

Town of Rockland

# Open Space and Recreation Plan

2018 Update

# Acknowledgements

This plan would not be possible without the support and leadership of many people in the Town of Rockland. Sincere thanks to the Rockland Open Space and Recreation Plan Committee and Marcy. Members of the Rockland Open Space and Recreation Plan Committee and supporting Town staff are listed below and in Section 2 of the plan. Funding for this project was provided by the Community Compact Best Practices Program through the Massachusetts Governor's Office and a technical assistance grant from the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC).

## Open Space & Recreation Plan Committee Members

Larry Ryan, Board of Selectmen  
Richard Furlong, Youth Commission & Park Commission  
George Anderson, Town Forest Committee & Open Space Committee  
Donald Cann, Open Space Committee  
Patricia Penny, Rockland Public Schools & Council on Aging  
Lorraine Pratt, Conservation Commission  
Peter Ewell, Park Department Superintendent  
Jeanne Blaney, Director, Youth Commission

## Town of Rockland Staff

Marcy Birmingham, Project Coordinator  
Allan Chiocca, Town Administrator

Professional support was provided by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, the regional planning agency serving the 101 cities and towns of Metropolitan Boston. The following MAPC staff executed the field work, research, analysis, and writing of this Open Space and Recreation Plan, as well as the facilitation of key public meetings:

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# 1

## Plan Summary

The 2018 Rockland Open Space and Recreation Plan (the Plan) updates and revises the 2005 Open Space and Recreation Plan approved by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs. This Plan Update was prepared by the Rockland Open Space and Recreation Plan Update Committee and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, with the assistance of Rockland residents, members of Town boards, committees and staff. The Plan was put together after significant public outreach and numerous discussions with the Committee.

Since the last plan, the Town has worked to implement many of the action steps identified in the 2005 Plan. A list of projects recently completed and ongoing projects is located in Section 9.

This Plan Update provides current information about the community's growth, open space and recreation needs and goals, and develops an action plan for meeting those needs.

### **Important Issues and Projects**

Based upon the public process and Committee conversations which informed the creation of the Plan, the Open Space and Recreation Plan Update Committee has identified a number of open space and recreation issues of particular importance.

- Improving existing park and recreation facilities
- Establishing a regular maintenance plan for park and recreational facilities
- Upgrading all facilities to be ADA compliant
- Enhancing the recreational opportunities at Union Point
- Linking existing walking and biking trail connections to key locations throughout town
- Connecting the Hanover Branch Rail Trail with Hanover and Abington
- Providing more information to the public about open space and recreational opportunities through written and online materials

These issues will be echoed in the Community Goals in Chapters 8 and 9 at the end of this document.

# 2

## Introduction

### Statement of Purpose

#### *Why was this Plan Update Written?*

This document will replace Rockland's 2005 Open Space and Recreation Plan, and will serve to guide the Town's decisions on open space and recreation activities (including spending) for the next seven years. The Plan is designed to provide a road map of open space and recreation priorities to ensure that the needs of the Rockland community are met. Through a public process, the community's needs were identified, and goals and action steps to address those needs were developed.

This 2018 Plan Update has been compiled in accordance with the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA), Division of Conservation Services (DCS) requirements and guidelines. In order to be eligible for state and federal grant aid offered through the EOAA, an approved Open Space and Recreation Plan is required.

#### *What is Open Space?*

Open space is land that is undeveloped, usually without buildings or structures, and that is accessible to the public. Open space is typically divided into two categories: conservation lands and recreation resources.

Conservation land is usually left in its natural state and it is often, but not always, open to the public. Conservation lands may include animal and plant habitats, water resources/aquifer protection, and other natural, historical or cultural features. Rockland has a number of properties that fall into this category, with a combined total of more than 300 acres managed by the Conservation Commission.

Recreation involves activity. Active recreation activities include team sports, tennis, swimming competitively, golf, etc. taking place in or on developed facilities. Passive recreation is defined as any activity that can be performed outdoors with a minimum disturbance to an area's natural resources. For example, hiking, picnicking, canoeing, ice-skating, cross country skiing, swimming in a natural water body, and informal sports activities on an open field are considered passive activities. Conservation lands can offer passive recreation opportunities.

This Plan will inventory both active and passive recreation areas, as well open spaces such as cemeteries that serve as historical/cultural features. The Inventory of Rockland recreation and open space resources is in Chapter 5.

## Planning Process and Public Participation

The Town of Rockland supported the development of this plan through the work of the Open Space and Recreation Plan Committee, comprised of volunteers from other Town committees and non-profit organizations, as well as Town staff. The members of the Open Space and Recreation Plan Committee and supporting Town staff persons are listed below.

### Open Space & Recreation Plan Committee Members

- Larry Ryan, Board of Selectmen
- Richard Furlong, Youth Commission & Park Commission
- George Anderson, Town Forest Committee & Open Space Committee
- Donald Cann, Open Space Committee
- Patricia Penny, Rockland Public Schools & Council on Aging
- Lorraine Pratt, Conservation Commission
- Peter Ewell, Park Department Superintendent
- Jeanne Blaney, Director, Youth Commission

### Town of Rockland Staff

- Marcy Birmingham, Project Coordinator
- Allan Chiocca, Town Administrator

Additional assistance and input were received from the following town volunteers:

- George Anderson, Town Forest Committee

The Committee began meeting in September 2017. For the past year, the Committee worked to gather, analyze, and discuss information to include in the Update. Their work was informed by the 2005 Open Space and Recreation Plan in conjunction with significant public input.

Documents and websites used in preparation of this Plan are referenced in the relevant chapters; a list of additional reports consulted is in Chapter 11. The draft plan was delivered to town, state and regional stakeholders for review. Following completion of the 2018 Open Space and Recreation Plan, the Town will continue to solicit community input as it implements the action steps outlined in this Plan, as well as to monitor overall progress toward meeting the Plan's goals.

### ***Public Participation***

In cooperation with the Town of Rockland, MAPC organized and hosted two public forums on October 19, 2017 and March 5, 2018 at the Senior Center. This location allowed the Town to reach senior citizens who live in the nearby Rockland Housing Authority apartments. At the

October forum, the lead project planner provided an introduction to the purpose and utility of Open Space and Recreation Plans generally and presented an overview of Rockland's social demographics and land use patterns. Members of the public in attendance were then engaged to complete a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis of the town's open space and recreation resources. Among the issues identified through the discussion, the need for more active recreation space, the desirability of intermunicipal trail connections, and the importance of expanded public education about existing resources were especially resonant. The second public meeting in March 2018 again allowed residents to provide input about the strengths and weaknesses of Rockland's open space and recreation areas, but also requested their evaluation of the goals and strategies for achieving them developed through the OSRP planning process. Action items were reviewed and prioritized.

### **Environmental Justice Enhanced Outreach**

The Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA) and other state agencies have been implementing an Environmental Justice (EJ) Policy since 2002 to help ensure that all Massachusetts residents experience equal protection and meaningful involvement with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies and the equitable distribution of environmental benefits. This policy was instituted because the Commonwealth realized that low to moderate income residents in densely populated older industrial areas often lack open space and recreation resources and may live near old, abandoned, and/or contaminated sites that can pose risks to public health and the environment.

Environmental justice is an integral consideration in all EEA programs, to the extent applicable and allowable by law. The Environmental Justice Executive Order No. 552 requires Secretariats to take action in promoting environmental justice. The Executive Order requires new environmental justice strategies that promote positive impacts in EJ communities.

For example, EOEEA has now amended the PARC and LAND program regulations to incorporate environmental justice in the award scoring system. Similarly, the Riverways and the Massachusetts Environmental Trust will work with EOEEA to develop systems for incorporating environmental justice as a criterion for awarding grants. The EOEEA also has determined to target its resources to more effectively create, restore, and maintain open spaces located in neighborhoods where EJ populations reside.

Rockland is one of 137 communities in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts that includes an Environmental Justice (EJ) population, as identified through analysis by MassGIS. EJ populations in Massachusetts are determined by the following criteria:

Households earn 65% or less of the statewide household median income; or  
25% or more of the residents are minority; or  
25% or more of the residents are foreign-born; or  
25% or more of the residents are lacking English language proficiency.



Map #2, which illustrates the EJ Populations by Census Block Group, indicates that only the central western portion of the town contains any EJ population. This area qualifies for EJ status under the low income classification. There are no areas of town that qualify under any other categories of EJ population.

The Rockland Housing Authority properties are located in the EJ block group, which are predominantly occupied by senior citizens. The public forums were held at the nearby Senior Center in part to encourage participation at the forums and to present opportunities to coordinate with the Council on Aging to determine needs and develop programs that cater to that population.

# 3

## Community Setting

### **Regional Context**

The Town of Rockland is situated in the southeastern portion of Massachusetts, along the northern edge of Plymouth County. Neighboring municipalities include the Towns of Weymouth and Hingham to the north, Norwell and Hanover to the east, Hanson to the south, and Whitman and Abington on the west. Brockton, the largest city nearest to Rockland, lies just under six miles to the southwest, while Boston, the largest city in the metropolitan region, is slightly less than 20 miles to the north.

In addition to its 6,359.9 acres of land area, Rockland encompasses 116 acres of water, in the Rockland Abington reservoir, which functions as part of the town's surface water supply. Other prominent water features include Studley's Pond, French Stream, and Old Swamp Brook. The Town of Rockland primarily lies in the South Coastal Watersheds, although a small area in the northern part of town is located in the Boston Harbor Watershed.

Vehicular commuters benefit from supportive infrastructure which makes the town easily accessible by car. Three major state routes run through Rockland: Routes 3, 123, and 139. Route 3 cuts through the northeast corner of town, Routes 123 and 139 bisect the town and connect to the Town Center, and also pass through several residential neighborhoods and provides access to the adjacent Town of Hanover.

Those commuters who prefer or rely on mass transit enjoy fewer options. Although the Brockton Area Transit Authority (BAT) offers some limited bus service from Brockton, the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) does not operate any bus routes in town. However, three immediately adjacent towns – Abington, Weymouth, and Whitman – do have MBTA commuter rail stations. Each of the three stations is located along the Kingston/Plymouth line, and allows passengers to access the broader regional mass transit system and to arrive at

Boston's South Station within one hour. A private company, Plymouth & Brockton Street Railway (known locally as the P & B Bus), provides weekday service to and from Boston, originating in Plymouth, with a park-and-ride stop located in Rockland.

The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) categorizes Rockland as a Mature New England Town, a community characterized by a mixed-use town center surrounded by compact neighborhoods with conventional single family subdivisions elsewhere. According to the Massachusetts Bureau of Environmental Health, 52% of Rockland's land mass is dedicated to agriculture, forest, recreation, and open space. Permanently protected open space comprises 23% of the town's total land area.

Rockland is one of 101 cities and towns represented by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), the regional planning agency for the Greater Boston region. Rockland is a member community of the South Shore Coalition, one of eight MAPC subregions. In 2008, MAPC adopted a comprehensive plan for the region with goals through 2030 entitled MetroFuture. MetroFuture guides the work of MAPC agency-wide and every project MAPC undertakes works towards reaching these goals. Many MetroFuture goals are applicable to the Rockland Open Space and Recreation Plan, including:

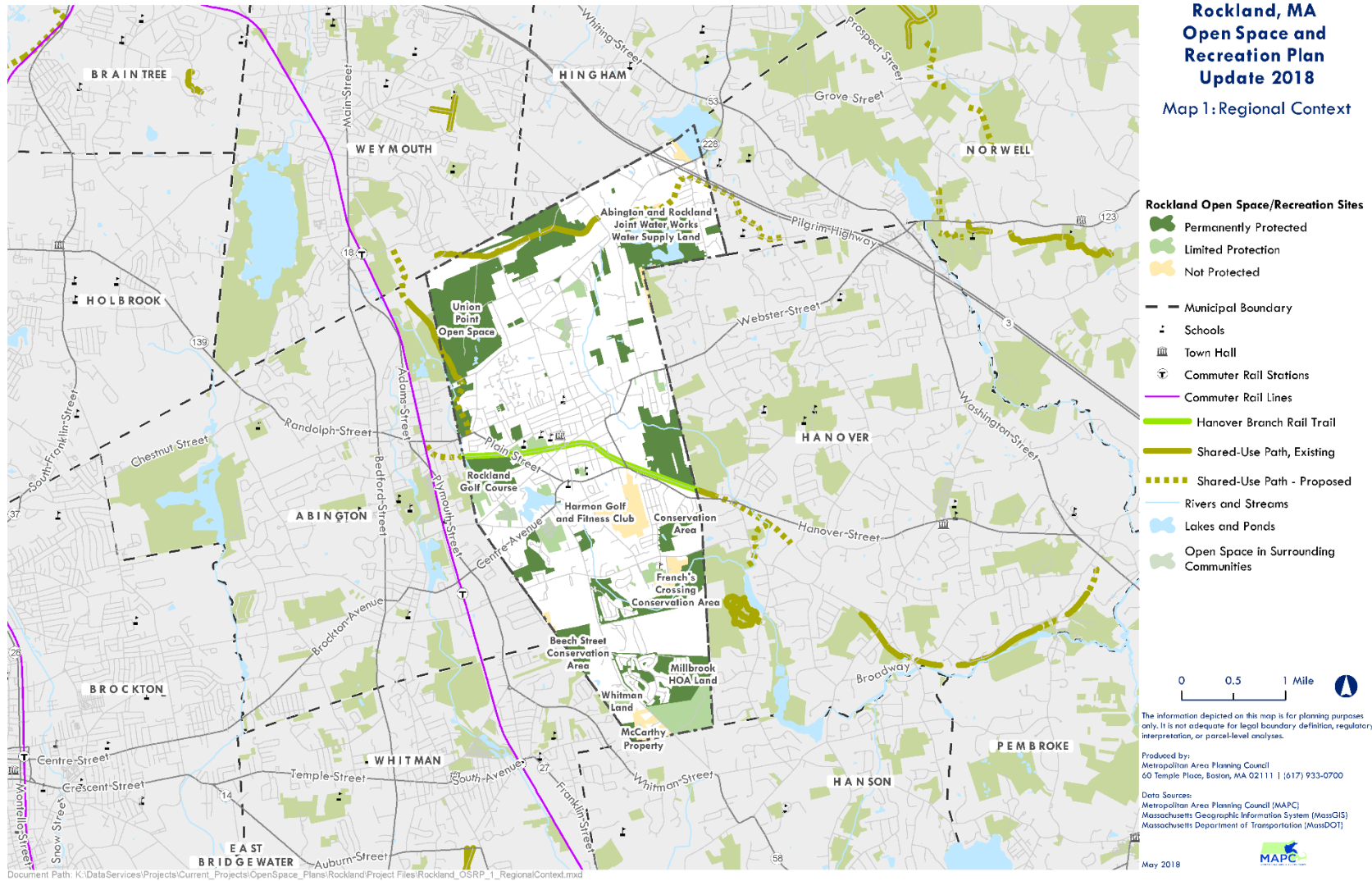
- *Sustainable Growth Goal 3*: Brownfields and other polluted sites will be cleaned up and re-used for parks or development.
- *Sustainable Growth Goal 8*: Historic resources will be preserved and enhanced.
- *Sustainable Growth Goal 9*: The region's landscape will retain its distinctive green spaces and working farms.
- *Sustainable Growth Goal 11*: The region will be prepared for and resilient to natural disasters and climate change.
- *Healthy Communities Goal 3*: All neighborhoods will have access to safe and well-maintained parks, community gardens, and appropriate play spaces for children and youth.
- *Healthy Communities Goal 5*: Most residents will build regular physical activity into their daily lives.
- *Healthy Environment Goal 7*: The region's rivers, streams, lakes, and ponds will have sufficient clean water to support healthy populations of native fish and other species, as well as recreational uses.
- *Healthy Environment Goal 10*: A robust network of protected open spaces, farms, parks, and greenways will provide wildlife habitat, ecological benefits, recreational opportunities, and scenic beauty.

Rockland has already demonstrated the capacity and commitment to work with neighboring towns to further open space and recreation development. For example, Rockland has begun converting a section of the former Hanover Branch Railroad corridor into a recreational trail. To date, Rockland has cleared nearly all portions of the trail in their boundaries, removing railroad infrastructure and improving drainage. An evolving project, Rockland is working with

neighboring communities Abington and Hanover to establish and enhance the trail's inter-municipal connectivity.

The Town of Rockland is also party to a highly significant regional development on the site of the former South Weymouth Naval Air Station. When the Station closed in 1997, the 1,500 acre site was targeted for redevelopment. Comprised of land split between Rockland, Weymouth, and Abington, all three towns voted at Town Meeting to approve a Reuse Plan prepared by the Naval Air Station Planning Committee in 1998. Development progressed slowly for many years, but a new master developer took control of the project in 2015 and has developed an updated Master Plan rebranding the site as "Union Point," replacing the second most recent iteration of its name, Southfield. Although the project encompasses multiple types of development, open space and recreation considerations have played a formative role in the planned changes. The project outlined in the Union Point plan will keep 1,007 acres, nearly 70% of the site, as open space. Approximately 600 acres of Union Point's open space will be located within Rockland's borders. Overall, the development will include approximately 43 acres of public parks, approximately 939 acres of passive and active open space, and 25 acres dedicated to recreation and sports, including 11 new playing fields.

Map 1: Regional Context



## **History of Rockland**

In 1645, the Plymouth Colony granted the area that would become Rockland to Timothy Hatherly. Early English settlers did not immediately move into the area, as groups of indigenous peoples lived there and resisted colonial expansion. However, King Philip's War, the most devastating war between colonists and the Native Americans in New England, cleared the way for the advance of English settlements by the end of the 1670s. The first settlers were drawn by the rich woodlands of pine and oak, and the first mill was opened by the Thaxter family in 1703. Memories of the violent clashes between Native Americans and settlers deterred inmovement for a time, and the community only began flourishing in the 1730s, well after the war period. The town relied on agriculture, timbering and saw milling and shipped large quantities of oak timber to colonial shipyards.

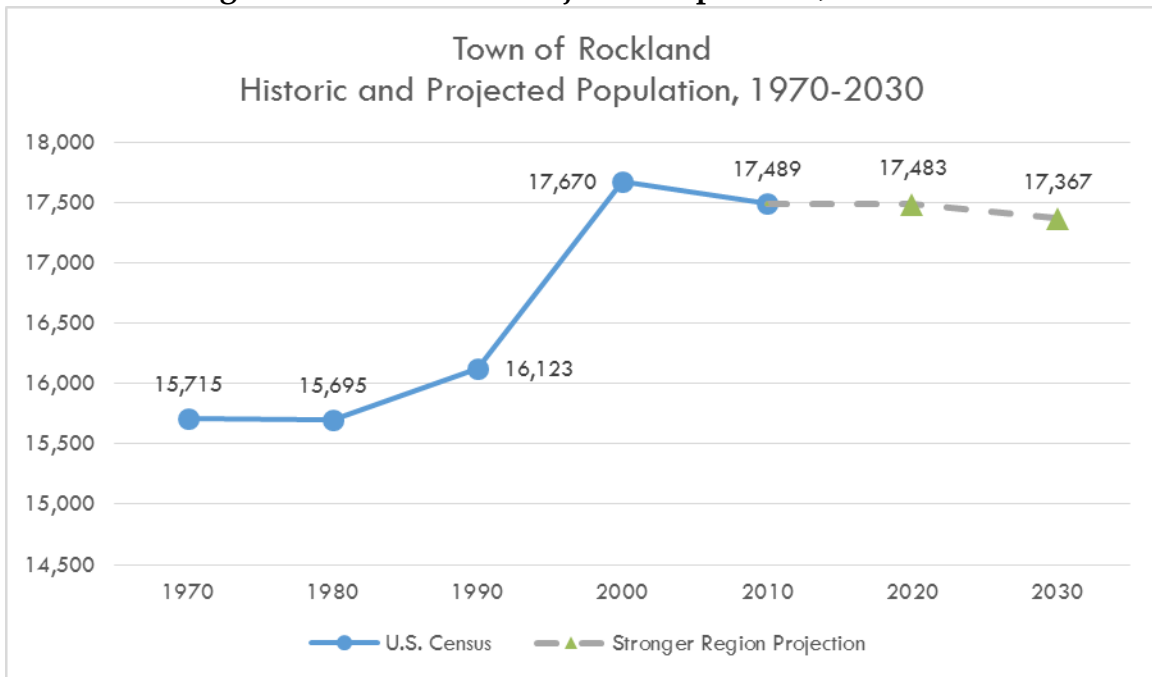
In the 19th century, Rockland became a center for shoe production and by 1832 there were six factories which produced twice the value of shoes being made in Brockton. By 1837, the town was manufacturing twice as many shoes as all other towns in the county put together. Rockland is supposed to have shod half the Union Army, along with pioneering in machine sewn shoes and producing fur-lined boots. By 1865, 2800 male and female workers produced \$3.5 million worth of shoes and boots compared to \$1.46 million in Brockton. Trolleys and trains tied the town to Abington, Hanover and Brockton in the 19th century. Most shoe factories closed in the Depression years but intense commercial expansion along Route 123 brought suburban development with it, since the town is only 20 miles southeast of Boston. Although Rockland has been an industrial community since the mid-19th century, there are a few tracts of town which remain wooded. There has been significant commercial and industrial development, particularly on Hingham Street near the intersection of Route 3 and on VFW Drive.

## **Demographic Characteristics**

### ***Population Trends***

As recorded by the 2010 Census, Rockland's residential population numbers 17,489, with a population density of 1,745 residents per square mile. Although the town population grew roughly 11% from 1970 to 2010, the majority of that growth occurred between 1990 and 2000, when the population surged almost 10%, from 16,123 to 17,670. Looking forward to 2030, MAPC's 2014 Metro Boston Population and Housing Demand Projections indicate that the town's population size will stay relatively stable, with a projected decline of about 122 residents (0.7%) in the Stronger Region scenario. However, the 2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Population Estimates dataset projects a population of 17,725, suggesting a modest upward trend. Despite the difference in estimates, the discrepancy is not large enough to require multiple scenario planning as part of this Open Space and Recreation Plan.

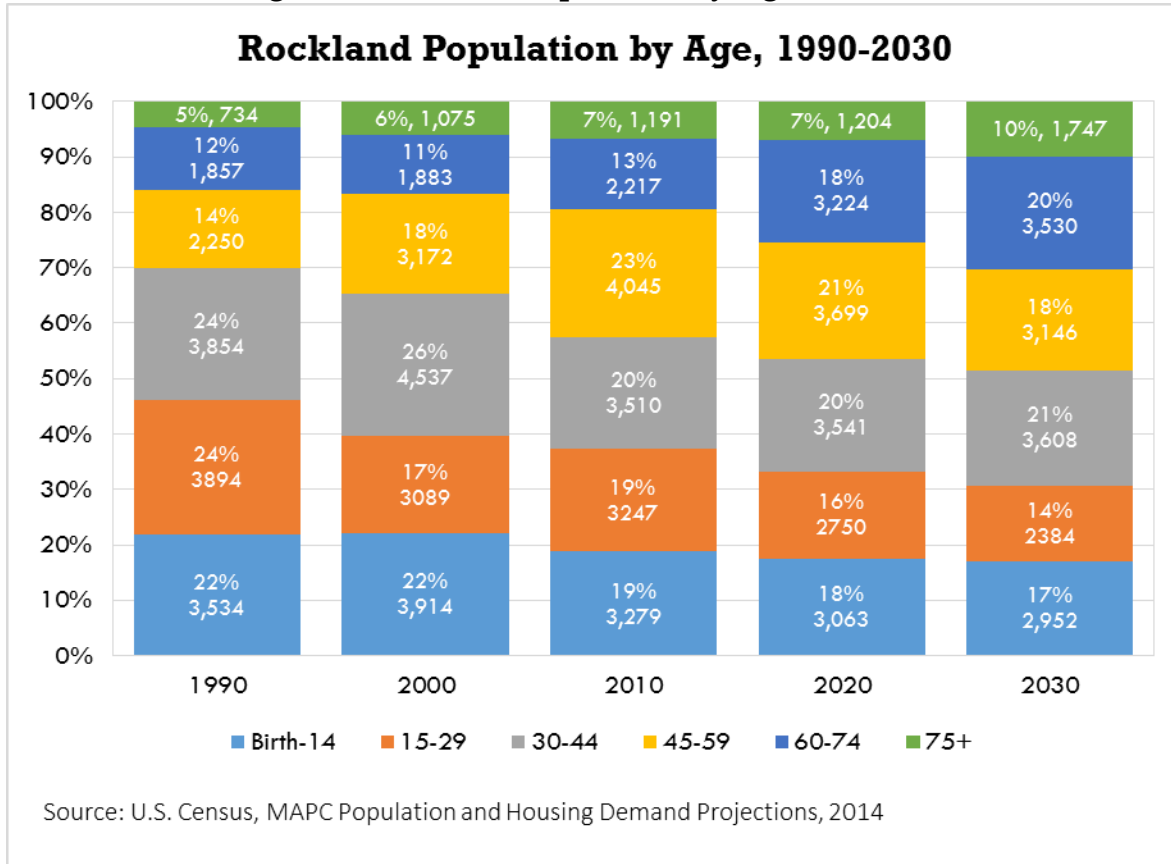
**Figure 1: Historic and Projected Population, 1970-2030**



Source: U.S. Census and MAPC Stronger Region Projections

Although the total population will remain stable, the population's projected compositional changes have implications for future open space needs. Although all age groups benefit from access to natural and recreation spaces, different user bases use recreations spaces with variable frequency and for a range of activities. For example, the facilities required by a large youth sports organization differ significantly from those enabling individual passive recreation activities pursued by older residents. Between 1990 and 2010 Rockland's population aged overall, with the population under 30 years old shrinking from 46% of the total population in 1990 to 38% in 2010. By 2030, the under 30 population is expected to decrease to 31% of the total population. Meanwhile, the proportion of Rockland's population 60 years and older, increased from 17% of the total in 1990 to 20% in 2010, and is expected to grow to 30% of the total in 2030.

**Figure 2: Rockland Population by Age, 1990-2030**



Rockland has become slightly more racially and ethnically diverse in recent years. At 90.8% of the 2010 population, the majority of the Rockland residents are White, Non-Hispanic. This majority decreased by 3.4% of the overall population from 2000, when 94.2% of Rockland residents were White, Non-Hispanic.

Although Rockland has become somewhat more racially and ethnically diverse over time, in comparison with the South Shore Subregion as a whole, a slightly larger share is White Non-Hispanic. Compared with the MAPC region and the state as a whole, the town’s racial composition is relatively more homogeneous.

**Table 1: Race and Ethnicity, Census 2010**

Race and Ethnicity	Rockland	South Shore Coalition (SSC)	MAPC Region	Massachusetts
<b>White Non-Hispanic</b>	90.8%	91.7%	72.2%	76.1%
<b>Black Non-Hispanic</b>	2.5%	1.8%	7.9%	6.0%
<b>Native American, Non-Hispanic</b>	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.2%



Race and Ethnicity	Rockland	South Shore Coalition (SSC)	MAPC Region	Massachusetts
<b>Asian/ Pacific Islander, Non-Hispanic</b>	1.1%	2.5%	7.6%	5.3%
<b>Other Race, Non-Hispanic</b>	1.8%	0.8%	1.1%	0.9%
<b>Multi-Race, Non-Hispanic</b>	1.7%	1.3%	1.9%	1.9%
<b>Hispanic/ Latino</b>	2.0%	1.9%	9.1%	9.6%

Source: U.S. Census, 2010

**Table 2: Percent Change in Race and Ethnicity, 2000-2010**

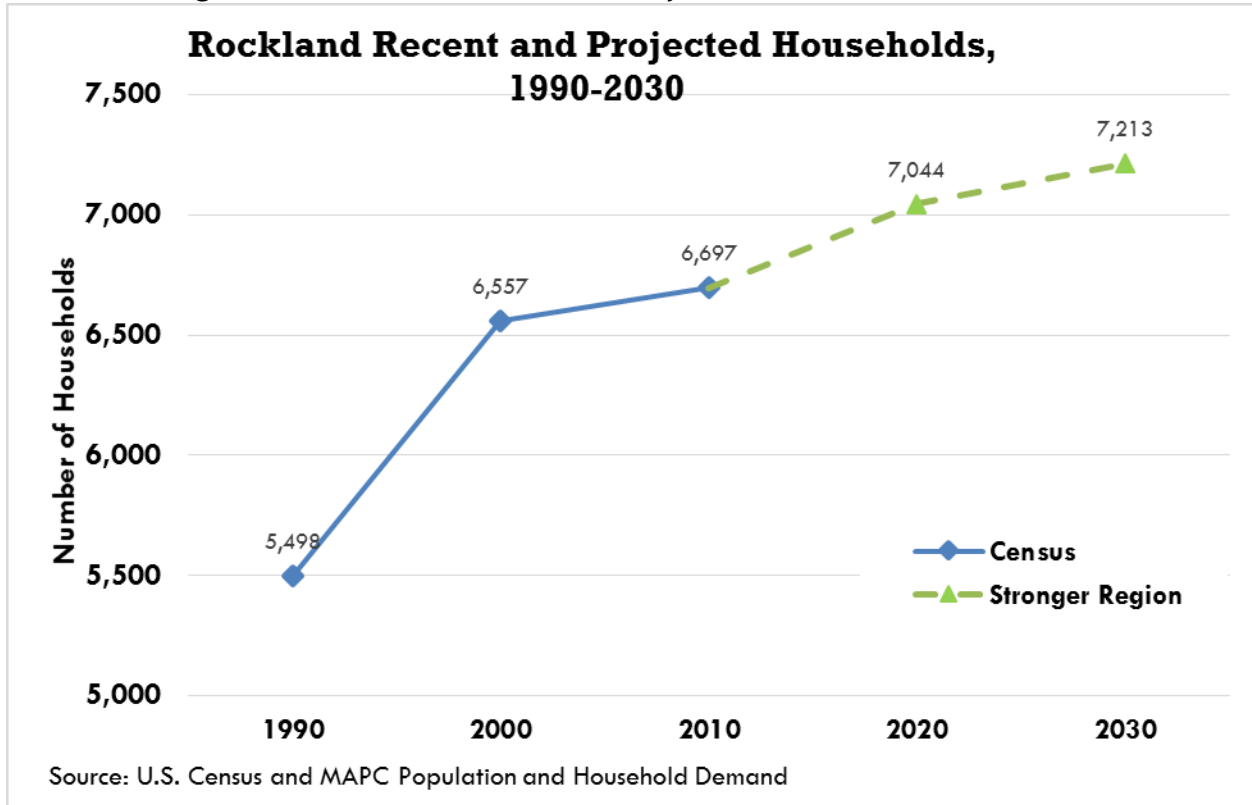
% Change by Race and Ethnicity, 2000-2010	Rockland	South Shore Coalition (SSC)	MAPC Region	Massachusetts
<b>Non-Hispanic White</b>	-4.6%	-1.0%	-5.2%	-4.1%
<b>Non-Hispanic Black</b>	47.6%	84.5%	15.8%	23.1%
<b>Non-Hispanic Native American</b>	-12.0%	28.7%	-4.5%	-4.3%
<b>Non-Hispanic Asian</b>	2.1%	104.8%	45.9%	46.8%
<b>Non-Hispanic Pacific Islander</b>	-1.0%	24.5%	-18.7%	-14.0%
<b>Non-Hispanic Asian/Pacific Islander</b>	4.8%	103.6%	45.5%	46.3%
<b>Non-Hispanic Other one race</b>	214.3%	114.2%	81.7%	41.2%
<b>Non-Hispanic Multi-Race</b>	23.6%	50.2%	6.3%	10.8%
<b>Hispanic/Latino</b>	93.3%	89.0%	47.8%	46.4%

Source: U.S. Census, 2000, 2010

### *Household Trends*

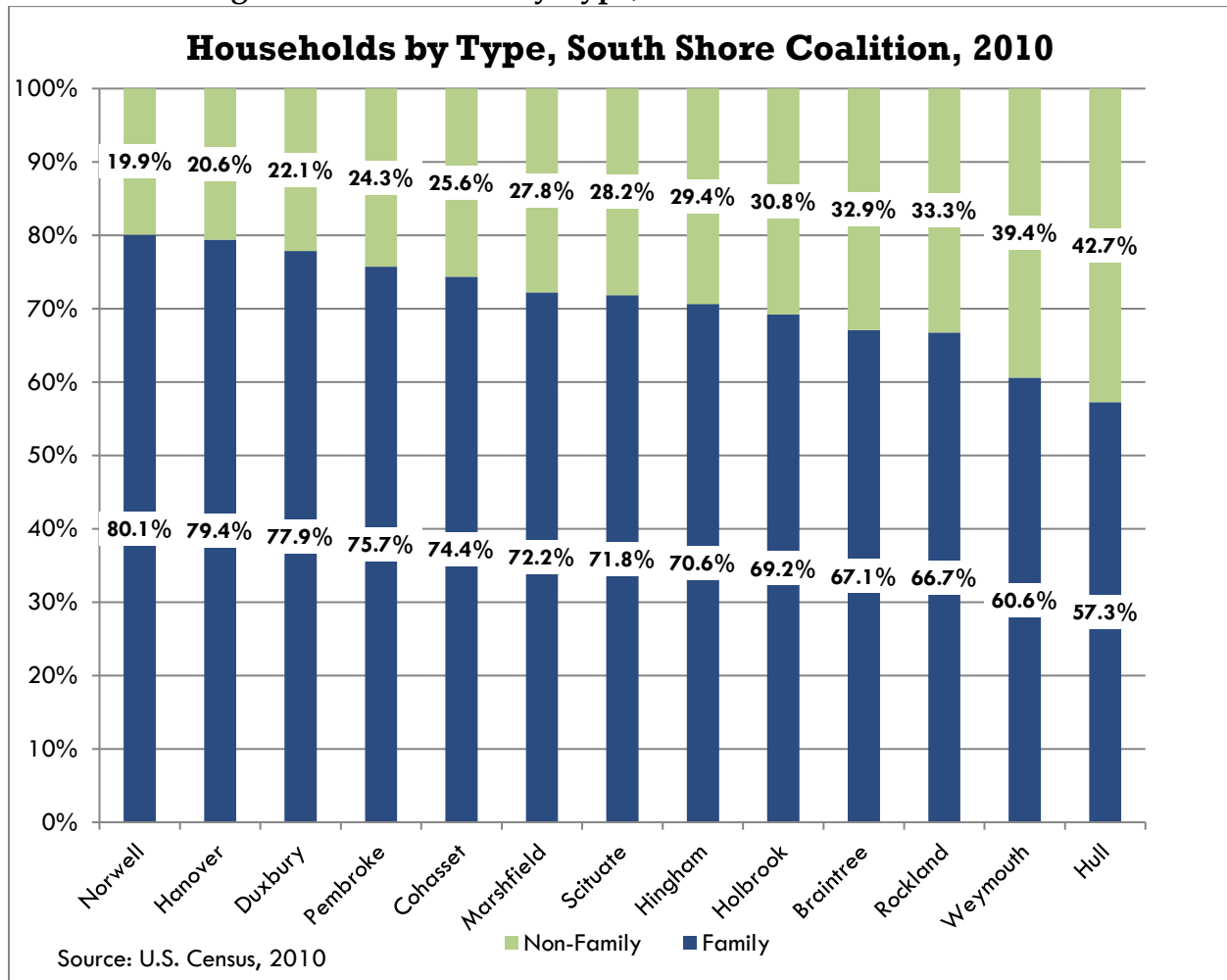
In addition to population trends, examining changes to household number and composition should also inform open space and recreation planning. Although projections indicate Rockland's population will remain largely stable, the number of households in town are projected to increase. As each household requires its own unit of housing, growing household numbers will add development pressure on existing open space. As of the 2010 Census, Rockland was home to 6,697 households, for an average of 2.58 persons per household. Rockland's total number of households increased by 19.3% from 1990 to 2000 and then by 2.1% from 2000 to 2010. Going forward, projections show a continued increase in households in the Stronger Region scenario. By 2030, Rockland is projected to add 516 households, a 7.7% increase from 2010. Due to continued declines in household size, the number of households is expected to grow faster than population. This corresponds to trends in the broader MAPC region and the state between 2000 and 2010.

Figure 3: Rockland Recent and Projected Households, 1990-2030



Reasons for decreased household size range from families delaying having children, having fewer children, and smaller households in the oldest age cohorts as baby boomers age. Compared to other communities in MAPC’s South Shore Coalition, Rockland’s proportion of family households ranked third lowest among the group, with family household comprising two thirds of Rockland’s total households in 2010. “Family households” includes any household with two or more related (by blood or marriage) persons living together; “non-family households” include single person households and pairs or groups of unrelated people living together.

Figure 4: Households by Type, South Shore Coalition 2010



Among total households, nearly one-third have children: 22% are married couples with children and 10% are single parent households. The remainder of family households include married couple without children (28%) and other family households (7%). Householders who live alone make up 27% of all households and non-family households of two or more persons account for 7% of all households.

Table 3: Household Type and Percent of Total

Household Type		Percent of Total Households
Family	Married Couples, without Children	28%
	Married Couples, with Children	22%
	Single Parent Households	10%
	Other Family Households	7%
Non-Family	Living Alone	27%
	Non-Family Households of 2+	7%

Source: U.S. Census, 2010

### ***Population and Housing Density***

Based on the ACS 2016 5-year population estimate of 17,725 residents, the Town of Rockland has a population density of 1,717 residents per square mile. When broken down further, the Census Tract and Block Groups clustered in the geographic center of town have a substantially higher than average population density; Census Tract 5021.01 has a population density of 3,197.

With an estimated 7,263 housing units spread across the town’s 10.3 square miles, the total housing density is 704 units per square mile. The densest residential development is also located in the geographic center of town, with Census Tract 5021.01 possessing a housing density of 1,303 units per square mile.

**Table 4: Population and Housing Density, 2016**

	Area (Sq. Mile)	Population	Population Density (per Sq. Mile)	Housing Units	Housing Density (per Sq. Mile)
Census Tract 5021.01	1.94	6,204	3,197	2,528	1,303
Census Tract 5021.02	3.54	5,637	1,593	2,205	623
Census Tract 5022	4.85	5,884	1,214	2,530	522
Total	10.32	17,725	1,717	7,263	704

*Source: ACS 2016 5-Year Estimates, Social Explorer*

### ***Jobs and Income***

According to the ACS 5-Year Estimates 2010-2014, median household income in Rockland is \$66,860. The median family income is higher at \$83,101 and the median non-family income is significantly lower at \$39,902. Rockland’s non-family households are primarily individuals living alone. Median Household Income in Rockland is the second-lowest in the South Shore Coalition.

**Table 5: Median Household Income, 2014**

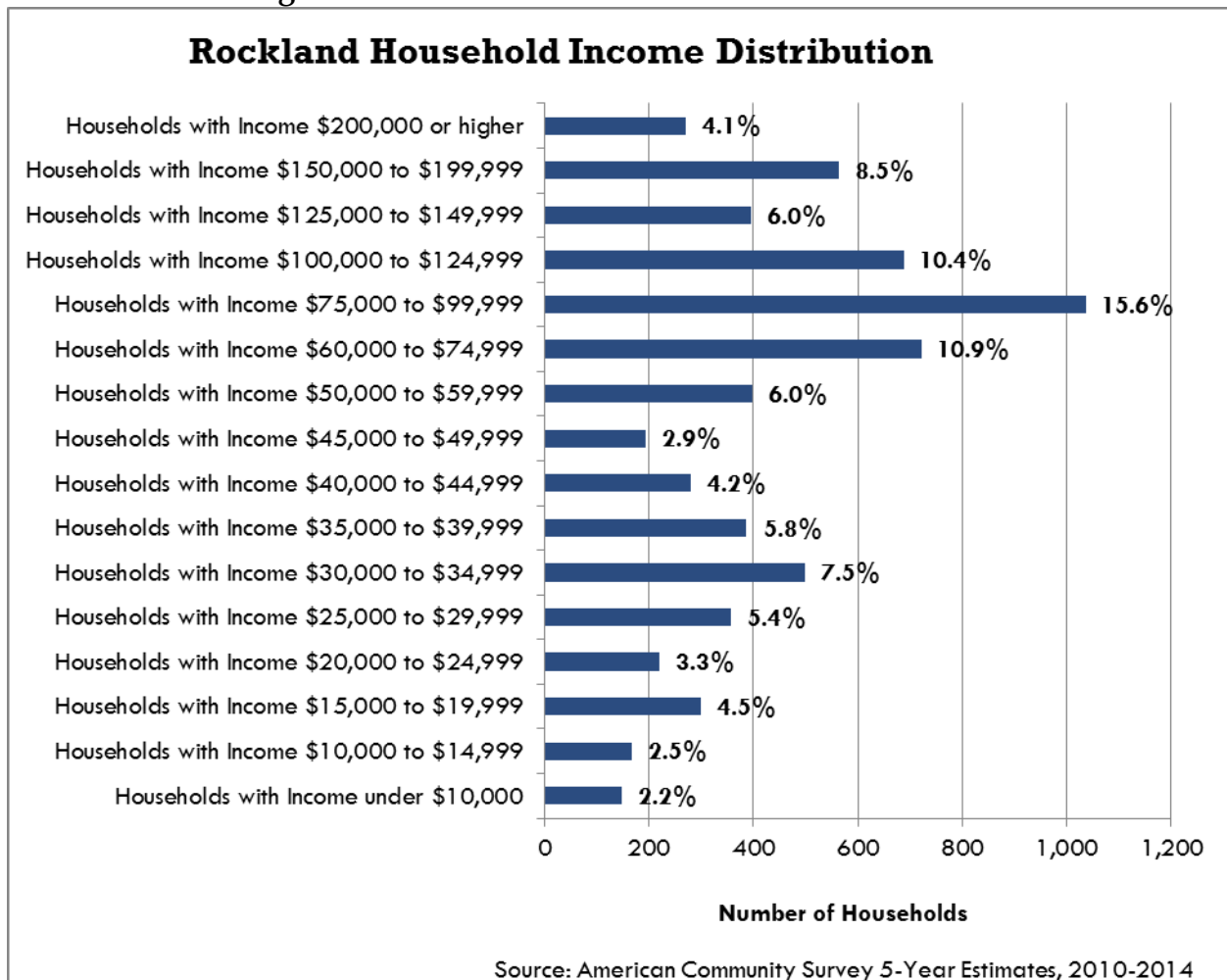
South Shore Coalition	Median Household Income
Duxbury	\$120,253
Cohasset	\$117,679
Norwell	\$110,671
Hingham	\$103,350
Scituate	\$102,577
Hanover	\$98,750
Pembroke	\$89,954
Marshfield	\$89,702

South Shore Coalition	Median Household Income
Braintree	\$87,500
Hull	\$77,440
Weymouth	\$69,099
Rockland	\$66,860
Holbrook	\$63,297

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2010-2014

Approximately 31% of Rockland’s households earn less than \$40,000 in income, with 9.2% earning less than \$20,000. Rockland households earning between \$40,000 and \$74,999 accounts for 24% of households while, 44.6% of households earn \$75,000 or more.

Figure 5: Rockland Household Income Distribution



In November of 2017, 347 of the 9,863 Rockland residents in the labor force were unemployed, for an unemployment rate of 3.5%, slightly higher than the Massachusetts unemployment rate of 3.3%.

## ***Industry***

According to data maintained by the State Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD), 570 wage paying establishments were located in the Town of Rockland in 2016, employing 7,627 workers and paying an average weekly wage of \$1,373. Construction, Health Care & Social Assistance, and Professional and Technical Services were the three largest industry groups in town.

**Table 6: Average Employment and Wages by Industry, All Ownership, 2016**

<b>Industry</b>	<b>Establishments</b>	<b>Total Wages</b>	<b>Average Employment</b>	<b>Average Weekly Wage</b>
<b>Total, All Industries</b>	<b>570</b>	<b>\$544,387,205</b>	<b>7,627</b>	<b>\$1,373</b>
<b>Construction</b>	86	\$72,041,985	944	\$1,468
<b>Health Care and Social Assistance</b>	77	\$38,876,480	816	\$916
<b>Professional and Technical Services</b>	62	\$84,751,259	709	\$2,299
<b>Retail Trade</b>	59	\$21,423,110	601	\$685
<b>Wholesale Trade</b>	46	\$127,008,783	726	\$3,364
<b>Other Services, Except Public Administration</b>	41	\$10,765,941	231	\$896
<b>Accommodation and Food Services</b>	39	\$19,754,550	880	\$432
<b>Manufacturing</b>	37	\$51,320,097	738	\$1,337
<b>Administrative and Waste Services</b>	34	\$12,349,050	238	\$998
<b>Finance and Insurance</b>	19	\$26,995,403	131	\$3,963
<b>Real Estate and Rental and Leasing</b>	18	\$5,562,592	116	\$922
<b>Transportation and Warehousing</b>	14	\$5,667,690	151	\$722

Industry	Establishments	Total Wages	Average Employment	Average Weekly Wage
<b>Educational Services</b>	12	\$32,613,088	686	\$914
<b>Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation</b>	9	\$3,721,112	138	\$519
<b>Management of Companies and Enterprises</b>	6	\$20,962,845	368	\$1,095
<b>Information</b>	5	\$1,329,405	27	\$947

Source: [http://lmi2.detma.org/lmi/lmi\\_town.asp](http://lmi2.detma.org/lmi/lmi_town.asp)

Among wage paying establishments in Rockland, there are twelve with over 100 employees. The two largest employers, North River Collaborative and Partners Health Care at Home, both employ more than 250 individuals.

**Table 7: Employers in Town of Rockland with Greater than 100 Employees**

Company Name	Number of Employees	Industry Code
<b>North River Collaborative</b>	250-499	61 - Educational Services
<b>Partners Health Care At Home</b>	250-499	62 – Health Care and Social Assistance
<b>3M Co</b>	100-249	33 – Manufacturing
<b>Arbour Senior Care</b>	100-249	62 – Health Care and Social Assistance
<b>Catered Affair</b>	100-249	72 – Accommodation and Food Services
<b>Doubletree By Hilton Boston</b>	100-249	72 – Accommodation and Food Services
<b>Hanover Nursery School Day Care</b>	100-249	62 – Health Care and Social Assistance
<b>Home Depot</b>	100-249	44 – Retail Trade
<b>Rockland Trust Co</b>	100-249	52 – Finance and Insurances
<b>South Shore Rehab &amp; Skilled</b>	100-249	62 – Health Care and Social Assistance
<b>Tedeschi Food Shops Inc</b>	100-249	44 – Retail Trade
<b>Webster Park Rehabilitation</b>	100-249	62 – Health Care and Social Assistance

Source: [http://lmi2.detma.org/lmi/Top\\_employer\\_list.asp?gstfips=25&areatype=05&gCountyCode=000132](http://lmi2.detma.org/lmi/Top_employer_list.asp?gstfips=25&areatype=05&gCountyCode=000132)

### *Environmental Justice Population Characteristics*

Massachusetts uses three criteria to identify Environmental Justice (EJ) communities, including income, race & ethnicity, and English language proficiency. The Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) defines EJ populations as neighborhoods (U.S. Census Bureau census block groups) that meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Median annual household income is at or below 65% of the statewide median income;
- 25% or more of the residents are a minority;
- 25% or more of the residents are foreign born; or
- 25% or more of the residents are lacking English language proficiency.

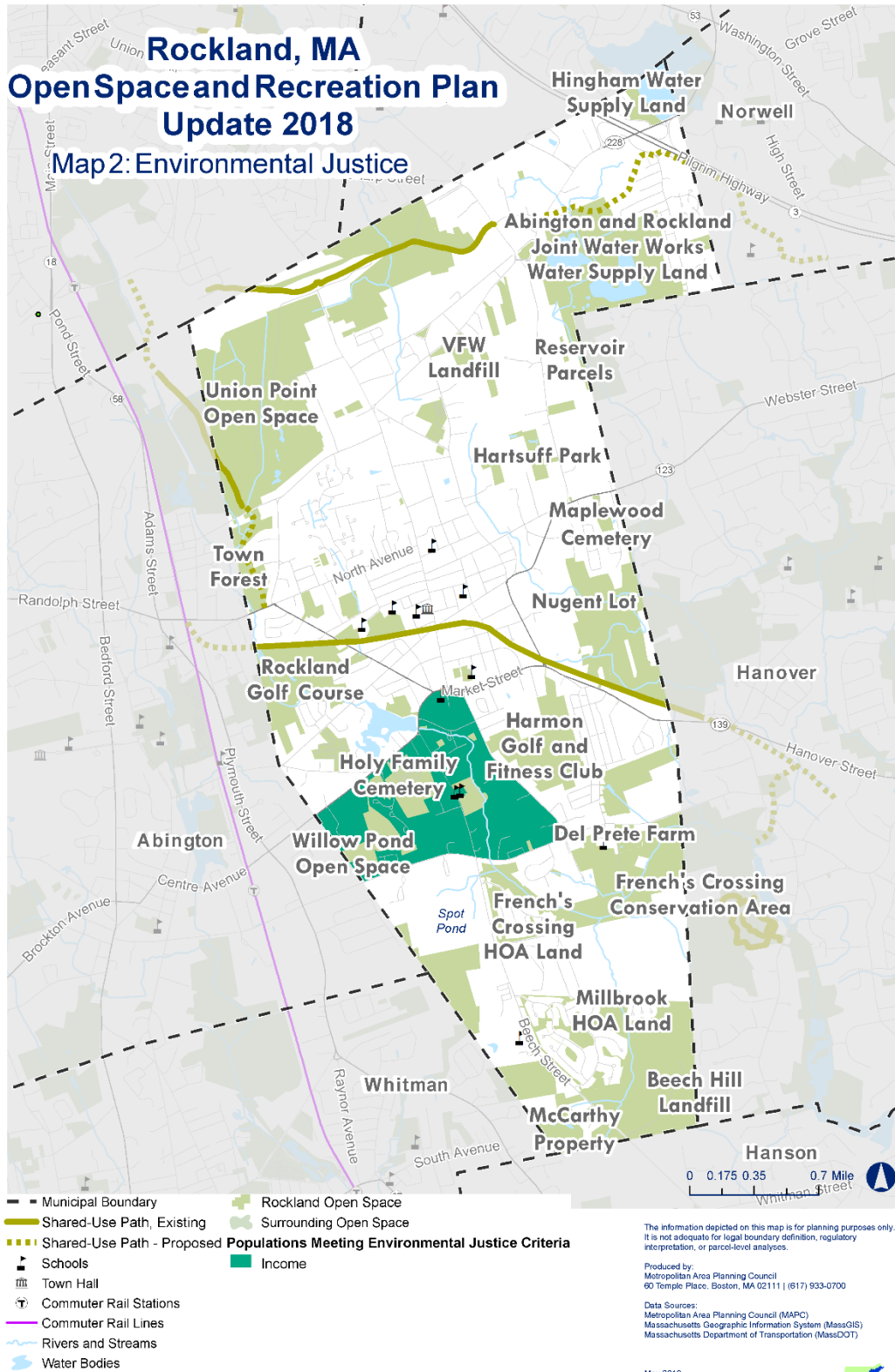
The most recent analysis completed by MassGIS (Bureau of Geographic Information), using data from the 2010 Census and ACS 2010 5-year Estimates, identifies one EJ neighborhood in the Town of Rockland. The identified block group meets the low-income criteria for EJ designation, meaning its median income falls below 66% of the state median income.

The Rockland Housing Authority properties are located in the EJ block group. The RHA provides housing assistance to low income residents through the management of programs such as Low Rent Public Housing and the Housing Choice Voucher Program - Section 8. These programs are income based and the eligibility guidelines are set by HUD. The RHA offers two public housing communities with 82 units dedicated to senior/disabled individuals.

A small map of the Environmental Justice populations in Rockland can be found on the following page. Appendix A contains larger versions of all maps embedded in the Plan.



Map 2: Environmental Justice Populations



## **Growth and Development Patterns**

### *Patterns and Trends*

While Rockland's role as a subregional manufacturing center shaped its historical development, today it exemplifies a Mature New England Town, a community characterized by a mixed-use town center surrounded by compact neighborhoods with conventional single family subdivisions elsewhere.

Rockland has witnessed little housing development since 2000, with only 5% of the housing stock built since then. In the preceding decades (1980-1999) however, Rockland gained approximately one quarter of its current housing stock. During those two decades, Rockland's population grew by about 12%. Rockland's share of housing units built since 1980 is on par with its South Shore Coalition neighbors.

### *Infrastructure*

Highways - Three major state routes run through Rockland: Routes 3, 123, and 139. Route 3 cuts through the northeast corner of town, Route 123 bisects the town and connects to the Town Center, and Route 139 passes through several residential neighborhoods and provides access to the adjacent Town of Hanover.

Bus service – Although Rockland is within the service area of the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA), the MBTA does not operate any bus lines in town. The Brockton Area Transit Authority (BAT) does offer bus service to Rockland on a flexible route schedule, which features on-demand, as well as fixed-stop service. BAT's service travels primarily on Union Street in Rockland, with set stops at the Rockland Community Center and Signature Healthcare, the former Brockton Hospital. A private bus company, the Plymouth & Brockton Street Railway Co., runs a return bus service from Plymouth to Boston, with a park and ride stop located in Rockland.

Commuter rail service – There is no direct commuter rail service in Rockland. However, there are commuter rail stations within 3 miles of Rockland in nearby Abington and South Weymouth.

Water supply – The Town of Rockland's water is supplied and treated through the Abington & Rockland Joint Water Works, a partnership dating back to 1885. The Joint Waterworks draws from both ground and surface water sources. The ground water source is four gravel-packed wells located on Myers Avenue in Abington. The surface water supply is drawn from two water bodies: the John F. Hannigan Memorial Reservoir - more generally known as the Abington/Rockland Reservoir - a manmade water body located in the northeast corner of Rockland, and the Great Sandy Bottom Pond located in the Town of Pembroke. Following treatment of water drawn from these sources, the product is then delivered by the towns' respective water departments.

There is no agreed-upon safe yield for the Rockland/Abington water system as a whole. However, the Myers Avenue wells have a safe yield of 0.49 million gallons per day (mgd). The maximum draw for the Rockland/Abington joint water system under the Water Management Act is 2.67 mgd according to the Water Management Act registration that is maintained by the DEP. The Rockland/Abington Joint Water Board owns and manages 144 acres of open space.

Sewer – Sewerage disposal is handled by the Rockland Sewer Commission. The Wastewater Treatment Plant is located at the intersection of Concord and Summer Streets. It was built in 1964 and upgraded in 1987. Over 90% of all buildings in Rockland are connected to the sewer system.

In response to the issuance of an Administrative Consent Order by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Town has made significant upgrades to its sewer system designed to reduce the rate of infiltration and inflow. As one example of the Town's compliance with the order, in 2011 the Town adopted a Sewer Use Ordinance instituting rigorous permitting requirements for connections and discharges to the wastewater system; a provision of the order restricts the Town from receiving additional wastewater outside its municipal borders. Developers must buy sewer capacity on a per unit basis. These upgrades and policy changes also facilitate the control of flow, biological oxygen demand, and total suspended solids in compliance with the Town's general permit.

Solid waste – Following the closure of the town landfill in the 1990s, Rockland began contracting with private companies to provide trash pickup services. In 2016, the town awarded a five-year contract to Republic Services, a national waste management company, to complete curbside residential trash and recycling pickup. As part of the service, Republic Services supplies each household with standardized trash and recycling carts, with a fixed lid design intended to reduce blowing trash, odors, animal scavenging, and other health concerns.

The Town also operates a Recycling Center on Beech Street, at the site of one of the town's two former landfills, where residents can dispose of bulk items and yard waste for a fee. The Town of Rockland is also a member community of the South Shore Recycling Cooperative. The SSRC is a regional voluntary association designed to help member towns improve their recycling programs, and reduce the quantity, toxicity, and cost of disposal for their solid waste.

### ***Recent and Anticipated Development Activity***

According the Rockland Building Department, a mixed-use commercial and residential building is currently under construction at 324 Union Street. The project already houses two retail tenants on its ground floor, and is awaiting approval for 8 market-rate units above the commercial space. None of the units will be designated as deed-restricted affordable. A 39-unit development at 71 Park Street is pending the review of its comprehensive permit application by the Zoning Board of Appeals. Although not yet finalized, a housing project on Albion Street has

been proposed, with construction occurring in two phases; Phase I would develop 44 units of affordable senior housing, while Phase II would include up to 40 additional units.

### Building Permits

According to the Census Building Permit Survey, since 2005 Rockland has issued 414 residential building permits, permitting the construction of 431 units of housing. Single family houses account for the large majority of reported permits, with only 12 multifamily building permits reflected in the Census records. Using the year 2014 as a point of reference, compared to other South Shore municipalities, Rockland’s 31 unit permits fell in the middle range (7 permits in Hull and 75 permits in Weymouth). For the five-year period between 2010 and 2014, Rockland issued 128 permits, which is just below the median of 131 permits for the South Shore Coalition.

**Table 8: Building Permits 2005-2016**

Year	Total Building Permit Buildings	Total Building Permit Units	Single Family Building Permits: Buildings	Multi Family Building Permits: Buildings
2005	99	99	99	0
2006	68	69	67	1
2007	57	57	57	0
2008	35	35	35	0
2009	28	28	28	0
2010	29	29	29	0
2011	23	23	23	0
2012	9	13	6	3
2013	25	32	20	5
2014	26	31	23	3
2015	11	11	11	0
2016	4	4	4	0

*Source: Census Building Permit Survey*

### Long-Term Development Patterns

#### Zoning

The Town of Rockland is divided into twelve zoning districts including five residential districts, two business districts and five industrial districts. All residential districts allow single-family residences. Two family residences are allowed by right in the R-2, R-3 and R-4 districts. Multi-family developments are only allowed by right in the R-4 district, and only 66 acres or 1% of the town falls within that zoning designation. Two- and multi-family developments are allowed by special permit in the Business I zoning district, and multi-family development in the Business II district. At the 2018 Annual Town Meeting, residents voted to allow accessory apartments by right in R-2, R-3, and R-4.

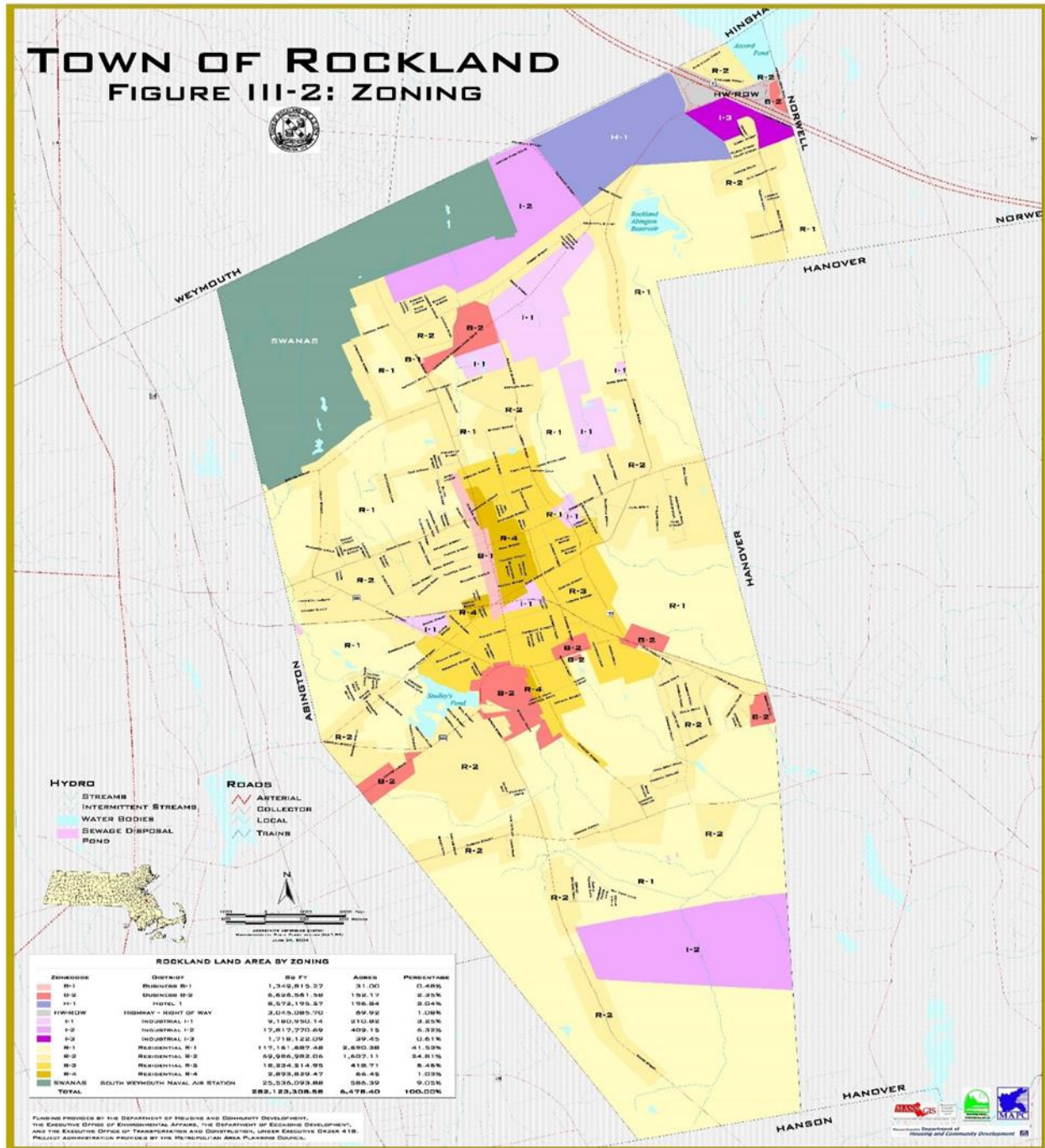
**Table 9: Zoning Districts**

<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>District Name</b>	<b>Principal Uses Allowed</b>	<b>Minimum Lot Size</b>
R-1	Residence 1	Single-family residences, agricultural, houses of worship, schools, cemeteries, parks, non-commercial kennel.	32,670 square feet
R-2	Residence 2	Same as R-1, plus two-family residences.	32,670 square feet
R-3	Residence 3	Same as R-2.	32,670 square feet
R-4	Residence 4	Same as R-2, plus multi-family residences.	32,670 square feet
RSH-1	Residential Senior Housing 1	Single family senior housing, houses of worship, schools, parks, other uses customarily accessory to the permitted principal uses, non-commercial kennels.	
B-1	Business 1	Retail businesses, personal and business service establishments, eating establishments, houses of worship, public parks, public institutional uses, private clubs, funeral homes, two-family and multi-family residences.	None
B-2	Business 2	Same as B-1, except no multi-family residences, plus theatres, bowling alleys, and nurseries.	None
I-1	Limited industrial	Professional, administrative, and office buildings; banks; public utility facilities; warehouses and wholesale and retail distribution centers; art gallery, photography studio, art framing shop; antique shop.	None
I-2	Industrial Park	Professional, administrative, and office buildings; banks; warehouses and wholesale and retail distribution centers; bottling plants; and food processing.	None
I-3	Industrial/Business	Same as I-2, plus major retail business.	
I-4	Industrial/Business	Same as I-2, plus day care centers; cemeteries, both human and pet; educational institutions; convention centers and hotels; funeral parlors; and public utility facilities.	
H-1	Industrial Park-Hotel	Same as I-2.	

Rockland recently completed a Housing Production Plan, prepared by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, which was approved by the Department of Housing and Community Development in November 2016. Goal 4 of that plan identified the Union Street Corridor as an area that was appropriate for establishing a Smart Growth Zoning Overlay District pursuant to MGL c. 40R. At the May 2017 Annual Town Meeting, voters approved the Downtown Rockland Revitalization Overlay District bylaw, which will allow residential and mixed-used development in downtown Rockland. The district, which primarily runs along Union Street but also includes parcels on Park and East Water Streets and the Emerson Lofts on Plain Street, has the capacity to create more than 100 housing units, of which at least 20 to 25% will be affordable.

The underlying zoning currently includes three zoning designations (B-1, I-1, R-4), creating a complicated permitting process. The district will help simplify the permitting process and provide incentives for developers to produce a more diverse and integrated housing stock and mixed-use developments. The Town has been actively engaged in efforts to revitalize the central business district and this proposal would support those efforts. Rockland's central business district is an area with banks, churches, town offices, and a mix of retailers and restaurants. The Town has completed several projects to revitalize this area in past years including one project funded through a Community Block Grant to reduce the speed of vehicular traffic and increase the walkability of the area. Memorial Park Elementary School Playground and the Rockland High School Athletic Fields are also located in the vicinity (less than 5 minutes from the area). The Hanover Branch Rail Trail also runs adjacent to this part of Rockland.

Map 3: Rockland Zoning Map



# 4

## Environmental Inventory & Analysis

### **Geology, Soils, and Topography**

#### *Geology*

The Town of Rockland's geology has long been a distinctive and celebrated feature of the town. In addition to its eponymous influence, the rocky nature of the land is reflected in the town seal, which includes a large rock as a central image. The Rock Train, a large boulder field created by glacial movement, is one of the town's most unique geological features. The boulders in the field are up to two and half feet high and extend for an area of 400-500 feet.

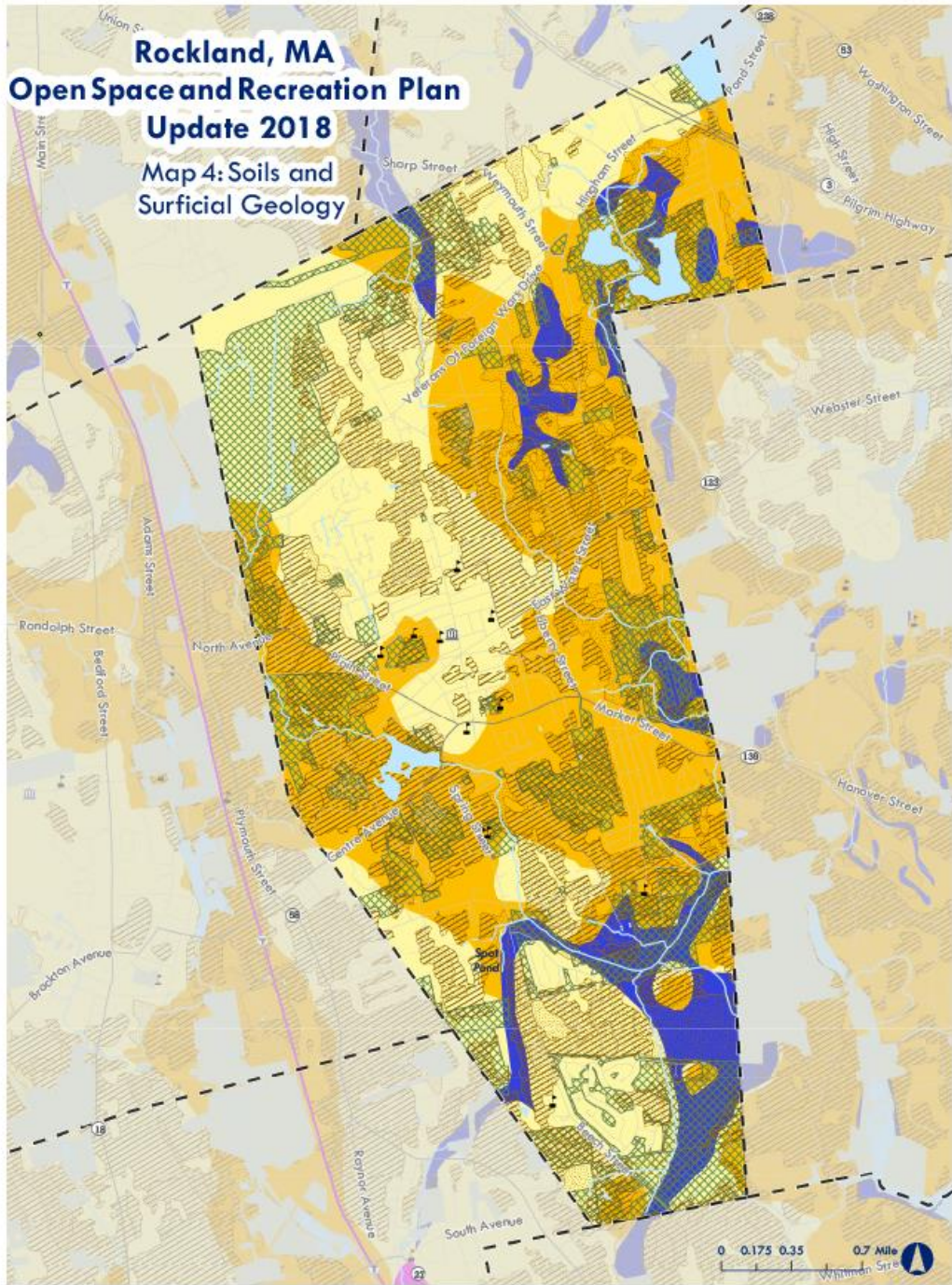
#### *Soils*

The most recent soil survey of Plymouth County completed by the Natural Resources Conservation Service was issued in 2010, with data based on fieldwork conducted between 1990 and 2010. This survey updated the Plymouth County Soil Survey published by NRCS in 1969. Three (3) soil types underlie Rockland's topography. The major soil type in the north and southwest portions of the Town, including Beech Hill, is glacial till. This soil type is relatively impervious and was a major reason why sewers were required in the Town Center. Floodplain Alluvium soils are found at the base of Beech Hill and in other wetland areas throughout the town. These soils absorb the ground waters that drain into the aquifers which serve the municipal water supplies of Hingham, Hanover, Abington, Pembroke, and Rockland. The balance of the town consists of a sandy/gravel type of soil.

Soil surveys provide an important reference point when evaluating the suitability and limitations of particular areas as spaces for recreational development. For example, soils which require extensive plantings of trees, shrubs, and grasses to guard against erosion should not be cleared for play areas or other uses requiring heavy foot traffic, but can provide ample opportunities for less intensive recreational uses.



Map 4: Soils and Surficial Geology



<p><b>Surficial Geology (1:250,000)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: yellow; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Sand and Gravel</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: #fff9c4; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Till or Bedrock</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: #ffb6c1; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Fine-Grained Deposit</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: #add8e6; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Floodplain Alluvium</li> </ul> <p><b>Farmland Soils</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: #c8e6c9; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Statewide/unique importance</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: #e8f5e9; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Prime Soils</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="border-top: 1px dashed black; width: 20px; display: inline-block; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Municipal Boundary</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px; border: 1px solid black; border-radius: 50%; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Commuter Rail Stations</li> <li><span style="border-bottom: 2px solid purple; width: 20px; display: inline-block; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Commuter Rail Lines</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px; border: 1px solid blue; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Rivers and Streams</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px; border: 1px solid lightblue; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Lakes and Ponds</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px; border: 1px solid lightgreen; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Surrounding Open Space</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Schools</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 10px; height: 10px; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Town Hall</li> </ul>	<p><span style="border: 1px dashed black; padding: 2px;">Rockland Open Space Sites</span></p>	<p>The information depicted on this map is for planning purposes only. It is not adequate for legal boundary definition, regulatory interpretation, or parcel-level analyses.</p> <p>Produced by: Metropolitan Area Planning Council 60 Temple Place, Boston, MA 02111   (617) 933-0700</p> <p>Data Sources: Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) Massachusetts Geographic Information System (MassGIS) Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT)</p> <p>June 2018</p>
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Document Path: \\Client\GIS\DataServices\Projects\Current\_Projects\OpenSpace\_Plan\Rockland\Project Files\Rockland\_OSRP\_4\_Soils.mxd

## *Topography*

Gently rolling terrain marks Rockland’s landscape, with Beech Hill, the highest point in town, located in the southwestern corner. Rising to roughly 180 feet, Beech Hill’s pinnacle is 80 feet above the general local elevation of 100 feet above mean sea level.

## **Landscape Character, Scenic Resources, and Unique Environments**

Rockland has its share of historic resources including one historic district and four structures that are included in the National Register of Historic Places. In addition, there are a number of historic cemeteries and churches.

The South Union Historic District runs between Market Street and East Water Street. It was established in 1989 and includes 36 structures within a three block area. There are numerous architectural styles represented and many of the homes were built by families who were associated with the shoe industry.

**Table 10: Historic Resources**

<b>Resource</b>	<b>Designation</b>	<b># of Properties</b>
Grand Army of the Republic Hall – 34 School Street	NRIND	3
Lower Union Street Historic District (from Water Street to Market Street)	NRDIS	57
Phoenix Building - 315-321 Union Street	NRIND	1
Rockland Almshouse – 198 Spring Street	NRIND	1
McKinley School – 394 Union Street	NRIND	1
Rockland Memorial Library – 366 Union Street	NRIND	1
Rockland Trust Company – 288 Union Street	NRIND	1
Emerson Shoe Factory – 51 Maple Street		1

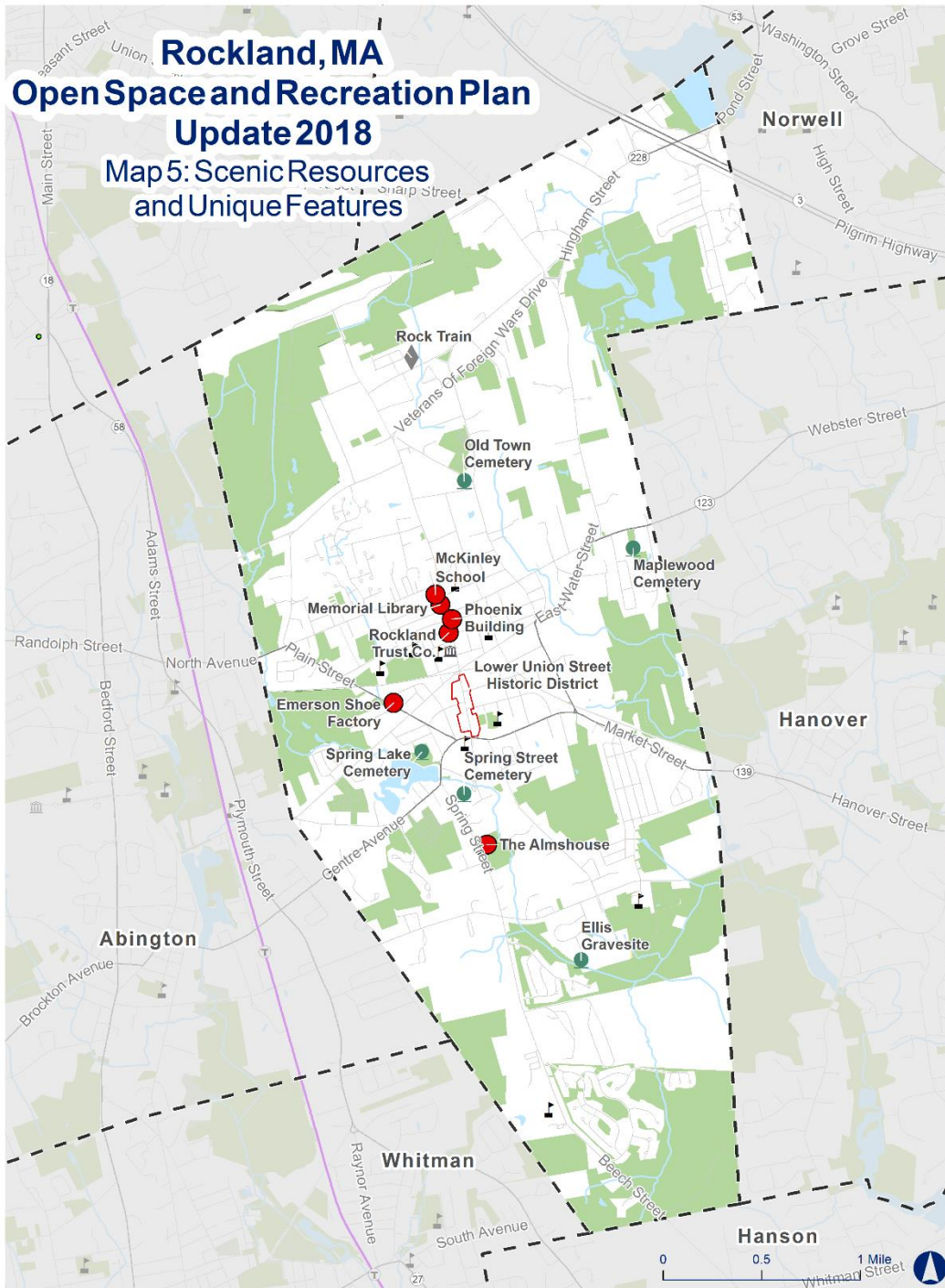
Source: State Register of Historic Spaces

The abbreviation NRDIS indicates a National Register District which includes properties of local, state, or national significance designated by the Department of the Interior through the

State Historic Preservation Officers. The designation NRIND indicates a National Register individual property.

Other scenic resources include the view from the old standpipe on Beech Hill and the DelPrete farm on Summer Street which includes a herd of polled Herefords. Studley's/Reeds Pond is also a scenic resource. Two historic manufacturing buildings, the ET Wright Building on Liberty Street and the Sandpaper Factory Building on East Water Street, have been converted to provide leasable studio space for many area artists. The Rock Train, a large boulder field created by glacial movement, is one of the town's most unique geological features. The boulders in the field are up to two and half feet high and extend for an area of 400-500 feet.

Map 5: Scenic Resources and Unique Features



- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Unique Resources</b>   | <span style="color: green;">■</span> Rockland Open Space         |
| <span style="color: red;">●</span> Building                             | <span style="color: purple;">T</span> MBTA Stations              |
| <span style="color: green;">●</span> Burial Ground                      | <span style="color: purple;">—</span> Commuter Rail Lines        |
| <span style="color: grey;">◆</span> Geologic Feature                    | <span style="color: blue;">—</span> Rivers and Streams           |
| <span style="color: red;">□</span> National Register of Historic Places | <span style="color: lightblue;">—</span> Lakes and Ponds         |
|   | <span style="color: lightgreen;">■</span> Surrounding Open Space |

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Produced by:  
Metropolitan Area Planning Council  
60 Temple Place, Boston, MA 02111 | (617) 933-0700

Data Sources:  
Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC)  
Massachusetts Geographic Information System (MassGIS)  
Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT)

June 2018



## Water Resources

Information on water quality was obtained from the Massachusetts Year 2016 Integrated List of Waters prepared by the MA Department of Environmental Protection to assure compliance under the Federal Clean Water Act. The state evaluates each water body for their recreational, ecological, and aesthetic qualities, as well as their capacity to support designated uses, including: aquatic life support, fish and shellfish consumption, drinking water supply, and primary (e.g., swimming) and secondary (e.g., boating) contact-recreation. Depending on the outcome of the evaluation, the state then lists each water body in one of five categories:

- Category 1: Unimpaired and not threatened for all designated uses;\*
- Category 2: Unimpaired for some uses and not assessed for others;
- Category 3: Insufficient information to make assessments for any uses;
- Category 4: Impaired or threatened for one or more uses but not requiring the calculation of a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL); or
- Category 5: Impaired or threatened for one or more uses and requiring a TMDL.

The Integrated List assessment found only one water body suitable for designated uses in the Town of Rockland. Ben Mann Brook, which flows from the Abington/Rockland Reservoir, supports aesthetic uses, as well as primary and secondary contact recreation. Accord Pond – parts of which fall within Hingham, Norwell, and Rockland – was not assessed for its use potential; however, the water body serves as a drinking water source for the Towns of Hingham and Hull, which use precludes any recreation potential.

The four remaining evaluated water bodies – Cushing Brook, French Stream, Old Swamp River, and Studley’s Pond – were each found to contain at least one impairment, e.g. bacteria, harmful algae bloom, requiring a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL), or a plan for restoring waters that identifies the maximum amount of a pollutant a body of water can receive while still meeting water quality standards.

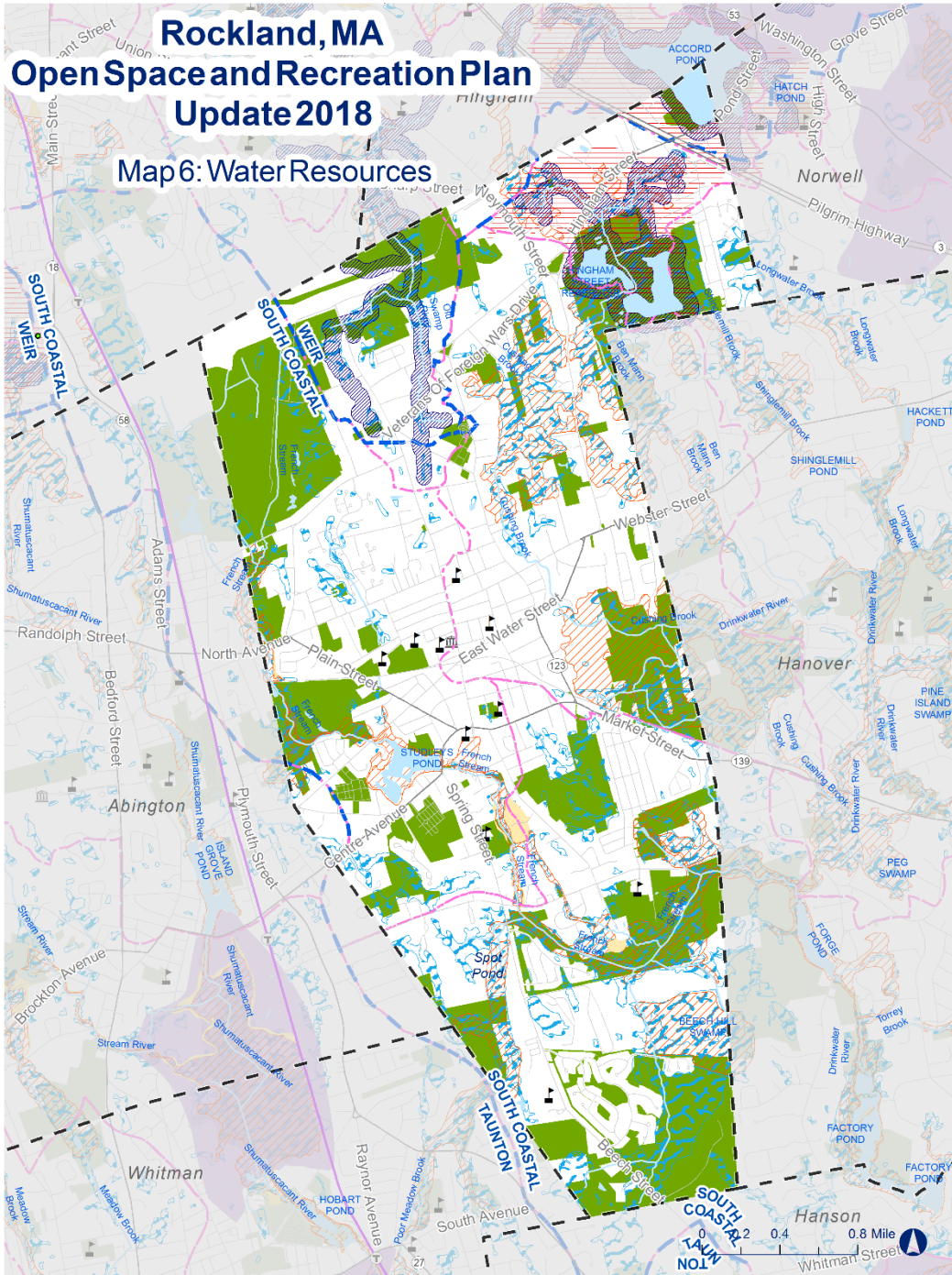
**Table 11: 2016 List of Waters, Rockland, MA**

Water Body	Description	Size	Units	Category
Ben Mann Brook	Headwaters, south of Abington Rockland Reservoir, Rockland to mouth at confluence with Cushing Brook, Hanover.	2	Miles	2
Accord Pond	Hingham/Norwell/Rockland	103	Acres	3
Cushing Brook	Headwaters (perennial portion), east of Pleasant Street, Rockland to mouth at confluence with Drinkwater River, Hanover.	3.1	Miles	5

\* “No Massachusetts waters are listed in [Category 1] because a statewide DPH advisory pertaining to the consumption of fish precludes any waters from being in full support of the fish consumption use.”

<b>Water Body</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Size</b>	<b>Units</b>	<b>Category</b>
French Stream	Headwaters on the southeast side of the former South Weymouth Naval Air Station, Rockland to mouth at confluence with Drinkwater River, Hanover (excluding the approximately 0.3 mile through Studley's Pond).	5.8	Miles	5
Old Swamp River	Headwaters just west of Pleasant Street and north of Liberty Street, Rockland to inlet Whitman's Pond, Weymouth.	4.6	Miles	5
Studley's Pond	Rockland	25	Acres	5
<i>Source: MA DEP, Massachusetts Year 2016 Integrated List of Waters</i>				

Map 6: Water Resources



- Wetlands
- Watersheds
- Sub-basins
- Surface Water Protection Area**
- ZONE A
- ZONE B
- Flood Zones (2017)**
- 1% Annual Chance Flood Hazard
- 0.2% Annual Chance Flood Hazard
- Rockland Open Space/Recreation Sites
- Municipal Boundary
- Schools
- Town Hall
- Commuter Rail Stations
- Commuter Rail Lines
- Rivers and Streams
- Lakes and Ponds
- Surrounding Open Space

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Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT)



### ***Flood Hazard Areas***

The major areas of flooding are along Liberty Street, French Stream, and Studley's Pond. There has also historically been flooding associated with drainage from the former Naval Air Station; however, stormwater management site improvements developed as part of the broader Union Point redevelopment should mitigate the issue. Wyman's Field is another area of flooding. The Town recently implemented drainage upgrades at the intersection of George Street and Crescent Street, where stormwater structures and connectivity design had led to an outfall off of Mark Street. Drainage capital improvements were also constructed on Neven Road, Manzella Court and Division and Reed Street. Flood areas are shown on Map 6 – Water Resources (above).

### ***Water Supply Protection/Watershed Protection***

The Town of Rockland's water is supplied and treated through the Abington & Rockland Joint Water Works, a partnership dating back to 1885. The Joint Waterworks draws from both ground and surface water sources. The ground water source is four gravel-packed wells located on Myers Avenue in Abington. The surface water supply is drawn from two water bodies: the John F. Hannigan Memorial Reservoir – more generally known as the Abington/Rockland Reservoir - a manmade water body located in the northeast corner of Rockland, and the Great Sandy Bottom Pond located in the Town of Pembroke. Following treatment of water drawn from these sources, the product is then delivered by the towns' respective water departments.

### ***Wetlands***

Wetlands are a significant component of Rockland's landscape. The edge of two river basins traversing the former NAS, the rolling terrain, and the sandy soils have given rise to numerous wetland areas, rivers and ponds. These areas serve five important functions: flood control, water supply, pollution control, wildlife and vegetation habitat protection, and aesthetics.

During times of high storms, these areas retain significant volumes of water protecting the predominant lowland areas of Rockland from flooding. The ground water also serves to recharge the town's water supply. The wetlands effectively filter-out pollutants that enter the surface waters. Without these wetlands, the quality and quantity of the Town's water supply would be seriously impacted.

Wetlands provide a natural environment for the growth of hardwood and softwood woodlands, marsh and swamp vegetation, and the wildlife that inhabit these areas. These natural areas also contribute to the Town's character and sense of place, important qualities identified by Town residents.

North Rockland is characterized by four (4) wetland areas each with their own streams and ponds.



Union Point is the locus of a series of wetland areas, which feed into two (2) tributaries to French's Stream. One branch is on the east and the other on the west of Union Point. They join south of the base near Rockland's parcel and then flow into Studley's/Reeds Pond.

The Swamp River runs north into Weymouth west of Weymouth Street where substantial wetland areas are located, which are fed by this river.

Cushing Brook traverses central Rockland before it winds east across the Phillips Street Conservation land where it runs into the Town of Hanover. Additional tributaries of this river north of Market Street traverse a series of wetlands which empty into Hanover.

The Ben Mann Brook runs south from the Abington Rockland Reservoir. A second tributary of this river runs through Hingham Street Conservation Land and empties into Ben Mann Brook in the Town of Hanover.

### ***Vernal Pools***

Vernal pools are small, shallow ponds that do not support fish and that have annual or semi-annual periods of dryness. Vernal pools are very important to a variety of wildlife species. Some amphibians breed exclusively in vernal pools while others spend their entire life cycles in such pools. The Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program has a program by which vernal pools can be certified. Certified vernal pools are protected if they fall under the jurisdiction of the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act Regulations. They are also protected under other state programs.

According to Mass GIS data, there are currently 27 certified vernal pools in Rockland. The state also maintains a computerized database of potential vernal pools. There are 41 such sites in Rockland. Property owners are encouraged to identify and certify vernal pools on their property. Although this is not a comprehensive listing, these would be good locations to investigate, along with other sites identified by the conservation agent.

### **Vegetation**

Rockland is split between two eco-regions as defined by the State of Massachusetts' Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program's BioMap Project. An eco-region is defined as an area with relatively homogeneous topographic and geologic features, soils, and animal and plant habitats. The Northern half of the town lies within the Southern New England Coastal Plains and Hills Eco-Region, an area characterized by low, rolling topography, generally acidic soil types, and a wide diversity of habitats and natural communities. The southern half of Rockland lies within the Bristol Lowlands Eco-Region, which shares similar glacially constructed topographic features with its counterpart eco-region.

The glacier's profound influence on the landscape is also reflected in the plant communities found in Rockland. The White Pine/Oak forest type dominates upland areas. This forest type occurs primarily on moraine or glacial till, with pine and oak the dominant canopy trees. The understory typically consists of a heath shrub layer, including lowbush blueberry, huckleberry, and maple-leaved viburnum (Swain and Kearsley, 2001). The herbaceous layer is usually not extensive and often includes Canada mayflower, bracken fern, and partridgeberry.

The predominant wetland forest type is Red Maple Swamp, the most common forested wetland type in Massachusetts. Red maple swamps occur in several settings, including seasonally flooded basin swamps in undrained basins, alluvial swamps, and hillside seeps and upland drainageways (Swain and Kearsley, 2001). They typically receive water through surface runoff, groundwater inputs, or stream and lake overflow. Other tree species that sometimes co-occur with red maple include white ash, eastern hemlock, black gum, and swamp white oak. Atlantic White Cedar is also known to be a common associate of red maple in some coastal areas. The shrub layer persisting under and extensive red maple canopy can be variable but is often densely stocked with sweet pepperbush and swamp azalea. The herbaceous layer is also variable, but typically dominated by ferns, including cinnamon fern and royal fern.

Rockland's natural open spaces primarily consist of pine and hardwood forests. The majority of conifers are White Pine and Canadian Hemlock. In general, the hardwoods are Red and White Oak, American Beech, Red and Canadian Maple. There are other more scattered species, such as Black Walnut, American Holly, Birches and Ashes to name a few. There are a large variety of shrubby plants, some of which are Sassafras, Witch Hazel, Flowering Maple, American Hazelnut, Buckthorns, Pepper Bush and High Bush Blueberry.

Other plants such as mosses and ferns, along with many varieties of wildflowers can be found in Rockland's open spaces. For example, Pink Lady Slipper can be found in mixed pine and oak forest areas of town but mostly on the eastern side of town. One threatened vascular plant species, Seabeach Needlegrass, has been observed in Rockland; however, the most recent observation occurred in 1920. Though there are no other recorded threatened or endangered plant species there are many uncommon and interesting species worth observing and preserving.

Although we have the capacity to describe the dominant plant community types currently existing in Rockland, further field research is desirable, and would potentially yield benefits in the form of enhanced knowledge and appreciation of the town's natural heritage and possibly uncover heretofore undiscovered community types.

## Fisheries & Wildlife

### *Rare and Endangered Species*

The following table lists all of the rare, threatened and endangered species that appear in the Natural Heritage Programs' database for Rockland. The observation dates are from the state's on-line database and reflect the most recent information available.

**Table 12: Endangered, Threatened, and Special Concern Species**

<b>Common Name</b>	<b>Taxonomic Group</b>	<b>MESA Status</b>	<b>Most Recent Observation</b>
Grasshopper Sparrow	Bird	T	2005
Seabeach Needlegrass	Vascular Plant	T	1920
Upland Sandpiper	Bird	E	2005
Bridle Shiner	Fish	SC	1952
Mocha Emerald	Dragonfly/Damsel fly	SC	2003
Eastern Box Turtle	Reptile	SC	2015

*Source: Massachusetts Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program*

"Endangered" (E) species are native species which are in danger of extinction throughout all or part of their range, or which are in danger of extirpation from Massachusetts, as documented by biological research and inventory.

"Threatened" (T) species are native species which are likely to become endangered in the foreseeable future, or which are declining or rare as determined by biological research and inventory.

"Special Concern" (SC) species are native species which have been documented by biological research or inventory to have suffered a decline that could threaten the species if allowed to continue unchecked, or which occur in such small numbers or with such restricted distribution or specialized habitat requirements that they could easily become threatened within Massachusetts.

More information relating to these populations is available through the state website: <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/list-of-endangered-threatened-and-special-concern-species>

### *Wildlife Habitats*

According to *BioMap2 Conserving the Biodiversity of Massachusetts in a Changing World*, Rockland has 1,355 acres of *BioMap2* Core Habitat, ten acres or 0.8% of which is protected. Additionally, there are 146 acres of Critical Natural Landscape, but none of this land is protected. The Core

Habitat land is found in two major areas of the town. The larger area is on land at the former South Weymouth Naval Air Station, now known as Union Point, along the northern boundary of Rockland, Weymouth and Abington (a total of 1,914 acres). It features Species of Conservation Concern and in addition to the species listed above, the non-listed Spotted Turtle has established habitat in this area identified in *BioMap2*.

The second area is in the southeastern portion of Rockland along the border with Hanover. This land is part of the Forge Pond/Summer Street Conservation Land in Hanover. The habitat area runs along French Stream and also encompasses the Critical Natural Landscape area designated in Rockland. It extends beyond Forge Pond into Hanover along the Downwater River corridor toward the National Fireworks Site, which is currently undergoing a site remediation process. The corridor then continues along Torrey Brook which roughly defines the town border between Hanover, Hanson and Pembroke, and then further to include the Indian Head, North and South Rivers along with their tributaries. This habitat area features Wetland Core (generally undisturbed wetlands), Aquatic Core (intact river corridors), Priority Natural Communities, and Species of Conservation Concern. It supports 17 rare and uncommon species.

Although both of these areas provide valuable wildlife habitat and corridors for the numerous species spotted there, additional areas of significant habitat should be noted including the Town Forest. In 2010, the National Wildlife Federation designated the Town Forest as a Certified Wildlife Habitat.

## **Environmental Challenges**

### ***Hazardous Waste Sites***

As with any community with substantial commercial and industrial development, Rockland has a number of hazardous waste disposal sites. The state's database of reportable hazardous waste releases includes 131 records for Rockland. Most of these sites are considered non-priority by DEP and are being cleaned up by the private sector under Chapter 21E of the Massachusetts General Laws.

### ***Landfills***

The town had two landfills, neither of which is still in use. The smaller of the two landfills (11 acres) was located in the northern portion of the town at the intersection of VFW Drive and Pleasant Street. The site has not been fully capped, although site work continues under the direction of the Board of Health. The larger landfill (90 acres) was located off of Beech Street in the southern end of town. Since its closure, the landfill has been capped, and a solar array was constructed on the site. The Town's recycling operation is located at this location, but the site also has recreational potential. Discussed recreation improvements to the site include the creation of mountain biking trails.

The former Naval Air Station site – currently being developed as Union Point – contains a closed landfill in Rockland’s open space area. Cap construction on the landfill site is now complete and the Navy is conducting long term environmental monitoring.

### ***Erosion and Sedimentation***

Erosion and sedimentation are primarily concerns at active construction sites. In order to limit the extent and duration of these effects, the Rockland Planning Board’s Rules and Regulations require the submission of a professionally prepared soil erosion and sediment control plan as part of new subdivision applications. Acceptable soil and erosion plans must contain provisions to adequately control erosion and sedimentation on the site based on the best available technologies. At the 2018 Annual Town Meeting, Rockland residents voted to adopt a stormwater management by-law, which requires a stormwater management permit issued by the Planning Department on sites that disturb more than one acre of earth.

### ***Chronic Flooding***

Substantial flooding most often occurs in the areas of Liberty Street, Wyman’s Field, French’s Stream and Studley’s Pond. Historically, drainage from the former Naval Air Station – now Union Point – caused flooding issues, but stormwater control improvements implemented as part of the development have mitigated the problem. However, other developments occurring upstream and outside of the town’s boundaries pose particular challenges, as the Town of Rockland cannot directly regulate their effects.

### ***Development Impacts***

The Town of Rockland’s Conservation Commission actively works to prevent or limit detrimental environmental impacts of development. With the assistances of expert consulting services, the Commission ensures that proposed projects within the town comply with local, state, and federal environmental law and regulations.

### ***Ground and Surface Water Pollution (Point and Non-point)***

The Massachusetts Year 2016 Integrated List of Waters prepared by the MA Department of Environmental Protection found only one water body suitable for designated uses in the Town of Rockland. Ben Mann Brook, which flows from the Abington/Rockland Reservoir, supports aesthetic uses, as well as primary and secondary contact recreation. Accord Pond – parts of which fall within Hingham, Norwell, and Rockland – was not assessed for its use potential; however, the water body serves as a drinking water source for the Towns of Hingham and Hull, which use precludes any recreation potential. The four remaining evaluated water bodies – Cushing Brook, French Stream, Old Swamp River, and Studley’s Pond – were each found to contain at least one impairment, e.g. bacteria, harmful algae bloom, requiring a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL), or a plan for restoring waters that identifies the maximum amount of a pollutant a body of water can receive while still meeting water quality standards.

In order to reduce non-point water pollution, the Town engages in a range of activities covering public education and outreach, public involvement and participation, illicit discharge detection

and elimination, construction site stormwater runoff control, post-construction stormwater management, as well as pollution prevention and good housekeeping in municipal operations. A soon to be formed Stormwater Committee will support the public education and outreach measures, such as developing brochures for mailing and posting up to date data online. The town has been engaged in outfall sampling as required under the 2003 permit, initiating sampling parameters required by the 2018 permit in spring of this year. Preliminary testing does not indicate illicit discharges. Rockland residents voted at the 2018 Annual Town Meeting to adopt a stormwater management by-law, which establishes minimum requirements and procedures to control stormwater runoff and nonpoint source pollution associated with new development and redevelopment.

### *Impacts from Climate Change*

Climate change is already having an impact on natural resources in New England and those impacts are expected to increase in the future. Impacts to Rockland's natural resources are likely to include extended dry periods, more intense rain storms and flooding, increases in temperature, changes in aquatic vegetation, and shifts in habitat for fish and other wildlife. Flooding impacts in particular can have a profound effect on the town's open space and recreational resources.

To date, there has not been much planning around climate change in Rockland, but the Town has just received funding to undertake a Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness assessment. This will allow the Town to evaluate the strengths and vulnerabilities of local residents, infrastructure and natural resources. Additionally, the Town will gain a better understanding of the connections between natural hazards and local planning and mitigation efforts.

### *Invasive Species*

Invasive species are an issue in all Massachusetts communities. These plants and animals, which are exotic in origin, threaten the integrity of natural communities due to their ability to out-compete native species. Invasive aquatic plants are an issue particularly at Reeds Pond where the Town is looking to dredge the pond and clean up the shoreline, including removal of the invasive species.

### *Trees*

Currently, the Highway Department handles the removal of unsafe or deceased trees and more are removed rather than replaced. An inventory of street trees is needed and another recommendation in this plan is to encourage a Town-managed tree planting program to a level of one new tree for every one removed on public streets, parks, and playgrounds.

# 5

## Inventory of Lands of Conservation and Recreation Interest

### Introduction

In order to effectively and efficiently plan for the preservation and development of open space, a community must develop as complete a picture of its current assets as possible. The inventorying process can identify both opportunities and vulnerabilities relevant to a community's open space resources. As defined in the Introduction to this Plan, open space "is land that is undeveloped, usually without buildings or structures, and that is accessible to the public." Open space is typically divided into two categories: conservation lands and recreation resources. The Massachusetts Division of Conservation Services, the agency responsible for Open Space and Recreation Plan review and approval, expands that definition to also include "agricultural land, corridor parks and small parks and green buffers along roadways owned by an agency or organization dedicated to conservation." The open spaces located in the Town of Rockland vary in important ways: by owner, use, and level of protection. The inventory included in the Plan aims to comprehensively survey all open space in town, while clearly differentiating the attributes and characteristics of existing parcels to inform open space planning.

### Levels of Protection Overview

For planning purposes, it is important to be aware of the degree of protection for each parcel. Knowing the level of protection (or lack thereof) will point out how easily some properties we assume to be open space can be developed. This knowledge will help in identifying those open space and recreation areas that need additional effort for their preservation and protection. The classification of protection status used in this plan comes from a variety of sources, primarily local knowledge and the Mass GIS open space data layer. It does not reflect any additional research into deeds or restrictions and will need to be updated if new information is discovered about these parcels.

While it is true that no parcel of open space is completely protected from sale or conversion, the Division of Conservation Services guidelines suggest that communities use the following definitions to categorize open space.

Highly Protected Public Land: Includes all land that is under the care and control of the Conservation Commission under MGL Chapter 40, Section 8c, and land that is owned by the Water Department or the Parks and Recreation Department. The conversion of these properties would invoke Article 97 of the Amendments to the State Constitution. Federal involvement would be triggered on any lands purchased with federal Land and Water Conservation Funds (LWCF).

These lands are owned and managed by the Town specifically for the purposes of conservation, water resource protection, and recreation needs. The laws protecting these lands make it extremely difficult, although not impossible, to sell or transfer the lands for a different use. This is the highest level of protection available.

Moderately Protected Public Land: Includes all land owned by other municipal departments or commissions including school properties and lands managed by the Board of Selectmen for non-recreational purposes. In some instances, it is better to take a conservative approach to lands managed by the Board of Selectmen for non-recreational purposes and classify them as unprotected. As communities face fiscal constraints, there is greater pressure to sell off these lands.

Unprotected Private Land: Includes private lands with significant open space or recreational values, such as golf courses. While these properties appear to be part of the town's open space network because of the length of time they have existed as such, these lands, in most cases, can be easily developed into office parks or housing developments. This can be especially disheartening and special efforts must be made to protect or acquire the most important of these properties.

### **When is property considered to be legally protected open space?**

Determining the actual legal level of protection for any given parcel can require some detective work. The section below is an excerpt from the "Open Space Planner's Workbook" published by the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs. This excerpt is included here to give the Town additional background on protection levels. The entire workbook can be found on-line at <http://www.mass.gov/eea/docs/eea/dcs/osrp-workbook08.pdf>.  
<http://www.mass.gov/envir/dcs/global/publications.htm>.

Article 97 of the Articles of Amendment to the State Constitution, or simply "Article 97", protects certain lands acquired for natural resources purposes, meaning "conservation, development and utilization of the agricultural, mineral, forest, water, air and other natural resources". Furthermore, a 1973 opinion of the Attorney General stipulates that land acquired for these purposes cannot be converted to any other use without the following actions: 1) the local conservation commission must vote that the land is surplus to its needs, 2.) the park commission must vote the same if it is parkland in question, 3.) the matter must be taken up at Town Meeting or City Council and pass by a 2/3 vote, 4.) the town must file and Environmental Notification Form with EOE's



MEPA Unit, and 5.) the matter must pass by a 2/3 vote of the Massachusetts Legislature. Finally, if the property was either acquired or developed with grant assistance from EOEAs Division of Conservation Services (i.e. Self-Help, Urban Self-Help or Land and Water Conservation Fund), the converted land must be replaced with land of equal monetary value and recreational or conservation utility. While conversions do occur, the process is purposefully onerous in an attempt to protect these conservation and recreation lands in perpetuity. Lands protected by Article 97 are often owned by the municipal conservation commission, recreation commission, water department, or by a state or federal conservation agency ( i.e. state EOEAs agencies or the federal National Park Service). Lands purchased for general municipal purposes are not protected by Article 97. Private lands can be permanently protected lands if the deed is restricted by a Conservation Restriction, Agricultural Preservation Restriction, Historic Restriction or Wetlands Restriction.

### **How do we determine if a property is legally protected open space?**

Lands owned by municipal conservation commissions and water departments are usually protected, and lands held by EOEAs agencies, the National Park Service and the USDA Forest Service are also protected. However, it may be necessary to do some research at the Registry of Deeds or at Town Hall to make a final determination. The deed may stipulate that the land is to be managed by the conservation commission or park commission, or that it was gifted to the town with deed restrictions or for park or conservation purposes. If the property was acquired or developed with DCS grant assistance, the grant agreement should have been recorded as an adjunct to the deed. Land acquired by the town can also be researched by looking that the Town Meeting Vote or City Council Vote authorizing the acquisition, with an eye toward the intended purpose of the acquisition or the managing municipal agency”.

### **Public Lands: Permanent, Limited and Unprotected**

#### ***Permanently Protected Public Land***

Conservation Commission – The Conservation Commission has control of 350 acres in 50 parcels scattered throughout the town. The individual parcels range in size from a 0.10 acre parcel which is part of the Town Forest to an 84 acre parcel within French’s Crossing Conservation Area. The majority of these parcels are undeveloped and do not have parking or street access.

Rockland/Abington Joint Water Board (RAJWB) – The RAJWB owns 144 acres of land in Rockland for the purposes of protecting the water supply. There are two key areas where the RAJWB owns land: one is in the northeastern corner of the town surrounding the Rockland/Abington Reservoir, the other is south of Route 123 in an area known as Fox’s Pit. The Fox’s Pit area was a well field developed in the 1960s which had to be abandoned because of high levels of iron and manganese. The Water Board is investigating the possibility of re-using this water supply.

This land is protected under CMR 310.22.24 which states that “(1) No supplier of water may sell, lease, assign, or otherwise dispose of, or change the use of, any lands used for water supply purposes without the prior written approval of the Department of Environmental Protection. (2) Land Transfers: Any sale, transfer of property interest or change in use of land acquired for water supply purposes may also require approval by a vote of the Legislature, in addition to Department approval. (Massachusetts Constitution Amend. Art. XCVII, Section 243)

Town Parks – There are five town parks totaling 75 acres. These range in size from Hartsuff Park (16.5 acres) to Major Reed Park (3.6 acres). There are two other small parcels which are named parks (Blaisdell and Howland) but these are essentially triangular parcels of open land at three-way road intersections.

#### ***Moderately Protected Public Land***

Town Water Supply Lands – In addition to the water supply land owned by the Rockland-Abington Joint Water Board, the Rockland Board of Selectmen owns another 145 acres in the vicinity of the reservoir and in the Fox’s Pit area. The land in the Fox’s Pit area is no longer used for water supply and lacking that use restriction, could be targeted by the Town for sale or other uses. The land in the vicinity of the reservoir may be more likely to remain open and undeveloped.

School Department Lands – The School Department operates three elementary schools (the Esten School, Jefferson and Memorial Park), the Rogers Middle School and the High School. The Rogers Middle School, the High School and the Memorial Park Elementary School are all situated on the 30 acre Memorial Park parcel. The 30 acre total includes school buildings and the park and playgrounds associated with the schools. The other two schools occupy a 6.4 acre parcel and an 18.7 acre parcel, bringing the total school property to 55 acres.

Other Municipalities – Abington, Hanover, and Whitman each own land within Rockland, totally just above 70 acres. The land owned by Abington abuts the site of the former Griffin Dairy Farm, which was purchased by the Town of Abington in 1998. Abington Town Meeting voted in 2017 to invest \$75,000 in site improvements and rename the property Griffin’s Dairy Park. It is currently unknown whether or how the adjacent land located in Rockland will be incorporated into the park design. The land owned by Hanover – spread across three parcels - is contiguous with conservation land located in the Town of Hanover, and it is presumed that this land will remain dedicated conservation space. It is not known what the Town of Whitman’s land in Rockland or the adjacent parcel in Whitman is currently used for.

#### ***Unprotected Public Land***

This category includes lands that are held by the Board of Selectmen but are not specifically dedicated to an open space or recreation use. This includes such properties as the two Town Landfills and a number of parcels for which no information was readily available but is classified as town-owned, tax-exempt properties. The total for this category is 116.87 acres.

## Private Lands: Permanent, Limited and Unprotected

### *Protected Private Land*

Homeowner Associations - There are three residential developments where a significant amount of open space is protected: French's Crossing, Millbrook, and Willow Pond. The French's Crossing Homeowner Association deeded all their wetlands to the Conservation Commission, and those parcels are now permanently preserved as the French's Crossing Conservation Area. A group of smaller open space parcels spread throughout the development are still owned by the Homeowners Association, but technically protected. The Millbrook Homeowner Association retains ownership of its open space parcels, including two large contiguous wetlands parcel and one parcel developed for active recreation including a playground and baseball diamond; all are protected from further development by conservation restrictions. Willow Pond has left roughly half of their 61 acre parcel open and undeveloped; the open space is protected by a conservation restriction. Since the development is comprised of condominiums, we assume the protected land is owned and managed by a condominium association, but no organizational information or management details were readily available.

Rockland Golf Course – In 2003, the former operator of the Rockland Golf Course sold the property to a developer who intended to reduce the course to a 9-hole format, and develop senior housing on the remainder of the site. However, the Town of Rockland successfully challenged the legality of the sale, as the land was previously assessed under Chapter 61B, which grants the Town the right of first refusal. The Trust for Public Land, a land conservation organization, subsequently purchased the property, and the Town of Rockland purchased a conservation restriction in 2008. The site is still operated as a golf course through a third party, but is now permanently protected from development.

Union Point –The project outlined in the Union Point plan will keep 1,007 acres, nearly 70% of the site, as open space. Approximately 500 acres of Union Point's open space will be located within Rockland's borders. Overall, the development will include approximately 43 acres of public parks, approximately 939 acres of passive and active open space, and 25 acres dedicated to recreation and sports, including 11 new playing fields.

### *Unprotected Private Land*

Lands enrolled in Chapter 61, 61A and 61B – In Massachusetts, there are three special taxation programs available to private landowners. Private landowners who enroll in Chapter 61, 61A or 61B (forested lands, agricultural lands and recreational lands, respectively) benefit by a reduced property tax if they manage their lands for these purposes. This is not truly a protection program because a property owner may withdraw from the program at any time. The town does have the right of first refusal or the ability to assign that right to a nonprofit in the event that the land is put up for sale. Purchase would have to be at fair market value (unless a property owner makes a donation for tax purposes) and the right of first refusal must be exercised within 120 days. There are three such parcels in Rockland: Brenda McCarthy Property, Harmon Golf Course, and the Gerald Del Prete Farm.

Studley's/Reeds Pond Access - The open land and beach area adjacent to Studley's/Reeds Pond is not publicly-owned or protected. It is owned by the Spring Lake Cemetery which allows public access. However, there is no legal protection and public access could be denied at the discretion of the Spring Lake Cemetery Corporation. This land should be protected through a long term easement or by eventual acquisition.

Abington Town Line Parcels - There are four lots on the Abington Town line totaling 4.9 acres. The tax assessor lists them as "owner unknown". These parcels should be evaluated for their recreation potential.

Rockland/Abington Reservoir Parcels – There are six parcels within or adjacent to the water supply land surrounding the Rockland/Abington Reservoir which are listed in the assessor's database as "Owner Unknown." These parcels should be evaluated for their water supply protection potential.

### ***Parks and Open Space Equity***

As shown on Map 2, the Town of Rockland has one block group that meets Environmental Justice (EJ) criteria. This is due to the area's annual median household income, which is less than 65% of the statewide median. This area roughly bounded by the Abington town line and Plain Street is served by a number of open spaces. Within or in close proximity to this EJ area are Willow Pond, Bicentennial Park, Jefferson Elementary Playground, and several ballfields. Further, the Hanover Branch Rail Trail is not too far away and is used by residents and visitors of all ages for walking and biking.

On a whole, open space is well distributed throughout Rockland (with the exception of the northeast quadrant of the town), though different areas contain various opportunities for either passive or active recreation. That said, Rockland does not have an extensive inventory of parks, playgrounds and ballfields. Planned improvements as detailed in the Action Plan (Section 9) over the few years should provide enhanced opportunities to access activities that are in demand in Rockland.

## **Inventory of Open Space and Recreation Resources**

All properties identified in the inventory are depicted in *Map 7, Open Space Inventory*.

The Open Space Matrix column headings are defined below

- **Name** – The most commonly used name of the open space site
- **Location** – The street where the open space is located
- **Acres** – The geographic area of the open space using acres as the unit of measurement
- **Owner** – The entity or individual who has legal ownership of the site

- **Managing Agent** – The entity or individual responsible for the maintenance and management of the site
- **Current Use** – The current status of land use
- **Condition** – Evaluation of the site’s condition. For active recreation areas, a qualitative scale is used (excellent, good, fair, or poor); for passive recreation sites, condition generally describes the site’s level of development
- **Recreation Potential** – Indicates the relative suitability of open space areas for recreational adaptation
- **Public Access** – Indicates whether sites are open or restricted to public access and use
- **ADA Accessibility** – Indicates whether the sites are accessible to individuals with physical limitations
- **Funding/Grant Received** – Indicates the source of funding for the acquisition of open space/passive recreation areas or the development of active recreation sites
- **Zoning** – The zoning district containing the site
- **Degree of Protection** – Identifies the level of protection held by the site, on a scale from: Unprotected, Moderate, to High
- **Facilities** – Lists recreational amenities and other structures on the site

Name	Location	Acres	Owner	Managing Agent	Current Use	Condition	Recreation Potential	Public Access	ADA Accessibility	Funding/Grant Received	Zoning	Degree of Protection	Facilities
<b>Town Owned Conservation Land (Permanently Protected)</b>													
Beech Street Cons. Land	Beech St.	63	CC	CC	Natural	Natural.	Limited - no street access.	Allowed but no road access.		Gift	R-1	High	None.
Casey Lot	East of Liberty and Pleasant Streets	5.9	CC	CC	Open	Lowland to the rear of house lot	None	None		Gift	R-1	High	None
Elizabeth Street	Elizabeth St.	1.56	CC	CC	None	Natural	Limited	Yes		Tax title.	R-1	High	None.
French's Crossing Conservation Area	Bay Path Lane	106.9	CC	CC	Open	Natural	Limited	No		Gift	R-1	High	NA
Griffin Lot	Abington Town Line	0.14	CC	CC	None	Natural	Adj. to Town Forest	Yes		Tax title.	R-1.	High	None.
Hingham St. Cons. Land	Hingham St.	5.57	CC	CC	Open	Natural	Limited	Yes		Gift.	R-1.	High	None.
Howland Estate	Midway St.	0.95	CC	CC	Open	Natural	Limited	Yes		Tax title	I-2	High	None.
John Smith Lane Cons. Land	John Smith Lane.	6.74	CC	CC	Open	Natural	Limited	Yes		Tax title	R-1.	High	None.
Madeline Lot	VFW Drive	4.2	CC	CC	Open	Natural	Limited	Yes		Tax title	I-1.	High	None.

Name	Location	Acres	Owner	Managing Agent	Current Use	Condition	Recreation Potential	Public Access	ADA Accessibility	Funding/Grant Received	Zoning	Degree of Protection	Facilities
Town Forest	North Ave.	26.34	CC	CC			Yes.	Yes		Gift.	R-1.	High	Trails
Nugent Lot	South of Philips Street	6.17	CC	CC	Open.	Natural.	Limited.	No.		Tax title	R-1.	High	None.
Philips Street	Philips Street	24	CC	CC	Open	Natural	Limited	Yes		Tax title	R-1	High	None.
Pond Street	Between Pond St. and Norwell Town Line	6	CC	CC	Open	Natural	Limited	No		Gift	R-1	High	None
Salem Street Cons. Land	Near Salem Street & Spruce St.	17	CC	CC	Open	Natural	Limited	No		Tax title	R-1	High	None
Sanderson Lot	VFW Drive	2	CC	CC	Open	Natural; wet.	Limited	Yes		Tax title	I-1	High	None
Summer Street	Summer St.	14	CC	CC	Open	Lowlands of mixed swampy areas and high spots covered with white pine.	Limited	Yes		Gift	R-1	High	None
VFW Drive Cons. Land	VFW Drive	13	CC	CC	Open	Natural	Limited	Yes		Tax title	I-1	High	None
Union and Bigelow	Union & Bigelow	0.37	CC	CC	Open	Natural	Limited	Yes		Tax title	R-2	High	None

Name	Location	Acres	Owner	Managing Agent	Current Use	Condition	Recreation Potential	Public Access	ADA Accessibility	Funding/Grant Received	Zoning	Degree of Protection	Facilities
Adjacent to ROW	Near Hanover line	5.59	CC	CC	Open	Natural	Limited	Yes		Tax title	R-1	High	None
Levin Road	Levin Road	33.05	CC	CC	Open	Natural	Large parcel could accommodate recreation	Yes	NO	Tax title	R-1	High	None
Wymans Field	Levin Road	8.15	CC	CC	Open	Natural	Yes	Yes	NO	Tax title	R-1	High	None
<b>Total conservation:</b>		350.63											



Name	Location	Acres	Owner	Managing Agent	Current Use	Condition	Recreation Potential	Public Access	ADA Accessibility	Funding/Grant Received	Zoning	Degree of Protection	Facilities
<b>Town Owned Parks (Permanently Protected)</b>													
Bicentennial Park	Reed St	9.64	Town	Parks	Park	Good	Recreation use	Yes	Partial	Town	R-2	High	Playground Running track Soccer Field
Major Reed Park	North Avenue	3.62	Town	Parks	Park	Poor	Recreation use	Yes	NO	Town	R-2	High	Forest
Memorial Park	Goddard Ave.	30.5	Town	Parks	Park	Good	Recreation use	Yes	Partial	Town	R-2	High	Ballfields, playgrounds.
Hartsuff Park	Hingham Street	16.54	Town	Parks	Park	Good	Recreation use	Yes	Partial	Town	R-1, R-2	High	Swimming, trails, playground, ballfields.
Spring Street Field	Spring Street	14.49	Town	Parks	Park	Good	Recreation use	Yes	Partial	Town	R-1	High	5 Ballfields
Total parks:		74.79											

Name	Location	Acres	Owner	Managing Agent	Current Use	Condition	Recreation Potential	Public Access	ADA Accessibility	Funding/Grant Received	Zoning	Degree of Protection	Facilities
<b>Other Town Owned Open Space (Limited or No Protection)</b>													
Blaisdell Park	VFW and Weymouth	2.82	Town	Town	Open land	Undeveloped	No	Yes	NO	Town	R-2	Moderate	None
Howland Park	Forest and Pleasant	0.5	Town	Town	Open land	Undeveloped	No	Yes	NO	Town	R-2	Moderate	None
Unnamed	No access	1.5	Town	Town	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	No		Town	R-1	Unprotected	None
Unnamed	No access	1	Town	Town	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	No		Town	R-1	Unprotected	None
Unnamed	No access	1.5	Town	Town	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	No		Town	R-1	Unprotected	None
Unnamed	Adj. to ROW	7.05	Town	Town	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown		Town	B-2	Unprotected	None

Name	Location	Acres	Owner	Managing Agent	Current Use	Condition	Recreation Potential	Public Access	ADA Accessibility	Funding/Grant Received	Zoning	Degree of Protection	Facilities
Unnamed	Adj. to ROW	5.35	Town	Town	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown		Town	R-1	Unprotected	None
Unnamed	Adj. to ROW	8.95	Town	Town	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown		Town	R-1	Unprotected	None
VFW Landfill	VFW Drive	12.2	Town	Board of Health	Closed	Disturbed land	Yes	No	NO	Town	I-1	Unprotected	NA
Beech Street Landfill	Beech Street	76	Town	Board of Health	Closed	Disturbed land	Yes	No		Town	R-1	Unprotected	NA
Total other:		116.87											

Name	Location	Acres	Owner	Managing Agent	Current Use	Condition	Recreation Potential	Public Access	ADA Accessibility	Funding/Grant Received	Zoning	Degree of Protection	Facilities
<b>Water Supply Land</b>													
Rockland/Abington Joint Water Board	Reservoir area and Fox's Pit	144.33	RAJWB	RAJWB	Water supply protection	Natural	Limited	No	NO	Various sources	R-1, R-2	High	None
Town water supply	Reservoir area and Fox's Pit	145.38	Town	Town	Water supply protection	Natural	Limited	No	No	Various sources	R-1, R-2	Moderate	None
Total water supply:		289.71											

Name	Location	Acres	Owner	Managing Agent	Current Use	Condition	Recreation Potential	Public Access	ADA Accessibility	Funding/Grant Received	Zoning	Degree of Protection	Facilities
<b>Schools</b>													
Memorial Park Elem.	Brian Duffy Way	4.89	Town	School Dept.	School	Good	Yes	Yes	Partial	Municipal		Moderate	Playground; Baseball Fields
Jefferson Elem.	James Street	6.4	Town	School Dept.	School	Good	Yes	Yes	Partial	Municipal		Moderate	Playground; Ballfields

Name	Location	Acres	Owner	Managing Agent	Current Use	Condition	Recreation Potential	Public Access	ADA Accessibility	Funding/Grant Received	Zoning	Degree of Protection	Facilities
Esten Elem.	Summer Street	18.7	Town	School Dept.	School	Good	Yes	Yes	Partial	Municipal		Moderate	Playground; Soccer Fields
Rodgers Middle School	Taunton Ave.	Part of 30 acre Memorial Park parcel	Town	School Dept.	School	Good	Yes	Yes	Partial	Municipal		Moderate	Playing Fields; Basket Ball
High School	MacKinley Way	14.12	Town	School Dept.	School	Good	Yes	Yes	Partial	Municipal		Moderate	Football & Baseball Stadium
Total schools:		44.11											

Name	Location	Acres	Owner	Managing Agent	Current Use	Condition	Recreation Potential	Public Access	ADA Accessibility	Funding/Grant Received	Zoning	Degree of Protection	Facilities
<b>Open Space Owned by Neighboring Municipalities</b>													
Abington	Abington Town Line	30.75	Town of Abington	Town	Unknown	Open	Unknown	No		Unknown	R-1	Moderate	None
Hanover	Hanover Town line	11.03	Town of Hanover	Town	Unknown	Open	Unknown	No		Unknown	R-1	Moderate	None
Whitman	Beech Street/town line	30.96	Town of Whitman	Town	Unknown	Open	Unknown	No	No	Unknown	R-1	Moderate	None
Total Other Municipalities:		72.74											

Name	Location	Acres	Owner	Managing Agent	Current Use	Condition	Recreation Potential	Public Access	ADA Accessibility	Funding/Grant Received	Zoning	Degree of Protection	Facilities
<b>Private Protected Open Space</b>													
Willow Pond subdivision	Centre Avenue	39	Willow Pond Homeowners Assoc.	Private	Open	Open	Unknown	Unknown		Private	R-2	High	NA

Name	Location	Acres	Owner	Managing Agent	Current Use	Condition	Recreation Potential	Public Access	ADA Accessibility	Funding/Grant Received	Zoning	Degree of Protection	Facilities
Millbrook subdivision	Millbrook Drive, east of Beech Street	121	Millbrook Homeowners Assoc.	Private	Open	Open	Unknown	Unknown		Private	R-1	High	Playground, baseball field (on parcel 76-92)
French's Crossing Subdivision Open Space	Bay Path Lane	14.12	French's Crossing Homeowners Assoc.	Private	Open	Open	Unknown	Unknown		Private	R-1	High	NA
Rockland Golf Course	Plain Street	75	Trust for Public Land	Private	Golf course	Good	Yes	Yes, for a fee		Private	R-1	High	Golf course; Club house
Union Point	Union Street	491	LStar Ventures	Private	Open		Yes	Yes		Private	R-1	High	Trails
Total Private Protected:		740.12											

Name	Location	Acres	Owner	Managing Agent	Current Use	Condition	Recreation Potential	Public Access	ADA Accessibility	Funding/Grant Received	Zoning	Degree of Protection	Facilities
<b>Private Unprotected Open Space</b>													
Owner unknown	Abington line	0.77											NA
Owner unknown	Abington line	3.02											NA
Owner unknown	Abington line	0.67											NA
Owner unknown	Abington line	0.44											NA

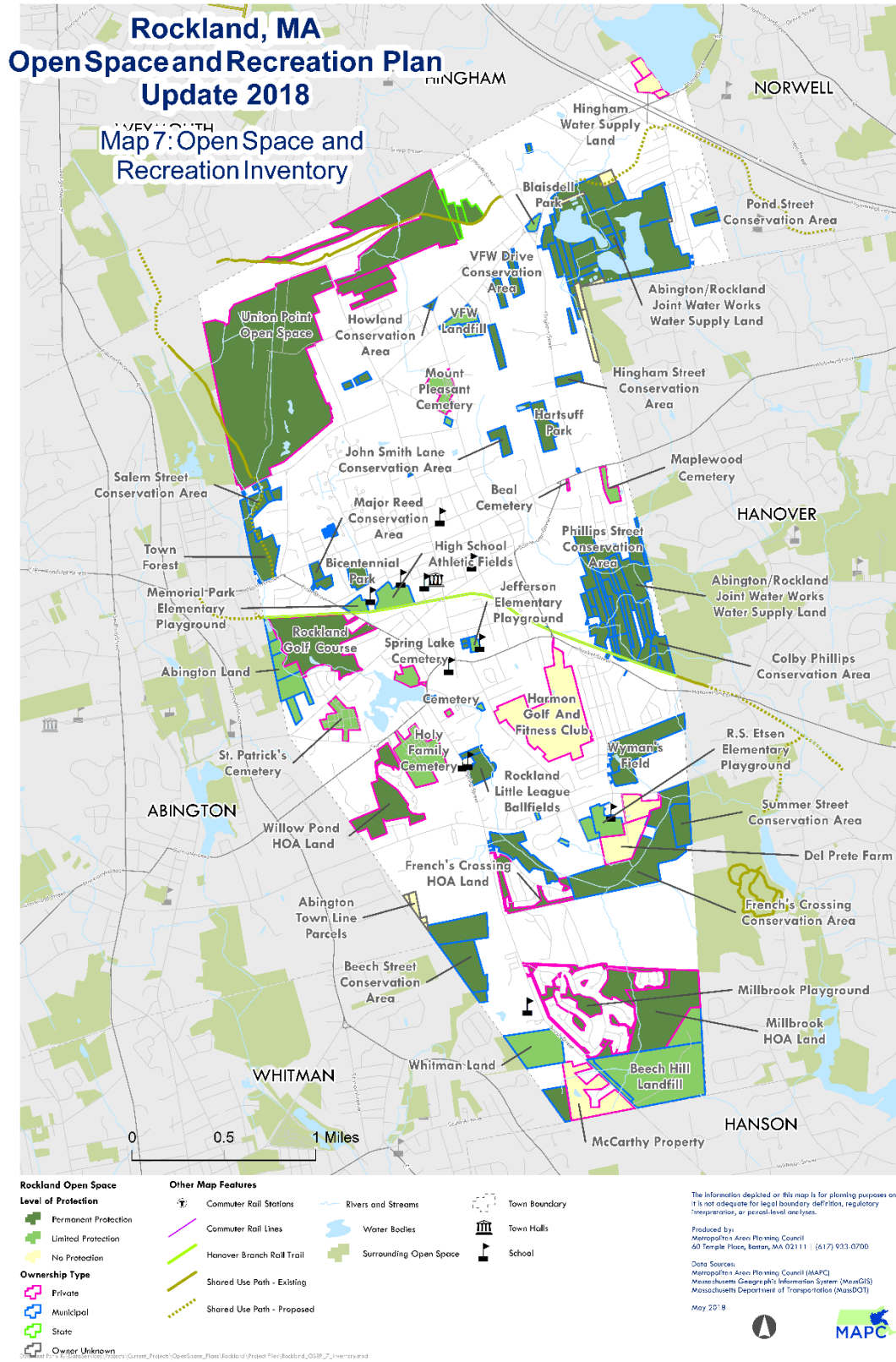
Name	Location	Acres	Owner	Managing Agent	Current Use	Condition	Recreation Potential	Public Access	ADA Accessibility	Funding/Grant Received	Zoning	Degree of Protection	Facilities
Owner unknown	Rockland Abington Reservoir	1.14											
Owner unknown	Rockland Abington Reservoir	2.77											
Owner unknown	Rockland Abington Reservoir	5.08											
Owner unknown	Rockland Abington Reservoir	1.84											
Owner unknown	Rockland Abington Reservoir	3.61											
Owner unknown	Rockland Abington Reservoir	0.24											
Total Private Unprotected:		19.58											

Name	Location	Acres	Owner	Managing Agent	Current Use	Condition	Recreation Potential	Public Access	ADA Accessibility	Funding/Grant Received	Zoning	Degree of Protection	Facilities
<b>Chapter Lands</b>													
Brenda McCarthy (Chapter 61A)	Beech Street	36	Brenda McCarthy	Private	Agricultural	NA	NA	None	NO	NA	R-1	None	NA
Gerald Del Prete Farm (Chapter 61)	Summer Street	22.53	Gerald Del Prete	Private	Farm	NA	NA	None	NO	NA	R-1	None	NA
Harmon Golf Course	Concord Street	95	JLWS Development LLC	Private	Golf course	Good	Recreation use	For a fee.		NA	R-1	None	Golf

Name	Location	Acres	Owner	Managing Agent	Current Use	Condition	Recreation Potential	Public Access	ADA Accessibility	Funding/Grant Received	Zoning	Degree of Protection	Facilities
Total Chapter Lands:		153.53											

Name	Location	Acres	Owner	Managing Agent	Current Use	Condition	Recreation Potential	Public Access	ADA Accessibility	Funding/Grant Received	Zoning	Degree of Protection	Facilities
<b>Other Private</b>													
Studley's/ Reeds Pond Access	Market Street	1	Spring Lake Cemetery	Cemetery	Access to pond	Open beach	Yes	Yes	Partial	NA	B-2	None	Fishing; Boating
Total Other Private:		1											

Map 7: Open Space and Recreation Inventory



# 6

## Community Vision

### Description of the Process

In cooperation with the Town of Rockland, MAPC organized and hosted two public forums on October 19, 2017 and March 5, 2018. At the October forum, the lead project planner provided an introduction to the purpose and utility of Open Space and Recreation Plans generally and presented an overview of Rockland's social demographics and land use patterns. Members of the public in attendance were then engaged to complete a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis of the town's open space and recreation resources. Among the issues identified through the discussion, the need for more active recreation space, the desirability of intermunicipal trail connections, and the importance of expanded public education about existing resources were especially resonant. The second public meeting in March 2018 again allowed residents to provide input about the strengths and weaknesses of Rockland's open space and recreation areas, but also requested their evaluation of the goals and strategies for achieving them developed through the OSRP planning process.

### Open Space and Recreation Goals and Objectives

Open space goals and objectives for this 2018 Open Space and Recreation Plan were developed by the Committee and reviewed during the October 19, 2017 public forum. These goals and objectives were further refined by the Committee as follows:

#### Goal #1: Acquire open space and conservation land

- Provide better access to ponds, rivers, and streams
- Create open space corridors that link Town and regional natural and historic resources in order to protect critical resources and habitats, to create a sense of place, to provide recreational opportunities, and to shape Rockland's growth

#### Goal #2: Protect and preserve Rockland's natural resources

- Identify watershed areas
- Protect existing and potential drinking water supplies by acquiring adjacent land.
- Stop wetland encroachment and degradation
- Preserve scenic areas by maintaining existing populations and species diversity and by preventing the loss or degradation of critical wildlife and plant habitat
- Minimize the impact of new development on wildlife and plant habitat
- Create by-laws for resource protection



**Goal #3: Provide open space resources and recreational facilities which meet the active and passive recreational needs of Rockland’s youth and adults**

- Add new town recreational facilities
- Develop facilities for all age groups
- Eliminate handicap barriers at all recreational facilities

**Goal #4: Maintain and manage existing recreation facilities, parks and conservation lands**

- Increase the use of the town’s conservation and open space lands
- Improve the condition of existing, and develop additional passive and active recreational facilities

**Goal #5: Increase public awareness on open space and conservation issues**

- Educate the public on the location of properties
- Foster stewardship of open space and conservation lands
- Place signage on selected conservation parcels

**Goal #6: Preserve, maintain, and enhance existing historic and cultural resources**

- Identify and catalog historic and cultural resources in Rockland
- Educate the public on the location and value of these resources

**Table 13: 2<sup>nd</sup> Public Forum Preference Exercise**

<b>Goal</b>	<b>Total Votes</b>
<b>Goal #1:</b> Acquire open space and conservation land	<b>22</b>
<b>Goal #2:</b> Protect and preserve Rockland’s natural resources	<b>11</b>
<b>Goal #3:</b> Provide open space resources and recreational facilities which meet the active and passive recreational needs of Rockland’s youth and adults	<b>17</b>
<b>Goal #4:</b> Maintain and manage existing recreation facilities parks and conservation lands	<b>17</b>
<b>Goal #4 (Park Specific Recommendations):</b> Maintain and manage existing recreation facilities parks and conservation lands	<b>30</b>
<b>Goal #5:</b> Increase public awareness on open space and conservation issues	<b>22</b>
<b>Goal #6:</b> Provide open space resources and recreational facilities which meet the active and passive recreational needs of Rockland’s youth and adults	<b>19</b>

# 7

## Needs Analysis

### Summary of Resource Protection Needs

Open Space and Conservation Lands – Open space and conservation lands provide communities with a multitude of irreplaceable benefits, including wildlife habitat, walking trails, scenic vistas, and water quality protection. Individually and collectively, these benefits contribute significantly to that oft-invoked, sometimes hard to define, but widely appreciated phrase “quality of life.”

Given the pace and scope of growth in Rockland and the region, maintaining this quality of life is an increasingly difficult task. Compounding this difficulty is the reality of Rockland’s limited physical size. Unlike many of its fellow South Shore communities, Rockland has comparatively few remaining large parcels of conservation interest.

However, there are still opportunities to conserve lands of conservation significance in Rockland. The Town should pursue these opportunities proactively in conjunction with a range of potential public and private non-profit partners, including the Massachusetts Division of Conservation Services and local and regional non-profit land conservation groups.

In addition to all of the above-referenced rationales for conserving open space, there are sound economic reasons to promote land conservation, including the pursuit of fiscal stability. Numerous studies of both local and regional origin have demonstrated the fiscal benefits of conserving open space. The South Shore town of Plymouth commissioned a study conducted by RKG Associates in October 2001 that identified open space protection as one component of a larger strategy to promote fiscal stability. The study recommended that the town should enhance its commercial/industrial tax base on the one hand, while also pursuing a complementary strategy of controlling the costs of providing municipal services by promoting open space protection and managing residential growth.

Some potential conservation opportunities include the following:

Conservation Core Areas: The Town should explore all opportunities to expand its existing assemblage of conservation lands, utilizing a variety of strategies to include acquiring land via donation, purchase, or exchange. The Town should also pursue all opportunities to create partnerships with other communities and non-profit conservation organizations.

Open Space Corridors Plan: Priority should be given to enhancing existing linkages between open space reserves, and to creating new linkages where possible.

Union Point Conservation Lands: Full advantage should be taken of opportunities arising from the impending creation of what will become Rockland's premier open space holding.

### **Summary of Community Needs**

Throughout the community planning process, the mismatch between the limited supply and high demand for available recreation resources arose as a salient issue. Multiple youth sports and adult recreation leagues all seek scheduling on the same fields, forcing some organizations to play on fields in nearby towns. Additionally, older residents desire more easily accessible and navigable areas for passive recreation, such as paved and lighted walking paths. Since the opportunity to acquire more land for the development of recreation areas is limited, residents highlighted the importance of maintaining and rehabilitating existing resources, especially the track in Bicentennial Park. Additionally, questions about public access to recreation space – such as playgrounds on school property or in private subdivisions - demonstrated the need for clearly defined policies and effective communication. In order to ensure town residents enjoy the full benefit of Rockland's open space and recreation areas, the Town should develop informational materials, including a comprehensive list of parks, with information about use, hours, and access. These materials should be posted on a dedicated and well promoted website maintained and regularly updated by town staff.

### **Summary of the Management Needs**

The active recreation areas owned by the Parks Department require the most intensive and sustained management. Maintenance activity is highest during the spring, when fields and other areas must be prepared for their peak use season. Although the Parks Department does create maintenance schedules, inclement weather routinely complicates the work, and the department must adaptively plan around the weather. The Highway Department assists with open space management, including through removing trees which are deceased and pose a danger to those using the open space areas. Recreation leagues and local businesses help support management activities through the provision of in kind donations, such as loam and infield mix.

Increased maintenance of the playgrounds, recreation fields, and conservation areas was a top priority mentioned during the public forums, and is one of the top priorities identified in the Action Plan. There is a need for, and a desire to undertake, a capital improvement plan to determine the physical improvements that should be made to each of the parks that are owned by the Town of Rockland to:

- improve the overall quality of the parks
- improve safety by replacing older, worn out and broken equipment, and

- improve compliance with ADA accessibility standards.

These improvements are detailed in the Action Plan.

# 8

## Goals and Objectives

### *Introduction*

The Open Space and Recreation Plan Committee decided to accept and reinforce its commitment to the previous Open Space and Recreation Plans by using those goals as the basis for this plan. The Committee believes these goals represent the entire Rockland community and its commitment to open space and recreation issues.

### *Goals for 2018–2025*

The following five goals and associated objectives guide the 2018-2025 Plan and are based on a review of the Town's recent accomplishments, as well as its existing and anticipated needs for park improvements. These new goals and objectives build on and go beyond the previous set of goals to provide a continuing mandate for the Town to pursue a coordinated and focused plan for protecting and managing open space and recreation facilities, working collaboratively within the Town and throughout the region to ensure continued protection of our fragile environment, and enhancing public awareness, accessibility, and stewardship of the existing open space resources in Rockland. The fulfillment of these goals will make Rockland a more desirable and pleasant community to live in and to visit.

Further, by accomplishing the specific actions associated with these goals, the entire community will acquire a greater sense of awareness of and appreciation for Rockland's valuable open space and recreational resources. The detailed actions to achieve these goals and objectives are listed in chapter 9, Action Plan.

As listed in Chapter 6, the Goals and Objectives are:

#### **Goal #1: Acquire open space and conservation land**

- Provide better access to ponds, rivers, and streams
- Create open space corridors that link Town and regional natural and historic resources in order to protect critical resources and habitats, to create a sense of place, to provide recreational opportunities, and to shape Rockland's growth

#### **Goal #2: Protect and preserve Rockland's natural resources**

- Identify watershed areas

- Protect existing and potential drinking water supplies by acquiring adjacent land.
- Stop wetland encroachment and degradation
- Preserve scenic areas by maintaining existing populations and species diversity and by preventing the loss or degradation of critical wildlife and plant habitat
- Minimize the impact of new development on wildlife and plant habitat
- Create by-laws for resource protection

**Goal #3: Provide open space resources and recreational facilities which meet the active and passive recreational needs of Rockland's youth and adults**

- Add new town recreational facilities
- Develop facilities for all age groups
- Eliminate handicap barriers at all recreational facilities

**Goal #4: Maintain and manage existing recreation facilities, parks and conservation lands**

- Increase the use of the town's conservation and open space lands
- Improve the condition of existing, and develop additional passive and active recreational facilities

**Goal #5: Increase public awareness on open space and conservation issues**

- Educate the public on the location of properties
- Foster stewardship of open space and conservation lands
- Place signage on selected conservation parcels

**Goal #6: Preserve, maintain, and enhance existing historic and cultural resources**

- Identify and catalog historic and cultural resources in Rockland
- Educate the public on the location and value of these resources

# 9

## Seven Year Action Plan

### **Introduction**

This Action Plan for the Town of Rockland Open Space and Recreation Plan seeks to translate its goals and objectives into concrete actions for the period between 2018 and 2025. It strives to deliver on the goals and objectives expressed throughout this process with a program of tangible steps for the Town to take over the next seven years.

These actions are targeted to address the physical and organizational issues confronting the Town, as described and analyzed in previous sections of this Plan, especially in Chapter 7. This Action Plan attempts to examine various needs and visions realistically in light of current economic conditions, while maintaining a focus on the substantive issues of open space and recreation preservation, acquisition, enhancement, management, and maintenance.

### **Progress Since the 2005 Plan**

Although the Town has not prepared an Open Space and Recreation Plan since 2005, the Town has been active in making improvements to its park and recreation system and in acquiring new and managing its existing open space resources. The following is a list of actions undertaken since the preparation of the previous plan:

- Acquisition of lands connecting the Town Forest from North Avenue to Spruce Street have been completed.
- The Rockland Town Forest Committee (a sub-committee of the Rockland Conservation Commission) received an Order of Conditions to develop the main trail from the end of the lower fire lane to Spruce Street.
- After constructing 15 wooden bridges and one stone culvert, the trail was completed in April 2012. The Committee continues today to improve the main trail through the Town Forest.
- In 2010, a small parking lot was constructed on the Spruce Street end to provide access for maintenance work and special events. The parking lot is ADA compliant. The Town installed a picnic table and a bench for sitting. The area has an overlook where one can see French's Stream and various wildlife. Similar improvements were made to the North Avenue end of the Town Forest, where it is accessible down to the end of the lower fire lane (approximately 1500 ft.) It is not possible to make the remainder of trail ADA accessible, since it passes through wetlands in areas prone to flooding.

- Members of the Town Forest Committee worked to build two loop hiking trails off the main trail in 2013 through 2015 where one can access many natural features, plants and wildlife.
- Trails have been marked clearly with appropriate signage.
- Since 2014 members of the Town Forest Committee have been involved with rebuilding the original stone walls that existed for many years (maybe 150 years) from old farm lots.
- The Town Forest Committee applied to the National Wildlife Federation for designation as a Certified Wildlife Habitat which was approved in 2010 (Certification # 131,323).
- The Town has been working to link the main town forest trail to important locations for hiking, biking, and passive recreation. This includes recent improvements to the Spruce Street entrance to the Town Forest. The goal is to make it easier for people to connect the trails on land at Union Point with the Town Forest and beyond, including the Hanover Branch Rail Trail.
- In Hartsuff Park, a KaBOOM! Playground was recently built.
- The Town has applied for and received grants to pave sections of the Hanover Branch Rail Trail.

### **Action Plan**

This section provide specific recommendations for meeting the goals and objectives that were formulated in Section 8. The formation of a committee or board that would be charged with implementation of the plan will be key to ensuring its success, and it is this group that will take charge of delegating the recommended responsibilities and actions to Town departments, boards and committees, and other stakeholders. This committee will also be responsible for public outreach and education regarding actions being taken.

Table 14 lists a wide range of action items, and Map 8 indicates the locations of selected major projects. Some of these actions are already in the planning process; others are ongoing but need additional support. While all of the actions listed are recognized as important, two issues rise to the top as being absolutely essential for any future progress toward meeting the goals of this Plan:

- Advocate for continued support from Town staff, commissions, and boards for the principle that open space and recreation are central and lasting priorities for Rockland residents. While it is understood that there are competing needs for both financial and staffing resources in the Town, all groups must abide by the central tenet that these issues are extremely important to the residents of Rockland. Where open space and recreational resources are concerned, the goals and policies of this Plan must be followed, and the committee members and Town staff must be consulted.
- Secure additional funding sources for staffing and other support to better maintain and enhance all parks, playgrounds, playing fields, and natural open spaces. Additionally,



there is strong interest among community residents in obtaining additional recreational facilities. Funds to achieve these goals are scarce and the Town must be creative in how funds are raised. The recent adoption of the Community Preservation Act in 2016 is a new opportunity for funding some open space and recreation needs.

### *Open Space and Recreation Priorities*

The five priorities listed below reflect the specific goals and attainable objectives that are embedded in the overall Plan. They hold equal importance and represent the concerns shared by Town residents for acquiring, maintaining, raising funds for, and working collaboratively to preserve, protect, and enhance open space resources and recreational facilities in Town.

#### 1. Land Protection

Actively pursue long-standing goals to acquire or protect through other means ecologically or recreationally valuable land parcels such as the parcel adjacent to Hartsuff Park, as well as other wetlands or undeveloped land that could be lost as open space. Another focus is to pursue opportunities for protecting and enhancing public access to the Town's open space and recreational resources.

#### 2. Maintenance and Capital Improvements

Explore multiple public and private avenues for raising additional funds for capital improvements and maintenance of all of the Town's parks, playgrounds, and other recreational facilities. Some projects are already in line for capital improvements that expand recreational opportunities throughout town over the next couple of years, including ADA compliance upgrades.

#### 3. Management of Town Open Spaces

Continue to encourage Town departments, Town and regional commissions, and volunteer Friends groups to work collaboratively to better coordinate, manage, and raise funds to implement all of the open space goals and objectives. Special efforts are needed to hire additional staff to advocate for and implement planning, management, and maintenance of Rockland's open spaces, natural resources, and recreational facilities.

#### 4. Public Participation and Stewardship

Increase public awareness, education, accessibility, and community stewardship of the Town's open spaces through a variety of participatory education programs and volunteer activities to better monitor and improve open space and recreational facilities. A related goal is to make better use of the Town website, e-mail lists, community access TV, and other resources to enhance channels of communication and levels of local knowledge and participation.

#### 5. Sustainable Approaches for Natural Resources Management

Take actions to improve water resources management, control flooding, maintain ecological diversity (flora and fauna), promote mitigation and adaptation to climate changes, and ensure

that Rockland’s residential areas, commercial centers, and infrastructure are developed in harmony with natural resource concerns.

The following table identifies the specific actions to be undertaken by the Town to implement this plan. Each action item is organized by goals and where applicable, a funding source is identified. The party or parties responsible are listed with the primary one being in **bold** type (there are a few where several entities are primary and are listed in **bold**). A list of the responsible departments, boards and committees is below. Finally, the timing for implementation is broken out into short- (1 to 3 years), medium- (4 to 5 years), long-term (6 to 7 years), and ongoing timeframes.

### **List of Responsible Party Acronyms**

- BOS – Board of Selectmen
- CC – Conservation Commission
- COA – Council on Aging
- CPC – Community Preservation Committee
- HC – Historical Commission
- HD – Highway Department
- OS – Open Space Committee
- PB – Planning Board
- PC – Project Coordinator
- PD – Park Department
- RPS – Rockland Public Schools
- SD – Sewer Department
- TA – Town Administrator
- WD – Water Department
- YC – Youth Commission

### **List of Potential Funding Sources**

- CPA – Community Preservation Act
- LAND – Local Acquisitions for Natural Diversity Grant Program through the Division of Conservation Services (DCS)
- LWCF – Land and Water Conservation Fund Grant Program through DCS
- PARC – Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities Grant Program through DCS
- RTP – Recreational Trails Program Grant Program through the MA Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)

Table 14: Seven-Year Action Plan

Seven Year Action Plan - Rockland OSRP Update 2018						
Goal <i>Action Item</i>	Potential Funding Source	Responsible Party	Implementation Schedule			
			Short term (1-3 Years)	Mid-term (4-5 Years)	Long term (6-7 Years)	Ongoing
<b>Goal #1: Acquire open space and conservation land</b>						
<i>Identify areas of Rockland that do not have any open space or are in need of a park, and acquire land and replace with a playground or open space for residents</i>	Town, CPA, LAND, LWCF	<b>BOS</b> , Town Meeting		X		
<i>Plan and implement access to adjacent open spaces/conservation areas or recreational sites to augment open space user experience</i>	n/a	OS				X

<p><i>Develop criteria to be applied when open space parcels become available in order to determine how best to acquire new properties (i.e. proximity or connection to other open spaces, watershed protection, wildlife corridors, etc.)</i></p>	<p>n/a</p>	<p><b>OS, CC, YC, WD</b></p>	<p>X</p>			
<p><i>Encourage private developers to incorporate open space into private developments, through zoning requirements or incentives</i></p>	<p>n/a</p>	<p>PB</p>				<p>X</p>
<p><b>Goal #2: Protect and preserve Rockland’s natural resources</b></p>						
<p><i>Achieve better water resources management in all town water bodies through control of nonpoint pollution and storm water runoff, use of low-impact development and groundwater recharge practices, and control of invasive plants</i></p>	<p>Town</p>	<p><b>WD, SD</b></p>				<p>X</p>

<i>Promote information about water conservation, ecological lawn and landscape treatments, and pollution control measures on both Town properties and private residences and businesses</i>	n/a	WD				X
<i>Use native vegetation appropriate in Town-sponsored and private landscaping projects along the main roadway corridors, and along the Hanover Branch Rail Trail</i>	Town, RTP, LWCF	BOS				X
<i>Undertake a street tree inventory</i>	Town	TW	X			
<i>Encourage Town-managed tree planting to a level of one new tree for every one removed on public streets, parks, and playgrounds, and work to make this official Town policy</i>	Town	TW				X

<i>Work with adjacent towns such as Hanover and Abington to protect and enhance shared resources</i>	n/a	<b>BOS, PC</b>				X
<b>Goal #3: Provide open space resources and recreational facilities which meet the active and passive recreational needs of Rockland’s youth and adults.</b>						
<i>Work with Town departments, such as the Council on Aging, to increase the diversity of recreational options to reflect Rockland’s changing demographics</i>	n/a	<b>COA, YC, PD</b>				X
<i>Evaluate best options for continuing to work with non-profit organizations/sports clubs to maintain appropriate sports fields while also allowing use of the facilities by the general public</i>	n/a	<b>YC, PD, RPS</b>				X
<i>To provide open space opportunities to the greatest number of residents, the Town should continue to look for opportunities to establish a dog park</i>	Town, CPA, PARC	<b>PD, PC</b>		X		

<p><i>In conjunction with Complete Streets efforts being undertaken by the Town, maintain existing, and establish new, sidewalk connections to improve mobility in town and provide access to key public sites such as schools, parks, conservation areas, etc.</i></p>	<p>Town, Complete Streets</p>	<p><b>HD, PD, RPS, PC</b></p>				<p>X</p>
<p><b>Goal #4: Maintain and manage existing recreation facilities, parks and conservation lands</b></p>						
<p><i>Prioritize and upgrade facilities in order to implement ADA Transition Plan</i></p>	<p>Town</p>	<p><b>ADA, TA, PC</b></p>				<p>X</p>
<p><i>Create a regular maintenance plan for parks and fields to include lawn maintenance, preparation of playing fields, landscaping, etc.</i></p>	<p>Town</p>	<p>PD</p>	<p>X</p>			
<p><i>Support all efforts to provide sufficient funding for staffing and maintenance of all resources and facilities through multiple sources and programs</i></p>	<p>Town</p>	<p><b>BOS, TA</b></p>				<p>X</p>

<i>Encourage the involvement and coordination of youth groups, sports teams, and other users in maintaining playing fields</i>	n/a	<b>YC, PD</b>				X
<i>Develop a long-range Capital Plan for park and recreation facilities and plan to upgrade the physical condition of playing fields and other recreational facilities in accordance with that plan</i>	n/a	<b>BOS, TA</b>	X			
<i>Explore potential recreational uses such as mountain biking, trails at Beech Hill Landfill</i>	n/a	<b>PD, OS</b>			X	



<p><i>Explore the potential to connect trails at Union Point with the Hanover Branch Rail Trail</i></p>	<p>RTP, LWCF</p>	<p>OS</p>			<p>X</p>	
<p><i>Continue to improve and maintain the Hanover Branch Rail Trail and work with Hanover and Abington to build the trail network</i></p>	<p>RTP, LWCF</p>	<p>OS</p>				<p>X</p>

<b>Hartsuff Park</b>							
<i>Land purchase to expand the park</i>							
<i>Build a basketball court</i>							
<i>Enlarge the bathhouse and make it ADA compliant</i>							
<i>Make the playground ADA compliant</i>	Town, CPA, PARC	<b>PD, YC, CPC</b>					
<i>Develop a low ropes course</i>					X		
<i>Increase the size of the disk golf course</i>							
<i>Improve parking lot to make space utilization more efficient</i>							

<b>Bicentennial Park</b>						
<i>Replace the track with new and improved material which would allow us to have track meets</i>	Town, PARC	PD, YC, CPC				
<i>Replace the field with a synthetic field</i>						
<i>Light the field so that we are able to use it after dark</i>						
<i>Replace the children's playground and provide ADA compliance</i>						

<b>Reeds Pond</b>						
<i>Purchase the parking lot and shore line from Spring Lake Cemetery</i>						
<i>Total renovation of shore line and beach, including replacing the wall, removing invasive shrubbery and poisonous plants, and replacing the ramp to the water's edge</i>	Town, CPA, PARC, LAND, LWCF	PD, CC, CPC			X	
<i>Dredge the edges of the shoreline cleaning them from invasive plant life</i>						
<i>Rehab the parking lot so that it is suitable for cars</i>						
<i>Building a small boat house to house kayaks and staff for rental purposes</i>						

<b>Memorial Stadium</b>						
<i>Renovation of the stadium: securing the structure, repaving cement stands, replacing seating and complying with ADA regulations</i>	Town	PD, YC	X			
<b>Beech Hill Park</b>						
<i>Blaze the trails so they are accessible to walk or ride mountain bike</i>	Town	OS, PD		X		
<b>Goal #5: Increase public awareness on open space and conservation issues</b>						
<i>Prepare handouts, educational materials, and online resources to encourage greater citizen awareness and participation in Rockland's parks and open spaces. Develop an online and printable map of Rockland's open space and recreational resources.</i>	Town	OS, PD, TF	X			

<i>Create a webpage for Rockland's recreational areas with descriptions of each facility and available recreational opportunities.</i>	n/a	PD	X			
<i>Develop a signage program for all Town-owned parks and open spaces.</i>	Town	OS, PD, TF	X			
<i>Work with groups such as the North South River Watershed Association to develop regular nature walks and environmental education programs for all ages (such as birding, canoeing/kayaking, and cleanup campaigns).</i>	n/a	OS, CC, TF				X
<i>Introduce educational signage and other amenities at parks (such as benches, bulletin boards, recycling receptacles, bike racks).</i>	Town	OS, PD, CC, TF	X			

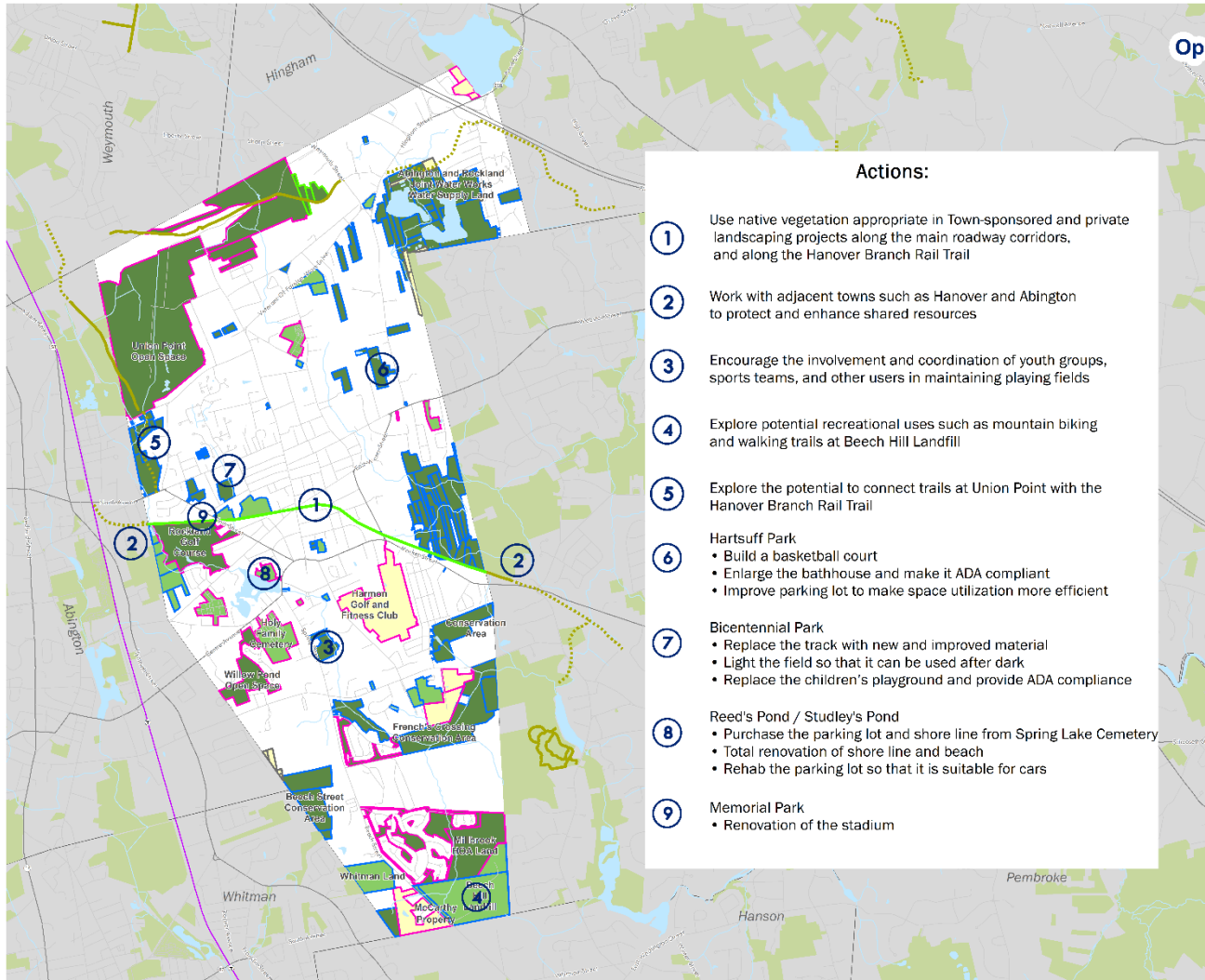
**Goal #6: Preserve, maintain, and enhance existing historic and cultural resources**

<p><i>Establish and maintain a current inventory of historic and cultural resources in Rockland so that the Town can enhance tourism and maximize the visibility of its historic role in the region.</i></p>	<p>n/a</p>	<p>HC</p>				<p>X</p>
<p><i>Continue to organize current cultural activities and look for new opportunities to enhance economic development through these events.</i></p>	<p>n/a</p>	<p>PC</p>				<p>X</p>
<p><i>Publicize historic assets on the Town website and create events such as walking tours to educate the public about Rockland's history.</i></p>	<p>n/a</p>	<p>HC</p>				<p>X</p>

## Map 8: Action Plan

### Rockland, MA Open Space and Recreation Plan Update 2018

### Map 8: Action Plan



#### Actions:

- ① Use native vegetation appropriate in Town-sponsored and private landscaping projects along the main roadway corridors, and along the Hanover Branch Rail Trail
- ② Work with adjacent towns such as Hanover and Abington to protect and enhance shared resources
- ③ Encourage the involvement and coordination of youth groups, sports teams, and other users in maintaining playing fields
- ④ Explore potential recreational uses such as mountain biking and walking trails at Beech Hill Landfill
- ⑤ Explore the potential to connect trails at Union Point with the Hanover Branch Rail Trail
- ⑥ **Hartsuff Park**
  - Build a basketball court
  - Enlarge the bathhouse and make it ADA compliant
  - Improve parking lot to make space utilization more efficient
- ⑦ **Bicentennial Park**
  - Replace the track with new and improved material
  - Light the field so that it can be used after dark
  - Replace the children's playground and provide ADA compliance
- ⑧ **Reed's Pond / Studley's Pond**
  - Purchase the parking lot and shore line from Spring Lake Cemetery
  - Total renovation of shore line and beach
  - Rehab the parking lot so that it is suitable for cars
- ⑨ **Memorial Park**
  - Renovation of the stadium

#### Rockland Open Space

##### Owner Type

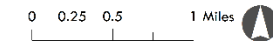
- Municipal
- Private
- State
- Owner Unknown

##### Level of Protection

- Permanent Protection
- Limited Protection
- No Protection

- Hanover Branch Rail Trail
- Shared-Use Path - Proposed
- Shared-Use Path, Existing

Please see the 7-year Action Plan in the Rockland Open Space and Recreation Plan for a more complete and detailed list of proposed action items.



The information depicted on this map is for planning purposes only. It is not adequate for legal boundary definition, regulatory interpretation, or parcel-level analyses.

Produced by:  
Metropolitan Area Planning Council  
60 Temple Place, Boston, MA 02111 | (617) 933-0700

Data Sources:  
Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC)  
Massachusetts Geographic Information System (MassGIS)  
Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT)

May 2018





# 10

## Letters of Approval

# Town of Rockland Board of Selectmen



## TOWN OF ROCKLAND

### Board of Selectmen

Town Hall  
242 Union Street  
Rockland, Massachusetts 02370

Telephone: 781-871-1874  
Fax: 781-871-0386

*Chairman:*

Edward F. Kimball  
*Vice Chairman:*  
Deirdre Hall

*Selectmen:*

Larry J. Ryan  
Michael P. Mullen, Jr.  
Michael P. O'Loughlin

*Town Administrator:*

Allan R. Chiocca

*Executive Assistant:*

Susan M. Ide

May 22, 2018

Larry Ryan, Chairman  
Open Space & Recreation Plan Committee  
Town of Rockland  
242 Union Street  
Rockland, MA 02370

Dear Mr. Ryan,

The Board of Selectmen has reviewed the proposed 2018 Open Space & Recreation Plan (OSRP); and hereby issues this letter of support for its final approval. The 2018 OSRP revised Rockland's 1998 OSRP; and creates a road map for the utilization of open space and recreation over the next seven years.

The Rockland Board of Selectmen recognizes the importance of the 2018 OSRP as it will serve as a vital tool for thoughtful planning in the future. The Board voted unanimously to support the 2018 OSRP at its May 15, 2018, meeting. The Board also looks forward to working toward the goals and priorities earmarked in the Plan.

Sincerely,

Edward Kimball, Chairman

Rockland Board of Selectmen

# Town of Rockland Planning Board



## TOWN OF ROCKLAND

### Planning Board

Town Hall  
242 Union Street  
Rockland, Massachusetts 02370

Telephone: 781-871-1874  
Fax: 781-871-0386  
E-mail: rocklandplanningboard@gmail.com

May 23, 2018

Dear Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs,

The Rockland Planning Board reviewed the proposed 2018 Open Space & Recreation Plan (OSRP) at the Planning Board meeting on Tuesday, May 22, 2018. The Planning Board voted unanimously to support the OSRP as presented. Further, the Planning Board supports the goals and objectives that are stated throughout the OSRP.

Rockland's parks and open spaces are a critically important asset to the health and well-being of the residents of Rockland. The Plan presents updated status for each of the Town's fields and facilities including an ADA component. The Plan also presents priorities for improving the parks and open spaces in Town and to resource ideas to care for as well as safeguard these important resources.

The Planning Board would like to thank you in advance for reviewing and approving Rockland's OSRP.

Sincerely,

John Lucas, Chairman

**Metropolitan Area Planning Council**

# 11

## References

Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, March 2008 Open Space Planner's Workbook, Boston, MA

Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA) [Online]  
<http://www.mass.gov/?pageID=eoeahomepage&L=1&L0=Home&sid=Eoeea>

Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program, Rockland 2012 BioMap2 – Conserving the Biodiversity of Massachusetts in a Changing World. Boston, MA.

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Massachusetts Office of Geographic Information Systems (MassGIS) [Online]  
<http://www.state.ma.us/mgis>

Swain, P.C. and J.B. Kearsley. 2001. Classification of the Natural Communities of Massachusetts. Version 1.3. Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program, Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife. Westborough, MA.

Town of Rockland, *General By-Laws*

Town of Rockland, *Zoning By-Laws*

Town of Rockland, *Open Space and Recreation Plan 2004-2009*

# 12

## Appendixes