

9 | SEVEN YEAR ACTION PLAN

The mission of the Seven-Year Action Plan is to categorize and describe attainable action items that strengthen and support the goals of the OSRP. The action items are a blend of conceptual and concrete projects and/or initiatives. Where appropriate, they will reference other departmental planning documents to strengthen connections in overall Town planning efforts.

The action items in the following plan were not conceived in a vacuum, nor can they be implemented in one. These action items are building blocks that have been identified to compliment, support, and respond to other comprehensive planning and goal-setting initiatives underway within the Town of Lexington. As these other initiatives were authored by many different Town departments and committees, with the support and participation of stakeholder groups, surrounding communities, and the general public, to address these objectives through the action items will require organizational collaboration between departments. Enhancing the methods and means of collaboration is a key focus of the OSRP and is featured prominently within the Communication goal.

The Seven-Year Action Plan is also useful in identifying which actions may need to be prioritized in order to make the most progress. In 2015, the OSRP described the need for increased funding, oversight of other departments, and support from other departments as the three most essential priorities for that year's plan. With the goals re-contextualized as a means to introduce synergy rather than a means to achieving an end, the action items that come to the forefront have begun to shift. For example, there are still competing needs between various interest groups, particularly where land acquisition is concerned. Where the 2015 plan suggested creating a new singular body in the form of an oversight committee to coordinate the actions of various groups towards the goals laid out in the OSRP, the 2022 plan suggests undoing some of the compartmentalization that has been put in place in the past. In this way, the 2022 OSRP is designed to fit into a broader network of planning initiatives; it is not suggested that its goals attempt to take precedence over the goals of any other plan.

At the end of this chapter, the new Seven-Year Action Plan will be introduced. This plan aims to identify a key intention for each departmental undertaking, based around the eight new goals and new priorities of coordination, streamlining, and long-term planning.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS SINCE 2015

The OSRP is a living document that views its list of goals not as a board to be cleared but as lenses through which to organize work. Though the format of the goals has changed with the 2022 update, this basic principle has remained. Since 2015, few objectives from the action plan were left unexamined.

The following is a summary of significant accomplishments since the 2015 Plan was adopted.

Goal 1: Establish and implement a land management program that will assure optimal maintenance and use of conservation lands.

- *Continue to develop and implement conservation land management plans that address both town-wide and site-specific issues, including invasive species (approximately two each year).*

The Conservation Division completed a *Principles and Policies for Management of Lexington Conservation Land* plan and has created targeted land management plans for Cotton Farm, the Leary Property at Lower Vine Brook, Wright Farm, and Willard's Woods and the Chiesa Farm Field Management Plan using various funding sources including CPA funding.

- *Continue to coordinate and build capacity for volunteer organizations that assist Town staff in monitoring and maintaining Town conservation lands.*

The Conservation Division continues to engage more than 1,000 hours of volunteer labor annually and has developed partnerships with Grace Chapel, Boy Scout Troops 10, 119, and 160, Girl Scout Troop GS 63054, Lexington High School 9th Grade honors earth science faculty, Minuteman Technical High School environmental science faculty, Boston Cares' corporate volunteer program, among others.

The Conservation Division has collaborated with Eagle Scout candidates in installing improvements at multiple sites over the last seven years, including new benches and picnic tables, boardwalk and fence repairs, signage improvements, installation of a firepit, improvements at the Idylwilde Community Gardens, and trail maintenance.

- *Increase funding to support conservation efforts and projects.*

Over the last seven years, the Conservation Division has raised approximately \$5,000 annually through annual citizen donations to the Lexington Nature Trust and another \$15,000 annually to the Lexington Nature Trust Fund through MOU agreements with various commercial developments in Town. In addition, the Conservation Division received funding through Program Improvement Requests for additional summer field crew staffing in FY20 and for the purchase of land management equipment in FY17 and FY20. Utilizing CPA funding, the Conservation Division has secured approximately \$1,537,000 in funding for conservation projects and land acquisitions. An additional \$20,900 has been secured through other grants.

- *Increase visibility of conservation area through standardized kiosks, entryways and wayfinding signage, and provide visitor amenities such as bike racks and parking. Include ACROSS Lexington as part of this effort.*

The Conservation Division installed 12 new informational kiosks using two standardized designs, re-installed new standardized entry-way signage at 16 property entrances and developed a standardized wayfinding signage system that has been installed at Whipple Hill, Lower Vine Brook, and Meagherville. Interpretative educational signage was installed at three sites: Cotton Farm, Hayden Woods, and Parker Meadow.

Conservation Division staff supported the planning and marking of a number of new ACROSS Lexington routes.

Bike racks were installed at 10 conservation entrances through a MAPC grant and in partnership with the Planning Department. The parking areas at Cotton Farm and Parker Meadow have been reconstructed for accessibility with plans to upgrade the parking at Willard's Woods.

Goal 2: Protect Lexington's natural environment, both within and beyond the borders of open space and recreational properties:

- *Continue to identify, certify, and protect vernal pools in Lexington. Outreach to landowners regarding vernal pool identification and certification.*

Since 2015, four vernal pools have been certified in Lexington. Conservation Division staff collaborated with volunteers and Lexington High School Conservation Club members to do a more thorough vernal pool assessment in 2021 and 2022.

The Conservation Division protected two sensitive open space parcels, totaling 4.63 acres and containing two certified vernal pools, through a generous conservation land donation from the Burns Family.

- *Coordinate with neighboring municipalities to protect and maintain lands of conservation or wetland significance.*

The Conservation Commission has been actively engaged with Arlington Conservation for the Arlington Great Meadows and Reservoir, Burlington Conservation Department and Friends of the Landlocked Forest for trail connections between Wright Farm and the Burlington Landlocked Forest, Cambridge Water Department for their water supply, as well as the Towns of Lincoln and Concord for regional collaboration within surrounding towns.

- *Implement land management plans for strategically managing invasive plant and pest species in Lexington, working with the Tree Committee, volunteer citizen groups, non-profit organizations, and schools.*

The Conservation Division developed the comprehensive *Principles and Policies for Management of Lexington Conservation Land* document as well as five site-specific land management plans at Cotton Farm, Wright Farm, the Leary Property at Lower Vine Brook, Willard's Woods, and Chiesa Farms that address invasive plant management. These land management plans have resulted in annual work to control black swallowwort, garlic mustard, Japanese stiltgrass and Japanese knotweed, among other high priority invasive plants.

In 2016, the Conservation Division formed the Lexington Invasive Plant Task Force with representation from the Conservation Stewards, Citizens for Lexington Conservation, and DPW to help plan and prioritize invasive plant projects in Lexington.

- *Improve management of conservation restrictions.*

Conservation Division staff and members of the Citizens for Lexington Conservation are in the process of filing conservation restrictions and baseline documentation for four Town-owned conservation properties purchased with CPA funding; the Leary Property at Lower Vine Brook, Cotton Farm, and the two "Goodwin Parcels". These parcels are monitored on an annual basis by Citizens for Lexington Conservation volunteers in coordination with Conservation staff. Conservation Division staff are currently working on prioritizing vulnerable Town-held conservation restrictions with plans to develop baseline documentation and institute a monitoring program starting in the future.

- *Continue to update web-based resources to educate Lexington residents on conservation related information.*

Conservation Division Staff supported the new Town website update in 2022 and improved and streamlined volunteer sign up and reporting. Staff have developed several new webpages available on the Conservation Division website: Current Conservation Projects, Invasive Plants in Lexington, and Public Land and Trails. In addition, online forms for registering as a volunteer Steward and for reporting volunteer hours and filing monitoring reports were added and are used frequently.

Goal 3: Promote public use of recreational facilities and open space among a wide variety of user types:

- *Increase outreach and education efforts to local and social media sources, and e-mail subscriber lists regarding recreation and conservation resources and programs and events, including new programs at the Community Center.*

The Conservation Division publishes between 2-4 articles in the Lexington Minuteman annually to promote its projects and posts to both the Town's and the Lexington Minuteman's online events calendars to promote volunteer events. Conservation events and other notices are included in the Town's overall weekly emails. Conservation staff also publish a monthly E-newsletter for volunteer Conservation Stewards.

The Recreation & Community Programs Department has implemented the use of several marketing/outreach tools including Facebook, Instagram, a monthly e-newsletter, and an upgraded website. A Capital landing page was added to the website to maintain project updates, presentations and information. In addition, Recreation now places A-frames with capital updates, seasonal registration information and event announcements through the park system. The Recreation & Community Programs Department has also joined the Chamber of Commerce and participates in the Community Coalition Coffee Hours.

In 2021, Recreation & Community Programs Department staff offered a Lexington Park Pop-Up Series. The year-long series rotated through various parks and open spaces in Lexington, a different one each month, offering safe, organized activities that engaged the community and exposed residents to areas that may have been unfamiliar. The goal was to encourage residents to return to the parks in the future, fostering stewardship and continued exercise. The activities promoted heart health, diverse abilities, artistic expression and friendly competition.

Events held by the Conservation Division have included annual fall apple picking events at Cotton Farm, spring celebration events at Wright Farm, and the Nature Speaker Series in 2021 and 2022 in collaboration with Lexington Living Landscapes (LLL). The Conservation Division also collaborated with LLL to establish a native pollinator kit program.

In Fall 2018, the Conservation Division hosted a series of free public programs at Wright Farm in partnership with the Recreation & Community Programs Department and in 2019 hosted a series of free public workshops on home orchard care at Cotton Farm. The Recreation & Community Programs Department is able to register participants in these various events through their online system.

- *Offer regular open space education activities throughout the year.*

The Conservation Division and Recreation & Community Programs Department have hosted numerous educational activities, including the aforementioned free joint public workshops at Wright Farm and Cotton Farm. In collaboration with UMass hosted a bee ID workshop in summer 2022. The Citizens for Lexington Conservation offer free public bird and nature walks for residents at Conservation areas typically in the spring and fall, beginning in 2015. Conservation Rangers lead dendrology workshops in the winter and hosted a bee identification workshop in the summer of 2022. In addition, the Conservation Division hosts periodic trainings for its Steward volunteers.

Since 2019, the Town of Lexington has participated in the City Nature Challenge, an international event taking place annually in Spring to catalog wildlife in urban areas. In 2022, 50 participants collaborated to identify 339 unique species in Town.

- *Plan and construct improvements that will provide access to programs and facilities for residents with disabilities, using ADA and MA AAB standards.*

The first universally accessible loop trail in the Lexington trail system was constructed at Parker Meadow in 2022, supported by CPA funding. As a part of the accessibility improvements at the site, parking upgrades were also constructed. Another universal access trail is under construction at Cotton Farm, which will also include accessible parking. The Conservation Division also received CPA funding in FY20 for the design of universally accessible parking and trail improvements to Willard's Woods. A

¹ For more information on the CHNA initiative and programming in Lexington, visit the CHNA15 Homepage: <https://www.chna15.org/home>

concept plan for the improvements at Willard's Woods was completed in 2021, and is expected to be submitted to the CPC for construction funding for FY24.

The Recreation & Community Programs Department completed the ADA Study of Recreation facilities in 2017. Since then, renovations and accessible improvements have been made to a number of facilities, including accessible pathways at Diamond Middle School, Sutherland Park, Marvin Park, the Center Reservation Complex, the Old Reservoir Bathhouse, and the Pine Meadows Golf Course; parking and pathway improvements at Adams Park and the Community Center; ADA bleacher systems at Lincoln Field #2 and the Center Recreation Complex; and an accessible family changing room and new accessible lifts at the Town Pool.

Lexington engages with the Commonwealth's Community Health Network Area (CHNA) initiative as a part of CHNA15, which supports the development of programming to encourage community members of all ages and abilities to visit and use open space and recreation areas.¹

In 2019, a part-time Certified Therapeutic Recreation Specialist (CTRS) was hired to develop and create an inclusion program. The position became full-time in 2020.

- *Work with other Town departments and citizen groups to identify how to best increase the use of recreational facilities and programs, including the feasibility for lighting athletic fields.*

The Recreation & Community Programs Department completed a Community Needs Assessment to guide future program, service and facility planning based on outcomes and trends. Goals and objectives from the Community Needs Assessment were referenced to create the 8 updated goals for the 2022 OSRP Update. A playground audit of all Town playgrounds was also completed in 2020 to determine the lifespan of existing facilities, in addition to reviewing the sites for accessibility.

Goal 4: Provide a balance of recreational activities for all of Lexington's citizens:

- *Continue to be cognizant of the need to diversify year-round recreational opportunities to reflect Lexington's demographics, including specialized events with local cultural organizations.*

In 2017, a Community Stakeholders group was created that meets quarterly to discuss best practices, trends and supportive resources. An annual Community Open House highlighting Town-wide summer opportunities for youth and teens was launched in 2018.

- *Establish programs for the new Community Center to meet the diverse needs of Lexington's citizens.*

New inclusion programs and events are now offered, including accessible raised sensory garden, a Harvest Fest, and the Drums Alive program. The Town has also incorporated inclusion services in adult and youth fitness programs and youth STEM programs. Accessible outdoor fitness equipment has been installed at the Community Center.

The Community Center began offering a Parent Academy sponsored by the Recreation & Community Programs Department, Human Services, and Lexington Public Schools in 2017. In 2018, the financial aid program for Community Center programming was updated to provide more access to community members in need.

- *Maximize use of current facilities, including the new Community Center and continue efforts to promote the use of the Pine Meadows Golf Course.*

The Community Center has added dozens of new out-of-school-time youth programs and explored introducing an extended day summer program. The Recreation & Community Programs Department began offering an annual end of summer outdoor movie & community celebration at the Community Center in Summer 2016. Recreation & Community Programs also hosts an overnight family camp-out at the Community Center in the summertime.

The Pine Meadows Golf Course joined the Chamber of Commerce in 2018. Since then, the PMGC has replaced and installed new tee signs throughout the course, implemented a new online tee time system and hosted its first full day tournament with the Lexington Education Foundation.

In addition, the Recreation & Community Programs Department oversaw the development of multi-use tennis courts with the addition of pickleball lines on 11 tennis courts, for a total of 18 pickleball courts and 17 tennis courts in Town. Service days and hours were expanded during the summer sports clinics and tennis programs. The Recreation & Community Programs Department also took over the administration of the Battle Green Tennis League.

- *Collaborate with other Town departments and citizens groups to explore options for expanding programs and additional facilities such as ballfields and dog parks.*

The Recreation & Community Programs Department created a Community Stakeholders working group to discuss best practices, trends and supportive resources and has refocused the Youth Sports Council to include permitting groups representing sports for all ages. In addition, 2020 saw the launch of an annual Community Forum, connecting committees such as Recreation, Human Services, Council on Aging, Youth Commission, Historical and Library to align goals and efforts in the coming years.

Goal 5. Enhance connectivity between open space and recreation areas:

- *Continue to develop and enhance the ACROSS Lexington system.*

The Greenways Corridor Committee has overseen the development of the ACROSS Lexington trail network with ongoing support from the Conservation Division and the Recreation & Community Programs Department. Since 2015, 10 new routes have added 30 miles to the ACROSS system. The system now totals 47 miles.

The Recreation & Community Programs Department has begun implementing guided walks with collaboration with ACROSS Lexington.

- *Work with neighboring communities and citizen groups to formalize trail connections between open space and recreation areas within and outside of Lexington.*

The Greenways Corridor Committee (GCC) has spearheaded efforts to connect the ACROSS Lexington trail network to trails in other communities. Connections have been made from Lexington Conservation Land to the Arlington Great Meadows and the Arlington Reservoir. The GCC is currently working on establishing connections with the Land Locked Forest in Burlington and the Western Greenway in Waltham/Belmont.

The Town approved funding in 2021 for a Pedestrian and Bike Master Plan that will kick off in 2023. This Plan will enhance multi-modal connections to open space, recreation areas, and other key locations.

Lexington's Transportation Services developed a program in 2019 called "Lexpress Walks" as a way to help seniors and others who do not drive an opportunity to explore our many conservation areas that are along our Lexpress bus routes.

Goal 6. Acquire and protect parcels that are important from an environmental, recreational, or historical perspective.

- *Identify parcels that have one or more of the following attributes: enhances Town character, provides wildlife habitat or connects isolated areas of habitat, protects water quality, contains important natural features and resources, improves public access to open space, has historical or cultural value, provides recreational opportunities, and/or connects existing Town open space parcels to facilitate non-motorized transportation routes and recreation routes.*

In 2015, the approximately one-acre Wright Farm house lot was purchased by the Town; the lot was divided in 2020 with a portion turned over to the Conservation Division.

In 2017, Turning Mill Pond Conservation Area was expanded by 2.88 acres through a generous donation by David and Harriet Kaufman.

In 2018, Lower Vine Brook Conservation Area was expanded by 4.63 acres through a generous donation by the Burns Family.

In 2019, the Kendall Road and Sherburne Road lots, totaling 5.3 acres, were purchased/acquired by conservation for permanent protection.

In 2021, a 4.5 acre lot on Highland Avenue adjacent to the Upper Vine Brook Conservation Area was acquired, and the Conservation Division accepted a generous donation of land by the Domingos Family, approximately 17,700 square feet, at 359 Lincoln Street (M. P.).

Goal 7. Protect and maintain Lexington's water resources.

- *Continue to collaborate with Engineering on NPDES MS4 permit to address stormwater run-off pollution and other issues affecting brook health and function.*

The Conservation Division collaborates with the Engineering Division with compliance and reporting on the MS4 NPDES permit on an annual basis and has completed several culvert upgrade projects and stream restoration projects, including the Willard's Woods stream daylighting and Whipple Hill stream restoration projects which were identified in Watershed Management Plans established for the Mystic, Charles, and Shawsheen watersheds. The Watershed Stewardship Program developed by the Conservation and Engineering Divisions has evolved into the "Stream Team Water Sampling Program" run by the Engineering Division in partnership with UMass Lowell.

Conservation and Engineering have also been participating members of the Mystic River Stormwater Collaborative since 2018 to target improvements to flooding and water quality in the watershed on a regional level. Through the Collaborative, several key public outreach and educational materials have been developed, including a video regarding stormwater runoff as well as brochures about salt and deicers, leaf litter and proper disposal, low impact development, fertilizer use, grass clippings, dog waste, construction best management practices, dumpster maintenance, parking lot maintenance and street sweepings.

Renovations to address water resources have been completed at multiple recreation sites in Town, including the widespread installation of pervious pathways at sites such as the Old Reservoir, Adams School, the Community Center, and the Pine Meadows Golf Course. A flood control project was completed at the Harrington School site in 2021, in collaboration with the Town of Reading and City of Woburn (for more information, see Chapter 4: Environmental Inventory). Design and engineering work associated with planned drainage improvements at the Pine Meadows Golf Course has been initiated. The DPW has also completed a full renovation of the dam at the Old Reservoir. The "Don't Dump - Drains to Brook" program has been implemented at storm drains in multiple locations through Town by Eagle Scout candidates and the Town maintains a record of additional drains to be marked by future interested candidates.

Goal 8: Maintain and expand Lexington's open space and recreational infrastructure.

- *Renovate Center Track Complex.*

A full renovation of the Center Track Complex was completed in 2020 including a new synthetic turf field, a new lighting system at the track, pool, basketball, and tennis courts, new bleachers, and upgraded pedestrian circulation. Through the Center Recreation Complex, connectivity through the Park was created to reach all amenities from the parking lot. The site was also reorganized to have all track and field events located within the track area.

- *Implement improvements to athletic fields.*

In addition to the renovations to the Center Track Complex, the Recreation & Community Programs Department has overseen irrigation improvements at 14 parks, athletic field improvements at Adams, Clarke, Diamond, and Estabrook, new athletic lighting at Lincoln Field #2, and the resurfacing of synthetic turf fields #1-3 at Lincoln Fields.

- *Encourage the involvement and coordination of youth groups, sports teams, and other user groups in maintaining playing fields.*

In 2020, the permit policy through the Recreation & Community Programs Department was updated, with sports organizations participating in the edits and providing feedback on the playability,

maintenance and long term sustainability of the fields. Sports Council meetings occur quarterly. News and updates are broadcast to constituent groups monthly.

The Recreation Committee has accepted scoreboards to be placed at the Center Recreation Complex and scoreboards and storage areas to be placed at Lincoln to improve experience and meet the storage needs of user groups.

- *Update and renovate playground facilities to meet safety and ADA and MA AAB requirements.*

The Sutherland and Rindge playgrounds have been updated to meet MAAB standards with the transition to poured-in-place surfacing. In addition, the Community Center implemented ADA access from the front to the rear of the building through capital funding for the replacement of the sidewalk and patio, and the patio was expanded to provide six accessible outdoor fitness stations that can accommodate up to 10 users.

- *Replace swings at playgrounds.*

Swings at the Center Recreation Complex, Munroe Park, and Franklin Park were replaced and swings were removed at Bow Street Park in 2018.

- *Resurface and tennis courts and neighborhood basketball courts.*

The Adams basketball, tennis, and pickleball courts were resurfaced in 2020. The Valley Road Tennis Courts were resurfaced and striped for tennis and pickleball in 2021.

- *Improvements at Pine Meadows Golf Course.*

Course improvements have included: renovation and reorientation of the green at Hole 4, renovation of the grass hollow at Hole 5, renovation of the bunker and relocation of the tee at Hole 6, renovation of the bunker and drainage work at Hole 7, drainage improvements at fairways, and improvements to golf cart paths.

- *Upgrade Lower Vine Brook Path.*

The upgraded Lower Vine Brook Path was completed in 2017.

- *Improve Parker Meadow accessible trails.*

The new universally accessible trail and associated parking improvements at Parker Meadow were completed in 2022.

- *Implement the Conservation Meadow Preservation Program.*

Since 2015, Daisy Wilson Meadow, Hennessey Field, Joyce Miller's Meadow, and Wright Farm have been preserved. The Conservation Division has secured CPA funding for the upcoming preservation of West Farm, which began in Fall 2022, and Willard's Woods.

- *Respond to maintenance issues at Town parks, playgrounds, ball fields, trails, and the Minuteman Bikeway.*

CPSI-certified staff from the Recreation & Community Programs Department and/or Department of Public Works make monthly playground inspections. Reports and response to maintenance issues are now coordinated between departments using an electronic work order system through the DPW and Department of Public Facilities.

- *Install standardized signage at Lexington's open space, park and recreational facilities.*

Conservation staff created template and protocol for interpretative signage in collaboration with Citizen for Lexington Conservation (CLC). The Conservation Division installed 12 new informational kiosks using two standardized designs, re-installed new standardized entry-way signage at 16 property entrances and developed a standardized wayfinding signage system that has been installed at Whipple Hill, Lower Vine Brook, and Meagherville. The Recreation & Community Programs Department has installed improved signage at the Community Center, Town Pool, Center Recreation Complex, and Old Reservoir.

Goal 9: Expand upon and create new opportunities for bicycling and walking throughout Lexington.

- *Establish ongoing bicycle safety and education programs for children and adults.*

In 2020, the Town of Lexington assigned a staff person in Transportation Services to be the Safe Routes to School coordinator and further the goals to get more kids walking and biking to school, which also crosses over to getting youth and others to walk/bike more places in general.

In 2020, Transportation Services organized the Town's first Bike Rodeo. Since 2020, we have hosted a wide array of programming from Smart Cycling for Adults, to group and family rides, to sessions on Winter Cycling and how to fix a flat.

The Recreation & Community Programs Department supports annual Bike Safety events that are held at either the Community Center or a public school.

- *Install and upgrade bike racks in Lexington Center and at parks and open spaces.*

Bike racks were installed at the Community Center and the Pine Meadows Golf Course. Additional racks were installed at 10 conservation entrances through a MAPC grant and in partnership with the Planning Department.

In addition, a bike maintenance station was installed with new bike racks in Depot Square along the Minuteman Commuter Bikeway. The station provides handtools and a tire inflation pump for public use year-round.

- *Develop a Town-wide Complete Streets policy.*

A Complete Streets policy was developed in 2016. Many of the sidewalks that have been built since are a result of that Policy and the related grants.

SEVEN-YEAR ACTION PLAN

The remainder of this chapter contains the new Seven-Year Action Plan that has been generated from the anticipated work of the Conservation Division and the Recreation & Community Programs Department, the goal-setting exercises, and continuing projects initiated with the 2015 OSRP and earlier. Action items, like the objectives in Chapter 8: Goals & Objectives, may refer to specific properties or may be intended to encompass all open space in Town regardless of management or ownership. Though the items listed are intended to represent concrete actions, like the goals and objectives before these action items have been made intentionally less specific in line with the conceptual nature of the plan. Actions are listed with limited explanation in order to leave space for needs to change and priorities to shift over the next seven years.

The following action items are presented as a matrix, where each action is assigned to one or more years from 2023 to 2029. The items are presented in this way in order to connect the OSRP directly to the five-year capital plans authored by the Conservation Division and the Recreation & Community Programs Department through 2027. Projecting to 2029 requires some assumptions and much flexibility, but is a useful exercise in planning grant applications, annual budgeting, and long-term contracts.

COMMUNICATION

Increase the efficacy of communication and collaboration with other Town departments, citizen groups and neighboring communities.



Action Item	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
<i>To increase collaboration opportunities between the Conservation Division and the Recreation & Community Programs Department, and between all Town departments regarding goals for open space and recreation.</i>							
Establish a team of Town stakeholder staff (Recreation, Conservation, Sustainability, DPW, Engineering, Planning, Chief Equity Officer) for this purpose.	●	●	●	○	○	○	○
Collaborate with the Chief Equity Officer to develop inclusive language to be implemented in Conservation Division and Recreation & Community Programs Department writings and on signage at open space and recreation parcels.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Discuss potential MOUs when parcels of interest are acquired or transferred between Town departments.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
<i>To simplify and/or unify methods of communication and outreach from the Conservation Division and the Recreation & Community Programs Department to the community.</i>							
Explore standardizing web-based resources to create a consistent user experience between departments.	●	●	●	○	○	○	○

Action Item

2023 2024 2025 2026 2027 2028 2029

(cont'd.) To simplify and/or unify methods of communication...

Increase/improve outreach and education efforts for programs and events.



Create opportunities for further education and outreach regarding water quality and stormwater runoff pollution.



To increase collaboration with bordering communities that share or abut open space parcels.

Work with neighboring municipalities to protect and maintain bordering lands of conservation or wetland significance.



Work with neighboring communities to formalize trail connections between open space and recreation areas within and outside of Lexington.



ACCESSIBILITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION

Improve access to programs and facilities for people of all ages, abilities, identities and backgrounds.



Action Item	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
<i>To provide a balance of facilities and opportunities throughout environmental justice (EJ) neighborhoods</i>							
Identify facilities located in and around EJ neighborhoods and continue to improve and support these facilities.	●	●	●	●	○	○	○
Identify whether existing and future program offerings are balanced within EJ neighborhoods.	○	○	○	●	●	●	●
Continue to provide natural and environmental education opportunities throughout a variety of open space areas.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
<i>To complement LexNext Goal 1: Diversity and Inclusion efforts.</i>							
Improve the delivery of resources and programming in languages other than English.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Consider how facilities and programs can serve the needs of users from all age groups.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Ensure that gender and sexuality are not a barrier to access at existing facilities and increase the availability of gender-neutral programs and resources.	●	●	●	○	○	○	○
<i>To create more inclusive outdoor experiences for all.</i>							
Plan and construct improvements that will provide access to programs and facilities for residents with disabilities, using ADA and MAAB standards and consideration of Universal Access.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Update and renovate playground facilities to serve the needs of users from all age groups.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Support the Town in developing an ability-inclusive bicycle infrastructure plan.	●	●	●	○	○	○	○
Evaluate the location and quantity of Universal Access trails and develop a collaborative formal approach for selecting open space areas to receive new Universal Access trails.	●	●	●	○	○	○	○

Action Item

2023 2024 2025 2026 2027 2028 2029

(cont'd.) To create more inclusive outdoor experiences...

Remove barriers to access by creating All Persons Trails, following Mass Audubon's All Persons Trails guidelines, that may include the following elements:



- Audio tours available by cell phone or online;
- Trail information booklet available online, in large print, and in braille;
- Trail map available in printed and tactile formats;
- Post-and-rope guiding system;
- Stops that are designed for sensory-rich audio and tactile exploration;
- Signage along the trail marking the stops with large print and braille;
- Improved trail surfacing and wider boardwalks with safety edging;
- Accessible seating areas;
- Orientation materials and information panels;
- Visitor services staff and volunteers who have been trained in accessibility regulations, customer service, and etiquette

Develop and determine enforcement abilities for public use policies at Universal Access areas within open spaces.



Evaluate the feasibility of improving/expanding Big Back Yard program routes to promote environmental justice area availability and universal accessibility for associated school age populations.



PROGRAMMING

Provide a balance of activity and educational opportunities for all of Lexington's citizens.



Action Item	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
<i>To capture the work of other committees and reflect the results of Comprehensive Planning efforts and Community Needs Assessments, including cultural diversity goals, in future programming.</i>							
Continue to offer regular open space education activities throughout the year.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Collaborate with other Town departments and citizen groups to explore options for adding programs and facilities, such as ballfields and dog parks.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
<i>To continue to be cognizant of the need to diversify year-round recreational opportunities to reflect Lexington's demographics.</i>							
Collaborate with local cultural organizations to offer and support their ability to offer specialized events and celebrations.	●	●	●	●	○	○	○
Establish programs for the Community Center to meet the diverse needs of Lexington's citizens.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Maximize use of current facilities and continue to promote use of facilities that may not be used to extent possible.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pine Meadows: support the development and use of walking trails, enhance winter use including cross-country skiing and snow-shoeing 	●	●	●	●	●	○	○
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Old Reservoir 	●	●	●	○	○	○	○
<i>To utilize connections with volunteer organizations/groups to increase programming opportunities.</i>							
Continue to collaborate with Citizens for Lexington Conservation to promote and offer open space programming.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Continue to collaborate with Lexington Community Farm to promote and offer agricultural programming within Lexington and to educate the community about the importance of agriculture to health, environment and economy.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate exchange of gardening and farming knowledge between residents and community groups with expertise in these areas 	●	●	●	○	○	○	○

Action Item

2023 2024 2025 2026 2027 2028 2029

(cont'd). To utilize connections with volunteer organizations/ groups...

Continue to enforce permitting and use policies for land use permits.



Standardize methods for permitting use of open space for outside groups.



Evaluate the ability and feasibility of the Conservation Division and the Recreation & Community Programs Department to charge fees to outside organized groups using land for programs, or donations/volunteering.



To identify opportunities for collaborative programming between the Conservation Division and the Recreation & Community Programs Department.

Share resources and staff to implement collaborative programs.



Explore the potential to share the costs of a full-time year-round park ranger program.



CAPITAL PROJECTS

Allocate capital efficiently in order to maintain, preserve, and grow open space and recreational infrastructure for many years in the future.



Action Item	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
<i>To continue to complete 5-year outlooks for projects for the Conservation Division and the Recreation & Community Programs Department.</i>							
Refer to Conservation 5-year Capital Improvement Plan.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Refer to Recreation & Community Programs 5-year Capital Improvement Plan.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
<i>To coordinate between the Conservation Division and the Recreation & Community Programs Department on capital projects within the same open space areas as part of 5-year capital planning.</i>							
Develop methods for cross-referencing between all Departments to identify and catalog the different capital projects planned at a given site.	●	●	●	○	○	○	○
<i>To plan for the future maintenance/replacement needs of capital projects and determine effects on other budgetary needs.</i>							
<i>To utilize the goals and objectives within the OSRP to identify potential projects that will help achieve other OSRP goals.</i>							
Implement improvements to athletic fields & courts.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Expand pickleball offerings at athletic courts.	●	●	●	○	○	○	○
Install standardized signage at Lexington's open space, park and recreational facilities.	●	●	●	○	○	○	○

LAND MANAGEMENT

Identify and establish open space management programs that will assure optimal maintenance and use of Town-owned lands.



Action Item	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
<i>To create land management plans to inventory resources and identify operation, management, infrastructure and maintenance needs at a facility.</i>							
Continue efforts by the Conservation Division to create and update land management plans for each parcel under Conservation control.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Consider implementing similar land management plans through the Department of Recreation & Community Programs.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Consider implementing invasive species management protocols at Town-owned open space areas across Departments.	○	○	●	●	●	●	●
Consider expanding invasive species management protocols to include the removal of vines from large trees on Conservation lands.	○	○	○	●	●	●	●
Consider retaining professional ecological service providers to assess existing vegetation and provide expert recommendations.	●	●	●	●	○	○	○
Consider more teaming opportunities to coordinate maintenance between multiple open space areas.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Continue to implement the Conservation Meadow Preservation Program.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Work with the Department of Public Works to define all maintenance needs of open spaces to better allocate funding and staffing responsibilities and opportunities.	●	●	●	●	○	○	○
Create a performance measure to identify the necessary FTE per maintained acre as a baseline metric for staff development.	○	○	○	●	●	●	●

Action Item

2023 2024 2025 2026 2027 2028 2029

To identify alternative funding sources to support maintenance and management.

Identify and apply for grant funding.



Ensure that associated funding for land management is secured during the process of land acquisition.



Leverage volunteerism and stewardship interest to support open space maintenance and the implementation of land management efforts.



Encourage the involvement and coordination of youth groups, sports teams, and other user groups in maintaining playing fields.



To establish typical materials to be used consistently in certain project types to ease maintenance of facilities including when items need to be replaced.

Create a material palette for various project types.



Continually review and update the palette of typical materials for availability.



ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Protect Lexington's natural environment and resources, both within and beyond the borders of open space and recreational properties.



Action Item	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
<i>To create or promote guidelines for open space projects that emphasize environmental protection, native species protection, and water conservation.</i>							
Continue to identify, certify, and protect vernal pools in Lexington.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Develop methods to improve oversight of conservation restrictions (both Town-owned and privately owned).	●	●	●	●	○	○	○
Continue to coordinate and build capacity for volunteer organizations that assist Town staff in monitoring and maintaining Town conservation lands.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Continue to collaborate with the Engineering Division on NDES MS4 permits to address stormwater run-off pollution and other issues affecting brook health and function.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Continue to update web-based resources to educate Lexington residents on conservation-related information.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Conduct a survey of large trees in Town and develop a plan to preserve trees.	○	○	○	●	●	●	●
<i>To consider the role of open space and recreation land in climate mitigation, resiliency, and carbon sequestration.</i>							
Work to reduce Lexington's carbon footprint through sustainable maintenance and construction practices.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Collaborate with Sustainable Lexington to conduct outreach campaigns at open space areas.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Protect existing farmland and expand initiatives to maximize the use of undeveloped land with prime farmland soils for agriculture.	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

LAND ACQUISITION

Assess, acquire, and protect parcels that are important from an environmental, agricultural, recreational, or historical perspective.



Action Item	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
<i>To work with the Town to develop a holistic approach for assessing the resources at each parcel in order to determine the best managing department.</i>							
Identify open spaces that have historic or cultural significance that would benefit from a detailed and lengthy State historical and archaeological process.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Consider the agricultural history of lands acquired by the Town when developing land use plans and proposals.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Develop protocols to identify and resolve conflicting priorities for acquisition between Town departments.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>To continue to identify private land that is useful to meeting open space goals.</i>							
Identify parcels that have one or more of the following attributes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enhances Town character, • provides wildlife habitat or connects isolated areas of habitat, • protects water quality, • contains important natural features and resources, • improves public access to open space, • has historical or cultural value, • provides opportunities for community gardening, farming, or orchards, • provides recreational opportunities, • expands active recreation, • connects existing Town open space parcels to facilitate non-motorized transportation routes and recreation routes. 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Develop and maintain separate databases of existing agricultural lands and other lands suitable for agriculture.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Collaborate between the Conservation Division and Recreation & Community Programs Department to share resources for identifying private parcels of interest.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Action Item

2023 2024 2025 2026 2027 2028 2029

To act to acquire land of significant conservation or recreation value for the benefit of the Town.

Educate landowners about programs in place to preserve private lands.

Work with the Department of Land Use, Health and Development to expand recreational opportunities on private parcels through MOU agreements.

Engage private owners of prime farmlands to create a path for future acquisition or conservation efforts.



