

TOWN OF ASHBY, MASSACHUSETTS
OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN
UPDATE



December 4, 2018

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SECTION 1 - PLAN SUMMARY

Ashby is located in the far northwest corner of Middlesex County, 49 miles west of Boston and 32 miles north of Worcester. Once an outpost of Lunenburg, Ashby was incorporated on March 5, 1767. The town is characterized by rugged, hilly terrain interspersed with gently rolling open fields, woodlands, stream corridors, and wetlands. Most of the town is in the Nashua River watershed with a small portion of the northwest corner in the Souhegan River watershed. The town was originally agrarian, but in the mid-19th century began to harness its fast flowing streams for water powered manufacturing. Although agriculture has declined over the years as it has throughout New England, the residents of Ashby still look to their agricultural roots as part of their definition of the town.

This Open Space and Recreation Plan seeks to lay out a comprehensive description of the town as it stands today, still securely attached to a rural past with a natural desire to protect itself from the impacts of sprawl and suburbanization. The Open Space and Recreation Committee hopes this plan, developed with input from town boards and residents, will help guide the direction and pace of development for Ashby through the next seven years.

Sections 3 and 4 provide background information on the physical, biotic, and cultural aspects of the Town of Ashby. Section 3 describes the community in its regional and historical context; demographics, population, population density, and historic and modern development patterns. Section 4 provides an environmental analysis of the characteristics of the town, including its geology, topography, landscape character and scenic resources, water resources, vegetation, fish and wildlife.

Section 5 includes a detailed inventory of lands of conservation and recreation interest. The inventory documents lands under public control, lands whether private or public protected in perpetuity, lands under non-profit organization ownership, and lands under special taxation programs (Chapter 61 and the like). The properties in each of these categories are listed in Section 5.

Section 6 summarizes the broad goals of the Plan as they have been defined based on community input and the committee's research. The overall open space vision for Ashby is to improve and enhance the Town's open space system in order to preserve rural character, protect natural resources, and expand recreational opportunities. The goals put forth by this plan are as follows:

- Preserve rural character – Ashby is fortunate to have large tracts of as yet undeveloped fields and forests. Along with the historic Town center and other heritage landscapes, these large fields and forests give Ashby the quaint, rural feeling and scenic views desired by its citizens.

- Protect natural resources - Ashby has tremendous natural resources including hills, mountains, rivers, water bodies, wetlands, wildlife corridors, and wind. These resources are important to the community and the region.
- Expand recreational opportunities - As desired by its citizens, Ashby has great potential to expand, locally and regionally, its passive recreational system while maintaining safe active recreational opportunities.

These goals were reviewed in depth at a public meeting held on June 18, 2018. While they were modified somewhat based on the responses of those who attended, the underlying concepts continue to be strongly supported. There is consensus that the revised goals offer valuable guidance for Ashby's open space preservation and recreation programs, and should be included in the 2018 Update of the Plan.

Sections 7 through 9 describe in detail the Town's resource protection, community interests, management needs, the specific objectives to achieve to meet the Plan's broad goals, and provide a seven year action plan. These sections outline the specifics that will serve as the active portion of the plan over the coming years and provide a point of reference for communication on open space and recreation by town officials, board members, and citizens.

We would like to note that this plan was done in the way things are done in Ashby - by a group of mostly volunteers who decided that putting the open space and recreation needs of the community into a Plan was important to them and to their town. We are proud of our effort and its result, and offer it to our community in hopes that it will serve us all well.

SECTION 2 - INTRODUCTION

Statement of Purpose

This document is intended to serve as a guide to the future direction, conservation, and expansion of the open space and recreational assets of Ashby. This Plan provides a set of tangible goals and objectives as well as an action plan for the next seven years. It is the most recent update to the original plan approved in 1999.

Ashby citizens set great store by the desirable qualities of small town living. We value open spaces, privacy, stargazing in the center of town, the moose walking down South Road, informality, socializing at the Post Office and the new restaurant in the center of town, quirky town politics, clean air and water, band concerts on the Common, and the July 3rd bonfire. Ashby wishes to protect our rural character and our natural resources, and expand our recreational opportunities.

Since the first update of the Open Space and Recreation Plan in 2005, Ashby has been extremely active in the preservation of land, enacting bylaws and policies that preserve rural character and protect farms and forests, while educating and encouraging citizens to be involved in open space efforts. In the past ten years, suburban sprawl stalled in response to the recession, but we expect the development pressure to return, as evidenced by a recent spate of Form A and small subdivision projects. It is important to bring forward a new update to address the changing needs of the community and to continue our efforts to preserve the sense of place that we value.

Planning Process and Public Participation

Ashby's town officials and landowners have made great strides in the actions laid out by the 1999 Plan and updates to that plan. We wanted to update the Plan to establish new goals and objectives and listen to whether the community wished to change direction or maintain the Town's open space and recreational planning efforts.

In late 2017, the Planning Board met with members of the Conservation Commission, Board of Health, and Ashby Land Trust to form a working group committed to producing an update to the Open Space and Recreation Plan. The members of the Open Space and Recreation working committee were Alan Pease, Roberta Flashman, Michael McCallum and Cathy Kristofferson. Land Use Agent Laura Harbottle assisted with writing, editing and formatting. The maps were created by Andrew Leonard and updated by Andrew Desrosiers, both residents of Ashby.

Interested citizens were invited to three public forums. Attendees included members of the Conservation Commission, Board of Selectmen and other residents with a strong desire to be involved with the plan. Their names are noted on the copies of Sign-In Sheets in the Appendix.

Over the next five months, the core group began work on updating the database of lands in the Town, researching topics of discussion, communicating with interested citizens, and preliminary planning. The public participation process consisted of a series of meetings with interested residents and a survey.

The first public forum was held on January 18, 2018. The notice of the meeting was included in the Town census mailing to reach as many townspeople as possible. The second public forum was on March 10, 2018. This was a Saturday meeting intended to attract those who might not be able to attend on a weeknight. This was followed by a third forum on June 18, 2018. A draft update will be presented to the Selectmen in the fall of 2018.

A final draft was prepared and submitted to the Selectmen, Planning Board and the regional planning agency for review. Sections 1 through 5 in draft form and Sections 6 through 9 in final draft form were submitted to the Division of Conservation Service with a LAND Grant application on July 12, 2018.

SECTION 3 - COMMUNITY SETTING

Regional Context

Ashby covers 23.66 square miles of land along the border between Massachusetts and New Hampshire. The Town's immediate neighbors in Massachusetts are Townsend, Ashburnham, Lunenburg and the city of Fitchburg. Ashby is bounded on the north by the towns of New Ipswich and Mason, New Hampshire.

The topography is hilly with rock outcroppings on some of the steeper slopes and relatively little flat land. The soils are primarily glacial tills with pockets of sand and gravel and small amounts of floodplain alluvium. Mount Watatic rises to a height of 1600 feet along the western border of town; its summit of 1832 feet is in Ashburnham. Most of the land in the town is flourishing with second growth forest of mixed deciduous and coniferous species. A number of hay fields and miles of stone walls provide a pastoral landscape reminiscent of our agricultural past.

Most of Ashby is in the Nashua River watershed. A small portion of the northwest corner is in the Souhegan River watershed. A number of brooks and streams originate in Ashby. There are several large bodies of water in Ashby: Upper Wrights Pond, Lower Wrights Pond, the Ashby Compensating Reservoir and the Fitchburg Reservoir. Another large body of water, Little Watatic Pond, is shared with Ashburnham. Ashby contains a number of wetland and vernal pools, including the important habitat of Great Meadow along Trap Falls Brook. With the exception of the Souhegan River, all of the waters flowing out of Ashby are classified as Outstanding Resource Waters by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP).

Townspeople in Ashby rely on private wells for their water needs. The forests on our undeveloped land help maintain our clean water. The Nashua River Watershed Association produced a guide in December 1995 called the *2020 Vision for the Nashua River Watershed*. The authors describe the value of these lands to water quality this way: "Runoff and infiltration from forested land produce the best quality water. A watershed whose open spaces become less than its developed lands can no longer supply itself with drinking water."

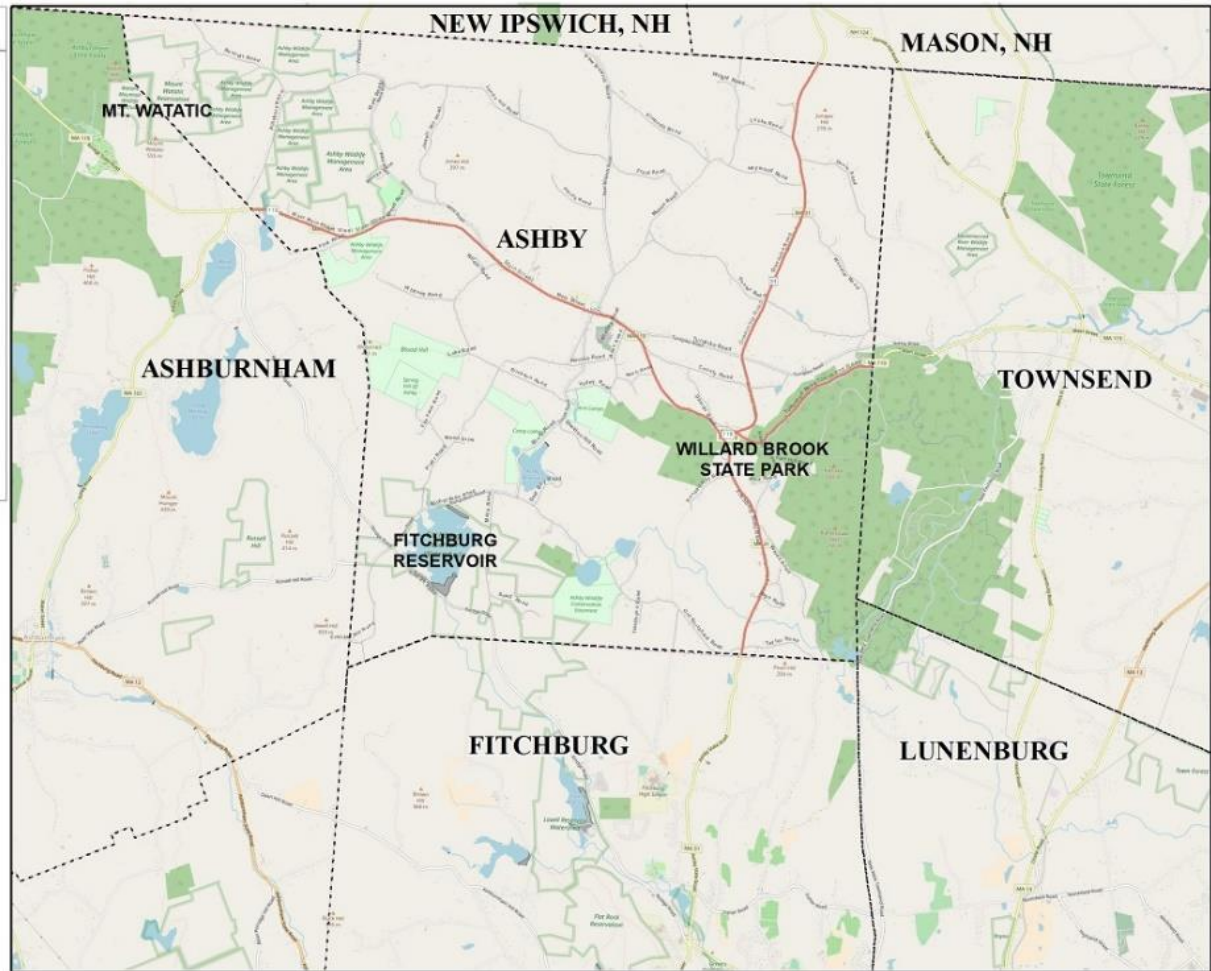
Portions of the water supply of two neighboring towns, Fitchburg and Townsend, are based in Ashby. The City of Fitchburg owns one reservoir in Ashby, and owns and manages the dam for the Compensating Reservoir. Townsend's municipal wells in West Townsend are supplied in part by the aquifer under eastern Ashby. To date, no research has been done to locate other potential aquifers within the borders of Ashby.

Two state highways traverse the town. Route 31 runs north-south providing access to Route 2, 20 minutes to the south, and Route 495, 30 minutes to the southeast. Route 119 runs east-west giving access to Route 495, 40 minutes to the east. Both carry commuters and commercial traffic. The heaviest growth in Ashby occurred near the intersection of

these two routes in the southeast part of town, with the building of a rather large housing development in the mid-to late 1980's. The only public transportation is MART, a dial-a-ride service available to the disabled and those over 60 years old. Ashby is a member of the Montachusett Regional Transit Authority (MRTA) which operates this service. Commuter rail service to Boston is accessible in Fitchburg about ten miles away.

Ashby is primarily a residential community with a very small commercial base of mostly home based businesses. A series of family farms still operate but serve primarily as secondary income to the farmers. At the time of the 2010 Census, Ashby had one of the lowest population densities in Massachusetts at 129 residents per square mile. A map of Ashby and the surrounding towns is found on the following page.

REGIONAL MAP



REGIONAL CONTEXT MAP
- RELATIONSHIP TO NEIGHBORING COMMUNITIES

REGIONAL CONTEXT MAP
- RELATIONSHIP TO MASSACHUSETTS CITIES



DATE: 09/04/2018

TOWN OF ASHBY,
MASSACHUSETTS
OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN

895 MAIN STREET ASHBY, MA 01431

REGIONAL CONTEXT MAP
OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN
TOWN OF ASHBY

FIGURE Y-1



DATE: 09/04/2018

TOWN OF ASHBY,
MASSACHUSETTS
OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN

895 MAIN STREET ASHBY, MA 01431

REGIONAL CONTEXT MAP
OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN
TOWN OF ASHBY

FIGURE Y-1

History of Ashby

Prior to European contact, Ashby was an upland hunting and gathering area for Native Americans. It is believed that there were no permanent native settlements in the town. However, at least one location, Indian Caves, is believed to have been a seasonal hunting camp. Indian Caves is a natural rock shelter overlooking the surrounding forest in the area of Caton Hill and Jones Hill. Pre-contact occupation of the site is indicated by soot deposits on the roof of the shelter and by an occasional arrowhead found in the area. Fort Hill and Rattlesnake Hill have also produced native artifacts but no shelters are known. It is very likely that Native Americans regularly inhabited this area until they were pushed out in the late eighteenth century.

Originally part of Lunenburg, Ashby was incorporated on March 5, 1767. In 1768, forty-three families were listed on the town's roster. Construction was started on the first place of worship in 1769 and the church was ready to occupy in 1774. Moneys were set aside for four district schools in the 1780's. Ashby's first town moderator, John Fitch, occupied one of three garrisons in town. He and his family were captured by Indians, taken on foot to Canada, and later ransomed by friends.

Ashby was originally agrarian like most New England towns. By the mid-eighteenth century the town began to harness its fast flowing streams for water-powered manufacturing. There were twenty-three water powered mill sites here in Ashby. The first grist mill was built in 1750. Other manufacturing included sawmills, a wood turning

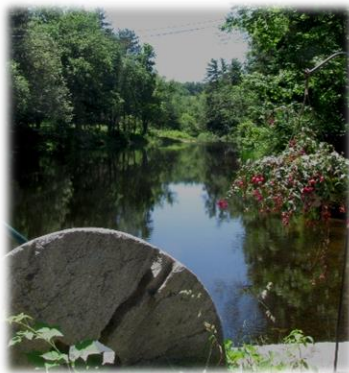


Figure 1 - Pond with Millstone

mill, wool carding, and several food-processing mills. In 1831, the Lawrence brothers and Martin Allen made the first wooden tubs and pails in Massachusetts which were turned on a lathe driven by a water wheel.

Three noted clock makers, Abraham Edwards and the Willard brothers, Alexander and Philander, worked in Ashby. They made large-standing, wooden works clocks. Jonas Prescott Whitney, a former carpenter, became very adept at fashioning church organs. He made every part from the bellows to the keys with power from a windmill mounted on the roof of his house.

A unique cottage industry was the braided palm-leaf hats made by women in Ashby. Approximately 60,000 of these hats were made in 1837 and sold south of the Mason-Dixon Line. Milk and butter were first retailed in Fitchburg and later in Boston. Apples were a cash crop. Fruit not fit for market was turned into cider.

But by the turn of the twentieth century, most of the mills were gone. Ashby discouraged industrialization by voting against a railroad in town. Although agriculture has declined over the years, Ashby maintained two large dairy farms until the federal dairy herd

buyout ended full-time farming in the town. The residents of Ashby see farming as essential to defining the town. Some residents feel that suburbanization is encroaching on this definition.

A historic district centered around the Town Common was approved by Town Meeting in 1997. This district includes the Wyman Tavern built in 1780 (now reconstructed as offices and the Town post office), the First Parish Church (built on the site of the first meeting house), the Grange Hall, the Congregational Church, the Ashby Free Public Library, Engine House #1 (currently home to the Ashby Historical Society), Ashby Market, the First Parish Cemetery and several private residences. Much of the turn-of-the-century look remains today in this area.

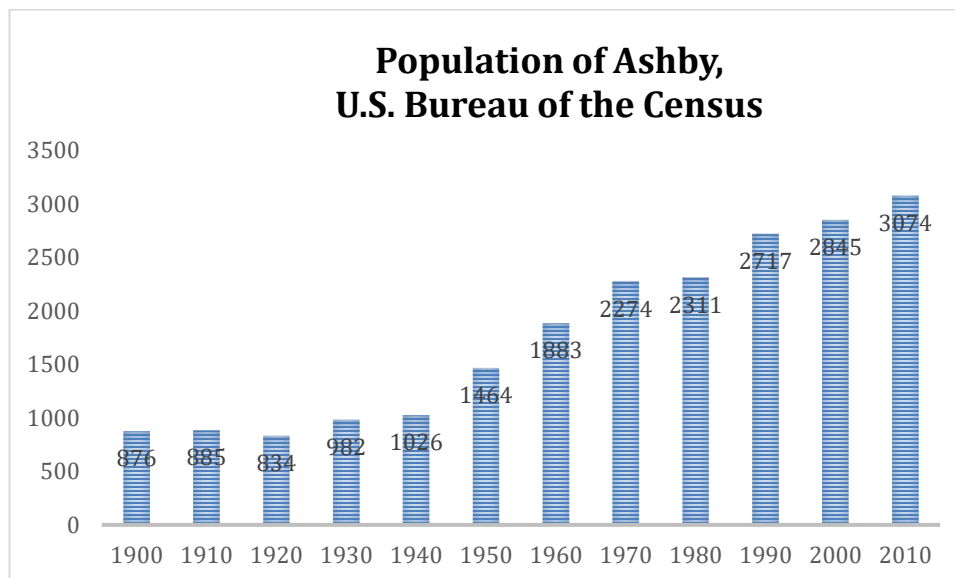


Figure 2 - First Parish Church

Another area of historical significance is South Village. The ruins of water-powered mills are still to be found along the banks of Willard Brook. South Village has no historic protection at this time but is somewhat protected by a degree of isolation and a zoning district that does not allow commercial use. South Village may be an area for a future extension of the historic district.

Population Characteristics

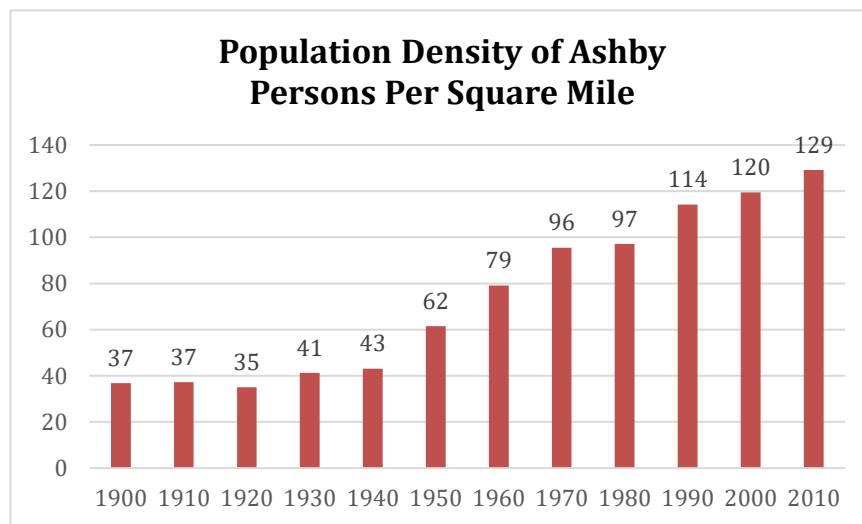
According to U.S. Census statistics, Ashby's population was 2,311 in 1980, 2,717 in 1990, 2,845 in 2000, and 3,074 in 2010, as illustrated below. The population grew at a rate of 11% from 1980 to 1990, 5% from 1990 to 2000, and 8% from 2000 to 2010.



Ashby saw large increases in population in the late 1940's (43%) and 1950's (29%) as the automobile provided greater access to employment outside of cities like Fitchburg that had active economies at the time. Most new residents at the time were employed in its mills or in the plastic industry of Leominster. In the 1970s, industry declined in the region and the population growth slowed.

The Town also conducts a census. This indicated that Ashby's population was 2,973 in 2000 and 3,178 in 2010. The higher numbers than the federal Census may result from residents' stronger inclination to respond to a local request. The Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC) projects that the population of Ashby will reach 3,350 by 2020. Based on the Town's figures, the number could be somewhat lower. These show the Town's total population for 2018 at 3,201, reflecting essentially no increase in residents over the past eight years.

As the population of Ashby rose over the years, so did the density of persons per square mile. A comparison of population density from 1900 to 2010 is shown below:

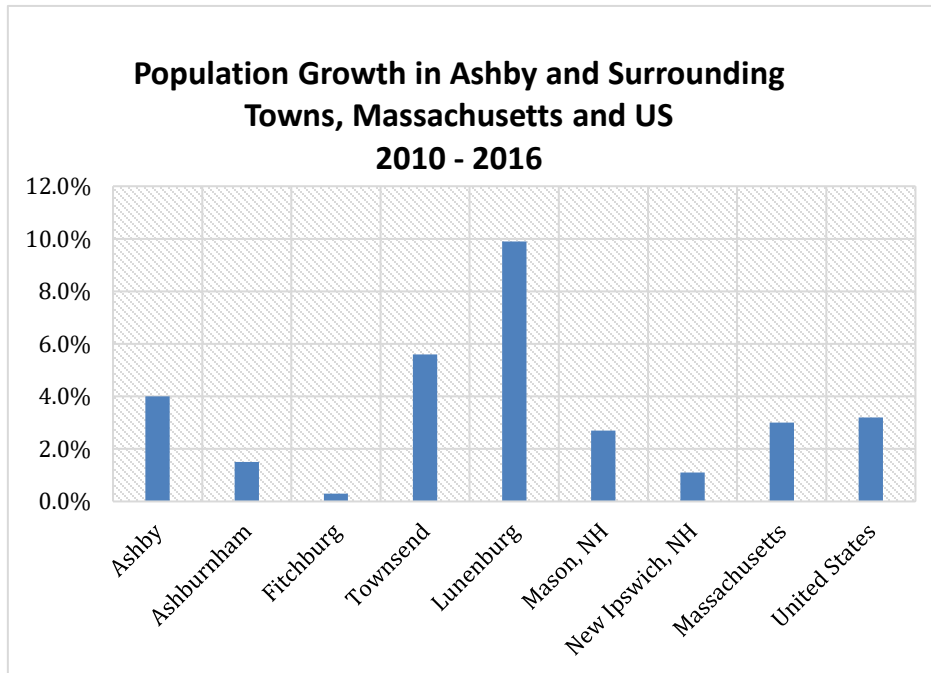


Population Trends

The last 20 years have seen a reduction in the number of young families and in the children per household in Ashby. This reflects national figures showing a reduced birth rate over this period. According to the U.S. Census for 1990, 26% of Ashby's population was under 15 years of age, while 41% was between the ages of 20 and 44. By 2000, 23% of the population was under age 15 and 35% was between the ages of 20 and 44. During the same period the number of people aged 45 to 55 increased from 9% to 17% of the total population. The 2010 Census showed 19% of the population was under 15, 27% was between 20 and 44 and the age group from 45 to 55 had risen to 21%. Ashby's population is 97% white with a small number of persons identifying themselves as other races or mixed-race.

Population Growth

Based on estimates of population by the U.S. Census, Ashby's population growth from 2010 to 2016 was 4%. This was in the mid-range with respect to surrounding towns, but slightly more than in the State of Massachusetts or the country. A comparison of population growth in Ashby and surrounding towns, based on U.S. Census statistics, shows the Town growing faster than towns to the west, but somewhat slower than towns to the east.



Trends in Housing and Residential Development

From 1970 to 1980 the number of Ashby's housing units grew at a rate of 22%. The rate of new construction declined to 20% between 1980 and 1990, and from 2000 to 2010 housing units increased from 1,011 to 1,191, a growth rate of 18%. The downturn most likely of 2006-2009 appears to have been followed by a resurgence in new building.

The Town's building permit statistics indicate this trend may have been temporary. From 2008 through 2015, less than five new homes per year received building permits. The pace of new building has recently picked up somewhat, with eight units approved in each year in 2016 and 2017. A four unit development was approved in 2018 and a few other lots are currently in the permitting process. It is hard to know whether this modest increase represents a return to the early 2000's when an average of 18 new homes per year were permitted according to Building Department totals for 2000-2007.

When the trend of housing growth was near 20% per decade, population growth has been between 8% and 11% per decade or even lower. One cause of the disparity appears to be a reduction in the number of persons per household. In 1970, Ashby averaged 3.5 persons per household. In 1990 the average was only 2.8 persons per household. By 2010, the household size had grown very slightly to 2.9 persons.

A second contributing factor has been the change in vacancy rates. In 2000, with an extremely active housing market, the rate of housing occupancy was 97%. Most vacant homes could be rented, or were quickly sold. In 2010, the occupancy rate had declined to 92%, indicating a softer housing market.

This information indicates that both the persons per household and the quantity of new housing units tend to follow the economic cycle. Thus, Ashby should expect development and population density pressures to increase as long as the economy is improving.

According to a Buildout and Development Impact Study conducted by MRPC in 2013, once protected land and land already built on were removed, Ashby had 10,446 acres of land remaining. Land within 100' buffers of rivers and streams, land with slopes greater than 26% and open space subject to permanent development restrictions was considered unbuildable. When these were eliminated, the actual developable land left was 8,893 acres, about 58% of the total land area.

The majority of this was in the residential zoning districts. Based on a two acre minimum lot size for most of that area, the study found an additional 4,177 new homes could be built in Ashby. The study noted that the pace of new home building was slow, and that it would take many years to reach buildout.

Even with relatively slow growth, it does seem that over time, Ashby is becoming more of a suburban bedroom community. This represents a gradual, but real change in the character and feel of the Town and a compelling reason to continue to preserve the remaining open spaces. Ashby's tradition of connection to the land and nature is reflected in the results of the survey conducted for this plan. These results showed a majority of residents supporting the preservation of open space for a wide variety of reasons, from maintaining agriculture to protecting water quality, to providing opportunities for more active and passive recreation. The responses echo a 1987 Future Growth Committee survey that found residents strongly wished to maintain a low residential density in Ashby. At that time residents considered below 4,000 (a density of 169 persons per square mile) to be the "ideal" population for the Town.

Economic Overview

Employment Trends

The 2012 survey of business owners for the U.S. Census American Community Survey indicated there were 206 businesses in Ashby. As of the end of 2016, Ashby had 78 private businesses and industries with employees covered by workmen's compensation. This does not include small home-based, family businesses where no workmen's compensation is paid. The largest number of these were in the category of construction (21). 13 businesses were considered Education and Health Services, while 11 were in Professional and Business Services. These included waste management and environmental remediation, as well as other, office-based professional services. In 2006, there were 77 businesses in total, while in 2011, there were 82.

American FactFinder was developed by the U.S. Census as a source of information on a variety of local population characteristics. Their figures are estimates based on sampling. Their numbers indicate there was a total labor force of 1,680 in Ashby in 2012. The workforce increased by about three percent from 2011 to 2016. The mean number of hours worked increased from 36 to 39 hours per week during this time.

With the closing of the only large manufacturing facility in town in 1998, the town and schools combined became the largest employer. The Town of Ashby employs about 27 persons; the Ashby Elementary School employs between 50 and 100 persons. The Spring Hill Addiction Center employs between 20 and 50 persons. An elderly home care business, a janitorial service and a pest control service are among other large private employers, with from 20 to 100 employees.

According to American FactFinder, 6.8% of the labor force worked at home or walked to work. 90% drove to work alone. Approximately 2% carpooled, and less than 1% took public transportation. These travel patterns include residents working in Ashby and those working out of town.

The lack of public transportation, limited availability of commercial sites, and the increasing age of the population of Ashby all affect the employment status of its residents. The lack of highway access, a public water supply, or wastewater treatment adds to the disincentive for businesses to locate in Ashby. At this time there are no known plans to improve the public transportation system in the area, for example by a shuttle bus to commuter rail. Fitchburg, Leominster, and Gardner will probably continue to be the main commercial centers while businesses in Ashby cater to local or niche markets.

A major and apparently successful component of Ashby's business community is home based businesses. These include specialty agriculture such as elite horse farms, raising alpacas, producing goat milk based soaps and cosmetics, and rearing pigs for artisanal meats. The 2013 plan reported that these constituted 69% of the businesses in the town

and they are likely to occupy a similar dominant role today. The legalization of recreational and medicinal marijuana is expected to add a new crop in Ashby.

The natural beauty of Ashby and its historic churches and special sites like the Town Common could make it an attractive wedding destination. Hiking trails, state parks and unique scenic sites like Mount Watatic could stimulate additional bed and breakfasts and other businesses that support outdoor tourism. Promotion of low-impact recreation like nature walks, snow-shoeing and similar activities could help this be successful.

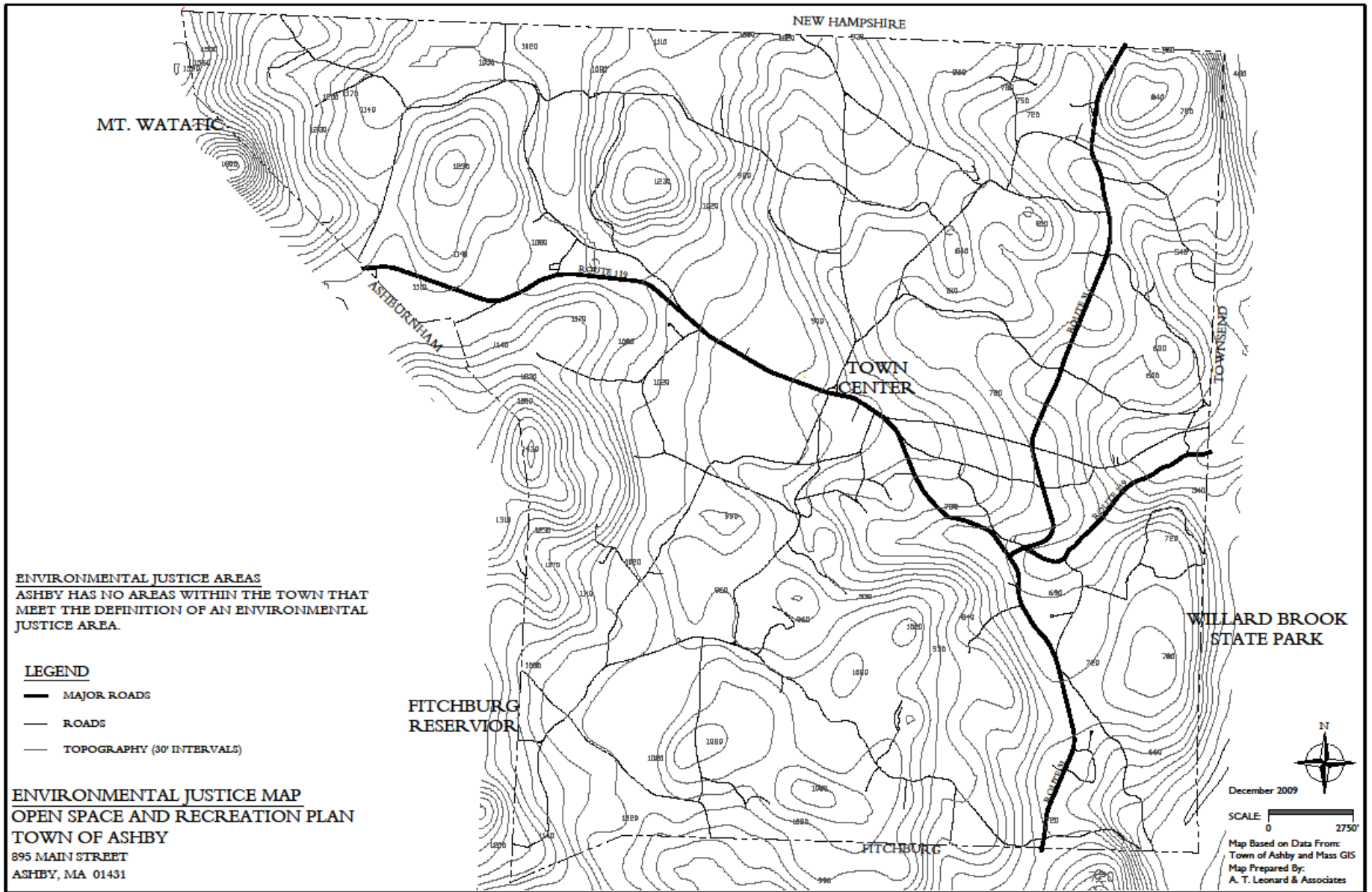
Family Income

With regard to household income, Ashby is towards the upper end of the towns in the surrounding area. In 2016, the US Census estimated the Town's median household income at \$89,934, up from \$82,614 in 2011. Ashburnham's median income for 2016 was estimated at \$86,219; Townsend's, \$82,519; that of Lunenburg, \$89,706; Fitchburg, \$40,318; New Ipswich, NH \$90,228 and Mason, NH \$88,942. All but Fitchburg exceeded the State's median household income of \$70,654. However, according to the Census data for 2016, Ashby has a median home value of \$ 247,000 versus the state average of \$341,000. The Town is a community where hardworking families can still afford a home, although there may be a long commute to work.

Environmental Equity

The state of Massachusetts has begun to address how open space can be located so it serves all residents, including the low-income, those vulnerable to discrimination, and those isolated through a non-English language. Neighborhoods with significant populations in these groups are considered "environmental justice communities." Although Ashby has no neighborhoods that qualify, an Environmental Justice Map is provided on the following page as a component of this Open Space and Recreation Plan.

The Inventory of Lands Map in this plan shows that open space is widely distributed throughout almost all parts of Ashby. The Plan's objective of acquiring land and establishing trails along the Northern tier of the Town will fill one small gap. The Town's largest area for active recreation is Allen Field, which serves as location of baseball and soccer fields, the annual Fourth of July Bonfire and the annual Antique Car Show. Residents have asked for children's play areas to be located more centrally. More active recreation close to the center of Town is included as Goal 5 Task K in the Action Plan.



Growth and Development Patterns

Patterns and Trends

Growth and development in Ashby follow two distinct patterns. In the first, growth occurs around a village center which depends on nearby natural elements, such as a river for a mill, or outlying farms that supply local markets. In this plan, the term resource-based development is used for this pattern, which allows preservation of open land outside a central core. The second pattern is the suburban zoning model, sometimes called sprawl, where new homes are built along existing roads, often in far-flung locations. This tends to break up expansive views and use up open land.

From its incorporation until the 1950's and 1960's, Ashby followed the first form of resource-based development. The growth occurred where the appropriate natural or cultural resource was available, i.e. mills along rivers, town center near the church, market and main roads, farm on best agricultural soils, etc. The result of this model is still visible today with the historic town center, village-like clusters of higher density housing, and outlying larger parcels around the villages. The cultural significance of this form of growth cannot be overestimated.

In the 1960's, Ashby adopted the basic zoning in place today and shown on the zoning map. The zoning combined with the most simple process for division of land, the Approval Not Required or ANR Plan, encouraged a "chopped-up" development of new houses along existing roads with a suburban appearance. This is particularly noticeable along the two State numbered highways, where homes have been built in an apparently arbitrary pattern that has no relationship to Ashby's natural resources. To preserve those aspects of Ashby which residents find most distinctive and appealing will require continued resolve to preserve open space while trying to maintain local property values and mitigate the impacts of the ANR and the suburban zoning model.

Infrastructure

Ashby has limited public infrastructure beyond its roads. All water and sewer systems are private. All utilities are provided by private companies.

The road infrastructure serves three levels of traffic: the main routes (Route 119 and Route 31), the collector roads (i.e. New Ipswich Road, West Road, and South Road), and country roads (all other tertiary roads). The numbered routes are maintained by the Commonwealth and are generally in good condition. They provide important access for Ashby's daily commuters. The collector roads are in varying levels of condition from good to passable and will require improvements in paving and drainage work within the next five to ten years. The tertiary, country roads receive less use. Some are paved, while others are not or have pavement in poor condition with little or no drainage. Ashby has a limited budget for road paving, reconstruction or repair.

Ashby has sidewalks in the center of Town. However, there are no bike paths. The Town may want to consider whether more facilities for pedestrians, and some provision for

bike riders, would benefit residents. On the east side of Route 119, utility poles in the middle of the concrete surface limit sidewalk accessibility. There is no sidewalk on either side of Main Street in front of the Elementary School. The Town may want to address whether there are ways to improve the comfort and safety of pedestrians crossing Route 119.

There may be value in some basic services for bike riders. Depending on the volume of bike traffic, these could include “Share the Road” or “Bike Route” signage, and bike racks at the Town Hall and other high traffic locations. In previous years, grants for bike racks have been readily available.

Zoning and Long Term Development Patterns

All of Ashby, with the exception of two small Residential/Commercial and one small Industrial zone, is zoned for residential use. Most of the residentially zoned land has a minimum lot size of 80,000 square feet. The Residential Zoning District in the center of Town and two Residential/Commercial zones, one in the town center and one on Route 31 leading to Fitchburg, allow residential development on 40,000 square foot lots.

All of Ashby - both homes and businesses - uses private wells and private septic systems. Recent science has shown that private septic systems on properties less than two acres can degrade water quality when private wells are in use. The 40,000 square foot minimum lot size is likely to be too small for adequate separation between private wells and septic systems in many cases. The Town should review whether science supports the current requirement for separation to prevent degradation of groundwater, and evaluate the need for increasing the distance. This may mean increasing lot sizes throughout Ashby to a minimum of two acres. The most prevalent 80,000 square foot minimum residential lot size and smaller grandfathered lots may not provide adequate distance between wells and septic. The minimum lot size of the residential zoning areas needs to be reviewed in light of these findings.

With no public sewer available, it is difficult to develop new multi-family housing in Ashby. Dwellings are permitted above commercial uses in the Village Overlay District by special permit, but must be in a condominium form of ownership. Each requires the same land area as a single family house, so there is little economic incentive to construct them. Accessory apartments are also permitted in all residential zoning districts. An average of two per year have been approved. Single family, one- and two-acre lot development is the way the town has developed. Until the current zoning or the State Subdivision Control Law authorizing ANR's are altered, these trends are likely to continue.

Most development in Ashby has taken place along existing roads through the ANR process because this is the least expensive and quickest approach for developers. Since 1988, when the first actual subdivision was approved, there have been six subdivisions developed, with one more recently approved. Only one is larger than ten lots. In addition to the limits of acreage, developers are limited by frontage and a maximum length for dead-end streets. In the case of ANR's, the frontage requirement usually means

that dwellings are spaced 200 feet apart along Ashby's roads. The use of all road frontage for new houses will tend to give Ashby more and more of a suburban look. State law and existing zoning by-laws encourage this type of development.

Ashby has passed an Open Space Residential Development bylaw to provide an avenue for developers to create subdivisions with open space and proper land use in mind. Also, Ashby has incorporated a 20 acre minimum reduced frontage lot bylaw to reduce the impact of ANR and conventional subdivisions. However, with the ANR process being far less expensive for developers, the Planning Board has seen only one subdivision plan in the past seven years. A further review of zoning bylaws would give the residents an opportunity to impact the suburbanization of Ashby.

Ashby's Zoning contains a Rate of Development bylaw that limits the number of residential building permits issued per year to no more than twenty. While this number is significantly more permits than are currently issued, it will insure the Town is not subjected to a sharp acceleration of growth at any one time.

Until now Ashby's active, more visible agricultural lands have avoided development. Development has taken place on farms that have ceased operation raising concerns for the future of farms across the Town. Ashby's primary crop is hay. The hay fields add to the scenic beauty as well as to the biodiversity of the town. Hay does not require large amounts of fertilizer or pesticides and does not have the adverse impact on the environment that more intensive farming does. The increasing resources of some of the residents have brought more horseback riding to the town. Horses and the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) requirements for silt barriers at construction sites across the state have created a ready market for the hay crop.

Farmers indicate that hay would not support a farm if the land had to be purchased at today's prices. The decline in farming in the area indicates that this is in fact the case. In 2018, Ashby Town Meeting approved bylaws allowing limited cultivation of marijuana for medical and recreational use. Under Mass Law, one grower of hemp has purchased property in Ashby and is moving ahead with a planting of more than 10 acres of this crop. This development has increased the value of that farm significantly. Under the new zoning bylaw, up to four growers of recreational marijuana could also locate in town.

Developers are frequently in the market for large pieces of land. They are likely to look to farms more and more as a source of buildable land as existing road frontage becomes increasingly scarce. With some forethought, like the Open Space Residential Development bylaw, and support for farming, Ashby might be able to allow some development on land owned by farmers while encouraging continued agricultural use of the prime farmland.

With more than 50% of the Town's total land area available for residential use, residential development will have the largest impact on the character of the town and the amount of remaining open space. Since the economy has largely recovered from the downturn of the previous decade, Ashby is likely to see a renewal of suburban sprawl development. If

state law continues to allow development with minimal review under the ANR process, more rapid development may occur in the near future with less regulation by the Town, and a negative impact on agricultural lands, open space, and the rural character of the community. If we assume an average lot size of two to three acres (including wetlands) and a return to a housing market approaching that of previous years, then the town could lose as much as 300 to 500 acres of open space over the next ten years.

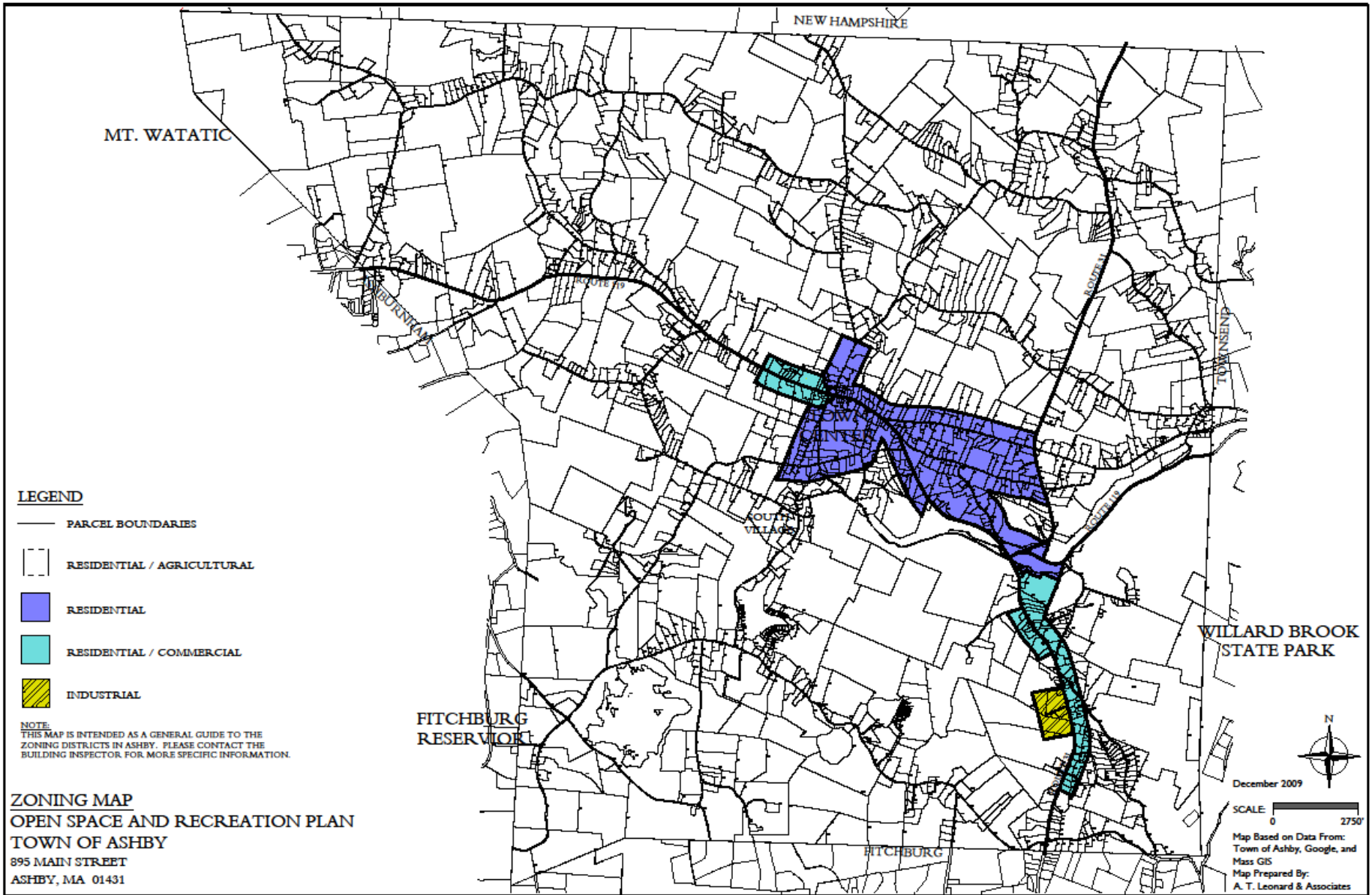
With its off the beaten path location and limited infrastructure, Ashby is unlikely to provide commercial or industrial opportunities beyond the home-based business, small retail service, or small office level.

Planning for the Future

Ongoing residential development puts pressure on Ashby to address open space needs before it is too late. A two-part approach will help to preserve the quality of life and the rural character of the town for the next generation.

First, Ashby should keep encouraging uses of open space that make economic sense for the owner. Farming, forestry, and special products must continue to be supported through tax incentives. Bylaws should allow new activities that invite the public and make private open space productive, whether for wedding venues, corn mazes, pick your own fruits and veggies, as well as the currently popular horse farms. These can help reduce the amount of land released for development while providing keeping ownership viable. This approach requires a long-term commitment. It can produce a high level of cooperation between the community and private landowners.

Ashby should also continue its strong public and private commitment to preserving open space through purchase, donation, conservation restrictions and agricultural preservation restrictions. Commitments like these have the advantage of insuring open space protection in perpetuity. Results are measurable as seen with the more than 1100 acres preserved or protected over the past fifteen years. The financial burden can be shared by obtaining state grants and having town agencies work with state organizations and land trusts. Joint efforts have the benefit of allowing large projects to be considered as well as increasing coordination and cooperation between various groups. Ashby's zoning requires 80,000 of lot area for new homes in the Residential/Agricultural (R/A) district, which occupies most of the Town. This is a relatively large lot size, and while it protects the homeowners' privacy it may result in consumption of significant amounts of land for each house built. The Town may want to consider whether any reduction in this size could mean preservation of open space for all to enjoy. A copy of the Zoning Map is found on the following page.



SECTION 4 - ENVIRONMENTAL INVENTORY and ANALYSIS

Geology, Soils and Topography

Ashby is characterized by rugged, hilly terrain interspersed with gently rolling open fields, woodlands, stream corridors, and wetlands. The topography and resulting landscape of the town is controlled by the underlying bedrock and surficial (unconsolidated) geologic units.

Bedrock geology

The bedrock in Ashby is comprised of members of three major geologic units, the metamorphic Littleton and Paxton Formations, and the Fitchburg Plutonic (igneous) Complex. The metamorphic bedrock types are gray-weathering feldspathic and sulfidic schists. The sulfidic schist is responsible for the "rotten egg" sulfur smell emanating from the water from many bedrock wells in town. The metamorphic bedrock was intruded by granites and tonalite, an igneous rock, which was also deformed somewhat by later metamorphism. The more resistant of these rock types are responsible for the bedrock hills and outcrops in the town.

Steep slopes, shallow water tables and hilly terrain used to be impediments to building. However, with the changes to Title 5 septic regulations, many parcels that were considered undevelopable in the past are now being developed by the introduction of new technologies and/or large amounts of fill to provide offset to groundwater. Septic outbreaks on these slopes may become more prevalent as building continues. These previously undevelopable areas are becoming increasingly threatened as the demand for undeveloped land increases and the desire for breathtaking views from Ashby's hillsides override the increase in costs of this development.

Surficial Geology

The last glacial episode in this region, the Wisconsin Ice Age, ended approximately 15,000 years ago. The resulting glacial deposits determine, in large part, whether land is well drained and easily developable or is poorly drained, wet, and difficult to develop.

There are three main classes of unconsolidated deposits in Ashby: glacial till, stratified drift and alluvium. Most of the town is covered by glacial till. Stratified drift deposits, where present in pockets, are abundant which has resulted in the numerous gravel excavation/extraction sites throughout town.

Glacial till is a dense, heterogeneous, poorly sorted mixture of sand, silt, clay and angular rocks and boulders that was plastered down beneath the glacier in a thin veneer over the bedrock. Glacial till transmits water very slowly (technically, has a low hydraulic conductivity or permeability) and tends to be poorly drained. Seasonal high water tables and wetland areas are common in soils formed over till.

Stratified drift deposits are sorted, layered material deposited by glacial meltwater streams. Fine-grained deposits are deposited by low energy, slow-moving streams, and are generally carried farther from the glacier. Coarse gravels and sands are deposited by higher energy, fast-flowing water. Most of the gravel pits in town were formed as kames or kame terraces or plains, having been deposited between the melting glacier and a stagnant ice lobe or ice-dammed stream. A kame is a mound of sand and gravel deposited by the action of a glacier.

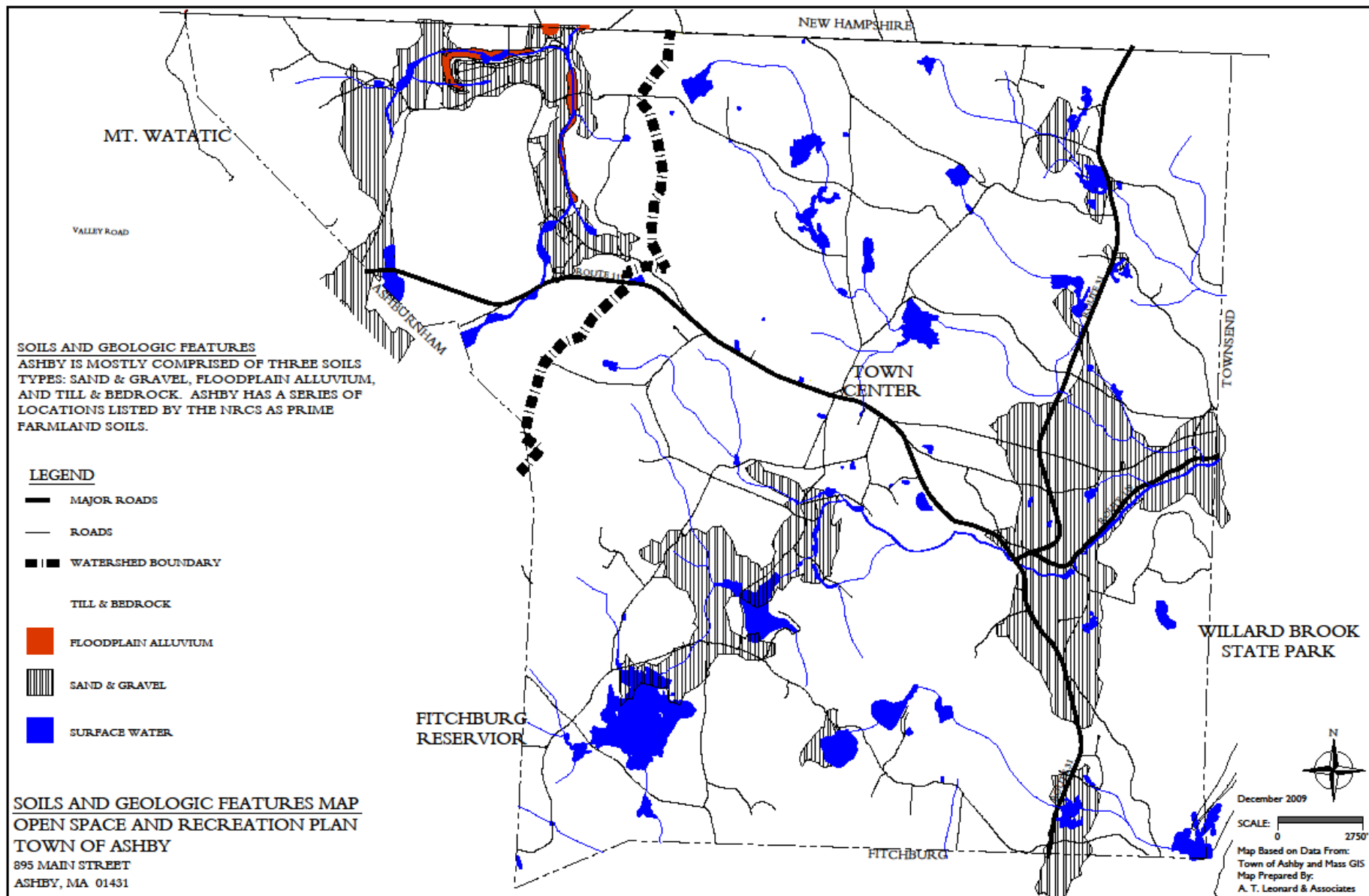
Sand and gravel deposits allow unobstructed flow of water and groundwater and have great aquifer-bearing and aquifer-recharge potential. Typically, bedrock valleys covered by large deposits of sand and gravel (known as buried valleys) provide the greatest potential drinking water resource. No studies have been completed to determine if such a resource exists in Ashby. A need for this kind of study would arise if Ashby's growth or widespread groundwater contamination necessitated a municipal drinking water supply. It is evident from the surficial geology map that sand-and-gravel areas are limited in town. Development of potentially precious aquifer-bearing land prior to such a study would be a great loss of the town's resources.

Soils

Soils reflect the underlying unconsolidated deposits. The most common soil type in Ashby is probably the Woodbridge Sandy Loam, consisting of deep soils formed on compact glacial till with a seasonal high water table at 18 to 24 inches. Other common soil types that share these characteristics (wetness, low permeability) are the Scituate fine sandy loam, the Ridgebury fine sandy loam, the Whitman loams, and the Birchwood fine sandy loam. Poorly-drained till soils are also found intermingled with bedrock outcrops.

Low-permeability till-based soils without characteristic high water tables are also found in town, although less frequently. These include the Paxton and Montauk fine sandy loams. Sandier, more permeable till soils without high water tables are much less prevalent, and include Canton and Charlton fine sandy loams.

River valleys often contain muck soils or sandy, permeable soils with characteristic high water tables. Well-drained soils formed on sand and gravel outwash are limited to the areas of sand and gravel shown on the soils and geologic features map on the following page.



Landscape Character

Ashby retains many features of its cultural history. As residents of the town, we are proud and protective of the natural beauty and heritage passed down to us.

The rural character of the town is characterized by such features as the well hidden but exquisite two-mile drive along Route 119 in the Willard Brook State Forest. In the spring, Willard Brook rushes snakelike through boulder-sided mini-chasms and under manmade arched bridges. Along the two-mile journey, it drops 500 feet, forms Damon Pond, the popular swimming pond with its own waterfall, and then merges with Trapfall Brook. The sides of the hills bloom with flowering rhododendron and mountain laurel. The retaining walls along this state highway are in a state of disrepair. Work to correct the situation will likely include removal of the canopy which will pose a number of risks to the scenic nature of the drive. As a result of the intersection of hills, roads and streams, stone arched bridges and stone culverts are frequent features of the landscape.



Figure 3 - Damon Pond, Willard Brook State Forest

Many of our public ways still have long stretches of woods and fields outlined by ancient hand built stone walls. It is this rural view from the roadway that helps to distinguish Ashby from its more developed neighbors. Maintaining this look was one of the priorities of the townspeople as demonstrated by the passage of a Scenic Roads Bylaw. Unital's recent "winter reliability" program of 2017/18 has greatly modified that character in the town's center, making a mockery of the Bylaw. The rural character that is so important to residents is generally defined by the following elements:

The Nine Hills

Ashby is a hill town, abutting the New Hampshire border at an average elevation of 1000 feet above sea level. The bold features of the town derive from its distinctively named hills.

Mount Watatic

Blood Hill

Jones Hill

Spring Hill

Juniper Hill

Rattlesnake Hill

Jewell Hill

Fort Hill

Caton Hill

Granite topped, historic Mount Watatic with its trails and Indian traditions is a regional treasure, hiked regularly by hundreds of people. Until the mid-1980s, Mount Watatic supported a popular local ski area whose summit was in Ashburnham with the majority of ski trails in Ashby. In 2004 Ashby partnered with Ashburnham, the Ashby Land Trust, Ashburnham Conservation Trust, DCR and Mass Fish and Wildlife to secure the old ski area from development by a company proposing a communication tower on the top and homes at the base. These 6 owners now manage the area known as the Watatic Reservation. The State Department of Fisheries and Wildlife has also acquired significant portions of the Mountain outside the Reservation in both Ashby and Ashburnham. Ashby enthusiastically supports their continued efforts to protect this resource. The result is that Ashby, in partnership with the Commonwealth and the Ashby Land Trust, has protected or gain ownership of four of the nine hilltops: Mount Watatic, Blood Hill, Jewell Hill, and Fort Hill.

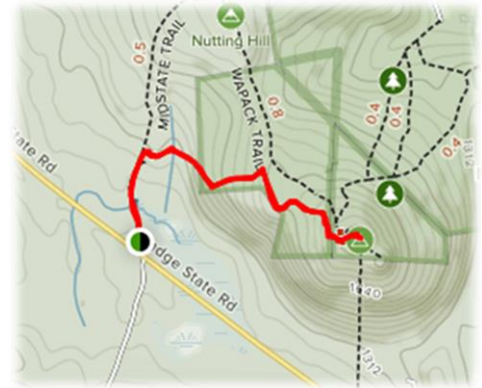


Figure 4 - Watatic Trails in Ashby and Ashburnham

The Fields and Farms

Although agriculture as an occupation has declined in Ashby as in many towns in Massachusetts, the fields and farms that remain speak eloquently about a rural way of life. The major crop is hay. The South Road fields (24 acres just south of the center of town) are still mowed for hay and contribute to the unique openness in the center of the village. The Ashby Stock Farm includes 238 acres of forest and field to the northwest of the center and a significant portion of the property is mowed for hay. The Stock Farm and the Crocker farm, which also mows significant acreage for hay, are the two largest farms to remain intact.



Figure 5 - Stock Farm

At one time, Ashby was home to more than six orchards encompassing over 200 acres. All of these are no longer commercially used. There are three active Christmas tree farms owned by the Pernaas, the Hansons and the Arnolds. Dave’s Sugar House on Jones Hill Road taps the sugar maples and fires up their sugarcane to make syrup. Town residents appreciate and wish to support the farms so they remain viable and open as shown through the passage of a Right to Farm bylaw. Evidence of this is the re-emergence of small farms, mostly specializing in niche markets, but include at least one CSA. With the change in zoning which allows marijuana grow facilities in Ashby, and the change in laws surrounding cultivation of hemp, several new farms are in the startup process.

The Brooks

In the valleys formed between the flanks of the hillsides are the fast flowing streams that are so closely linked to Ashby's history of water powered mills. With the exception of Locke Brook, all these brooks have their headwaters in Ashby.

Trapfall Brook

Willard Brook

South Branch of the Souhegan

Locke Brook

Pearl Hill Brook

Fallulah Brook

The Ponds and Reservoirs

The major bodies of water in Ashby are the Fitchburg Reservoir (owned by the city of Fitchburg), the Ashby Compensating Reservoir, Upper Wright's Pond, Lower Wright's Ponds, and Little Watatic Pond. There are numerous other small ponds sprinkled through town and created, for the most part, by dams constructed by either humans or beavers. Most of these have no name, or have acquired a name through local lore, like Dead Man's Pond on Piper Rd.



Figure 6 - Fitchburg Reservoir

Heritage Landscapes

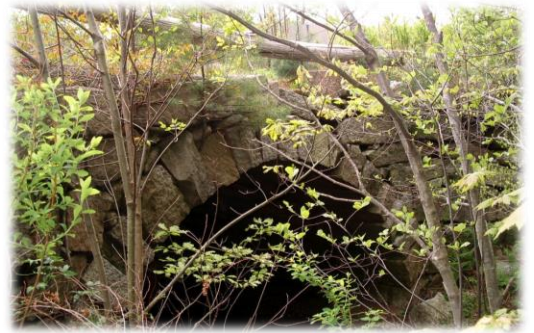
Recently, with the assistance of the Department of Conservation and Recreation, Ashby identified 52 heritage landscapes and nine priority landscapes as part of the State's Heritage Landscape Inventory Program. The nine Priority Landscapes (described below and shown on the Landscape Character Map) are critical to the character of Ashby. These unique features should be protected and preserved as the base of the cultural fabric of the community.



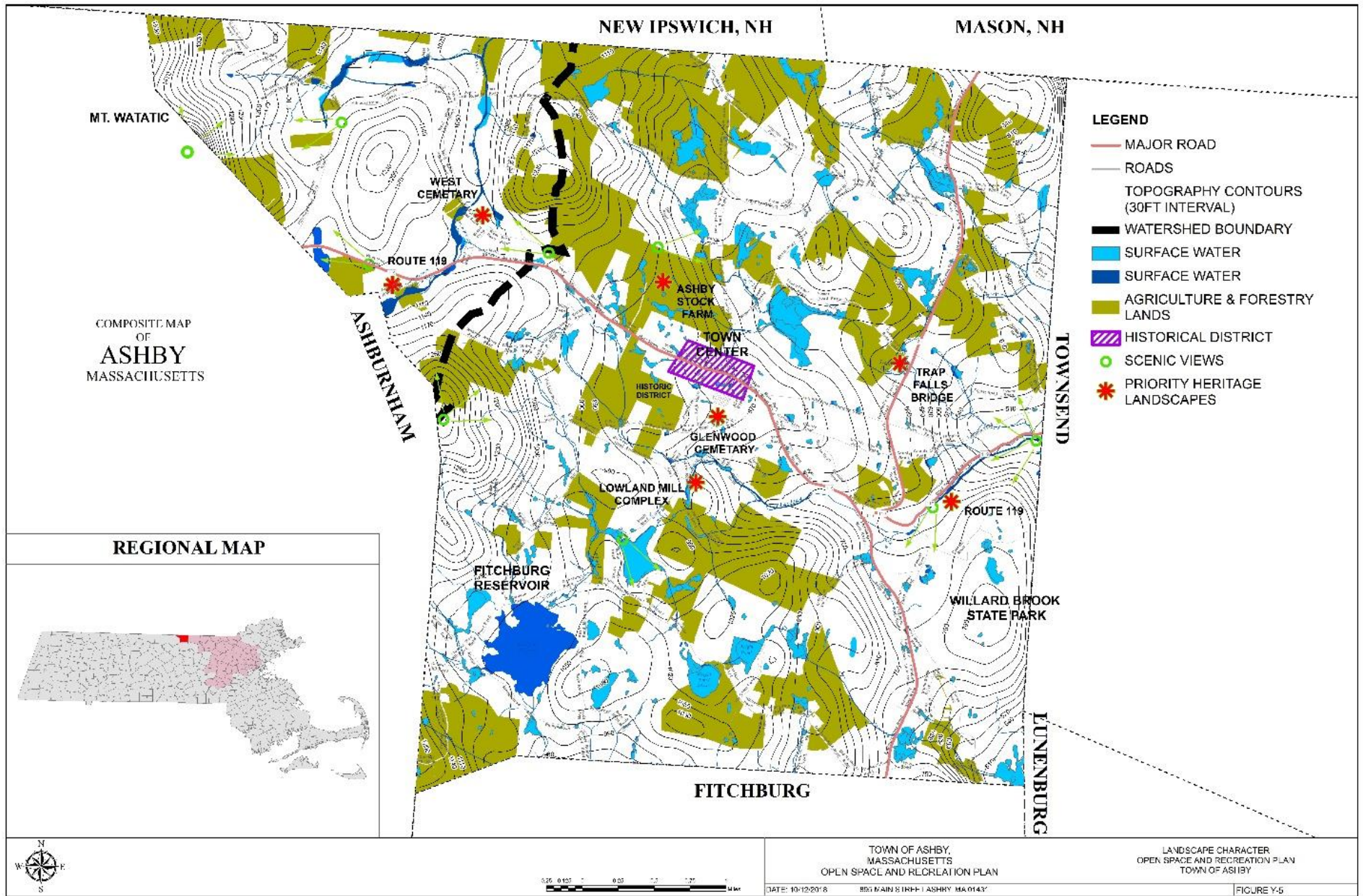
Figure 7 – Bandstand, Town Common

- **Ashby Stock Farm** – A large (238 acre), active farm located along Route 119 provides a visual and agricultural anchor to the community.
- **Cemeteries** (First Parish Burial Ground, Glenwood, West) – These historic cemeteries capture the history of the townspeople.
- **Bandstand on Town Common** – A gazebo-like bandstand serves as a cultural hub for events, tourists, and a landmark
- **Jewett Hill Caves** – “Indian caves” on traditional native peoples' hunting grounds.

- **Loveland Grist and Saw Mills** - A mill building structure and series of foundations expressing the only industrial phase in the history of Ashby and located on the grounds of the current Camp Middlesex.
- **Route 119** - The scenic highway through Willard Brook State Forest, the historic Town Center, and the Watatic Mountain area.
- **Trap Falls Stone Arch Bridge** - A historic stone arch bridge over Trapfall Brook located to the side of Route 31.



*Figure 8 – Stone Bridge,
Trapfall Brook*



Water Resources

Water resources in Ashby consist of various forms of surface and subsurface water: ponds, rivers, brooks, wetlands, aquifers, and other groundwater sources. Ashby's water drains through two watersheds, the Nashua River watershed and the Souhegan River watershed, into the Merrimack River.

Watersheds



Figure 9 - Sub-basins of the Nashua River Watershed In Massachusetts and New Hampshire

The Nashua River watershed covers an area of 538 square miles within 31 communities in Massachusetts and New Hampshire. Locke Brook, one of the New Hampshire sources of the Nashua River passes through Ashby. Willard Brook and Trapfall Brook begin in Ashby and feed into the Squannacook River watershed, then into the main stem of the Nashua River. Fallulah Brook is its own small watershed that feeds into the North Nashua River after flowing through Fitchburg Reservoirs downstream from Ashby.

The South Branch of the Souhegan starts in the northwest corner of Ashby and the northeastern parts of Ashburnham, then flows north into New Ipswich, New Hampshire on its way towards the Merrimack River.

Surface Waters and Wetlands

All of Ashby's surface waters and wetlands are listed by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection as outstanding resource waters (ORW's). Ashby provides water to its own residents through private wells; to Fitchburg, through the Fitchburg Reservoir; and to Townsend, through its streams and aquifers which feed the wellfields in West Townsend.

Ashby's relatively high altitude in relation to its neighboring towns results in most of its streams being fast flowing and well-oxygenated. This is aided by their route over stony riverbeds and their steep banks. Ashby's streams are home to many species of fish, the most notable being native brook trout. This is only possible because of the cool temperatures of the highly oxygenated waters. Ashby's Scenic Road Bylaw was enacted in part to assist in maintaining the waters' cooler temperatures by protecting the heavily forested areas from the impact of roads. Ashby's higher altitude and cooler climate than

surrounding towns is reflected by weather reports including it in the “snow belt” of southwestern New Hampshire.

The scattered wetland areas that intersect the slower sections of many of Ashby’s streams are home to many beavers. Most ponds in Ashby have been artificially created either by beavers or people. These wetlands and ponds recharge the aquifer and protect downstream properties and streambeds from water damage and flooding during periods of high water run-off, spring melts, and 25-, 50-, and 100-year storm events with higher than usual rainfall.

A significant number of Ashby’s streams are home to as many as five families of beavers, one per pond, inhabiting the linked ponds along their water course. The beavers have dammed the streams and created numerous ponds and wetlands throughout town. Although a great number of these ponds are located away from direct contact with people, they have created havoc where they have been near homes. Septic systems have been flooded, giardia counts have to be monitored closely at swimming ponds, and people have watched their trees and shrubs disappear. The intersection of humans and beavers is problematic. On the other hand, beavers create wonderful wetland habitat for themselves and a plethora of other wildlife.

Another unique surface water feature in Ashby is the fire pond. Stream dams have created some of these ponds. Others have been created through the emergence of groundwater in depressions or kettle holes. The town has no public water system and relies on these ponds for fire protection. These ponds also provide recreational opportunities for fishing, swimming, ice skating, and wildlife viewing.

Ashby’s high water quality has been taken for granted. Relatively little testing or monitoring has taken place on the streams. However, with the cooperation and support of the Nashua River Watershed Association, some water testing and discussion of low impact development/best management practices has begun.

Ashby has protected multiple properties containing surface water and wetlands. Three of the most notable are the Morrison Property, a 3 acre parcel with surface water; a 23 acre parcel with bordering vegetated wetlands and access to Locke Brook on Wheeler Rd.; and the 169 acre Wiita Conservation Area with wetlands, vernal pools and a vibrant stream running through it.

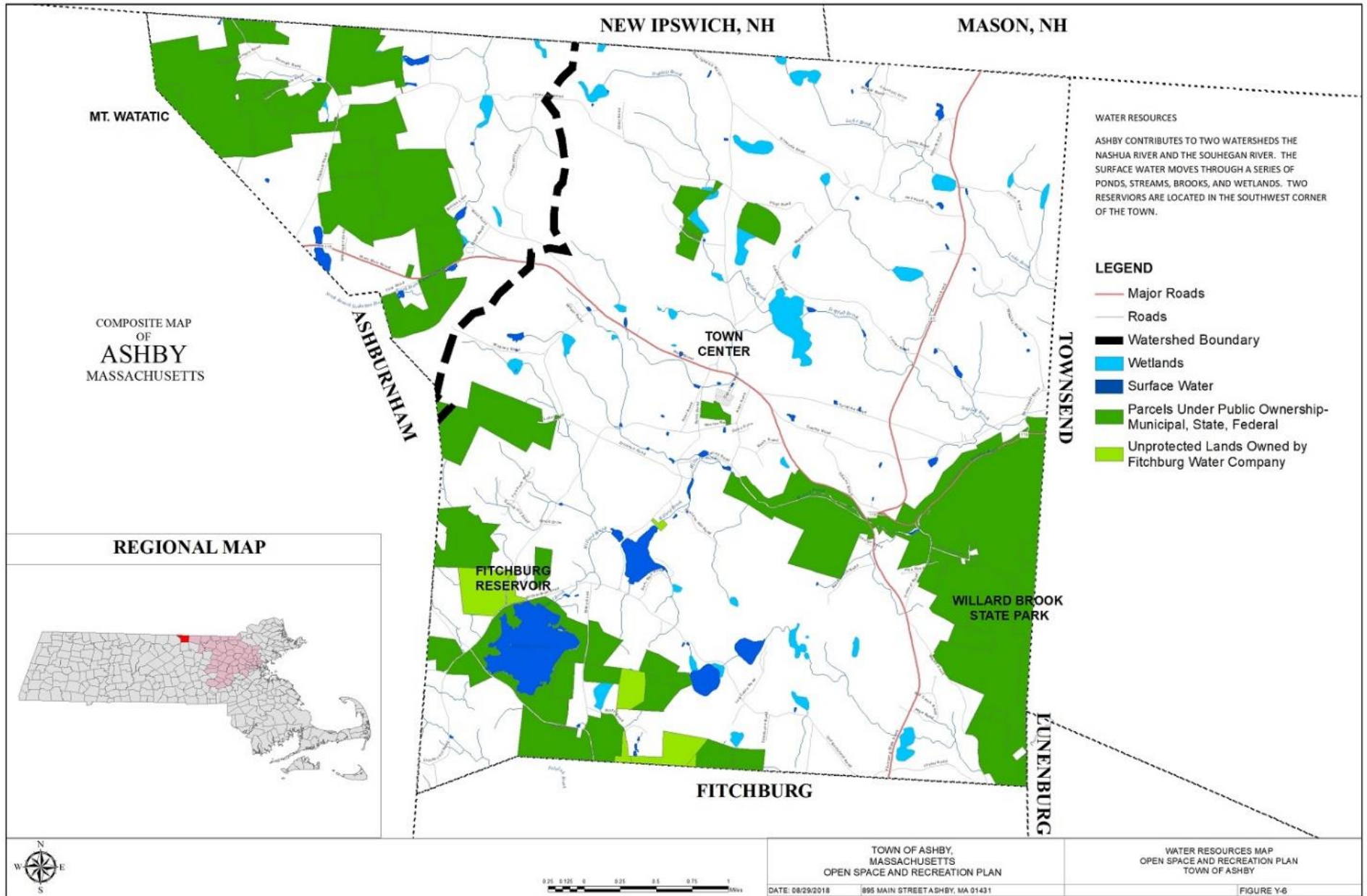
Aquifer Recharge Areas

No official studies have been performed on the breadth of aquifers under Ashby or the extent or ability of Ashby’s soils to recharge aquifers. The only noted aquifer recharge locations are along the eastern border with Townsend serving the wells in West Townsend. Ashby has some pockets of sand and gravel deposits within its generally glacial till soils. It is suspected that these areas would provide the highest quality aquifer recharge within Ashby.

Flood Hazard Areas

By viewing the recently updated Flood Hazard Boundary maps for Ashby, it is evident that not many areas in town are subject to flooding. For the most part, this is due to the high slopes of the town. Wherever there is level land along a stream, there is a flood hazard zone. Two of the more notable areas prone to flooding are the Great Meadow, between Mason Road, Foster Road and Main Street, and a large wet meadow situated downstream from Lower Wright's Pond. Other flood hazard areas have, in the past, been filled in and had homes built upon them. This is most obvious along the southern stretch of Route 31 heading into Fitchburg.

A map of Ashby's water resources is found on the following page.



Vegetation

General Inventory

Ashby was reputedly named for the abundance and quality of white ash (*Fraxinus americana*) found in the area by early settlers. Numerous fine specimens of white ash are still found along roadsides in town, although many of these were recently removed by Unitil's tree "trimming" efforts. Many have also succumbed to Ash decline.

There is a wide range of natural vegetative communities in Ashby, including hardwood and pine forest, red maple swamps, cattail marshes, wet meadows, and even a quaking (sphagnum) bog. In late May, lady slippers sprinkle the pine and oak forest areas and jack in the pulpit can be found in moist areas near streams. The town contains fertile farmland, tree farms, berry farms, orchards, and hay fields. Many of the large forest tracts in town are managed for cordwood and lumber.

Forest Land

Ashby is generally located in the white pine-hemlock-northern hardwood forest. White pine (*Pinus strobus*) is the dominant conifer, growing especially in (but not limited to) areas with fast-draining sandy soils. Large white pines are common. Hemlock (*Thuja canadensis*) groves grow in valleys and wet areas. Hillside forests tend to be stands of mixed hardwoods, including beech (*Fagus grandifolia*), white or paper birch (*Betula papyrifera*), sugar maples and red maples (*Acer saccharum* and *Acer rubrum*), red oaks (*Quercus*), white & green ash, and hickories (*Carya*). Old growth oaks have been noted on private and public lands.

Common forest understory plants include mountain laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*), green or striped maple (*A. pennsylvanicum*), and hobblebush viburnum (*V. alnifolium*). "Laurel hells," almost impenetrable thickets of laurel, are occasionally found surrounding, but not in, wetlands.

In December 2008, Ashby was hit with a devastating ice storm causing significant damage and stress to the upland forest including topping a majority of maple, oak and ash trees, and uprooting trees on steep slopes. There were many plantations of red pine that were planted during road straightening projects and efforts to stabilize slopes. Most of these were severely impacted during the ice storm of December, 2008. The trees snapped in half and fell to the forest floor, creating a potential fire hazard in areas that were not "cleaned up" afterwards.

Since 1900, a variety of diseases and insects have changed our woodlands. Chestnut blight eliminated the American chestnut and most of the American elms succumbed to Dutch Elm disease, although individuals appear occasionally to have resisted the diseases. Current changes are now reducing white ash trees through the Emerald Ash Borer and Ash Decline, and Hemlock through the influx of the wooly adelgid. Other pest

concerns continue to include the Asian Long-Horned Beetle and invasive plants like Asiatic Bittersweet, which will climb to the canopy and strangle trees.

Public Shade Trees

Ashby has 53 miles of accepted Town roads and 11 miles of State highway. In 2006 the adopted a Scenic Roads Bylaw and designated all town ways as scenic roads. The bylaw requires a permit for the removal of trees over 12" in diameter within the right of way. Public shade trees are primarily mixed hardwoods. However, this has not prevented utilities from removing large numbers of trees along Main St. that were an important part of this special landscape. The Town should find ways to protect trees of significant size that should be preserved for posterity.

Agricultural Land

Ashby is fortunate that there are still a number of large tracts maintained as open fields, generally for hay production and some grazing. Notable examples are the Ashby Stock Farm on Main Street, the Crocker Farm on Jewell Hill, and the Perna property on South Road.

Despite the large tracts still maintained as fields, the general decline in agriculture in Ashby has led to vegetative succession on once open land. Recently overgrown fields commonly contain sumac, poplars (*Populus tremuloides*), and white birch as well as invasive plants like bittersweet, Russian olive and thorny briars.

Wetland Vegetation

Ashby has a variety of wetland types and wetland vegetation including streams and their banks, beaver ponds, wet meadows, bordering vegetated wetlands, forested wetlands and open water. The Great Meadow is a significant wet meadow habitat along Trap Falls Brook. Speckled alder (*Alnus rugosa*) and highbush blueberry (*Vaccinium corymbosum*) are common in wet areas.

Rare Species

The Massachusetts Endangered Species Act (MESA) regulates the "taking" of plants and wildlife considered threatened or endangered. MESA is administered by the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP), a part of the Massachusetts Division of Fish and Wildlife. Species subject to the Act are determined through scientific research and field observation. A "take" includes harming habitat, disturbing breeding or nesting areas, as well as simply removing protected species. Ashby has two MESA-listed plant species. Detailed information on endangered and threatened species, and species of special concern, is given in the table on the next page:

Common Name	Type	Scientific Name	Year Last Observed	Status*
Vegetation				
Pod-grass	Vascular Plant	Scheuchzeria palustris	1882	E
Sand Violet	Vascular Plant	Viola adunca	1914	SC

* E - Endangered

SC - Species of Special Concern

These terms are defined by MESA as follows:

- Endangered species are in danger of extinction.
- Threatened species are likely to become Endangered in the foreseeable future.
- Special Concern species have suffered a decline or are found in small numbers, and are likely to become Threatened.

Sites with Unique Natural Resources

Ashby has many acres of untouched woodlands, as well as numerous farms and fields whose size and numbers make them unique. The Great Meadow is a wet meadow habitat unique to Ashby in its size and diversity of species. The Fitchburg Reservoir is home to loon nesting sites. The South Branch of the Souhegan in the northwest corner of Ashby has many wildlife species along its river banks. Twenty-eight vernal pools have been certified. There are also several cold water brooks that provide excellent habitat for fish which are adapted to these locations. More information about unique natural resources and the habitat they provide is included in the Fisheries and Wildlife subsection below.

Vegetation Mapping Projects

In 2012, the Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game and the Nature Conservancy developed BioMap2, an atlas of significant habitat areas. BioMap2 identified 1,719 acres of Core Habitat and 3,514 acres of Critical Natural Landscapes in Ashby. Critical Natural Landscapes encourage biodiversity because of unique, unspoiled vegetation and notable size, while others, called Core Habitat, support vulnerable plant and wildlife species. It will be helpful to the Town's open space planning to have these special habitats identified and mapped.

Fisheries and Wildlife

General Inventory - Wildlife and Wildlife Habitats

Ashby has many wetlands, relatively large tracts of forest, mountainous areas, vernal pools, springs, seeps, rocky outcrops and open fields which are all important habitats able to support diverse populations of organisms. Wetlands are one of the Town's most important habitats due to the large number of vertebrate and invertebrate species that depend on them. The generally small, non-game species found in wetland habitats very

often cannot migrate to other more suitable areas as a response to habitat destruction so protection of wetlands is important.

Most of the common Massachusetts wetland and upland species are found in Ashby. Since the writing of the previous Open Space Plan some wildlife populations have rebounded and have now become more commonplace. Several of the most notable are mentioned here as well as a brief overview of some of the organisms found in the town. A list of all mammals and birds native to Ashby is found in Appendix B.

Through ongoing conservation efforts, Ashby has large contiguous tracts of forested land with associated wetlands providing ideal habitat for the largest mammal found in Massachusetts, moose. Moose utilize beaver ponds for feeding, cooling off and as relief from large numbers of ticks. The moose population in Massachusetts is presently stable but may be in decline due to warming trends, droughts and impacts associated with high numbers of ticks. Habitats utilized by moose are also inhabited by otters, one of the largest members of the Mustelidae (weasel) family. Other mustelids found in Ashby include long tailed weasels, short tailed weasels (ermine), fishers, mink and skunks.

Bald eagles also utilize areas around water bodies for hunting and prey upon many wetland species such as waterfowl and fish. Bald eagle numbers have been on the rise in Massachusetts. As a result, birds have begun to spread to new areas. Bald eagles have been observed more frequently in Ashby and appear to be setting up permanent residency. It is possible that in the near future, they may begin to nest here (personal comment by Andrew Vitz, Mass. Wildlife).

Fields and open spaces, while providing habitat for fewer species, are still very important. Bobolinks, short tailed weasels, voles, moles, and some shrews depend on open areas as do numerous birds, insects, and grazing or browsing animals. Small mammals native to the fields provide a ready food source for migrating and resident raptors. Fields left to grow to wildflowers are important for pollinators which are suffering a decline due to environmental factors. Dense underbrush at the edge of a field is important cover for rabbits, mice and birds.

Some of the fields found in Ashby are being strategically managed with conservation in mind. Others have been allowed to revert back to a more natural state. Ideally fields should be managed so as not to create a monoculture of just one or a few species of grasses, but to encourage a great diversity of plant species that are attractive to many organisms. This may be accomplished by mowing once every two to three years to maintain an early successional habitat. If possible, plants should be left intact at the end of the growing season so as to provide a winter source of food for birds and small mammals and then mowed the following year. Efforts should be made to increase or at least maintain the same number of acres of fields as that currently found in Ashby.

If fields are being used for harvest of a hay crop, mowing can be carefully timed to decrease disruption of nesting birds and feeding insects. Delayed mowing of the field at the base of Blood Hill resulted in several nesting pairs of bobolinks during the summer of

2017. Delayed mowing techniques are also being utilized by farmers, also resulting in an increase in nesting bobolinks.

White-tailed deer, fishers, porcupines, bobcat, red, gray and flying squirrels, coyote, and red and grey fox as well as many other mammals inhabit the wooded areas of Ashby. The black bear population in Massachusetts is estimated to be approximately 4500 statewide. There is now a breeding population of black bears in Middlesex County including Ashby. While not a common sight, they are becoming more abundant.

Ashby is fortunate to have within its boundaries numerous contiguous tracts of land where many species of birds, mammals, amphibians, reptiles, fish and insects flourish. It is important that these tracts of land remain contiguous because the largest numbers of wildlife are found where one habitat borders another. Diverse habitats are necessary to sustain these various species since most animals have specific requirements and are therefore restricted by their dependence on the surrounding vegetation, shelter, nutrient availability and other factors. By protecting our fields, meadows, forests, wetlands, brooks and ponds through conservation efforts, we encourage wildlife habitation and enrich the quality of our own lives. Each of these areas provides unique, aesthetically pleasing places for people who enjoy wildlife viewing, as well as recreational opportunities for those who choose to use them in that manner.

Vernal Pools

The Ashby Conservation Commission and others have been active in identifying and certifying the vernal pools in Ashby. We currently have 28 certified vernal pools. With cooperation from private property owners, Ashby has been able to identify vernal pools on private lands as well as on public or conserved land. The Town will continue to identify and protect these valuable habitats.



Figure10 - Typical vernal pool found in Massachusetts

Corridors of Migration

The Mount Watatic summit is a recognized viewing area for a large numbers of raptors who can be observed passing over the mountain as they follow their yearly migration cycles. Bird counts are reported daily during the three to four week period of the hawk migration by various hawk watch organizations. Mount Watatic has averaged 7700 raptor sightings per season over 14 years and 11,400 over the five year period ending 2016.

Rare Species

The Massachusetts Endangered Species Act protects threatened wildlife as well as plant species. Ashby has six MESA-listed wildlife species. The common loon, wood turtle and

orange sallow moth are actively protected by the act. The other three species while still listed, have not been observed for more than twenty-five years and alteration of their habitat is not currently regulated. Detailed information on endangered and threatened species, and species of special concern, is given in the table below:

Common Name	Type	Scientific Name	Year Last Observed	Status*
Wildlife				
Bridle Shiner	Fish	Notropis bifrenatus	1974	SC
Brook Snaketail	Dragonfly/Damselfly	Ophiogomphus aspersus	1941	SC
Common Loon	Bird	Gavia immer	2017	SC
Harpoon Clubtail	Dragonfly/Damselfly	Gomphus descriptus	1940	E
Orange Sallow Moth	Butterfly/Moth	Pyrrhia aurantiago	2005	SC
Wood Turtle	Reptile	Glyptemys insculpta	1993	SC

* E - Endangered

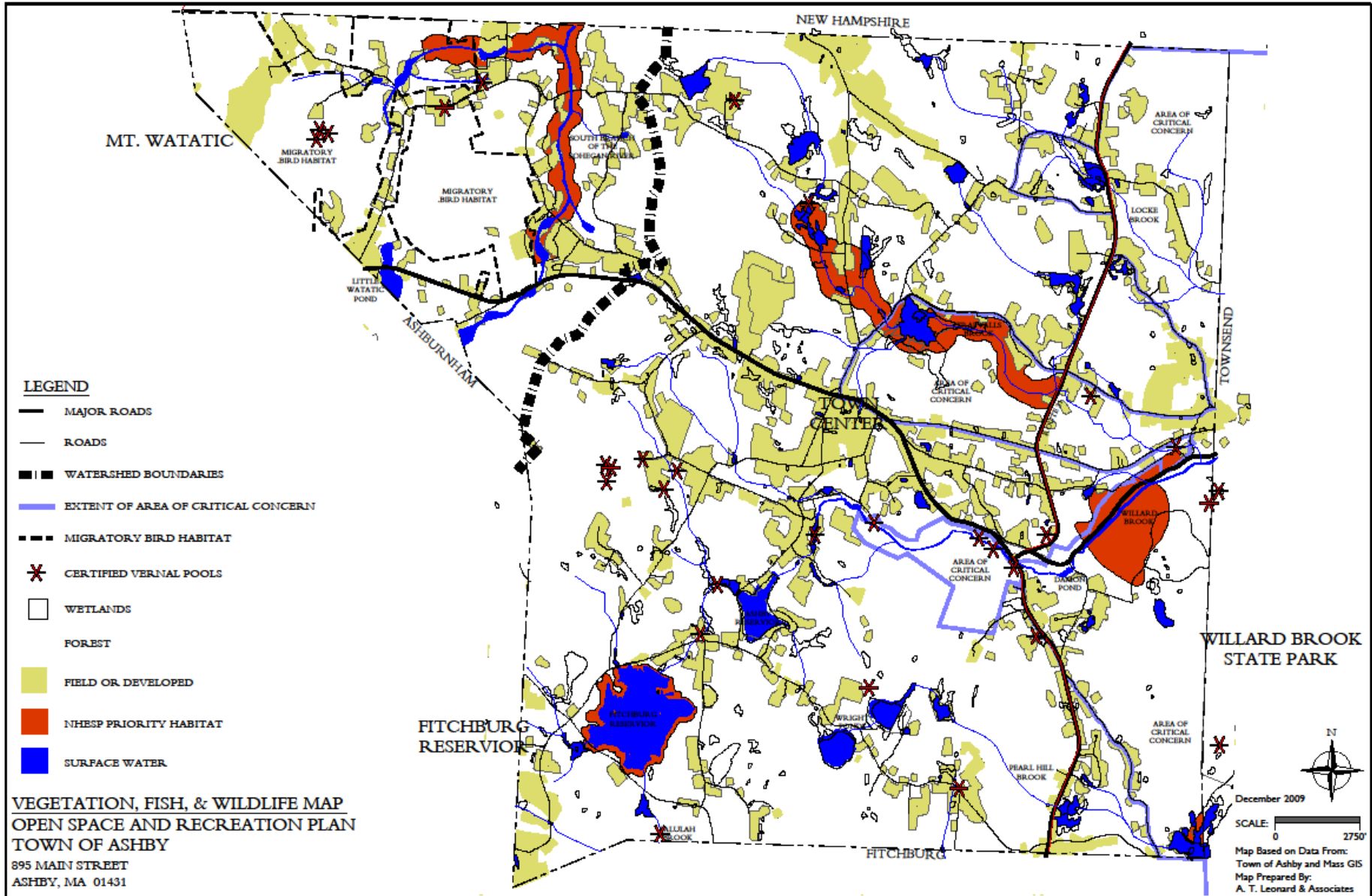
SC - Species of Special Concern

These terms are defined by MESA as follows:

- Endangered species are in danger of extinction.
- Threatened species are likely to become Endangered in the foreseeable future.
- Special Concern species have suffered a decline or are found in small numbers, and are likely to become Threatened.

BioMap2 makes reference to two additional rare species found in Ashby, the four-toed salamander (*Hemidactylium scutatum*) and zebra clubtail (*Stylurus scudderi*), a type of dragonfly. Wood turtles, a species of special concern with the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program, have been found as well as recently delisted spotted turtles and beaverpond clubtail dragonflies.

Ashby also has whip-poor-wills, bald eagles and one vernal pool with an over-wintering population of spotted salamanders. Ashby is fortunate to have native brook trout in some of our streams. Some of the wildlife species inhabiting the South Branch of the Souhegan include musk turtles, painted turtles, water shrews, and northern water snakes. A map of the distribution of wildlife and vegetation in Ashby is on the following page. The NHESP Priority Habitat has recently been reduced to only those areas surrounding the Fitchburg Reservoir.



Scenic Resources and Unique Environments

The town of Ashby is replete with scenic beauty. *Sawtelle's History of Ashby, Massachusetts*, written in 1890, speaks of Ashby in glowing terms, "The surface is hilly and diversified. The outlines of the landscape are majestic and grand. Many of the elevations are bold and rough, while others are gracefully rounded and some of the elevated swells of land are fertile to the summit." For those fortunate enough to live in Ashby in 2018, it is a joy that Ashby has retained the scenic beauty that Sawtelle spoke about over 100 years ago.

Ashby enjoys abundant wooded areas including Willard Brook State Forest, a treasure of thickly forested woodlands with clear flowing streams. Damon Pond, nestled in the State Park, provides a lovely, tranquil setting for a refreshing swim on a hot summer day. The hike along Valley Road is easily accessible for young children because it is relatively flat and is a wonderful place to go cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, or horseback riding. The hand-built arched bridge is beautiful. The Trap Falls stone bridge on Route 31 is a fine example of the particular historic building style. It has been rescued from demolition once already when Route 31 was widened and repaved in the 1970s. Keeping the bridges repaired and maintained as scenic/historic sites would be a special gift to future generations.

Our many hills afford unparalleled views of Ashby's surroundings. From atop Blood Hill, located in the western part of town, or Caton Hill located near the center of town, one can look eastward and see the skyscrapers of Boston. Pine Hill and Battery Hill along Ashby's eastern border overlook the valley around the Squannacook River. Mount Watatic views are lovely and tranquil in all directions. Jones Hill, a little west of the center of town, Jewell Hill in the southwest part of town and Caton Hill are primarily open and agricultural. All provide grand views of Mount Watatic and the Monadnock Range that stretches north into New Hampshire.

The Indian Caves, found in the West Road and Jewett Hill area adjacent to the Ashby Stock Farm are an important remnant of Ashby's past and should be preserved for future generations. Rattlesnake Hill and Fort Hill are two more areas where Native American artifacts, such as arrowheads, have been found.

Throughout town you can find large parcels of land that provide corridors for wildlife migration. Beavers have been busy in several locations creating larger wetland areas where wildlife is abundant. Great Meadow, located off Foster Road, is a beautiful beaver-flooded field that is home to a variety of plants and animals as well as a place for migrating waterfowl to feed. These wetland areas help to recharge our water supply and serve as a holding area that moderates the effects of high and low water seasons downstream.

Ashby's natural beauty provides the perfect backdrop for her picturesque village green. The Town Common was recently named among a list of "perfect village greens" by a writer for the *Sentinel & Enterprise* newspaper. "The Common has a fine green surrounded by two churches, a burial ground and a weathered old Grange Hall. On the

green itself is a gazebo, an old hand pump, monuments to the early settlers and Ashby's war veterans, and a couple of ancient gnarled maples." The town pump is still available to folks when their wells run dry. Band concerts have been held on the Common on Wednesday nights in the summer since 1897. The land of Ashby flows in all directions from the Town Common with its beautiful historic homes and charm of yesteryear.



Figure 11 - Band Concert, Town Common

Ashby has an active Historical Society. There is a collection of local artifacts housed in the refurbished Fire Station located in the Ashby Historic District. Among other historically significant buildings in Ashby, there are still many large barns, both attached and detached, which help maintain the rural feel of the town.

Environmental Problems

Although Ashby is both rural and sparsely populated, it has not escaped the scourges of modern life. The points of vulnerability are groundwater contamination, erosion, and loss of open space.

Groundwater Contamination

Ashby is served entirely by private water supply wells and private septic systems. In many areas of Ashby the overburden deposits are thin and contaminants can easily enter the bedrock aquifer. Gradual deterioration of water quality from long-term septic associated with development poses the most serious town-wide threat to Ashby's water supply. Zoning build-out analyses typically demonstrate that septic inputs on numerous contiguous lots of 1.5 acres to 2 acres will, over time, result in nitrate concentrations approaching or exceeding the drinking water standard. There is no remedy, other than point-of-use treatment, for degraded water quality.

To reduce the potential groundwater contamination of large farm animals, the Ashby Board of Health issued a series of regulations regarding the waste of housed and pastured large farm animals.

Hazardous Materials

Ashby has little industrial and commercial property use which helps limit the potential for hazardous materials contamination. The worst known incidence of ground water contamination by hazardous materials is at the gasoline filling station at the corner of Erickson Road and Route 119. At that site there was a gasoline release which contaminated a number of private drinking water wells along Main Street. Point-of-use treatment systems were placed on the contaminated wells in the 1980s. Due to a failure of the regulatory system and intransigence on the part of the party responsible for the spill, no additional progress was made until 1994, when the Board of Health and citizens petitioned the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to designate the contamination site a Public Involvement Site. Although progress has continued to be slow, the point-of-use systems have been upgraded. Remediation of groundwater in the source area has begun.

The other threat is home-based disposal of hazardous waste. In the past ten years, there have been no hazardous waste disposal days for residents to safely discard of paints, turpentine, antifreeze, and other harmful household chemicals in Ashby. Hazardous Waste days have only been held out of town in Ayer and Leominster. Unfortunately, despite advertising, few residents make the drive. Too often the septic system, backyard, or nearby wetland has been used for disposal. The town needs to be far more proactive in this area.

Erosion

Erosion can be defined as the wearing away of the ground surface as a result of the movement of wind, water, ice and/or land disturbing activities. As most development entails at least some clearing of vegetation, development is one of the primary causes of soil erosion.

Ashby's steep terrain makes it susceptible to erosion resulting from land clearing and development. The annual rainfall of approximately 40 inches, more or less evenly distributed through the year, can provide opportunities for erosion and sedimentation of cleared soils into Ashby's wetlands and water bodies. Over the last decade, there has also been an increase in major flooding events, which makes the risk of serious erosion all the more likely.

Over the past two decades, government and planning agencies have developed model ordinances, bylaws and regulations that can assist towns in better regulating development on steep slopes, thereby reducing the incidence of serious erosion and other environmental problems.

Road Salt and Sedimentation

Due to cold, snowy winters and its hilly roads, Ashby uses large amounts of road sand / salt mix. With tight budgets and low funding of the Highway Department, much of the sand / salt mix remains on the roads in the spring. Over the spring and summer, stormwater runoff pulls the sediment into the nearby wetlands, forests, and fields. This

sedimentation is gradually filling in swales and wet areas while increasing the salt content of the soil, negatively impacting vegetation. With development occurring increasingly on steeper slopes, erosion and sedimentation of lower elevations will become a issue of great concern for the future. 2018 was the first year in the past decade that the Town Highway Department was given funds to employ a street sweeper to remove sand and salt from the road edges. They also have employed other equipment to remove ages of accumulated silt from the edges of Ashby's roads.

Surface Water

Several ponds in town have various residences on their shores. Many of the houses were built as camps but are increasingly being used as full-time residences. Ground water near these residences may become enriched in nutrients and then discharge to the ponds, resulting in eutrophication. In addition, sedimentation of surface waters from road runoff is a constant threat to surface waters. Conversion of summer camps into full year residences needs to be better controlled. In some cases that may mean that the owners cannot rebuild a camp on a tiny lot that cannot afford sufficient setback for the septic system from the pond's edge.

Solid Waste

Ashby has been forced to close our landfill to comply with the DEP's solid waste master plan, which makes little sense for small rural towns. To pay for the DEP-mandated closure, the town decided to sell available airspace in the landfill for construction and demolition debris. The town continues to grapple with how to maintain its recycling programs in the face of the increased disposal costs resulting from the use of a transfer station for disposal of trash out of town.

The landfill is also surrounded on two sides by wetlands. The great weight of trash being dumped is squeezing the wastewater out of the landfill, potentially into abutting wetlands. One of these adjacent wetland areas feeds into Trapfall Brook that supplies water to Townsend.

Subdivision and Loss of Open Space

Over the past several years, a large percentage of available lots with road frontage have been built out, and developers have started to purchase and subdivide larger parcels. This trend will have a marked impact on wildlife. It will impact human perception of the environmental quality of the town as the large, interconnected parcels of woods and fields start to disappear and are replaced with expansive mowed lawns.

Poor Quality Logging

Numerous large parcels have been logged over the past several years. The environmental impact of logging varies from minimal to extensive. The worst of these operations have had severe impacts on wetlands, with skidder roads cut perpendicularly up and down slopes and through wetlands in muddy conditions. These operations have often preceded sale, and in some cases subdivision, of the land. Supervision of the logging operations by

the state forestry office could be improved with more state funding instead of the trend towards less funding. The foresters could also be helped by the active participation of town residents as additional eyes and ears.

Off-Road Vehicle Impacts

Many trails, logging roads, and old byways experience moderate to heavy use by dirt bikes, 4-wheelers and other off-road vehicles. The erosion that results from this use is occasionally severe. Notable examples include Mount Watatic and Blood Hill properties.

SECTION 5 – INVENTORY OF LANDS OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION INTEREST

Introduction

The term open space as used in this Plan denotes all undeveloped land, and all land, whether developed or not, that is used for conservation or recreation purposes. Open space makes a significant impact on the rural character and quality of life in Ashby. Large forest and farm lands provide a bucolic setting for residents and their families, as well as homes for wildlife, protection for water and air, and recreational opportunities. Open space offers hiking, fishing and other recreation that draws tourists and hikers from out of town who could potentially have a role in economic development in the community.

Ashby has often been considered too remote for extensive development. This has led residents to assume that the open space they enjoy today will always be available. In the past ten to fifteen years, Ashby has started to experience suburban sprawl in earnest. Planning for permanent protection has become more and more important. The Ashby Land Trust and Town have worked together to preserve significant quantities of open space during this period, with substantial lands preserved at Mount Watatic, Blood Hill, and at South Road Fields, in an important location near the village center.

The inventory of the Town's protected and unprotected open space lands in this section will help the Town gain a better understanding of Ashby's existing open space. It will serve as an important step in planning for further protection of open space over the next seven years.

Ashby's protected open space includes privately owned land, and land owned by the Town, the State and the City of Fitchburg. Privately owned parcels are protected through conservation restrictions recorded on the deed to prevent development, usually in perpetuity. Municipal open space, parks, land purchased for drinking water protection, State forests and State parks are all protected by Article 97 of the Amendments to the State Constitution. This law requires a determination by the Conservation Commission or the Town that the land is surplus, and a 2/3 vote of both Houses of the Legislature before land can be converted from open space to another use. In recent years, new cases have led to questions about the protection given by this law as the Land Court determined it was acceptable for a solar farm to be built on land originally purchased for protection of water quality. The State law has been effective in the vast majority of cases, and for the purpose of this plan, land subject to Article 97 will be considered "permanently protected."

The Town has purchased several important parcels in recent years. Over 300 acres was placed under restriction in 2011 and 2012 alone. Altogether there are over 3,500 acres of land in Ashby that can be considered permanently protected.

Through the permanent protection of open space, the iconic landscapes on these properties will be preserved for their environmental value, and for the wonder and delight of future generations. Private landowners have recorded conservation restrictions on parcels totaling 467.28 acres.

The City of Fitchburg has purchased substantial acreage to protect the water quality of its Reservoir. The State has very significant land holdings in Ashby, including land in Willard Brook State Forest and at Mount Watatic.

The public and private composition of this open space is shown in the table below. The following pages include a breakdown of publicly owned land and individual parcels under conservation restrictions, in Chapter 61 or unprotectd.

<u>Ownership</u>	<u>Area in Acres</u>
<u>Protected <i>Private</i> Land (under Conservation Restrictions)</u>	467.28
<u>Protected <i>Public</i> Land (under Article 97, Conservation Restriction or Deed Restriction)</u>	3,076.42
TOTAL ACRES, PROTECTED PUBLIC AND PRIVATE LAND	<u>3,543.70</u>

Summary of Public Open Space:

The following table provides the breakdown of ownership of open space between the Town of Ashby, the City of Fitchburg and the State of Massachusetts. The total acreage which is considered to have a high degree of protection is to the right.

<u>Ownership</u>	<u>Total Acres</u>	<u># Acres With Very High Degree of Protection</u>
Town of Ashby Conservation	247.72	216.05
Town of Ashby Recreation	28.39	0
Commonwealth of Massachusetts	2,332.62	2332.62
City of Fitchburg	<u>672.35</u>	<u>527.75</u>
TOTAL PUBLIC LAND	<u>3,281.08</u>	<u>3,076.42</u>

Town of Ashby Open Space and Recreation Land

In Ashby, the Conservation Commission owns open space with the majority of parcels subject to Conservation Restrictions. Some parcels were purchased after approval by Town Meeting, while others were deeded to the Conservation Commission as gifts. The Town also owns recreation lands which are not restricted. Still other land is used for a variety of municipal purposes and is listed on page 76 of this Open Space Plan.

The Town has worked hard to permanently protect 216.05 acres of land, including the 170 acre Wiita property and the scenic 12 acre South Road Fields near the village. The Wiita land contains Blood Hill, which has challenging hiking trails and is an important part of the Western Spine referenced in this plan's recommendations. The Conservation Commission owns two other parcels, the Turnpike Rd. and Wheeler Rd. properties, which total 31.67 acres and could have greater protection as open space if they were deed restricted.

Open Space Owned by the Town of Ashby

STREET ADDRESS	PARCEL TAX ID	OWNER	ACRES	DATE ACQUIRED	ZONING	LEVEL OF PROTECTION	GRANTS USED TO ACQUIRE	PUBLIC ACCESS FACILITIES
0 FROST ROAD	003.0-0045-0000.0	TOWN OF ASHBY	30	10/28/2010	R/A	HIGH - CONSERVATION RESTRICTION	Mass. Forest Legacy Program	None
0 WEST STATE ROAD	007.0-0033-0001.0	CONSERVATION COMMISSION	2.01	12/30/1999	R/A	HIGH - DEED RESTRICTION	None. Property was donated.	Trails, no parking available
0 LUKE ROAD (WIITA PROPERTY)	008.0-0031-0002.0	TOWN OF ASHBY	170	6/1/2001	R/A	HIGH - CONSERVATION RESTRICTION	Self-Help Grant	Yes, public parking available.
0 LUKE ROAD	008.0-0031-0003.0	TOWN OF ASHBY	0.98	6/1/2001	R/A	HIGH - CONSERVATION RESTRICTION	Self-Help Grant	Yes, public parking available at contiguous parcel.
0 LUKE ROAD	008.0-0031-0004.0	TOWN OF ASHBY	0.56	6/1/2001	R/A	HIGH - CONSERVATION RESTRICTION	Self-Help Grant	Yes, public parking available at contiguous parcel.
0 SOUTH ROAD (SOUTH RD FIELDS)	010.0-0024-0003.0	TOWN OF ASHBY	12.50	7/7/2000	R	HIGH - CONSERVATION RESTRICTION	None. Town purchase.	None
0 TURNPIKE ROAD	011.0-0114-0000.0	CONSERVATION COMMISSION	8.7	3/24/2006	R/A	MODERATE to HIGH - CONSERVATION COMMISSION OWNERSHIP	None.	None
0 WHEELER ROAD	005.0-0034-0009.0	CONSERVATION COMMISSION	22.97	5/2/2009	R/A	MODERATE to HIGH - CONSERVATION COMMISSION OWNERSHIP	None	None

WITH HIGH DEGREE OF PROTECTION 216.05
 WITH MODERATE TO HIGH PROTECTION 31.67
TOTAL: 247.72

The Town has approximately 29 acres dedicated to active recreation which are considered to have some protection, but not a high level. Because of their historic public uses and their ownership it is unlikely they would be sold, although it is possible. These are listed below.

<u>Recreation Lands Owned by the Town of Ashby</u>								
STREET ADDRESS	PARCEL TAX ID	OWNER/USE	ACRES	DATE ACQUIRED	ZONING	LEVEL OF PROTECTION	GRANTS USED TO ACQUIRE	PUBLIC ACCESS FACILITIES
92 BREED RD	007.0-0011-0000.0	TOWN OF ASHBY, ALLEN FIELD	16.4	12/18/1831	R/A	MODERATE - TOWN OWNED	NO	PARKING, RESTROOMS AND SNACK BAR
911 MAIN STREET	009.0-0003-0000.0	TOWN OF ASHBY/ ELEMENTARY SCHOOL FIELDS	10.68*	UNKNOWN		MODERATE - TOWN OWNED	NO	PARKING
0 MAIN STREET	009.0-0011-0000.0	TOWN OF ASHBY/ TOWN COMMON	1.25	UNKNOWN		MODERATE - TOWN OWNED	NO	DRIVEWAY, LIMITED PARKING
0 MAIN STREET	009.0-0011-0001.0	TOWN OF ASHBY/ GREEN SPACE IN DRIVEWAY TRIANGLE	0.06	UNKNOWN		MODERATE - TOWN OWNED	NO	PARKING

TOTAL: 28.39

*Includes Town Hall, Police Station and Elementary School and actively used ballfields on one parcel

Other Land, Town of Ashby

There are other lands owned by the Town of Ashby which serve a variety of municipal purposes. These include the Town Hall, Police and Fire Stations, Elementary School, Highway Department, and Public Library. They total about 247 acres and are listed on the following page.

Other Land Owned by the Town of Ashby

STREET #	STREET	PARCEL TAX ID	OWNER	USE	ACRES	DATE OF ACQUISITION
0	WATATIC MT ROAD	001.0-0004-0000.0	TOWN OF ASHBY	NONE SPECIFIED	0.56	7/13/2004
0	WEST ROAD	002.0-0018-0000.0	TOWN OF ASHBY	CEMETERY	2.09	UNKNOWN
0	JEWETT HILL ROAD	002.0-0020-0014.0	TOWN OF ASHBY	ADDITION TO WEST CEMETERY	1.11	7/14/2004
1140	GREENVILLE ROAD	005.0-0028-0000.0	TOWN OF ASHBY	LANDFILL	90.44	7/30/1973
0	WHEELER ROAD	005.0-0030-0000.0	TOWN OF ASHBY	OLD DUMP	5.4	UNKNOWN
0	FOSTER ROAD	005.0-0045-0000.0	TOWN OF ASHBY	CONTAMINATED, TAKEN BY TOWN	49.56	7/3/2007
0	TURNPIKE ROAD	005.0-0089-0000.0	TOWN OF ASHBY	NONE SPECIFIED	0.3	3/24/2006
1093	MAIN STREET	006.0-0016-0002.0	TOWN OF ASHBY	FIRE DEPARTMENT / EMS	34.4	2/4/1955
895	MAIN STREET	006.0-0046-0000.0	TOWN OF ASHBY	TOWN HALL, POLICE DEPT AND ASHBY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL	13	5/25/2007
0	BREED RD	007.0-0010-0002.0	TOWN OF ASHBY	HIGHWAY DEPT	6.1	UNKNOWN
47	ERICKSON RD	008.0-0007-0001.0	TOWN OF ASHBY	MAJA HALL	3.6	10/8/2004
0	MAIN STREET	009.0-0002-0000.0	TOWN OF ASHBY	SEPTIC SYSTEM	3.93	UNKNOWN
911	MAIN STREET	009.0-0003-0000.0	TOWN OF ASHBY	LYMAN BUILDING, POLICE DEPT.	10.68	UNKNOWN
3	NEW IPSWICH ROAD	009.0-0008-0000.0	TOWN OF ASHBY	WELL	1.25	UNKNOWN
0	COMMON RD	009.0-0010-0000.0	TOWN OF ASHBY	TOWN HORSE AND CARRIAGE SHED	0.5	1/1/1770
0	NEW IPSWICH ROAD	009.0-0012-0000.0	TOWN OF ASHBY	PARKING AT CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH	0.57	1/1/1770
35	NEW IPSWICH ROAD	009.0-0013-0000.0	TOWN OF ASHBY	LEGION & GRANGE HALL	0.3	UNKNOWN
0	NEW IPSWICH ROAD	009.0-0014-0000.0	TOWN OF ASHBY	WELL	0.02	UNKNOWN
850	MAIN STREET	010.0-0003-0001.0	TOWN OF ASHBY	OLD FIRE STATION/ HISTORICAL SOCIETY EXHIBITS	0.2	1/5/1882
0	MAIN STREET	010.0-0003-0002.0	TOWN OF ASHBY	OLD FIRE STATION	0.03	1/6/1882
0	ALLEN RD	010.0-0024-0001.0	TOWN OF ASHBY	CEMETERY	2.74	10/27/1982
812	MAIN STREET	010.0-0030-0000.0	TOWN OF ASHBY	LIBRARY BUILDING	2.86	1/9/1900
730	MAIN STREET	010.0-0037-0000.0	TOWN OF ASHBY	GLENWOOD CEMETERY	11.83	UNKNOWN
0	SOUTH ROAD	012.0-0066-0000.0	TOWN OF ASHBY	CORNER VALLEY & SOUTH	0.53	UNKNOWN
0	LOWER WRIGHT POND	014.0-0023-0000.0	TOWN OF ASHBY	TAX TAKING	0.15	7/21/2008
102	RICHARDSON ROAD	014.0-0063-0000.0	TOWN OF ASHBY	TAX TAKING	3.8	10/5/1979
0	WARES ROAD	015.0-0073-0023.0	TOWN OF ASHBY	LOW VALUE	1	7/3/2004
0	WARES ROAD	015.0-0073-0026.0	TOWN OF ASHBY	LOW VALUE	0.33	7/13/2004

TOTAL: 247.28

Protected Open Space Owned by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts

The state owns 2,332.62 acres of land in Ashby. The majority consists of 1,159 acres in Willard Brook State Forest and vicinity and 891 acres in the northern part of Town, on Mount Watatic and in the Souhegan River watershed.

The 1,880 acres listed in the 1999 plan as the size of Ashby's portion of Willard Brook State Forest was listed in error. The actual Willard Brook State Forest acreage in 1999 was 836.5. The park, shared by Ashby and Townsend, currently has 1,159 acres in Ashby, including approximately 328 acres added since 1999 with the assistance of the Ashby Land Trust.

Willard Brook State Forest provides protection for the lower portion of Willard Brook, Trapfall Brook and the surrounding upland area. The park provides swimming, picnicking, and fishing. About two miles of trail in Ashby and several abandoned roads offer opportunities for hiking. There are over 15 miles of less charted trails that are used by horseback riders and more adventurous hikers. The park is popular with residents of the region and can be quite crowded in the summer.

The State owns 517.4 acres around and including the parts of Mount Watatic that lie in Ashby. Of this, 280 acres was acquired in 2002 in partnership with the Town of Ashby and the Ashby Land Trust. They helped assemble a combination of federal, state, municipal and private dollars. This land is accessible from the road but is undeveloped for recreation on the Ashby side of the mountain. Close by is a 566.6-acre cluster of parcels, which includes Jewett Hill, and fronts West Road and Pillsbury Road just north of Route 119.

There are two other parcels owned by the Commonwealth. One of approximately 30 acres was acquired within the past ten years, and is located along the western bank of Upper Wright's Pond. This parcel abuts City of Fitchburg land and a 53-acre parcel owned by the Fitchburg Rod and Gun Club. Together these three parcels surround 80% of the shoreline of the pond. The State land has no frontage on the road. The state also owns a parcel that straddles Harris Road. This parcel is also unmarked and abuts a 200-acre farm that is in Chapter 61.

A list of all the open space in Ashby owned by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts follows on the next page. The divisions of State government with responsibility for managing these parcels are listed in most cases. These parcels are considered to have a high degree of protection for the purpose of this report.

PROTECTED OPEN SPACE OWNED BY THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

STREET #	STREET	PARCEL TAX ID	STATE DEPARTMENT OR DIVISION	AREA IN ACRES	DATE ACQUIRED	ZONING
0	WATATIC MTN RD	001.0-0002-0000.0	Commonwealth of Massachusetts	235.00	6/4/2003	R/A*
0	WATATIC MT RD	001.0-0003-0000.0	Division of Fisheries & Wildlife, Environmental Law Enforcement	11.05	N/A	R/A
0	WATATIC MT RD	001.0-0008-0000.0	Division of Fisheries & Wildlife, Environmental Law Enforcement	56.32	7/6/1999	R/A
0	WATATIC MT RD	001.0-0009-0000.0	Division of Fisheries & Wildlife, Environmental Law Enforcement	20.45	7/6/1999	R/A
0	BENNETT RD	001.0-0011-0000.0	Division of Fisheries & Wildlife, Environmental Law Enforcement	9.99	8/20/2009	R/A
0	BENNETT RD	001.0-0011-0001.0	Division of Fisheries & Wildlife, Environmental Law Enforcement	23.99	8/20/2009	R/A
495	BENNETT RD	001.0-0011-0002.0	Division of Fisheries & Wildlife, Environmental Law Enforcement	5.00	9/8/2009	R/A
0	BENNETT RD	001.0-0014-0000.0	Division of Fisheries & Wildlife, Environmental Law Enforcement	128.25	12/17/1992	R/A
0	PILLSBURY RD	001.0-0016-0002.0	Division of Fisheries & Wildlife, Environmental Law Enforcement	73.10	N/A	R/A
0	BENNETT RD	001.0-0016-0008.0	Division of Fisheries & Wildlife, Environmental Law Enforcement	4.57	10/26/1990	R/A
0	BENNETT RD	001.0-0018-0002.0	Division of Fisheries & Wildlife, Environmental Law Enforcement	1.10	5/30/1996	R/A
0	WATATIC MT RD	001.0-0018-0003.0	Division of Fisheries & Wildlife, Environmental Law Enforcement	37.00	6/29/2000	R/A
0	PILLSBURY RD	001.0-0020-0001.0	Commonwealth of Massachusetts	0.79	2/17/2012	R/A
0	PILLSBURY RD	001.0-0020-0002.0	Commonwealth of Massachusetts	23.47	2/17/2012	R/A
0	PILLSBURY RD	001.0-0023-0000.0	Division of Fisheries & Wildlife, Environmental Law Enforcement	46.00	N/A	R/A
0	JONES HILL RD	003.0-0039-0001.0	Dept of Conservation & Recreation, Div of State Parks & Recreation	22.88	5/24/1994	R/A
0	HARRIS RD	006.0-0019-0000.0	Division of Fisheries & Wildlife, Environmental Law Enforcement	13.10	6/1/1986	R/A
0	HARRIS RD	006.0-0019-0001.0	Division of Fisheries & Wildlife, Environmental Law Enforcement	9.39	6/1/1986	R/A
0	WEST STATE RD	007.0-0007-0005.0	Division of Fisheries & Wildlife, Environmental Law Enforcement	105.70	7/13/1990	R/A
0	WEST RD	007.0-0010-0001.0	Division of Fisheries & Wildlife, Environmental Law Enforcement	160.00	N/A	R/A
0	RINDGE RD	007.0-0010-0003.0	Division of Fisheries & Wildlife, Environmental Law Enforcement	50.00	N/A	R/A
0	WEST STATE RD	007.0-0032-0000.0	Commonwealth of Massachusetts	10.00	7/8/2004	R/A
0	FLINT RD	007.0-0038-0000.0	Commonwealth of Massachusetts	1.00	7/8/2004	R/A
0	FLINT RD	007.0-0039-0000.0	Commonwealth of Massachusetts	7.00	7/8/2004	R/A
0	WEST STATE RD	007.0-0040-0000.0	Commonwealth of Massachusetts	35.50	7/8/2004	R/A
0	WEST STATE RD	007.0-0042-0000.0	Commonwealth of Massachusetts	12.00	7/8/2004	R/A
0	WEST STATE RD	007.0-0043-0000.0	Commonwealth of Massachusetts	23.49	7/8/2004	R/A
0	ROUTE 31	011.0-0011-0000.0	Dept of Conservation & Recreation, Div of State Parks & Recreation	220.00	6/19/1947	R/A

0	ROUTE 119	011.0-0011-0001.0	Division of Fisheries & Wildlife, Environmental Law Enforcement	39.97	12/28/1929	R/A
0	GREENVILLE RD	011.0-0011-0002.0	Dept of Conservation & Recreation, Div of State Parks & Recreation	0.17	12/28/1929	R/A
0	TURNPIKE RD	011.0-0011-0003.0	Dept of Conservation & Recreation, Div of State Parks & Recreation	52.00	12/28/1929	R/A
0	TOWNSEND RD	011.0-0011-0004.0	Dept of Conservation & Recreation, Div of State Parks & Recreation	343.36	8/30/1930	R/A
0	HOSMER RD	011.0-0011-0005.0	Dept of Conservation & Recreation, Div of State Parks & Recreation	2.20	6/24/1930	R/A
189	HOSMER RD	011.0-0076-0000.0	Dept of Conservation & Recreation, Div of State Parks & Recreation	19.00	7/22/1969	R/A
208	FORT HILL RD	011.0-0117-0000.0	Dept of Conservation & Recreation, Div of State Parks & Recreation	5.83	6/25/1996	R/A
0	FORT HILL RD	011.0-0119-0000.0	Dept of Conservation & Recreation, Div of State Parks & Recreation	1.00	4/14/1967	R/A
0	FORT HILL RD	011.0-0120-0000.0	Dept of Conservation & Recreation, Div of State Parks & Recreation	0.84	4/14/1967	R/A
0	FORT HILL RD	011.0-0121-0000.0	Dept of Conservation & Recreation, Div of State Parks & Recreation	0.50	6/29/2010	R/A
0	FORT HILL RD	011.0-0122-0000.0	Dept of Conservation & Recreation, Div of State Parks & Recreation	0.23	6/29/2010	R/A
0	FORT HILL RD	011.0-0125-0000.0	Dept of Conservation & Recreation, Div of State Parks & Recreation	0.44	6/29/2010	R/A
0	FORT HILL RD	011.0-0126-0000.0	Dept of Conservation & Recreation, Div of State Parks & Recreation	0.47	6/29/2010	R/A
0	FORT HILL RD	011.0-0127-0000.0	Dept of Conservation & Recreation, Div of State Parks & Recreation	0.75	7/22/1969	R/A
0	FORT HILL RD	011.0-0128-0000.0	Dept of Conservation & Recreation, Div of State Parks & Recreation	118.00	6/8/2006	R/A
0	TOWNSEND LINE	011.0-0129-0000.0	Dept of Conservation & Recreation, Div of State Parks & Recreation	42.19	7/12/1935	R/A
0	WARES RD	011.0-0131-0000.0	Dept of Conservation & Recreation, Div of State Parks & Recreation	10.60	7/13/2006	R/A
0	UPPER WRIGHT POND	014.0-0048-0001.0	Dept of Conservation & Recreation, Div of State Parks & Recreation	29.72	3/7/1966	R/A
0	RICHARDSON RD	014.0-0054-0001.0	Dept of Conservation & Recreation, Div of State Parks & Recreation	18.00	4/28/2011	R/A
0	RATTLESNAKE HILL	015.0-0074-0000.0	Dept of Conservation & Recreation, Div of State Parks & Recreation	12.00	N/A	R/A
0	WARES RD	015.0-0075-0000.0	Dept of Conservation & Recreation, Div of State Parks & Recreation	189.00	2/1/2001	R/A
0	TOWNSEND LINE	015.0-0076-0000.0	Dept of Conservation & Recreation, Div of State Parks & Recreation	14.00	11/22/1965	R/A
0	LUNENBURG TOWN LINE	015.0-0077-0000.0	Dept of Conservation & Recreation, Div of State Parks & Recreation	86.21	2/14/1964	R/A

TOTAL ACRES: 2,332.62

Open Space Owned by the City of Fitchburg

The City of Fitchburg draws drinking water from a number of surface water bodies, including the Fitchburg Reservoir in Ashby. Fitchburg has acquired a significant area of land, in addition to the Reservoir and Upper Wrights Pond. The land was purchased to protect the drinking water from stormwater and other sources of contamination such as private septic systems.

The City owns a total of 672.35 acres of land in the Town of Ashby. 527.75 acres is protected by deed restrictions; these parcels are listed in the table below. There are an additional 144.6 acres that may have been acquired early in the history of their water supply system which do not appear from deeds to be subject to deed restrictions. This acreage is considered partially protected and is listed in the table on the following page.

PROTECTED OPEN SPACE OWNED BY THE CITY OF FITCHBURG IN ASHBY				
STREET #	STREET NAME	PARCEL TAX ID	ACRES	PROTECTED BY DEED RESTRICTION
0	WILKER RD	012.0-0003-0001.0	95.18	YES
0	PIPER RD	012.0-0029-0000.0	11.20	YES
0	PIPER RD	013.0-0001-0002.0	130.00	YES
0	PIPER RD	013.0-0001-0003.0	28.00	YES
0	RINDGE RD	013.0-0001-0004.0	23.00	YES
0	RINDGE RD	013.0-0001-0005.0	29.00	YES
0	RINDGE RD	013.0-0001-0006.0	77.00	YES
0	RINDGE RD	013.0-0001-0007.0	43.00	YES
0	MAYO RD	013.0-0023-0001.0	18.00	YES
0	MAYO RD	013.0-0023-0002.0	19.75	YES
0	UPPER WRIGHT POND	014.0-0048-0000.0	30.02	YES
0	RINDGE RD	014.0-0058-0000.0	23.60	YES

TOTAL ACRES: 527.75

APPARENTLY UNPROTECTED LAND OWNED BY THE CITY OF FITCHBURG IN ASHBY				
STREET #	STREET NAME OR LOCATION	PARCEL TAX ID	ACRES	PROTECTED BY DEED RESTRICTION
0	GATE HOUSE COMPENSATING RESERVOIR SOUTH RD	012.0-0055- 0000.0	2.50	NO
0	RINDGE RD	013.0-0001- 0000.0	64.00	NO
0	PIPER RD	013.0-0001- 0001.0	8.40	NO
0	SCOTT RD	014.0-0049- 0000.0	30.00	NO
0	SCOTT RD	014.0-0050- 0000.0	5.30	NO
0	FITCHBURG CITY LINE	014.0-0052- 0000.0	33.00	NO
0	FITCHBURG CITY LINE	014.0-0053- 0000.0	1.40	NO

TOTAL ACRES 144.60

Ashby's private citizens play an important role in protecting the Town's open space. Some opt to place land under permanent Conservation Restrictions, preserving land for open space in perpetuity. Others participate in the Chapter 61 programs, placing temporary restrictions on building on their land in exchange for a reduction in property taxes. Still others may own large tracts of open space, but have not chosen to protect it.

Privately Owned Protected Open Space

The following table shows the location of privately owned land permanently protected by Conservation Restrictions:

ADDRESS	PARCEL TAX ID	OWNER	ACRES UNDER RESTRICTION	HOLDER OF CR	SPECIAL TYPE, IF ANY	ZONING*
Jones Hill Road	002.0-0003-0000	Draper Properties, Inc.	35.00	New England Forestry Foundation	Forest Legacy	R/A
590 Jones Hill Road	003.0-0004-0000	John P. Mickola	52.28	Ashby Conservation Commission	Forest Legacy	R/A*
Elliot Road	003.0-0013-0003	Jeffrey S. Packard	145.00	Ashby Conservation Commission	Forest Legacy	R/A
1238 New Ipswich Road	003.0-0015-0000	William L. Arnold	15.00	New England Forestry Foundation	Conservation Restriction	R/A
Simonds Road	003.0-0021-0001, 003.0-0027-0000, 003.0-0027-0001	Robert L. McAuley	145.00	Ashby Conservation Commission	Forest Legacy	R/A
840 New Ipswich Road	003.0-0026-0000, 003.0-0036-0000	Elizabeth W. Moulton	75.00	Ashby Conservation Commission	Forest Legacy	R/A

TOTAL ACRES: 467.28

*Residential/ Agricultural Zoning District

Privately Owned Partially Protected Open Space

Although Ashby has large amounts of open space, some parcels are only partially protected or are unprotected. Undeveloped land that is privately owned may be a beloved part of the natural landscape, or may be used actively as recreation land. It may be owned by a non-profit like a children's camp or sporting club, or have been used as a farm for generations. It is frequently perceived as open space although it is most often completely unprotected from future development.

There are methods for partially protecting privately owned land in Massachusetts. General Laws Chapter 61, 61A and 61B provide that owners can petition their local Assessor's office for a reduction in taxes when the use remains forestry, agriculture or recreation. The reduced tax burden reduces the pressure to sell and provides an important incentive to keep large holdings intact. If the use is changed, the owner is liable for payment of the full tax bill for the previous four years. Towns have the right of first refusal for acquisition when the land is removed from Chapter 61 designation. Over 3,700 acres in Ashby are in this program and can be considered partially protected.

The amount of acreage in Ashby's Chapter 61, Chapter 61A and Chapter 61B is as follows:

Type of Chapter 61 Exemption	Acres
Chapter 61 (Forestry)	1,800.81
Chapter 61A (Agriculture)	998.61
Chapter 61B (Recreation)	<u>939.41</u>
TOTAL ACRES:	<u>3,738.83</u>

Chapter 61 provides a reduced assessment for forestlands. The program requires a ten-year plan for the harvesting of trees for timber or firewood. Timber sales are an important source of income from large parcels and help offset the costs of maintaining the land. Ashby has large forested areas and this program helps preserve them. Properties where the owner has obtained a Forestry exemption under Chapter 61 are as follows:

LANDS WITH CHAPTER 61 (FORESTRY) EXEMPTIONS:

PARCEL TAX ID:	STREET#	STREET NAME	ACRES:	TYPE:
002.0-0003-0000.0	0	JONES HILL RD	21	FORESTRY
002.0-0003-0000.0	0	JONES HILL RD	14	FORESTRY
003.0-0004-0000.0	590	JONES HILL RD	52.28	FORESTRY
003.0-0009-0000.0	227	JONES HILL RD	49.82	FORESTRY
003.0-0009-0000.0	227	JONES HILL RD	10.1	FORESTRY
003.0-0013-0003.0	0	ELLIOTT RD	118.38	FORESTRY
003.0-0026-0000.0	0	NEW IPSWICH RD	1.84	FORESTRY
003.0-0026-0000.0	0	NEW IPSWICH RD	32.36	FORESTRY
003.0-0036-0000.0	840	NEW IPSWICH RD	29.5	FORESTRY
003.0-0036-0000.0	840	NEW IPSWICH RD	9.97	FORESTRY
004.0-0024-0001.0	965	MASON RD	42.46	FORESTRY
004.0-0042-0000.0	0	DAVIS RD	64.8	FORESTRY
004.0-0043-0000.0	1601	GREENVILLE RD	51.67	FORESTRY
004.0-0045-0000.0	0	GREENVILLE RD	1	FORESTRY
005.0-0008-0000.0	0	FOSTER RD	13.16	FORESTRY
005.0-0008-0000.0	0	FOSTER RD	1.84	FORESTRY
005.0-0008-0001.0	0	FOSTER RD	3.96	FORESTRY

005.0-0008-0001.0	0	FOSTER RD	1.84	FORESTRY
005.0-0010-0000.0	453	FOSTER RD	28.6	FORESTRY
005.0-0023-0000.0	0	FOSTER RD	1.837	FORESTRY
005.0-0023-0000.0	0	FOSTER RD	11.26	FORESTRY
005.0-0023-0000.0	0	FOSTER RD	16.9	FORESTRY
005.0-0029-0000.0	0	WHEELER RD	43.92	FORESTRY
005.0-0029-0000.0	0	WHEELER RD	1.84	FORESTRY
005.0-0054-0000.0	0	WHEELER RD	35.1	FORESTRY
005.0-0056-0000.0	0	GREENVILLE RD	1.84	FORESTRY
005.0-0056-0000.0	0	GREENVILLE RD	4.674	FORESTRY
006.0-0001-0002.0	179	WEST RD	73.12	FORESTRY
006.0-0001-0007.0	0	WEST RD	42.17	FORESTRY
006.0-0016-0001.0	0	MAIN ST	45.4	FORESTRY
006.0-0017-0000.0	0	MAIN ST	123.4	FORESTRY
006.0-0029-0002.0	0	NEW IPSWICH RD	4	FORESTRY
006.0-0029-0005.0	0	NEW IPSWICH RD	35.38	FORESTRY
006.0-0032-0000.0	218	NEW IPSWICH RD	10.4	FORESTRY
006.0-0038-0000.0	256	MASON RD	14.6	FORESTRY
006.0-0038-0000.0	256	MASON RD	20.4	FORESTRY
007.0-0046-0000.0	0	WHITNEY RD	1.84	FORESTRY
007.0-0046-0000.0	0	WHITNEY RD	35.7	FORESTRY
008.0-0018-0000.0	0	ERICKSON RD	1.33	FORESTRY
008.0-0026-0000.0	0	ERICKSON RD	2.96	FORESTRY
008.0-0026-0000.0	0	ERICKSON RD	1.84	FORESTRY
008.0-0045-0000.0	276	ERICKSON RD	2.86	FORESTRY
008.0-0060-0001.0	0	PIPER RD	1.6	FORESTRY
008.0-0060-0002.0	0	PIPER RD	3.1	FORESTRY
008.0-0061-0000.0	0	PIPER RD	11.35	FORESTRY
008.0-0062-0000.0	0	MAIN ST	3.1	FORESTRY
008.0-0063-0000.0	0	PIPER RD	61.16	FORESTRY
008.0-0063-0000.0	0	PIPER RD	1.837	FORESTRY
008.0-0065-0000.0	274	PIPER RD	12.5	FORESTRY
009.0-0001-0000.0	114	NEW IPSWICH RD	17.98	FORESTRY
011.0-0010-0000.0	120	INGERSON RD	32.09	FORESTRY
011.0-0012-0000.0	0	VALLEY RD	34.5	FORESTRY
011.0-0013-0000.0	0	VALLEY RD	151	FORESTRY
012.0-0026-0000.0	0	PIPER RD	1.84	FORESTRY
012.0-0026-0000.0	0	PIPER RD	29.9	FORESTRY
012.0-0072-0000.0	0	SOUTH RD	73.4	FORESTRY
012.0-0118-0006.0	570	RICHARDSON RD	44.6	FORESTRY
014.0-0041-0000.0	0	RICHARDSON RD	4	FORESTRY
014.0-0054-0000.0	0	RICHARDSON RD	60	FORESTRY
014.0-0055-0000.0	985	RICHARDSON RD	48.7	FORESTRY
014.0-0055-0001.0	0	UPPER WRIGHT POND	4	FORESTRY
014.0-0057-0000.0	1149	RICHARDSON RD	35.2	FORESTRY
015.0-0004-0000.0	0	RICHARDSON RD	32	FORESTRY

015.0-0005-0000.0	1300	RICHARDSON RD	<u>55.6</u>	FORESTRY
		TOTAL:	<u>1800.81</u>	

Ashby's Chapter 61A properties that have been approved for an Agricultural tax exemption are as follows:

LANDS WITH CHAPTER 61A (AGRICULTURAL) EXEMPTION:

PARCEL TAX ID:	STREET #	STREET NAME	ACRES	TYPE:
001.0-0006-0000.0	66	HARDY RD	18	AGRICULTURE
001.0-0013-0000.0	149	BENNETT RD	15	AGRICULTURE
001.0-0013-0004.0	0	BENNETT RD	2.98	AGRICULTURE
002.0-0001-0000.0	0	WEST RD	1.84	AGRICULTURE
002.0-0001-0000.0	0	WEST RD	12.66	AGRICULTURE
002.0-0029-0000.0	500	JEWETT HILL RD	9	AGRICULTURE
003.0-0013-0003.0	0	ELLIOTT RD	24.76	AGRICULTURE
003.0-0013-0003.0	0	ELLIOTT RD	1.84	AGRICULTURE
003.0-0015-0000.0	1238	NEW IPSWICH RD	17	AGRICULTURE
003.0-0017-0000.0	0	NEW IPSWICH RD	1.84	AGRICULTURE
003.0-0017-0000.0	0	NEW IPSWICH RD	0.16	AGRICULTURE
003.0-0021-0001.0	70	SIMONDS RD	126.29	AGRICULTURE
003.0-0027-0000.0	0	SIMONDS RD	1.84	AGRICULTURE
003.0-0027-0000.0	0	SIMONDS RD	15.92	AGRICULTURE
003.0-0027-0001.0	0	NEW IPSWICH RD	1.04	AGRICULTURE
004.0-0020-0000.0	1590	GREENVILLE RD	34.16	AGRICULTURE
004.0-0057-0000.0	54	WHEELER RD	24.56	AGRICULTURE
004.0-0057-0001.0	0	WHEELER RD	5.8	AGRICULTURE
004.0-0057-0003.0	0	WHEELER RD	18.8	AGRICULTURE
005.0-0009-0000.0	382	FOSTER RD	49	AGRICULTURE
005.0-0027-0000.0	0	GREENVILLE RD	68.86	AGRICULTURE
005.0-0027-0000.0	0	GREENVILLE RD	1.84	AGRICULTURE
005.0-0040-0000.0	495	WHEELER RD	8.33	AGRICULTURE
005.0-0041-0000.0	603	WHEELER RD	1	AGRICULTURE
005.0-0041-0000.0	603	WHEELER RD	21.2	AGRICULTURE
005.0-0041-0001.0	0	WHEELER RD	3.16	AGRICULTURE
005.0-0041-0001.0	0	WHEELER RD	1.84	AGRICULTURE
006.0-0017-0000.0	0	MAIN ST	9.5	AGRICULTURE
006.0-0017-0000.0	0	MAIN ST	31.1	AGRICULTURE
006.0-0017-0001.0	0	MAIN ST	6.5	AGRICULTURE
006.0-0017-0002.0	0	MAIN ST	3	AGRICULTURE
006.0-0017-0003.0	0	MAIN ST	1.84	AGRICULTURE
006.0-0017-0003.0	0	MAIN ST	17.16	AGRICULTURE
006.0-0017-0004.0	1155	MAIN ST	4.46	AGRICULTURE
007.0-0010-0004.0	590	WEST RD	3.46	AGRICULTURE
007.0-0010-0005.0	0	WEST RD	5.8	AGRICULTURE
008.0-0039-0000.0	632	ERICKSON RD	24.16	AGRICULTURE
008.0-0039-0001.0	0	ERICKSON RD	1.26	AGRICULTURE

008.0-0039-0001.0	0	ERICKSON RD	1.84	AGRICULTURE
008.0-0058-0002.0	1128	MAIN ST	28.26	AGRICULTURE
008.0-0060-0001.0	0	PIPER RD	1.2	AGRICULTURE
008.0-0061-0000.0	0	PIPER RD	1.84	AGRICULTURE
008.0-0061-0000.0	0	PIPER RD	2.78	AGRICULTURE
008.0-0062-0000.0	0	MAIN ST	4.4	AGRICULTURE
008.0-0065-0000.0	274	PIPER RD	2.5	AGRICULTURE
008.0-0065-0001.0	0	PIPER RD	3.63	AGRICULTURE
008.0-0065-0001.0	0	PIPER RD	1.84	AGRICULTURE
008.0-0066-0000.0	259	PIPER RD	7.82	AGRICULTURE
011.0-0057-0000.0	320	DAMON RD	8.75	AGRICULTURE
011.0-0057-0000.0	320	DAMON RD	13.95	AGRICULTURE
011.0-0057-0004.0	0	DAMON RD	1.84	AGRICULTURE
011.0-0057-0004.0	0	DAMON RD	8.16	AGRICULTURE
012.0-0007-0000.0	1023	PIPER RD	13.16	AGRICULTURE
012.0-0034-0001.0	934	PIPER RD	6.82	AGRICULTURE
012.0-0038-0003.0	579	RICHARDSON RD	25.16	AGRICULTURE
012.0-0072-0000.0	0	SOUTH RD	1.81	AGRICULTURE
012.0-0072-0000.0	0	SOUTH RD	27.2	AGRICULTURE
012.0-0072-0000.0	0	SOUTH RD	6.22	AGRICULTURE
012.0-0072-0000.0	0	SOUTH RD	1.84	AGRICULTURE
012.0-0121-0000.0	0	RICHARDSON RD	1.03	AGRICULTURE
013.0-0011-0000.0	0	CROCKER RD	10.4	AGRICULTURE
013.0-0012-0000.0	298	CROCKER RD	24.16	AGRICULTURE
013.0-0012-0001.0	0	CROCKER RD	1.84	AGRICULTURE
013.0-0012-0001.0	0	CROCKER RD	30.16	AGRICULTURE
013.0-0012-0002.0	511	CROCKER RD	11	AGRICULTURE
013.0-0012-0003.0	0	CROCKER RD	16	AGRICULTURE
013.0-0012-0004.0	0	CROCKER RD	43.16	AGRICULTURE
013.0-0012-0004.0	0	CROCKER RD	1.84	AGRICULTURE
013.0-0012-0005.0	0	CROCKER RD	0.12	AGRICULTURE
013.0-0014-0000.0	0	CROCKER RD	29	AGRICULTURE
014.0-0044-0000.0	730	RICHARDSON RD	9.16	AGRICULTURE
015.0-0005-0000.0	1300	RICHARDSON RD	11.56	AGRICULTURE
015.0-0008-0001.0	1342	RICHARDSON RD	8	AGRICULTURE
015.0-0008-0001.0	1342	RICHARDSON RD	6	AGRICULTURE
015.0-0082-0000.0	164	MILL CREEK RD	25.05	AGRICULTURE
015.0-0082-0005.0	0	MILL CREEK RD	<u>2.15</u>	AGRICULTURE
		TOTAL	<u>998.61</u>	ACRES

Ashby properties with a Chapter 61B (Recreational) exemption total approximately 939 acres, with individual properties listed below:

LANDS WITH CHAPTER 61B (RECREATIONAL) EXEMPTIONS

PARCEL TAX ID:	STREET #	STREET NAME	ACRES	TYPE:
001.0-0001-0000.0	550	BENNETT RD	54.56	RECREATION
001.0-0001-0000.0	550	BENNETT RD	9.6	RECREATION
001.0-0005-0000.0	0	HARDY RD	38	RECREATION
001.0-0006-0000.0	66	HARDY RD	9	RECREATION
001.0-0013-0000.0	149	BENNETT RD	38	RECREATION
001.0-0016-0001.0	0	PILLSBURY RD	4.25	RECREATION
001.0-0016-0001.0	0	PILLSBURY RD	1.84	RECREATION
001.0-0021-0000.0	0	PILLSBURY RD	1.84	RECREATION
001.0-0021-0000.0	0	PILLSBURY RD	13.16	RECREATION
002.0-0030-0000.0	377	JEWETT HILL RD	28	RECREATION
002.0-0031-0000.0	285	JEWETT HILL RD	35	RECREATION
003.0-0001-0000.0	675	JONES HILL RD	24.42	RECREATION
003.0-0001-0004.0	0	JONES HILL RD	1.84	RECREATION
003.0-0001-0004.0	0	JONES HILL RD	97.34	RECREATION
003.0-0014-0000.0	1166	NEW IPSWICH RD	23.16	RECREATION
003.0-0050-0000.0	531	MASON RD	58.45	RECREATION
004.0-0001-0000.0	0	MASON RD	33	RECREATION
004.0-0007-0012.0	386	SIMONDS RD	8.71	RECREATION
004.0-0007-0012.0	386	SIMONDS RD	1.84	RECREATION
004.0-0007-0017.0	388	SIMONDS RD	26.42	RECREATION
004.0-0019-0000.0	0	MASON RD	29	RECREATION
004.0-0033-0000.0	39	DAVIS RD	4	RECREATION
004.0-0033-0000.0	39	DAVIS RD	14.32	RECREATION
005.0-0001-0000.0	0	FOSTER RD	10.13	RECREATION
005.0-0026-0003.0	0	FOSTER RD	3.24	RECREATION
005.0-0026-0003.0	0	FOSTER RD	1.84	RECREATION
005.0-0048-0000.0	471	WHEELER RD	15.16	RECREATION
006.0-0039-0002.0	0	FOSTER RD	1.84	RECREATION
006.0-0039-0002.0	0	FOSTER RD	1.66	RECREATION
006.0-0040-0000.0	0	FOSTER RD	2	RECREATION
006.0-0041-0000.0	0	FOSTER RD	3.36	RECREATION
007.0-0008-0000.0	2306	WEST STATE RD	31.4	RECREATION
007.0-0041-0000.0	52	FLINT RD	13.3	RECREATION
008.0-0030-0000.0	224	WHITNEY RD	84.31	RECREATION
011.0-0014-0000.0	205	KENDALL HILL RD	3.16	RECREATION
011.0-0014-0000.0	205	KENDALL HILL RD	21.18	RECREATION

011.0-0077-0000.0	213	GREENVILLE RD	22.49	RECREATION
011.0-0105-0000.0	0	GREENVILLE RD	1.84	RECREATION
011.0-0105-0000.0	0	GREENVILLE RD	1.08	RECREATION
011.0-0106-0000.0	0	COUNTY RD	1.84	RECREATION
011.0-0106-0000.0	0	COUNTY RD	1.16	RECREATION
012.0-0028-0006.0	50	WOOD DR	22.91	RECREATION
012.0-0036-0000.0	0	RICHARDSON RD	20.16	RECREATION
012.0-0036-0000.0	0	RICHARDSON RD	1.84	RECREATION
012.0-0036-0000.0	0	RICHARDSON RD	5	RECREATION
013.0-0019-0000.0	0	RINDGE RD	42	RECREATION
015.0-0006-0000.0	75	LOG CABIN RD	17	RECREATION
015.0-0009-0000.0	0	OLD NORTHFIELD RD	30.46	RECREATION
015.0-0009-0001.0	0	RICHARDSON RD	1.65	RECREATION
015.0-0009-0005.0	282	OLD NORTHFIELD RD	5.65	RECREATION
015.0-0071-0000.0	338	TAYLOR RD	2.16	RECREATION
015.0-0071-0000.0	338	TAYLOR RD	4.2	RECREATION
015.0-0071-0000.0	338	TAYLOR RD	<u>9.64</u>	RECREATION
TOTAL			<u>939.41</u>	ACRES

Unprotected Private Open Space

As in many Massachusetts towns, a large amount of open space in Ashby is privately owned, and very developable. These lands are part of the historic, unspoiled landscape of Ashby, and they could be converted to new homes, lawns and landscaping with no relationship to their natural surroundings at any time. The Town has been fortunate to have several non-profit organizations who run camps and programs for youth, or outdoor adult recreation. These own large tracts of land that are essentially open space, but they are not protected. Ashby should continue to work towards permanent protection of all of these private parcels. The names of the organizations, and location and area of their land are as follows:

UNPROTECTED OPEN SPACE OWNED BY NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS					
STREET NO.	STREET NAME	PARCEL TAX ID	OWNER	ACRES	DATE ACQUIRED
0	WEST RD	002.0-0011-0000.0	ASHBY BOY SCOUTS	6.00	9/15/1958
731	SOUTH RD	012.0-0025-0000.0	CROSSROADS FOR KIDS (formerly Camp Lapham)	85.00	12/16/1941*
0	SOUTH RD	012.0-0025-0000.1	CROSSROADS FOR KIDS (formerly Camp Lapham)	2.90	N/A
0	SOUTH RD	012.0-0025-0000.2	CROSSROADS FOR KIDS (formerly Camp Lapham)	0.71	N/A
0	ERICKSON RD	012.0-0058-0000.0	MIDDLESEX COUNTY FOUNDATION (Camp Middlesex)	4.10	N/A
1012	ERICKSON RD	012.0-0058-0001.0	MIDDLESEX COUNTY FOUNDATION (Camp Middlesex)	0.51	N/A
1031	ERICKSON RD	012.0-0071-0000.0	MIDDLESEX COUNTY FOUNDATION (Camp Middlesex)	70.65	N/A
1032	ERICKSON RD	012.0-0071-0001.0	MIDDLESEX COUNTY FOUNDATION (Camp Middlesex)	0.63	12/29/1972
0	RICHARDSON RD	014.0-0041-0000.0	FITCHBURG ROD & GUN CLUB	4.00	12/4/1963
958	RICHARDSON RD	014.0-0054-0000.0	FITCHBURG ROD & GUN CLUB	60.00	6/14/2004
0	RICHARDSON RD	014.0-0055-0000.0	FITCHBURG ROD & GUN CLUB	53.00	5/24/1938
0	RICHARDSON RD	014.0-0055-0001.0	FITCHBURG ROD & GUN CLUB	4.00	N/A
TOTAL:				<u>291.50</u>	

*Acquired by Camp Lapham

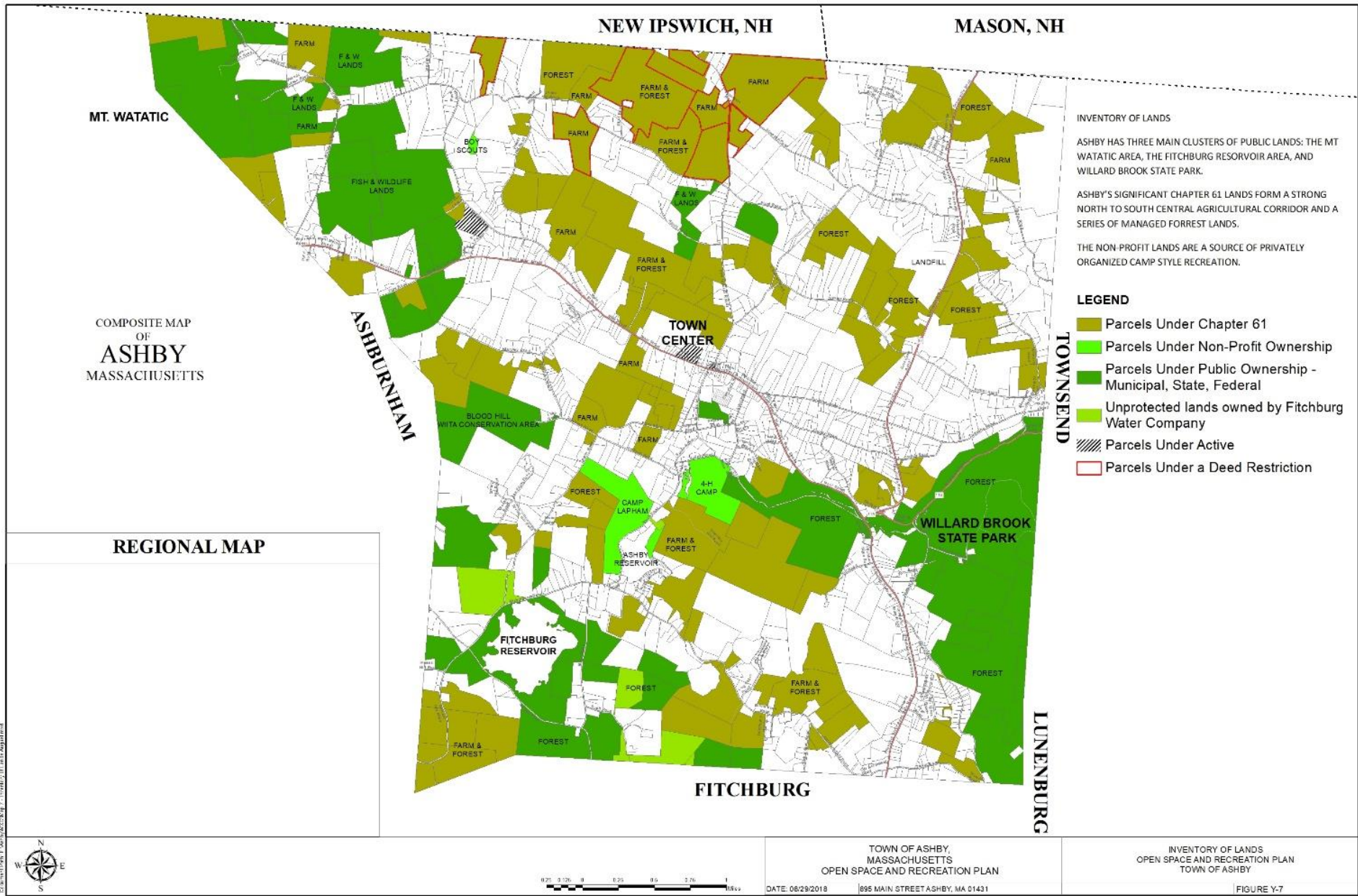
Other Unprotected Privately Owned Open Space

Ashby's landscape also benefits from many farms, fields and forests that are owned by private individuals. Many of these properties have been held by the same families for generations. An example is the Buczynski property, which Town Meeting voted to purchase in April, 2018, which will now be permanently protected. Hopefully the Town will be able to acquire the land or development rights for some of these parcels that are in key locations. The list of unprotected private lands that follows was compiled from the Assessor's comprehensive list of all vacant land.

UNPROTECTED OPEN SPACE OWNED BY OTHERS				
STREET #	STREET	PARCEL TAX ID	ACRES	NOTES
0	JONES HILL RD	002.0-0021-0000.0	42.00	Forest; Potentially Developable Land
0	JONES HILL RD	002.0-0026-0003.0	16.12	Fields
0	JONES HILL RD	002.0-0027-0000.0	40.00	Forest; Developable Land
0	JUNIPER HILL	004.0-0048-0000.0	27.00	Forest
0	TOWNSEND LINE	004.0-0049-0000.0	32.56	Forest
0	MAIN ST	006.0-0017-0003.0	19.00	Field Crops - hay, wheat, tillable forage cropland etc.
0	HARRIS RD	006.0-0018-0000.0	42.00	Forest; Potentially Developable Land
0	SPRING HILL RD	012.0-0001-0000.0	69.00	Forest; Potentially Developable Land
0	LOWER WRIGHT POND	014.0-0001-0000.0	80.00	Forest, part of Western Spine
0	OLD NORTHFIELD RD	015.0-0009-0006.0	27.00	Forest; Potentially Developable Land

394.68

A map of all protected and unprotected, public and private open space is found on the next page.



MT. WATATIC

NEW IPSWICH, NH

MASON, NH

COMPOSITE MAP
OF
ASHBY
MASSACHUSETTS

ASHBURNHAM

TOWN CENTER

TOWNSEND

REGIONAL MAP

BLOOD HILL
WITA CONSERVATION AREA

CAMP LAPHAM

4-H CAMP

WILLARD BROOK
STATE PARK

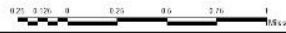
FITCHBURG
RESERVOIR

LUNENBURG

FITCHBURG

INVENTORY OF LANDS
ASHBY HAS THREE MAIN CLUSTERS OF PUBLIC LANDS: THE MT WATATIC AREA, THE FITCHBURG RESERVOIR AREA, AND WILLARD BROOK STATE PARK.
ASHBY'S SIGNIFICANT CHAPTER 61 LANDS FORM A STRONG NORTH TO SOUTH CENTRAL AGRICULTURAL CORRIDOR AND A SERIES OF MANAGED FOREST LANDS.
THE NON-PROFIT LANDS ARE A SOURCE OF PRIVATELY ORGANIZED CAMP STYLE RECREATION.

- LEGEND**
- Parcels Under Chapter 61
 - Parcels Under Non-Profit Ownership
 - Parcels Under Public Ownership - Municipal, State, Federal
 - Unprotected lands owned by Fitchburg Water Company
 - Parcels Under Active
 - Parcels Under a Deed Restriction



TOWN OF ASHBY,
MASSACHUSETTS
OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN
DATE: 08/29/2018 | 895 MAIN STREET ASHBY, MA 01431

INVENTORY OF LANDS
OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN
TOWN OF ASHBY
FIGURE Y-7

Inventory of Recreation Interests

In addition to its wealth of open space, Ashby has some well utilized active recreation facilities. Allen Field, operated by the Town, has a playground, three little league baseball fields, and a softball field that are used regularly in the summer. Soccer has been a recent addition, played in the outfield of one of the baseball fields. Ashby has a bandstand that is used several times each year for townwide events and a horseback riding rink that has fallen into disrepair. Allen Field is home to the July 3rd bonfire celebration, a traditional community event.

The Town Common is used as a picnic area and hosts the very popular weekly band concerts in the summer. Nearby at the elementary school, there are tennis courts and a basketball court. Both suffer from lack of maintenance and the tennis courts are seriously undersized. The school playground is available for use after school and during the summer.

Ashby is more heavily populated outside the immediate Town center, requiring many residents to travel some distance to use these facilities. The 2018 survey results and ongoing conversations show an interest in more children's playgrounds close to the center of Town.

Ashby's lakes are fairly shallow and thus are not suitable for boats of any significant size. Powerboats are prohibited on ponds used for drinking water, such as the Fitchburg Reservoir. This fact has actually kept most of Ashby's ponds relatively free of invasive aquatic plants. Only Little Watatic Pond has become choked with milfoil and other exotic water plants to the point of becoming disturbing enough to residents for them to fund chemical weed control. Residents on Little Watatic Pond noted a significant increase in the invasives following motor boats "doing donuts" through a "weedy" portion of the pond.

Willard Brook State Forest has a swimming area, Damon Pond. It becomes quite crowded on summer weekends. Most Ashby residents do not use Damon Pond except on weekdays.

The existing playing fields appear to be adequate for the current needs of residents. The town currently has two tennis courts, but they are very much undersized, in poor condition and rarely used. The little league fields are enough for now, but maintenance of the ball fields is done voluntarily by the Little League Association.

Lands owned by the State Division of Fish and Wildlife are managed with wildlife conservation in mind and no formal trail system has been developed on these holdings. The town has purchased the Wiita Recreation Area and Watatic Reserve in recent years with some trail systems in place. Most informal trails use old cart roads over public or private land. On private land there is no public right to use the trails, and they may be closed at the discretion of the landowner.

Maintenance is critical to keeping open space, fields and the few recreation buildings in Town attractive and useful. The Town needs to plan how to maintain both active and passive

recreational facilities. A plan should be in place to ensure that trails are adequately maintained. In addition it should be noted that while the population is aging, few recreation areas in Ashby are handicap accessible.

Organized Recreational Activities

Organizations for youth include Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Townsend-Ashby Youth Soccer Association, Little League and T-ball, Children’s Story Hour at the library, private horseback riding instruction, church groups, Crossroads for Kids leadership programs, and Camp Middlesex day- and overnight-camp.

Organized recreation activities for adults include coed volleyball, basketball, and badminton, the Fitchburg Rod and Gun Club, Church activities, Ashby Historical Society, the Council on Aging and Ashby Land Trust.

Residents of all ages enjoy Ashby’s Memorial Day ceremonies, July 3rd celebration and bonfire, Wednesday night band concerts in July and August, Pumpkin Festival in October, Halloween on Main Street, Congregational Church flea market, First Parish Church summer sales, cultural activities sponsored by the Public Library, The Friends of the Ashby Library Book Sale, maple sugar supper, pancake breakfasts, corned beef and turkey suppers, auctions, and more!



Figure 12 - Annual Antique Car Show, Allen Field

In today’s world, increasing emphasis is being placed on recreation, and group sports for children and individual recreation among adults are both very popular. Anecdotal information indicates that there are more walkers, joggers and bicyclists on the roads. Equestrian trail riding, hiking, cross-country skiing and snowmobiling are the more popular, trail-based activities, although some of these might require their own trail system to accommodate incompatibilities between activities.



Figure 13 - Fourth of July Bonfire, Allen Field

On first glance Ashby appears to have adequate open space and recreation facilities. However, while the acreage is substantial, a substantial amount of public land in the town is allocated to state or water supply protection needs which may not always align with the needs of the residents of Ashby. A number of residents are requesting more up to date recreation sites that better accommodate their needs. The succeeding sections identify several important town recreation and open space needs that are not being met.

SECTION 6 - COMMUNITY GOALS

Description of Process

In the early winter of 2017, it was noted that the 2012 Update of the Open Space and Recreation Plan was approaching expiration. Some members of the Planning Board, Conservation Commission, and Selectmen saw the need to take stock of past progress and current needs, and create a new Update with fresh community input. A small group of people (approximately 20), including town officials and citizens, met to determine how to proceed. They reviewed actions taken since the 2012 Update and resolved to complete a new update as soon as possible.

Public input was critical to the prior Update. The board members who met to discuss the first steps for the update of 2018 decided to hold several meetings and workshops to gauge public opinion. Three public meetings were convened and a survey was conducted to develop a new set of goals and objectives and a draft Action Plan.

An initial meeting was held on January 18, 2018 to engage the public in the planning process. This meeting was widely publicized by a notice included in a mailing for the Town census. A second public meeting took place on March 10. At this time residents were informed about the nature of an Open Space Plan, and the goals of the previous plan were reviewed. Some good discussion gave an initial sense of residents' priorities. A third and final public meeting on June 18 was posted on social media and the Town website. The purpose was to finalize the goals and objectives and develop a new Action Plan.

The agenda for the second meeting and sign-in sheets for the second and third meetings are found on the following pages. The survey was conducted from March to June, 2018. 54 responses were received and tabulated. The results are in the Appendix to this Update. Since so much good work went into the previous draft, this revision was less extensive. We were again fortunate to have a number of knowledgeable and technically skilled people working on the committee. Information in Sections 3, 4, and 5 was thoroughly reviewed and revised. We are proud that our Open Space and Recreation Plan was again created entirely 'at home.'

AGENDA

DISCUSSION OF GOALS, WISHES AND NEEDS FOR ASHBY'S OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION

TOWN HALL
FIRST FLOOR LAND USE ROOM
3/10/18
1:00 – 3:00 P.M.

1. OVERVIEW - OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN UPDATE
Please ask questions
2. YOUR WISHES AND NEEDS
What are YOUR wishes for open space protection and recreation services in Ashby
How could these realistically happen
3. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES
4. WRAP UP

046

OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN UPDATE DISCUSSION

3/10/18

PLEASE SIGN IN

<u>Name</u>	<u>Affiliation</u>	<u>E-mail for more information</u>
1. DEAN VOURE		
2. KICK SHAW		
3. JIMMY AUST		
4. TIFFANY CELL		
5. MATTHEW WERNER		
6. HAROLD CHATTAWAY		
7. TIM & SALLY BAUMANN		
8. ALAN PRINE		
9. KRISHNABHAR		
10. LIL WHITNEY		
11. TONY CARSTOR		
12. JIM PANOSKY		

Open Space and Recreation Plan Update ^{6/13/18}

Please sign in email or phone.

- Name
- 1 Roberto Pashman
 - 2 Alan Pease
 - 3 Laura Harbottle
 - 4 Cathy Krestofferson
 - 5 Peter Mustay
 - 6 Juana Baer
 - 7 Nancy Catalini
 - 8 Cathy Foster
 - 9 ~~Robert~~ Amis
 - 10 Nicholas Ameymaki
 - 11 Daniel Ewald
 - 12 Mike McCallum...
 - 13 Me
 - 14 Gary Beal
 - 15 Justin Baer
 - 16 Tiffany Call
 - 17 Leon GAY
 - 18 Sue Chapman
 - 19 Rebecca Walsh
 - 20 Matthew Perra
 - 21 Jeanie Lindquist...
 - 22
 - 23
 - 24
 - 25

Statement of Open Space and Recreation Goals

The 2018 Survey results revealed much about the open space and recreation desires of residents of the Town of Ashby. These results and additional anecdotal information demonstrate that townspeople have a strong wish to retain the small town character of Ashby and to preserve the Town's natural resources. In addition, some updating of recreational facilities is desired.

The overall open space vision for Ashby is to improve and enhance the Town's open space system in order to preserve rural character, protect natural resources and expand recreational opportunities. The goals of prior plans were found to still pertain to this vision, and are stated here:

Preserve rural character – Ashby is fortunate to have large tracts of as yet undeveloped fields and forests. Along with the historic Town center and other heritage landscapes, these large fields and forests give Ashby the quaint, rural feeling and scenic views desired by its citizens.

Protect natural resources – In addition to its wealth of plant and wildlife species, Ashby has tremendous physical natural resources including hills, mountains, rivers, water bodies, wetlands and wildlife corridors. These resources are highly important to the community and the region.

Expand recreational opportunities – As desired by its citizens, Ashby has great potential to expand, locally and regionally, its passive recreational system while maintaining safe active recreational opportunities.

In order to accomplish these goals, the town must continue the persistent dedication of the past fifteen years to preserving open space. This has included traditional land acquisition strategies of supporting the purchase of land by the town and state agencies, and assisting the conservation efforts of private land trusts and landowners to maximize the open space benefits for the community. These have resulted in the permanent protection of 216 acres of open space over the last twenty years, a very significant amount for a small town. Ashby has facilitated purchases of land at Mount Watatic by the Division of Fish and Wildlife that are of regional importance. It has also purchased land jointly with other Towns.

In recent years, "smart growth" changes to zoning and land development regulations, and low impact development techniques have also been brought forward or are under consideration. The Town is a Right to Farm community and has shown strong support for local agriculture. The newly-adopted recreational marijuana bylaw encouraged small scale growing consistent with a rural community.

In addition to preserving open space, public forums showed a need to consider residents' desires for more active recreation. At the third public meeting, several residents felt strongly

that there was a need for additional snowmobile, mountain bike and horseback riding trails. It will be important to make sure that these activities can be located without significant impacts on habitat and natural resources. Other residents spoke up about the renovation of athletic fields, refreshment stands and public bathrooms that are used for sports and multiple other activities. The Town should explore sources of funds to make these facilities useable and ensure that they remain.

Residents envision a sustainable, rural community with an historic Town center, clustered villages, large tracts of functioning agriculture, expansive corridors of conserved forest, clean air, clean water and recreational opportunities, while maintaining Ashby's strong sense of community. As a rural community threatened by the spread of suburban development, we believe our open space and recreation aspirations are a reflection of the smart growth practices the Town continues to encourage.

SECTION 7 - ANALYSIS OF NEEDS

Relation to Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan

The 2017 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) provides data that was designed to influence and shape local planning and policy efforts. This document emphasizes the strong relationship between preserving open space and supporting outdoor recreation. The data in the SCORP comes from public survey results and inventories of recreation sites. Four hundred Massachusetts residents, 215 middle and high school students and municipal employees from 58 towns were surveyed by Insights and Answers, Inc. of Virginia Beach, VA to determine preferences for different types of recreation and the specific needs of youth. The most strongly desired recreation improvements overall were hiking and multi-use trails, playgrounds, outdoor swimming pools or spray parks, off-leash dog parks and picnic areas. The most popular activities for middle and high school students were team sports (for boys) and team sports or swimming pools (equally desirable for girls.) The young people also felt hiking trails were important.

The SCORP noted the importance of tourism as the third largest employer in Massachusetts in 2014 and was responsible for \$19.5 billion in consumer spending in that year. Open space and recreation resources contribute to a high quality of life, a factor important to attracting businesses to a given area. These are two ways open space and recreation are critical to the economy throughout the State. Their economic value may be of particular note for small towns like Ashby which are far from areas of economic growth.

The goals of the SCORP included increasing the availability of trails; increasing water-based recreation; investing in conservation and recreation areas that are close to home; and investing in racially, economically and age-diverse neighborhoods. The SCORP also stressed the importance of providing recreation opportunities for persons with disabilities. Teens and seniors were also seen as underserved populations. Some of these priorities are likely to be reflected in criteria for grants for open space and recreation.

Summary of Resource Protection Needs

Despite the progress made by the town of Ashby since its first Open Space and Recreation Plan, the Town continues to have needs in the area of protecting its natural and cultural resources. These resource protection needs focus on achieving our community goals of preservation of our rural character and our natural resources.

With the conservation of the Watatic Mountain area, Blood Hill, Jewell Hill, and the Fitchburg Reservoir area, Ashby has an opportunity to create a green corridor, a “western spine,” from Watatic Mountain to the Fitchburg Reservoir including potential connections in Ashburnham, the Ashburnham State Forest, and the Midstate Trail. A map of the Midstate Trail is provided below. This original concept has expanded as several survey responses and further discussion at the public meetings mentioned the desirability of also connecting Mount Watatic to Willard

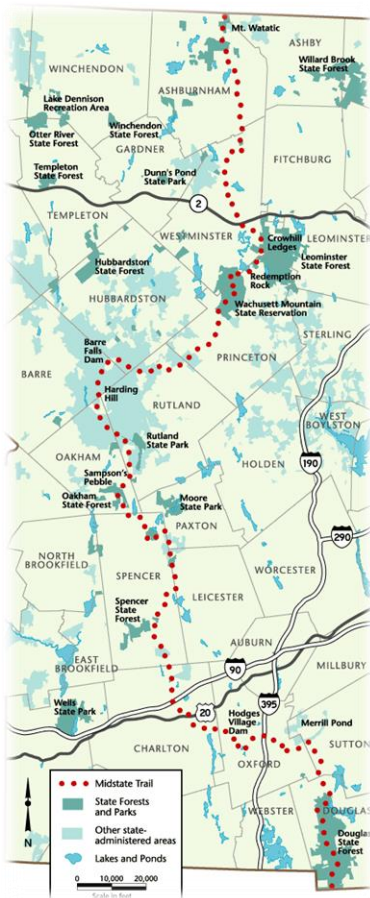


Figure 14 – 92 mile MidState Trail adjacent to Ashby

Brook State Forest. To accomplish this, the Town would need to obtain conservation restrictions or easements to allow passage across private landowners’ parcels. This effort would also need the support of the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation and Division of Fish and Wildlife. Access easements may provide a one-time source of needed revenue for farmers and should be in place before any development occurs on large tracts of land.

Part of this potential trail would be located along an existing agricultural corridor from the New Hampshire border to the Ashby Stock Farm along Route 119. It could possibly be extended from Willard Brook State Forest to the Crocker Farm in the southwest corner of Ashby, where portions of the property are subject to deed restrictions.

These trails would protect three distinct areas - forests, wildlife corridors and active farms. When they were completed, Ashby would have achieved a network of its resources, while protecting them and creating a valuable asset for the Town. This would be a public/private partnership effort involving obtaining access easements together with conservation and/or agricultural restrictions.

There is also a need for protection of contiguous farms and forests which provide wildlife habitat and create the natural landscapes which are so important to the character of Ashby. The survey results identified the Stock Farm and Caton Hill as especially in need of protection.

The wetlands and waterways of Ashby are an extremely important resource. All are necessary to drinking water, healthy ecosystems and rare species habitats. The Town’s waters are connected to groundwater that feeds private wells in Ashby, and the City of Fitchburg’s public drinking water reservoir. On this basis they are designated as outstanding resource waters by the Department of Environmental Protection. Two surface water features of particular interest are the South Branch of the Souhegan, which feeds the Merrimack River, and the Great Meadow, a very large contiguous wetland area. The 2018 survey noted them as priorities for protection together with the Town’s quaking bog. These are critical and unique resources, and both the river and wetlands and their buffer zones need to be protected from development.

Ashby is proud of its cultural heritage and is looking to preserve this heritage for future generations. In particular, Ashby has nine priority heritage landscapes in need of protection from development or deterioration including the Ashby Stock Farm, the three Town

cemeteries, the Gazebo on the Common, the Jewett Hill Caves, the Loveland Grist and Saw mills, the scenic Route 119, and the Trapfall Stone Arch Bridge.

Summary of Community's Needs

Community driven needs for active recreation, passive recreation, and access to water bodies are important areas of focus for Ashby's Open Space and Recreation Plan.

The recreation needs most often cited in the survey were the desires for more passive recreation options, specifically hiking and cross-country skiing trails, and public access to lakes for boating and fishing. Ashby has cleared trails on the Wiita Conservation Land for public use for access to Blood Hill. Moving forward, the passive recreational opportunities would continue to be focused on the western spine public lands including improved trails, expanded trails, and connections to Ashburnham. Recreational opportunities for the disabled community and senior citizens are becoming increasingly important, creating a need for equally accessible facilities that has been recognized by federal and state government. This need supports the future creation of a universal accessible nature trail. It is further reflected in the goal of making all recreation facilities accessible within the next five years.

Ashby is a small community and its active recreation facilities are limited. However, there is much public interest in a wide variety of recreation opportunities. At the first public meeting, that discussion centered on the need to maintain open fields for views, to provide multi-use trails that could be shared with horseback riding, the need for ATV Trails, and a strong desire by some for a dog park at Allen Field or behind Elementary School. Besides the discussion at the meeting, comments were received from Suzanne Caron of 4H, Eric Pierce of Cub Scouts and Keith Turgeon of Townsend Ashby Youth Baseball and Softball. These are found in the Appendix to this report. They suggested multiple upgrades to Allen Field and playing fields for younger children's sports in a more central location. There is also a clear need to make these facilities more fully handicap accessible.

The residents who attended the second and third public meetings wanted to see improvements to the fields at Ashby Elementary School and Allen Field. They expressed a desire for more baseball and softball fields, tennis courts, basketball courts, and open fields for multi-use of soccer, lacrosse, and informal active recreation. Volunteers recently raised funds and rebuilt the playground at Allen Field, and now accessory activities like the concession stand and restrooms were seen to be in serious need of maintenance. Several who attended the meetings spoke out strongly about the need for more regular maintenance to keep existing facilities useable, and protect the Town's investment. Others indicated a need for playgrounds. The preference was to have them in a more accessible location, closer to the center of town.



Figure 15 – Townsend-Ashby Soccer Team

Finally, at the third meeting, there was considerable discussion of the need to provide designated trails for snowmobile users. Many types of active recreation are prohibited by conservation restrictions, but the needs of this group are important and it was a valuable conversation. This could be a first step to identifying a suitable location and managing impacts on the environment.

Townpeople clearly value the open space the town affords and wish to retain as much of it as possible. Ashby citizens are protective of their land ownership and do not like people telling them what to do with their land. We will be more effective in accomplishing the Ashby Open Space and Recreation Plan goals and objectives if we also implement an active public education program about the financial value of open space. There is much information available to help inform residents about their land preservation options; the need for such information is clear.

Summary of Management Needs

We need to expand our ideas of who is responsible for developing and managing open space and recreation areas – and to increase the amount of maintenance that takes place. While there is a dedicated base of volunteers willing and able to help do the work, it may be more effective in some cases to use paid staff. At the third public meeting, there was discussion of the Town hiring an employee like a Trails Manager who would be responsible for maintenance of trails and passive recreation sites. This individual could coordinate volunteer/private efforts in clean-ups; maintain signage and blazing; and recommend capital improvements to the active recreation facilities. They could help organize volunteers who do significant maintenance on their own. A sub-committee of the Conservation Commission could assist with trail maintenance in open space areas. Eagle Scout and VoTech School efforts could be guided to priority projects, to supplement the work of paid staff and other volunteers.

Our town boards enjoy cordial working relationships with each other but would do well to coordinate more effectively in the areas of development policy. Improving the distribution of information between boards will provide a better ability to mitigate the impacts of development on the vision of the community. We need to continue strong enforcement of regulations that protect natural resources, such as Title V, the Wetlands Protection Act, the Subdivision Rules and Regulations and the Zoning Bylaw. We also need a shared vision, expressed in policies and regulations promoting the type of development that is in keeping with the rural character and precious natural resources of the Town.

SECTION 8 - GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The goals and objectives from the 2012 Open Space and Recreation Plan Update were reviewed with the residents who attended the public meetings. The three goals remain as listed in Section 6 of this Plan - preserve rural character, protect natural resources, and expand recreational opportunities. All of the objectives are applicable to multiple goals. The objectives are largely the same as in the prior plan, except that the last objective from the 2012 update, promoting renewable energy, was removed since this objective is addressed by the Town independent of the Open Space Plan. The following list is an update of the specific actions to be taken to accomplish the objectives. This update responds to comments received at the public meetings.

1: Unite a Western Spine and Connect to Ashburnham, the Midstate Trail and Willard Brook State Forest

Starting with the lands of public ownership, Watatic Mountain, Department of Fish and Wildlife Land, Blood Hill, and the Fitchburg Reservoir, create a wildlife and recreational corridor, "a western spine," from north to south, and from the "western spine" east to Willard Brook State Forest and west to Ashburnham.

- A. Acquire easements, conservation restrictions and available land within the north-south corridor from Watatic to the Fitchburg Reservoir in order to create a trail along the Western Spine, and from the spine south and east to Willard Brook State Forest, subject to the availability of funds
- B. Communicate with Commonwealth as needed to develop working planning relationships
- C. Educate abutters on the programs and options available for conservation
- D. Discuss Deed Restrictions and Easements with interested abutters
- E. Explore possibility for a trail or trails to accommodate active recreation such as snowmobiles and mountain bikes
- F. Discuss creation of a stewardship fund for maintenance of Town lands

Potential Funding Sources: LAND grant, formerly 'Self-Help'; Landscape Partnership grant; Community Forest grant from USFS; the "Merrimack Initiative;" Extension of the Quabbin to Cardigan (Q2C) corridor into Ashby and same with the Open Space Institute (OSI); Western MA project funding extended similarly.

2: Preserve Contiguous Farms and Forests

Starting with the lands in the northern agricultural corridor and significant farms in the southwest corner of Ashby, promote and actively protect, through restrictions or acquisition, contiguous sections of farms and forest lands. Where possible, prioritize the preservation of the lands actively forested and farmed; thus protecting both land uses with one effort.

- A. Maintain a working relationship with the Commonwealth regarding agricultural and open space preservation programs
- B. Acquire easements, conservation restrictions and/or available farm and forest land in the northern agricultural corridor and southwest corner of Ashby, in order to preserve traditional landscapes, valuable habitat and open spaces for future generations, subject to the availability of funds
- C. Prepare agricultural and recreational overlay district to assist farmers and large property owners maintain their properties without selling for development
- D. Request information from Assessors on location of all lands under Chapter 61, 61A, and 61B to update Open Space Map at least quarterly
- E. Analyze and rate parcels for potential united public lands trail system
- F. Discuss with landowners the advantages of the Chapter 61 laws
- G. Discuss with landowners the programs and options available for conservation
- H. Discuss Deed Restrictions and Easements with interested abutters
- I. Support conservation restriction, easement, and land acquisition activities that serve to protect forests and farm parcels
- J. Prepare documentation for restrictions or easements being enacted
- K. Analyze and identify lands with prime agricultural soils with assistance from NRCS
- L. Analyze, rate, and explore land acquisition alternatives of parcels for sale
- M. Identify and develop means of funding the Ashby Land Trust in preparation for land acquisition of parcel for sale or being removed from Chapter 61 designation

Potential Funding Sources: Agricultural Preservation Restrictions, Forest Legacy Program, local Land Trusts.

3: Protect the Critical Natural Water Systems and Habitats

Ashby's natural water systems are vital to the environmental health of the local ecosystem and regional water supply. Some of these natural water systems are also important habitats for a variety of wildlife including rare species. Ashby is looking to increase the protection of areas that are both important water systems and habitats.

- A. Work with the City of Fitchburg to protect the loon nesting sites on Fitchburg Reservoir
- B. Educate landowners on the programs and options available for conservation
- C. Discuss Deed Restrictions and Easements with interested landowners
- D. Work with local and regional agencies to identify potential aquifer sites
- E. Continue efforts to identify and certify vernal pools
- F. Continue efforts to inventory and water test all streams in Ashby - obtain assistance and training from the Nashua River Watershed Association
- G. Investigate possibility of obtaining a group rate for private well testing
- H. Prepare and present a low impact development or resource protection bylaw to mitigate development impacts on natural resources
- I. Need a bylaw to the Wetlands Protection Act that prevents location of new homes within the 100 foot wetland buffer. WPA does not prevent this development

Potential Funding Sources: MA DEP Drinking Water Supply Protection Grants; Fitchburg Water Dept.; MA Division of Fish & Wildlife.

4: Protect the Priority Heritage Landscapes

In 2007, Ashby, with assistance from the Department of Conservation and Recreation, identified heritage landscapes with cultural or historical importance including nine priorities determined to be critical to the fabric of the community. These priority landscapes are: Ashby Stock Farm, the three Town cemeteries, the Gazebo on the Common, the Jewett Hill Caves, the Loveland Grist and Saw mills, the scenic Route 119, and the Trapfall Stone Arch Bridge.

- A. Educate landowners on the value of Heritage Landscapes to the community and identify options available for protection
- B. Acquire easements, conservation restrictions and/or available land to permanently protect the land and structures that are designated as Heritage Priority Landscapes, subject to the availability of funds
- C. Adopt rules and regulations to promote the protection of the priority landscapes
- D. Develop and maintain a working planning relationship with Commonwealth
- E. Coordinate grant writing for preservation of First Parish Cemetery
- F. Restore the First Parish Cemetery
- G. Coordinate with the Commonwealth on the creation of preservation plans for the priority heritage landscapes
- H. Coordinate grant writing for preservation activities
- I. Depending on public opinion and the readiness of the Town, explore reconsideration of CPA for funding historic preservation, recreation improvements and open space projects

Potential Funding Sources: Massachusetts Historical Commission Preservation Projects Fund (MPPF); Massachusetts Department of Transportation; Heritage Landscape Program; Historic Preservation Grants; National Register of Historic Places

5: Maintain and Enhance Active and Passive Recreation Opportunities

Ashby has limited active recreational opportunities and public passive recreational opportunities. Citizens are interested in expanding opportunities while maintaining the existing facilities.

- A. Work with the North Middlesex school system to develop a survey for the prioritization of active recreation repairs, improvements, and expansion
- B. Continue the working relationship with the Commonwealth regarding maintenance of the passive recreation opportunities on state land (Watatic Mountain, Willard Brook State Forest, other land holdings)
- C. Establish trails committee under the direction of the Conservation Commission to cut and maintain trails on public land. Explore ability of Eagle Scouts and other less traditional groups to help with trail maintenance
- D. Make all active and passive recreation locations intended for public use handicap accessible
- E. Identify and rate water bodies for public access of non-motorized craft
- F. Improve public access to water bodies including potentially obtaining an easement or acquiring land. Investigate location for access to Lower Wrights Pond
- G. Clean-up and improve active recreation facilities based on the priorities established by the survey
- H. Analyze and rate potential sites for the expansion of active recreational facilities
- I. Evaluate the ability of volunteers to maintain parks and trails and discuss the potential role of a Trails Manager
- J. Encourage developers to set aside land for recreation and maintenance of existing trails
- K. Explore more active recreation and a wider range of activities for younger school aged children closer to the center of Town
- L. Explore possible use of parcel by West Cemetery for more active recreation
- M. Investigate use of PARC grants to improve recreation facilities the Town already has

Potential Funding Sources: Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities (PARC) Program (EOEEA), Recreational Trails Grants Program (DCR)

6: Educate Citizens on the Financial, Ecological, and Personal Value of Open Space

Townpeople clearly value the open space our town affords and wish to retain as much of it as possible. Understanding the supportive nature of the citizens and the importance of private property to the landowners, implement an active public education program about the financial value of open space in order to create a strong public / private partnership in the open space and recreation efforts.

- A. Assemble and create literature about the advantages of the Chapter 61 laws and their tax advantages
- B. Assemble and create literature about the financial values of open space
- C. Assemble and create literature explaining conservation restriction, trail easements, and the tax advantages of deed restrictions
- D. Assemble and create literature explaining the function and importance of wetlands and surface waters
- E. Assemble and create literature explaining the function and maintenance of wells and septic systems and their potential impact on the environment
- F. Assemble and create literature about the impacts of the current zoning on the rural character and resources of the Town in order to begin the discussion of potential zoning changes
- G. Assemble and create literature regarding the impact of many common household practices on the environment
- H. Encourage members of Planning Board, Conservation Commission and other land use boards to continue their education by attending seminars and conferences

Potential Training Sources: Workshops offered by the Nashua River Watershed Association (NRWA); Mass. Association of Conservation Commissions; Citizens Planner Training Collaborative; Online Information; Research by the Land Use Agent

SECTION 9 - SEVEN YEAR ACTION PLAN

ACTION PLAN 2018 - 2024

1: UNITE THE WESTERN SPINE, AND CONNECT TO ASHBURNHAM AND THE MIDSTATE TRAIL

TASK	TASK LEAD	PRIORITY	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	YEAR 4	YEAR 5	YEAR 6	YEAR 7
A. Acquire easements, conservation restrictions and available land within the north-south corridor from Watatic to the Fitchburg Reservoir in order to create a trail along the Western Spine, and from the spine south and east to Willard Brook State Forest, subject to the availability of funds. Sources of funds: ALT, Town, grants.	ALT	Very High							
B. Communicate with Commonwealth as needed to develop and further working planning relationships. No funding required.	BOS, PB	High							
C. Educate abutters to a future Western Spine connection on the programs and options available for conservation. No funding required.	ALT	High							
D. Discuss deed restrictions and easements with interested abutters, with the goal of creating a permanent connection between protected parcels. No funding required.	ALT	High							
E. Explore possibility for a trail or trails to accommodate active as well as passive recreation. Working with local snowmobile and mountain bike groups, explore providing some location(s) for active recreation and motorized vehicles. Identify steps that could be taken to avoid conflicts between users. No funding required.	PB, CC	Very High							

2: PRESERVE CONTIGUOUS FARMS AND FORESTS

TASK	LEAD	Priority	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	YEAR 4	YEAR 5	YEAR 6	YEAR 7
A. Maintain a working relationship with the Commonwealth regarding agricultural and open space preservation programs. No funding required.	ALT & CC	High							
B. Acquire easements, conservation restrictions and/or available farm and forest land in the Northern Agricultural Corridor as shown on Map 8 and the southwest corner of Ashby in order to preserve traditional landscapes, valuable habitat and open spaces for future generations, subject to the availability of funds. Funding: ALT, Town, Grants	ALT & CC	Very High							
C. Discuss an overlay district with incentives for farmers and large property owners to maintain their properties without selling for development. No funding required.	PB	Medium							
D. Analyze and rate parcels for potential trail system to unite public lands. No funding required.	ALT, CC	Medium							
E. Discuss all programs and options available for conservation, including deed restrictions, easements and Chapter 61 with landowners. No funding required.	ALT, CC	Very High							
F. Support conservation restrictions, easements, and land acquisition as strategies to protect forest & farm parcels and abutting properties. No funding required.	ALT, CC	Very High							
G. Prepare documentation for restrictions or easements being created. Funding: Town, ALT, grants.	ALT & CC	As needed							
H. Identify lands with prime agricultural soils with assistance from NRCS. No funding required.	PB	Medium							
I. Explore acquisition alternatives for parcels with conservation value for sale. No funding required.	ALT	Very High							

3: PROTECT CRITICAL NATURAL WATER SYSTEMS AND HABITATS

TASK	TASK LEAD	Priority	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	YEAR 4	YEAR 5	YEAR 6	YEAR 7
A. Work with the City of Fitchburg to protect the loon nesting sites on Fitchburg Reservoir. No funding required.	CC	High							
B. Educate landowners on the programs and options available for conservation. No funding required.	CC	High							
C. Discuss deed restrictions and easements with interested abutters that connect to other protected properties. No funding required.	ALT & CC	High							
D. Work with local and regional agencies and the State to identify potential aquifer sites. Funding: Town, RPA, State.	CC	High							
E. Continue efforts to identify and certify vernal pools. No funding required.	CC	High							
F. Continue efforts to inventory and water test all streams in Ashby using assistance and training from the Nashua River Watershed Association. No funding required.	CC	Medium	1 stream	1 stream	1 stream	1 stream	1 stream	1 stream	1 stream
G. Investigate possibility of obtaining a group rate for private well testing. No funding required.	BOS, BOH	High							
H. Prepare and present a low impact development or resource protection bylaw to mitigate development impacts on natural resources. Funding: PB	PB	High							
I. Prepare a local wetlands bylaw or similar regulation that prevents location of new homes within the 100 foot wetland buffer. WPA does not prevent this development. No funding required.	CC	Medium							
J. Purchase and preserve Buczynski parcel to help protect native trout stream from potential abutting development. Repair perched culvert under Harris Rd. that blocks trout movement upstream. Funding: Obtain grant if possible; combine with Town funds for match.	CC, BOS, Highway	Very High							

4: PROTECT THE PRIORITY HERITAGE LANDSCAPES

TASK	TASK LEAD	Priority	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	YEAR 4	YEAR 5	YEAR 6	YEAR 7
A. Educate landowners on the value of Ashby's Heritage Landscapes to the community and identify options available for protection. No funding required.	PB	Medium							
B. Acquire easements, conservation restrictions and/or available land to permanently protect the land and structures that are designated as Heritage Priority Landscapes, subject to the availability of funds. Funding: ALT, Town, Grants.	ALT, CC	High							
C. Propose bylaws to promote the protection of the Heritage Landscapes. Prioritize if needed. No funding required.	PB	Medium							
D. Obtain grants and restore the First Parish Cemetery. Funding: Town, Grants.	PB, Cem. Comm.	Medium							
E. Coordinate with the Commonwealth on the creation of preservation plans for the Heritage Landscapes. Funding: Town, Grants.	Land Use Agent	High							
F. Coordinate grant writing for preservation activities. No funding required.	Hist. Soc., PB	High							
G. Depending on public opinion and the readiness of the Town, explore reconsideration of CPA for funding historic preservation and open space projects. No funding required.	BOS, Interested Citizens	Medium							
H. Purchase and preserve Buczynski property to secure public access to the summit of Caton Hill and view of a heritage landscape. Funding: Town, Grants.	CC, BOS, Ashby Hwy	Very High							

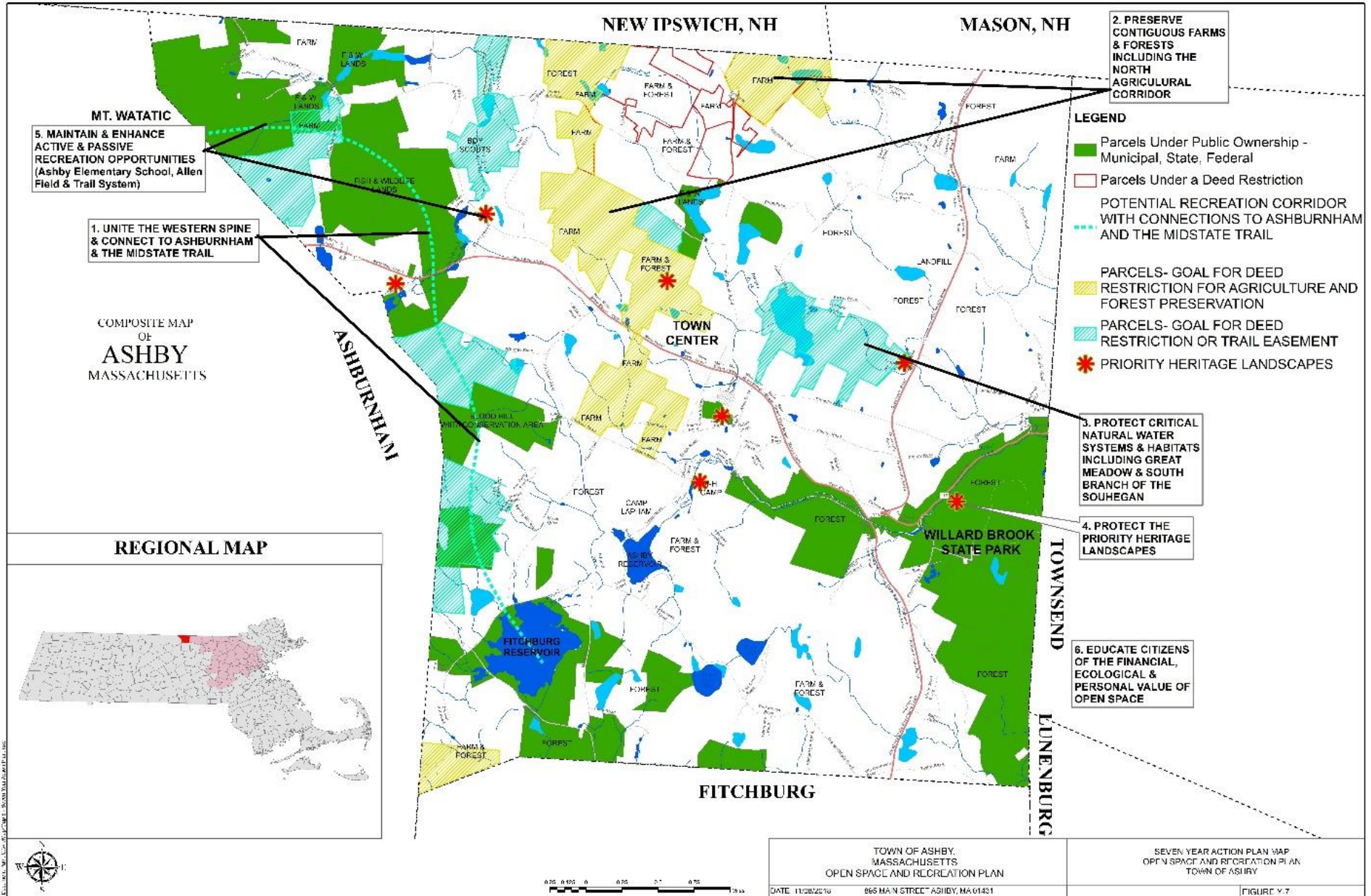
5: MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE ACTIVE AND PASSIVE RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES

TASK	TASK LEAD	Priority	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	YEAR 4	YEAR 5	YEAR 6	YEAR 7
A. Work with the North Middlesex Regional School District (NMRSD) and local athletic groups to develop a survey for active recreation needs. Analyze and rate existing and potential sites for repairs, expansion and new facilities. No funding required for survey. Professional assistance may be needed to determine feasibility of alternatives.	NMRSD, Athletic groups	Very High							
B. Restore & improve active recreation facilities based on the priorities established by the survey. Funding: Town, grants.	BOS, PB	Very High			1 project	1 project	1 project	1 project	1 project
C. Continue the working relationship with the Commonwealth regarding maintenance of the passive recreation facilities on state land (Watatic Mountain, Willard Brook State Forest, other land holdings), and grants for other recreation amenities. No funding required.	BOS	Very High							
D. Establish trails committee under the direction of the Conservation Commission to oversee and maintain trails on public land. Explore ability of Scouts, 4-H Club and other groups to help with trail maintenance. Discuss potential role of a Trails Manager. Funding: Town, donated services. .	CC	High		1 trail	1 trail	1 trail	1 trail	1 trail	1 trail
E. Make all active and passive recreation intended for public use handicap accessible. Funding: Town, grants.	BOS, CC	Very High							
F. Identify and rate water bodies for public access for non-motorized craft. No funding required.	CC	Medium							
G. Improve public access to water bodies by obtaining easements or acquiring land. Investigate location for access to Lower Wrights Pond. Funding: Town, grants.	CC	Medium				1 access point	1 access point		
H. Encourage developers to set aside land for recreation and funds for maintenance of existing trails. No funding required.	PB	Medium							
I. Explore more active recreation and other activities for kids closer to the center of Town. No funding required.	BOS, Parks	High							
J. Explore possible use of parcel by West Cemetery for more active recreation. No funding required.	BOS, Parks	High							
K. Discuss the creation of a stewardship fund for lands under Town control or supervision. No funding required.	BOS, CC	Medium							

6: EDUCATE CITIZENS ON THE FINANCIAL, ECOLOGICAL, AND PERSONAL VALUE OF OPEN SPACE

TASK	TASK LEAD	Priority	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	YEAR 4	YEAR 5	YEAR 6	YEAR 7
A. Assemble and create literature about the Chapter 61 laws and their tax advantages. Funding: Town.	PB, Assrs	High							
B. Assemble and create literature about the financial values of open space. Funding: Town.	PB, CC	Very High							
C. Assemble and create literature explaining conservation restriction, trail easements, and the tax advantages of deed restrictions. Funding: Town.	CC	High							
D. Assemble and create literature explaining the function and importance of wetlands and surface waters. Funding: Town.	CC	High							
E. Assemble and create literature explaining the function and maintenance of wells; the need for regular well water testing; the impact of septic systems on wells and the impact of wells and septic systems on the environment. Funding: Town.	BOH	High							
F. Assemble and create literature about the impacts of current zoning on Ashby’s rural character and resources in order to begin the discussion of potential zoning changes. Funding: Town.	PB	High							
G. Create awareness regarding the impact of many common household practices on the environment. No funding required - use existing free information on the Internet and from other sources.	BOH, CC	Medium							
H. Encourage members of Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Conservation Commission and other land use boards to continue their education by attending seminars and conferences. Funding: Town.	PB, ZBA, CC, BOH	Very High							

A map showing the primary locations for proposed actions for the next seven years is found on the following page.



NEW IPSWICH, NH

MASON, NH

MT. WATATIC

5. MAINTAIN & ENHANCE ACTIVE & PASSIVE RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES (Ashby Elementary School, Allen Field & Trail System)

1. UNITE THE WESTERN SPINE & CONNECT TO ASHBURNHAM & THE MIDSTATE TRAIL

COMPOSITE MAP OF ASHBY MASSACHUSETTS

ASHBURNHAM

TOWN CENTER

2. PRESERVE CONTIGUOUS FARMS & FORESTS INCLUDING THE NORTH AGRICULTURAL CORRIDOR

LEGEND

- Parcels Under Public Ownership - Municipal, State, Federal
- Parcels Under a Deed Restriction
- POTENTIAL RECREATION CORRIDOR WITH CONNECTIONS TO ASHBURNHAM AND THE MIDSTATE TRAIL
- PARCELS- GOAL FOR DEED RESTRICTION FOR AGRICULTURE AND FOREST PRESERVATION
- PARCELS- GOAL FOR DEED RESTRICTION OR TRAIL EASEMENT
- PRIORITY HERITAGE LANDSCAPES

3. PROTECT CRITICAL NATURAL WATER SYSTEMS & HABITATS INCLUDING GREAT MEADOW & SOUTH BRANCH OF THE SOUHEGAN

4. PROTECT THE PRIORITY HERITAGE LANDSCAPES

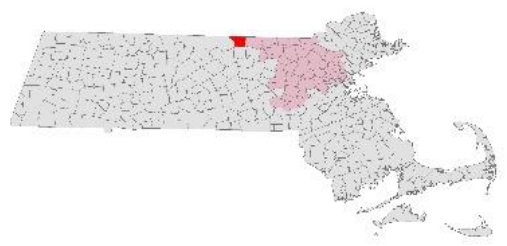
6. EDUCATE CITIZENS OF THE FINANCIAL, ECOLOGICAL & PERSONAL VALUE OF OPEN SPACE

TOWNSEND

LUNENBURG

FITCHBURG

REGIONAL MAP



TOWN OF ASHBY, MASSACHUSETTS
OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN
DATE 11/28/2016 865 MAIN STREET ASHBY, MA 01431

SEVEN YEAR ACTION PLAN MAP
OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN
TOWN OF ASHBY
FIGURE Y.7

SECTION 10 - PUBLIC COMMENTS

The section includes letters of review from the following:

- Board of Selectmen
- Planning Board
- Ashby Land Trust
- Montachusett Regional Planning Commission
- Division of Conservation Services (forthcoming)

In addition comments from residents who lead local and regional recreation programs are provided.

Town Hall
Town Clerk,
Treasurer &
Town Accountant
978-386-2424



TOWN OF ASHBY
895 Main Street
Ashby, Mass. 01431
Town Hall Fax: 978-386-2490

**Board of Selectmen &
Town Administrator**
978-386-2501
**Town Collector &
Board of Assessors**
978-386-2427

November 28, 2018

Melissa Cryan
Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs
100 Cambridge Street – Suite 900
Boston, MA 02114

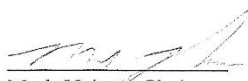
Dear Ms. Cryan,

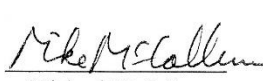
The Ashby Board of Selectmen has reviewed the 2018 Ashby Open Space and Recreation Plan and approves of the content and the goals and objectives. The plan has been formulated over the past nine months by a volunteer committee that included members of various boards. The committee did extensive community outreach and received valuable input from Ashby citizens.

The Open Space and Recreation Plan is an important planning tool that will assist in directing municipal practice in the coming years. We are pleased to present this plan for your review.

Sincerely,

Ashby Board of Selectmen


Mark Haines, Chairman


Michael McCallum


Janet Flinkstrom

Corr/BOS Ltrs./ Open Space Plan Approval 112818.docx

17918 m.milled



Town of Ashby
Planning Board
895 Main St.
Ashby, MA 01431

Melissa Cryan
Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs
100 Cambridge Street – Suite 900
Boston, MA 02114


November 14, 2018

Dear Melissa Cryan,

The Ashby Planning Board has reviewed the 2018 Ashby Open Space and Recreation Plan and approves of the content and the goals and objectives. The plan has been formulated over the past nine months by a volunteer committee that included members of the Planning Board. The committee did extensive community outreach and received good input from Ashby residents.

The Open Space and Recreation Plan is an important planning tool that will assist in guiding municipal policy and practice in the coming years. We are proud to present this plan for your review.

Sincerely,


James Hargraves, chairman



P.O. Box 144
Ashby, MA 01431
978-386-5591

To Whom It May Concern;

The Board of Directors of the Ashby Land Trust wishes to express our support for the Town of Ashby's Open Space and Recreation Plan of 2018.

Members of the Ashby Land Trust were active participants in the development of the Plan. The Open Space Committee worked hard to include many stakeholders, and the resulting action plan is thorough and ambitious. We believe the OSRP accurately represents both the state of preservation in the Town and the expressed interests of townspeople for open space and recreational opportunities.

We look forward to continuing our successful partnership with the Town in helping to preserve the natural resources and rural character of Ashby.

Thank you,

Jeanie Lindquist
President

To Preserve the Natural Resources and Rural Character of Ashby



October 29, 2018

Ashby Open Space and Recreation Plan Committee
Attn. Alan Pease
Town Hall
895 Main Street
Ashby, MA 01431

Dear Mr. Pease:

The Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC) staff completed a review of Ashby's Open Space and Recreation Plan (OS&RP). Staff used the Open Space Guidebook published by the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEEA), Division of Conservation Services (DCS) "Open Space and Recreation Plan Requirements" to determine if the local planning document contained the required sections and met requirements. Ashby's plan is thorough and consists of all required sections. We would like to take this opportunity to congratulate all local residents and officials for putting this important document together.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John Hume".

John Hume
Planning and Development Director



Comments from leaders of local recreational programs who were unable to attend public meetings:

4-H - Suzanne Caron

Thanks for inviting us to the meeting, I will not be able to attend because I have plans for Saturday but the Ashby 4H group wants to help Allen Field become a place where townspeople go. We would like to form a committee to get a 1/4 mile track for people to exercise/run on and maybe another committee to spruce up the playground area!! We are at the beginning stages all of our members want to make this happen, any help or input that we can get from the planning board would be awesome!!

Thanks for reaching out to us we are excited to start moving forward on our endeavor!!

Cub Scouts - Eric Pierce

Thank you for reaching out to us, I am not sure about John's thoughts here.

My thoughts would be to make substantial improvements at Allen Field. Have you seen the Snack Shack/Bathrooms at town of Shirley Baseball fields?

Something of this nature would be a significant and useful improvement.

Also an updated power supply along back of the Grandstand and multiple additional circuits along the chain link fence attached to Grandstand would certainly avoid the use of the FD generator that provides diesel exhaust for all to enjoy during large events.

I believe that Allen Field is asset worthy of such improvements.

Thank you for the opportunity

Townsend Ashby Youth Baseball & Softball - Keith Turgeon

Unfortunately, right now neither Jess nor myself will be able to attend the meeting on Saturday.

In the past we used the Allen Field baseball and softball fields as our primary. Unfortunately, due to the high costs to maintain these fields, we had to leave the complex to use other less costly locations. We are hoping to be able to potentially use the softball field either at Allen or the Elementary school (as early as this year), but as of right now, there are no solidified plans.

TAYBS maintains the baseball fields with lawn mowing, fertilizing and grounds maintenance. The cost is \$1,000 -3,000 per field per year. This compares to the one municipal baseball field in Townsend that costs about \$2,000 for maintenance. To keep costs low we try to use school fields as much as possible as they are better maintained. There is one school field in Ashby that we are talking to the school about using this year.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A - ADA ACCESSIBILITY SELF-EVALUATION AND TRANSITION PLAN

Designation of an ADA Coordinator

Mr. Peter Niall, Building Inspector, is the ADA Coordinator for the Town of Ashby.

Grievance Procedure

The procedure on the following pages shall be used by any persons wishing to file a complaint alleging discrimination on the basis of disability in employment practices or in the provision of services, activities, programs and benefits by the Town of Ashby.

Town Hall
Town Clerk,
Treasurer &
Town Accountant
978-386-2424



TOWN OF ASHBY
895 Main Street
Ashby, Mass. 01431
Town Hall Fax: 978-386-2490

Board of Selectmen &
Town Administrator
978-386-2501
Town Collector &
Board of Assessors
978-386-2427

Town of Ashby

ADA Rights and Grievance Procedures

Policy

The Town of Ashby, in compliance with state and federal laws and regulations that include the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504), does not discriminate on the basis of disability in admission or access to, or in the administration of, its programs, services, and activities for the public.

In accordance with these laws, the Town of Ashby will make reasonable accommodation to the known physical and mental limitations of people with disabilities in order to provide an equal opportunity to enjoy and participate in the Town of Ashby's programs, services, and activities available to the public. The Town of Ashby will not retaliate against any individual who has complained of or opposed a violation of the ADA or of Section 504.

Individuals who need auxiliary aids for effective communication or any other reasonable accommodation are invited to make their needs known to Town of Ashby personnel. They may wish to seek assistance directly from the Town of Ashby ADA Coordinator.

Grievance Procedure

The Town of Ashby has adopted the following grievance procedure to assure the prompt and equitable resolution of complaints by members of the public alleging that the Town of Ashby has violated the ADA or Section 504, including complaints alleging retaliation for having complained of or opposed a violation of the ADA or Section 504.

Any person who wishes to make a complaint of a violation of the ADA or Section 504, including a complaint of retaliation, may do so by contacting the Town of Ashby's ADA Coordinator. The Town of Ashby prefers to receive complaints in writing, although alternative methods of communication, such as a personal or telephone interview, email, or a tape recording, are acceptable. The complainant should provide his or her name and address and describe the alleged violation in as much detail as possible, including the date(s) and people involved. The Town of Ashby asks that the complainant make the complaint as soon after the alleged violation as possible, in order to allow a prompt investigation.

Upon receiving the complaint, the ADA Coordinator will coordinate with appropriate Town of Ashby staff to promptly investigate the complaint and determine whether it can be resolved. When the investigation is complete, the ADA Coordinator will communicate to the complainant the result of the investigation and any resolution.

If the Town of Ashby determines that a requested accommodation would result in a fundamental alteration in the nature of the Town of Ashby's programs, services, or activities, or in an undue financial or administrative burden, the ADA Coordinator will provide the complainant with a written statement of the reasons for reaching this determination. The ADA Coordinator will also work with the complainant to attempt to identify alternative action by the Town of Ashby that would not result in such an alteration or such burdens, but would nevertheless ensure that the complainant receives the benefits and services of the Town of Ashby's programs and activities.

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the ADA Coordinator's response, he or she may request reconsideration. The complainant may request reconsideration by submitting a written request to:

ADA Coordinator
Office of the Attorney General
One Ashburton Place
Boston, MA 02108

The government enforcement agency for the ADA and Section 504 is the U.S. Department of Justice. Complaints to that agency may be directed to:

United States Department of Justice
Civil Rights Division
950 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.
Disability Rights Section, NYA
Washington, DC 20530
(202) 307-0663 (voice and TDD)
Fax: (202) 307-1198

ADA Coordinator

The Town of Ashby has designated the following person as its ADA Coordinator to coordinate its efforts to comply with and carry out its responsibilities to the public under the ADA and Section 504:

Peter Niall
Ashby Building Inspector
Town of Ashby
895 Main Street
Ashby MA 01431
(978) 386-2501 x10

Public Notification Requirements

The following public notice referencing discrimination on the basis of disability is posted in the Ashby Town Hall.

Town Hall
Town Clerk,
Treasurer &
Town Accountant
978-386-2127



TOWN OF ASHBY
895 Main Street
Ashby, Mass. 01447
Town Hall Fax: 978-386-2190

Board of Selectmen &
Town Administrator
978-386-2501
Town Collector &
Board of Assessors
978-386-2427

TOWN OF ASHBY

NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

The Town of Ashby is committed to the principle of equal opportunity and the conduct of its governmental and business functions in a work environment free from discrimination.

Ashby prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, national or ethnic origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity/gender expression, age, disability, veteran status, and any other legally protected status in the making of employment decisions, conduct of its activities, or the award of contracts to outside entities.

The Town adheres to all applicable State and Federal equal opportunity laws and regulations.

FACILITY INVENTORY AND TRANSITION PLAN

The following is based on information from Town officials and site visits conducted in November, 2018.

Most open space properties in Ashby have no parking, trails or programming. The Wiita open space, Allen Field, Ashby Elementary School and Town Common do have parking, trails and/or activities for the general public. The following information on these sites was obtained from a visual inspection of each property.

Name of Property: Ashby Town Hall and Elementary School - 895 - 911 Main St.

The Town Hall and Elementary School are on one parcel.

Activities: There is a baseball field, soccer field, and covered viewing area with three tables; a sandbox; two half-court basketball playing areas; and a children's play area with swings, a slide, other playground equipment and three benches nearby for adults at the Elementary School. All of these facilities are behind the school. There is also a basketball court and two tennis courts on the south side and slightly to the rear of Town Hall.

Observations: There are 47 striped parking spaces in front of the school. The parking area is approximately 75 feet from the fields and play areas. There are two handicap spaces at the school building. They are 8' wide. These would require travelling on a slope that appears to be > 5% to reach the recreation areas. The driveway from the parking to the recreation areas has an uneven surface with a number of potholes. The play area, sandbox and viewing areas are within grassed areas and have no paths that a wheelchair could traverse. There are two handicap parking spaces behind the Town Hall.

Recommendations:

Parking: At the school, locate one handicap parking space off the driveway towards the rear of the building. Add paved or hardened paths from this space all the way to the play areas and fields, and repair or repave driveway if needed to eliminate holes and large bumps from the route.

Seating: Add seating accessible for a wheelchair at the viewing area, possibly switching out one of the non-accessible tables in the covered area to a different

location. A paved or hardened path should be created to the area where there are tables.

Name of Property: Town Common – Main St.

Activities: There is a central bandstand, with four benches nearby, and surrounded by a grassy area used for informal seating. There are adjacent driveways and room for about 25 cars on property owned by the Town or in the immediate area. Sitting and relaxing, regularly scheduled summer band concerts and town celebrations are some ways residents use the Common.

Observations:

Parking: There is no handicap parking nearby. The Town should designate one van accessible handicapped space at the Town Common, ideally in close proximity to the paved path that winds from the access road / parking area through the grassy area of the Common. The Town owns parking very close by the Common in front of the Grange and Congregational Church. Potential locations for such handicapped parking spaces were identified by Mr. David Ogala, representing the handicapped community, a Planning Board member and the Land-Use Agent during a site assessment on June 5, 2013. Conditions today are very similar to those that existed five years ago. The driveways could work as paths from a future parking spot with a little additional paving or hardening to get to a location appropriate for a wheelchair.

Seating: There is no obvious place for a wheelchair to access so someone could easily sit and listen to the concerts.

Recommendations: Stripe and sign one van size handicap parking space in the immediate area. Create a spot for a wheelchair with hardening or pavement somewhere within the grassy area.

Name of Property: Allen Field – 92 Breed Rd.

Activities: Three baseball fields, two with covered dugouts, one with covered bleachers, one with open bleachers; one softball field, one soccer field, two concession stands, a play area with playground equipment, bandstand and picnic tables. The town's 4th of

July celebration, summer and fall bonfires, and other large public events are held at the Allen Field complex. Signs indicate that dog walking is permitted if dogs are on a leash.

Observations:

Parking: There is space for approximately 150 cars on the property although the parking area is not paved or striped. There are no designated or signed handicapped parking spaces. There are no paved routes although it has been noted that the property is level, and people in wheelchairs are able to access the edge of all the sports fields for the purpose of watching games or practices.

Viewing stands: Some of the sports fields have associated grandstands (bleachers), but these are not handicapped accessible. Mr. Ogala noted that the floor height of the bandstand and grandstands would require an extensive ramp system if they were to be made accessible. However, since handicapped individuals are able to watch games and events from wide open spaces on the sidelines, such a system is not necessary for enjoyment of games, etc.

Restrooms: Most buildings appear to have been built a number of decades ago although playground equipment is new. The restrooms are not handicapped accessible. The width of the door block for both restrooms is 36 inches, but the actual functional entrance is presently only 32 inches. Because of a privacy divider, there isn't a five (5) foot turning space measured 12 inches from the door. The distance from the floor to the rim of the sink is 32 inches, not the recommended 34 inches. The toilet paper dispenser is 36 inches from the floor, higher than the recommended 24 inches. The toilet does not have a 42 inch clear space from its center to the farthest wall or fixture. The toilet also lacks a hand rail.

Concession Stand: At one of the concession stands, there is a 6" high deck in front of the order window. If this concession stand is still in use, this requires a short ramp that conforms to HC requirements, or a different surface in front of the window.

Recommendations:

Parking: Five handicap parking spaces with a hardened or paved surface should be provided. These will need to be paved or otherwise permanently designated on the ground so adequate width and aisle space is maintained. Handicap signage needs to be installed. A paved or hardened path will allow wheelchair access to the fields and concession stands.

Viewing stands / concession areas: It may be helpful to have a small paved pad for wheelchair access at each of the fields. Barriers to access at the concession stands need to be made accessible, or removed.

Restrooms: Some renovations will be needed to make the bathrooms handicap accessible. Grant funds accessibility improvements should be sought from the Massachusetts Office of Disability. In the interim, the Parks Department and the Town will investigate renting or purchasing a handicapped accessible portable toilet which could be placed adjacent to the existing rest room building during the spring, summer and fall months when Allen Field is used. This is only a temporary solution because similar facilities should be provided for handicapped that are available to all other individuals.

Name of Property: Wiita Property (0 Luke Rd.)

Activities: Hiking, passive recreation.

Observations: This property has a small unpaved parking area that could accommodate six to eight cars. Parking spaces are unmarked and there is no sign for a handicap space. There is a board at a height about 3 ½' across the entrance to the trails leaving only an 18" opening. The trail is fairly flat for about 75' in from the entrance but beyond that, sections are very steep and not suitable for persons with physical handicaps that limit mobility. There are no picnic tables or seating.

Recommendations:

Parking: A minimum of one handicap parking space should be provided at the Wiita property. There should be a suitable surface for a wheelchair to disembark from a vehicle and enjoy the view from outside of a car. This surface could be compacted soil where the ground is fairly level. A high, dry spot is preferred to prevent a muddy surface, and regular grading will be needed. Persons who require a wheelchair should also be able to enjoy these unique properties.

APPENDIX B - MAMMALS AND BIRDS NATIVE TO ASHBY

(1) MAMMALS ENDEMIC TO ASHBY

Updated March, 2018

Beaver (<i>Castor canadensis</i>)	Mink (<i>Mustela vison</i>)
Black bear (<i>Ursus americanus</i>)	Moose (<i>Alces alces</i>)
Bobcat (<i>Felis rufus</i>)	Muskrat (<i>Ondatra zibethicus</i>)
Coyote (<i>Canis latrans</i>)	Northern flying squirrel (<i>Glaucomys sabrinus</i>)
Eastern chipmunk (<i>Tamias striatus</i>)	Norway rat (<i>Rattus norvehicus</i>)
Eastern cottontail (<i>Sylvilagus floridanus</i>)	Porcupine (<i>Erethizon dorsatum</i>)
Eastern mole (<i>Scalopus aquaticus</i>) (questionable)	Raccoon (<i>Procyon lotor</i>)
Eastern pipistrelle (<i>Pipistrellus subflavus</i>)	Red bat (<i>Lasiurus borealis</i>)
Ermine (<i>Mustela erminea</i>)	Red fox (<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>)
Fisher (<i>Martes pennanti</i>)	Red squirrel (<i>Tamiasciurus hudsonicus</i>)
Gray fox (<i>Urocyon cinereoargenteus</i>)	River otter (<i>Lutra canadensis</i>)
Gray squirrel (<i>Sciurus carolinensis</i>)	Short-tailed shrew (<i>Blarina brevicauda</i>)
Hairy-tailed mole (<i>Parascalops breweri</i>)	Silver-haired bat (<i>Lasionycteris noctivagans</i>)
Hoary bat (<i>Lasiurus cinereus</i>)	Smoky shrew (<i>Sorex fumeus</i>)
House mouse (<i>Musculus</i>)	Snowshoe hare (<i>Lepus americanus</i>)
Indiana myotis (<i>Myotis sodalis</i>)	Southern bog lemming (<i>Synaptomys cooperi</i>)
Keen's myotis (<i>Myotis keenii</i>)	Southern flying squirrel (<i>Glaucomys volans</i>)
Little brown myotis (<i>Myotis lucifugus</i>)	Southern red-backed vole (<i>Clethrionomys gapperi</i>)
Long-tailed weasel (<i>Mustela frenata</i>)	Star-nosed mole (<i>Condylura cuestata</i>)
Masked shrew (<i>Sorex cinereus</i>)	Striped skunk (<i>Mephitis mephitis</i>)
Meadow jumping mouse (<i>Microtus</i>)	
Meadow vole (<i>Microtus pennsylvanicus</i>)	

Virginia opossum (*Didelphis virginiana*)

Water shrew (*Sorex pallustris*)

White-footed mouse (*Peromyscus leucopus*)

White-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*)

Woodchuck (*Marmota monax*)

Woodland (Pine) vole (*Microtus pinetorum*)

Woodland jumping mouse (*Zapus hudsonius*)

(2) BIRDS ENDEMIC TO ASHBY

Alder flycatcher

American black duck

American crow

American goldfinch

American kestrel

American redstart

American robin

American tree sparrow

American woodcock

Bald eagle

Bank swallow

Barn swallow

Barred owl

Bay-breasted warbler

Bellied kingfisher

Bellied kingfisher

Black-and-white warbler

Black-billed cuckoo

Black-throated green warbler

Black-throated blue warbler

Blackburnian warbler

Black-capped chickadee

Blackpoll warbler

Blue jay

Blue-crowned gnat catcher

Blue-winged warbler

Bobolink

Broad-winged hawk

Brown creeper

Brown thrasher

Brown-headed blackbird	Eastern screech owl
Canada goose	European starling
Canada warbler	Evening grosbeak
Cape May warbler	Field sparrow
Cedar waxwing	Fox sparrow
Chestnut-sided warbler	Golden-crowned kinglet
Chimney swift	Gray catbird
Chipping sparrow	Great blue heron
Cliff swallow	Great crested flycatcher
Common grackle	Great horned owl
Common night hawk	Green-backed heron
Common raven	Hairy woodpecker
Common redpoll	Hermit thrush
Common snipe	Hooded merganser
Common yellowthroat	House finch
Coopers hawk	House sparrow
Dark-eyed junco	House wren
Downy woodpecker	Indigo bunting
Eastern bluebird	Killdeer
Eastern kingbird	Least flycatcher
Eastern meadowlark	Lincoln sparrow
Eastern phoebe	Louisiana waterthrush

Magnolia warbler	Pine grosbeak
Mallard	Pine warbler
Merlin	Prairie warbler
Mourning dove	Purple finch
Nashville warbler	Purple martin
Northern bobwhite	Red crossbill
Northern cardinal	Red shouldered hawk
Northern flicker	Red-breasted nuthatch
Northern goshawk	Red-tailed hawk
Northern harrier	Red-winged blackbird
Northern mockingbird	Ring-billed gull
Northern oriole	Ringed-neck pheasant
Northern parula	Rock dove
Northern rough-winged swallow	Rose-breasted grosbeak
Northern saw-whet owl	Ruby-crowned kinglet
Northern shrike	Ruby-throated hummingbird
Northern waterthrush	Ruffed grouse
Olive-sided flycatcher	Rufous-sided towhee
Osprey	Rusty blackbird
Oven bird	Savannah sparrow
Palm warbler	Scarlet tanager
Pileated woodpecker	Sharp shinned hawk

Snow bunting	Whip-poor-will
Snow goose	White-breasted nuthatch
Solitary sandpiper	White-crowned sparrow
Solitary vireo	White-throated sparrow
Solitary vireo	Wide-winged crossbill
Song sparrow	Wild turkey
Spotted sandpiper	Willow flycatcher
Swainson's thrush	Wilson's warbler
Swamp sparrow	Winter wren
Tennessee warbler	Wood duck
Tree swallow	Yellow-throated vireo
Tufted titmouse	Yellow warbler
Turkey vulture	Yellow-bellied flycatcher
Veery	Yellow-bellied sapsucker
Warbling vireo	Yellow-billed cuckoo
Wax thrush	Yellow-rumped warbler

APPENDIX C - 2018 SURVEY QUESTIONS AND RESULTS

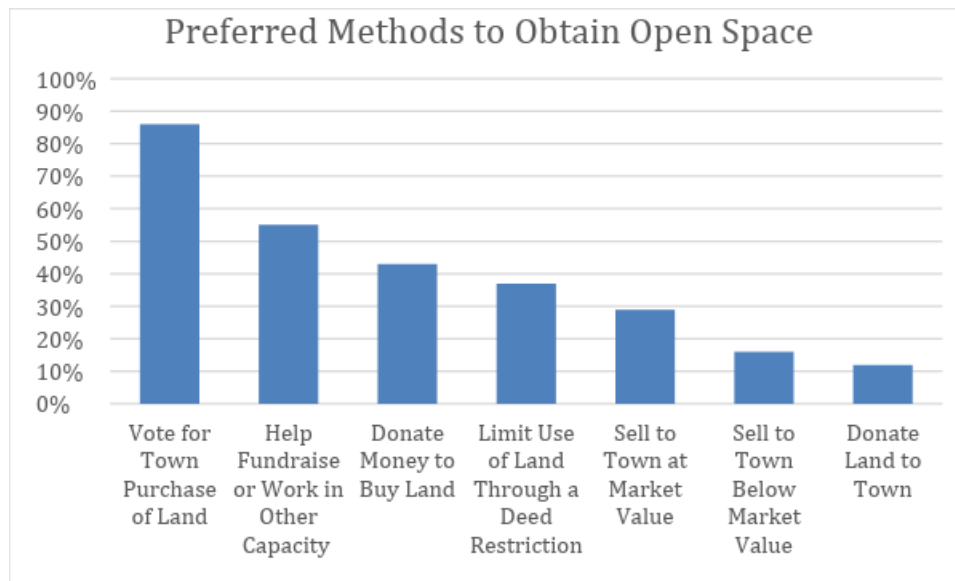
There were 54 Open Space and Recreation Plan surveys returned. The questions and distribution of answers were as follows:

1. How important do you feel it is to preserve.... **Ranked in order of importance:**

<u>Options</u>	<u>Average Score based on a scale of 1 to 5</u>
farmlands and agriculture	4.50
open space for water conservation needs	4.41
open space for hiking/snowshoeing	4.31
scenic views and vistas	4.31
sites with historic value	3.96
open space for hunting	3.65

2. To preserve open space, would you... **Ranked by number who indicated importance.**

1. 42 Vote for town purchase of land?
2. 27 Help fund raise or work in some other voluntary capacity?
3. 21 Limit use of your land through a deed restriction?
4. 18 Donate money to buy land?
5. 14 Sell land to the town at market value?
6. 8 Sell land to the town at below market value?
7. 6 Donate land to the town?

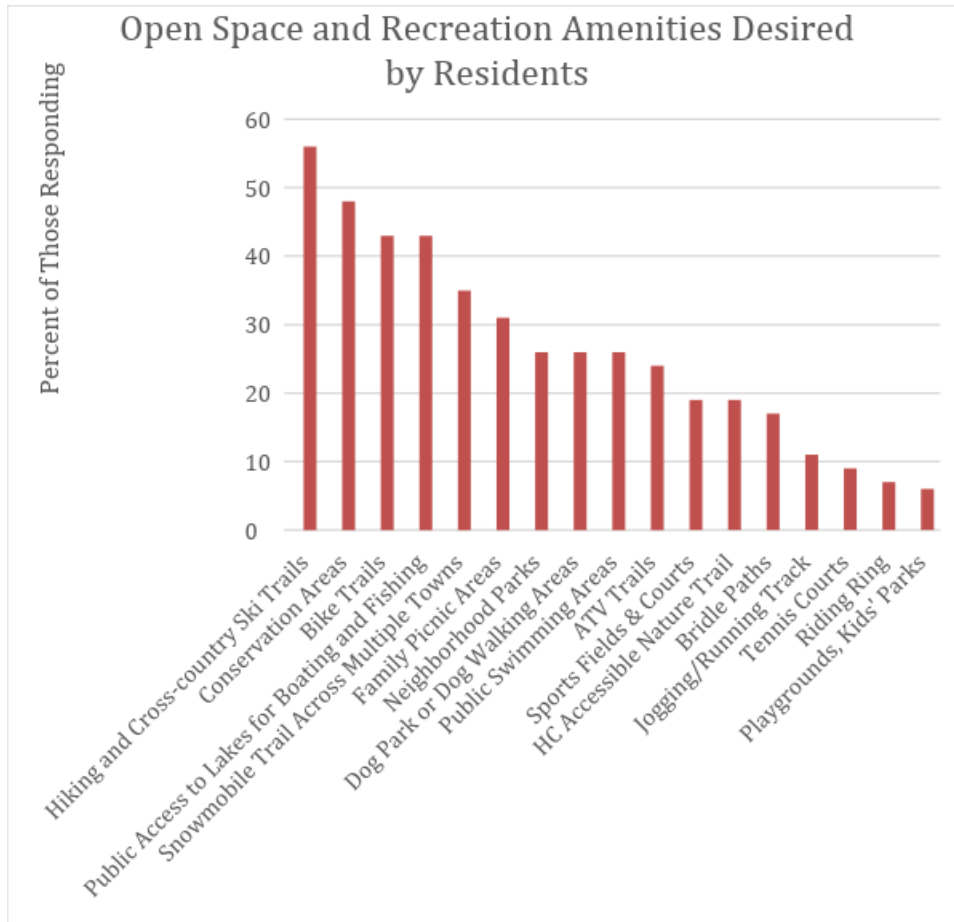


3. Which of the following recreational facilities do you feel Ashby needs more of?

Ranked by number who indicated preference.

- 30 Hiking and cross-country ski trails
- 26 Conservation areas
- 23 Bike trails
- 23 Public access to lakes for boating/ fishing
- 17 Family picnic areas
- 14 Neighborhood park areas
- 14 Dog park, place for dog walking
- 14 Public swimming areas
- 13 ATV accessible trails
- 10 Wheelchair accessible nature trail
- 10 Sports fields (soccer, baseball, football)
- 9 Bridle paths
- 6 Jogging/running track
- 5 Tennis courts
- 4 Riding ring
- 3 Snowmobile trails
- 3 Children's play areas
- 0 Golf course

These are shown on the graph on the following page.

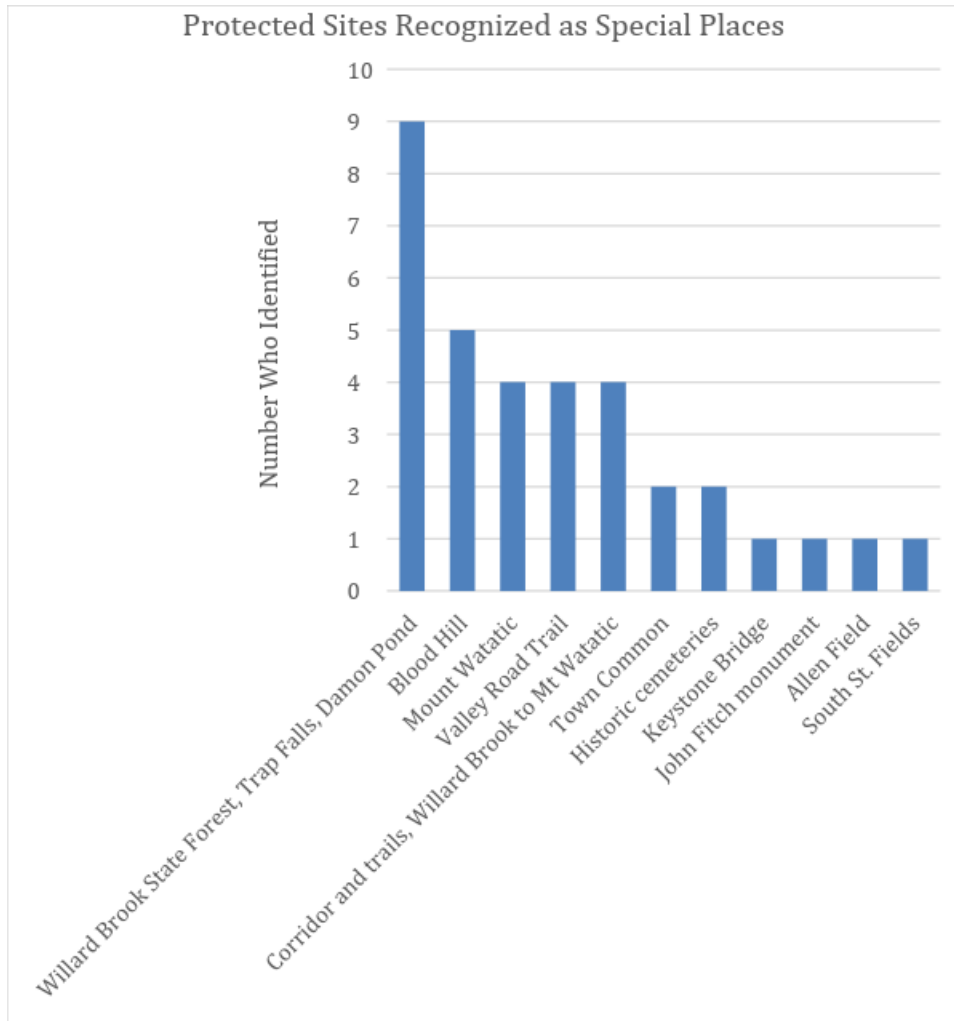


4. What specific scenic, natural and recreational areas do you feel are unique to Ashby and/or need protection? (For instance, the Stock Farm, Great Meadow, Keystone Bridge, Mount Watatic, the Squannacook watershed, agricultural fields, etc)

a. Scenic, natural and recreational areas most valued by residents that are currently protected:

Willard Brook State Forest, Trap Falls,	
Damon Pond	9
Blood Hill	5
Mount Watatic	4
Valley Road Trail	4
Corridor and trails, Willard Brook to	
Mt Watatic	4
Town Common	2
Historic cemeteries	2
Keystone Bridge	1
John Fitch monument	1
Allen Field	1
South St. Fields	1

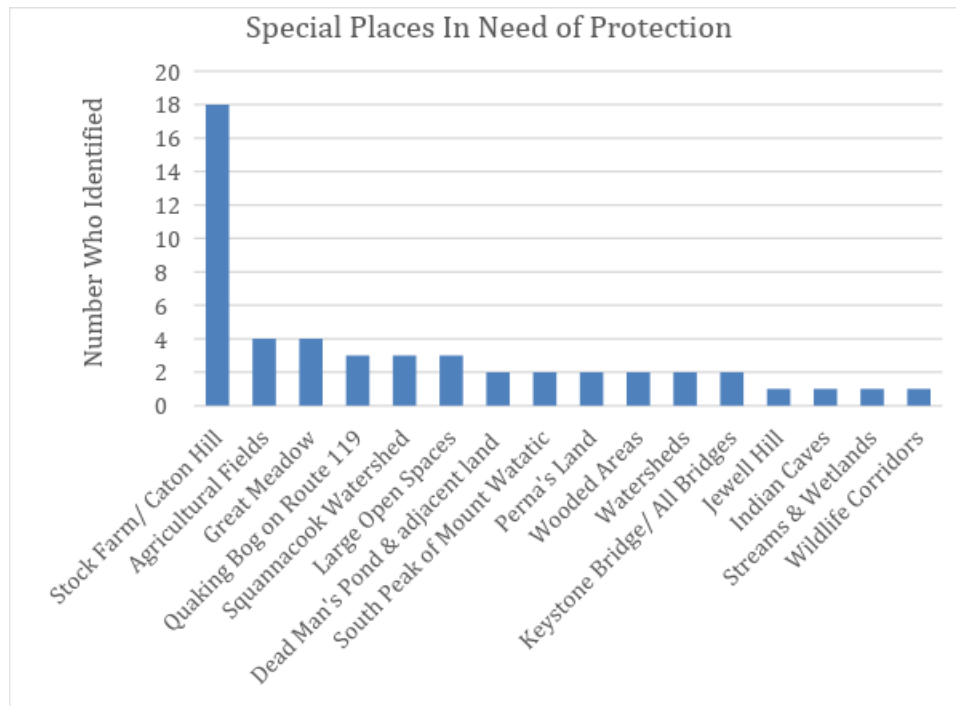
These are shown on the graph on the following page.



b. Scenic, natural and recreational areas in need of protection:

Stock Farm/ Caton Hill	18
Agricultural Fields	4
Great Meadow	4
Quaking Bog on Route 119	3
Squannacook Watershed	3
Large Open Spaces	3
Dead Man's Pond & adjacent land	2
South Peak of Mount Watatic	2
Perna's Land	2
Wooded Areas	2
Watersheds	2
Keystone Bridge/ All Bridges	2
Jewell Hill	1
Indian Caves	1
Streams & Wetlands	1
Wildlife Corridors	1

These are shown on the chart below:



c. The following needs for Ashby's recreation facilities were provided from responses from the questionnaires and comments from Suzanne Caron of the Ashby 4th Group, Eric Pierce of the Cub Scouts and Keith Turgeon and Jessica Fellows of Townsend Ashby Youth Softball and Baseball.

Needs for formal recreation programs and casual recreation activities:

1. Mowed fields for views, use by horses, recreation & ATV's
2. Re-establish riding arena at Allen Field
3. Dog park at Allen Field or behind Elementary School
4. Investigate program in Dracut where a small percentage is added onto tax bill for open space purchases
5. List of historical sites & points of interest
6. Trails for ATV's, meet w Lunenburg group to see how theirs were developed
7. 1/4 mile track at Allen Field
8. Spruce up playground at Allen Field
9. Bring in new power supply to avoid diesel exhaust at Allen Field
10. Add/improve Snack Shack and bathrooms at Allen Field
11. Relocate concession shed at Allen Field
12. Better maintenance so fields can continue to be used for the long term
13. Find fields closer to the center of Town for T-ball and team sports for young kids