

SECTION 7: ANALYSIS OF NEEDS:

A. Summary of Resource Protection Needs

North Brookfield's resource protection needs are primarily two-fold: finding a way to remedy the water quality problems plaguing Lake Lashaway and finding a way to protect as much land as possible within the contiguous Supporting Natural Landscapes in the southern portion of the Town and Core Habitat areas located in the northwest on the New Braintree town line. With limited funding available and rising real estate prices, there is no way the Town could ever afford to protect the entirety of the State-identified Core Habitat areas. In an effort to address this situation, the Master Plan Committee has endeavored to prioritize the properties included in its land protection strategy as presented in Section 9 of this document (Five-Year Action Plan).

B. Summary of Community Needs

North Brookfield's Master Plan Committee utilized two methods to obtain public input in the open space and recreation planning process: a citizen survey and a public forum. In the spring of 2006 the Committee distributed surveys to all 1,842 households in North Brookfield and of those 642 chose to respond. This represents a 35% response rate, well above the normal response rate of 15-25%. The high response rate is indicative of a population that is concerned about being involved in the formulation of local policy. The survey was intended to cover a multitude of topics that impact the Master Plan process and included several questions that were specific to recreation activities in North Brookfield. These questions and summary of the responses are listed below. A public forum was held on 2 May 2007, to further verify the preferences of the Town's citizens. Feedback given at this event affirmed that which was expressed in the survey responses.

Master Plan Survey Question #1: What do you like about living in North Brookfield?

Opens spaces: Roughly 62% of respondents indicated open spaces as the reason they like living in North Brookfield. This indicates that the residents feel a connection with the natural environment and preserving it will aid in retaining and possibly attracting new residents.

Master Plan Survey Question #15: In an effort to preserve North Brookfield's rural character, would you be in favor of any of the following initiatives?

Protecting Open Space: Nearly 65% of those who completed the survey chose this, making it the number one response to this question. This points to the fact that residents associate open space with rural character, which was the number one reason people like living in North Brookfield. This can be further interpreted to indicate there will be support by residents for the purchase of properties under Ch. 61 protection should the opportunity arise.

Protect Farming with an Agriculture Commission: This was the second most popular answer among those that completed the survey with 59% indicating their support. The protection of farming works to preserve open space through allowing owners to work the land in its natural state rather than selling out to developers. The farm industry in Massachusetts is shrinking and more and more farmers are being forced to sell their property to guarantee financial security. Support from local government and Town residents can be an important part of farms continued success in North Brookfield.

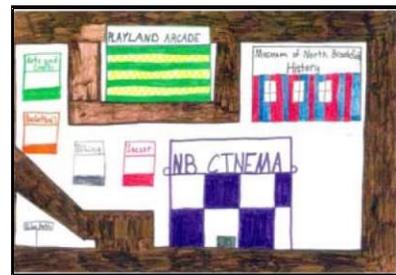
Master Plan Survey Question #16: What types of recreation opportunities would you like to see more of in North Brookfield?

The top three responses were Bike Trails, Theater and Hiking Trails. Bike and hiking trails are recreation activities that mirror the rural quality of life that is mentioned as an important part of life in North Brookfield.

Master Plan Survey Question #17: Rate the services.

Recreation: Roughly 45% rated this service as excellent or good and 55% rated it fair to poor. This was only one of two Town services that received more fair/poor responses than excellent/good responses. It was mentioned at the public forum that there was a lack of programmatic activities for children in North Brookfield. It was also mentioned that there are many private organizations in Town that provide programming but not all children feel comfortable taking advantage of these for a variety of reasons. This may be the basis of the fair/poor responses, especially since the Town recently built a new school complex that includes several athletic fields.

In addition to the Master Plan survey results described above, North Brookfield planners can utilize the survey results from the document, Massachusetts Outdoors 2004, the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) prepared by the EOEEA Division of Conservation Resources (DCR) in 2000. As part of the SCORP, the DCR conducted a statewide recreation user survey and the results were further broken down by region. The 2004 SCORP survey identified the following recreation needs for Central Massachusetts:



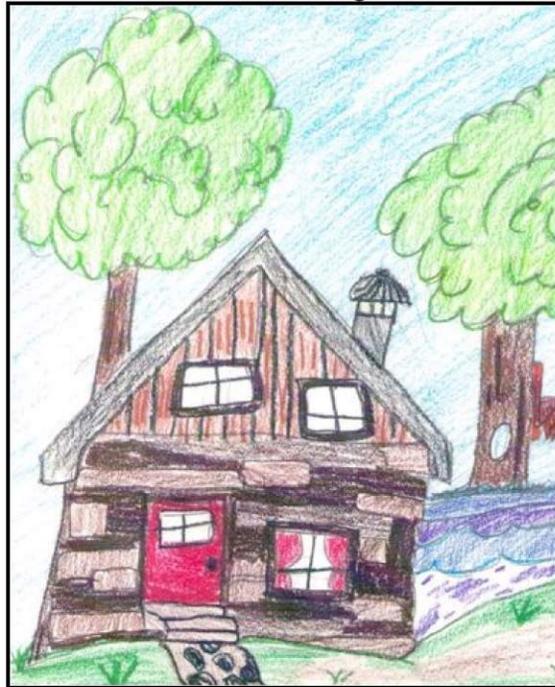
- Field-Based Activities: The survey identified playgrounds to be the most needed field-based recreation resource, followed by golfing.
- Passive Recreational Activities: The survey identified picnicking facilities to be the most needed passive recreation resource, followed by wildlife and nature study areas.
- Trail-Based Activities: The survey identified places for walking to be the most needed trail-based recreation resource, followed by places for biking (both mountain and road).
- Water-Based Activities: The survey identified places for swimming to be the most needed water-based recreation resource, followed by boating (both motorized and non-motorized) and canoeing.
- Wilderness Activities: The survey identified places to hike to be the most needed wilderness resource.

In regards to the recreation needs of special populations, North Brookfield built a new Junior/Senior High School in 2004. This relatively new facility offers school-aged children and teenagers a variety of recreation facilities including a gym, a softball field, a soccer field, and a basketball court. In terms of recreation activities for seniors the Senior Center offers a variety of activities and a place for them to socialize.

What the Kids Say: “We need sports all year round.”

C. Management Needs, Potential Change of Use

The Town of North Brookfield has limited financial resources and the current fiscal situation of our State is likely to result in fewer resources for the purposes of open space protection and recreation. Identification of funding and staffing resources will be key elements of the Town’s strategy for open space acquisition and upgrading recreation facilities. Several of the properties identified for protection on the Action Plan Map (Map 6) are currently in the State’s Chapter Lands program. Should North Brookfield purchase land currently classified as agriculture under Chapter 61A it is probable that the land would instead be used for conservation or recreation purpose. Thus the land would technically undergo a change in use. However, there is little likelihood of other changes in use.



What the Kids Say: “Do you want to keep your kids active? If you do, then I am going to tell you about a few of my plans.....”