

Town of West Stockbridge, Massachusetts

***DRAFT* Open Space & Recreation Plan**

Summary of Findings and Seven-Year Action Plan

May 16, 2021

Plan Summary

The 2022 West Stockbridge Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) was developed to comprehensively examine the Town's open space conservation and outdoor recreation needs and to identify needed actions to meet these needs for current residents and generations to come. Overall, this Open Space and Recreation Plan helps to answer three questions related to open space and recreation within the Town:

1. What resources do we currently have?
2. What more do we want?
3. How do we get there?

The West Stockbridge OSRP Working Group, made up of volunteers from the Parks and Recreation Committee, Conservation Commission, Select Board and Master Plan Steering Committee, drafted a set of goals and actions that reflect the importance of protecting the rural and natural resources of the Town while also providing outdoor recreational opportunities for West Stockbridge residents. In developing goals and actions for this Open Space Plan, the OSRP Working Group revisited the recommended actions that were drafted in the 2004 *Community Development Plan*. Many of the goals, objectives and actions from that plan remain relevant today and have been adapted to meet current needs and desires. The Working Group also incorporated actions that residents themselves voiced throughout the planning process: during the public survey and public forum, and through individual interviews with current and former Town officials. Three overarching goals emerged as part of the planning process, as derived from the public process:

1. West Stockbridge's rural and natural landscape is protected and maintained; careful development does not impair this landscape.
2. West Stockbridge's water resources are protected and of high quality.
3. Residents of all abilities have access to outdoor recreational opportunities, while respecting and maintaining the natural landscape in which these are set.

Analysis of Needs

The Town of West Stockbridge developed this Open Space and Recreation Plan concurrently with the development of an updated Master Plan. During the development of the Master Plan, residents expressed what they valued most about the Town. Small-town character was the most singly valued aspect of living in West Stockbridge, rated far above 16 other aspects. Other highly valued aspects were low crime rate, open spaces and access to highways. Loss of small-town character and lack of affordable housing, brought on by the tourism economy and the demand for seasonal homes, were cited as greatest concerns by residents.

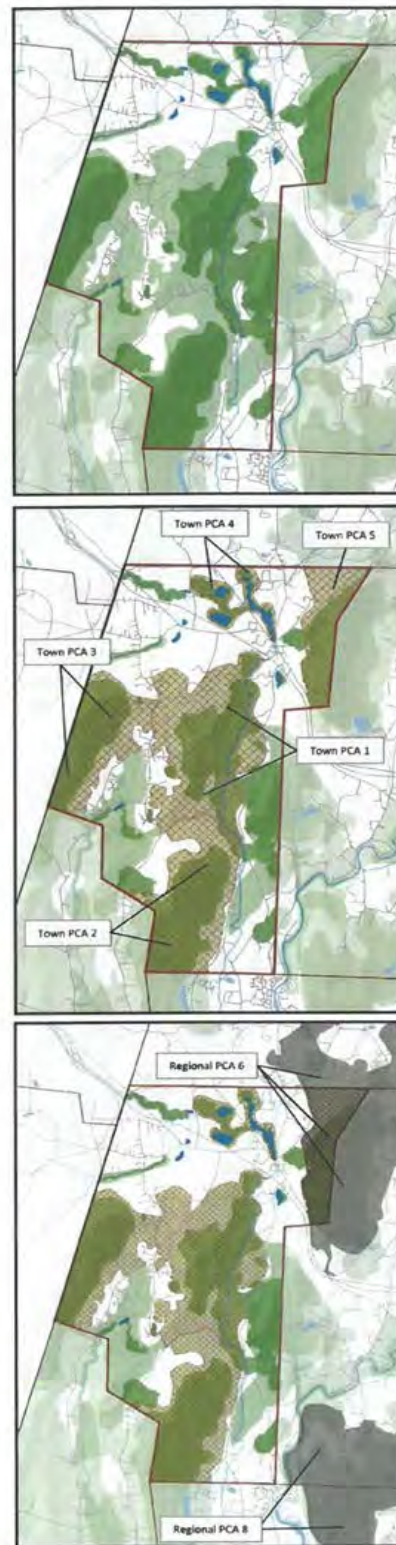
Summary of Resources Protection Needs

BioMap2 is a statewide mapping project that combines 30 years of rare species and natural community data from the NHESP with wildlife species and habitat assessments. Additionally, BioMap2 data integrates the Nature Conservancy's assessment of large, connected, and intact ecosystems across the state to determine areas most suited for the long-term protection of biodiversity in the state. BioMap2 identifies two complementary spatial layers, Core Habitat and Critical Natural Landscapes. Core Habitat identifies key areas that are critical for the long-term persistence of rare species as well as a wide diversity of natural communities and intact ecosystems. Critical Natural Landscapes identifies large landscape blocks that are minimally impacted by development or fragmentation. If protected, these areas will provide habitat for wide-ranging native species, support intact ecological processes, maintain connectivity among habitats and enhance ecological resilience to disturbances in a changing world.

Taking these analyses one step further, NHESP prioritized areas in each town in the Housatonic River Watershed to help communities and local conservation organizations focus their land protection and stewardship efforts. These areas are termed Priority Conservation Areas (PCAs), of which five have been delineated in West Stockbridge. The results of this effort are found in the NHESP's *Guiding Land Conservation for Biodiversity in Massachusetts, West Stockbridge* (2011).

- PCA 1: This area in the central area of Town is along the Williams River and stretches westward across Maple Hill. Rich, Mesic Forests are found here, along with rare reptile and bird species that live and breed in this area.
- PCA 2: This area includes a large Forest Core along the southern portion of the Williams River watershed in the Town. Rare state-listed salamanders are found here along with a 25-acre patch of a Ridgetop Chestnut Oak Forest/Woodland community.
- PCA 3: This area is found along the Harvey Mountain hills complex, with forests that extend westward along the Taconic Mountain range. A rare salamander and two unusual natural communities, the Hickory-Hop Hornbeam Forest and the Acidic Rock Summit/Rock Outcrop are found in this area.
- PCA 4: This area includes the ponds and wetlands found in the northern section of the Town. Found here are several species of aquatic and semi-aquatic plants that support the feeding and nesting for an endangered marshland bird.
- PCA 5: This is a large area that extends far beyond the Town boundary into Lenox and Richmond and is known to harbor several state-listed plant species and a rare salamander. Coordinated conservation efforts with these neighboring towns and regional organizations may be warranted.

Priority Conservation Areas



Core Habitat + Critical Natural Landscape
↓
Town Priority Conservation Areas
↓
Regional Priority Conservation Areas

Source: NHESP, 2011.

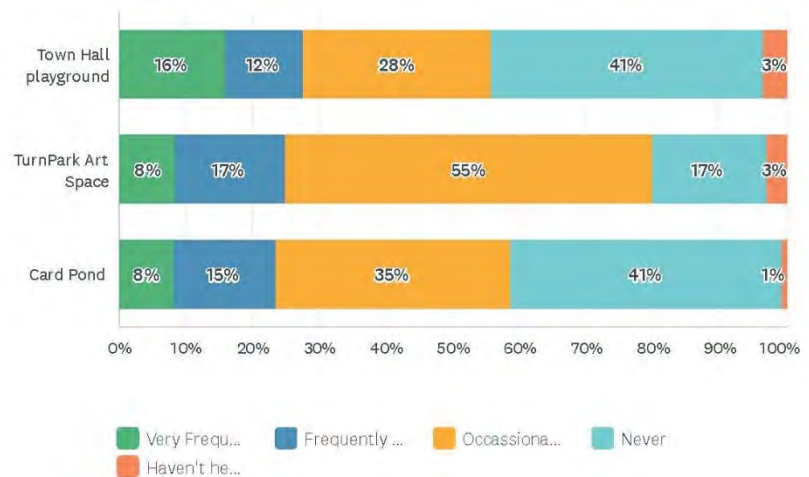
Summary of West Stockbridge's Recreational Needs

The Town issued a public survey to gauge residents' current outdoor recreational activities and ask their opinions on what additional recreational activities were needed in West Stockbridge. The 146 surveys that were filled out represented a total of 218 people (as calculated by respondents' self-reported household size). Of these, 97 people were 60 years of age or older, representing 44% of the total number of people represented. Twenty percent of people represented were aged 19 or under (12% were under 10 and 8% were ages 10-19).

When asked what outdoor activities they currently enjoy doing, 82% percent of survey respondents stated that they walked/hiked, the activity that was by far the most popular. The other top activities that respondents engaged in were gardening (69%), bicycling (51%), swimming (50%), bird watching (43%), and boating/canoeing/kayaking and playgrounds/swings/slides at 42% each.

The survey endeavored to understand the visitorship and use of three key park lands in West Stockbridge's Village Center area: TurnPark Art Space (a new privately-owned park and art space), Card Pond (which includes the town beach and a playground), and the Town Hall Playground site (which includes a playground, athletic fields, tennis courts and a skate park). Results indicated that the site used Very Frequently or Frequently by respondents was the Town Hall Playground site, closely followed by the TurnPark Art Space. However, when asked which of these three sites was their favorite, 43 respondents (47%) chose TurnPark as their favorite, with Card Pond coming in second with 29 respondents (32%)

Respondents choose their favorite of three Village Center parklands



Source: Survey Monkey, W. Stockbridge OSRP Questionnaire 2021.

West Stockbridge has several publicly-accessible conservation and recreation lands beyond the three parks discussed above. However, the vast majority of these lands are in a natural state, with very few trails or parking areas to facilitate visitation. Many of these lands cover steeply sloped hills, such as Harvey Mountain, Maple Hill WMA and Tom Ball Mountain. All three of the Fish & Game WMAs host vast acreages of river floodplain, wetlands and a few ponds. These lands are perfect for those who enjoy the wilderness experience, feel comfortable being alone in dense woodlands and can physically maneuver steep woodlands and ford streams. For those who would rather enjoy nature by hiking/walking along a trail system, there is very little formal opportunity in West Stockbridge to do so. It is telling that the favorite open space recreational land that received the most votes in the public survey was Olivia's Overlook, which has a trail system and stunning scenic views – even though the site is just outside of Town. This site received 43 votes (46%), far above the second-place and popular Town-owned site of Card Pond (18 votes / 19%). For residents who need trails on gentle terrain, there are no such sites in West Stockbridge.

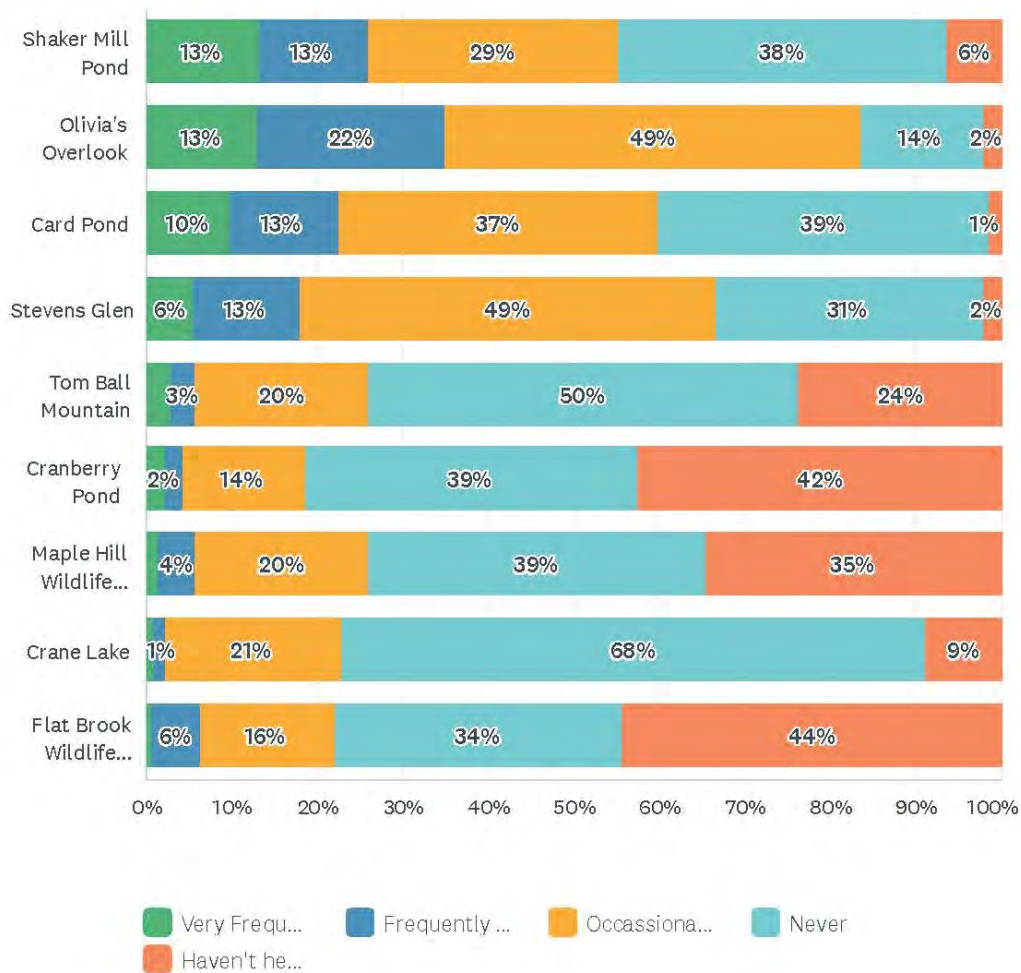
The open space public survey asked residents to identify who in West Stockbridge needs more recreational opportunities. Forty-seven percent of respondents cited a need for opportunities for Adults, which may reflect the high number of adults represented in the households who responded to the survey (80% of people within respondent households were aged 20 or older and more than half of that were aged 60 years or older). The Town lacks any trails where walking and hiking are available in level terrain that seniors could traverse.

In an open-ended questions, the public survey asked respondents to list what additional recreational opportunities they would like to see, 20 answers specifically called for walking and more accessible trails and routes. Additionally, 20 specifically requested bike accommodations, with most asking for an off-road bike path. Forty-two percent of respondents cited a need for Youth. Thirty-four percent of respondents answered that they Don't Know or were Neutral as to the Town's needs. This significant number may indicate that the recreational areas in West Stockbridge are not well known and/or that respondents did not feel qualified to answer this question.

The survey endeavored to understand residents' use of outdoor conservation / recreational lands in West Stockbridge, listing the nine sites that are open to the general public. Of the nine, Olivia's Overlook is by far the one that is most visited, with 50 respondents saying that they visited the site Very Frequently or Frequently. The other two sites that were cited as being visited Very Frequently or Frequently were Shaker Mill Pond (37 choices) and Card Pond (32 choices). When asked which one of the nine were

they favorite site, Olivia's Overlook again was chosen most often. Respondents reported that they have never heard of many of the sites, with these choices shown in Fig. 7.3 in orange in the far-right column.

Respondents choose the public open space sites they visit the most



Source: Survey Monkey, W. Stockbridge OSRP Questionnaire 2021.

Management Needs, Potential Change of Use

Residents indicated that Card Pond and Shaker Mill Pond are widely known and beloved water resources. Card Pond rated highly as a favorite spot in West Stockbridge. Twenty-two percent of respondents to the public survey stated that they visited Town-owned Card Pond Frequently or Very Frequently, and another 36% stated that they

visited the pond occasionally (a few times a year). Shaker Mill Pond was also often cited as a place that residents visited with 25% of respondents stating that they visited it Frequently or Very Frequently, and 28% stating that they visited it Occasionally.

Respondents were given an open-ended question, asking them what improvements they would suggest for their favorite open space lands. Both Card and Shaker Mill Ponds were mentioned very specifically. Twenty percent of respondents who listed a specific site stated the need for improved maintenance at Card Pond, with many citing the need to control excessive aquatic vegetation and goose droppings. Other respondents cited the need to improve the parking lot and add amenities such as a walking trail and some type of shading. Public enjoyment of this favorite spot is diminished by heavy Canada goose visitation, which leaves the beach, dock and water littered with feces.

The West Stockbridge Parks and Recreation Committee is the local body that oversees the Town's parks and conducts community events and activities. This volunteer committee works cooperatively with the Highway Department and the Town Administrator to maintain and improve the properties. Funds for capital improvements (such as playground equipment) and community activities (i.e. parades, festivals, Halloween and Santa events) come from budget items appropriated through Town Meeting. Through coordinated effort, the Town has conducted several projects that benefit the use of Card Pond, including herbicide applications to reduce aquatic plant cover, goose control measures in an effort to keep the birds off publicly used areas, and creating a complete sidewalk connection between the downtown area and the pond.

Ongoing aquatic plant management and goose control measures will need to be undertaken to continue safe swimming conditions. At the April 13, 2022 public forum, residents were asked to vote for draft actions that they believed should be prioritized for implementation. Actions calling for creating more of a park-like atmosphere on the property and developing a long-term pond management plan were voted as the second and third highest priorities respectively. Only pursuing an off-road walking/biking trail received more votes.

The Committee and Town envisions a Card Pond property that is even further improved. Initial designs have been drafted that include a walking trail along the pond, parking lot improvements, and lighting and shading amenities. The walking trail would provide a route on gentle terrain, which is needed. Additional improvements to maximize the use of the open field next to the parking lot are being considered. A grant was submitted to the Winter Shared Streets programs but was not successful. The Town plans to continue to pursue funding opportunities to design and complete the improvements.

The Parks and Recreation Committee would like to expand the recreational opportunities at the Town Hall Playground site and transform the site into a recreational hub. The site currently includes a playing field, tennis courts, skate park, playground and picnic area. The parking lot is currently ample for the use the site receives. Some residents informally walk the perimeter of the open, mowed area, and there is a desire to create a more formal, fully accessible walking track or path here. This would provide an accessible off-road walking track people of all abilities. A long-term goal of the Town is to also create an off-road walking route that would link this property and the downtown. The amenities that are available at both ends of the loop, including restrooms, picnic tables and benches, make this route favorable for seniors and families with children.

A one-mile walking loop from the Town Hall site to downtown is currently available along State Line Road, Albany Road and around the downtown commercial blocks. The loop starts at Town Hall, which has ample parking, and follows Albany Road, Main Street, Center Street, Depot Street and back along Albany Road to Town Hall. Crosswalks in the downtown are well marked. Although the traffic along Albany Road make this route less desirable than an off-road route, the picnic tables and benches located both at Town Hall and in the downtown area offer places to rest and visit. The shortcoming of this loop is the lack of a sidewalk for approximately 1,000 feet along the west side of Albany Road. There is a sidewalk on the eastern side of the road, but having to cross Albany Road is undesirable due to the high volume and speed of commercial and commuter traffic. Bridging the sidewalk gap would provide a one-mile accessible walking route along paved gentle terrain without having to cross the road. A second walking loop extending from the downtown to Card Lake provides another half-mile route with picnic and resting amenities found at each end of this route.

Another site which could offer walking on level terrain is the open field area nestled between the Town Cemetery and the St. Patrick's Cemetery. Creating a walking loop here could wind through the fields and go through the woodlands located at the rear of the property. This would provide a more varied landscape for those who would like to walk through a mix of field and forest.

The Highway Department manages the old town landfill on Oak Street, which may have habitat and recreational potential. This site is currently kept in a meadow condition and might be a good site to create a native wildflower pollinator meadow. Creation of a pathway with interpretive signage to explain the importance of pollinators could provide an educational experience for residents and visitors alike. Creating a picnic area would expand the enjoyment of this site and possibly offer a place for residents and visitors to

enjoy take-out food from the nearby restaurants. This site could be a spot along a future off-road walking path between Town Hall and the downtown area.

Twenty-one percent of respondents specifically cited the need to improve access to and add amenities at Shaker Mill Pond. Several respondents offered very specific improvements that would make these waterbodies more enjoyable. However, at this time the land surrounding the pond is privately owned, and public accessibility is limited to a small site near the dam.

When asked what additional recreational opportunities were needed, 30% of respondents indicated a need to have more hiking, walking and biking trails, with many citing a need for easy walking trails linking the downtown to other recreational areas. There are currently no off-road walking trails in West Stockbridge that are on gentle terrain. The only hiking trails are at Stevens Glen, which involve steep slopes and a very steep stairway. Creating walking loops between the Town Hall and downtown would meet this need. Creating a walking loop on the field next to the Town cemetery would partially meet this need, but there is no sidewalk linking this property to the downtown.

There is currently no trail to access Tom Ball Mountain, because the public access off Samantha Lane ends at the face of a sheer cliff. The Berkshire Natural Resources Council (BNRC) is in the process of securing an easement on private land so that the public can access Tom Ball Mountain from East Alford Road. BNRC owns large parcels of land adjacent to that owned by West Stockbridge, and this new access will provide an opportunity to create a large new trail system in Town. The hiking trails would undoubtedly be on steep terrain, but the slopes on this western side of the mountain are less steep than those on the eastern side, making it accessible to people of various abilities. The Town and BNRC will need to create safe and ample parking at the trailhead to avoid impacts to neighbors and traffic.

Fig. 7.4. Steep Terrain of Tom Ball Mountain



Twenty-two percent of respondents specifically mentioned their desire for safer ways to bicycle in West Stockbridge. Local bicyclists have stated that biking on Albany / Great Barrington Road (Rt 41) is dangerous due to lack of consistent shoulders and heavy speeding truck and car traffic. A 2004 bicycle study ranked biking enhancements for this

road as a high priority. This would likely require widening the road corridor to accommodate wider shoulders, an endeavor which would be costly. The other main route, along Stockbridge Road (Rt. 102), has more consistent shoulders, but it also carries heavy speeding truck and cars. Enhancements for several other main travel routes were also highlighted as needed.

Many of the survey respondents that cited a need for safer biking stated a desire to create a walking/biking trail along the old railroad corridor that parallels the Williams River and Great Barrington Road (Route 41). This need was restated by residents during a public forum held in April 2022, a hybrid meeting held in person and via zoom technology. Attendees of the forum was presented with a list of draft actions that had been drafted as a result of the open space and recreation planning process. Attendees of this forum were allowed to vote for the highest priority actions that they thought the Town should pursue. The draft action that was resoundingly favored and received the most votes was this - "Continue conversations with property owners along the old RR/National Grid Corridor" - receiving a total of 26 votes.

The corridor is currently used by local residents in an informal way, with general public use not sanctioned by the Town or National Grid, the latter of which is the landowner. The condition of the corridor, from the Great Barrington Road / Pixley Hill Road intersection south to the town border is in good shape and seems to be used fairly heavily. There is no formal trailhead parking, so the site can become crowded with cars. Creation of a pull-off within the old railroad corridor may alleviate this issue.

A movement to create a walking/biking trail along the old railroad corridor was undertaken several years ago. The route would follow along the corridor National Grid currently owns, extending northward from the West Stockbridge/Great Barrington town boundary, where the Housie Rail Trail currently ends, to the downtown area. This trail would provide approximately six miles of trail on easy terrain. If this trail were developed, it would provide approximately nine miles of trail that would link downtown West Stockbridge to the Village of Housatonic. National Grid has indicated that it would offer the use of the corridor to the Town if it wished to pursue development of a bike/pedestrian trail.

However, many landowners abutting the corridor oppose the creation of a formal, publicly accessible trail, citing concerns over potential loss of privacy and the encouragement of trespassing, nuisance and crime. The most ardent opposition appear to be from abutters who live north of the Great Barrington Road intersection. As such, efforts to develop the walking/biking trail along this corridor has stalled.

The same concerns were raised by abutters of the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail, a 13-mile multi-use rail trail traveling from Lanesborough to Adams. The first 11 miles of the trail was constructed by 2004. In 2014 a survey of abutting landowners was conducted to determine what impacts the rail trail has had on their property and privacy. Eighty percent of survey respondents stated that they were satisfied with the rail trail as a neighbor. When asked if living near the trail was better or worse than they expected, 45% said it was better than expected and another 44% said it was the same. The majority of respondents (86%) owned their property prior to the Trail being built, so they provide a good perspective of pre- and post-trail conditions.

During the planning process for this plan, some residents suggested that bicycle safety improvements be undertaken on several fronts, both on-road and off-road. If there were several safe bicycling options for bicyclists to use, then perhaps no one route would become over-used. This may alleviate some of abutters concerns that an off-road bike path would become crowded.

There were several additional suggestions made during the public survey, with many respondents mentioning the desire to promote and improve access to the state's natural areas, including directional signage to existing properties, parking and trails. Others expressed a desire to connect more public open space lands to the downtown area. Others cited a need, during the survey and at the public forum for a dog park, which would not only benefit local dogs but also create a way for neighbors to meet and socialize.

The Town of West Stockbridge has recently acquired a long-term easement on a two-acre portion of the National Grid corridor in the downtown area that is located on the corner of Moscow Road and Harris Street. The Town would like to create a greenspace here that will provide public outdoor space for visiting and to complement the shops and restaurants in the area. Picnicking and resting amenities in this area would further support downtown as key stop within a walking loop that has Town Hall on one end and Card Pond on the other end.

During the public open space survey, a significant number of respondents indicated that they had never heard of many of the open space lands listed. The DFW-owned properties received the most votes for not being heard of, with 42% of respondents citing that they had never heard of Flat Brook WMA, 42% had never heard of Cranberry Pond, and 33% had never heard of Maple Hill WMA. Many respondents stated that they might visit these areas if they know where they were located and how to access them. Additionally, 22% of respondents had never heard of Tom Ball Mountain.

The mission of DFW is to protect and preserve natural habitat areas without creating new roads or trails through its properties. As such, their lands are best enjoyed by those who prefer a wilderness experience. Those who prefer walking or hiking on trail systems tend not to utilize these lands. There is only one formal pull-off to the Maple Hill WMA, located in the very northern portion of the property off State Line Road. Two other informal pull-offs are located along Maple Hill Road. Access to this WMA would be increased if the old railroad / National Grid corridor was formally open to the public.

One way for people to better access the Flat Brook WMA may be through improved canoe/kayak access. Staff at the Western Region of DFW indicated that it may be possible to paddle from Cranberry Pond, along Flat Brook and on to Mud Pond / Shaker Mill Pond. This would offer better access to Shaker Mill Pond, which has been cited as a need. This “water trail” would consist of paddling open waterbodies, a stretch of forest stream and a stretch of open, small river corridor. The varied habitats provide paddlers with an opportunity view and enjoy a wide array of wildlife. Field work would need to be conducted to identify any possible safety hazards (such as buried logs) and to document water levels to ensure that there is a route that can be paddled most of the year. Beavers are known to be active in these waters and have created a few dams, so field work would also be needed to assess if dams will create barriers and require portage at key sites. There is already a car-top parking to Cranberry Lake, which is within DFW lands.

Another option to improve access to Flat Brook WMA would be to construct a pedestrian bridge over Flat Brook using the old railroad bridge abutments. The old railroad corridor associated with the abutments already provides a walking route through the site.

To aid Town officials in understanding how dedicated residents would be to financially support open space and recreation initiatives, the final question on the public survey asked residents to choose what improvements the Town should spend its limited open space /recreation funds on. Respondents were asked to choose up to three categories. The choice hiking/biking received the most votes (63 votes), closely followed by preserve wildlife corridors and habitat (61 votes) and preserve open space (59 votes).

West Stockbridge adopted the Massachusetts Community Preservation Act (CPA) in June 2020. The Town adopted a surtax of 2% on real estate taxes, with exemptions on low-income resident and the first \$100,000 valuation of residential real estate. The Town is in the process of creating a Community Preservation Act Committee and developing its operating procedures for use of the funds, and so no funds have yet been distributed. As of February 2022, the Town’s total revenue available for distribution was \$110,781.

The West Stockbridge Planning Board is considering conducting a comprehensive review of its zoning bylaws to facilitate economic development while also considering ways to encourage open space conservation. Development in recent decades have mostly been construction of large homes on large lots, which leads to larger residential footprints and deeper forest fragmentation. The Town would like to identify ways to encourage overall smaller footprints with dedicated open space conservation. For guidance, the Commonwealth has created the Smart Growth Toolkit and the Green Neighborhoods Alliance, formed by Mass Audubon and other groups, has developed model Open Space Residential Development bylaws and regulations that are being utilized successfully by many communities.

Goals & Actions

The goals and actions herein reflect the findings and recommendations that were developed during the concurrent drafting of two municipal plans: the *Open Space & Recreation Plan* and the *Master Plan*.

Goal #1: West Stockbridge's rural and natural landscape is protected and maintained; careful development does not impair this landscape.

- Finalize regulations and procedures so the Town can implement the Berkshire Scenic Mountains Act bylaw.
- Finalize procedures so the Town can consider grant applications to protect natural and cultural open space lands and expand outdoor recreation opportunities using Community Preservation Act funds.
- Support the Planning Board efforts to update the Town's zoning bylaws, encouraging strengthening of existing bylaws and drafting of new ones that conserve key wildlife habitat and cultural and scenic landscapes.
- Consider conveyance of the small Town-owned parcel within Williams River Access WMA to Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (DFW).

Goal #2: West Stockbridge's water resources are protected and of high quality.

- Develop a long-term pond management plan for Card Pond, with a focus on measures to control invasive aquatic plant growth and reduce goose visitation at the Town beach.
- Conduct a detailed survey to map the extent and densities of native and invasive plant communities within Shaker Mill Pond and along its shoreline; work with the Massachusetts Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program (NHESP) to develop a pond management plan for the pond that addresses invasive plant species while also being protective of the rare species that inhabit the pond.

- Protect aquatic habitat connectivity and reduce erosion and sedimentation in streams by conducting stream-road crossing improvements recommended in the Town's Hazard Mitigation Plan and Road-Stream Crossing Inventory. The stream-road crossing at Baker Road is a high priority.

Goal #3: Residents of all abilities have access to outdoor recreational opportunities, while respecting and maintaining the natural landscape in which these are set.

- Develop a long-term Site Plan for the Town Hall property to serve as a recreational hub and other potential future uses, such as senior housing and/or emergency services. Favored recreation items would be an accessible walking track around the perimeter of the Town Hall fields, a pavilion at the site to provide shade and cover, and off-road walking route to the downtown area.
- Create more of a park-like atmosphere at Card Pond:
 - Develop a walking loop around Card Pond; if a loop not feasible, create an in & out trail
 - Improve the parking lot
 - Consider ways to create a gathering place in the field next to the parking lot
 - Install a pavilion and/or other structures for shade and cover
- Develop a long-term Site Plan for the fields at the Village Cemetery site, considering uses such as a field/forest walking trail, dog park and/or an emergency services facility.
- Support Berkshire Natural Resources Council's (BNRC) efforts to create a trail system leading from East Alford Road to the public lands on Tom Ball Mountain; this will include trailhead parking.
- Support BNRC's long-term goal of creating a High Roads route that would link the downtown area to the Yokun Ridge Trail system, which reaches north to Bousquet Mountain in Pittsfield.

- Investigate opportunities to utilize the open fields of the Town's capped landfill on Oak Street; ideas could include a public picnic area and a wildflower/pollinator meadow with an interpretive trail.
- Pursue greenspace improvements to the Town's new acreage on Moscow Road / Harris Street.
- Work with DFW to improve access and use of the Flat Brook WMA, considering ideas such as:
 - Investigate the feasibility of creating a "water trail" that would connect Cranberry Pond, Crane Lake, Mud Pond, Shaker Mill Pond.
 - Investigate the feasibility of installing a pedestrian bridge at the former railroad crossing to improve access to the interior of the property, using the existing abutments if possible.
- Create safer biking routes across West Stockbridge, both on-road and off-road.
 - Complete a Tier II Complete Streets Prioritization Plan, using the 2004 Community Development Plan as a reference.
 - Continue investigating off-road routes, including having conversations with property owners along the old railroad / National Grid corridor.

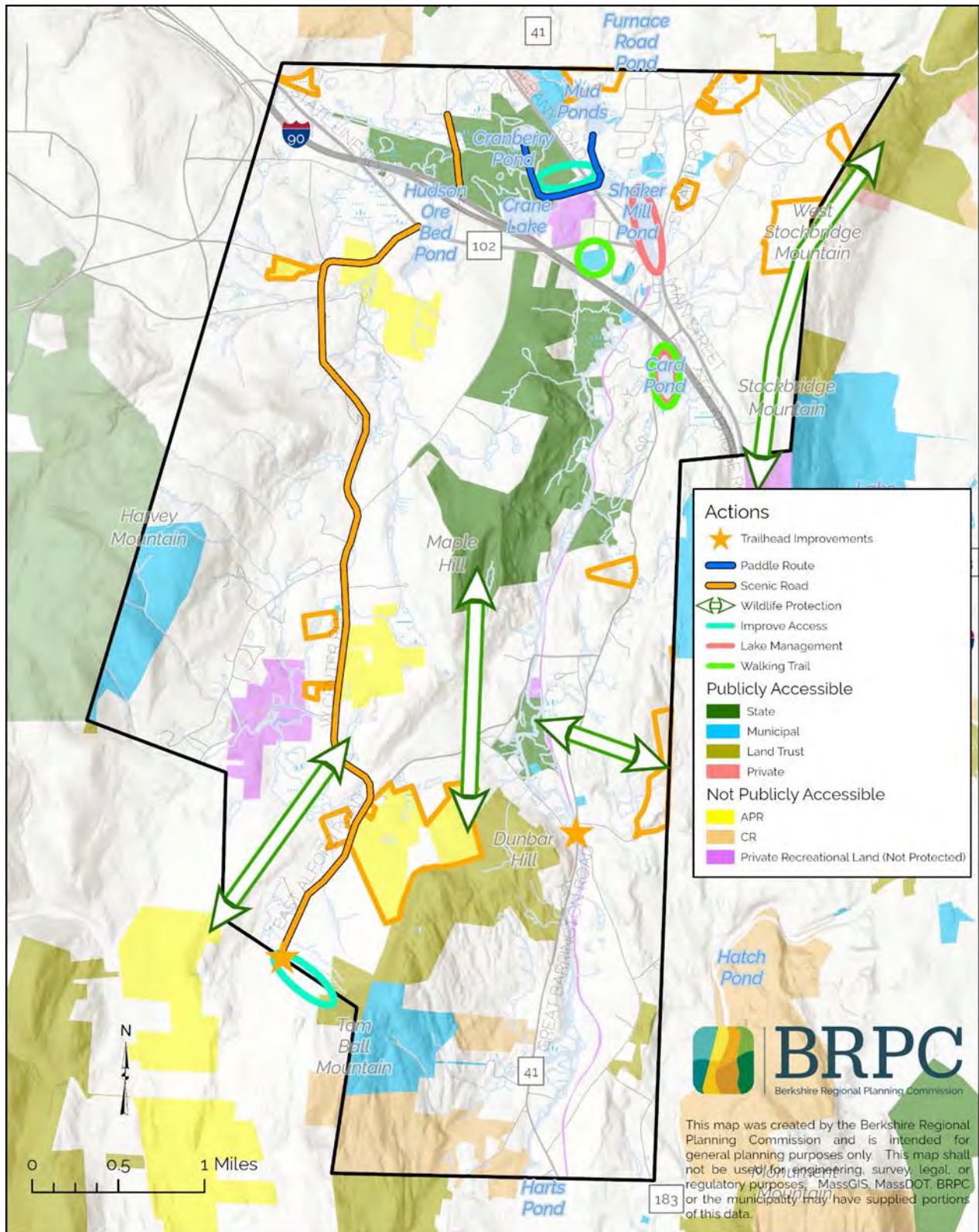
Seven-year Action Plan

Actions	Responsible Party or Lead	Priority / Timeline 2023-2028	Potential Funding
<i>Goal #1: West Stockbridge's rural and natural landscape is protected and maintained; careful development does not impair this landscape.</i>			
Finalize regulations and procedures so the Town can implement the Berkshire Scenic Mountains Act bylaw.	Conservation Commission (CC), Dept. of Conservation & Recreation	High / 2023-25	Town, District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA)
Finalize procedures so the Town can consider grant applications to protect natural and cultural open space lands and expand outdoor recreation opportunities using Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds.	Select Board (SB), future Community Preservation Committee (CPC)	High / 2023	Town
Support Planning Board efforts to update the Town's zoning bylaws, strengthening existing bylaws and drafting new ones that conserve key wildlife habitat and cultural and scenic landscapes.	Planning Board (PB)	High / 2023-28	Town, DLTA, MA Planning grants
Consider conveyance of the small Town-owned parcel within Williams River Access WMA to Div. of Fisheries and Wildlife (DFW).	SB, DFW	Low / 2025-28	Town
Support further development and public access to the Vision Committee's Tree Walk – possibly a brochure and/or installing tree species name plaques.	Vision Committee, P&R,	Low / 2022-24	Town, Cultural Commission, local garden clubs

Actions	Responsible Party or Lead	Priority / Timeline 2023-2028	Potential Funding
<i>Goal #2: West Stockbridge's water resources are protected and of high quality.</i>			
Develop a long-term pond management plan for Card Pond, with a focus on measures to control invasive aquatic plant growth and reduce goose visitation at the Town beach.	Parks & Recreation Committee (P&R), CC	High / 2024-27	Town, CPA
Conduct a detailed survey to map the extent and densities of native and invasive plant communities within Shaker Mill Pond and along its shoreline; work with the Mass. Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program (NHESP) to addresses invasive plant species while also being protective of rare species.	P&R, CC, NHESP	High / 2023-27	Town, CPA
Protect aquatic habitat connectivity and reduce erosion and sedimentation in streams by improvements recommended in the Town's Hazard Mitigation Plan and Road-Stream Crossing Inventory; crossing at Baker Road is a high priority.	Highway, CC, SB	High / 2023-28	Town, Trout Unlimited, Housatonic Valley Assoc. Grant, Div. Ecological Restoration, MA DOT
<i>Goal #3: Residents of all abilities have access to outdoor recreational opportunities, while respecting and maintaining the natural landscape in which these are set.</i>			
Develop a long-term Site Plan for the Town Hall property to serve as a recreational hub and other potential future uses, such as senior housing and/or emergency services; favored recreation items: accessible walking track, a pavilion, off-road walking route to the downtown area.	P&R, Highway, SB, PB, Council on Aging, Emergency Management Director	Medium / 2023-28	Town, Div. of Conservation Services (DCS) Grant, CPA, MassTrails

Actions	Responsible Party or Lead	Priority / Timeline 2023-2028	Potential Funding
Create more of a park-like atmosphere at Card Pond: walking loop, parking lot improvements, gathering place, pavilion or other structure for shade/cover.	Pks & Rec, Highway	High / 2023-28	DCS Grant, MA DOT, Town, CPA
Develop a long-term Site Plan for the fields at the Village Cemetery site; possibly field/forest walking trail, dog park, an emergency services facility.	P&R, Highway, SB, PB, Council on Aging, Emerg. Man. Dir.	Low / 2025-28	Town, CPA, DCS, MassTrails
Support Berkshire Natural Resources Council's (BNRC) efforts to create a trail system from East Alford Road to lands on Tom Ball Mountain, including trailhead parking.	BB, P&R, Highway, Volunteer hikers	High / 2023-28	BNRC, CPA, Highway, MassTrails
Support BNRC's long-term goal of creating a High Roads route that would link the Town Center to the Olivia's Overlook/Yokun Ridge Trail system.	SB, P&R, Volunteer hikers	Medium / 2028	BNRC, CPA, Highway
Investigate opportunities to utilize the open fields of the Town's landfill on Oak Street; ideas include a picnic area, a wildflower/pollinator meadow, dog park.	P&R, Highway	Low / 2025-28	Town, CPA
Pursue greenspace improvements to the Town's new acreage on Moscow Road / Harris Street.	SB, PB, Highway	High / 2023-28	Town, CPA
Work with DFW to improve access and use of the Flat Brook WMA: create a "water trail" connecting Cranberry Pond to Shaker Mill Pond; install a pedestrian bridge at the former railroad crossing.	DFW, CC, Volunteer kayakers, Volunteer hikers	Low / 2025-28	MassTrails
Improve safe biking routes across West Stockbridge, both on-road and off-road: Tier II Complete Streets Prioritization Plan; continue conversations with property owners along old RR/National Grid corridor.	Highway, P&R, Volunteer bikers & hikers	High / 2023-28	Highway, MA DOT, PARC, CPA

Summary of Actions Map



Summary of Actions Map Village Center Inset

