



## 7. Open Space, Recreation and Natural Resources

### KEY FINDINGS

- + The combined public and private open space in Natick covers approximately 23% of the land area.
- + Nearly 90% of the land area of Natick is within 1/4 mile of public open space, but less than half of the Town is within 1/4 mile of a park entrance.
- + The Town active recreation facilities are at capacity and additional facilities are needed, especially in the northeastern and southern-most portions of the Town.
- + The Town recently protected a 16.3 acre parcel in the Pegan Hill Reservation and recently purchased 21 acres of land for the Cochituate Rail Trail.

### Introduction

The Town of Natick has a strong heritage of preserving its outstanding open space and natural resource assets and providing a variety of excellent recreational facilities. Over the last twenty years the open space, recreation and natural resources of the Town have been reviewed as part of the 2002 Open Space and Recreation Plan, Natick 360 Strategic Plan 2008-2012 visioning process, the 2012 Open Space and Recreation Plan, and the 2016 Master Plan for Parks and Fields. While the 2002 Plan expressed alarm at the pace at which new development was taking over existing open space, the emphasis in recent years has been to encourage redevelopment of underutilized land in the downtown area, and on existing industrial land, through zoning such as the HOOP and the Smart Growth Overlay District (40R) program. As part of the Natick 360 process, "stewardship of its diverse open spaces, and natural resources" was identified as one of the six core "Values" for the Town of Natick. The high value residents placed on the Town's open space was again reinforced in the feedback received during the public meeting process for Natick 2030+. In the initial public meeting, the Town's offerings of open space and recreational amenities were repeatedly listed among its strengths and assets by residents participating in the process.

As part of the Natick 360 Strategic Plan 2008-2012 visioning process, seven key "Visions" were also developed for the Town - one of which was to create a future in which "Natick's natural resources are preserved and accessible to the community." This "Vision" was further elaborated as follows:

// Natick supports responsible stewardship of its natural resources, including its aquifer, open spaces, forests and trees, farms, parks, lakes, wildlife habitat and views. Natick may exercise this stewardship through appropriate acquisition, regulation, mitigation and restoration strategies. //

*~ Natick 360 Strategic Plan*

## NATICK 360 VISIONING PROCESS

In general, residents demonstrated strong support for Town purchase of more open space. In the Natick 360 Strategic Plan Community Survey, residents were asked about their willingness to pay additional user fees, property taxes, and/or sales taxes to help fund various items in Natick. "Purchase of land for future parks and open space" ranked 8th of 23 items listed, with 60 percent strongly or somewhat in support.

For the 2012 Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) the values of the Natick 360 process were expanded upon with a focus on Natick's open space and natural resources. The 2012 OSRP identified the following goals for Natick:

- + Protect Natick's open spaces, including lakes, rivers, streams, woodlands, farms, and parks, that can be enjoyed by future generations.
- + Provide and maintain playing fields and other recreational facilities that support the needs of the population.
- + Preserve and protect the Town's water supply, wildlife, and other natural resources.
- + Provide a system of walking and bicycle trails that connect our open spaces and provide a way to travel throughout the town.
- + Seek opportunities for reclaiming previously developed sites for recreational opportunities.
- + Increase awareness, appreciation, and use of the Town's open spaces, trails, natural resources, and recreational opportunities.
- + Develop and implement a management plan for open space.

Following the process for the 2012 Open Space and Recreation Plan, which covered both the ecological benefits and recreational assets of the Town's existing open spaces, the 2016 Master Plan for Parks and Fields focused primarily on the Town's active recreational resources. The 2016 study provided a comprehensive inventory and analysis of all existing conditions and a series of recommendations for improving field and park facilities throughout the Town of Natick. A summary of those recommendations is covered under the Recreational Amenities section of this chapter.



Town Center Common



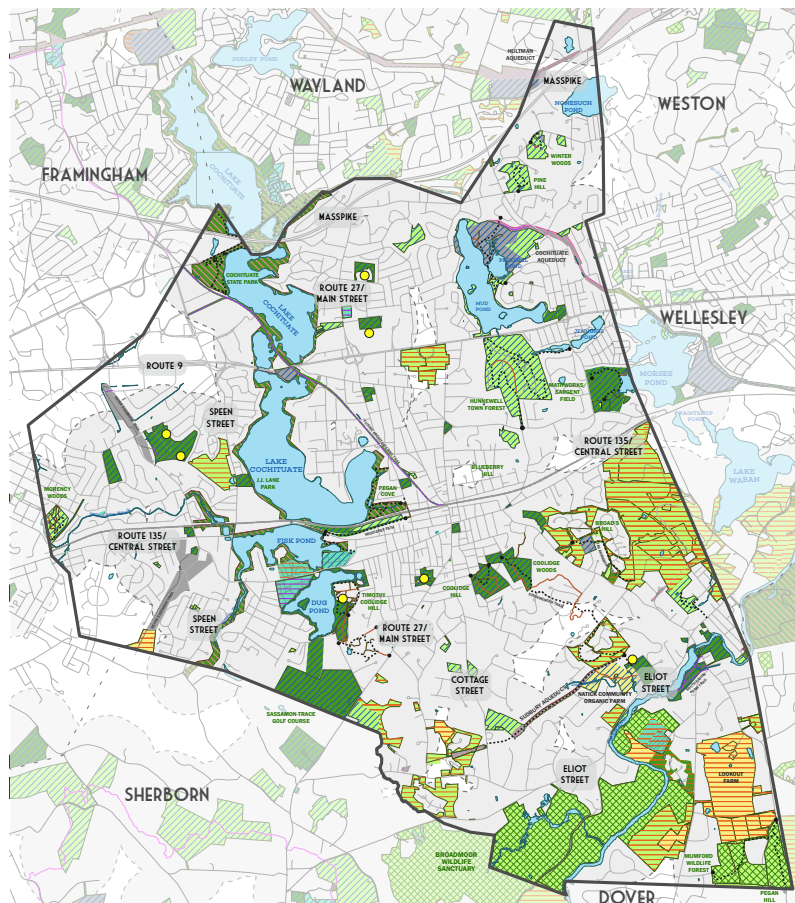
Cochituate State Park



Grove Park

As part of the public process for this Natick 2030+ Comprehensive Plan, residents again have echoed support for preservation, conservation and maintenance of the Town’s open space system. During the first public meeting the public comments surrounding open space generally fell within one of three overarching themes:

- 1 The total available area and general state of the natural open spaces around Natick is a major asset to the Town and future efforts should focus on maintaining the ecological health of these spaces and creating strong networks of open spaces.
- 2 Access to the Town’s open space network needs to be improved and strong connections from all neighborhoods should be a priority. A variety of access improvements need to be made – sidewalks, bike lanes, bike trails, walking trails, accessibility – and should be coordinated with general transportation improvements in Town.
- 3 The recreation and programmed spaces in town are under stress from high levels of use, and there is a need for additional recreational amenities. Residents wished to see a greater variety of recreational uses, including varying athletic field types, community gardens, dog parks, public pools, a teen center, and family oriented destinations. These comments echoed the findings of the 2016 Master Plan for Parks and Fields.

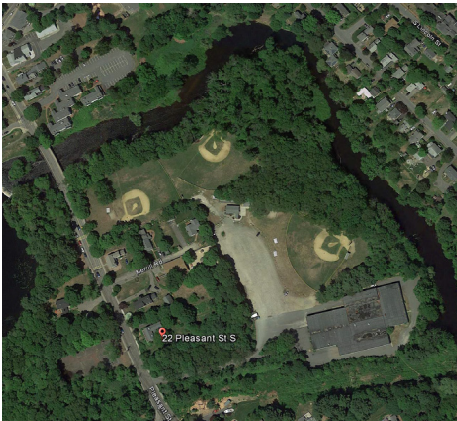


**EXISTING OPEN SPACE**

(see page 7.9 for full map and legend). Source: Natick Assessing Department data and MassGIS.



*Pegan Hill Walking Trail*



*22 Pleasant Street*



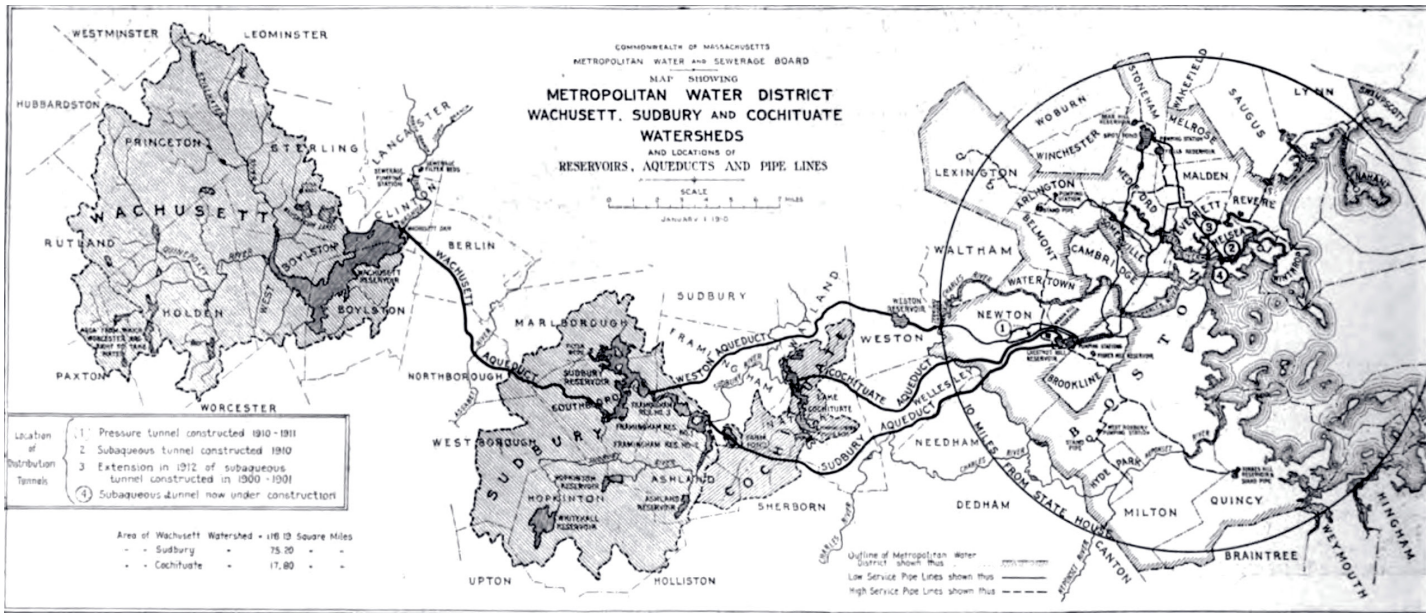
*Cochituate Rail Trail Corridor*

## Recent Open Space and Recreation Actions/ Accomplishments

Through the efforts of the Town of Natick, the Open Space Advisory Committee (OSAC), and other committees and interest groups, a number of new open space acquisitions and improvements have been made in recent years. Those actions and accomplishments are listed by category below.

### Town Open Space Expansion

- + **Pegan Hill:** In December of 2015, Town Meeting appropriated \$1 million to purchase a conservation restriction on a 16-acre parcel at the top of Pegan Hill, enabling The Trustees of Reservations to purchase this parcel for \$3.3 million to add to its existing Pegan Hill Reservation. A few months earlier, Dover Land Conservation Trust purchased the adjacent 24-acre parcel for \$3.5 million. The Trustees now manage this land, along with the adjacent 26-acre Mumford Wildlife Forest, resulting in 100 acres open to the public, as well as surrounding land protected under Conservation Restrictions but not open to the public. The Trustees held a public opening on June 25, 2016.
- + **22 Pleasant Street:** In May of 2016, Town Meeting appropriated \$3.2 million to purchase the 4.1 acre riverfront parcel at 22 Pleasant Street to add to the existing 11.2 acre Hunnewell baseball fields. The plans for the new facility have not yet been developed.
- + **Cochituate Rail Trail:** In November of 2016, Town Meeting appropriated \$3.1 million from the Floor Area Ratio (FAR) Fund and \$2.96 million from borrowing to purchase the CSX right-of-way. Previously, in April of 2016, Town Meeting approved taking the so-called Wonder Bread spur by eminent domain. The Cochituate Rail Trail project continues to make progress. The corridor has been leveled and cleared and is now open to the public as an informal hiking area. The design is being revised to have an interim terminus at Willow Street, about 1000 feet north of the Natick Center MBTA station. A future direct connection to Natick Center will be designed when the commuter station itself is redesigned in the coming years.
- + **Pumping Station:** In April of 2014, Town Meeting transferred the large parcel of land under control of the DPW (used for a water pumping station) to the Conservation Commission, protecting the land and offering the opportunity for public trails.
- + **Sudbury & Cochituate Aqueducts:** On May 22, 2012 the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority announced it would begin making its aqueducts available for public walking trails. Natick quickly secured permits to use both the Sudbury and Cochituate Aqueducts.
- + **New Conservation Restrictions (CRs):** As of the 2012 Open Space Plan, private landowners granted three new conservation restrictions (CRs), totaling about 37 acres.
- + **New Conservation Land:** Natick received six acres of conservation land as part of the Walnut Hills Estate Development, and a 16-acre conservation restriction as part of the South Natick Hills development.



MWRA Historic Map of Sudbury and Cochituate Aqueducts



Sudbury Aqueduct



Natick Trail Days Cleanup

- + **Conservation Commission Parklands:** The Town transferred to the Conservation Commission custody of four Town-owned parklands, ensuring their permanent protection: Pine Hill (Oak and Winter Streets), Natick Community Organic Farm, Hunnewell Town Forest, and J.J. Lane Park.
- + **Arthur Morency Woods:** In a similar action, the Town of Framingham transferred to its Conservation Commission custody of Arthur Morency Woods, which is owned by Framingham, but 16 acres of which are located in Natick.

### Open Space Trail And Accessibility Actions

The Town holds Annual Trail Days to improve trail and open space property. Recent Annual Natick Trails Day efforts have included:

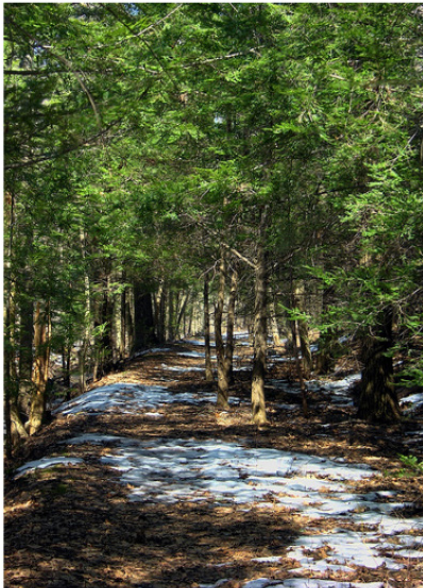
- + Oct. 22, 2016 - Development of new trail segment at the Cochituate Aqueduct. The trail is now open from Rathburn Road to the Wellesley Town Line, where it joins Wellesley Trails and crosses through the Town of Wellesley.
- + Oct. 17, 2015 - Grade improvement and clearing of Henry Wilson Trail.
- + Oct. 18, 2014 - Cleanup of Timothy Coolidge Hill, and installation of kiosks at three locations.
- + Oct. 19, 2013 - Kiosk installation and continued improvements to Hunnewell Town Forest.
- + Oct. 20, 2012 - Improvements to Morse Pond trails.
- + Oct. 22, 2011 - Erosion controls and other improvements to Hunnewell Town Forest.
- + Oct. 23, 2010 - Clearing and cleanup of Eisenmenger Trail.



Lilja Elementary School Informational Trail Signage

## NATICK TRAILS

### Hunnewell Town Forest



Hunnewell Map Brochure

Other recent actions include:

- + In 2016 the Board of Selectmen formally named and mapped many of the “paper streets” being used informally as pedestrian connectors.
- + In 2015, the Conservation Commission purchased a strip of land on Oak Street to provide access to the Pine Hill area.
- + Using a combination of Town-owned land and easements from developers, the Town completed the 1.5-mile Eisenmenger Trail from Natick Center to South Natick.
- + Many additional trails were completed, including in the Mumford Wildlife Forest (part of the 16-mile Charles River Link Trail), Timothy Coolidge Hill, the Henry Wilson History Trail, Annballi Park at Pegan Cove, and several parts of the Takawampait Trail.
- + A boardwalk was completed in 2011 by the developer of Sanctuary Estates between Whispering Lane and Woodleigh Road.
- + OSAC has explored installation of a trail from the Community-Senior Center along wetlands to Union Street, to be planned at part of Community-Senior Center Open Space design, funded by 2016 Fall Annual Town Meeting.
- + OSAC has explored installation of a trail between Highland and Bacon Streets on land given to the Conservation Commission as part of Walnut Hill Estates development.

### Open Space and Recreation Awareness Actions

- + The Town Forest Committee developed an updated map of the Town Forest in 2014.
- + OSAC, working with the Trails Maintenance Committee and the Community Development Office, developed maps of seven other parts of Town, mapping a total of 16 trail areas. These maps were put online at <http://natickma.gov/448/Trail-Maps> in August 2016, linking to Town web pages for all trails-related committees and were showcased at Natick Days in September 2016.
- + OSAC is working with Natick GIS to incorporate all trail updates into an attractive trail map of the whole town. Currently the only publicly displayed physical map of the parks is on the stairs in Town Hall.
- + The Town Forest Committee created a website to showcase Hunnewell Town Forest, <http://naticktownforest.org/>.
- + OSAC runs an active Facebook Group entitled Natick Open Space, with over 200 members, giving the OSAC and public a chance to share formal and informal information about open space. Other groups with Facebook Pages include: Natick Trails Maintenance Committee, Cochituate Rail Trail, FIDO of Natick, Friends of Natick Trails, and The Trustees of the Reservation. The Town Forest Committee has a separate web site, <http://naticktownforest.org/>.



J.J. Lane Park



Community Gardens at J.J. Lane Park

- + Since 2011, new information kiosks have been installed at Hunnewell Town Forest (Oak St.), Timothy Coolidge Hill, Middlesex Path (Middlesex Ave.), and Eisenmenger Trail (Memorial School). Rain hoods have been added to existing kiosks at Coolidge Field, Coolidge Hill, Hunnewell Town Forest (Bacon St.), Middlesex Path (West Central St.), and Mumford Wildlife Forest.

### Amenity Space and Recreation Field Actions

- + 2016 Fall Annual Town Meeting approved funding for a design study for the field adjacent to the new Community-Senior Center, and a study committee is expected to be established shortly.
- + After an extensive public design process, the new J.J. Lane Park held a “soft opening” on May 26, 2014, and a formal dedication on April 26, 2015. This park truly provides something for everyone, with playground, walking trails, picnic areas, informal lawn play, etc.
- + Community Gardens are open at J.J. Lane Park and on Hartford Street. Areas for additional community gardens are being considered as covered in the Parks and Fields Master Plan.
- + The OSAC heard from many people about the need for a dog park, and held a public forum on Oct. 10, 2013. The meeting led to the formation of a citizens’ group called FIDO (Fun, Informed Dog Owners) of Natick, which researched possible sites and possible grant funding, and conducted fundraising. The Town’s Office of Community & Economic Development is contracting for a full design and applying for funding from the Stanton Foundation.
- + Two new fields were opened near Lilja School: Sargent Field and MathWorks Field.

### Open Space Administration/Policy Actions

- + In November of 2015, Town Meeting transferred most of the Conservation Fund into a new “FAR Bonus Stabilization Fund,” with the same general purpose of acquiring open space, but managed by Town Meeting instead of the Conservation Commission.
- + Town Meeting adopted a number of Zoning By-Laws that include requirements for open space (e.g., Comprehensive Cluster Development Option) or pocket parks (Housing Overlay Option Plan, HOOP) and the Smart Growth Overlay District (Chapter 40R) Program which also has requirements for improvements to public open space.
- + In 2014 the Town Administrator created a new position for Sustainability Coordinator to work on natural resource protection issues.

### Open Space and Recreation Funding Actions

- + As a result of the Natick Mall expansion, the Town received \$7.2 million in mitigation funds for the Conservation Fund, plus an additional \$500,000 toward the Cochituate Rail Trail.



Town Center Green



Broadmoor Wildlife Sanctuary



Lookout Farm

## Existing Conditions/Facilities

### Existing Open Space

The Town of Natick currently has approximately 2,283 acres of combined public and private open space land area and roughly an additional 700 acres of surface water within its boundaries (surface water boundaries fluctuate regularly based on precipitation and tides). This area is displayed on the Existing Open Space Map and covers approximately 23 percent of the land area of Natick. Of this total about half is owned by the Town of Natick, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts or abutting towns. As noted above, there have been a few recent acquisitions of open space lands for trails and contiguous open space which have been included in this total. Due to the well distributed nature of the open space around the Town, nearly ninety percent of the land area of Natick is within one quarter mile of a public open space<sup>1</sup>. However, while proximity to open space is a strength of the Town, many residents have called for better connectivity of these spaces both to each other and to the surrounding residential neighborhoods. A more detailed analysis of the access to existing open space entrances confirmed this issue, as less than half of the Town is within a quarter mile of a formal park or open space entrance<sup>2</sup>. Future efforts towards conservation and public acquisitions should focus on goals of connectivity. Additionally, there are still a few residential nodes throughout Town that are not within a quarter mile of any public open space, and opportunities to extend access to these areas should be also be considered in future efforts.

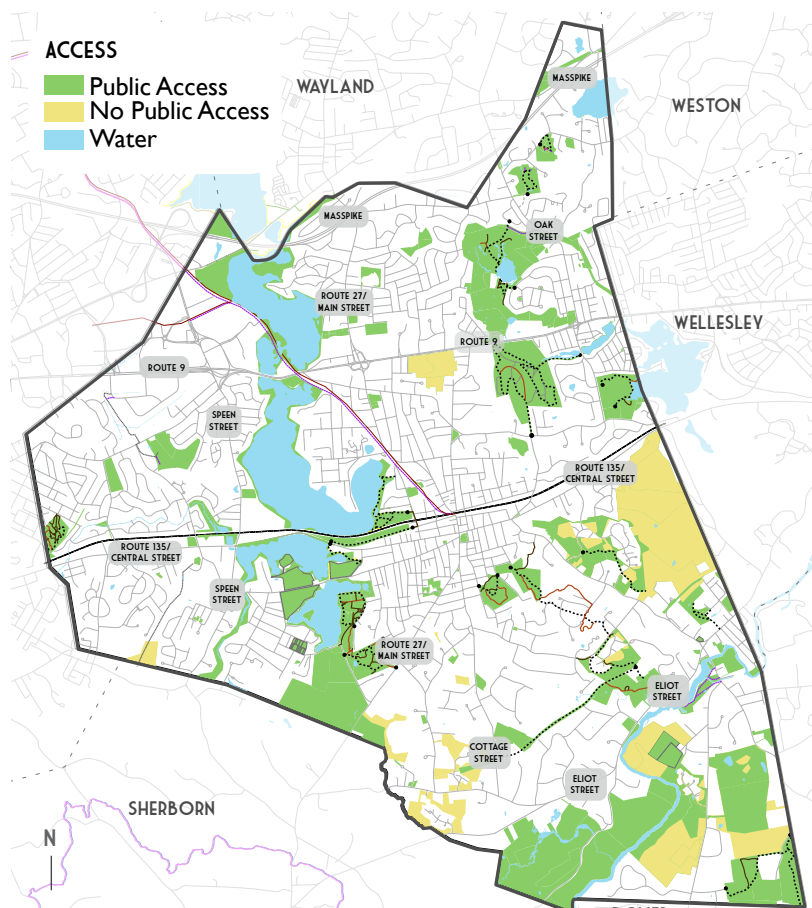
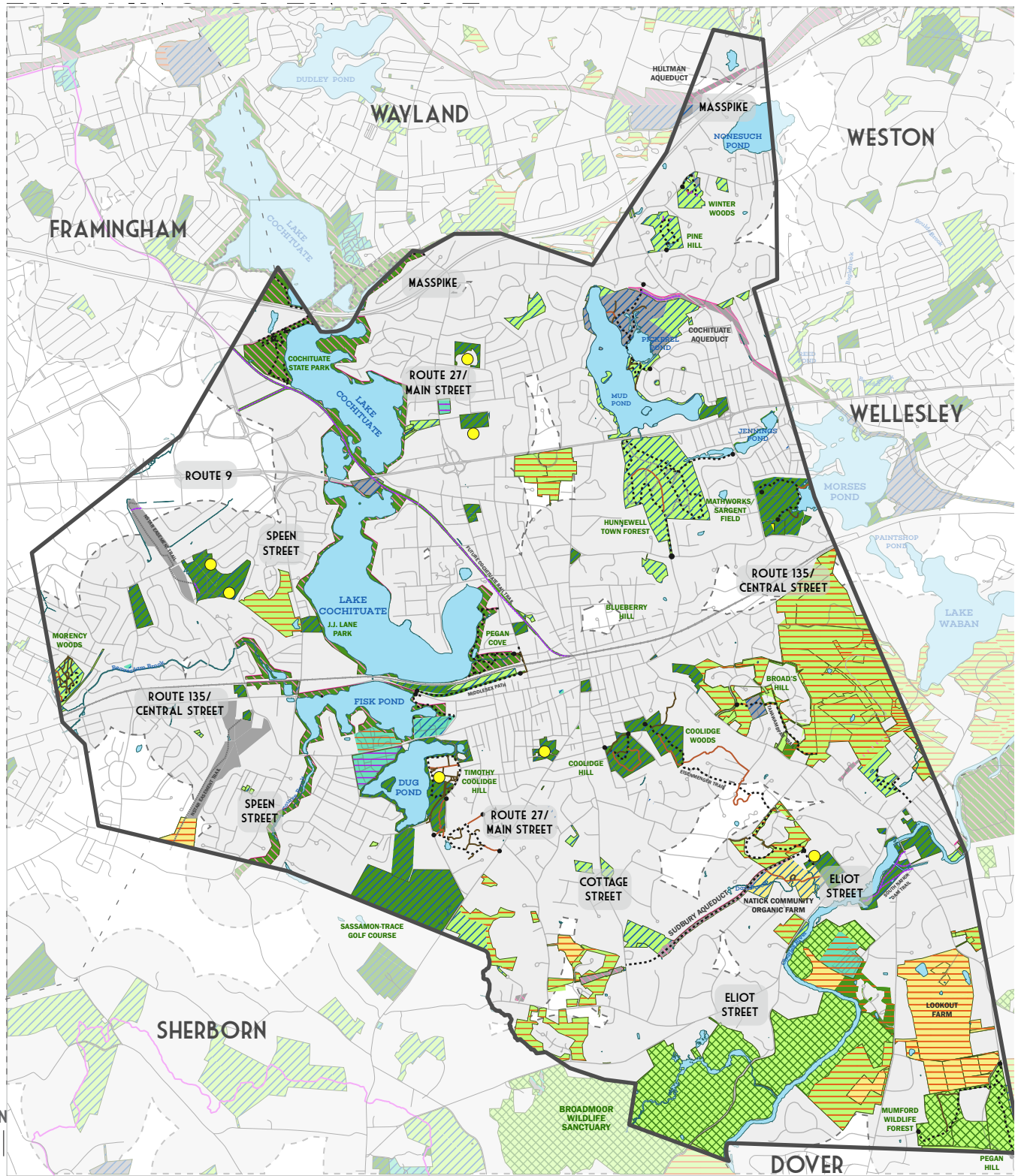


FIGURE 7.1 PUBLIC/PRIVATE ACCESS

- 1 As calculated from the total area of a ¼ mile offset from the edges of all publicly available open space. See the Existing Open Space Map for delineated boundary.
- 2 The calculated total came to approximately 46% of the Town area. The total area was determined by analyzing the total reach of a ¼ mile radial distance centered on each park entrance and trail head.



**LEGEND**

- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <p><b>PRIMARY PURPOSE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: #006400; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Recreation</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: #008000; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Recreation &amp; Conservation</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: #90EE90; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Conservation</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: #90EE90; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Historical/Cultural</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: #FFD700; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Agriculture</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: #808080; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Utility</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: #ADD8E6; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Water</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Neighborhoods within 1/4 Mile of Publicly Accessible Open Space</li> </ul> | <p><b>OWNERSHIP</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; border: 1px dashed black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Land Trust</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Municipal</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Non-Profit</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Private</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> State</li> </ul> | <p><b>TRAILS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; border-bottom: 1px dashed black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Main Trail</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; border-bottom: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Minor Trail</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; border-bottom: 1px dotted black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Alternative Trail</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; border-bottom: 1px dashed black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Rail Trail</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; border-bottom: 1px dashed black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Proposed Trail</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; border-bottom: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Unmarked Trail</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; border-bottom: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Other Town Trail</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; border-bottom: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Trail Head</li> </ul> |
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**MAP 7.1 EXISTING OPEN SPACE**

Source: Natick Assessing Department data and MassGIS.

OPEN SPACE TYPE	OSRP 2012 (ACRES)	NATICK 2030+ (ACRES)
Town of Natick Conservation Commission	402	428 (incl. 12 water acres)
Town of Natick Recreation and Parks Department	203	204 (incl. 0.6 water acres)
Town of Natick/Other	60	66
Commonwealth of Massachusetts	387	708 (incl. 498 water acres) <sup>a</sup>
Other Town Lands	21	21
Non-Profit, APR and other lands under Article 97 protection	700	665 (incl. 13 water acres)
Conservation Restrictions	286	(475 acres of land carry a conservation restriction – the actual restricted acreage information was unavailable for this plan)
Private Cemeteries	90	76
<b>Total Well-Protected Land</b>	<b>2,149</b>	<b>2,168<sup>b</sup></b>
Chapter 61, 61A, 61B	467	578
Schools/Playgrounds	240	246
<b>Total Limited Protection Land</b>	<b>707</b>	<b>824<sup>c</sup></b>

**TABLE 7.1 OPEN SPACE TOTAL AREA BY TYPE**

As part of the 2012 Open Space and Recreation Plan, much of the open space within Natick was identified, categorized, and tabulated. Building on that effort, this 2030+ Master Plan has combined those tables with the Town of Natick’s Assessors Database to create an ongoing database of current and future parcel acquisitions and protections that can be tracked alongside the Town Assessor’s parcel data. The full table is found in the Plan Appendix. Minor variations in acreage were observed as a result of the data merge, but much of this is assumed to be due to variations in calculations for surface water/wetland area, methodology or partial area restrictions. The final comparison is presented in Table 7.1. One notable variation is the total acreage for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, which is primarily composed of Cochituate State Park land area. The discrepancy is presumed to be caused by a variation in methodology used for subtracting the surface water area of Lake Cochituate. For clarity, the total surface water acres calculated has been included in the table.

<sup>a</sup> There is a large discrepancy in the OSRP 2012 total acreage and area calculated for Natick 2030+. The discrepancy may be due to variation in the calculated boundary for Lake Cochituate. See Appendix for calculation methodology. The calculated total came to approximately 46% of the Town area. The total area was determined by analyzing the total reach of a ¼ mile radial distance centered on each park entrance and trail head.

<sup>b</sup> Total does not include Conservation Restriction acreage.

<sup>c</sup> Some overlap in total acreage occurs between the categories for “Well Protected” and “Limited Protection Lands”. See the Level of Protection Map for parcels falling under both designations.

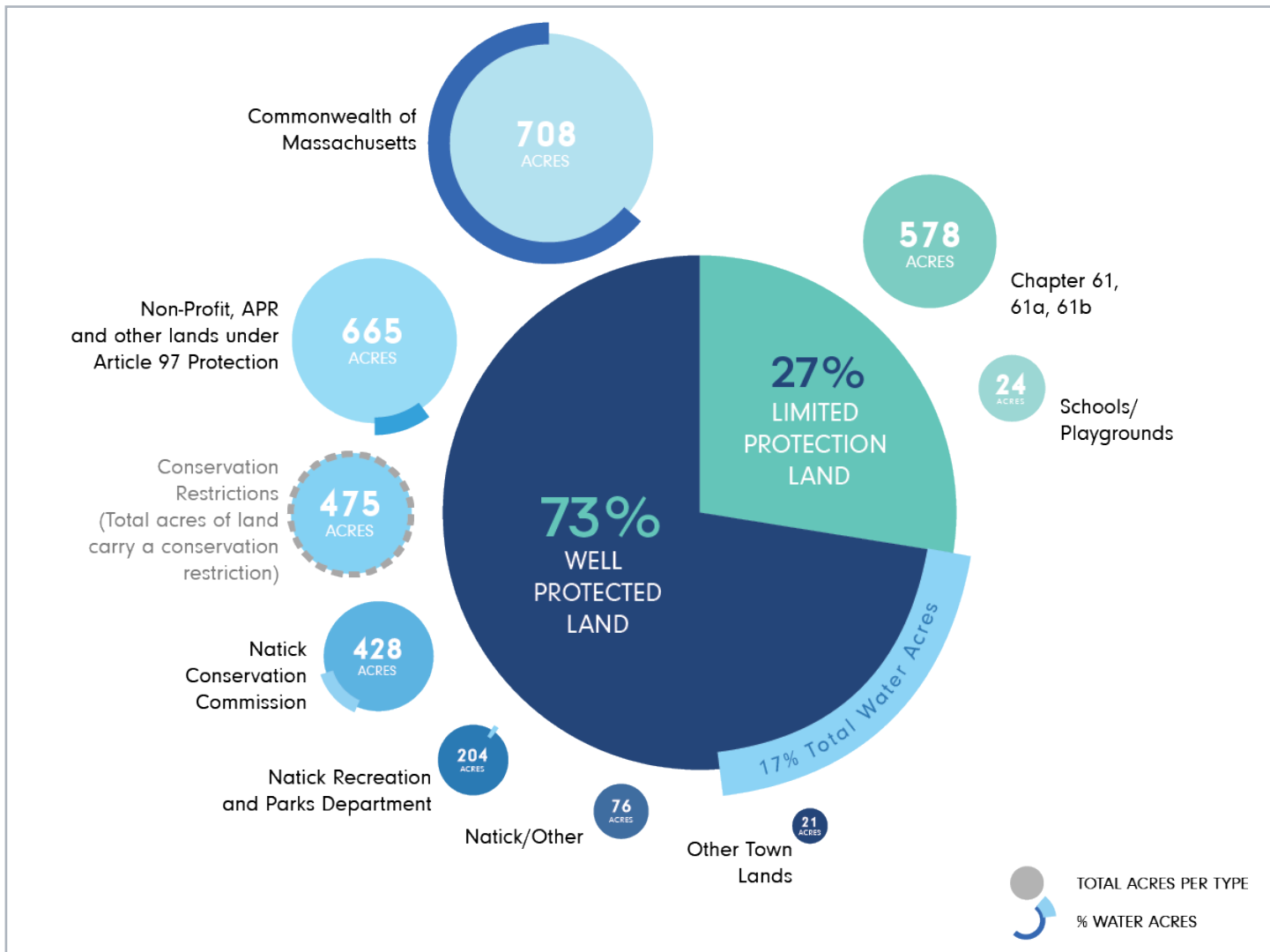


FIGURE 7.2 OPEN SPACE DISTRIBUTION BY TYPE



*Cochituate State Park*



*Broadmoor Wildlife Sanctuary*

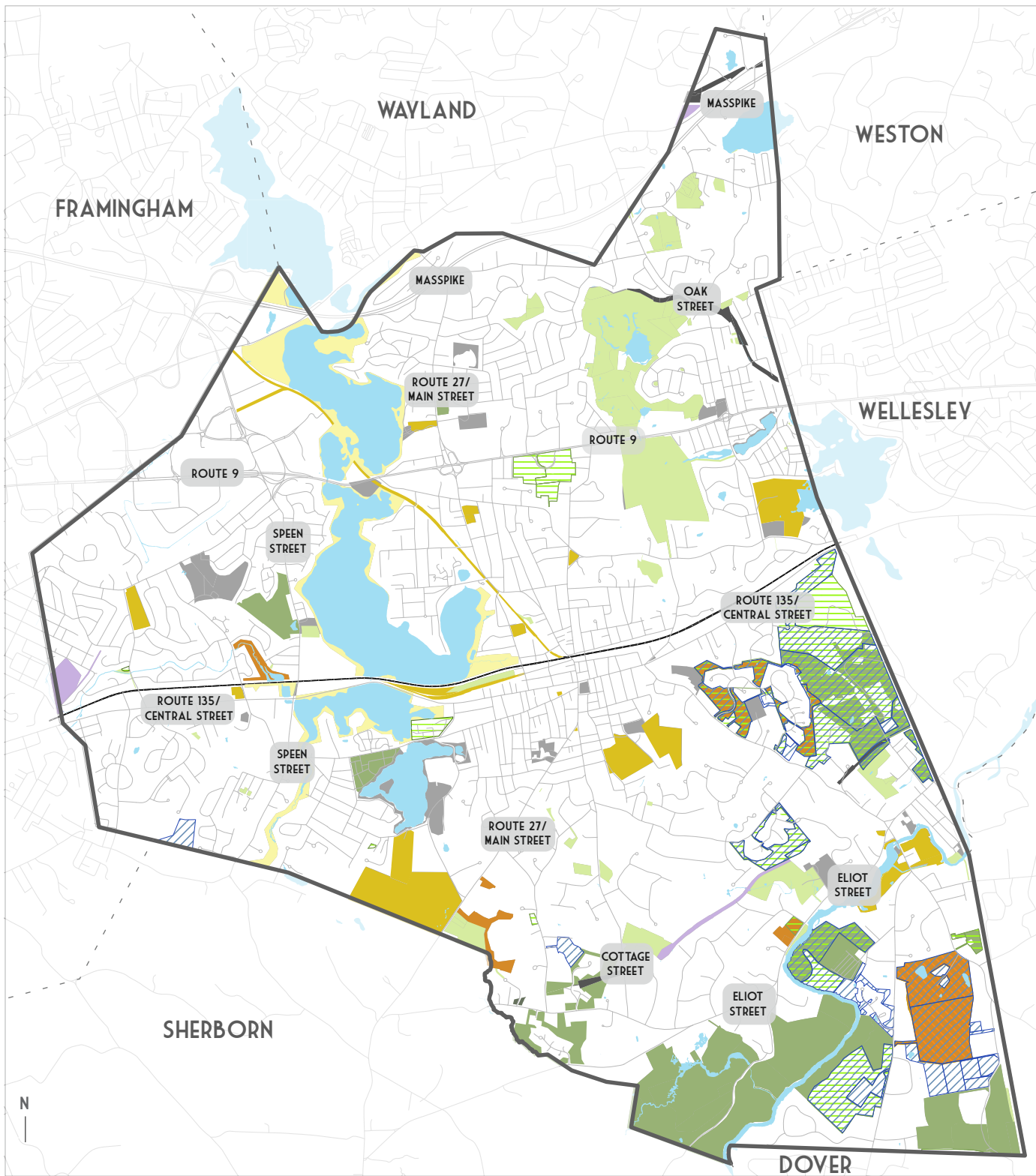


*Belkin Family Lookout Farm*

Table 7.1 Open Space Total by Area Type is divided into two categories, “Well Protected Land” and “Limited Protection Land.” Level of Protection is shown on Map 7.2. The “Well Protected Land” category falls under the ownership of the Town of Natick, an adjacent Town ownership, the Natick Conservation Commission, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, or a non-profit ownership such as the Trustees of the Reservation. It is characterized as well protected by the fact that, except for in special exceptions where the land may be sold by the public agency into private ownership, the primary purpose of the land and its managing agency is to keep the land open and available for public use in perpetuity. Much of this land falls under Massachusetts Article 97, which grants the Commonwealth or its political subdivisions the right to acquire conservation easements. Article 97 was intended to be a legislative ‘check’ to ensure that lands acquired for conservation purposes were not converted to other inconsistent uses.

The other categories of land ownership/restriction that fall within this category are parcels with Agricultural Preservation Restrictions (APR), Conservation Restrictions (CR), and private cemeteries. The APR program offers to pay farmland owners the difference between the “fair market value” and the “agricultural value” of their farmland in exchange for a permanent deed restriction which precludes any use of the property that will have a negative impact on its agricultural viability. A Conservation Restriction (CR) limits future development by transferring some rights in property, such as the right to construct new buildings, from the landowner to a nonprofit organization or a governmental entity for conservation purposes. In most cases both of these programs restrict development in perpetuity and are again considered well-protected classifications. Finally, private cemeteries, while held in private ownership, must follow state law for closure and transfer and are considered well protected in their existing use.

The “Limited Protection Lands” encompass land protected by the Chapter 61, 61A and 61B programs and land currently used for schools. The Chapter 61, 61A and 61B programs provide tax breaks for land in forestry, agricultural or recreation use, respectively, in return for a commitment from the landowner to continue those uses. This is a voluntary program and the restriction is lifted if the landowner chooses to withdraw from the program and pay retroactive taxes. There is no guarantee of term or longevity of protection from this program. Similarly, while school buildings and grounds are Town owned, their availability for open space is determined more by the needs of the primary use as an educational facility; the land is subject to changes through school building expansion, demolition, or relocation projects. Because of these external factors, both of these open space categories are characterized as Limited Protection Lands.



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**LEVEL OF PROTECTION**

- Well Protected by Management
  - Non-Profit Owned
  - Conservation Comm. Owned
- Well Protected by Article 97
  - State Owned
  - Municipal Owned
  - Private/Non-Profit Owned
  - Unknown Article 97 Protection

- Well Protected by Restriction
  - Agricultural Preservation Restriction
  - Conservation Restrictions
- Limited Protection by Status/Restriction
  - Chapter 61, 61A, 61B Status
  - Municipal Owned - No Protection
  - State Owned - No Protection



**MAP 7.2 OPEN SPACE BY LEVEL OF PROTECTION**



From top left counterclockwise:  
 J.J. Lane Park, Natick High School South Complex, Mary Bunker Park, Mary Bunker Park, Cole Center.

## Recreational Amenities

The Town of Natick offers a variety of active and passive recreational amenities throughout its publicly and privately held open spaces, twenty-nine town-owned recreational facilities and the Sassamon Trace Golf Course, located on the border of Sherborn at Route 27 and West Street. Map 7.3 illustrates the currently available active/passive recreation and team sport facilities available throughout the town.

### Active Recreation

As part of the 2016 Master Plan for Parks and Fields, an in-depth needs assessment was completed for recreational facilities in the Town of Natick. Due to the in-depth nature of that recent analysis, this section will refer heavily to that report. The summary findings/conclusions of that report are as follows:

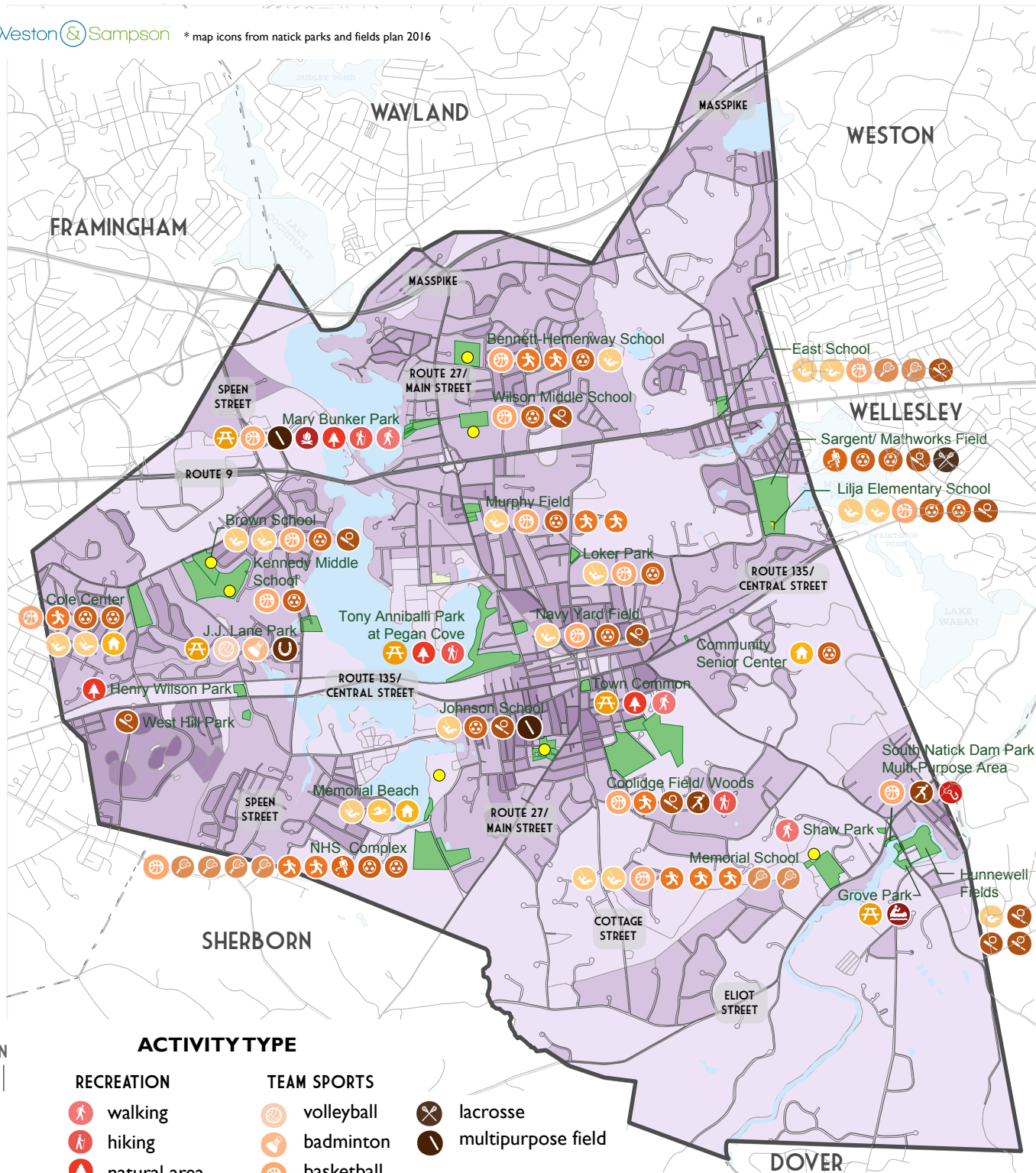
There Are Two Areas Of Town That Lack Recreational/Park Resources.

- + The northeast and southernmost sections of Natick lack recreational park resources.
- + Of the two, the northeast section is the most lacking, with East Park, one of the most dilapidated parks in Town, as the only recreational facility in that area.

There are insufficient playing venues to meet the increasing demands of the Natick community.

- + Turf conditions are stressed at many locations due to heavy and often excessive use during all seasons of the year and during all types of weather.
- + Natick athletes play on the Town's thirty fields (about 35 acres of athletic fields) in excess of 32,000 hours a year, which is an average of over 1,060 hours of use per field. In order to maintain proper field conditions, the total capacity of the Town's fields is 21,000 hours of use per year based on the Sports Turf Managers Association (STMA) standards; therefore, the Town uses their fields at more than 150% of their capacity.

Weston & Sampson \* map icons from natick parks and fields plan 2016



**ACTIVITY TYPE**

<b>RECREATION</b>	<b>TEAM SPORTS</b>	<b>lacrosse</b>
walking	volleyball	multipurpose field
hiking	badminton	
natural area	basketball	
fishing	tennis	
campfire pits	softball	
canoe launch	field hockey	
picnic	soccer	
indoor facilities	baseball	
swimming	skating	
playground	horseshoes	

**POPULATION DENSITY**  
PERSONS PER ACRE  
(2010 CENSUS BLOCK DATA)

0.0-2.0	school
2.1-8.0	park
8.1-15.0	water
15.1-30	
30.1+	



MAP 7.3 RECREATIONAL AMENITIES INVENTORY

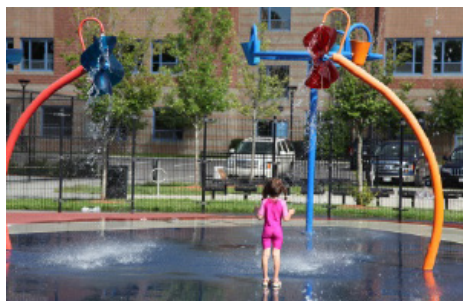


High School Athletics (above)

- + Current trends show an increase in lacrosse and soccer from 3,455 players in 2010 to 3,622 players in 2015 and a general increased interest in sports due to college admissions, and health and wellness concerns. The construction of new fields in Town has not kept pace with the increased participation levels.
- + Town maintenance and operations staff members, hampered by the growing number of park/field users and lack of facilities to accommodate the needs of these users, make decisions on how to best allocate maintenance funds and maintenance resources based on priority of need. Under this approach, some properties suffer, namely the Lilja Elementary School Little League Field, West Hill Park, Johnson School Field, and East Park Field. Despite current limitations, quality turf conditions have been achieved at several playing venues, such as the Sargent/MathWorks fields, the High School soccer/lacrosse and baseball field, Wilson Middle School Field, Cole South Field, Coolidge Park, and Murphy Field.
- + The needs assessment found that the Town lacks dedicated rectangular-shaped fields for the exclusive use of football, soccer, lacrosse, field hockey, and other similar athletic programs. Nine of the 17 rectangular-shaped fields in Town overlap with baseball, softball, or little league diamonds, and Town sports programs that require rectangular-shaped fields often make use of “multi-use” fields. The overlapping nature of these multi-use fields creates both scheduling and use conflicts if two activities occur at the same time, and puts facilities in extremely high demand during all playing seasons. Maintaining turf under these high-demand, multi-use conditions becomes a major challenge. Many sports programs at the recreational level currently play on private, leased land.
- + All of the Town schools use their respective athletic field facilities for extra-curricular sports, recess, and physical education classes in addition to scheduled practices and games. This intensive use wears on the condition of many of these fields. The Town needs another full-size baseball field for use by junior varsity (JV) baseball. Currently, the JV team plays at Wilson Middle School, but the site layout is not ideal because of sun orientation and the field’s proximity to abutters. In addition, Wilson Middle School representatives would prefer to see a more age-appropriate use of the field. A full-size baseball diamond does not meet the needs of a middle school; they would like to expand their

Images of Existing Cole Center (below)





Splash pad



Water fountain



Kayak facilities

rectangular field and add a little league field, which would better meet the needs of the school. If the Town can find a location for a new full-size baseball field, the current full-sized baseball field at the school could be converted to a more appropriate facility that includes both a multi-use rectangular field and a little league field.

- + The 2016 Master Plan calls for a total of 12 tennis courts. However, United States Tennis Association (USTA) industry standards call for 30 courts. The 2016 Master Plan suggests adding additional courts if new venues become available.
- + Many residents, users, and stakeholders expressed an interest in improving other ancillary facilities at the various playing field properties (e.g., support buildings, backstops, fencing, parking areas, sports lighting, irrigation, basketball courts, children’s playground equipment, etc.).

The general recreational amenity shortfalls at the Natick parks include:

- + Shade structures/picnic areas/seating
- + Signage – wayfinding, identification, and emergency information
- + Restroom and storage facilities
- + Drinking fountains / bottle-filling stations
- + Trail heads and connections to natural resources
- + Splash pads
- + Dog parks
- + Community gardens
- + Canoe/kayak launches (where applicable)

**Recommendations for Improvements/Expansion**

- + The 2016 Master Plan recommended 10 two-acre rectangular multi-use fields, one full-size baseball field, and two tennis courts to be located in the western and northwestern regions of Town, additional play areas on the eastern side of Town Center, and at least two new lighted basketball courts located generally within the Town limits.
- + The Town should look for opportunities to create new playing venues at alternate properties. Without new venues, the improved playing conditions will never be attained because the existing venues will continue to be overused at an ever increasing rate, further deteriorating conditions. However, since land is tight at all venues, realistic opportunities for field expansion at existing facilities are limited, which will force Town representatives to find other potential open space properties.



+ The Town should set aside funds to renovate existing facilities as new venues come online. Improvements can be accomplished through a traditional public design, bid, and construct process or through other creative means that provide cost benefits.

+ The Town should aggressively pursue other traditional state and federal funding sources for proposed renovations to reduce the financial burden on residents. The Town should also use local funding authorizations to leverage other funds from both public and private sources.



+ There are high levels of risk involved with continuing to operate some of the facilities in their current condition. Many facilities exhibit safety issues that include compacted turf, uneven playing surfaces, sharp protrusions on fencing, and trip hazards. It is important to protect the users of the recreational fields.

### Passive Recreation

Passive recreation opportunities abound in Natick. This is partially a result of the very active Planning Board encouragement (since the 1970's) for developers to include open space, and specifically trails, into their developments. This was recognized several years ago when the still-incomplete trail system between South Natick and Natick Center was named the Eisenmenger Trail System, after long-time Planning Board member and trail advocate Bob Eisenmenger. This focus on passive recreational opportunities continues, with the enlarging and improvement of J.J. Lane Park, the current efforts of the Cochituate Rail Trail and Cochituate Aqueduct (Trail) Study Committees, and the Planning Board's continuing focus on the creation of trails.



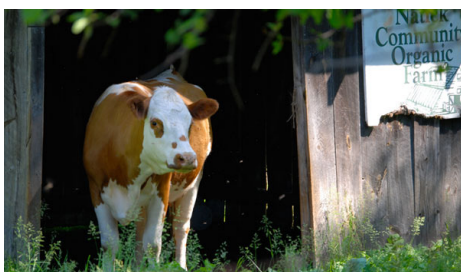
### Equitable Access to Parks/Open Space

Although Natick is not included on a list of communities that include environmental justice populations, a small portion of western Natick, abutting Framingham in the area of Morency Wood, is shown on a state map as being an environmental justice area ([http://www.mass.gov/mgis/ej\\_boston\\_metro.pdf](http://www.mass.gov/mgis/ej_boston_metro.pdf)). In general, the major open space and recreation resources are fairly well distributed in Town. Cochituate State Park is in the northwest section, Broadmoor in South Natick and Hunnewell Town Forest in the east. The western and northern parts have fewer recreational amenities than other parts of Town. The water quality in Lake Cochituate has become an important environmental equity issue due to the number of people who use its fish as a part of their diets.

*The 2016 Master Plan recommends adding more rectangular multi-use fields, a baseball field, and more tennis courts as part of Town facilities upgrades (above)*



*Belkin Family Lookout Farm*



*Natick Community Organic Farm*

## Agricultural Land

Two plots of scenic agricultural land in Natick offer particular recreational opportunities to the public. The Belkin Family Lookout Farm is one of the oldest working farms in the country. The farm was originally established in 1651 by Natick's original settlers with John Eliot. Since then, it had been owned and managed by eight different families and individuals until Steve and Joan Belkin purchased it in July 2005. In addition to its scenic views and agricultural value, the farm also hosts events and entertainment sessions, offers seasonal pick-your-own fruits and vegetables, features a hard cider taproom open year-round, and includes a children's play area complete with a livestock petting zoo. While open to residents and visitors throughout the season (for an entrance fee), the farm is privately owned and operated and is only partially protected under the Chapter 61A program. Continued public access to this large agricultural parcel will continue to be determined by farm functions and offerings provided by the owners.

The non-profit Natick Community Organic Farm in South Natick was founded in 1974 on Town-owned land and has produced organic crops ever since. Additionally, it provides open space and educational opportunities for the public. Its educational emphasis is on year-round classes for youth. In 2009 the Town transferred ownership of the property to the Conservation Commission, ensuring its permanent protection as open space.

Today, the owners of several large farms are considering options for the future, including sale and redevelopment. As part of the efforts of the Town to strengthen connections to existing open space and promote the conservation of important ecological corridors, these parcels should be reviewed and assessed as they become available to determine if strong conservation restrictions or acquisition would contribute to the Town's network of open space.

## CHAPTER 61, 61A, 61B

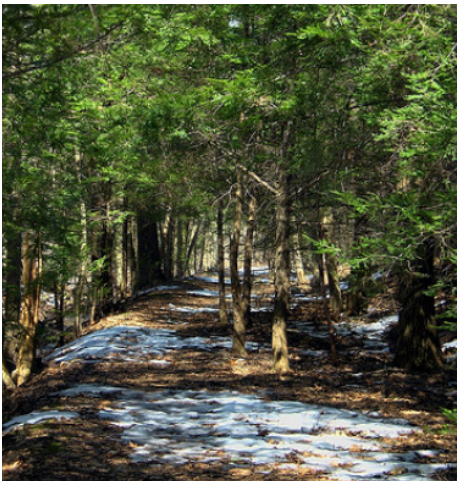
Chapter 61, 61A and 61B programs provide tax breaks for land in forestry, agricultural or recreation use, respectively, in return for a commitment to continue those uses and allow the Town a right of first refusal to purchase the properties prior to any change in use. Since the properties can be released from these requirements upon the payment of back taxes, they are not considered to be permanently protected. The 2012 Open Space and Recreation Plan reported 467 acres in Chapter 61, 61A and 61B programs. Based on calculations from the 2016 Assessor's Database for the listed parcels, a total of 441 acres was calculated for this plan in Chapter 61, 61A and 61B programs; this variation is negligible. The 2012 Open Space and Recreation Plan noted that some of the calculated acreage was included in the conservation restrictions, and this may account for the discrepancy.



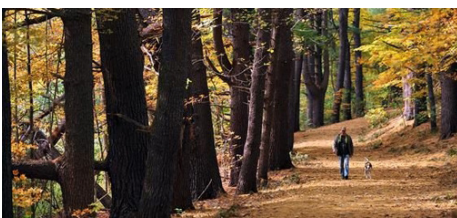
*Cochituate State Park*



*Broadmore Wildlife Sanctuary*



*Hunnewell Town Forest*



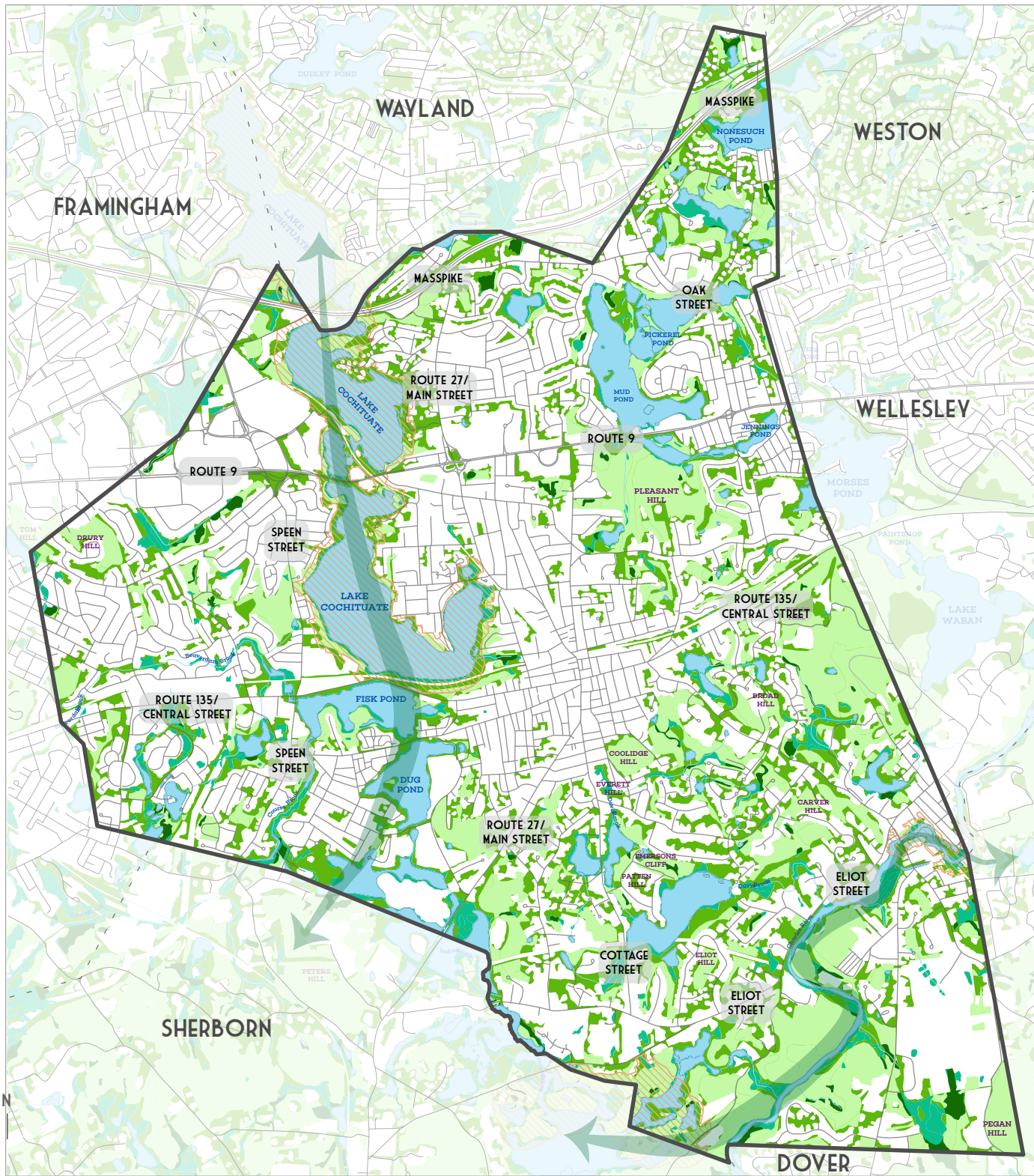
*Pegan Hill Reservation*

## Natural Resources

Nestled between the upper basins of the Charles and Sudbury Rivers in Middlesex County, Natick has a great variety of natural landscapes including forests, hills, river valleys (including several lakes, ponds, rivers and streams), and open agricultural lands. Among its variety of natural resource offerings, Natick contains a number of large open spaces that serve as significant natural resources to the area.

- + Cochituate State Park, managed by the state’s Department of Conservation and Recreation, consists of over 1100 acres, including Lake Cochituate itself and the land surrounding the lake. Two of the lake’s three “ponds” are located in Natick, while the northern pond lies in Framingham and Wayland.
- + The Broadmore Wildlife Sanctuary, owned by the Massachusetts Audubon Society, consists of 735 acres plus another 165 acres under conservation restriction. Most of this area is within Natick, the remainder in Sherborn. It has 9 miles of walking trails through a variety of habitats, as well as a universally accessible trail. It provides a venue for hiking, birdwatching, photography, cross-country skiing and other activities, and offers year-round access.
- + There are currently 200 acres of private land held in conservation restrictions on the border of Wellesley near Lake Waban. It is a goal of the Town to keep this area in conservation. The area contains the Takawampait Trail which is planned for expansion. The expansion has not been accomplished to date due to difficulties in negotiating several easements across private property.
- + The 98 acre Hunnewell Town Forest descends from Walnut Hill to Route 9 where it connects with the 156 acre Sunkaway/Pickerel Pond wetland area. The Sunkaway is a low wetlands area fed by Sunkaway Brook that is crossed by Route 9. This area contains approximately 4 miles of hiking trails
- + Pegan Hill Reservation, a 52-acre property managed by The Trustees of Reservations, is located in Dover and Natick. A glacial drumlin, its thickly wooded habitat is laced by remnant stone walls. It is open year-round, from sunrise to sunset, and has a one-mile walking trail. To date, including the recent parcel acquisition by the Trustees of the Reservation and adjoining land of the New England Forestry Foundation, over 100 contiguous acres has been acquired, protected, and made available for the public’s use and enjoyment. These properties contain Natick’s highest elevation, with unmatched scenic views of Mount Monadnock to the northeast and the Blue Hills to the east.

There are also several smaller conservation parcels that range in size from 12 to 17 acres including Pine Hill, Winter Woods, and Morency Woods. Morency Woods spans Natick and Framingham and is under the control of the Framingham Conservation Commission.



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- Prime Forest
- Forest Land Use
- Prime 3 Wetlands
- Water
- Wetlands
- Priority Habitat
- Potential Wildlife Corridor



**MAP 7.4 NATURAL RESOURCES**



*Charles River at South Natick Dam*



*Beach-goers at Cochituate State Park*



*Boating at Cochituate State Park*

## Water Resources

Water bodies and wetland areas cover approximately 13.5 percent of the Town's total area. A nearly continuous chain of lakes and wetlands extends through the town, from north to south. The northeastern corner of Natick is dominated by the low-lying Sunkaway area around Pickerell Pond and Nonesuch Pond. Many smaller low-lying wetland areas are scattered throughout the town.

### *Watersheds*

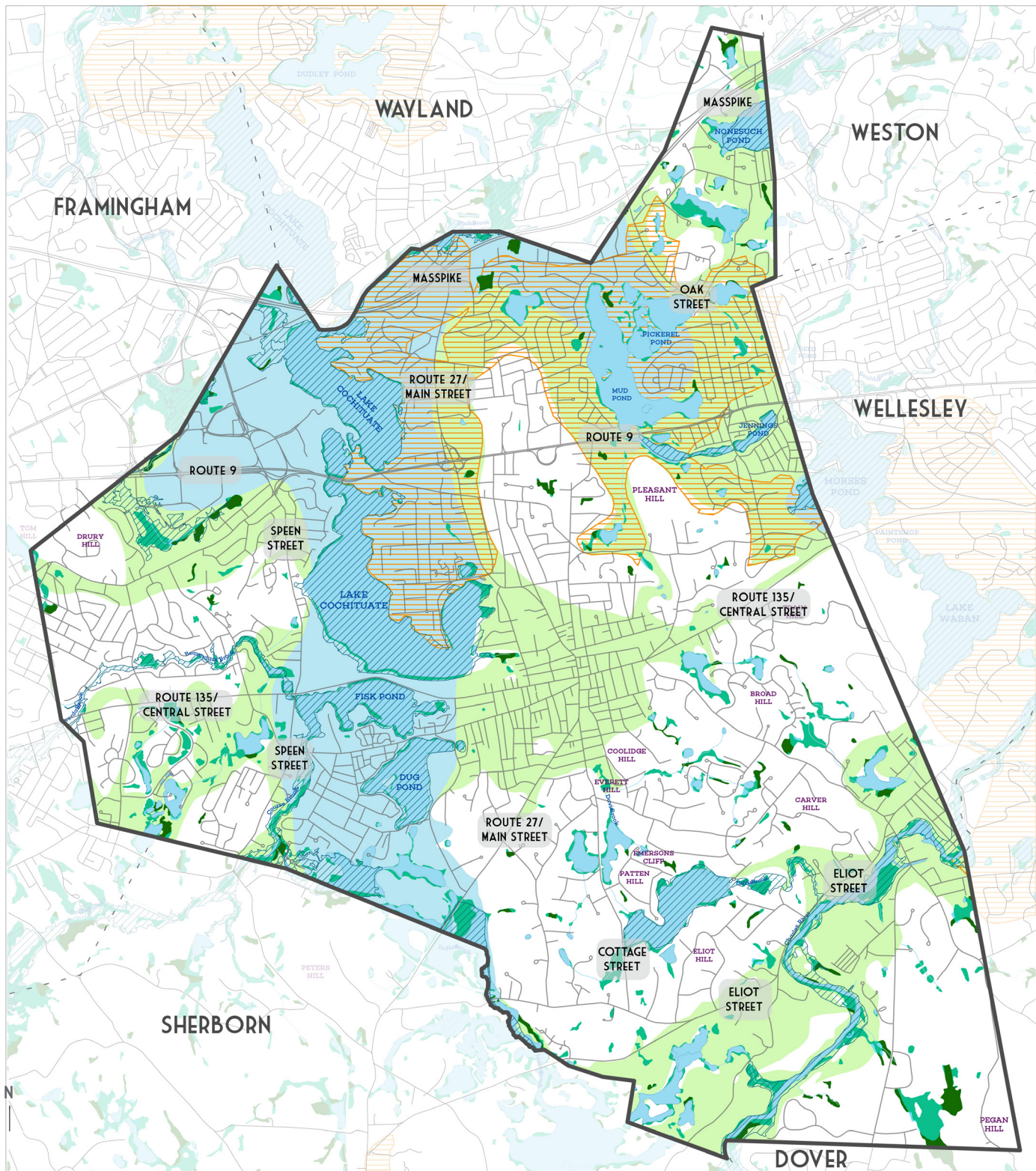
Natick is divided in half with two watersheds: the Charles River, which drains the eastern and southern portions of the town, and the SuAsCo (Sudbury-Assabet-Concord), which drains the western and northern portions of town. These drainages are classified as Class B waters under Massachusetts regulations (314 CMR 4.05). Class B waters are designated as a habitat for fish, other aquatic life, and wildlife, including for their reproduction, migration, growth and other critical functions, and for primary and secondary contact recreation. Class B waters are also suitable for irrigation and other agricultural uses and for compatible industrial cooling and process uses. Based on State regulation, these waters must consistently have good aesthetic value.

The Charles River passes through the southeastern corner of Natick. Major sub-basins within the Charles River watershed consist of Indian Brook (including Dug Pond), Davis Brook, and Jennings Pond (which includes the Sunkaway region and Pickerell Pond). Natick's portion of the SuAsCo watershed includes Lake Cochituate and Fisk Pond, with their tributary basins of Beaverdam Brook, Course Brook, Pegan Brook and Snake Brook.

### *Surface Water*

Water bodies and associated wetlands in Natick comprise a total of 1,287 acres of the Town's gross acreage. The largest water body is Lake Cochituate, which covers roughly 440 acres within Natick. Lake Cochituate is part of a chain of water bodies running north to south in Natick which also includes Fisk Pond, Dug Pond, and the Indian Brook drainage. This chain continues through the southern portion of Natick along the Charles River corridor.

Surface waters in Natick provide many recreational opportunities. Lakes, ponds and rivers offer fishing, swimming and boating. They are often surrounded by scenic walking trails with particularly good areas for bird and animal watching. The Charles River has a boat launch at the South Natick Dam that is often used by canoeists. Cochituate State Park encompasses all of Lake Cochituate and Fisk Pond and provides swimming, boating, and picnicking opportunities. The Town maintains a swimming beach at Dug Pond.



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- Aquifer
  - Aquifer Recharge Areas
  - Charles River Basin
  - Concord River Basin
  - 100 Year Floodplain
  - Zone II Wellhead Protection Areas
  - Water



MAP 7.5 WATER RESOURCES



South Natick Dam on the Charles River



Beach at Dug Pond

### Impaired Water Bodies

According to the MassDEP Division of Watershed Management Watershed Planning Program 2014 Integrated List of Waters (305(b)/303(d)), the following bodies of water are listed with impairments:

- + Lake Cochituate - Impaired with a TMDL in place
- + Charles River - Impaired with a TMDL in place
- + Fisk Pond - Impaired, not caused by pollutant
- + Dug Pond - Impaired, not caused by pollutant
- + Morses Pond (Wellesley) - Impaired, not caused by pollutant
- + Jennings Pond - Attainment for some uses/other uses not assessed

Jennings Pond has been reported as an impaired water body on each EPA report since 2002, but was listed in the most recent report as having attained aesthetic standards, while other uses were not assessed. Lake Cochituate has also appeared on the report each year since 2002 and is contaminated by organic enrichment/oxygen depletion, pathogens and toxic organics. The Charles River has a more extensive presence on the impaired water bodies list. It has appeared on each report since 1998, and is contaminated by noxious aquatic plants, nutrients, organic enrichment/oxygen depletion, pathogens, toxic organics and turbidity north of the South Natick Dam. South of the dam, it is impaired by metals, noxious aquatic plants, nutrients, organic enrichment/oxygen depletion, pathogens, turbidity and unknown toxicity. Fiske Pond, Dug Pond and Morse Pond are all listed for impairments caused by non-native aquatic plants.

Ongoing efforts to improve the condition of these impaired bodies are extremely important. The Army's effort to remove sedimentation from Lake Cochituate, completed in 2010, is a strong first step in cleaning that water body. The Charles River Watershed Association (CRWA) continuously works to develop strategies to clean the river. In 1995, the CWRA's research convinced the EPA to launch a plan to restore the Charles to fishable and swimmable conditions by 2005. Water quality has significantly improved through wastewater treatment and the elimination of contaminated discharges. The goal has been met along most of the river but some areas remain in need of improvement.

## IMPAIRED WATER BODIES TMDL

A TMDL is a pollution budget and includes a calculation of the maximum amount of a pollutant that can occur in a waterbody and allocates the necessary reductions to one or more pollutant sources. Under section 303(d) of the Clean Water Act, states, territories and authorized tribes (included in the term State here) are required to submit lists of impaired waters. The law requires that the states establish priority rankings for waters on the lists and develop Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL) for these waters.

### *Aquifer Recharge Areas*

The main aquifer generally bisects the Town's subsurface from north to south, links to the north with Wayland and stretches over to Weston, to the east to Framingham then south, to Sherborn. The recharge areas are typically found in the second concentric circle around the aquifer area, but often sporadically shift. With a particular interest in aquifer protection, the Town retains an interest in the protection of Elm Bank in Dover, where one of Natick's town wells is located.

## AQUIFER PROTECTION OVERLAY DISTRICT

The Town of Natick Aquifer Protection Overlay District (APD), Zoning Bylaw 9.2, (<http://www.natickma.gov/ArchiveCenter/ViewFile/Item/80>) protects existing and potential groundwater supply recharge areas within the Town. This regulation applies to all land uses within the overlay district; however, a special exception is made for residentially used lots in the RS and RG Districts. The APD specifies both prohibited uses, such as disposal of on-site solid waste other than brush or stumps, and uses allowed by special permit, such as application of fertilizers for non-domestic or non-agricultural uses. The APD permit application is reviewed as part of the Special Permit Granting Authority Process by the Zoning Board.

### *Flood Hazard Areas*

According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) FIRM Database data published as of July 21, 2014 the flood hazard areas present in Natick are as follows:

- + A: 1% Annual Chance of Flooding, no Base Flood Elevation
- + AE: 1% Annual Chance of Flooding, with Base Flood Elevation
- + AE: Regulatory Floodway
- + X: 0.2% Annual Chance of Flooding

Zone A areas in Natick are located around Lake Cochituate, Fisk, and Dug Ponds. Zone AE is an area inundated by 100-year flooding for which base flood elevations (BFE) have been determined. In Natick these areas include the areas around Jennings Pond and along Mud Pond Stream south of Route 9, around Nonesuch Pond, along Beaver Dam and Davis Brooks, and along the Charles River. Zone X includes the areas between the limits of the base flood and the 0.2-percent-annual-chance (or 500-year) flood. These areas in Natick include wetlands south of Winter Street, wetlands around Pickerel Pond and along Mud Pond Stream north of Route 9, along Beaver Dam Brook, three patches of wetlands south of Route 135 just west of Fisk, Dug and Cochituate Ponds, Union Street intersection, and along the Charles River. There are also Zone X areas along a short brook near Glen Street and around a small water pool in the northernmost part of Town just north of the MassPike.



*Mud Pond (Sunkaway)*



*Mud Pond (Sunkaway)*



*Vegetated buffer zone*

## FLOOD PLAIN OVERLAY DISTRICT

The Town of Natick Flood Plain Overlay District (FPOD), Zoning Bylaw 9.1, (<http://www.natickma.gov/ArchiveCenter/ViewFile/Item/80>) protects persons and property against the hazards of floodwater inundation. This regulation restricts construction or expansion of buildings in the FPOD, except those used for woodland, grassland, wetland, agricultural, horticultural or recreational purposes. Permissible exceptions are provided in the FPOD, including use of such land that will not interfere with the general purpose of the FPOD, and are reviewed by the Board of Appeals with input from the Planning Board, Board of Health, Board of Public Works, Board of Selectmen and Town Conservation Commission.

### Wetlands

Massachusetts defines wetlands as follows (MA General Law Chapter 131, Section 40):

“The term ‘freshwater wetlands’ shall mean wet meadows, marshes, swamps, bogs, areas where groundwater, flowing or standing surface water or ice provides a significant part of the supporting substrate for a plant community for at least five months of the year; emergent and submergent plant communities in inland waters; that portion of any bank which touches any inland waters.” Various wetland types are further defined on the basis of hydrology and indicator plants and include bogs (19 types of indicator plants), swamps (22 types of plants), wet meadows (12 types of plants), and marshes (22 types of plants).”

Any activity within this 100 feet and/or within 200 feet of a river or perennial stream is subject to the discretion of the Conservation Commission, as per the Wetlands Protection Act, Rivers Protection Act (a 1996 amendment to the Wetlands Protection Act), the state regulations pertaining to these acts (310 CMR 10.00 and 310 CMR 10.58, respectively), Stormwater Management Policy and Natick’s Wetlands Protection Bylaw and Regulations.

The Wetlands Protection Bylaw, Article 79 of the Natick Bylaws, effective as of 2000, increased the restrictions placed on wetlands in Town by dividing the 100-foot jurisdictional buffer area provided by the state law into a “no-disturb” zone (first 25 feet), a “no-build” zone (first 40 feet) and the remaining 60 feet which requires permission from the Conservation Commission for any work within it. It also regulates isolated wetlands subject to flooding and vernal pools (See discussion of vernal pools in the Fisheries and Wildlife section later in this chapter). In addition, it provides for wildlife corridors.



*Rain garden at Natick High School*

## WETLAND BYLAW

The Town of Natick Wetland Bylaw Article 79 (<http://www.natickma.gov/DocumentCenter/Home/View/462>) protects any freshwater wetland, bank, beach, flat, marsh, swamp, wet meadow, or bog bordering on any creek, river, perennial stream, intermittent stream, pond, lake, or reservoir and any vernal pool, Riverfront Area, floodplain, isolated wetland, lands under any of the water bodies listed above, and lands subject to flooding or inundation by groundwater, surface water or storm water flow. A buffer zone of 100 ft. around any resource area (except Riverfront Area and 100-year floodplain) is subject to regulation under the Bylaw. The Bylaw establishes minimum setbacks from the Protected Resource Area referred to as "No Build Zones" and "No Disturbance Zones". Unless it meets one of the predefined exceptions, any alteration to a Protected Resource Area or the Buffer Zone must first receive and then comply with an issued permit. Permits applications are reviewed by the Natick Conservation Commission.

The Town has also adopted a stormwater management bylaw and regulations in compliance with EPA's Phase II requirements for Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems. The regulations require a permit for land disturbances greater than 40,000 square feet and prohibit illicit discharges into the stormwater system.

## STORMWATER MANAGEMENT BYLAW

The Town of Natick Stormwater Management and Erosion Control Bylaw Article 79A (<http://www.natickma.gov/DocumentCenter/Home/View/460>) protects surface and groundwater resources from pollutants and sedimentation runoff resulting from disturbance activities. Any activity that results in land disturbance of 40,000 square feet or more shall be reviewed and permitted by the Conservation Commission (<http://www.natickma.gov/426/Conservation-Commission>). Any land disturbance less than 40,000 sf must prevent soils or other eroded matter from being deposited onto adjacent properties, rights-of-ways, public storm drainage system, or wetland or watercourse as prescribed and specified by the Bylaw.



*Broadmoor Wildlife Sanctuary*



*Blue Heron on Lake Cochituate*

## Flora and Fauna Resources

### *Vegetation*

Vegetation within Natick is typical of the eastern Massachusetts region. Upland areas are dominated by a mixed deciduous and coniferous tree line, while the low-lying wetlands are predominantly red maples. The undeveloped open fields in Natick have combinations of upland grasses, goldenrods, and asters with scrub shrubbery dominated by roses and brambles. Wetland communities form combinations of trees, shrub, and herbaceous layers. Some wetland areas exist as either shrub swamps or herbaceous marshes. A large portion of the Sunkaway is an Atlantic white cedar swamp, which is much less common than red maple swamps.

Public shade trees are managed by the Natick Public Works Department Land Facilities Department and Natural Resources Department under the Tree Warden. These trees line public streets and rights-of-way and landscape public grounds such as cemeteries, schools and the Town Common. According to the Town's subdivision rules and regulations, "any tree twelve (12) inches in diameter or larger shall not be removed in the construction of a new subdivision." In an effort to increase the species diversity of street tree offerings, and mitigate the effects of pest infestations like Emerald Ash Borer and diseases like Dutch Elm, it is recommended that efforts should be made to use a variety of hardy tree species when planning for any replacement or new street tree planting activities.

### *Corridors for Wildlife Migration*

For most species, the best habitats are found in areas that are well watered, have abundant understory vegetation, and are relatively free of human intervention. For some game species, such as white-tail deer or beaver, the size of the contiguous range is important. An analysis of existing open space and Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program Core Habitat and Critical Natural Landscape Habitat lands reveals two possible pathways to serve as corridors for wildlife migration in Natick. Probable pathways occur when several large tracts of habitats are located in close enough proximity for wildlife to travel from one area to another. One such stretch of land creates a potential North-South corridor from Lake Cochituate on the Wayland town line to South Main Street (Route 27) on the Sherborn town line (see Map 7.4). The corridor at its northern extent includes conservation open space around Lake Cochituate from the Wayland town line southward to West Central Street (Route 135). It continues with a small tract of Cochituate State Park recreational open space along West Central Street, and southward to conservation open space surrounding Fisk Pond. Next, it reaches recreational open space around and south of Dug Pond extending to South Main Street where it continues into Sherborn.

There is a potential East-West corridor for wildlife migration in South Natick along the Charles River. The Charles River, which offers a natural wildlife corridor, supports great blue herons, black-crowned night herons, and green herons, as well as a large number of more common waterfowl. The corridor begins at the intersection of the Natick, Dover and Sherborn town lines and continues northeasterly along the Charles River through a Critical Natural Landscape habitat area within Mass. Audubon's Broadmoor Wildlife Sanctuary. It continues along the river just south of Route 16 to the Glen Street Park conservation open space. Finally, it crosses through South Natick falls and into the Hunnewell Field Playground conservation open space before crossing the Natick-Dover-Wellesley town line.



*Blue-spotted salamander*



*Eastern Box Turtle*

Existing powerline rights-of-way, such as the existing utility corridor running along the western edge of Town, provide a potential wildlife corridor. These existing cleared rights-of-way can double as habitat for wildlife if vegetation cutting is limited to longer intervals that allow shrub habitat to develop. The protective cover serves as nesting habitat for birds like Prairie Warbler, eastern Bluebird and Eastern Towhee.

### *Unique Environments & Rare Species*

Natick has no areas designated as Massachusetts Areas of Critical Environmental Concern. However, there are important ecosystems. The BioMap2 prepared by the Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP) shows several important areas for biodiversity based on the occurrence of rare species. The largest is the area including and near Cochituate State Park, followed by Broadmoor. There are smaller areas along the Charles River near the Wellesley town line, some areas of the Sunkaway, and an area east of South Main Street near the Sherborn town line.

Additionally, the Charles River corridor provides a habitat for the “threadfoot” plant, as well as animals including waterfowl, white-tailed deer, mink, and otter. A unique Atlantic white cedar swamp is located around Mud Pond in the Sunkaway.

The NHESP’s list of Rare and Endangered Species by town is available at <http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dfg/dfw/natural-heritage/species-information-and-conservation/town-species-viewer.html>. According to the database, the Boreal Turret Snail is the only species in Natick that is listed as endangered and was last sighted in 1977. Two species, Hentz’s Redbelly Tiger Beetle and Mustard White, are listed as Threatened and have been spotted historically. All other rare species in Natick are listed as species of Special Concern. These include the Blue-spotted salamander (last sighted in 2003), Purple Tiger Beetle (1937), Intricate Fairy Shrimp (1998), Mocha Emerald (1971), Triangle Floater (2000), Eastern Pondmussel (2006), Creeper (2000) and Eastern Box Turtle (2007).

### Scenic Landscapes

Natick has a number of officially designated scenic roads: Winter and Frost Streets in the northeast corner of Town; Bacon (from Wellesley town line to Walnut Street) and Walnut Streets north of the Town Center; and many streets in the more rural southern part of town: Cottage Street, Dover Road, Everett Street, Farwell Street, Glen Street, Glenwood Street, Pegan Lane, Pleasant Street, Rockland Street, South Street, Union Street and Woodland Street.



*Pegan Hill*

Natick has several notable hills that offer scenic value and should be protected: Pegan Hill, Carver Hill, Broad Hill, Train Hill, Pleasant Hill, Drury Hill, and Tom Hill. The valley between the Sunkaway, Morse's Pond, Coolidge Hill, Indian Brook and the Charles River is another notable geological feature. The Charles River and especially its waterfall at the South Natick Dam offer particular scenic value.

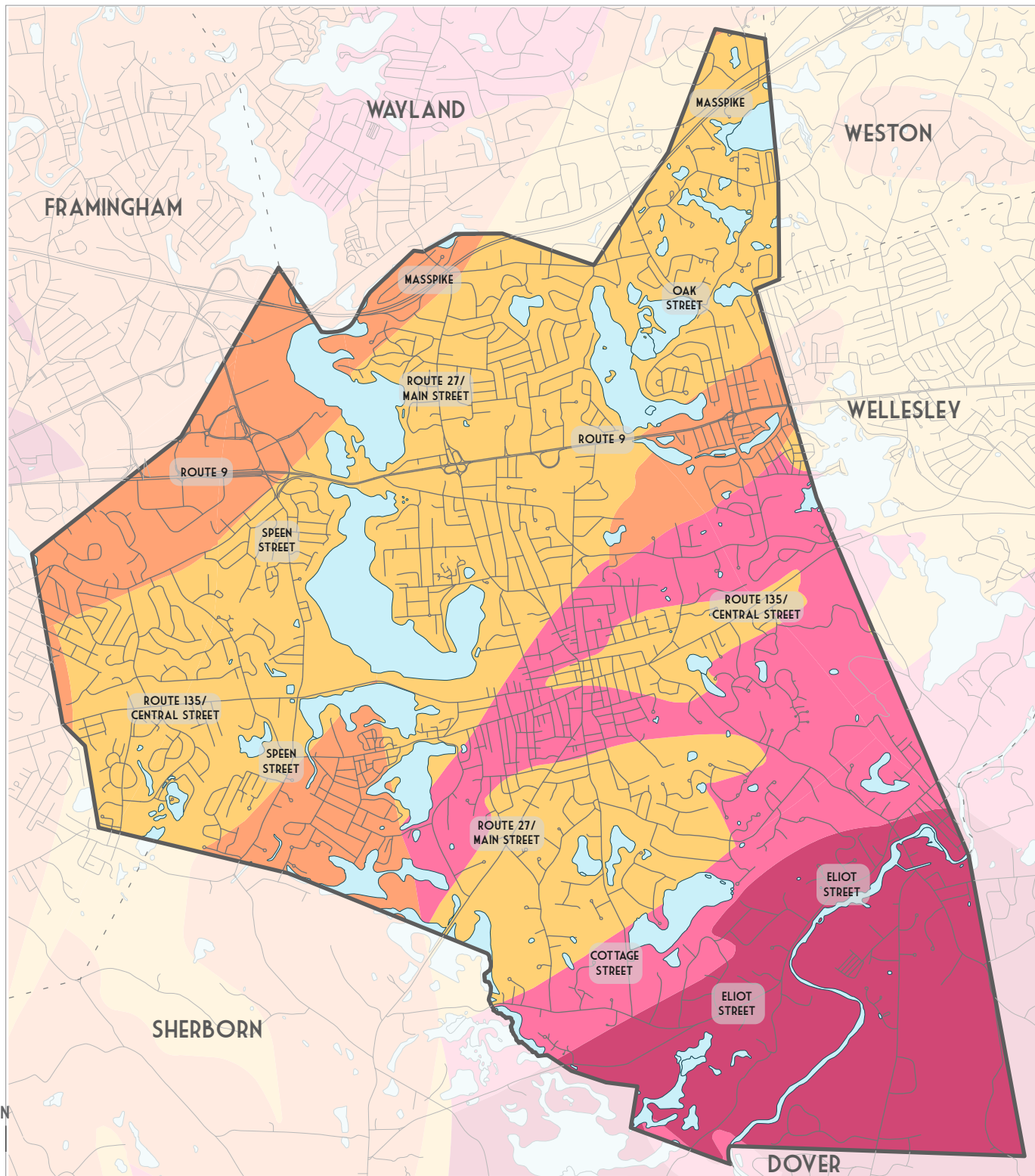
## Geology

The bedrock composition and surficial geology of Natick determine the soil make up, topography and the landscape character. As shown in the bedrock and surficial geology (see Maps 7.5 and 7.7), Natick has a varied subsurface geology determined by bands of bedrock types running in a roughly diagonal pattern southwest to northeast across the Town. The entire Town is located over the Milford antiform and includes five categories of bedrock:

- + **Pelitic Rocks:** derived from mudstone (shale) protoliths and are rich in potassium (K), aluminum (Al), silicon (Si), iron (Fe), magnesium (Mg), and water (H<sub>2</sub>O), with lesser amounts of manganese (Mn), titanium (Ti), calcium (Ca), and other constituents.
- + **Felsic Volcanics:** produced by metamorphism of both igneous and sedimentary protoliths (e.g., granite and arkose, respectively) and are rich in silicon, sodium (Na), potassium, calcium, aluminum, and lesser amounts of iron and magnesium.
- + **Mafic Rocks:** derive from basalt protoliths and some volcanogenic sediments and contain an abundance of iron, magnesium, calcium, silicon, and aluminum
- + **Avalon Granite:** Granite found within the Avalon Terrance composed of Dedham granite, a Light grayish-pink to greenish-gray granite, and the Milford granite, a grayish-pink granite

This bedrock base contributes to the surficial geology found across the Town. Four generalized categories comprise the surficial geology:

- + **Postglacial Deposits:** Sand, gravel, silt and other materials deposited after the last glacial period either by natural erosive forces (wind, water, etc.) or by man-made activities. Alluvial deposits are associated with moving water channels and floodplains, rich in minerals and nutrients and well suited to agricultural use where topography allows. Swamp and marsh deposits are associated with wetland areas, less suitable to agriculture and development but important from a flood protection standpoint. Artificial fill is non-native material transported to the site, usually for development activities. The general make-up of the fill is determined by the site of origination.
- + **Glacial Stratified Deposits:** Deposits of streams formed by the melting of glaciers. These deposits are sorted and stratified by the action of water from melting ice. While the melt water deposits the coarse material near the end of the glacier, the finer material is carried further away. Exact soil make-up is variable, and suitability for agricultural use or development is dependent on soil class and slope.
- + **Thick Till & Moraine:** Unstratified and unsorted deposits of sediment that form



**LEGEND**

- BEDROCK TYPE**
- Pelitic Rocks
  - Felsic Volcanics
  - Mafic Rocks
  - Avalon Granite
  - Water



**MAP 7.6 BEDROCK LITHOLOGY**

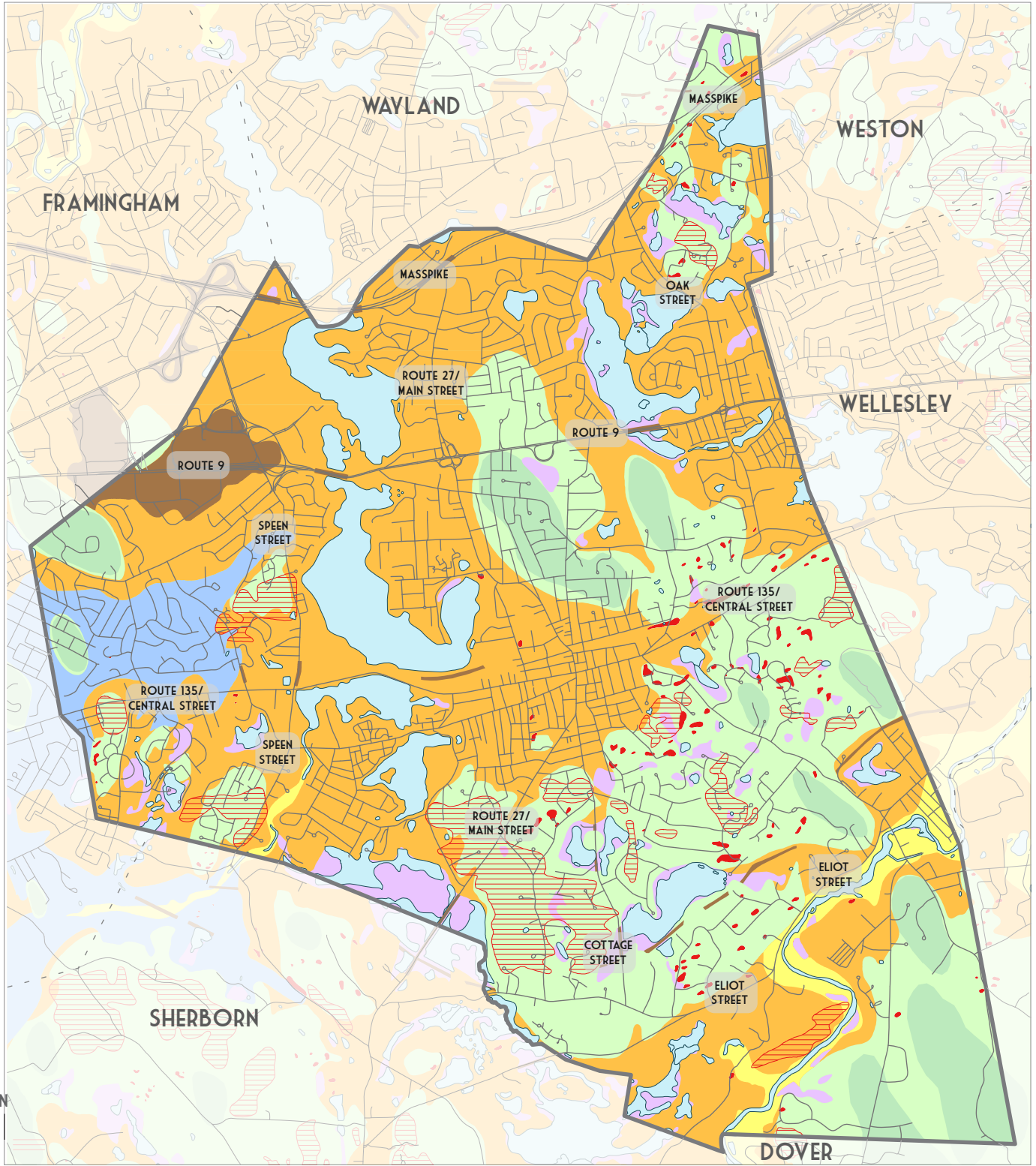
through the direct action of, or contact with, glacial ice. Till is derived from the erosion and entrainment of material by the moving ice of a glacier. Many different varieties are recognized on the basis of their position with respect to a glacier. Areas of thick till tend to be more suited towards agriculture, although this is highly dependent on existing topography.

- + **Bedrock & Thin Till:** Exposed areas of subsurface bedrock and thin deposits of unstratified glacial till. Thin till is suitable for agricultural purposes depending on depth to bedrock. These areas can be challenging for development uses and bedrock outcroppings may increase development costs.

## Open Space Committees/Management

The ongoing efforts of the Town to manage and preserve the excellent open spaces it offers are led by various committees and volunteer groups. A few of the key committees are included below with descriptions of their services.

- + **Open Space Advisory Committee,** appointed by the Board of Selectmen, recommends ways the Town can protect and make best use of town open spaces and updates the Town's Open Space and Recreation Plan.
- + **Town Forest Committee,** appointed by the Conservation Commission, manages Hunnewell Town Forest and promotes public enjoyment and appreciation of this resource.
- + **Trails Maintenance Committee,** appointed by the Conservation Commission, maintains and encourages use of existing trails throughout Natick and develops new trails.
- + **Cochituate Rail Trail Advisory Committee,** appointed by the Board of Selectmen, advises the Selectmen regarding future development of a multi-use path on the old railroad line between Natick and Saxonville.
- + **F.I.D.O. (Fun Informed Dog Owners of Natick),** an independent citizens group initiated by the Open Space Advisory Committee, is developing plans for a dog park at the entrance to the Middlesex Path on Route 135.
- + **Friends of Natick Trails,** a new nonprofit corporation, is currently being formed to raise funds and support the development of the Cochituate Rail Trail and other trails in Natick.
- + **Natick Transportation Advisory Committee** is appointed by the Board of Selectman to advise the Town on transportation projects and policies through an integrated approach that reflects all modes of transportation, including transit, cycling, pedestrian and vehicular modes of travel. The former Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee was incorporated into this committee.
- + **The Trustees of Reservations** is a statewide non-profit agency that manages Pegan Hill.



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D**
- POSTGLACIAL DEPOSITS**
    - Artificial Fill
    - Swamp & Marsh Deposits
    - Alluvium
  - GLACIAL STRATIFIED DEPOSITS**
    - Coarse
    - Glaciolacustrine Fine
  - THICK TILL & MORaine**
    - Thick Till

- BEDROCK & THIN TILL**
  - Bedrock Outcrop
  - Thin Till Outcrop
  - Abundant Outcrop & Shallow Bedr
- OTHER**
  - Water



MAP 7.7 SURFACE GEOLOGY

## Issues & Opportunities

The Town of Natick contains an excellent variety of open space and natural resource offerings for its residents. The Town offers great access to its water resources, a good variety of recreational amenities provided around town, well buffered and protected natural areas, and a distribution of protected open space such that 90% of the Town is within a quarter mile of an open space area. As noted at the beginning of this chapter, many identified opportunities for improvement focus on specific efforts to improve the existing resources and pursue expansion in a more focused manner. The four key areas for future efforts are as follows:

### Connectivity of Open Space

- + Providing better access to the Town open spaces was identified as a prime area of focus as part of the public meeting discussions and during the existing conditions analysis. Many of the existing parks have internal trail networks and one or two access points that limit a wider availability of access to surrounding neighborhoods. Access to the Town's open space network should be improved through increased entry points, better signage and trailhead markings, handicap accessibility improvements, and stronger connectivity to under-served neighborhoods.
- + The focus of access improvements should include all modes of transportation including sidewalks, bike lanes, bike trails, walking trails, and crossing signals and markings. These improvements should be planned and constructed in coordination with general transportation improvement efforts in town.
- + Future trail networks should focus on creating linkages both between the various isolated open space parcels and to larger regional networks in and around Natick.
- + Wildlife corridors are most beneficial to species when they provide a contiguous network of well sized parcels and linear corridors. Future land acquisitions and planned conservation easements should focus on expanding connections between existing open space parcels and corridors, especially along the potential wildlife corridors identified on the Natural Resource Map.

### Availability and Variety of Recreational Space

- + While there is a good variety of recreational space available in town, it is currently under stress from high levels of use. There is a need for increased recreational space and the 2016 Master Plan for Parks and Fields recommended 10 two-acre rectangular multi-use fields, one full-size baseball field, and two tennis courts to be located in the western and northwestern regions of Town, additional play areas on the eastern side of Town Center, and at least two new lighted basketball courts located generally within the town limits.
- + Multiple public comments from residents included a desire to see a higher level of variety offered in the recreational uses, including varying athletic field types, community gardens, dog parks, public pools, a teen center, and family oriented destinations. These comments echoed the findings of the 2016 Master Plan for Parks and Fields.

- + There are two areas of town that were identified in the Master Plan for Parks and Fields as lacking recreational park resources: the northeast corner and the southernmost section. There is a limited availability of undeveloped land in the northeast corner of Natick and much of that land is unsuitable for field space due to topography or the presence of wetlands. Improvements should focus on improving existing facilities. The southern portion of Natick is more sparsely populated, but also has several large undeveloped parcels and current agricultural uses that may become available for recreational development in the future.

### **Maintenance and Protection of Open Space and Natural Resources**

- + Residents of Natick recognize that the total available area and general state of the natural open spaces around Natick is a major asset to the Town. Future efforts and resources should focus on maintaining the good condition and the ecological health of these spaces.
- + Future expansions and acquisition of open space should be carried out with mindfulness to the capacity and budget of the Public Works Department. Small, single plot acquisitions should be limited to areas that can become part of a larger open space network, or that have the potential to fill an identified need.
- + Improvements to connectivity and access should be carried out in coordination with larger transportation projects to maximize efficient use of public funding.

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