



Southampton Open Space and Recreation Plan 2012 Update

September 12, 2012

OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN TOWN OF SOUTHAMPTON

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With Assistance From
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Open Space and Recreation Plan Update

The Town of Southampton's *Open Space and Recreation Plan 2012 (OSRP)* updates the previous *Open Space and Recreation Plan* that expired in September 2011, and provides the framework for how Southampton can continue to work towards maintaining a vibrant rural community without compromising the Town's valued environmental resources.

The OSRP planning process has developed concurrently with the Southampton Master Planning Process now underway since March 2010.

For additional information on the master plan project, please visit the Southampton Master Plan website at <http://www.southamptonmasterplan.org>.

Plan Update Endorsed by Four Town Boards and Commissions and the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission:

Board of Selectmen
Conservation Commission
Park Commission
Planning Board

Board of Selectmen 06/25/2012, Planning Board 09/05/2012 (as Open Space Plan and component of the Master Plan Process), Conservation Commission 6/25/2012, Park Commission: 6/26/2012, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission 7/5/2012

Plan Update Approved by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts:

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1.0 Plan Summary (2012)

OVERVIEW

The Town of Southampton is updating its previous Open Space and Recreation Plan in order to inform its citizens, boards and committees about the unique “sense of place” that its residents find important. The plan focuses on open space and recreation within Southampton. In general terms, “open space” is defined as undeveloped land. In this plan, the focus is on land that is valued by residents because of what it provides: actively managed farm and forest land; wildlife habitat; protection and recharge of groundwater; public access to recreational lands and trail systems; important plant communities; structures and landscapes that represent the community’s heritage; flood control; and scenic value.

Like earlier plans, the Southampton Open Space and Recreation Plan 2012 Update identifies and evaluates the Town’s natural, cultural, and historic resources, analyzes community needs, and presents an action plan by outlining goals and objectives to be implemented over a seven-year period. Current guidelines for Massachusetts Open Space Plans include recreational elements as a key component. Hence, this plan is the 2012 Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP).

The OSRP makes recommendations based on current preservation and recreation priorities, which due to shifting demographics and community needs, have changed somewhat over the past five years. As part of the broader awareness, a regional approach is encouraged. The OSRP proposes the implementation of planning practices that encourage responsible use of natural resources.

With a wealth of forested land and numerous remaining large farmsteads, Southampton retains much of its rural character. The residents of Southampton have a strong desire to maintain this rural character, and the recent surge in residential development is of concern, since it may impact the Town’s visual character. Landowners benefit from selling large parcels of land to developers. However, to the community at large, the impact of lost open space can represent a change from the present pastoral landscape to residential suburban sprawl.

The Town needs to take steps to maintain its scenic, natural, and open space resources, while allowing for development that is sensitive to its unique character. To this end, the Town is developing strategies to preserve the rural character, protect natural resources, control development patterns, and manage its present and future open space.

In this plan, “open space” encompasses conservation land, recreational land, farmland, parks, riparian corridors and other water resources, roadways, scenic views, historic sites, forests, and areas with unique natural features. The OSRP offers current planning options that assist government officials with land use decisions.

The OSRP supports the following goals:

Goal 1: Identify and preserve important parcels for ecological, recreational, cultural and historical value to create a town - wide green network.

Goal 2: Protect Southampton's remaining agricultural lands, promote local farming, and create opportunities for residents to become involved in local agriculture.

Goal 3: Protect Southampton's water resources.

Goal 4: Promote land use policies that protect the town's natural lands and rural community character.