

SECTION 1: PLAN SUMMARY

The Town of North Brookfield was incorporated in 1812. Historically, it was part of the Quaboag Plantation and then became part of Brookfield. The Town has a long tradition of agriculture that has made use of its abundant natural resources. Through the years the Town has managed to maintain its rural character even in the face of regional growth and development pressures that have brought urban sprawl to other communities across the State and in Central Massachusetts. A multitude of scenic vistas, special places and environmentally sensitive areas exist throughout the Town. Many of these places have managed to remain in their natural state but are not permanently protected from future development. North Brookfield's major challenge will be to find a way to protect as many of these special places as possible with the limited funds available. To achieve this goal North Brookfield will need to think creatively, work with its neighbors, and create partnerships with other like-minded organizations (i.e. regional land trusts, etc.). The open space planners in North Brookfield will need to actively pursue open space preservation opportunities rather than wait and expect the opportunities to present themselves.

The North Brookfield Open Space Plan Committee initiated its open space and recreation planning effort in January of 2007. The Committee was charged with updating a plan that was certified in 1995 and expired five years later. The current effort was in conjunction with the Town's Master Plan, which was begun in October of 2005. The first phase of the Master Plan was funded through an appropriation at Town Meeting; using this money North Brookfield was able to hire the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission to provide technical assistance for the plan. The second phase, which includes the Open Space and Recreation Plan, was funded through a Smart Growth Technical Assistance Grant provided by the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs.

North Brookfield's Master Plan Committee made a determined effort to involve the public in the open space planning process. The Committee sent a Master Plan Survey to every household in Town in early 2006. Roughly 35% of North Brookfield's households responded to the survey, a very good response rate for such an effort. The Committee also sponsored a public forum on open space and recreation on the evening of May 2, 2007. The Committee met regularly on this project beginning in January 2007 and concluding in July 2007.

Through the planning process, the North Brookfield Master Plan Committee was able to establish the following primary goals for its open space protection priorities and recreation facilities:

- Maintain North Brookfield's Rural Character.
- Preserve and Enhance North Brookfield's Water Resources.
- Enhance the Community's Knowledge About Open Space in North Brookfield.
- Provide North Brookfield with well-maintained recreational facilities and opportunities.

The goals of this plan will serve as a guide for North Brookfield in its future efforts to protect open space and provide recreation resources for its citizens. The document before you is intended to serve as two chapters of the Master Plan as required under Chapter 41, Section 81-D of Massachusetts General Laws: the Natural Resources Chapter (see the environmental resource inventory in Section 4 of this document), and the Open Space Chapter (see the inventory of conservation/recreation lands in Section 5 of this document).