



# Attleboro Open Space & Recreation Plan Update Public Workshop Summary

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On September 28, 2023, approximately 45 residents attended Attleboro's first public workshop for the update of its Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) at City Hall from 6:30-8 PM. The event started with a welcome from Mayor Cathleen DeSimone and introductions by Gary Ayrassian, Director of Planning and Development. Krista Moravec and Gabby Queenan of Horsley Witten Group followed with a brief presentation describing the OSRP update process.

Following the presentation, attendees were divided into four small groups, where they discussed the following questions:

1. **What is the City doing well?** What is the City of Attleboro doing well by way of protecting the natural environment and/or providing recreational opportunities for residents?
2. **What could the City do better and how?** What existing recreation facilities could benefit from improvements and how? Could the City strengthen natural resource protection strategies and how?
3. **What more could the City do?** What new recreational opportunities should the City consider? Which natural areas need protection? What are some new strategies to protect these resources?

For each question, a participant wrote their ideas on sticky-notes and posted them on a board. After everyone had a chance to offer their ideas, the group organized the sticky-notes into common themes. For Questions 2 and 3, the group prioritized their top three priority themes or ideas by dot-voting. After each group had worked through all the questions, they reported out to the larger group the ideas that resonated with the group the most in their discussion.



## Themes and Priority Ideas

The following provides an overall summary of themes and priority areas that came out of each small group. Detailed notes from each group follow.

For “What is the City doing well,” all groups felt the City does a great job with protecting open space, citing specifically the purchase of Highland Park. The City also has also developed important partnerships with Mass Audubon and Attleboro Land Trust that support conservation initiatives. Recreation fields and facilities are available and well maintained. Many also felt the City does a good job with communication through emails, articles in the local papers, and its website about open space and recreation issues.

The four groups had slightly different priorities for “What could the City do better.” Group One prioritized site safety, such as better lighting and level surfaces. It also highlighted the need for information on the City’s resources, including onsite signage as well as on the City’s website. Group Two prioritized improvements of recreation fields, citing the lack of infrastructure at certain fields, more parking, and the use of turf versus grass. Maintenance and upkeep of the City’s open spaces was also a priority. Group Three prioritized water quality projection, specifically the City’s drinking water sources, as well as encouraging the use of the City’s Open Space Residential Development Ordinance by developers. Group Four’s priorities were public education, particularly of young people, on the importance of the City’s natural areas. It also highlighted the need to increase accessibility of trails at open spaces for people with disabilities.

When asked “What more should the City do,” Group One prioritized limiting development of new housing on undeveloped land and building City efforts for public tree protection and maintenance. Group Two prioritized development of an indoor gym and community space, as well as increasing lighting at fields for extended use. Group Three also prioritized trees and talked about best practices for planting and maintenance, particularly at the new transit-oriented development. Addressing access for people with disabilities was also a priority for this group. Group Four prioritized open space acquisitions. Examples included Locust Valley and properties that link existing conservation and recreation areas. Education was also important to inform residents about open space and recreation resources, in particular the conservation and open space history of Attleboro.

## Individual Table Boards

Question	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4
What is the City doing well?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City is acquiring open space when available, Highland Park (x5)</li> <li>• Partnerships (x3)                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Mass Audubon</li> <li>○ Land Trust</li> <li>○ Working well with non-environmental civic groups in the city</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Programming (x3)                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Purchase of Highland Park</li> <li>○ Open space at former Locust Valley - walks and sledding</li> <li>○ Outdoor programs</li> <li>○ Oak Knoll</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Trails (x3)                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Abundance and easy access</li> <li>○ A pandemic lifesaver!</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Maintenance of fields (x4)</li> <li>• Communications and awareness (x4)                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Land trust booklet</li> <li>○ Emails</li> <li>○ Advertising</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recreation facilities are in fantastic shape.</li> <li>• Select field improvements</li> <li>• Improving some field areas</li> <li>• Sports areas seem available</li> <li>• Fields are well maintained and cared for</li> <li>• Accessibility in Capron Park</li> <li>• Wildlife/habitat preservation at Highland</li> <li>• Refreshing of open spaces, cleaning them up for safer use</li> <li>• Space that becomes available being looked at by the city and land trust</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• River clean up events coordinate by Nick</li> <li>• Providing adequate facilities for sports and recreation (for youth)</li> <li>• Additional recreational opportunities (e.g. Finberg Park tennis courts)</li> <li>• Wide range of PR, projects in the local paper</li> <li>• City departments are willing to help/understand process</li> <li>• Councils addressing concerns/needs: Recreation, cultural, disability</li> <li>• Community garden</li> <li>• Storm clean up</li> <li>• The City's efforts in obtaining grants for sustainable projects (x2)</li> <li>• Protecting open space (x2)</li> <li>• Purchase of Highland Park and maintaining it as an open space and for cross country</li> <li>• The City has partnerships with Mass Audubon and the Attleboro Land Trust on several outstanding land acquisition projects. (x2)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kevin Dumas walkway</li> <li>• Hike Attleboro (x2)</li> <li>• Trails</li> <li>• Riverwalk</li> <li>• Open space already preserved</li> <li>• Easy access to numerous parks within city</li> <li>• Improved connectivity properties</li> <li>• City organizes river clean up being a yearly event</li> <li>• Community gardens</li> <li>• Amazing volunteer groups</li> <li>• Recreation field space seems to be adequate</li> </ul>
Where can the City do better and how?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site safety (<b>6 dots</b>)                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Lighting, fencing</li> <li>○ Level surfaces</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Trail makers, kiosks, signage, QR codes, information, amenities (x6) (<b>4 dots</b>)                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Maintenance and clean up of trails</li> <li>○ Handy St Conservation area, site map</li> <li>○ More user-friendly city website</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Connectivity (x7) (<b>4 dots</b>)                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Train station crosswalks</li> <li>○ Need more sidewalks, better maintenance of sidewalks</li> <li>○ Highland Park walkways don't connect</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Multiuse complex at Poncin-Hewitt (x3) (<b>3 dots</b>)</li> <li>• Bike paths (2 dots)</li> <li>• Equitable amenities (1 dot)</li> <li>• More activities/programming (e.g. guided hikes, events that are eco-friendly) (1 dot)</li> <li>• Maintenance and upkeep of fields and facilities (no dots)</li> <li>• Upgrade and expansion of fields (grass/turf) and mixed use space (no dots)</li> <li>• Holden Street, canoe launch improvements and rentals (no dots)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improvements at fields (<b>6 dots</b>)                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Lack of infrastructure at certain fields</li> <li>○ Better sports fields (maybe turf)</li> <li>○ Better parking around the sports fields</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Maintenance (<b>5 dots</b>)                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Following through and maintain the open spaces, keeping them open and clean for residents</li> <li>○ Cleanliness of Highland Park needs attention, landscaping, mowing</li> <li>○ Acquire and maintain even more open space for preservation, i.e. Locust Valley</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Access to school facilities (<b>5 dots</b>)                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ AHS field use without the fees, city student athletes are the feeders to the school</li> <li>○ Access to walking on high school track during summer!</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Allocation/logistics associated with field usage (2 dots)</li> <li>• Entrance open space to downtown area (2 dots)</li> <li>• Public pool space, e.g. loss of South Attleboro location (1 dot)</li> <li>• Balfour Park ice rink, what happened? (1 dot)</li> <li>• Dog park (1 dot)                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Further conversations on dog park</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protect water quality (<b>5 dots</b>)</li> <li>• Encourage use of the Open Space Residential Development Ordinance by developers (<b>5 dots</b>)</li> <li>• More emphasis on sustainability, climate change (<b>4 dots</b>)                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Future drainage considerations, planting trees</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Utilize all assets, categorize the assets, be open minded about possible uses, multiple uses at sites (<b>3 dots</b>)</li> <li>• Providing areas for "extreme" sports: Hunting, ATV, which adversely affect preserved areas (2 dots)</li> <li>• Bike lands/making cycling safer (2 dots)</li> <li>• ADA access (2 dots)</li> <li>• Review ordinances and update to increase/protect open spaces (no dots)</li> <li>• Revising parking regulations to reduce pavement (no dots)</li> <li>• Bigger trash barrels (no dots)</li> <li>• Ensuring preservation of all city-owned open space, e.g. Highland Park (no dots)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education (<b>5 dots</b>)                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Education of younger people as to environment and open space</li> <li>○ Sponsor/fund more youth/volunteer projects</li> <li>○ Education to the public, tell them what is important for the future, Bungay River</li> <li>○ Environmental education programming in parks and open space</li> </ul> </li> <li>• ADA access (<b>5 dots</b>)                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Handicap forest access, bridal trail (see #40 and 45 on map)</li> <li>○ Develop universal use of trails</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Integration of arts in park space (<b>3 dots</b>)</li> <li>• Preserve open space, including water quality protection (<b>3 dots</b>)</li> <li>• Review rules and regulations (2 dots)                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Adapt to climate change, protect assets</li> <li>○ Update rules and regulation to be forward looking</li> <li>○ Future planning and construction – cluster zoning</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Maintenance (1 dot)                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Hiking trail at Bungay River needs to be better maintained</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Question	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sustainability (no dots) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Better empower the Sustainability Commission and allow it to move forward</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Maintenance of dog park</li> <li>• Turf fields (1 dot)</li> <li>• Availability of indoor recreation space (no dots)</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Develop/maintain existing trail system</li> <li>• Enhancements (1 dot) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Better use of Highland Park</li> <li>○ Lighting in Balfour Park (and electrical access)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Trail markers on city and “Hike Attleboro” etc., connecting open space (1 dot)</li> <li>• Reduce noise pollution (no dots)</li> </ul>
<p>What more can the City do?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limit development of new housing if it destroys unused land (e.g. across from Murray Church and near Agudas (x7) <b>(7 dots)</b></li> <li>• Trees <b>(5 dots)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Tree protection and replacement (x2)</li> <li>○ E.g. Willett Field</li> </ul> </li> <li>• New amenities <b>(4 dots)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ At sports fields (2 dots)</li> <li>○ Splash pads in parks (2 dots)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Parking at resources (x5) (3 dots)</li> <li>• ADA access at all areas (2 dots)</li> <li>• Biking amenities (no dots)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indoor gym/community space <b>(7 dots)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Indoor rec</li> <li>○ Indoor gym space (x2)</li> <li>○ Community center/rec space</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Field lighting, some fields don’t have any <b>(5 dots)</b></li> <li>• Focus on optimizing preserving and beautifying riverfront areas (similar to Stony Brook in Norfolk) <b>(4 dots)</b></li> <li>• Fishing (2 dots)</li> <li>• Downtown events, Wednesday night market, block party (not only focused on young kids) (2 dots)</li> <li>• Field painting, maintenance (1 dot)</li> <li>• Another dog park in the north section of the city (1 dot)</li> <li>• Areas for wildlife habitat preservation (1 dot)</li> <li>• Add pickleball courts (1 dot)</li> <li>• Put field in the Willett School field (no dots)</li> <li>• Big sports area that has indoor and outdoor (no dots)</li> <li>• Increase accessibility partnership to local resources (no dots)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Trees <b>(5 dots)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Street trees in new TOD: ensure wide enough sidewalks, appropriate planting methods</li> <li>○ Promoting the benefits of trees</li> <li>○ Maintenance, upkeep of public trees</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Disability access <b>(3 dots)</b></li> <li>• Addressing “forever chemicals” and other pollutants like PFAS, microplastics, nip bottles, etc. <b>(3 dots)</b></li> <li>• Increasing recreational activities, including equine recreation (2 dots)</li> <li>• More forums to discuss open space concerns with officials (2 dots)</li> <li>• Promote the concept of bioregionalism, a sense of place (1 dot)</li> <li>• Partnering with neighboring with communities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acquisitions <b>(5 dots)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Purchase Locust Valley if becomes available</li> <li>○ Prosperity Park on Dodgeville Pond, public or private? Canoe/kayak launch</li> <li>○ Linkage for the sake of diversify of exactly who do we hope/all utilize our land; getting people to our land</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Education <b>(4 dots)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Inform, education residents</li> <li>○ School education</li> <li>○ Compilation of conservation and open space history of Attleboro open space</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Art <b>(4 dots)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Art event at Highland Park, natural resources</li> <li>○ Art walk program, “Riverwalk Arts”</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Disc golf course at Highland (3 dots)</li> <li>• City conservation area stewards (2 dots)</li> <li>• Work with surrounding towns (1 dot)</li> <li>• Rivers (1 dot) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Investigate site feasibility of obtaining a designation of Wild and Scenic for Bungay River</li> <li>○ Dredging Ten Mile River to create more canoeable sections of the river</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Construct boardwalk trails (low impact, improve access) (1 dot)</li> </ul>