

Goals of the 2004 Open Space Plan

Goal A:

Protect and enhance existing open space assets, from neighborhood parks to recreational fields, natural areas and historic sites.

Goal B:

Increase public access to and enjoyment of our rivers, with new parks and trails that invite a variety of activities.

Goal C:

Provide recreational facilities that meet the needs of a diverse population, including youth, teens, families, elderly, and mobility-impaired residents.

Goal D:

Develop a network of safe, tree-lined streets and walking/cycling paths that provide better connections between existing neighborhoods and open space, and support greater physical activity and improved public health.

Goal E:

Initiate new public-private partnerships to build greater awareness, stewardship, and pride in our open spaces.

Goal F:

Improve management and maintenance of the city's open space resources.

2004 Five-Year Action Plan Priorities:

Following is a summary of recommendations in the 2004 Open Space Plan, including indications of progress made on each priority.

- ✓ *Indicates item has been addressed or accomplished.*
- *Indicates item is in progress or partially complete.*
- *Indicates item has not been addressed or accomplished.*

A. *Capital Projects*

I. *Current Park Projects*

- ✓ **Veterans Memorial Stadium**- Complete stadium renovations.
- ✓ **New Lawrence High School**- Complete construction of new playing fields at South Lawrence East, the new high school, and the Kane Gym site; complete renovations to Sullivan Park.
- ✓ **North Common**- Construct new baseball field as planned.
- ✓ **Den Rock Park**- Complete construction of new parking lot.
- **Oxford Paper site**- Complete remediation, site design and construction for new 2-acre passive park along the Spicket River.
- **Everett Mills Warehouse site**- Complete site design and construction for a new civic square at the corner of Canal and Union Streets.

- **Marston Street Park-** Work with Mass Highway to complete park construction and transfer ownership to City of Lawrence.
- ✓ **Brook Street Park-** Complete remediation, site design, and construction for new 2.7-acre neighborhood park along the Spicket River.
- ✓ **FEMA site-** Complete site design and construction for new 2-acre neighborhood park along the Spicket River.

II. *Recreational Improvements*

- **Bourgoin Square (West Street)-** Renovate and upgrade the existing field to create the city's first dedicated soccer facility.
- **Hayden-Schofield Playstead-** Redesign the park to improve condition of the ball fields, children's playground, and trail access along the Spicket River. *(Trail access has yet to be improved.)*
- **O'Connell South Common-** Renovate existing ball fields. *(Repairs to fencing, backstops have been made.)*
- ✓ **Mt. Vernon Park-** Improve/upgrade ball fields.
- ✓ **Misserville Skate Park-** Complete design and construction for a new skate park and riverfront trail in conjunction with school yard renovations.

III. *Historic Landscape Improvements*

- **North and South Commons-** Renovate historic commons, including tree trimming, soil improvements, and pathway reconstruction, as well as new plantings and lighting consistent with the historic character of the parks. *(17 new trees have been planted on the North Common since 2004. Several dead or dying trees have been removed as well.)*
- **North and South Canals-** Restore the city's historic canals, including stabilization of canal walls; restoration of locks, gates, machinery, and bridges; and new landscaping and walking paths along the canals.
- **Bellevue Cemetery-** Improve pathways, plantings, and other historic landscape features in the Bellevue cemetery. *(At least 12 new trees have been planted at Bellevue Cemetery since 2004.)*

IV. *Neighborhood Park Improvements*

- ✓ **Install new steel trash receptacles and recycling containers** in all city parks in place of the existing steel drums. New receptacles should match those installed in Phase One Park Improvements.
- ✓ **Storrow Park:** Complete design and construction for Phase Two park improvements, including new bbq/picnic area, sidewalk, and paths.
- ✓ **Reservoir:** Install new steel benches and park sign.
- **Rowell Park:** Identify improvements to make the park safer and more usable, including new play equipment and safety surfacing.
- **Highland Park:** Identify improvements to make the park safer and more usable.
- **Cronin Park:** Identify improvements to make the park safer and more usable, including new play equipment and safety surfacing. *(100% construction documents have been completed for the park's complete renovation; State grant funds for construction are pending.)*
- **Oxford Park:** Identify improvements to make the park safer and more usable, including new basketball courts and/or play equipment. Explore the feasibility of acquiring adjacent vacant lots for park expansion.

V. *New Parks*

- **Water Treatment Plant-** Initiate planning and design for a new riverfront park and walking paths on twenty acres of city-owned land adjacent to the water treatment plant.
- **Covanta site-** Work with property owners to develop new public parkland and walking trails around Stevens Pond. *(Final design phase for a new park is in process now; funding secured for spring 2009 construction.)*
- **Plycraft site-** Work with property owners to develop new publicly-accessible parkland and a walking trail along the south bank of the Merrimack River.
- **Wood Mill-** Work with property owner to develop new publicly-accessible parkland and a walking trail along the south bank of the Merrimack River. *(Pending Monarch redevelopment includes plans for open*

space adjacent to river and buildings; Riverwalk trail designs are 75% complete; pending release of State funding, the project could be constructed within the next 12 to 18 months.)

- **Ultimate Window site-** Work with property owner to develop new publicly-accessible parkland and walking trail along the north bank of the Merrimack River.
- **Duck Mill-** Work with property owner to develop new publicly-accessible parkland and a walking trail along the north bank of the Merrimack River.
- **Tomborello Site-** Work with property owner to develop new publicly-accessible parkland and parking for the Parthum School and surrounding neighborhood. *(This site was featured as a potential lot for sale at the City of Lawrence's*

VI. *New Walking/ Cycling Trails:*

- **Boathouse Trail Connector:** Build a new trail connecting the Lawrence Boathouse to the Merrimack River Trail in Andover.
- **Merrimack River Trail (north bank):** Build a new riverfront trail along the north bank of the Merrimack River from the Water Treatment Plant to Broadway.
- **North Canal/ Pemberton Park Loop:** Build a new walking path along the south side of the North Canal, connecting the existing tow path and Pemberton Park.
- **Spicket River Greenway:** Build a new walking/cycling trail along the Spicket River, connecting schools, neighborhoods, and parks. *(Survey and 100% construction documents will be completed this fall; funds to support construction are currently being sought.)*
- **Merrimack River Trail (south bank)-** Build a new trail along the south bank of the Merrimack River from Broadway to Route 495. *(Riverwalk trail designs are 75% complete; pending release of State funding, the project could be constructed within the next 12 to 18 months.)*
- **Merrimack/Shawsheen Connector:** Build a new trail connecting the Merrimack River and the Shawsheen River Trail at Costello Park.
- **Shawsheen River Canoe Launch:** Work with the Hampton Inn to secure access to the Shawsheen River for canoe launches.
- **Rails-to-Trails Feasibility Study:** Conduct a feasibility study for rails-to-trails development of unused rail corridors.
- **Merrimack Street:** Redesign Merrimack Street as a tree-lined boulevard with cycle lanes and improved sidewalks linking riverfront areas, the South Canal, and the new train station.

B. *Maintenance and Programming*

- Increase the resources available to DPW and the Recreation Department for maintenance and programming in the parks.
- Hire Lawrence youth to assist with parks maintenance during the summer months. *(Lawrence Outdoor Youth Corps had operated for 3 years; currently inactive due to lacking funds; exploration of Outdoor Youth Corps maintenance of Riverwalk project, once constructed, is being considered.)*
- Conduct feasibility study for relocation of the City Yard to create additional storage space and improved DPW facilities.

C. *Resource Protection*

- ✓ Create a local wetlands bylaw. *(Drafted by Conservation Commission in cooperation with Groundwork Lawrence; passed unanimously by City Council in 2006.)*
- If necessary create additional conservation restrictions for Jacques Pond, Donovan Park and the Shawsheen River wetlands.
- ✓ Conduct a citywide street tree survey to determine location, species, and conditions of trees. Based on this information, establish citywide standards and management practices for street trees. *(Completed by Groundwork Lawrence in 2004.)*
- Conduct a stem-by-stem inventory of trees in city parks, and label rare and historic trees.
- Rezone existing public parks to Open Space for additional recognition and protection. *(Newly constructed parks built with State grant funding are required to undergo a zoning change to Open Space and Recreation, so the following parks have been re-zoned accordingly: Misserville Park, Scarito Park, Kennedy Playstead; likewise, Manchester Street Park will be re-zoned before end of 2009.)*

D. Environmental Education

- Work with the Lawrence School Department, teachers and students to renovate existing schoolyards for outdoor classrooms and learning environments. (*A schoolyard garden has been built at the Leonard School. Additional beds are pending further discussion with the Lawrence School Department.*)
- Coordinate with public and private schools to establish a citywide “Day of Service” in the parks for Lawrence youth. (*Earth Day and the Spicket River Cleanup are two events that engage hundreds of Lawrence youth as volunteers.*)

E. Healthy Neighborhoods

- Conduct an inventory of all city streets to document the condition of roadways, sidewalks and lighting and evaluate the level of pedestrian and vehicle safety. (*Groundwork Lawrence’s youth Green Team program members have been assessing intersections across the City with “walking audits” to help illustrate the need for safer pedestrian conditions, and advance plans for traffic calming measures at unsafe locations.*)
- Create a citywide pedestrian/bicycle plan to improve the safety and aesthetic character of city streets and encourage walking and cycling.
- ✓ Pilot a neighborhood “Adopt-a-Tree” program to engage residents in tree planting and maintenance in their front yards. (*Groundwork Lawrence operates a “GreenStreets” program—whereby residents can receive free trees if planted on private property but within 20 feet of a public right-of-way. To date over 40 trees have been planted through this program; another 60 trees are planned for 2009.*)
- Work with neighborhood residents to identify vacant lots suitable for development as small parks or gardens. (*Vacant lots are currently being utilized in various neighborhoods around the City. Groundwork Lawrence is leading an effort to identify and develop new community garden sites in suitable locations where there is interest among residents.*)

F. Citizen Involvement

- Create a Parks and Recreation Commission to coordinate open space development, maintenance, and programming efforts across the City.
- Pilot a citywide “Adopt-a-Park” program to encourage citizen involvement and volunteer efforts in the parks. (*Groundwork Lawrence has been exploring possible Adopt-a-Park program efforts that engage local citizens as park support volunteers.*)

Open Space Improvements Made Since 2004
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In sum, since 2004, the City of Lawrence has invested \$12.5M in its parks, open spaces, and recreational fields. This investment has leveraged an additional \$1.5M in State funding in our open spaces as well. Below is a list of the projects that emerged as a result of those investments.

Phase II Parks Improvement Plan: Renovation and repairs of fencing, players’ benches, bleachers, and fields, as well as installation of signage and trash receptacles at Hayden Schofield and Howard Playsteads, O’Neill and Oliver Fields, Gagnon Park, Bruce School, Frost School, and Guilmette School (completed fall 2006).

Phase III Parks Improvement Plan: Installation of new field lighting at Hayden Schofield, signage for parks across the city, design of Cronin Park renovation, and a feasibility study of drainage at Hayden Schofield (completed spring 2008).

Renovation of Veterans Memorial Stadium: Construction of new fields at the high school (completed summer 2007).

Renovation of Mount Vernon Park: Construction of new fields, lighting, and concession stand (completed fall 2007).

Construction of a new ball field on the North Common: Design and construction of ball field.

New neighborhood park on former industrial laundry site on the Spicket River: Today called Dr. Nina Scarito Park. Park design, site cleanup, and park construction, including play equipment, basketball court, walking paths, community gardens, grassy open field, trees, a gazebo, a picnic structure, benches, trash receptacles, and picnic tables (completed fall 2006).

New neighborhood park on former "FEMA land": adjacent to the Spicket River at Central Catholic High School, known today as Kennedy Playstead;. Park construction included a walking path, play equipment, new trees, benches, interpretive signage, and trash receptacles (completed fall 2007).

New neighborhood park on former schoolyard at Misserville School: Park design and construction included basketball courts, turf field, a skate park, and schoolyard garden beds (completed fall 2007).

New public plaza on Merrimack Street: as part of new MVRTA intermodal transportation center (completed in 2006).

Newly landscaped parking lot and signage at Den Rock Park: Design and construction of parking lot and signage completed fall 2004; trail improvements, signage, and wetland viewing platform inside the park installed in 2005 and 2006.

Manchester Street Park: On the former incinerator site at 85 Manchester Street, site cleanup and park construction slated for spring 2009; park opening anticipated fall of 2009.