

SECTION

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INTRODUCTION

In 2003, the Town of Shelburne initiated development of their Executive Order 418 Community Development Plan (CDP). The first element of the CDP was an Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP). In 2012, the Open Space Committee, formed as an action item in the 2004 Plan, began a process to update and revise the Plan.

The 2014 Shelburne Open Space and Recreation Plan was developed by a multidisciplinary committee coordinated by the Shelburne Open Space Committee, and funded by a grant from the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) Planning Department who provided extensive mapping services, research, background data analysis and technical support for the development of plan components.

A. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The purpose of this plan is to serve as a guide for the identification, prioritization and protection of Shelburne's natural, cultural, scenic and historic resources, and future open space and recreation needs of the residents of Shelburne. With an extensive action plan developed collaboratively with input and buy-in of many Town boards and commissions, the OSRP represents consensus building on the most important natural, agricultural, and recreational resource needs in town and on the best solutions for addressing them. The Seven-Year Action Plan, when carried out by the Open Space Committee and other Town boards and commissions who participated in its development, will successfully implement Shelburne's open space and recreation goals and objectives.

An updated Open Space and Recreation Plan for Shelburne is an essential tool for the Town to use as it works to protect the quality of life that the residents of Shelburne now enjoy, and to plan for growth that will not be in conflict with Shelburne's open space and recreation goals.

B. PLANNING PROCESS AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

In 2012, the Open Space Committee recognized the need to invest time and energy into updating the 2004 Shelburne Open Space and Recreation Plan. Building on the accomplishments achieved in the 2004 Action Plan, the Open Space Committee established a working sub-committee with representatives of the Conservation Commission, Agricultural Commission, Planning Board and Recreation Committee to lead the effort with the support of the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) Planning Department.

Visioning Forum

To start the review and update process, the committee sponsored a community-wide Visioning Forum to identify issues of concern as well as possible solutions. Over 60 Shelburne residents gathered at this forum on October 24, 2012. Participants broke up into discussion groups focused on the following topics intended to stimulate creative thinking about Shelburne's future:

- ***What could we do to help preserve agricultural and forest resources?***
- ***How can we provide opportunities for development while protecting Shelburne's fields, forests and scenic views?***
- ***How do we best utilize Shelburne's river areas and water resources?***
- ***Do we have the right mix of recreational facilities and programs?***
- ***How can we best sustain Shelburne's quality of life, small town environment, and historical resources for the future?***

Community Survey

Feedback and data gathered at this forum was then used to by the Open Space/Recreation Plan Update Sub-committee to create a survey (see Appendix xx). In January, 2013, this survey was mailed to over 860 Shelburne households. 339 responses were received--- close to 1/3 of all the town's households providing a wide range of opinions.

Demographics of respondents include:

- 71% of respondents have lived in Shelburne for more than 10 years, with 51% of all respondents having lived here for more than 20 years;
- 46% of respondents live in Shelburne Falls village; 41% live in rural/agricultural sections of town (including 14% who live in Shelburne Center village area);
- 6% own a working farm; 19% own forest land; 23% own more than 5 acres of undeveloped land; 6% identify as commercial property owners.

Responses were grouped into four major areas:

- Open Space/Conservation
- Agriculture/Forestry
- Development
- Recreation

The issues of top importance to respondents in regards to open space and conservation were:

- protecting drinking water resources, well fields, aquifer recharge areas (95%)
- keeping habitats for various wildlife (94%)
- preserving scenic views (88%)

Most respondents indicated an interest in preserving the rural character of the town through agriculture and forestry:

- 97% feel that keeping farms economically viable is important
- 92% are concerned about the loss of agricultural lands
- 92% want to maintain working forest lands
- 91% feel keeping fields/pastures open is important to the Town
- 88% feel that the impact of invasive species on farms and open space is an important issue

Balancing development and open space is on the minds of many respondents. A majority of respondents (82%) feel that increasing the rate of business/commercial development is important. 57% feel that increasing the rate of residential development is important, while 43% do not. The top issues:

- 91% are concerned about developing and siting alternative energy sources such as wind, solar, etc.
- 88% feel preserving and maintaining historical buildings/spaces is a priority
- 80% would like to see the Town regulate building development on ridgelines
- 78% feel we should provide more village parking and restroom facilities for visitors

In regards to recreation:

- 82% are interested in working on how to best use the Pothole/riverfront area
- 80% want to allow more access to river resources
- 76% would like to be able to access more land for recreation
- 76% would like more information about available recreational activities
- 74% indicated the availability of organized recreational opportunities is a concern

An overwhelming majority (95%) of the survey respondents believed it is important to preserve the rural/agricultural character of our town. A majority of respondents (77%) said that they would support the town taking action to protect and conserve open space and natural resources. Many respondents supported various strategies to balance development and open space. However, a significant number requested additional information about them, indicating that there may be a need for more discussion and educational opportunities about strategies for protecting what we cherish about our town.

While the responses to the survey reveal there is overwhelming citizen support for the maintenance of Shelburne's rural, small-town and agricultural character, ideas and strategies to achieve this are wide ranging and disparate.

Action Planning

In spring-summer 2013, the Open Space and Recreation Plan update committee continued to meet with Town boards and residents. Further analysis of the survey results was conducted by Town boards including the Select Board, Agricultural Commission, Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Recreation Committee, and Open Space Committee. Members of the Open Space and Recreation Plan update subcommittee met with many Town boards and committees for individual review and discussion and then

formulated draft action plans to address the goals and objectives identified. Copies of the draft maps and the Action Plan were made available for public review at the Town Hall and on-line at the town's website.

A town-wide Open Space Committee meeting was held November 21, 2013 to provide members of the public an opportunity for additional review and comment. Following this meeting, all 10 sections of the Draft Plan were posted on the Town Website for public review. Copies of the Draft Plan, along with all maps, were made available for public review in the Town libraries and Town Hall for a final 10-day review period.

After review and discussion, all ideas, comments, and corrections pertaining to the different sections of the Plan, maps and the action steps received during the public discussions, throughout the planning process, and following the November 21, 2013 meeting were incorporated in the final version of the 2014 Shelburne Open Space and Recreation Plan.

The information collected from both the survey and the Public Forums was also used to update Section 6 – Community Vision, Section 7 – Analysis of Needs, Section 8 – Goals and Objectives, and Section 9 – Seven-Year Action Plan.

The goals, objectives and action plans outlined in the 2014 Shelburne Open Space and Recreation Plan are designed to accomplish the visions articulated by the residents through the forums and surveys. The Seven-Year Action Plan, developed in close collaboration with those Town officials accountable for the implementation phase will help ensure a measured road map for building a better future for Shelburne.