pressure. In the past few years Westwood has seen a number of large parcels subdivided for residential development. The conversion of this undeveloped land to roadways and house lots entails significant alteration of topography and natural resources. It is also affecting the character and scenic qualities of the community. Infill development, i.e., carving an additional lot(s) from oversize “estate” lots, is also seriously impacting resources through encroachment into wetlands.

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<sup>5</sup>Archetype Architecture, Inc., *Westwood Services and Facilities*, Boston, revised 1995.

The Town has completed a comprehensive analysis of the capacity and condition of its recreational facilities which revealed a shortage of fields relative to the demand from the ever-increasing numbers of participants and variety of organized sports. The constant and intense level of usage of the existing fields, combined with inadequate resources for maintenance, has resulted in their unacceptably poor condition.

The Town's continuing and projected growth has created an urgent need to acquire open space and recreational lands. Land suitable for these purposes is increasingly scarce and demand from other land uses is making the cost prohibitive. In response, the Town is taking active steps to establish land use priorities through the development of a Comprehensive Plan (the first since the 1960's) and this updated Open Space and Recreation Plan.

As a result of the process outlined above, the Open Space and Recreation Goals for the Town of Westwood are as follows:

- *Enhance the quality of life and maintain the desired character of the community, through the preservation of key natural, cultural and scenic resources.*
- *Protect critical land and water resources.*
- *Better manage the location, rate and design of new residential developments to protect natural and scenic resources and community character.*
- *Provide quality recreational opportunities for all segments of Westwood's growing population.*

## SECTION 7 ANALYSIS OF NEEDS

### A. SUMMARY OF RESOURCE PROTECTION NEEDS

The inventory of open space land, recent development trends, community input provided through the public participation process and a review of prior Conservation and Recreation Comprehensive Plans all reveal problems and issues relating to resource protection and open space needs.

Much of the open space that gives Westwood its character is not protected. Topography and natural resource constraints (wetlands, ledge and slope), the unavailability of public sewer and in some cases, long-time family ownership have been deterrents to development in the past. However, as land values increase and regional growth accelerates, these lands are being converted at a rate that is threatening the quality of the Town's resources and ultimately, the character of the Town.

The Town's continuing growth has created an urgent need to acquire open space and recreational lands. Land suitable for these purposes is increasingly scarce and demand from other land uses is making the cost prohibitive. In response, the Town is taking active steps to establish land use priorities through the development of a Comprehensive Plan (the first since the 1960's) and an updated Open Space and Recreation Plan. The Board of Selectmen have also established the non-profit Organization for the Preservation of the Environment and Nature (O.P.E.N.) to assist in land acquisition priorities and coordination of fundraising activities. This group was instrumental in generating public support for the purchase of the Lowell Woods parcel and for soliciting donation to offset the public cost of its acquisition.

The number one priority for proposed acquisitions in each of the past plans, and the top priority of this Plan, is the undeveloped and unspoiled area in the Sandy Valley Road/Purgatory Brook corridor, which runs approximately from the northern point of Sandy Valley Road through Gay Street and Clapboardtree Street to the Town line. As mentioned previously, the purchase of the Lowell parcel represents the Town's first successful conservation land acquisition in this area in over 20 years. However, important parcels in this area remain in unprotected private ownership and thus will always be susceptible to development pressures. The 1977 plan (p. 23) states:

*Consistent with the previous conservation master plan and the recommendations of the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, this large area is essential... Control of this area would give the Town a wide range of features: A major recreational area will be preserved adjacent to Islington which will also serve the rest of Westwood; linkage will be preserved across the northeastern side of the Town; a buffer will be increased; a joint conservation-recreation program involving trails, picnicking and camping could be operated; an educational program for teachers and naturalists could be scheduled...*

The large amount of land being consumed by residential development also fragments and displaces wildlife habitat and is a potential threat to the quality of water resources. The rate and design of residential development requires attention. The Town's land use regulations contain provisions for cluster-type development (Westwood Zoning Bylaw, Section 14(g) and 14A Flexible Plan Development) with the intent of preserving open space and resources, but it has been rarely used. In 1998, the Town approved a mandatory special permit review process for residential development that will provide the Planning Board with greater authority to ensure that the proposed development is harmonious with the natural, scenic and community characteristics of the land. This process requires the applicant to submit at least two substantially different development plans, of which it is expected that one plan will utilize cluster-type provisions, including the provision of open space. This innovative article was approved by the awaiting Attorney General's office.

Beyond the impacts resulting from consumption of large amounts of land by development, concern is also expressed by residents over the loss of scenic attributes. One of the exercises conducted by citizens during preparation of this Plan was an inventory of scenic and cultural "sacred places". Residents, armed with cameras, were asked to photograph places in Town that they consider to be special. It is clear from this project and from comments made at public meetings that the community's character is defined, in large part, by the woodlands, pastures, stone walls and fences that are contiguous to the heavily-traveled roadways through Town. The Town needs to develop a strategy for preserving these scenic elements. This strategy will likely include land use regulations, promoting conservation restrictions, establishing a conservation trust, acquisition of land and other techniques.

## **B. SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY NEEDS**

The Town of Westwood provides a diverse recreation program serving all age groups and a broad range of interests. In 1996 nearly 26,000 participants in organized recreational activities were counted, taking part in 423 programs plus special events. Swimming is by far the most heavily attended activity, with over 11,000 participants during 1996. The Recreation Department's operating budget of nearly \$250,000 is essentially self-supporting through fees, revolving funds, gifts and fundraising.

Recreation activities are accommodated at three Recreation Department facilities and seven schools. At Westwood High School an indoor pool accommodates heavy usage. All together there are fewer than twenty available fields for team sports.

There have been efforts over the years to meet programmatic needs through use of "borrowed" recreation facilities. Activities have taken place intermittently since the 1970's on facilities such as those of the Hale Reservation, Polaroid Corporation, Xaverian School and teams have even journeyed out-of-town to find space. Despite the difficulties in arranging such sharing, it provides a valuable means of reconciling facility overburden, at least on a temporary basis.



Town growth, loss of areas once informally used for recreation, and the growing popularity of organized recreation programs place growing strains upon the Town's available facilities. The need for additional recreation facilities has been demonstrated in many ways, for many years. At the December 1996 vision workshop, improvement to recreation fields was one of the major topics participants selected for short-term action. Bike paths, cross-country ski trails, hiking trails and a recreation comprehensive plan all drew strong support. A high school student's proposal for a senior center and recreation facility also drew enthusiastic support. The condition and inadequacy of existing playfields was singled out as one of the Town's important deficiencies.

An earlier community facilities planning study conducted in 1995 thoroughly examined Westwood's existing recreation facilities, their adequacy and their condition. It concluded that the Town is badly in need of additional playfield space to allow adequate programming and to allow the fields some "time out" for field recuperation, maintenance and upgrading.

The Town's 1979 *Conservation, Recreation Master Plan* prepared by the Westwood Conservation Commission reached strikingly similar conclusions. It observed that for recreation facilities "... the total saturation point had been reached possibly by 1974." Population and participation levels have grown hugely since then, but not the facilities to support them.

Comparison with similar communities helps to put Westwood's needs into perspective. Tables 14, 15 and 16 compare the relationship of facilities to population in Westwood with the same measure in eight other communities commonly used by Westwood for comparisons on other topics. All are suburbs of Boston roughly comparable to Westwood in population, growth and socioeconomic factors. Soccer is often cited in Westwood as the activity most constrained by space limitations. Only two of the eight comparison communities have higher population per soccer field than Westwood. When all fields, whether full, half or 6 on 6 are counted equally, only the Town of Canton has a higher population and registered players per field than Westwood (Table 17, Charts 4 and 5). At the other extreme, tennis court shortages are seldom cited in Westwood. Only two of the eight comparison communities are more generously supplied with tennis courts in relation to population than is Westwood (Chart 3). An inventory of Westwood's current playfields is shown in Table 18.

Those comparisons reinforce the observations made locally in workshops, studies and informal conversations. The most salient recreation facility need in Westwood is for athletic field space. Other facilities, including a recreation center, skateboarding facilities and outdoor swimming facilities have all been suggested as needs. However, Town Meeting has given evidence that in an era of sharply constrained Town finances, funding for recreation will not come easily, so not all of those proposals are likely to soon be satisfied.

In an ideal recreation system, participation in programs and activities would be completely unconstrained by facilities, and program managers could even promote additional participation. That would be an "A" level of service. At a "B" level of service current demand could be met with some creativity in scheduling and programming, but there would be no room for additional participation. At level of service "C" some programs and some participants would

be told “no.” At level of service “D” facility deficiencies would sharply limit programs and participation.

At present, additional recreation leagues cannot be accommodated in Westwood (one has threatened to withdraw because of scheduling constraints), nor can Westwood support substantial expansion in the number of teams in existing leagues, nor can the teams reasonably add many participants. In short, programs are constrained by facilities. At workshops, participants agreed that the Town now provides approximately a “C” level of service, but many supported facility development to allow a full “A” level of service.

### **C. MANAGEMENT NEEDS, POTENTIAL CHANGE OF USE**

In Westwood, recreation management responsibilities are shared between two departments: the Recreation Department has primary responsibility for programmatic activities and the Superintendent of Schools manages recreational facility maintenance. There are, however, three sites in which the Recreation Department has both programmatic and maintenance responsibilities: the School Street and June Street playgrounds and Morrison Park, the only Town playfield equipped with lights for evening activities.

The need to better coordinate programmatic and maintenance responsibilities arises from residents’ concerns about the present maintenance standard of the Town’s existing playfields. In workshops and at previous Town Meetings, residents complained that the facilities are not well-maintained by the Town and at times, are in such bad condition that they are essentially unusable. In fact, it is not unusual to find coaches or parents cutting the playfield’s grass or performing minor maintenance tasks prior to a scheduled game. It has also been noted that a soccer team from a neighboring community refuses to play on the Hanlon School field because it considers its condition to be so deplorable that it risks injury to participants.

There has also been discussion that the Town should not finance additional recreation facilities to meet the growing need until it can adequately maintain its existing inventory. Others disagree, stating that it is impossible to adequately maintain constantly used playfields because they have no “fallow” time to allow for grass regrowth and aeration. In February 1998, the Board of Selectmen took the first step to address this need by commissioning a consultant study to restore and maintain the Town’s recreation facilities<sup>6</sup>. Prescription Turf Services first provided a comprehensive review of all Town recreational facilities including the type and size of facility; frequency of use by organization and/or individual; current condition and maintenance effort. Based on this information, the consultant study made a series of recommendations for each facility, which, in most cases, entailed reconstruction followed by an annual maintenance and rotation program.

Based on the recommendation of this study, the 1998 Annual Town meeting appropriated \$100,000 in FY 1999 to upgrade the Martha Jones School fields. The 1999 Town Meeting added

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<sup>6</sup> Prescription Turf Services, Inc., *Westwood Athletic Facilities Renovation & Maintenance Plan*, February 1998.

an additional \$100,000 in FY 2000 to upgrade the Sheehan School fields, purchase specialized maintenance equipment and hire additional maintenance personnel. An additional \$72,000 was also added to the field maintenance budget. The third year (FY 2001) of the plan recommends the reconstruction of the Deerfield School fields.

**Table 14**  
**COMPARATIVE INVENTORY: OUTDOOR RECREATION FACILITIES**

Town	Fields				Other		
	Soccer	60' Baseball	90' Baseball	Football	Basketball courts	Tennis courts	Outdoor swim
Bedford	4 full 2 intermed. 3 <10 yr	6 LL 6 SB	2	1(L)	2(L) 3	4(L) 2	Pond
Canton	2 full 4 6 on 6	2(L) 6	2	1	2	7	Pool
Concord (w/o school)	8 full	8	2	1	4	13	-
Holliston	5 full 3 6 on 6	6	2	1	3	3	Lake
Medfield	6	2 LL 1 LL(L) 5 SB	2	2 2 practice	2 5 backbds	4(L) 2	Pond
Sharon (w/o school)	1 1 practice	2 SB	1(L) 1	1	1	4(L)	Lake
Sudbury	6	1 LL 4 SB	5	3 1 practice	2	18	-
Weston	6	7	2	1(L)	3	15(L)	Pool
Westwood	4 full 2 half	3 2 SB 2 TB	2	2	3	14	-

(L)- Lighted LL – Little League TB – Tee Ball SB- Softball

SOURCES: Westwood facilities: Westwood Recreation Department; Other facilities: plans on file with MA DCS, telephone inquiries.

**Table 15**  
**EQUIVALENT "FULL" OUTDOOR RECREATION FACILITIES**

Town	Fields				Other		
	Soccer	60' Baseball	90' Baseball	Football	Basketball courts	Tennis courts	Outdoor swim
Bedford	6.5	12	2	1	5	6	1
Canton	4	8	2	1	2	7	1
Concord	8	8	2	1	4	13	
Holliston	6.5	6	2	1	3	3	1
Medfield	6	8	2	4	4.5	6	1
Sharon	2	2	2	1	1	4	1
Sudbury	6	5	5	4	2	18	
Weston	6	7	2	1	3	15	1
Westwood	5	6	2	2	3	14	

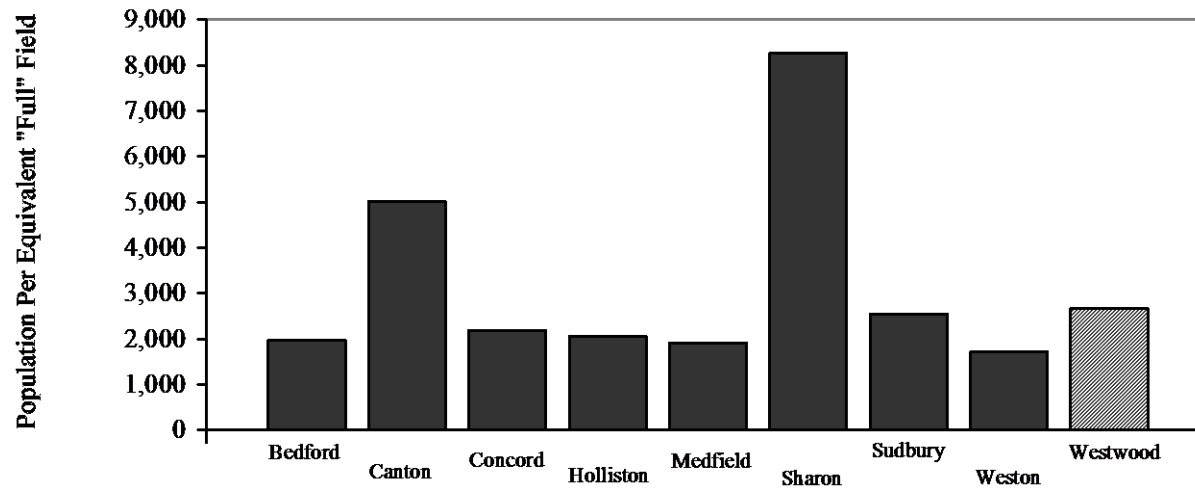
SOURCES: Data from Table 14.  
 "Equivalencies" by Herr & James Associates.

**Table 16**  
**ANALYSIS: POPULATION AND OUTDOOR RECREATION FACILITIES**

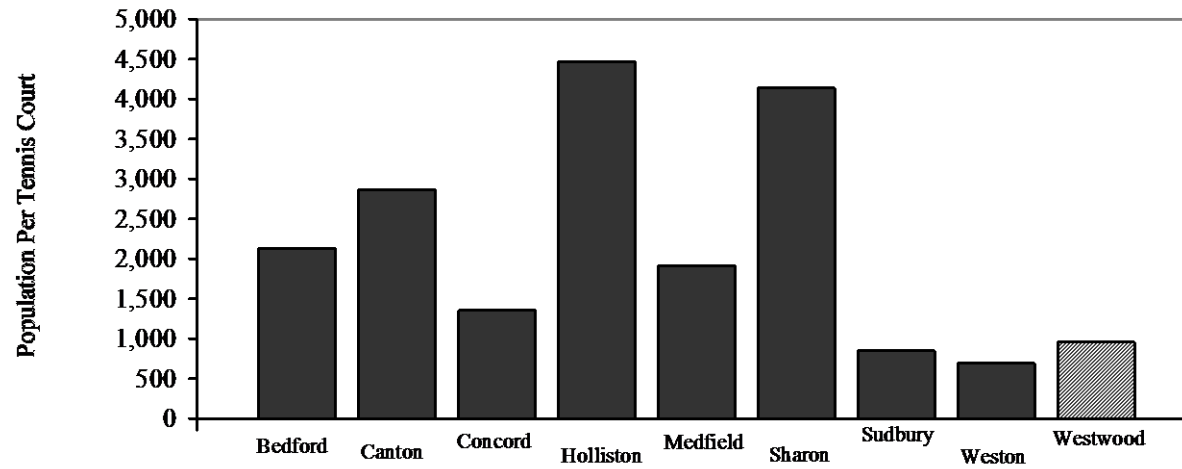
Town	Population 1994	Population per equivalent "full" facility						
		Fields				Other		
		Soccer	60' Baseball	90' Baseball	Football	Basketball courts	Tennis courts	Outdoor swim
Bedford	12,765	1,964	1,064	6,383	12,765	2,553	2,128	12,765
Canton	20,039	5,010	2,505	10,020	20,039	10,020	2,863	20,039
Concord	17,563	2,195	2,195	8,782	17,563	4,391	1,351	(None)
Holliston	13,393	2,060	2,232	6,697	13,393	4,464	4,464	13,393
Medfield	11,466	1,911	1,433	5,733	2,867	2,548	1,911	11,466
Sharon	16,542	8,271	8,271	8,271	16,542	16,542	4,136	16,542
Sudbury	15,290	2,548	3,058	3,058	3,823	7,645	849	(None)
Weston	10,301	1,717	1,472	5,151	10,301	3,434	687	10,301
Westwood	13,329							
		2,666	2,222	6,665	6,665	4,443	952	0
Pop/facility Rank	4	7	5	5	3	5	3	7

SOURCES: Population: MISER estimates.  
Facilities: Tables 14 and 15.

**Chart 3  
SOCCER FIELDS**



**TENNIS COURTS**



**Table 17**  
**SOCCER FIELDS COMPARISONS: 1997**

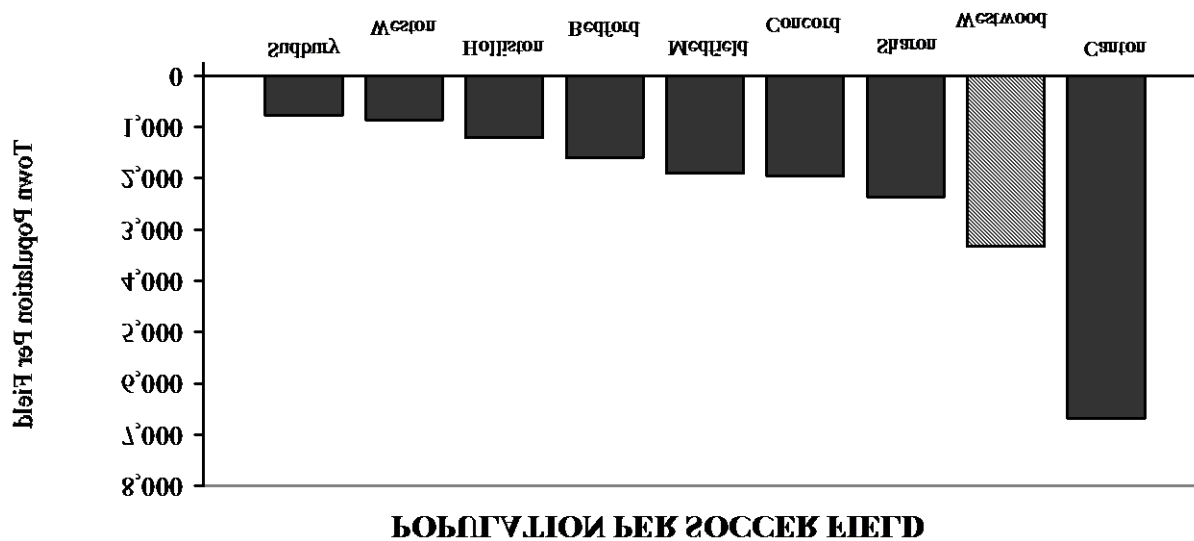
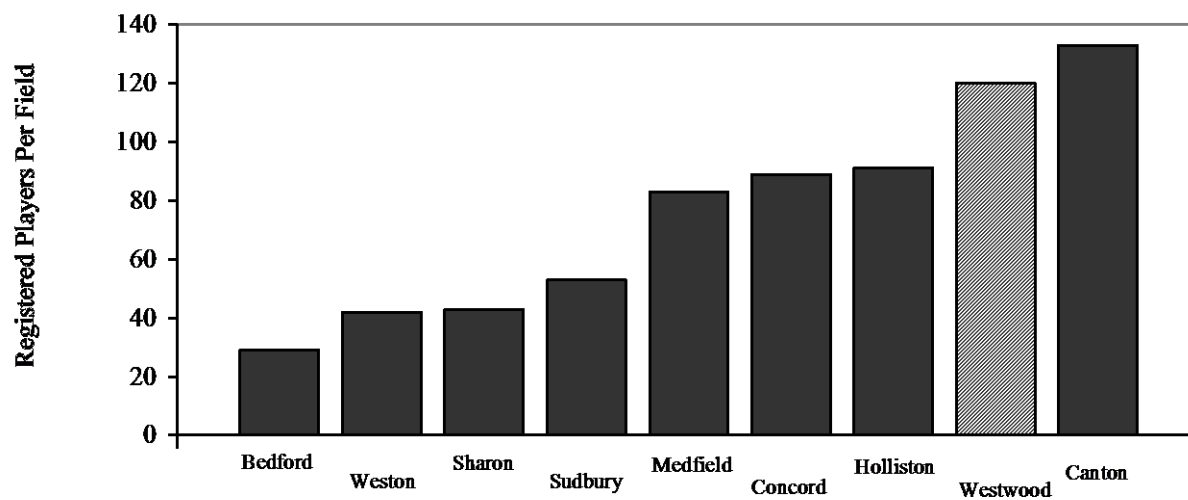
Town	Fields	Players		Population (1994)	
		Total	Per Field	Total	Per Field
Bedford	8	230	29	12,765	1,596
Canton	3	400	133	20,039	6,680
Concord	9	800	89	17,563	1,951
Holliston	11	1000	91	13,393	1,218
Medfield	6	500	83	11,466	1,911
Sharon	7	300	43	16,542	2,363
Sudbury	20	1,050	53	15,290	765
Weston	12	500	42	10,301	858
Westwood	4	480	120	13,329	3,332

SOURCE: Telephone interviews conducted with local Youth Soccer Association officials by Susan Aries, June 1997.

NOTE: Fields used by travelling soccer teams



**Chart 4  
PLAYERS PER SOCCER FIELD**



**Table 18**  
**WESTWOOD FIELDS INVENTORY**

Fields	Location										
	High School	Thurston Middle	Deerfield	Downey	Hanlon	Martha Jones	Sheehan	Morrison Park	June Street	School Street	TOTAL
Baseball (60' Diamond)						1	2 Overlap	1			4
Baseball (90' Diamond)	1 Overlap										1
Field Hockey	1 Overlap										1
Football	1										1
Football Practice	1 Overlap										1
Lacrosse											0
Soccer (full)	1 Overlap	1 Overlap					1 Overlap				3
Soccer (half or .5 field)	2		3 Overlap		1 Overlap		1 Overlap				7
Softball 200' foul lines	1 Overlap							1			2
T-Ball/Small Softball			3 Overlap	1 Overlap	1 Overlap					1	6
Basketball Courts							1	1			2
Playground Structures		1	2	1	1	1	1		1	1	9
Tennis Courts	4			2			2	2			6
				Not Playable			Not Playable				

SOURCE: Westwood Recreation Commission

## SECTION 8 GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

As described in detail in Sections 2 and 6, the goals and objectives for open space and recreation were developed through a public process conducted by the Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee and the Open Space and Recreation Subcommittee. Goals and policies were developed through public forums and by the Conservation Commission and Recreation Commission (the two boards responsible for open space and recreation, respectively).

- *Acquire new conservation and recreation areas, through donation, purchase or other appropriate means. Priority for acquisition of open space should be:*
  - *contiguous to existing protected land;*
  - *high natural resource value, habitat value;*
  - *in areas of Town which have a shortage of open space and passive and active recreation areas.*
- *Protect and enhance Westwood's natural environment.*
- *Encourage increased use and appreciation of Westwood's existing conservation areas.*
- *Identify and protect those places--open spaces, scenic, cultural and natural features--of special significance to the community.*
- *Establish and manage a Town-wide network of publicly and privately held open spaces for the protection of critical land and water resources, habitats, scenic vistas, and active and recreational activities.*
- *Better manage the design, location and rate of new residential and commercial development in a manner that protects important natural and cultural resources.*
- *Preserve Westwood's rural character, with a focus on village centers and open space.*
- *Provide quality recreational opportunities for all segments of Westwood's population.*
- *Improve maintenance of recreation fields.*
- *Create a system of bikeways, hiking and cross-country skiing trails, connecting the two town centers, recreation areas and other public facilities.*

## SECTION 9 FIVE-YEAR ACTION PLAN

The open space and recreation planning process culminates in the Five-Year Action Plan, which is designed to directly address the community needs outlined in Section 7 and implement the goals and objectives identified in Section 8. As such, it is the most important section of the Plan and will serve as the primary “scorecard” from which to determine the success of this planning process.

The Five-Year Action Plan identifies the timetable for implementation of the action items in six categories and the board or organization primarily responsibility for their implementation. It is not designed to be rigid, but should instead maintain some flexibility to respond to unexpected opportunities or challenges. In fact, it is expected that the timetables for implementation may change from time to time, based on local conditions or other factors. Or, new action items—such as the identification of additional sites to be acquired for conservation or recreation purposes—may be added. The key is to review the Action Plan periodically to ensure that the Town is moving forward with the implementation process.

Within each of the six main categories, each action item is classified as either one of the following<sup>7</sup>:

- *Expenditure* strategies involve direct revenue outlays or payments. Land acquisition is a common expenditure item, although development costs and equipment purchases are also included in this category. For approximately 20 years, Annual Town Meeting appropriated an average of \$250,000 annually for land acquisition. Proposition 2½, in combination with competing municipal and educational priorities, halted this annual appropriation in the late 1970s. Since this time, land acquisition has also come to a virtual halt, with the exception of small acquisitions—primarily by donation or to impede a specific development project. As mentioned previously, the purchase of the 68-acre Lowell Woods parcel ended this 20-year trend of minimal land acquisitions and has reenergized the Town to the benefit of land acquisition for open space and recreation purposes.
- *Management* strategies utilize administrative skills and efforts to manage existing resources more effectively and to develop new programs to address recreation and conservation needs. Examples of these types of strategies include the establishment of a conservation trust and the development of a comprehensive field maintenance program.
- *Regulatory* strategies involve better administration of existing bylaws, revision and amendment of prevailing regulatory schemes, and preparation and adoption of new control strategies. The “Major Residential Development” zoning article passed at the 1998 Annual Town Meeting is an example of this type of strategy.

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<sup>7</sup>Town of Littleton, *Open Space and Recreation Plan (draft)*, September, 1996.

## ***A. OPEN SPACE ACQUISITION***

### **Actions:**

1. Acquire additional land in the Sandy Valley Road/Purgatory Brook corridor, which when added to the Mulvehill and Grimm conservation parcels, the newly acquired Lowell Woods and the Town-owned Shuttleworth property would provide protection of critical land and water resources, outstanding wildlife habitat, recreational and educational opportunities and sufficient acreage for certification as a town forest.
2. Acquire scattered undeveloped parcels to provide conservation and recreation areas within walking distance of all population centers throughout the Town.
3. Acquire parcels providing exceptional scenic or community character defining vistas.
4. Develop the expertise and institutional capabilities to effectively utilize a variety of techniques to preserve and protect natural resources and conservation areas. This includes soliciting donations, below-market purchase prices, conservation restrictions and tax laws.
5. Create a conservation land trust.
6. Establish a procedure for the timely acquisition of threatened land.
7. Create a fund to enable the Town to respond quickly to opportunities to acquire open space. The purpose of the fund would be to purchase short-term options, conduct appraisals and prepare studies on land that suddenly becomes available.
8. Support enabling legislation for a statewide local option real estate transfer tax to fund open space and housing goals.

## ***B. PROTECTION OF THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT***

### **Actions:**

1. Revise Westwood's wetlands bylaw to prohibit any development activity on applicable lands prior to the issuance of all required permits and approvals from local and state agencies.
2. Institute a program of volunteer stewardship for neighborhood conservation areas and existing natural habitats, and encourage the creation of new or expanded habitat areas to compensate for lands lost to development.
3. Work with the Charles River and Neponset River Watershed Associations to promote the continued improvement of water quality in the Charles and Neponset Rivers.
4. Undertake improvements to Westwood's stormwater management system, as necessary.
5. Integrate protection of critical environmental resources into all local bylaws.

### ***C. ENCOURAGE INCREASED USE OF EXISTING CONSERVATION AREAS***

#### **Actions:**

1. Implement an annual program of trail cutting, cleanups, guided tours, and nature presentations.
2. Install signage and trail markings at all major conservation areas.
3. Develop and distribute maps and brochures for all major conservation areas.

### ***D. PROVIDE QUALITY RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES***

#### **Actions:**

1. Evaluate all conservation areas for possible recreational playfield use, where appropriate.
2. Provide sufficient and consistent maintenance of all recreation areas.
3. Evaluate the options for improving maintenance of the fields developed through the Services and Facilities Study.
4. Include needed renovations or reconfigurations of athletic fields on school property as part of all projects to expand or modify school facilities in order to be eligible for funds within the state reimbursement process.
5. At a minimum, whenever new fields are created or existing fields are rehabilitated, ensure an adequate maintenance program is devised and funded as part of the plan.
6. Develop a network or series of pedestrian, bicycle and cross-country ski trails throughout Westwood.
7. Construct an outdoor skating facility on Town-owned land.
8. Respond to the need for recreational field space identified by the Recreation Commission and Fields Advisory Committee and documented in the facilities study and this Plan. Use the continuing Open Space and Recreation Plan process to reevaluate the issue and explore the options in the larger context of the Town-wide comprehensive planning process.

### ***E. PROTECT AND ENHANCE WESTWOOD'S COMMUNITY CHARACTER***

#### **Actions:**

1. Revise Westwood's zoning bylaw and subdivision regulations to ensure adherence to principles of sustainable, character-appropriate development.

2. Continue the process of identifying and protecting those places in Town—open spaces, scenic, cultural and natural features—of special significance to the community.
3. Provide significant incentives for maintenance of defining natural features and for the preservation of scenic vistas along existing and proposed roadways.

***F. BETTER MANAGE NEW RESIDENTIAL GROWTH***

**Actions:**

1. Adopt an interim development rate control to limit growth while the Town completes its Comprehensive Plan.
2. Review and revise as appropriate the Town's Flexible Plan Development regulations to more effectively promote the use of cluster or open space layouts for new residential development.









Map 7 five year action plan

**SECTION 10**  
**PUBLIC COMMENTS AND REQUIRED LETTERS OF REVIEW**

Submitted letters from the public and mandatory letters of review from the Westwood Board of Selectmen, Westwood Planning Board and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) will be inserted in this section.

**SECTION 10**  
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