

2018 Falmouth Open Space Plan:

Honoring Our Legacy, Now and for Our Future

Goals and Recommended Actions

Goal 1: Protect Our Natural Resources and Open Spaces

- 1-1 Establish an annual open space acquisition appropriation amount of \$500,000 by the Town.
- 1-2 Review and update the Open Space Rating Guides used by LMAC in evaluating potential acquisition and trail properties to reflect (1) the variation in development patterns in the growth and rural areas and (2) the variation of open space that is desired in the growth and rural areas.
For example, the criteria for open space in rural areas should reflect the need for acquisition of large parcels or smaller parcels that, when combined, create large parcels, or those lands that provide connectivity for the purposes of habitat conservation/corridors, natural resource protection, and trails.

Similarly, the criteria for open space in the growth area should reflect the need for walkability and accessibility of smaller, more developed open spaces for recreational and aesthetic purposes, as well as increasing connectivity for the purposes of habitat conservation and corridors, natural resource protection and trails.
- 1-3 Preserve lands that provide specific benefits or achieve specific goals that will enhance the chances for acquisition of supporting grants or funding (e.g. wetlands or vernal pool protection/enhancement funds, farming and forestry grants, trail connection grants, shoreline access funding, etc.)
- 1-4 Protect waterfront and water access areas; incorporate active farmland, viable timberland, and other working lands; and reflect the need for resilient and adaptable ecosystems, including factors occurring due to climate change, such as the increasing intensity of storms, sea level rise and changes/threats to habitat.
- 1-5 Identify the conservation tools and resources available to the Town, and utilize these tools and resources in discussions with landowners, policy makers, and other stakeholders to promote open space preservation (see Goal 4).
- 1-6 Develop a monitoring system to assure that requirements of Town permit approvals regarding open space, trails, and corridors are properly executed.

Goal 2: Provide a Range of Open Spaces and Experiences for a Diverse Population

- 2-1 Develop and maintain a comprehensive inventory of current open spaces, their uses, and available amenities.
- 2-2 Develop an up to date understanding of open space users and their needs and expectations.

- 2-3 Develop a user impact assessment of open space parcels, including compatibility of current uses and identification of underutilized and overutilized parcels. Monitor user impact and adjust as necessary to ensure optimal user experience and preservation needs. Use the open space inventory and user impact assessment to determine where natural resource protection and recreational access need to be improved.
- 2-4 Coordinate efforts with neighboring communities and non-governmental conservation and recreation organizations to preserve and enhance regional open space, trails, and wildlife corridors.
- 2-5 Enhance accessibility to open spaces for the handicapped, special accommodations and elderly populations.
- 2-6 Develop an approach for preserving and acquiring access to smaller, more developed open space areas with recreational value.

Goal 3: Ensure that Protected Open Spaces are Available throughout the Entire Town

- 3-1 Increase access to open spaces designated for recreation in accordance with the following benchmarks:
 - a. Within the Growth Area: Strive for walkable access to all residents, e.g. an open space within a 5-minute walk or within a quarter-mile.
 - b. Within the Rural Area: Strive for an interconnected recreational trail network with good signage and readily available maps.
- 3-2 Implement related actions in the 2016 Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan incorporating non-open space connections between open spaces. Consider sidewalks, lanes, and driveways to help create a more connected system for walking and bicycling.
- 3-3 Protect and expand habitat corridors to allow greater access for wildlife to unfragmented habitat areas (within Falmouth and beyond).
- 3-4 Protect waterfront areas for coastal and riparian habitat, fishing, non-motorized watercraft, swimming, passive recreation, and similar activities.
- 3-5 Promote regional interconnectivity by acquiring and planning for open space that connects with recreation trails and open space in neighboring municipalities.

Goal 4: Utilize Open Space Acquisition as a Land Use Growth Management Tool

- 4-1 Identify the suitability for preservation of remaining undeveloped properties and those containing trails with accompanying trail licenses and prioritize those parcels that also have a high potential or risk for development. Enter into a dialogue with the owners of these properties about property or trail preservation potential.
- 4-2 Expand the review of all development proposals to include the Open Space Manager to help determine their potential and/or plan for open space preservation and trail connections.
- 4-3 Proactively negotiate with developers and owners property acquisition through fee title or easement before development proposals are prepared and submitted to the Town for review.

- 4-4 Explore certain fee-in-lieu programs, such as the following:
 - a. allow added residential density to a project subject to payment into an open space fund dedicated for use by the Town to fund open space acquisition; or
 - b. implement a fee for development impacts within natural resources and buffers, with the funds dedicated to protecting natural resources and buffers in other parts of the town.
- 4-5 Review and update land use ordinances as necessary, including, but not limited to, open space provisions for Residential Planned Developments.

Goal 5: Ensure the Utility and Longevity of Open Spaces Through Good Management

- 5-1 Incorporate new data to make the Town's Geographic Information System (GIS) more powerful in identifying, prioritizing, and managing open space protection efforts.
- 5-2 Develop and/or update land management plans for all open space properties that are the responsibility of the Town and encourage other organizations with open space properties in Falmouth to do the same.
- 5-3 Ensure adequate staffing, volunteer, and capital resources to execute management plans and fulfill any other operational open space needs. Where certain positions require ongoing funding, ensure that the Town's budgetary allocations meet the needs of the program.
- 5-4 Formalize agreements between the Town and organizations such as the Falmouth Schools and Falmouth Land Trust regarding open space stewardship, educational programming and sharing of resources.

Goal 6: Educate the Public about the Presence, Functions, and Values of Open Spaces

- 6-1 Ensure that the public is appropriately apprised of the presence, access to, and use of Town open space through the communication processes around open space land management.
- 6-2 Prepare a communication and outreach strategy that underscores the broad community support for open space preservation.
- 6-3 Improve graphic materials that depict the range of open space locations and uses (e.g. invest in maps, brochures, web pages, perhaps a Global Positioning System (GPS) enabled app depicting open space boundaries, access points and trails, etc.).
- 6-4 Strengthen the bond and connection that different population groups feel with existing open spaces. Examine current and new opportunities for open space use, and explore expanded partnerships with stakeholder organizations, such as Falmouth Community Programs, Falmouth Land Trust, Falmouth Schools, and the media. Examples of these include:
 - a. Supporting educational programs focused on natural resource conservation that are already underway, such as the Land Trust's work in school programming;
 - b. Supporting the development of young leaders and enthusiasm for open space conservation through grants, contests, and internships; and,
 - c. Re-engaging the public in the natural history of open spaces and their natural resource and ecosystem values in partnership with local organizations such as the Falmouth Historical Society, Falmouth Land Trust, or Maine Audubon.

- 6-5 Develop short term (<12mo.), medium term (2-3 yrs.) and long term (ongoing) awareness building campaigns with the media, through effective signage, information, and events aimed at maximizing citizen engagement.
- 6-6 Develop a feedback mechanism to monitor the effectiveness of the open space education strategy.
- 6-7 Educate the public about Falmouth's open spaces and trail networks by utilizing the existing outreach strength of neighboring communities and potential partner organizations (e.g. Portland Trails, Maine Audubon, the Bicycle Coalition of Maine, the Greater Portland Chapter of the New England Mountain Bicycling Association).