



Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs

Open Space and Recreation Plans Update

Melissa Cryan

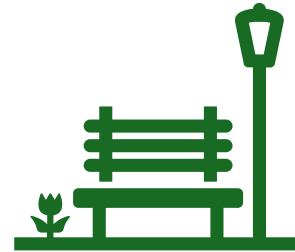
Division of Conservation Services

Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs

What is an Open Space and Recreation Plan?



A document that describes a community's open space and recreation resources



It is also a blueprint for action on open space and recreation topics for decision-makers in a community

What is Open Space?



Conservation land, forested land, recreation land, agricultural land, and amenities such as green buffers along roadways or any other predominantly undeveloped area



Owned by an agency or organization dedicated to conservation or recreation



Can also refer to undeveloped land with conservation or recreation potential, including vacant lots and brownfields that can be redeveloped into recreation areas or community green spaces



Passive vs. Active Recreation

- **Passive recreation** – any outdoor activity that occurs in a natural setting with minimum disturbance of the natural and cultural resources and that is consistent with quiet enjoyment of the land including walking, hiking, and nature study
- **Active recreation** – outdoor recreation that occurs in parks and requires significant alteration of the natural landscape to provide playground or active sports facilities including soccer, tennis, or baseball

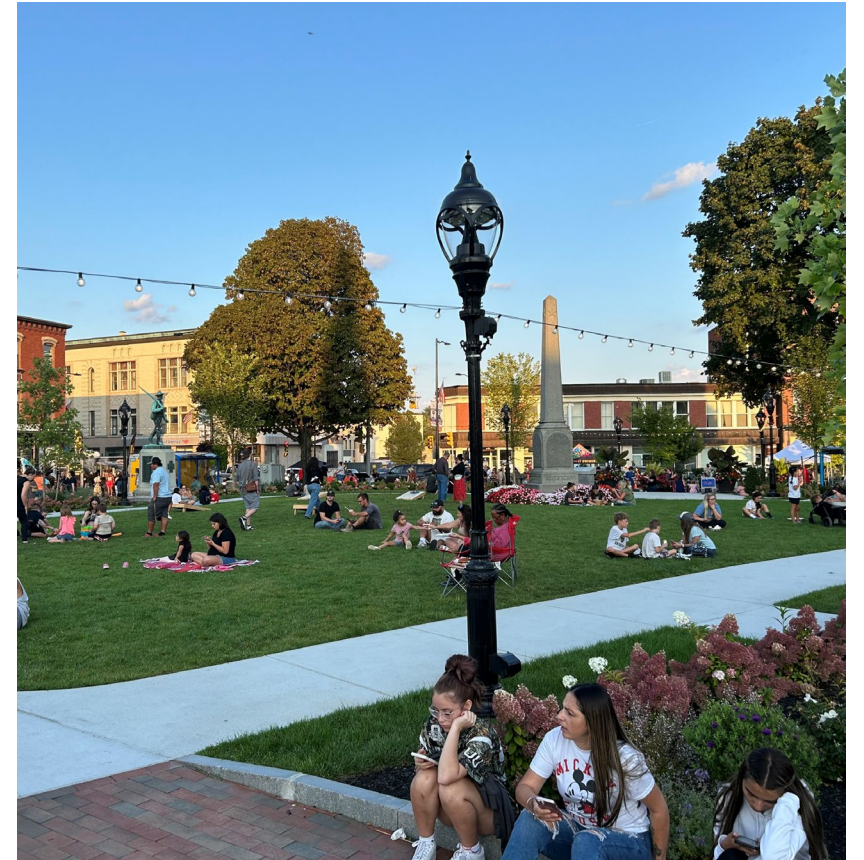


Reasons to Write an OSRP

- Gives the public a meaningful way to provide feedback on open space and recreation topics to municipal leaders
- Educates residents about conservation and recreation resources and amenities in their community, as well as any issues their communities are facing on these topics
- Integrates many sources of the community's natural resources' data into one document
- Makes the community eligible for certain grant funds

OSRP Planner's Workbook 2025 Update

- Current Workbook is from 2008 and much has changed since then
- Calls over the years to modernize the requirements and eliminate some that were deemed to be unnecessary
- Going back a few years, held calls with RPAs that produce a majority of OSRPs to hear feedback
- Reviewed letters received from some advocacy groups
- Asked state colleagues for updates to information on mapping, Open Space Act, BioMap, etc.
- Once Workbook was updated, sent out for feedback



Changes to 2025 OSRP Planner's Workbook

2008 Workbook

- Plan Summary
- Introduction
- Community Setting
- Environmental Inv. & Analysis
- Conservation & Recreation Lands Inventory
- Community Vision
- Analysis of Needs
- Goals and Objectives
- Action Plan
- Public Comments
- ADA
- Maps

2025 Workbook

- Executive Summary
- Introduction
- Community Setting
- Environmental Inv. & Analysis
- Conservation & Recreation Lands Inventory
- Analysis of Needs
- Action Plan
- Public Comments
- Maps

Section by Section Changes



Introduction – Office for Environmental Justice and Equity provided up-to-date information on EJ issues and resources



Throughout the Workbook, suggested page lengths for each section are provided



Community Setting

History of the Community section deleted

Demographics focusing only on open space and recreation



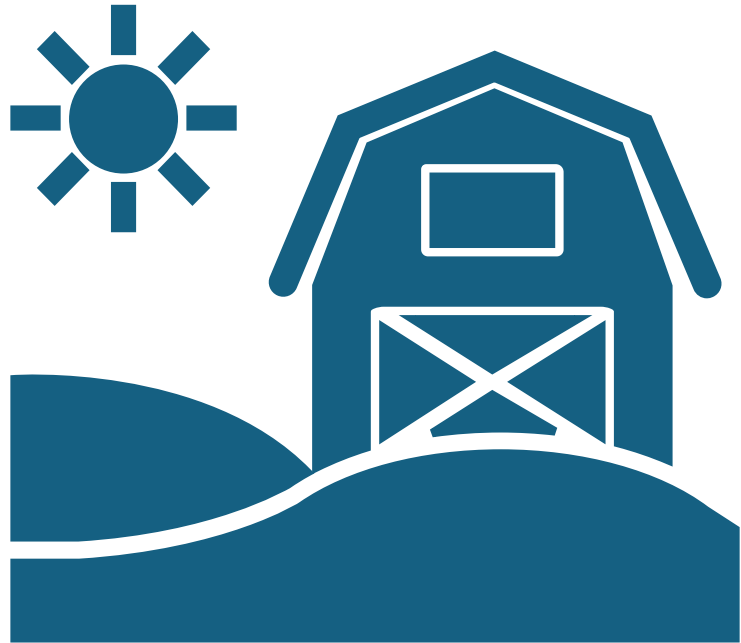
Growth and Development Patterns

Duplicative Patterns and Trends section deleted

Infrastructure section focusing on open space infrastructure only, such as sidewalks and bike paths

Long-term Development Patterns section – only focus on zoning’s impact on open space and recreation

Section by Section Changes



- Geology, Soils, and Topography – now focused solely on Soils and Topography
- Duplicative Landscape Characteristics deleted
- Vegetation/Fisheries and Wildlife – both sections now reference latest BioMap and clarifies level of species information needed
- Climate Change Impacts – new section
- Environmental Challenges section deleted
- Duplicative Community Vision section deleted
- Goals and Objectives section deleted and combined with Action Plan

Section by Section Changes

- Action Plans – now can be written for 10 years instead of seven
- Once DCS approves OSRP, Action Plan must be translated into most commonly spoken languages in your community (if relevant)



Section by Section Changes

- Public Comments – Letters of Review needed from Chief Executive Officer, Regional Planning Agency, Planning Board, Conservation Commission, and Recreation Commission (or Parks Department)
- ADA section deleted
- Maps – MassGIS is developing a dataviewer, Action Plan map no longer required, Climate Change Map now required



Regional Open Space and Recreation Plans

- Some of the Commonwealth's smaller communities by population share outdoor recreation and conservation resources
- DCS will therefore allow for communities with populations of 5,000 residents or less to partner on their OSRP
- The total population of the communities submitting an OSRP cannot total more than 10,000 residents
- The maximum number of communities submitting an OSRP together, regardless of population, is five
- Each community must share in the work, most importantly in the public participation process, and a lead person from each community must be appointed



Transitioning from Seven to Ten Year Plans

- Plans will now be approved for 10 years if a Ten-Year Action Plan is included in the OSRP
- Any communities that have submitted an OSRP over the past seven years will have six months to submit a new Action Plan (10 years vs. 7 years) that will provide an additional three years of eligibility
- Letters/emails will be sent to the contact person for each of the OSRPs to inform them of this change

Writing an OSRP



First step is starting an Open Space and Recreation Plan Committee



Members can come from local boards, interested citizens, and municipal employees



The lead author of the plan can be a volunteer, a municipal employee, graduate student, or a consultant (in some cases)



Committee members should reflect the diversity of the community (in all definitions of the word)

Public Participation Process



Many options – survey, public meeting, workshop, etc.



No set number or types that must happen – you know your community best



Widely advertise any event(s) being held



Helps to gather information on what land community members feel is important to protect, what recreational activities they'd like to see, etc.



Also helps to inform the community about the importance of open space and recreation in their community

Public Participation Process



Enhanced Outreach to EJ Populations



Enhanced Outreach is required to Environmental Justice Populations



More information on this is provided in Workbook



If your community has residents with limited English-language proficiency, translation services should be provided for any written materials, and interpretation services should be provided for public meetings

Open Space Inventory

Three types of required land inventories:

1. Municipally-owned Conservation and Recreation Properties
2. Public properties providing conservation and recreation amenities, but not held by municipal conservation or recreation departments
3. Permanently Protected Private Parcels

By identifying currently available conservation and recreation land in your community and the recreational amenities they provide (or could provide in the future), additional land that may be needed to provide requested outdoor recreational amenities begins to become clear



Action Plan

List of Goals and Objectives community will undertake over a 10-year timeframe to satisfy residents' needs as heard through public participation process



Usually in the form of a table with goals and objectives listed in some sort of priority order with a timeframe, responsible party, and funding source identified for each

Closing Thoughts

“What is really needed is time (12-18 months), an organizer, and community volunteers. Open Space and Recreation is generally a heart-warming topic. I've been working on our plans since the 1990s and I am genuinely amazed at the passion our volunteers bring to each planning cycle. I have a few holdovers from cycle to cycle, but each plan has brought forth new faces. The Public Involvement Plan is critical to a successful plan, not for just its input, but for its volunteer researchers, writers, field inspectors... And if you can find someone who can make the plan look attractive, then you've hit a home run.”



Contact Information

Melissa Cryan

100 Cambridge Street, 9th Floor

Boston, MA 02114

(857) 274-7173

melissa.cryan@mass.gov

<https://www.mass.gov/grant-programs-offered-by-the-division-of-conservation-services>