

## **Section 7: ANALYSIS OF NEEDS**

### ***A. Resource Protection Needs***

#### A.1. Scenic Landscapes:

*Vision: The unique beauty of the Gloucester landscape and the vibrant community that has grown up along its shores has a long tradition of inspiring visual artists and writers. Preservation of open space along with its magnificent vistas will help to promote a continued artistic tradition in Gloucester.*

The rich number and variety of scenic landscapes makes it difficult to pick out a list of locations that warrant higher protection. Open Space and Recreation Committee members are not aware of any particular landscape that is threatened or warrants immediate protection. The Committee did not think there is a need for a local scenic protection by-law or a need to seek state-designation of a scenic area. The biggest need is for good communication within the City and between the Community Development Department and the standing Open Space & Recreation Committee for review and appropriate protections to be incorporated into plans when necessary.

Community members during the development of Plan 2001 offered their suggestions for locations they believed to be significant (See Appendix C). This list contains many open space and recreation area and can be used and further refined by the Open Space and Recreation Committee in the development of significant open space and recreation areas.

#### A.2. Welcome Signs, Guides and Education Programs

*Vision: Open Space and Recreation Areas need access gateways with attractive welcome signs, adequate parking and/or accessible paths.*

Residents at the February 2009 meetings commented on the need for better trail markers, kiosks and maps.

Major tracts of open space, such as the Thompson Reservation/ Red Rock and Mount Ann in West Gloucester, lack adequate directional signs and parking. Many playgrounds, parks and fields through out the City lack name signs at entry points. Many open space areas, parks and playgrounds lack regulations signs indicating appropriate uses and hours. Trail head signs are also needed. Signs for heritage trails and stream-crossing would help educate the public on important cultural and environmental features of the City. Public paths where abutters consistently encroach or discourage access need signs stating "Enjoy This Public Way" in order to foster public use. Installing clear, well-written signs with the proper name, creation date and historical significance will imbue Gloucester's parks, playgrounds and open spaces with an importance that they don't currently have. Parks with clear signage are more welcoming and more likely to be treated with respect by visitors.

Guidebooks and maps need to be readily available both on and off-line and provide clear information regarding appropriate public access and use of open space and recreational lands. Trails through large tracts of open space need to be adequately documented including Dogtown, Magnolia Woods and Red Rocks. An inventory of these trails and trail head locations needs to be done, placed on GIS maps and made available to the public on the web and through printed trail guides.

One map should comprehensively list parks, playgrounds, fields, beaches, reservations, and other open space as well as trails and be placed on the City's website.

### A.3. Land Inventory Needs

*Vision: Gloucester needs a full inventory of its open spaces, needs to identify the appropriate level of protection of its open spaces and adopt appropriate regulations and management practices to protect and preserve these lands and facilities.*

Residents and the OSRC members note the glaring lack of a complete understanding of the ownership and level of protection of open spaces used by Gloucester residents. The area known as Dogtown was of particular concern.

As mentioned in Sections 3 and 5, 70% of Gloucester's land is open space at this time. The varying acreage, type of use and means of acquisition of open space has resulted in disparate lists of open space and recreational lands and uses kept by varying City Departments. The City's Assessor's office does keep a comprehensive list of all properties in the City and identifies those in government or non-profit ownership. Section 5 identifies 459 total parcels comprised of 5573.2 acres under government or non-profit control. The Assessor's data does not adequately identify the level of protection provided to those parcels whether by deed restriction or through regulation.

The City's Parks Ordinance lists only a fraction of the parcels from the Assessor's list. The City's Department of Public Works keeps a list of playgrounds and fields that it regularly maintains many that are not listed in the City's Parks Ordinance. The City has a Water Supply overlay zone that places certain restrictions on development of private land but does not have an ordinance that identifies and regulates activities on public lands within that zone. Dogtown is the historic name given to large tracts of land that of the watershed that feeds the Goose Cove and Babson Reservoirs. The area to the north of Dogtown, has traditionally been accessible via a network of fire roads and trails that cross private and public lands that need to be mapped in relation to existing parcels.

The City also owns salt marshes and strips of land adjoining roads and public landings.

#### A.4. Need to Protect the Open Space and Recreational Value of Lands

*Vision: The community adopts regulations and practices that ensure no net loss of wetlands, protection of critical habitat and enhancement of recreational areas.*

The City's 1998 Open Space Plan proposed adoption of additional wetland by-laws. These by-laws were never adopted. The Conservation Commission may recommend a new package of wetland by-law changes in the near future.

As mentioned in Section 3, the City's Parks Ordinance does not include a comprehensive list of the open space and recreational areas owned by the City, does not categorize different areas based on their use and open space value nor does it adequately set forth enforceable rules designed to manage those uses and protect key open space values.

The community needs to undertake a rigorous and honest evaluation of undeveloped private and public open space to determine where public access would be possible without compromising identified ecological values.

Residents refer to areas around the Goose Cove reservoir as Dogtown in recognition of a former common settlement along Common Road that was abandoned in the 1800's. A 1985 report by the Dogtown Steering Committee mapped out an area that straddles both public and private lands from Dogtown Road up to Norton Tree Farm for protection and proposed acquisition and management plans. Some acquisitions have occurred since 1985; however, the public area of Dogtown needs to be defined by metes and bounds and abutting private parcels that are critical to its open space and recreational value need to be identified and prioritized for protection. This should include consideration of land north of Norton's Tree Farm along Quarry Road, referred to herein as the North Gloucester Woods.

The Great Marsh Area of Critical Environmental Concern consists of marshes on the Ipswich Bay along the northern shore of West Gloucester. The marshes along the Annisquam River also provide significant habitat, flood control and scenic value. Comments by a resident at the West Gloucester neighborhood meeting suggested that the Great Marsh ACEC be expanded to include these marshes. Concerns have also been expressed that ACEC designation would create ponderous regulatory requirements for property owners for even minor intrusions into those marshes such as small docks. OSRC members suggest developing local strategies to protect the ecological values of the Annisquam Marshes without creating overly burdensome processes for owners to use their lands in ways that respect those values.

Residents at the West Gloucester meeting also commented that private, undeveloped parcels that are part of continuous open spaces that cross town boundaries including land near Ravenswood on the Manchester line and in Dogtown on the Rockport line need protection.

A.5. Identify Additional Open Spaces for Acquisition or Protection

*Vision: Open space protection needs to focus on preserving the important natural and cultural character of areas by protecting continuous tracks of land and by strategically adding adjacent lands and in-fill parcels. Strategic preservation includes acquiring tracks necessary to protect the ecological significance of the land and projects to restore the ecological function of prime habitats.*

Open Space Committee members have identified the following tracts of land that need consideration for further protection and/or acquisition include:

A.5.a. *Ravenswood:*

- Land that sits between Ravenswood and the Manchester woods is important to protect in order to preserve this continuous open space and potentially provide a link for the Northern Trail.
- In-fill parcels: Within and adjoining the Park are numerous undeveloped in-fill parcels. Lack of access and restrictions on the development within a water supply area have helped ensure that many of the parcels remain undeveloped. Some of these parcels could potentially end up developed given the appropriate financial climate.

A.5.b. *Dogtown:*

- The northern section of Dogtown consists of a mix of private and public parcels. Some development has occurred over the past few decades as subdivision roads are pushed farther in. This area needs to be studied to determine the most valuable parcels and outreach needs to be done with property owners to determine their willingness to provide protections and access to these lands;
- In-fill parcels: The ownership and tax status of in-fill parcels needs to be identified. Efforts should be made to either take tax-title or work with owners for either donation or conservation restrictions.

A.5.c. *Red Rocks:* This area in West Gloucester just off Essex Street that is popular for rock climbing. Continued public access across private lands used to enter this area needs to be ensured;

A.5.d. *Mount Ann:* This area once was a prominent gateway to Gloucester including a tower with a panoramic view. Current residents and visitors rarely go to this area now due to a lack of parking. An improved trail area for parking and trail access needs to be identified and acquired if necessary;

A.5.e. *Thompson Reservation:* Several privately-owned undeveloped parcels about this reservation. These could provide a better connection to Route 133 / Essex Avenue. Access is through a cemetery or a gate with a small parking area.

- A.5.f. *Annisquam River*: Large stretches of salt marsh are in private ownership. Some development has been proposed for upland sections of these properties. Protection of salt marshes on the west bank of the River should be afforded.
- A.5.g. *Magnolia*: The Magnolia Woods area has significant forest and wetland areas. Only a portion of the public land in this area is known to be under permanent protection.
- A.5.h. *Lanesville*: The UMASS Marine Center property near Plum Cove has been under utilized for a long period of time. This is the largest tract of public land that could provide water access along this stretch of Ipswich Bay.
- A.5.i. *Downtown Gloucester*:
- the Emerald Forest open space near Myrtle Square is a large wooded area in the heart of Downtown Gloucester and provides important greenery in a densely populated area. Neighborhood residents have suggested that this area be better protected. (From 2-12-09 meeting)
  - The City has acquired the long vacant lot (known as I4,C2) that sits between Rogers Street and a city-owned dock. The City will be developing plans for an appropriate use of the lot now that the acquisition is complete. Development potential includes a range of commercial, marine and open space uses.
- A.5.j. *East Gloucester*  
Residents attending the February 2009 meeting called for the preservation of wildlife corridors and expanded borders of the Audubon lands.
- A.5.k. *West Gloucester / Wingaersheek*:  
A large residential development with has been proposed for 23 acres just south of Wingaersheek beach. This development should be reviewed for potential impacts on open space values and may be prioritized for acquisition or conservation restrictions that protect identified values.

## ***B. Community Recreational Facility Needs***

### **B.1. Improve and Maintain Existing Recreational Land and Facilities**

*Vision: The community supports the improvement and maintenance of existing recreational parks, fields and playgrounds so that they are safe, clean and well-maintained.*

OSRC members and the Department of Public Works have undertaken various efforts to inventory the condition of existing fields, playgrounds and beaches.

Key projects to seek funding to support repair and rehabilitation funding include:

B.1.a. BURNHAM'S FIELD: has not been renovated since 1984. This park needs to be made a safe and active center piece of Downtown. The play structure is covered with graffiti. Two of four basketball hoops are unusable. Sections of fence are missing or collapsing. The field does not drain well and is not irrigated. The backstops are deficient. Access from the street is via steep sloping dirt paths that do not meet ADA accessibility standards. A football tackling dummy has stood abandoned in the field for years. Litter and vandalism is high due to inadequate lighting and the difficulty in patrolling the park. The park is situated in a densely populated neighborhood that should be more involved in its planning and use, perhaps through the development of gardens.

B.1.b. MATTOS FIELD: the lights are in poor shape and the playground lacks a firm surface to allow wheelchair access.

B.1.c. PALAZOLA FIELD: The mulch below the playground equipment at has broken up and the field needs reconditioning.

B.1.d. NEWELL ATHLETIC FIELD (next to Gloucester High School) has the following deficiencies:

#### Field – Natural Turf

- Must be used sparingly to minimize damage especially during wet weather
- Narrower than the National Federation of High School standards minimum for soccer (53 yds vs. 55 yds)

#### Track

- 40 yds shorter than standard 440 yard oval
- Pitted surface, very close to fence
- Not used for meets in 2 years

#### Bleachers

- Sinking due to poor foundation
- Warped seats and railings
- Restricts track and field size

- Lacks Wheelchair accessible seats
- Visitor section condemned
- Bathroom torn down

All the improvements provided above can readily serve the environmental justice population in Gloucester.

**Other Park and Playground Needs Identified by the Department of Public Works:**

B.1.e. STAGE FORT PARK:

- Refurbish Bathroom floors;
- Remove Ledge outcropping;
- Replace fee collector booth;
- Computerized fee collection
- Replace 2 picnic benches;
- Replace 2 basketball court lights;
- Repair Wooden Fence at Boudreau Field;
- Install gate at upper parking lot

**Beach Facilities Needs Identified by the Department of Public Works:**

B.1.f.. GOOD HARBOR BEACH:

- Parking Lot Repairs
- Computerized Ticketing
- Concession Stand - Electric Upgrade
- Window, wall, counters
- New board walks to protect dunes and provide ADA access
- Witham St Access Improvements

B.1.g. PAVILION BEACH / STACEY BOULEVARD:  
Reconstruct Seawall Cost: \$770,000

B.1.h.WINGAERSHEEK BEACH:

- Electric update
- Window, door, counter repair
- Computerized Ticketing
- Lifeguard Stand
- Sidewalk between parking lots to improve ADA access
- Parking lot repair
- Dune Boardwalks to protect dunes and provide ADA access

Open Space Committee members commented that ADA accommodations should be added to allow handicap access to the beach and water such as a movable boardwalk or a beach wheelchair.

**Athletic Field Needs Identified by the Department of Public Works:****B.1.i. BEEMAN SCHOOL FIELD:**

- Field needs a complete overhaul. Fill needs to be brought in to raise the level of the field and cover all rock outcroppings.

**B.1.j. BROWNS FIELD:**

- The field has old metal soccer goal posts that should be removed.
- Parking is limited but more space could be generated with the removal of large boulders along the Wheeler Street end of the field. Area could then be used for parking.

**B.1.k. FULLER SCHOOL FIELD:**

- Irrigation system is in place but will need to be checked for damages.
- Skinned softball infield needs to have existing material removed and replaced.

**B.1.l. GLOUCESTER HIGH SOFTBALL FIELD:**

- Skinned infield for softball has serious drainage issues. Water pools up by shortstop and behind home plate.
- Irrigation system is in place but needs repairs. There is a broken pipe that needs to be repaired, several sprinkler heads that need repair, and 1-2 zones that do not work.
- Remnants of an old batting cage that need to be removed.
- The grass running from left field to center field is in tough condition due to wear and tear from football.

**B.1.m. GREEN STREET FIELD:**

- Infield is in poor condition as it is all overgrown with weeds. Work with Little League and Lacrosse Teams to create two baseball fields overlapping one multi-use field
- Needs more parking or better crossing from Fuller School
- Add irrigation system.
- Fix Large holes scattered throughout both outfields

**B.1.n. MAGNOLIA WOODS RECREATION COMPLEX:**

- There is a fenced area that was designated as a community garden. The area has never been used for that purpose and should be converted over to parking spaces.
- Some type of restroom and storage facility needs to be constructed on site. Water and sewer connections are available.

**B.1.o. MATTOS SOFTBALL FIELD:**

- Skinned infield has some drainage issues that will be addressed this spring. The City has plans to remove the material from both infields, run drainage from both to nearby catch basins, re-grade both infields, and install new material before the season starts in April.
- The field has lights but they are in tough shape. The brackets holding the lights are starting to deteriorate to the point where we do not feel comfortable adjusting them. Musco Lighting has looked at the field and priced out new lighting. Their proposal came in at around \$70,000.
- There is a bench on both sides for players and there is a large concrete set of bleachers along the 3<sup>rd</sup> base side. The concrete has been freshly painted by the Women's league but half of the seating planks are missing.
- There is a small building that with a men's restroom, ladies restroom, and a storage room. The ladies room is maintained and cleaned by the Women's league while the men's room needs to be cleaned, painted and new lights installed.
- The electric panel for the lights is located behind the backstop in a chain link fenced in area. Holes have been cut in the fence repeatedly for illegal access to the lights. The City would like to move the electric panel inside the storage room.

**B.1.p. O'MALEY BASEBALL FIELD (NATE ROSS):**

- The fence in right field is too close as it surrounds the track on the football field located on the other side. Should be replaced and extended up at least 10-15 feet to make it more difficult for balls to be hit out of right field.

**B.1.q. O'MALEY FOOTBALL FIELD:**

- Football field is in good condition from the hash marks to the sidelines. Middle of the field from hash mark to hash mark in terrible condition and needs to be renovated. Field was shut down several years ago for a complete overhaul. Middle of the field was stripped, re-graded and seeded.
- Goal posts are in poor condition and should be replaced.
- There is no spectator seating available at the field.
- Track around the football field is in poor condition.
- Field is used by High School JV and Freshmen Football teams for games, Pee Wee Football for practice and games, High School Boys Lacrosse, and a youth lacrosse league for games and practice. Field conditions have deteriorated steadily since lacrosse was introduced.

**B.1.r. O'MALEY SOFTBALL FIELD:**

- Single bench for players on each side that is unprotected from field of play.
- There is no outfield fence and left field runs along the roadside.
- No irrigation system.
- Infield was skinned several years ago but no maintenance over the past few years has led it be filled in with grass and weeds.
- The only parking available is along the street.

- Field needs to be renovated and a fence put in along the roadside if the field is going to accommodate more usage.

B.1.S. PARA RESEARCH FIELD:

- Backstop is fully encompassed with vines and brush.
- Field surface is a combination of grass, weeds, dirt, and small stones.
- The field needs a complete overhaul and it could then be a serviceable location for t-ball, b-ball and the youngest level of softball.

B.1.T. SWINSONS FIELD:

- Field down not drain well and retains water after heavy rains.
- Field is large enough for Pee Wee football practices but it is not level. Center to right field of the softball field slopes upwards to the woods.
- Basketball and tennis courts have been removed due to the area being used as a construction storage site for ongoing project in the area.
- Plans are to have the basketball court repaved and painted while the old tennis court area will be repaved, fenced in and striped for hockey and possible whiffle ball.

B.1.U. WEST PARISH SCHOOL FIELD:

- Field is in poor condition.
- Drainage issues along the right field side of the field are an ongoing concern.
- Skinned infield is in desperate need to repair.
- Grass areas need work
- Restroom facilities available at the School but only during School hours.

## B.2. Needs for Additional Recreation Needs Based on Per Capita Analysis

*Vision: Gloucester will dedicate land in order to add recreational facilities to meet the needs of youth & high school sports in a manner consistent with preserving and enhancing the environment.*

Table 6-1 shows the per capita amount of recreational facilities in Gloucester and compares those amounts to standards presented in the City of Virginia Beach's 2008 Strategic Outdoor Recreation Plan<sup>1</sup>.

According to those standards, Gloucester has sufficient number of the following facilities:

- Tennis Courts (Note: this includes 4 courts at Gloucester High that need resurfacing)
- Playgrounds
- Picnic Areas
- Full-size (300-foot) baseball fields
- Softball Fields
- Soccer Fields for Competition
- Football Fields
- Lacrosse and Field Hockey Fields
- A Skate Park

These standards indicate that Gloucester falls below those standards for recreational facilities in the following areas:

- Small (200-foot) baseball fields
- Practice/youth soccer fields
- Outdoor basketball courts
- Dog park (off-leash recreation area for dogs)
- Community garden plots

The apparent shortage of practice and youth soccer fields results from the categorization of the Magnolia Soccer Fields as competitive fields, which the standards indicate are more than adequate.

For small baseball fields the standards do appear to be consistent with existing conditions in Gloucester. OSRC members and President of the Gloucester Little League, Dean Murray notes that Little League teams have difficulty finding practice space and are often competing against other users except at the facilities the Little League maintains.

---

<sup>1</sup> The National Park and Recreation Association has per capita facility standards that were developed in 1983. The Virginia Beach standards are similar but reflect more up-to-date trends in recreational facility use demand.

Over the next five years the City needs to:

- Identify the needs and full range of recreational uses, youth & high school sports, events, facilities and services that support the local community. This should be done through outreach to:
  - DPW
  - Gloucester Fishermen Athletic Association (GFAA)
  - GHS Athletic Director
  - Local sports board of directors: from youth and adult football, baseball, basketball, soccer, lacrosse, softball leagues
- Identify existing inventory of open spaces for recreational uses.
- Identify areas of open space where new fields can be built, including consideration of the open space function and value of those areas.
- Collaborate with other city departments, sports and other volunteer organizations to effectively leverage resources to accomplish mutual goals.

Potential areas for additional recreation fields are:

- City land that adjoining the Beeman School.
- Magnolia Woods Athletic Fields

**Table 6-1 City of Gloucester Recreational Facility Count 2/18/2010**

Outdoor Recreational Facility and Asset Type	Per Capita Standard (Population)*	Current Number in Gloucester	Location of Facilities	Current Per Capita Number in Gloucester
Tennis Courts	1 Court/5,000	10	[2] Stage Fort Park [3] Bass Rocks Athletic Club (Private) [5] Gloucester High School [0] Decommissioned: Swinson's	1.66/5000
Outdoor Basketball Courts	1 Court/2,500	9	[1] Ciaramitaro/ Gemellaro (the Fort) [1] Stage Fort Park [2] Burnham's Field [1] O'Maley School [1] West Parish School [1] Beeman School [1] Veterans School [1] Ganine Doucette	0.75/2500  <b>Below Standard</b>
Playgrounds	1 Site /2,000	17	(1) Babson (2) Bayview (3) Beeman School (4) Ben Smith (5) Brown's Field / Apple Street (6) Burnham's Field (7) Ciaramitaro/Gemellaro (8) East Gloucester School (9) Eastern Avenue School (Pararesearch) (10) Ganine Doucette (11) Mattos Field (Veterans School) (12) Middleton (13) Palazola (14) Plum Cove School (15) Rebecca's Playground (Private) (16) Stage Fort Park (17) West Parish School (Science Park)	1.13/2,000

<b>Outdoor Recreational Facility and Asset Type</b>	<b>Per Capita Standard (Population)*</b>	<b>Current Number in Gloucester</b>	<b>Location of Facilities</b>	<b>Current Per Capita Number in Gloucester</b>
Picnic Pavilions	1 Site/2,500	45	[45] Stage Fort Park	3.75/2,500
Baseball 200' Outfield	1 Field/3,250	7	[1] Beeman School (Practice-Shared) [1] Boudreau Baseball Field [1] Burnham Field (Shared) [1] O'Maley Softball Field (Shared) [1] Plum Cove [1] West Parish (Shared) [1] Wilson Little League Field	0.75/3,250  <b>Below Standard</b>
Baseball 300' Outfield	1 Field/18,000	3	[1] Ganine Doucette (Green Street) [1] O'Maley (Nate Ross) [1] Parisi (Stage Fort)	1.8/18,000
Softball Fields - Youth Competitive	1 Field/5,000	9	[1] Beeman School (Practice-Shared) [1] Burnham's [1] Green Street [1] Magnolia Woods [1] O'Maley Softball Field (Shared) [1] Eastern Ave. School (Practice) [1] Swinson's [1] West Parish (Shared) [1] Palazola	1.5/5,000
Softball Fields - Adult Competitive	1 Field/18,000	4	[1] Mattos Field (Women's) [1] Burke's Field [1] Gloucester High (shared with GHS and Pee Wee Football) [1] Plum Cove	2.4/18,000
Soccer Fields - Youth/Competitive/Practice	1 Field/4,000	2	[1] Brown's Field (Practice) [1] Kettle Cove Field	0.27/4,000 <b>Below Standard</b>
Soccer Fields - Regulation/Competitive	1 Field/6,000	7	[6] Magnolia Woods [1] Newell Field (Shared)	1.4/6,000

<b>Outdoor Recreational Facility and Asset Type</b>	<b>Per Capita Standard (Population)*</b>	<b>Current Number in Gloucester</b>	<b>Location of Facilities</b>	<b>Current Per Capita Number in Gloucester</b>
Football Fields - Competitive/Practice	1 Field/6,000	6	[1] O'Maley Multi-use (Shared with Lacrosse) [1] Newell Field [1] Burnham's (Fall Football - Shared) [1] Burke's (Flag) [1] O'Maley Softball (shared) [1] West Parish (shared)	1/6,000
Lacrosse/Field Hockey Fields	1 Field/50,000	3	[1] O'Maley Multi-use (Shared) [1] Fuller School [1] Newell Field (Shared)	5/50,000
Dog Parks	1 Site/50,000	None		None
Skate Parks (Inline, Skateboard, BMX)	1 Site/50,000	1	[1] O'Maley	1.66/50,000
Hockey Rink	None		[1] O'Maley	
Volleyball (seasonal)	None	2	[1] Stage Fort Park [1] Wingersheek Beach	
Community Gardens	2 Plots/1000 **	~20	~10 Riverdale Park ~10 – Young's Farm Lanesville - Note – Community Garden Space at Magnolia Fields is not being used	0.66/1000

\* based on standards in the 2008 Virginia Beach Outdoor Recreation Strategic Plan

\*\* estimated from the City of Somerville, MA Community Garden Program

#### B.4. Needs Based on Spatial Distribution of Playgrounds

Figure 21 shows the distribution of playgrounds within the City. Figure 21 shows that the environmental justice areas of Gloucester extending from Downtown up towards Riverdale Park have a rich density of both playgrounds and fields. The only densely populated area of Gloucester that lacks walking access to a playground is Magnolia. Riverdale area needs better access to the nearby fields and basketball courts at O'Maley School.

Magnolia lacks a playground. Outreach should be done to assess if there's community interest in creating a playground there.

Basketball courts are below per capita standards. Further assessment should be done to identify areas lacking outdoor basketball courts and the extent indoor basketball courts are available.

#### B.5. Needs to Improve Public Access to the Water

*Vision: Public landings provide open and well-maintained access to the water and include new amenities to allow easier public use. Open Space and Recreation plans complement Waterway Board activities to maintain and improve public access to the water.*

The Waterways Board has reviewed the status of 58 locations historically identified as public landings. After the 1998 Plan the Board successfully researched and improved access to numerous landings. The Harbor Master and the Shellfish Warden have provided an update to the 1998 inventory and identified the following key additional activities necessary to improve public access to the water:

- B.5.a. **Stage Fort Park / Downtown:** A water recreation access plan to improve opportunities for more residents to easily enjoy water recreation such as kayaking, rowing, sailing, fishing and swimming including expanding water taxi service to Stage Fort Park so that residents and tourists can walk from Stage Fort to Downtown and Rocky Neck and return by boat. The Public Access Board has developed preliminary engineering plans for a new landing at Stage Fort Park that can serve the water shuttle and recreational water access. Stage Fort Park is the City's most popular park and is centrally located.
- B.5.b. **Gardiner Landing,** Rear 167 East Main Street. Assessor's Map 63  
Recommendation: City should work with Americold to obtain some use of the water portion (not presently used by the company) and a portion of the parking lot.
- B.5.c. **Robinson's Landing,** East Main Street, at Pirate's Lane. Map 79 Lot 1.  
Recommendations: Remove encroachments. Grade launch area. More research at Registry through the County Commissioner. City needs to obtain use of greater portion of the small cove area, as access is very limited due to houses, trees and signpost. Another option is to seek negotiations with abutters for the use of this

property in exchange for the signs and trees remaining. A direct purchase is safer for the future.

B.5.d. **Walker Creek Landing**, Concord and Sumner Street near the lower bridge, Assessor's Map 240. City owns west side of bridge. Private on other side.

Status: Undetermined. Used locally for many years, especially for swimming. Some clamming. Marsh land. Access limited to four hours around high tide.

Recommendation: Potential land on Essex Bay. Should be researched at Registry. If privately owned, abutter may be willing to donate, or grant easement.

B.5.e. **Long Wharf Landing**, 113-123 Atlantic St, Assessor's Map 246/Lot 45  
Condition: Pre-fabricated boat ramp installed but washed out. Gravel causeway gets deep potholes. Requires frequent repair by Department of Public Works. Well-used landing with small, simple clam-shell launch area. Used by clammers and recreational boaters. Small parking area on the end. High tides only. Launch area is presently in clam flats. 10 PM to 4 AM curfew.

Recommendations: Prefabricated boat ramp needs to be relocated. Should have guard rails; add dingy dock tie-up. Create long-term restoration and management plan Signs needs to be replaced constantly.

B.5.f. **County Landing**, Western Avenue at Pavilion Beach, Assessor's Map 2. Next to the Tavern.

Condition: Ramp destroyed during a construction project.

Recommendations: Needs to be repaired to re-open access. Consider putting in kayak racks.

B.5.g. **Stanwood Point Landing**, Stanwood Ave, Assessor Map 230/Lot 134.

Recommendation: Washed out and in need of repair.

#### B.6. Needs Related to Access to Open Space: Ascertain the Feasibility of a Pathway Network

*Vision: Gloucester develops plans for a pathway network to connect major recreation areas and accessible open space to Downtown and village centers. The "Green Path Network" will provide trails for fitness and enjoyment and to the extent practicable have surfaces and slopes that can accommodate casual walkers, wheelchairs, strollers and recreational bicyclists.*

At the February 2009 meetings residents identified the need for an inland pedestrian and bicycle trail network that provides access to open space and recreation areas and transportation connections. Some residents described this as a green network. Needs identified included providing a route through Dogtown, crossings for Route 128 and the MBTA Commuter Rail Line and bike lanes around Cape Ann.

The City's Get Fit Gloucester! program has undertaken an assessment of physical infrastructure needs and has done outreach to youth group known as the Chill Zone. That assessment identified the lack of good pedestrian and bicycle connections to:

- Major recreational facilities such as Magnolia Woods, Ravenswood, Dogtown , Good Harbor and Wingersheek Beaches;
- Athletic fields near the O'Maley School that are near the Riverdale Park apartments that house a significant number of low-income residents;
- Between Downtown and the Riverdale Park apartments and
- Downtown, East Gloucester, the Back Shore/ Bass Rocks.

Figure 22 shows a conceptual representation of a potential "Green Path Network" that would provide those connections via off-road paths and on-road improvements.

#### B.7. Needs of Environmental Justice Community

Riverdale area – has a tot play area not one for older children.. At the Riverdale Community meeting residents indicated that their priority would be to create better connections to the fields, basketball courts and skate park near O'Maley School basketball by improving a walking path to those areas. Residents did not show strong interest in creating better access to Babson Playground and O'Maley BB courts via the DPW yard.

#### B.8. Elderly Population

The Community Development Department's evaluated the active lifestyles needs of seniors as part of the Get Fit Gloucester! community evaluation. The Rose Baker Senior Center on Main Street serves as a central location for senior focused activities and can be reached via CATA bus lines. The Center offers exercise classes through-out the week including walking/balance classes, yoga, Tai Chi and dances. The center is fully handicap accessible and offers meals as well. The Cape Ann YMCA offers free and discounted programs including swimming for seniors.

Stacy Boulevard along the Gloucester Waterfront is a popular location for seniors to walk through out the year and features a wide, level sidewalk and bathroom facilities. A senior walking group runs from spring to fall. Gloucester lacks a major indoor mall that could serve the needs of winter walkers

B.9. Results of ADA Self-Evaluation

The City completed an ADA Self-Evaluation of its recreational facilities in July and August of 2010. The results of that evaluation are summarized in this section and set forth in detail in Appendix G.

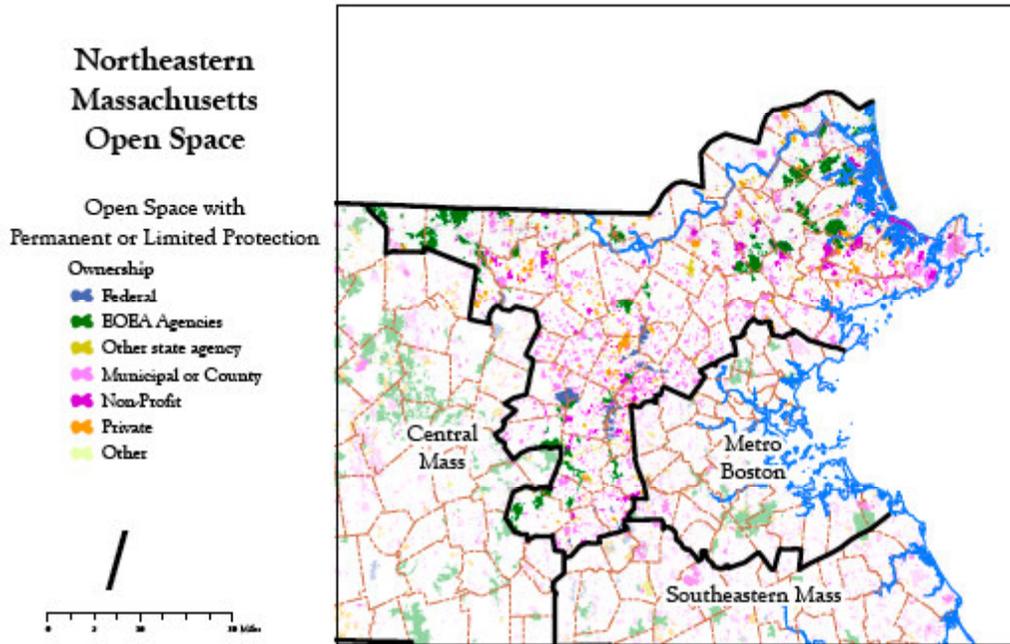
The open space and recreation facilities and activities as a comprehensive system substantially comply with the American with Disabilities Act. The Department of Public Works continues to make access improvements to increase the number of facilities that are accessible and to meet new ADA access standards as facilities are upgraded. The Community Development Department and the Department of Public Works will work together to find funds to continue improve access in the future as described above in this evaluation.

Location	Improvement	Responsible Staff	Timeframe
Burnham's Field	Community Garden with Accessible Beds	Com Development DPW	Spring 2011 Additional beds in 2012 if funding available
Green Street	Accessible Path around Field	DPW Com Development	2011
Schools	Accessible Outdoor Lunch Tables	School Department with support from PTO's, Rotary and others	As Funding is available
Burnham's Field	Improve ADA access to field, playground and gardens	Com Development DPW Private Contractor	2012 or when PARC funds obtained
Ballfields	ADA parking with accessible routes to fields <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Burnham's</li> <li>• The Oval</li> <li>• O'Maley</li> <li>• Wilson</li> <li>• Parisi</li> <li>• Burke's</li> <li>• Newell Stadium</li> </ul>	DPW Com Development	2011: Green St 2012: Burnham's* & Newell 2013*: Burke's & the Oval 2014*: O'Maley & Wilson 2015*: Parisi * based as CDBG funds availability
Beeman School	Accessible Route from School Building to fields and playground	DPW Facilities	TBD
Stage Fort Park	More accessible Bathroom near snack shop	DPW/Vendor	TBD

B.10. State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)

In 2006, the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs’ Division of Conservation Services prepared a plan that examined statewide and regional recreational facility needs (<http://www.mass.gov/Eoeea/docs/eea/dcs/massoutdoor2006.pdf>). The following is an excerpt from the SCORP for the Northeast Region, where Gloucester is located.

**Supply in the Northeastern Region**



**Activities**

In terms of the most popular activities, the Northeastern Region is unremarkable, closely following the statewide patterns. Swimming, walking, sightseeing and tours, hiking and fishing top the list. However, interesting and distinctive preference patterns emerge at a more subtle level when activity levels are compared in detail with other regions. Among the more notable exceptions, baseball, sunbathing, horseback riding, off-road vehicle driving, snowmobiling, boating (motorized), and surfing are more often reported here than anywhere else in the Commonwealth. Also more popular than average are soccer, tot lot activity, and hockey (pond).

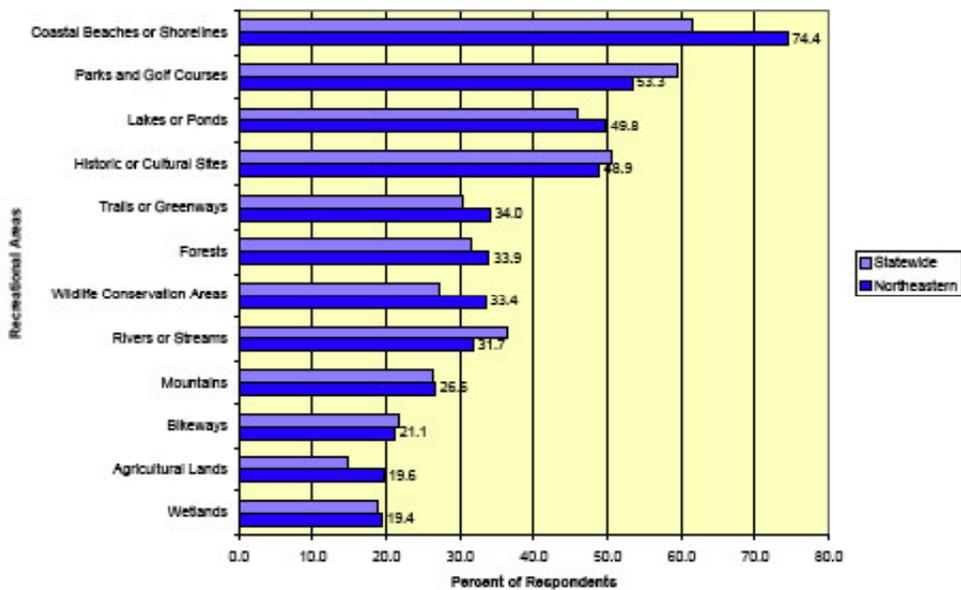
While motor boating is most popular, sail boating and sailing are reported at their least popular level statewide, notwithstanding the great harbors of Marblehead, Salem, Manchester and Lynn. The same is true of football, sightseeing and tours and events, road biking, cross country skiing, fishing, and hunting. Also less frequently reported than other regions are roller blading and skating, running and jogging, and camping. When aggregated according to field, water, trail, passive and wilderness activities or pursuits, the

strongest area seems to be that of water-based activities, followed by passive recreation activities. Wilderness activities are the least reported. These patterns imply the abundance of water (both coastal and fresh) and conservation resources, and hint at the relative scarcity of trail and wilderness types of resources.

**Resource Use**

Once again, the statewide patterns are in evidence in the Northeast, with coastal beaches and shorelines topping the list of resource areas used, followed distantly by golf courses, neighborhood parks, playgrounds and tot lots, lakes and ponds, and historic and cultural sites. The least used recreation resources in the northeast are reported to be wetlands and agricultural lands, although these had high satisfaction ratings for those using them. Regarding the frequency of visits, versus number reporting use, residents here indicate much lower frequency of return trips per year to wetlands, trails and greenways, wildlife conservation areas, and agricultural lands. Not consistent with the preferences noted above, this data would suggest that in the Northeast, a large percentage of the population is engaged in these activities, but on an infrequent basis.

**Figure 51. Experience with Recreational Areas In the Northeastern Region**



**Needs in the Northeastern Region**

**Satisfaction Levels**

Residents of this region are least satisfied with lakes and ponds, bikeways, rivers and streams, and coastal beaches, in that order. The dissatisfaction level for bikeways is far and away the highest in the state. Cleanliness, maintenance, and other are cited as issues. The same is true, though to a lesser degree, with forests, where capacity and attractiveness are cited as complaints, causing forests to be ranked lowest in this region in terms of median number of trips. The Northeastern Region reports the lowest dissatisfaction level of all regions for golf course, neighborhood parks, playgrounds and tot lots.

The highest satisfaction level is that for historic and cultural sites, followed by wildlife conservation areas, and then mountains, agricultural lands and wetlands. The high satisfaction level with mountains must result from the closer

#### Funding Preferences

In the Northeast, residents support improving access for people with disabilities more strongly (96.1%) than in any other region, although support statewide is already at 92.8%. Support for maintaining existing facilities ranks at the top of this region's priority list, as is also the case statewide, with the Northeast (98.0%) tying the Connecticut Valley for the highest reported value in any funding priority. Adding park staff received the lowest priority ranking, but still exceeds a two-thirds majority at 69.9%. Support for new acquisitions was also among the highest regionally, at 80.1%, just below that in the Metropolitan Boston (80.4%) and Central (81.1) regions.

#### Facilities Needs

The survey asked residents what new facilities would most benefit them, and it is a good thing the question was asked, because the answers in the Northeast are largely not a direct reflection of the supply and demand patterns. The respondents in this region place the highest priority for new facilities on road biking (14.1%), then playground activity (13.8%), swimming (12.6%), walking (11.8%), golfing (9.1%) and basketball (8.3%). A middle tier of priorities includes tennis (7.6%), fishing (6.5%) and mountain biking (6.1%).

When expressed as inferred need for new recreational areas, these activities translate to the need for more playgrounds, neighborhood parks, and golf courses, and better access to agricultural lands, lakes and ponds, rivers and streams, and coastal beaches. Need was nearly as strongly expressed for bikeways and trails or greenways. The least need was identified for historic and cultural sites and then wetlands.

### ***C. Management Needs***

#### **C.1. Develop Management Plans and Improve Stewardship**

*Vision: The community supports greater stewardship of major tracks of lands, including the watershed lands around Ravenswood and Dogtown. Watershed and other conservation lands have management plans that include strategies to protect the City's water supply and to maintain their ecological significance. Private and public partners fund staff dedicated to developing, implementing and enforcing management plans.*

Residents commented on various management issues at the community meetings including the following comments on the Dogtown area:

- Cherry Street recycling area (from 2-12-09 neighborhood meeting)
  - Vandalism,
  - Access
  - Lack of trail markers
  - Temporary Compost area continues to exist
  - Lack of maintenance
  
- From 2-9-09 meeting in Lanesville:
  - Limited & diminishing access to woods/quarries, Dogtown & the coast
  - Decreasing access to, and use of old roads, top of Barker, Biancini, Leverett, etc.
  - Bike path thru Dogtown. Emergency management aspect.
  - Lack of regulation of damaging dirt bikes & ATV's
  - Need to know boundaries of Open Space woods
  - Lack of knowledge of habitat & other important lands
  - Resolve what land is public and what is private

Open Space Committee members identified the need to set forth the metes and bounds of existing public lands in the Dogtown area so that a "Dogtown Reservation" can be formally established.

### *C.2. Involve Youth in Stewardship*

*Vision: Children and youth take pride in the open space and recreation areas of the City and become more involved in the improvement and stewardship of open space and recreation areas through education, community participation, volunteer actions and paid service.*

#### *C.2.a. Educational Curriculum*

Information about educational opportunities for students needs to be distributed more widely. For instance, the Trustees of Reservations has opened an education center in Ravenswood Park where classes and families can go to learn about the natural environment in and around the Park. The Gloucester School Department has developed a school curriculum on Dogtown.

#### *C.2.b. Environmental Center*

Gloucester High School and Salem State University Staff have identified the creation of an Environmental Center near the school as one important way to encourage youth stewardship.

Research shows that physical exercise and cooperative activities enhance the social, emotional and intellectual growth of young people. Physical fitness is a key element of mental and emotional health, and the program not only engages students in active learning, but also offers space for a circuit training course, which is an effective physical fitness process. At-risk and regular education students at GHS require exercise and team building experiences. Obesity, sedentary life styles, computer game addiction, substance abuse, general depression and alienation, plague at-risk students.

An area between GHS and Dunfudgin' landing along the Annisquam River has been identified as a possible location for "Adventure-Based Counseling", now a recognized international intervention strategy for at-risk youth.

The Dunfudgin' upland is an ideal work site for this project. The Uplands encompass a rich variety of trees, plants, birds and microscopic life forms. The location offers easy access to the Annisquam River and acres of salt marsh and tidal sand flats. Students could build connections to the natural world and to the role they play in shaping a healthy future for themselves and others. This piece of land has been neglected for many years. Broken glass, cement blocks, food wrappers and other trash litter the ground.

### C.3. Consider and Mitigate Impacts from Climate Change

*Vision Open space and recreation land planning, use and management will thoughtfully consider the changing environment and how our open spaces can be resilient, remain robust and continue to provide critical open space functions and value for wildlife and citizens of Gloucester.*

Open space and recreation land planning, use and management will incorporate best use and management practices aiming to preserve and maintain an environment throughout the city that is resilient to the current and projected impacts of a changing climate. Potential impacts include loss of coastal habitat as a result of sea-level rise, increased coastal and inland flooding during storm events, an increased “urban heat island” effect, diminishing surface water resources due to evaporation and increased domestic and commercial use, loss of native species due to habitat changes, including increasing numbers of invasive plants and animals. A well-adapted city, strongly resilient to the potentially destructive effects of climate change will preserve and maintain green spaces, both urban and rural, in a manner that retains a rich biodiversity and enhances the quality of life for all citizens.

#### ***D. Considerations for Potential Change of Use:***

The OSRC recommends the City consider the following criteria when evaluating whether to change the use of existing City land designated or used for open space and recreation purposes. The City should consider whether the property:

1. Sits in a water supply watershed;
2. Provides significant recreational opportunities to residents;
3. Provides high value habitat;
4. Contributes to the scenic beauty of Gloucester,
5. Consists of properties with historic significance or
6. Abuts land described in items 1-5.

For parcels not currently designated or used for open space and recreation, the Committee advises that the City keep the parcel in public ownership and proceed to designate the land for open space and recreation when the land:

1. Abuts or is otherwise continuous with designated open space and recreation land;
2. Neighbors indicate that the land provides or potentially can provide open space and recreational value that does not currently exist in the neighborhood.

When selling tracts of land not designated for open space the City should consider favoring proposals that can preserve more open space or provide recreational amenities that are open to the public.

## **Section 8: Goals and Objectives**

### ***Goal 1. Improve Stewardship of Open Space***

- a. The City should develop a more complete open space land inventory that identifies:
  - Enforceable recorded easements or restrictions on the use of a parcel; or
  - In the absence of such easements or restrictions, whether a law or ordinance provides enforceable use restrictions.
- b. For all open space and recreation areas in the City, the City should develop plans and rules that clearly identify the City Department responsible for managing each area and enforcing the rules.
- c. The City should consider creating a stewardship partnership with the Trustees of Reservations (TTOR), Essex Greenbelt, the Massachusetts Audubon Society and other non-profits that will seek to identify and share resources to oversee use and care of passive recreation and conservation open spaces. Stewardship could include hiring of an open space warden or ranger to patrol watershed and woodland areas.
- d. Stewardship will include support for involving youth, including development and use of curriculum for classes to visit and learn about the natural environment in Gloucester.
- e. The City should take actions to consider and mitigate impacts of climate change on open space in Gloucester and manage open space in ways that help protect both public and private land from the adverse impacts of climate change.

### ***Goal 2. Improve Existing Recreation Facilities and Create New Areas to Meet Defined Needs***

The City should improve and maintain its recreation facilities paying special attention to:

- a. Burnham' Field: Replace damaged facilities and fences, improve lighting and provide better access for residents and police patrols;
- b. Newell Field: Create a public-private partnership to develop a plan to fund the renovation of Newell Field including pursuit of state and foundation grants and individual donations;
- c. Stage Fort Park, Good Harbor Beach and Wingaersheek: Support the ongoing renovations at these major recreational facilities. Seek to reduce congestion around beaches by implementing electronic parking control and information systems;
- d. Support efforts by DPW and volunteers to maintain and improve existing athletic fields and identify opportunities for grants and donations to support these efforts
- e. Partner with local sports organizations on efforts to improve Dick Wilson Field, Mattos Field and Green Street Fields at Doucette Park in order to serve as fields for baseball, softball and other field sports;

- f. Swinsons Field: restore recreational use of the portions of the field that were damaged during recent construction.

The City should consider adding a number of recreational facilities, for example:

- g. Little league fields and basketball courts;
- h. Improved access from the Riverdale area to the fields at O'Maley School;
- i. A playground more centrally located in Magnolia.

***Goal 3. Protect and Improve Gateways to Open Space, Recreation Areas and the Water***

a. All parks, playgrounds and significant tracts of open space should have signs at key entry points indicating the name of the area and appropriate uses. Gateways should be easily identifiable and, when supported by neighbors, include adequate parking if site conditions allow.

b. An Open Space and Recreation Map should be developed that includes the City's parks, playgrounds and conservation areas. Improved mapping should be done of major open space areas such as Dogtown, Magnolia Woods and Red Rocks.

- Identify access points to open space
- Create clear, marked entrances
- Pursue acquiring rights-of-way or easements on privately-owned land.

c. To maintain and improve public access to the water the City should:

- Support efforts by the Harbormaster, Waterways Board, and Conservation Commission to protect and improve public landings;
- Create new water recreation access at Stage Fort Park; and
- Support the addition of kayak lockers, changing areas and other infrastructure at appropriate locations.

***Goal 4. Create Strategic Connections Between Existing Open Spaces***

The City has large tracts of Open Space lands that would better serve residents if connections between those lands were strengthened, better marked in the field and more clearly identified on maps.

a. Acquire undeveloped parcels that are part of continuous open spaces. Especially consider regional linkages where open spaces cross town boundaries including land near Ravenswood on the Manchester line and in Dogtown on the Rockport line are inventoried and prioritized for potential acquisition.

b. Identify potential "green" linkages between existing protected lands, such as the connection between separate areas of the Thompson Street reservation.

c. Identify and improve on-road and off-road connections to provide safe linkages for connection between recreational areas.

***Goal 5. Strategic Preservation of Open Space***

The City should clarify its open space and recreational interests so that development activities can be managed to preserve those interests.

Strategies:

- a. Define Dogtown by metes and bounds and identify abutting private parcels that are critical to the open space and recreational value of the area;
- b. For existing publicly-owned open space parcels where there is neither deed nor regulatory restriction, propose enforceable restrictions or regulations for review by the public and approval by the City Council and Mayor.
- c. Pursue the following defined projects:
  - Ravenswood: the City should continue its work with Trust For Public Lands and TOR to acquire 100 acres of land that sits between Ravenswood Park and Magnolia and Western Avenues
  - Dogtown: protected public, non-protected public and private undeveloped land abutting public land should be studied to determine strategic potential land acquisitions and protections to preserve historic passive recreational uses of the undeveloped areas;
- d. Red Rocks: public access routes should be identified and protected;
- e. Mount Ann: an area for parking should be identified and developed and an improved trail to the summit built;
- f. Tompson Street Reservation: the area should be expanded and a gateway added;
- g. Annisquam River: marsh lands should be protected and the City and property owners should work creatively with existing zoning to ensure upland development protects open space within the development and respects adjoining open space;
- h. Magnolia: The Magnolia Woods area should be more clearly delineated and protected.
- i. Lanesville: The City should monitor the status of the University of Massachusetts Marine Center property and be prepared to work towards an acquisition of this Center if it becomes available.
- j. Downtown Gloucester:
  - The Emerald Forest open space near Myrtle Square: consider working with the private landowner to allow access for a nature walk;
  - Pursue Harborwalk extensions along the downtown waterfront.
- k. East Gloucester: preserve wildlife corridors and expanded borders of the Audubon lands.