



Fitchburg Trails Vision Plan, 2020-2024

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MAYOR'S LETTER



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Dear Reader:

It is my pleasure to introduce this Trails Vision Master Plan on behalf of the City of Fitchburg. This Plan offers a clear, in-depth vision of the status and condition of the city's many existing trails, the needs and costs associated with their improved use and safety, and the vast potential for expanding our existing trail network to serve our citizens well into the future.

Every step of the development of this Plan has been open to the public, inclusive, and carefully vetted and approved by the relevant local government authorities, including the City Council, the Parks Commission, the Planning Board and the Conservation Commission - All of whom lent their support and advice in its preparation. In addition, the Department of Community Development, Recreation Department, and Library provided invaluable staff support and participation throughout its development.

Many local citizens and organizations lent their active support and expertise during various stages in the development of this Plan. These organizations include, but are not limited to: the Fitchburg Greenway Committee, the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission, the North County Land Trust and Mass Audubon. We are all grateful for their assistance.

It is my sincere hope that this comprehensive, well prepared document will serve a wide range of uses well into the future; whether as a simple guide for those looking to plan their next hike, a catalyst for organizing volunteer efforts, or most importantly; as a blueprint for planning future projects and funding opportunities to further develop Fitchburg's trail system.

My heartfelt thanks go to all those who made this Trails Vision Master Plan a reality. May it inspire us all as we continue to improve and expand upon the many wonderful hiking, biking and walking opportunities in our great city.

Sincerely,

Stephen L. DiNatale
Mayor, City of Fitchburg

Acknowledgements

We gratefully acknowledge Paul Funch of the Town of Groton Trails Vision Committee for kindly permitting us the use of their Trails Vision document as a template for this plan, and for guiding us in forming a Trails Vision Plan committee.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ATV	All-Terrain Vehicle
CCA	Crocker Conservation Area
CR	Conservation Restriction
DCR	Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation
DFW	Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife
DPW	Department of Public Works
FWWTP	Fitchburg West Wastewater Treatment Plant
GCPP	Gateway City Parks Program
MassDOT	Massachusetts Department of Transportation
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
MRPC	Montachusett Regional Planning Commission
MRTC	Montachusett Regional Trails Coalition
NCLT	North County Land Trust
NMRC	North Medford Running Club
NRWA	Nashua River Watershed Association
RR	Railroad
SCA	Student Conservation Association
SRTS	Safe Routes to School
WPA	U.S. Works Progress (Projects after 1939) Administration

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Executive Summary

The main **purpose** of this *Fitchburg Trails Vision Plan* is to describe how Fitchburg can use and enhance its infrastructure of non-motorized recreational trails¹ to significantly increase the quality of life for its citizens and visitors. This report explains how the exceptional infrastructure we have today came to be, and also highlights the limitations of the current infrastructure that prevent us from using it for much greater recreation, tourism, and social benefit.

This Trails Vision acknowledges the Montachusett Regional Trails Coalition (MRTC), which served as the impetus for the development of this plan, and the town of Groton, which kindly provided us their Vision Plan to serve as a template for ours.

Introductory Sections. The *Fitchburg Trails Vision Plan* is essentially a **Master Plan for the city's existing and potential non-motorized recreational trails**. The Introductory Sections (1-4) explain that among the audiences for this Trails Vision are the Commonwealth, which through a variety of programs supports, coordinates, and funds many local and regional trail initiatives; nearby cities and towns, with whom some of our trails connect; and the City of Fitchburg, which owns many of the properties through which our trails pass.

While the city of Fitchburg constructs and maintains some of our trails, it relies upon volunteers for most trail maintenance. This Trails Vision Plan includes improvements to existing trails and development of new trails, intended to meet the needs of a wide variety of trail users. The many benefits of non-motorized pathways are pointed out, including benefits to public health, reduced traffic, and cleaner air. Walkable communities are dynamic, livable, and sustainable. Trails provide many educational benefits, introducing residents and their children to natural and historic assets in their neighborhoods of which they may not have been aware, and improving their quality of life. They also offer a range of economic opportunities related to outdoor recreation and eco-tourism. Visitors to our city will be delighted to discover the varied landscapes that our trails make available to them, from urban to rural, and from well-trod riverside walks to remote and untrammelled forest paths in the city's Northern Watershed.

Fitchburg Trails Vision Committee and Partners, Section 5, introduces readers to the Fitchburg Trails Vision Committee, an *ad hoc* committee, mostly of volunteers, which is an outgrowth of the Fitchburg Greenway Committee, and has, over the past three years, met biweekly to develop this *Fitchburg Trails Vision Plan*. We have enjoyed the regular participation

¹ Throughout this report, we will use the terms trail, path, pathway, sidewalk, dirt road, pedestrian stairway, and rail trail somewhat interchangeably. They are all considered part of the non-motorized pathway infrastructure that this Trails Vision for Fitchburg seeks to expand and enhance to improve the quality of life for all of Fitchburg's citizens and visitors.

of a representative of the Fitchburg Community Development Department, as well as representatives of the Fitchburg Recreation Department and the Fitchburg Public Library. During the first year and a half or so, representatives of the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC) and North County Land Trust (NCLT) were also regular participants.

Section 5 also introduces readers to the many organizations that are represented on or supportive of the Fitchburg Trails Vision Committee. These include a number of Fitchburg city departments, boards and commissions, including the Departments of Community and Economic Development and Parks and Recreation and the Public Library. Other organizations include the MRTC as mentioned above; and a range of non-profit organizations including the Friends of Coggshall Park; Mass Audubon; Nashua River Watershed Association (NRWA); North County Land Trust; Fitchburg Historical Society; and the North Medford Running Club, among others. Fitchburg State University has also been supportive of our work. This section also describes an important Public Outreach event that the Trails Vision Committee held to solicit input from the community which helped guide our efforts.

Section 5.2, **Purpose, Vision and Values**, is a key part of this Vision Plan. One of the first things the Fitchburg Trails Vision Committee did was to arrive at and agree upon our purpose, vision, and values. After doing so, we solicited and received the written endorsement of the Mayor, and the Board of Parks Commissioners.

History of Fitchburg's Trails, Section 6, outlines the history of Fitchburg's trails and trail networks, many of which may have begun as Native American footpaths, evolved into rural roads, and later became abandoned as roads and repurposed as trails. Many of our trails and parklands exist today because of the foresight and generosity of earlier citizens, and are much loved as a result. Prominent donors are recognized here and in Section 7.

Section 7, **Current Trail Resources**, takes up 50 pages, i.e., most of this Vision Plan. It provides summaries of all the existing trail assets within the City, over 35 miles of trails in all. Each trail or trail network is shown with a map and relevant pictures. A description of each of the 50 trails is provided, along with information concerning ownership, parking, route length and difficulty, and major features of interest. A significant accomplishment of the Fitchburg Trails Vision Committee, during the development of this Vision Plan, was producing a *Fitchburg Trail Guide* (2018) with over 10,000 copies printed by the city in English and Spanish for widespread distribution to residents and visitors. The MRPC provided graphic art assistance in the preparation of the *Fitchburg Trail Guide*. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that the Fitchburg Trails Vision Committee prepared detailed trail descriptions and trail maps that are now available on the city's website, www.Fitchburgma.gov/trails, in both English and Spanish for each of the trails and trail networks described in section 7 of the Vision Plan. These online trail descriptions

differ slightly from those presented here, because they are intended to guide trail users, rather than serve as a planning tool.

For those trails on city land, maintenance needs are identified in Section 7, as well as necessary/desirable improvements to the trail surface, signage and wayfinding. By contrast, for trails on private land, e.g., Mass Audubon's Flat Rock Wildlife Sanctuary and North County Land Trust's Crocker Conservation Area, we defer to those organizations' internal processes with regards to maintenance, improvements, and signage and wayfinding, but we have a long history of cooperating with them whenever requested. Section 7 also points the reader to **Appendix A, Implementation Schedule**, which itemizes the steps the Trails Vision Committee has identified to implement this Vision Plan on city land.

Section 8, **Fitchburg Trails of the Future - Projects to Enhance & Expand the Trails Network**, includes summaries of a number of ongoing and potential projects that would notably add to the use of, and people's enjoyment of, the many kinds of trails that Fitchburg has. These include the development of a potential blue trail along the North Nashua River, if it proves safe and feasible. We describe several planned and/or prospective projects that involve developing new long pathways that would increase the number of major non-motorized "arteries" both within Fitchburg as well as between Fitchburg and its neighboring municipalities. A prominent example, currently in design, is the Twin Cities Rail Trail that will connect the downtowns of Fitchburg and Leominster. Another currently undergoing major improvement is the Rock Walk Trail that extends from Fitchburg's Upper Common to the former stone quarries on the summit of Rollstone Hill, providing a commanding view only a mile from downtown. In addition, both north-south, and east-west linkages connecting many of our existing trail networks to adjacent cities and town are projected, which, when brought to fruition, will greatly expand the Montachusett region's trail network. Finally, a few of "The Rapids," the long stone stairways that made it possible, prior to the age of automobiles, for mill workers to quickly negotiate Fitchburg's steep hills on foot, are still extant and may be possible to bring back to use.

In Section 9, **Prioritization of Projects**, the various projects discussed in this Vision Plan are prioritized based on the Fitchburg Trails Vision Committee's estimate of the overall benefit from each project, how long it might take for each project to be implemented, and a rough estimation of the cost of each project. This prioritization scheme, as presented in **Table 2, Prioritization of projects within major groupings**, is a very simple one and does not consider aspects of each project that might make it very important to the community; nevertheless, the Trails Vision Committee feels it is a useful initial way to rank and prioritize the projects. In fact, the factors most critical to the successful implementation of any project will end up being: a) whether or not the project is feasible due to legal and environmental issues, b) whether the project has a strong advocate who will pursue obtaining the necessary approvals and funding, and c) whether the

project is financially supported by the City of Fitchburg and external grants that may become available.

Section 10, **Projects Underway or Planned**, expands on this slightly by summarizing the short-term projects planned and ongoing needs.

Finally, in Section 11, **Sustaining the Vision**, we discuss the all-important considerations of how to realize and sustain the vision provided in the preceding sections. Community engagement is a key element, since so many of our trails will require concerted voluntary efforts for regular maintenance. In addition, the city's continued support of needed improvements will require collaboration among the several departments, boards and commissions that have contributed to the development of this Trails Vision Plan, as well as funding and/or contribution of matching funds required for outside grants. Available public and private grant programs at the national, state, and local levels are identified in *Funding Sources for Trails and Greenways in Massachusetts (Appendix B)*, prepared by MRTC. Over recent years, the city of Fitchburg has shown itself to be a strong supporter, collaborator and contributor to many trail projects, and we expect to see that continue and grow. We, the members of the Fitchburg Trails Vision Committee, expect to morph into a Trails Stewardship group upon the completion and distribution of this Trails Vision Plan, so that we can help carry out the vision.

We anticipate that after about five years, the initial plan provided in this report will need to be updated in a new Fitchburg Trails Vision report for the subsequent five years, 2025-2029.

1. Introduction

The main purpose of this *Fitchburg Trails Vision Plan* is to describe how Fitchburg can use and enhance its infrastructure of non-motorized recreational trails to significantly increase the quality of life for its citizens and visitors. This report explains how the exceptional infrastructure we have today came to be, and also highlights the limitations of the current infrastructure that prevent us from using it for much greater recreation, tourism, and social benefit.

Throughout this report, we will use the terms trail, path, pathway, sidewalk, dirt road, pedestrian stairway, and rail trail somewhat interchangeably. They are all considered part of the non-motorized pathway infrastructure that this Trails Vision for Fitchburg seeks to expand and enhance to improve the quality of life for all of Fitchburg's citizens and visitors. The core of this report is section seven and eight, which describes Fitchburg's current trails and trail networks, along with several projects that could significantly enhance Fitchburg's trail infrastructure. In section nine, the projects are prioritized by the Trails Vision Committee based on their relative benefit, the length of time required for each project, and their relative costs.

To lay the foundation for these projects, this report begins by describing the following:

- a) How the Trails Vision Committee believes this report can be used by the state, the region, and the City of Fitchburg;
- b) Who uses the trails in Fitchburg;
- c) What the benefits are to the City of Fitchburg and the region by enhancing our trails infrastructure;
- d) Who is on the Trails Vision Committee and what the current committee's purpose, vision, and values are;
- e) The history of the current trails infrastructure, and
- f) The limitations in the current trails infrastructure.

It is the Trails Vision Committee's hope that this Trails Vision will serve to stimulate discussion and actions that will lead to the implementation of many of the projects described herein. Our intent is to provide a long-range view of what is possible and the benefits that could be achieved, but it will need to be updated every five years or so to incorporate lessons learned along the way and to reassess priorities. As we move forward, membership on the Trails Vision Committee is expected to be dynamic as advocates for the different projects come forward to take them from concept to completed infrastructural enhancement. The Trails Vision Committee believes this could be a sustainable approach to enhancing the trails infrastructure for the benefit of all the citizens of, and visitors to, the City of Fitchburg.

2. How this Trails Vision will be used

2.1 By the Commonwealth of Massachusetts

The impetus for developing a Trails Vision for Fitchburg was a request from the MRTC to each of its participating cities and towns to develop their Trails Vision plan. The MRTC will integrate the plans from each of its participating municipalities into a regional Trails Vision and Implementation plan. The Trails Visions of all the active regional trail coalitions will be integrated to provide an update to the current state-wide recreational trails vision, Commonwealth Connections.² The goals of Commonwealth Connections have been used to prioritize Recreational Trail Program grants that are administered by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and funded from the state's alternative transportation funds. The updated Commonwealth trails vision will seek increased state funding for trail projects at all levels to help achieve the vision. Section 5.1 of this document provides additional information on the MRTC and its purpose.

2.2 By Other nearby Towns

Fitchburg's Trails Vision may help other nearby communities in developing their own Trails Vision. Our Trails Vision may also stimulate greater interest in developing long-distance town-to-town pathways with our neighboring towns. To the extent that parts of our Trails Vision are in common with those of nearby communities, they are more likely to become part of the future statewide Trails Vision and thus give the projects a higher probability of being at least partially funded with state resources.

2.3 By the City of Fitchburg

The development of this Fitchburg Trails Vision builds upon and advances a number of the goals and recommendations presented in Fitchburg's Open Space and Recreation Plan 2014-2021³. Committee members also chose to incorporate several projects that serve parts of the city and/or groups of users that had not been specifically addressed in that Plan. The Trails Vision provides an assessment and implementation plan for improving or developing each trail or trail network and provides an initial attempt at prioritizing the projects. Bringing all the ideas together in one document, will make it easier to take a comprehensive and balanced approach toward growing and enhancing our trail network.

This Trails Vision describes a variety of projects that use and enhance Fitchburg's trails network to improve the quality of life for all Fitchburg residents. To this end, this Trails Vision provides examples of short-term, mid-term, and long-term projects that serve the following needs:

- Outdoor recreational opportunities of all types for all ages,

² Department of Environmental Management, "Commonwealth Connections – A greenway vision for Massachusetts," 2001. https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2016/08/uu/connections_36610_28060.pdf

³ Fitchburg's Open Space and Recreation Plan Update. <http://www.fitchburgma.gov/documentcenter/view/1715>

- Healthy and safe activities for residents of all levels of ability,
- Business growth via easier access and increased tourism, and
- Increase in connectedness among neighborhoods and points of interest (library, religious facilities, cultural/historic sites, schools, post office, ball fields, parks, offices, restaurants, town facilities, mass transportation nodes, etc.) via woods trails, field trails, roadside paths, abandoned roads and rail lines, and sidewalks.

The improvements to existing trails and projects under development in this Trails Vision have very different levels of feasibility. Some of them have been approved and are in various phases of construction. Some may be relatively easy to do and others very difficult. A few might be better considered conceptual since they are not specific as to what should be done but rather they illustrate an idea with the aim of encouraging public discussion of exactly what could and should be implemented. The projects in this report are intended to stimulate excitement about what the future of non-motorized transportation could look like in Fitchburg and to provide an initial set of priorities for the detailed studies and discussions that they will require to become more than just ideas.

By developing Fitchburg's Trails Vision, we have begun to lay out some directions our city can take to enhance the great potential of our network of trails, waterways, pathways, and sidewalks. As each project described in this Trails Vision is implemented, we believe the quality of life will be significantly improved for a large number of Fitchburg's citizens. Some projects focus on particular types of trail users and some projects support multiple trail users. We believe that as each project is completed, all be pleased with the new opportunities that will be provided.

Some of the projects to enhance the trails network may require considerable resources and will involve hard decisions. Other significant projects can be accomplished with minimal cost if accompanied by a spirit of cooperation and a collective will to do them. The Trails Vision identifies numerous projects having varying degrees of difficulty and benefits so that we can begin a more systematic approach to tapping into the potential our exceptional trails infrastructure holds. We will know that our Trails Vision is successful if we enjoy the benefits of each successful project enough to want to continue to work on the next and plan additional ones.

3. Trail Users Considered in this Report

The non-motorized trails in Fitchburg have many uses and people with many different interests use them. The following list of potential users is certainly not complete, but it gives an idea of the many uses that our trails have.

- Bicyclists
- Commuters
- Cross-country skiers
- Equestrians
- Exercisers (e.g., laps around tracks, calisthenics; physical fitness)
- Fishermen
- Hikers
- Hunters
- Mobility-impaired individuals (e.g., wheelchairs, walkers, canes, crutches)
- Motorized wheelchair users
- Mountain bikers
- Nature observers (e.g., birdwatchers, educational groups; scenic views; geologic features)
- People going to and from churches
- People going to and from the downtown and other business areas in the city
- People going to and from historical sites
- People going to and from recreational facilities
- People going to and from retail stores
- People going to and from schools
- People going to and from town and private offices
- People walking their pets
- People with children in strollers
- Runners
- Senior citizens
- Skaters (e.g., roller skates, in-line skates, ice skates)
- Students going to and from their schools/university
- Snowshoers
- Swimmers (e.g., in pools, ponds, lakes, and rivers)
- Trail runners
- Walkers

4. Benefits of Non-Motorized Pathways

The benefits of non-motorized pathways are as varied as the interests of the people who use them. In addition to the specific personal benefits that each user wishes to derive from the pathways, there are community-wide benefits as well that include the following:

Health – The more that people can safely use non-motorized pathways, the more they will benefit from increased exercise they will get and the reduced stress they will enjoy due to driving less on our city’s busy roadways.

Cleaner air – The less that people use motorized vehicles, the cleaner the air will be for all.

Community connections – The more that people go from place to place using non-motorized pathways the more likely they are to meet people they know and to make new acquaintances. Over time, this can provide an increased sense of community, and with it a sense of safety, support, and pride.

Educational opportunities – The City of Fitchburg is rich in history and natural diversity. Improved signage or other means (e.g., pamphlets) to identify places of archaeological and historic interest, flora, fauna, geologic points of interest (e.g., rock outcrops, geomorphological features), and agricultural areas and activities can educate citizens and visitors alike about the things that make Fitchburg unique and thus a place worth living in or visiting.

Business opportunities – An improved non-motorized infrastructure will attract people to live in Fitchburg and to come to Fitchburg for leisure activities. There will be opportunities for increased business in general due to more eco-tourism as well as for new businesses that support the recreational interests of the trail users (e.g., hiking, biking, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, running).

- Tourism is the 3rd largest industry in Massachusetts, and such local attractions as Great Wolf Lodge, Fitchburg Art Museum, Hollis Hills Farm, and Coggshall Park (disc golf course) represent unique “draws” to North Central MA as a region and to Fitchburg as a place.
- Recreational tourism is a segment of Fitchburg’s economy that continues to grow, as evidenced by the on-going development of the “*Game On Fitchburg*” tournament level soccer complex that will support commercial recreation in West Fitchburg.
- The City’s existing network of trails and open spaces add greatly to the quality of life in Fitchburg, which make the city a desirable place to live, work and visit.
- The “*Twin Cities Rail Trail*” that will connect downtown Fitchburg to downtown Leominster will support these two key commercial centers within the region by offering a safe transportation option (for both employees and consumers) that will double as a recreational amenity.
- Such periodic guided tours as the “Rock Walk” hosted by Peter Capodagli (owner of Boulder Art Gallery) have introduced many locals and visitors to the beautiful vistas that can be enjoyed atop Rollstone Hill following a relatively short walk from the Upper Common in the downtown. The Rollstone Hill Rock Walk Trail is currently being improved.

These benefits and more are discussed in the following initiatives that have emerged in the past decade:

- The Massachusetts Safe Routes to Schools (SRTS) program⁴. “In 1969, roughly 48% of students bicycled or walked to school. Today only 13% of children do so. And, travel to school can account for up to 25% of all morning traffic. That's why we work...to teach and inspire children to start walking and bicycling more often to and from school, improving their physical health, safety, and community. The Massachusetts SRTS program promotes healthy alternatives for children and parents in their travel to and from school. It educates students, parents and community members on the value of walking and bicycling for travel to and from school.”
- Walkable communities⁵ – These are described as “...thriving, livable, sustainable places that give their residents safe transportation choices and improved quality of life. They are the oldest, and until quite recently, the only towns or cities in the world...” They are “...designed around the human foot, truly the only template that can lead to sustainability and future community prosperity. Increased walkability also helps improve resource responsibility, safety, physical fitness and social interaction.”
- The Massachusetts Department of Transportation’s (MassDOT’s) GreenDOT Policy - One of the three primary objectives of the GreenDOT Implementation Plan⁶ is to “Promote healthy transportation options of walking, bicycling, and public transit.” An important aspect of the Policy, Planning, and Design component of the Plan are the guidelines offered by the Complete Streets⁷ concept. “In 2009, MassDOT became the second New England state to adopt a Complete Streets design policy.” Complete Streets “...are designed and operated to enable safe access for all users. People of all ages and abilities are able to safely move along and across streets in a community, regardless of how they are traveling. Complete Streets make it easy to cross the street, walk to shops, and bicycle to work.” The Fitchburg Trails Vision Committee chose not to incorporate Fitchburg’s Complete Streets program into this Trails Vision Plan, because Fitchburg has so many miles of sidewalks and streets that it would be redundant with the Complete Streets effort.

None of these initiatives can prescribe what Fitchburg needs to improve its non-motorized infrastructure for the benefit of the quality of life for its citizens and visitors, and none of them tries to do so. They simply offer a variety of approaches and guidelines that can be adopted by Fitchburg as appropriate. The broad acceptance of these initiatives throughout the country speaks to the need and desire of communities to purposely build and sustain a greater number of healthy, safe, and convenient non-motorized transportation pathways to counter the emphasis we

⁴ <http://www.commute.com/schools>

⁵ <http://www.walkable.org>

⁶ <http://www.massdot.state.ma.us/Portals/0/docs/GreenDOT/finalImplementation/FinalGreenDOTImplementationPlan12.12.12.pdf>

⁷ <http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/complete-streets>

have all put on motor vehicles to get us where we want to go. Fitchburg will make its own decisions about how it views the benefits of improved public pathways relative to their costs and to other important quality of life issues. The Trails Vision Committee hopes that this report will help the citizens of Fitchburg make those decisions with a better vision of what is possible.

5. The Fitchburg Trails Vision Committee

5.1 Organizations represented on or supportive of the Committee

The Fitchburg Trails Vision Committee was convened in September 2016 and began as an outgrowth of the Fitchburg Greenway Committee (FGC), an *ad hoc* committee that has been meeting monthly for over 15 years. Volunteers to serve on the Trails Vision Committee were solicited from within the FGC as well as from various city departments and committees that have traditionally been strong proponents of planning for, implementing, and sustaining non-motorized pathways. In particular, the Fitchburg Community Development Department, the Fitchburg Department of Parks and Recreation, and the Fitchburg Public Library each have contributed members to the Trails Vision Committee. In addition, the MRPC and the NCLT have had representatives on the committee. Many of the Trails Vision Committee members thus represent an important constituency as the Trails Vision Committee members proposed, discussed, and evaluated the many potential projects that could be undertaken.

The Mayor of Fitchburg and the Parks and Recreation Commission wrote letters in January 2017 in support of the work of the Fitchburg Trails Vision Committee. With the City's support, the Trails Vision Committee is committed not only to the completion of this Vision, but also to identifying a means to ensure its long-term implementation. Recognizing that this is an ambitious goal, it is our hope to enlist all those entities with a shared interest in expanding, improving and maintaining Fitchburg's many trails - whether this means the creation of a new entity of trail stewards who meet regularly and work together in implementing this plan, or simply a cooperative effort among many partners to share resources and assist each other where possible in their respective efforts.

The successful achievement of this vision involves much more than simply working on city owned land. While the city does have a large inventory of park land, forest land, and watershed protection areas that currently accommodate trail use, there are also many miles of existing and planned trails owned by others that allow public use, including Mass Audubon, NCLT, and others. They also include privately owned land that allows the public use of trails through existing easements. Some of the key public and private entities who play an important role in the realization of this Trails Vision include the following (in no particular order):

Fitchburg Board of Parks Commissioners

The Board of Parks Commissioners, with the capable assistance of the City's Department of Public Works (DPW), manages many parks and recreation areas including numerous playgrounds, wooded parks, a swimming pool, a disc golf course, and several large fields used for baseball, soccer, softball, and other sports. The Parks Commission has been very supportive of this Vision and encourages both the use of its facilities and the efforts of volunteer groups like the Friends of Coggshall Park to help with ongoing maintenance efforts.

Fitchburg Planning Board

Fitchburg's Planning Board has supported trail use and growth in the city, particularly in inner city urban locations along the Nashua River and has conditioned a number of Special Permits for new housing developments to include easements for public walking trails. In addition to supporting this Trail Vision, the Planning Board has consistently advocated for greater trail connectivity and use, seeing this as a benefit to local residents, as well as an amenity to spur new residential and economic growth.

Fitchburg Department of Public Works and its Water Division

Fitchburg's DPW and its Water Division have been instrumental in both maintaining and expanding recreational trails throughout the city. In addition to general maintenance of the city's parks and the trails that fall within them, the DPW has been instrumental in several initiatives to create new trails over the years. The innovative use of DPW crews in the creation of both the Steamline Park Trail and the Sheldon Street Gateway Park has enabled the city to stretch available state and federal grant funds to install these new park trails along the Nashua River.

The Water Division owns over 2,000 acres of critical watershed protection land in the northern, more rural parts of the City. In June 2009, the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife (DFW) secured a Conservation Restriction (CR) from the City of Fitchburg to assure permanent protection of its northern drinking water supply watershed. The CR permanently protects the property's important wildlife habitat resources and provides quality non-motorized outdoor recreational opportunities for the general public. In addition to protecting the land surrounding many of the city's drinking water reservoirs, this initiative has opened up large expanses of land for trail use by the public that had previously been posted as "no trespassing."

Montachusett Regional Planning Commission

The MRPC is in its fifth decade of providing technical planning assistance to its 22 member communities. Located in north central Massachusetts, the MRPC was formed in 1968 under the State Enabling Legislation Massachusetts General Law Chapter 40B and is one of thirteen regional planning agencies across the Commonwealth. Their purpose is to carry out comprehensive planning in the Montachusett Region, an area of approximately 685 square miles that is home to some 242,671 individuals. As the regional planning agency for the north central Massachusetts region, MRPC has actively supported the development of trail vision plans for its member communities. In addition to grant funded support for various mapping and trails initiatives, MRPC has provided ongoing staff assistance to the MRTC, the Twin Cities Rail Trail Association and others. The MRPC provided invaluable graphic art assistance to the Fitchburg Trails Vision Committee in the development of many of the maps that appear in this Vision Plan, and in the production of the *Fitchburg Trail Guide*.

Montachusett Regional Trails Coalition

MRTC, founded in March 2012 by the NRWA, the MRPC, and the Leominster Trail Stewards, is one of the few regional trail *coalitions* in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. It represents a wide array of trail stakeholders including state agencies, municipal entities, non-profit conservation groups, community trail groups, and private individuals. While other regional trail groups exist such as the North Quabbin Trails Association, the Essex County Trail Association, and the group that built and oversees the Boroughs Loop Trail in the towns of Marlboro, Westboro, Southborough and Northborough, they don't represent as many communities or don't have as diverse a base of support as the MCRT. The MRTC's Mission is to "...enrich the lives and communities within its boundaries by advancing the development of diverse, high quality trails and greenways." The MRTC's Core Values are to provide "...trails and greenways that promote accessibility, healthy lifestyles, economic vitality, sustainable development, best practices, experiences in the outdoors, appreciation for the outdoors, learning in the outdoors, and connectivity." One goal of the MRTC is to create a regional trails vision that integrates the Trails Visions from all its participating towns. MRTC represents 22 communities in northern Worcester County, however not all currently have representation on the MRTC. For more information about MRTC, visit their website at www.montachusetttrails.org.

Nashua River Watershed Association

The NRWA was established in 1969 in Fitchburg by Marion Stoddart, who gained renown for leading efforts to clean up the Nashua River, which at that time was one of the ten most polluted rivers in the U.S. The NRWA serves 32 communities in the watershed of the Nashua River, and focuses on protecting the river and its tributaries, conserving the land within the watershed, and providing environmental education to adults and school children alike. In Fitchburg, the NRWA helped to start the Stream Team, which later evolved into the Fitchburg Greenway Committee, from which the Fitchburg Trails Vision Committee later sprung. The Fitchburg Trails Vision Committee's chair, Ralph Baker, is a resident of Fitchburg and a former CEO and chief scientist of an environmental firm that he co-founded in Fitchburg. He has served as an NRWA Board member since 2004 and is currently the NRWA's Board secretary. He, therefore, brings both local knowledge, business acumen, and the NRWA's regional environmental perspective to his leadership of the Fitchburg Trails Vision Committee.

North County Land Trust

NCLT owns Crocker Conservation Area (CCA), which comprises 150 acres of land and miles of trails adjacent to Mass Audubon land in the northerly section of the city. These trails are accessible by car from the end of the paved section of Flat Rock Rd. by the former Overlook Reservoir. In the years since acquiring this land from the Crocker Family, the NCLT has done a remarkable job in creating new trails, and signing and maintaining them. In addition, NCLT staff have participated actively in Trails Vision Committee meetings and have actively assisted in the creation of this Vision.

Mass Audubon

As noted in the trails section of this Vision, Mass Audubon owns and maintains Flat Rock Wildlife Sanctuary, a large tract of land with numerous trails in Fitchburg. Many of these trails begin near UMass Memorial – HealthAlliance-Clinton Hospital (the former Burbank Hospital) and extend north to the city’s Northern Watershed land, near Ashby West Rd. As stewards of trails throughout the Commonwealth, Mass Audubon has limited resources to devote exclusively to the maintenance of its trails in Fitchburg, but it offers programs to members and the public on its land and occasionally organizes volunteer efforts to maintain and improve its trails, including signage and erosion control efforts. Mass Audubon’s local Central Massachusetts headquarters has also been very supportive and helpful in the creation of this Trail Vision.

Fitchburg Conservation Commission

The Fitchburg Conservation Commission has historically supported efforts to create new open space in the city for the principal purpose of protecting existing wetlands and the Nashua River, as well as for the creation of new public access and use of these new open space areas. Most recently, the Conservation Commission has been supportive of the creation of the new Rock Walk Trail, which starts at the city’s Upper Common and climbs to a former granite quarry on the summit of Rollstone Hill, offering unparalleled views of the city’s center and surroundings.

Fitchburg Department of Community Development

The Department of Community Development, which includes the offices of Planning and Economic Development, has been the city’s principal interface with and supporter of this Trails Vision Master Plan, providing staff participation and support at all its meetings, and covering the cost associated with printing copies of the Trail Vision Committee’s *Fitchburg Trail Guide, 2018* in English and its Spanish counterpart, *Guia de Senderos en Fitchburg, 2018*, enabling it to be made available to the public throughout greater Fitchburg.

In addition to providing staff support to both the Planning Board and the Conservation Commission, the Department of Community Development is responsible for developing and updating the city’s *Open Space and Recreation Plan*, which is updated every seven years to assess the city’s current open space and recreation assets and to plan for its future needs, and was most recently updated in 2014. This important document serves as a blueprint for potential state funding of needs identified in the Plan and has been instrumental in the funding and creation of several new city trails in recent years. These include all three riverfront park trails, the soon to be created Twin Cities Rail Trail, and the Rock Walk Trail.

Fitchburg Public Library

Residents of Fitchburg and visitors often consult the public library for information about the city’s parks, trails, and recreational offerings. Copies of the *Fitchburg Trail Guide* are available to the public at the library, among other locations. The Fitchburg Trails Vision Committee

visited the Fitchburg Public Library to find information concerning the history of Fitchburg's parks and trails, which was incorporated into this report. The Committee gratefully acknowledges the participation and assistance provided by the Fitchburg Public Library, particularly in the editing and compilation of the *Fitchburg Trails Vision Plan*.

Fitchburg Historical Society

Trails often have historical aspects that can serve as the basis for bringing history to life for both the citizens of Fitchburg and for visitors. Connections between towns, such as along rivers, via old railroad (RR) rights of way or abandoned roads, may have great historical significance. Historic points of interest such as old factory sites, quarries, home sites, school sites, RR stations, farm buildings, cemeteries, etc. are found along many of our trails. Calling attention to these features can bring a clearer understanding of how our city has developed and changed over several centuries.

Fitchburg State University

In 2017, under the supervision of faculty, Fitchburg State University students conducted a Summer Research Collaborative project on Fitchburg Parks and Gyms. Their work included a public survey that concluded that many of the residents interviewed were unaware of parks and trails within walking distance of their own neighborhoods. Fitchburg State students, faculty, and staff, as well as its cross country and track teams, have long enjoyed the use of the northern watershed trails for training and recreational use.

North Medford Running Club

Notwithstanding its name, the North Medford Running Club is principally based in the greater Fitchburg area and its members regularly enjoy the use of our trails. In addition, they host at least one trail race per year in Mass Audubon and City of Fitchburg trail networks near the UMass Memorial - Healthalliance-Clinton Hospital (Burbank). In recognition of their enjoyment of Fitchburg's trail system, Club members have historically been willing to assist in past trail maintenance efforts and may be willing to assist in future efforts as well.

Fitchburg Disability Commission

Fitchburg's Disability Commission, while focused primarily on increasing accessibility along the city's most heavily travelled streets and sidewalks, has also advocated for and supported the creation of new accessible trails wherever possible. Of particular note was the Commission's active involvement in the creation of an accessible trail in the Sheldon Street Gateway Park. Other accessible trails supported by the Disability Commission include the soon to be constructed Twin Cities Rail Trail, which will be fully accessible for its estimated 4.2 mi. length. The Disability Commission has also been an invaluable resource in providing ongoing feedback and review of proposed projects throughout the city that may impact accessibility for handicapped persons.

5.2 Purpose, Vision, and Values

At its first meetings, the Trails Vision Committee discussed its purpose, vision, and values. The Committee developed the following consensus statements:

5.2.1 Purpose

- a) Help the City of Fitchburg to preserve and improve our quality of life by identifying and inventorying the existing walking, hiking, and recreational (non-motorized) trails within the city, highlighting the linkages among them and to points of interest, finding and formalizing the interconnections between the city and surrounding communities, and recommending potential new trail development.
- b) Support the regional trail plan by contributing to the region's Trails Vision.
- c) Create an initial implementation plan for our Trails Vision – identify basic resource needs, set priorities (short, medium and long term), and suggest a timeline for possible implementation
- d) Improve our city's ability to access public and private funding sources by identifying and prioritizing our potential trail projects.

5.2.2 Vision

Our vision for Fitchburg's trails is a safe and easy-to-use network of ways that will connect people to each other, to destinations in the city and in surrounding municipalities, and to the unique natural, cultural and historical points of interest throughout Fitchburg.

5.2.3 Values

- a) We believe that a more complete understanding by community members of the city's unique and substantial recreational opportunities and abundant natural, cultural and historical points of interest will foster sustainable community support for improving the quality of trails in Fitchburg.
- b) We believe increased and improved connectedness of our network of trails will support improved health, recreational, business, and educational opportunities for people of all ages and abilities, both for citizens of Fitchburg and visitors to our city.
- c) We believe that Fitchburg's trails should promote accessibility, healthy lifestyles, economic vitality, appreciation of our diverse biohabitat and history, education, and connectivity with each other and the places we want to go.

5.3 Public Outreach

On March 8, 2017, the Fitchburg Trails Vision Committee convened a Public Outreach Meeting at the Fitchburg Central Fire Station. The meeting was advertised widely and approximately 35 people attended. At the meeting, the committee members presented the goals and purposes of the



Figure 1 Public Outreach Meeting at the Fitchburg Fire Department

Trails Vision effort, along with a slide show describing a number of the existing and proposed trails and trail networks in the city. The meeting concluded with a breakout session, during which input from the public was solicited by means of a survey. Comments from the attendees, as well as data from the survey forms, indicated that attendees overwhelmingly supported the committee's efforts. Survey respondents requested that trail maps, descriptions, signage, and other aides be developed to improve public access to the city's trails.

6. History of Fitchburg's Trails and Trail Networks

Early histories of Fitchburg make reference to trails that settlers used, which may have originally been used by Native Americans. Mentioned in Rufus Torrey's 1865 History of the Town of Fitchburg, Massachusetts are the Flat Rock Rd. (p. 8 in his book), remnants of which exist as a trail by that name within Mass Audubon Flat Rock Wildlife Sanctuary. The Crown Point Rd., which undoubtedly began as a footpath, was described by Torrey (p. 108) as providing a principal route of travel between Vermont and Boston. It passed Upton's Tavern, which stood at the junction of Ashburnham Hill Rd. and Caswell Rd. Presumably the Crown Point Rd. followed portions of what is today known as Ashburnham Hill Rd. and Dean Hill Rd. in Westminster. Doris Kirkpatrick's history of Fitchburg, The City and the River (1971) (p. 125 and 137) also makes mention of and depicts the Crown Point Rd. as being "the busy main thoroughfare from Boston to Vermont" and thence to Dorchester, Ontario, Canada.

Many of Fitchburg's current roads and some of its trails were at one time rural roads. A Map of Old Rural Roads - Fitchburg, MA, prepared by the U.S. Works Projects Administration (WPA) in 1939, includes the following rural roads that are located in or near areas where there are now trails. The years listed indicate when the roads were first officially recognized, according to the WPA: Fifth Mass Turnpike (1745); Fisher Rd. (1746); Flat Rock Rd. from Upper Common to Prospect St. (1753); Crown Point Rd., section going by Saima Park (1754); Mt. Elam Rd. (1760); Flat Rock Rd. from Scott Rd. to Ashburnham Hill Rd. (1766); Babcock Rd. (1774); Caswell Rd. (1776-8); Thurston Rd. (1782); Ashby West Rd. (1784-1816); and Shattuck Rd. (1790).

Fitchburg's substantial park system includes approximately 35 mi. of non-motorized recreational trails. Most of Fitchburg's parks came into being as a result of philanthropic efforts by various city leaders. Other properties were acquired by the city directly. Following are some historical highlights:

- a) Coggs Hall Park was originally donated by Henry F. Coggs Hall, the manager of Fitchburg Gas and Electric Co., and his wife, Sylvania L. Carpenter Coggs Hall in 1893. Mirror Lake was first created in 1911. A dam was erected and raised in 1913, which enlarged Mirror Lake to eight acres. After an additional donation, Coggs Hall Park comprised 212 acres by 1919. Development of the trail system followed in later years. More information on the history of Coggs Hall Park is included within the chapter describing its trail system.
- b) A nearly forgotten gem formerly known as Falulah Park, off Rindge Rd., which comprised four acres including "a natural, rock-encased pool formed by Falulah Brook" was gifted to the City by Mary D. Hartwell in 1895 in memory of her brother, William E. Hartwell, who according to Doris Kirkpatrick's The City and the River gave the valley the name of Falulah. It is now part of the City's Northern Watershed lands.

- c) Parkhill Park was gifted to the City and dedicated in 1932. The elaborate stonework along Sand Brook, built in the WPA era, including a number of small stone-encased swimming pools, are deteriorating but are still evident.
- d) Approximately 300 acres of land that became the Flat Rock Wildlife Sanctuary was donated to Mass Audubon in 1973 by Jeanne Crocker (Mrs. Bigelow Crocker) and Thomas Crocker III, owners of the Crocker Burbank Paper Co. Many of the trails within Flat Rock were formerly carriage paths used by the Crocker Family. An additional 26 acres were donated by Meimi Mattson in 1988. That donation provided a parking area and access off Ashburnham Hill Rd.
- e) Adjacent to Flat Rock is the Crocker Conservation Area, which has an extensive network of trails. The CCA was created in 1994, when Bigelow and Jeanne Crocker donated 127 acres of forested land to the NCLT. In 1999 NCLT was able to have a conservation restriction placed on an additional 30 acres, which includes the 17-acre (former) Overlook Reservoir. The remaining 23-acre parcel that makes up this 180-acre site was donated by the Crocker Family in 2003.
- f) A 65-acre parcel including what is now Coolidge Park was until 1954, operated by the Worcester North Agricultural and Driving Association, including a half-mile track and stables for harness racing. In 1939 a 44.3-acre portion was donated by former Senator Marcus A. Coolidge to the City of Fitchburg, which used it for many years for a 9-acre municipal golf course, an earthen swimming pool along Baker Brook (now the City's Dog Park), and a rubbish dump that is no longer in evidence.
- g) The City of Fitchburg's ~2,000-acre Northern Watershed was acquired over many years beginning in the mid-1800s for the purpose of providing a dependable water supply for the city. More information on the history of the Northern Watershed and its reservoirs is included within the chapter describing its trail system. Most of the trails in the Northern Watershed were formerly maintenance and woods roads for use only by the Fitchburg Water Department, but as of 2009, when the MA DFW purchased a conservation restriction on the Northern Watershed lands, the trails were formally opened to the public.
- h) Rollstone Hill was well known in colonial times, and later became a prominent location for 19th century excursions, including by Harvard geologists and their students who often visited the Boulder that sat prominently on the summit of the hill. From 1845-1941, Rollstone Hill was a thriving locale of granite quarries, with as many as 500 workers toiling for 10 different companies to produce granite that is evident in many of the city's historic buildings and other structures and in other cities, including Boston and New York. In 1929, when quarrying encroached on the location of the Boulder, it was moved to its present location in Litchfield Park on the Upper Common. After quarrying ended around World War II, the land on Rollstone Hill was taken by the City for taxes. From approximately 1932 to the present, Fitchburg High School students have annually painted

a ledge known as The Rock with the number of their class year. Rollstone Hill is now being developed into a park and trail system, including the Rock Walk.

- i) The Steamline Park Trail was formerly a cart path used to service steam lines that connected all nine of the Crocker-Burbank Company paper mills to their Central Steam Plant, which was built in 1924 and operated until the early 1980s. The Steamline Park Trail was created by the city in 2006. Until it was demolished in 2015, the former Central Steam Plant occupied a site on the east side of the North Nashua River close to the beginning of the trail.
- j) The Twin Cities Rail Trail, which will begin construction in 2020, was formerly a RR line connecting downtown Fitchburg to downtown Leominster. The RR right of way was acquired in 2017.
- k) Sheldon Street Gateway Park, the former site of a woolen mill that burned down, was established in 2011. The land for the Park was acquired in 2009 by The Trustees of Reservations with a \$350,000 grant from the Massachusetts' Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs' Gateway City Parks Program (GCPP). In 2010, the land was gifted to the City through its Parks Commission and the GCPP awarded an additional \$976,000 grant to the City for park design and construction work. The Fitchburg Greenway Committee, with representation by the NRWA and NCLT, played an important role in protecting the property and continues to lead efforts to establish a friends group for the Park. The adjacent property along Westminster Hill Rd. containing the Knoll Trail was added to the park in 2015 by the City through the coordinated efforts of several non-profit organizations.

7. Current Trail Resources

In this section, we provide descriptions and evaluations of each of the existing trails and trail networks in Fitchburg. The Fitchburg Trails Vision Committee agreed in 2016 to adopt a consistent approach to evaluating our trails to facilitate prioritization and rank-ordering of trail-related needs. The US Forest Service developed a standard trail classification system that categorizes trails as Class 1 (back country, primitive trails), Class 2 (natural, moderately developed), Class 3 (natural but somewhat developed), Class 4 (modified and highly developed) and Category 5 (fully developed, accessible trails). This was modified by the MA Department of Conservation and Recreation. We agreed to classify our trails using this general system.

Trail Class Attributes					
Trail Attributes	Trail Class 1 Minimal/ Un developed Trail	Trail Class 2 Simple/ Minor Development Trail	Trail Class 3 Developed/ Improved Trail	Trail Class 4 Highly Developed Trail	Trail Class 5 Fully Developed Trail
General Criteria					
Tread & Traffic Flow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tread intermittent and often indistinct May require route finding Native materials only 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tread discernible and continuous, but narrow and rough Few or no allowances constructed for passing Native materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tread obvious and continuous Width accommodates unhindered one-lane travel (occasional allowances constructed for passing) Typically native materials 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tread wide and smooth with few irregularities Width may consistently accommodate two-lane travel Native or imported materials May be hardened 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Width generally accommodates two-lane and two-directional travel, or provides frequent passing turnouts Commonly hardened with asphalt or other imported material
Obstacles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obstacles common Narrow passages; brush, steep grades, rocks and logs present 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obstacles occasionally present Blockages cleared to define route and protect resources Vegetation may encroach into trailway 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obstacles infrequent Vegetation cleared outside of trailway 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Few or no obstacles exist Grades typically <12% Vegetation cleared outside of trailway 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No obstacles Grades typically <8%
Constructed Features & Trail Elements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimal to non-existent Drainage is functional No constructed bridges or foot crossings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structures are of limited size, scale, and number Drainage functional Structures adequate to protect trail infrastructure and resources Primitive foot crossings and fords 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trail structures (walls, steps, drainage, raised trail) may be common and substantial Trail bridges as needed for resource protection and appropriate access Generally native materials used in Wilderness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structures frequent and substantial Substantial trail bridges are appropriate at water crossings Trailside amenities may be present 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structures frequent or continuous; may include curbs, handrails, trailside amenities, and boardwalks Drainage structures frequent; may include culverts and road-like designs
Signs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum required Generally limited to regulation and resource protection No destination signs present 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minimum required for basic direction Generally limited to regulation and resource protection Typically very few or no destination signs present 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regulation, resource protection, user reassurance Directional signs at junctions, or when confusion is likely Destination signs typically present Informational and interpretive signs may be present 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wide variety of signs likely present Informational signs likely Interpretive signs possible Trail Universal Access information likely displayed at trailhead 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wide variety of signage is present Information and interpretive signs likely Trail Universal Access information is typically displayed at trailhead
Typical Recreation Environments & Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Natural, unmodified ROS: Often Primitive setting, but may occur in other ROS settings WROS: Primitive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Natural, essentially unmodified ROS: Typically Primitive to Semi-Primitive setting WROS: Primitive to Semi-Primitive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Natural, primarily unmodified ROS: Typically Semi-Primitive to Semi-Developed Natural setting WROS: Semi-Primitive to Transition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May be modified ROS: Typically Semi-Developed Natural to Developed Natural setting WROS: Transition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be highly modified ROS: Typically Developed Natural to Urban setting Commonly associated with Visitors centers or high-use recreation sites

Table 1 Trail Class Attributes from the MA DCR

There are 50 public trails within the city of Fitchburg, comprising over 35 miles of trails. Figure 2 on page 19 provides an overview map of these trails. This city-wide map also appears in the 2018 *Fitchburg Trail Guide*. The sections that follow include more detailed maps and information on each of the trail networks.

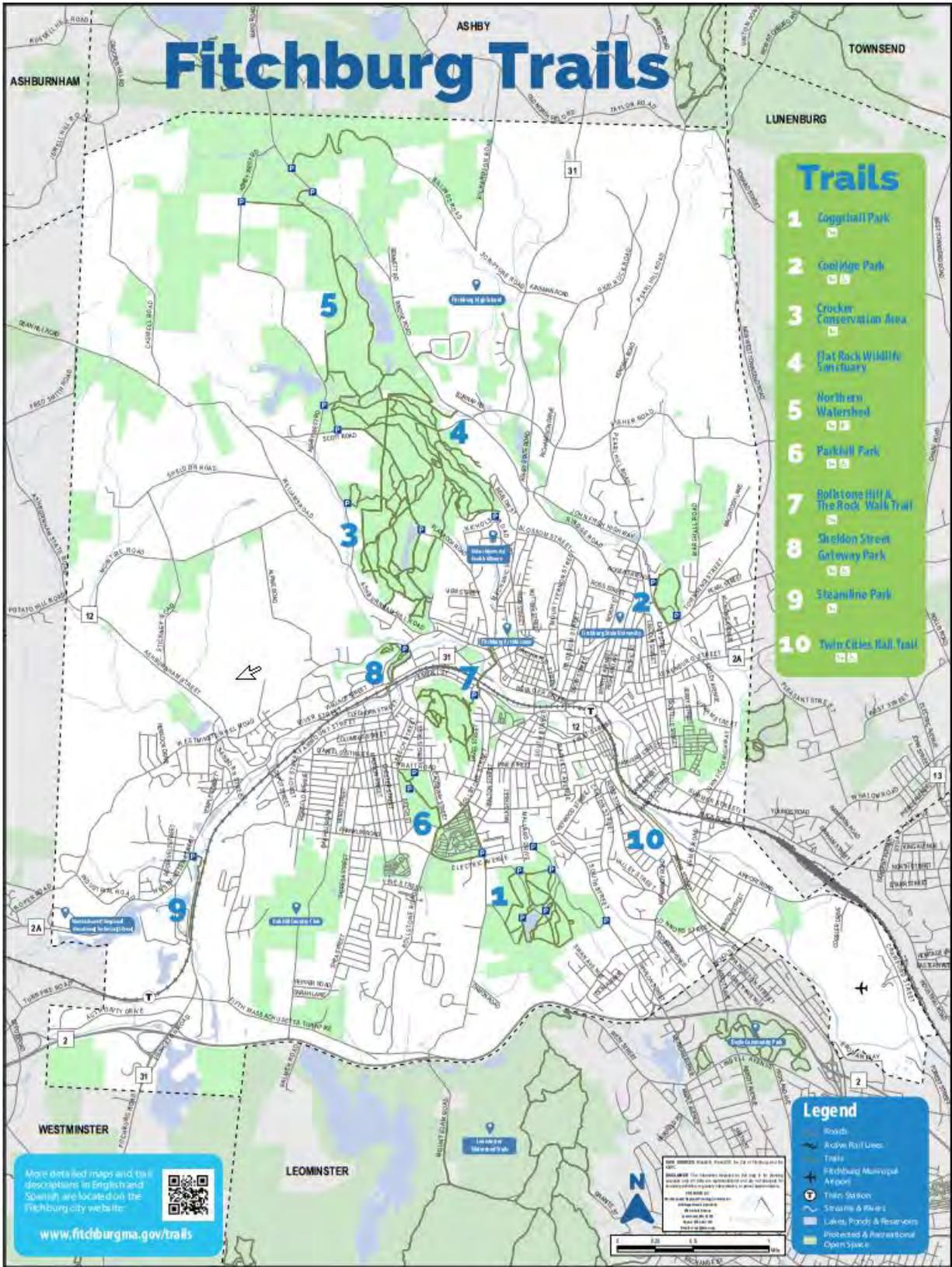


Figure 2 City wide map of trails

7.1 Coggshall Park Trail Network

7.1.1 History

In 1894 Henry F. Coggshall and his wife, Sylvania L. Carpenter Coggshall, donated 86 acres of woodlands to the City of Fitchburg to create a park.

Additional parcels were donated to enlarge the park to its current 212-acre size. The park was named after the couple and is known today as Coggshall Park. It can be

assumed that the hiking/ walking trails were probably one of the first visitor amenities to have been formalized at the park using some of the trails that already existed on the property. Over the years significant activity has occurred that has led to the park as it is today. During 1934-35, the WPA built many of the significant stone structures that can be seen in the core of the park today. In 1992, a \$1 million renovation project was undertaken to improve and increase visitor amenities in the park. After the historic 2008 December Ice Storm, the City engaged a consultant forester to conduct a timber improvement cut on the park to clean up the tremendous debris and damage that had been done to the woodlands. In 2010-11, after a devastating fire in 2009, the historic Stone House, the Henry F. Coggshall Memorial Building, was rebuilt by Montachusett Regional Vocation Technical High School students and their instructors to resemble the original. Additionally, in 2011, granite edging and an accessible path were installed around two thirds of the edge of Mirror Lake. Today the park is in relatively good shape with the Stone House substantially rebuilt, the Gazebo and Amphitheater still functioning well, adequate and easy parking throughout the park, a playground and ball fields for youngsters, a popular disc golf course on the northeast side of the park, and several miles of historic trails available for use on the property, including an accessible segment of the 0.5 mi. trail around Mirror Lake.



Figure 3 Mirror Lake and Gazebo



Figure 4 Rebuilt Stone House

7.1.2 Overall description of trail system

The Park's rugged, hilly topography coupled with varied woodland habitats provide an appealing and slightly challenging setting for the park's trail system. It currently consists of a set of six trail loops, a number of connector trails, and several spurs that provide diverse recreational

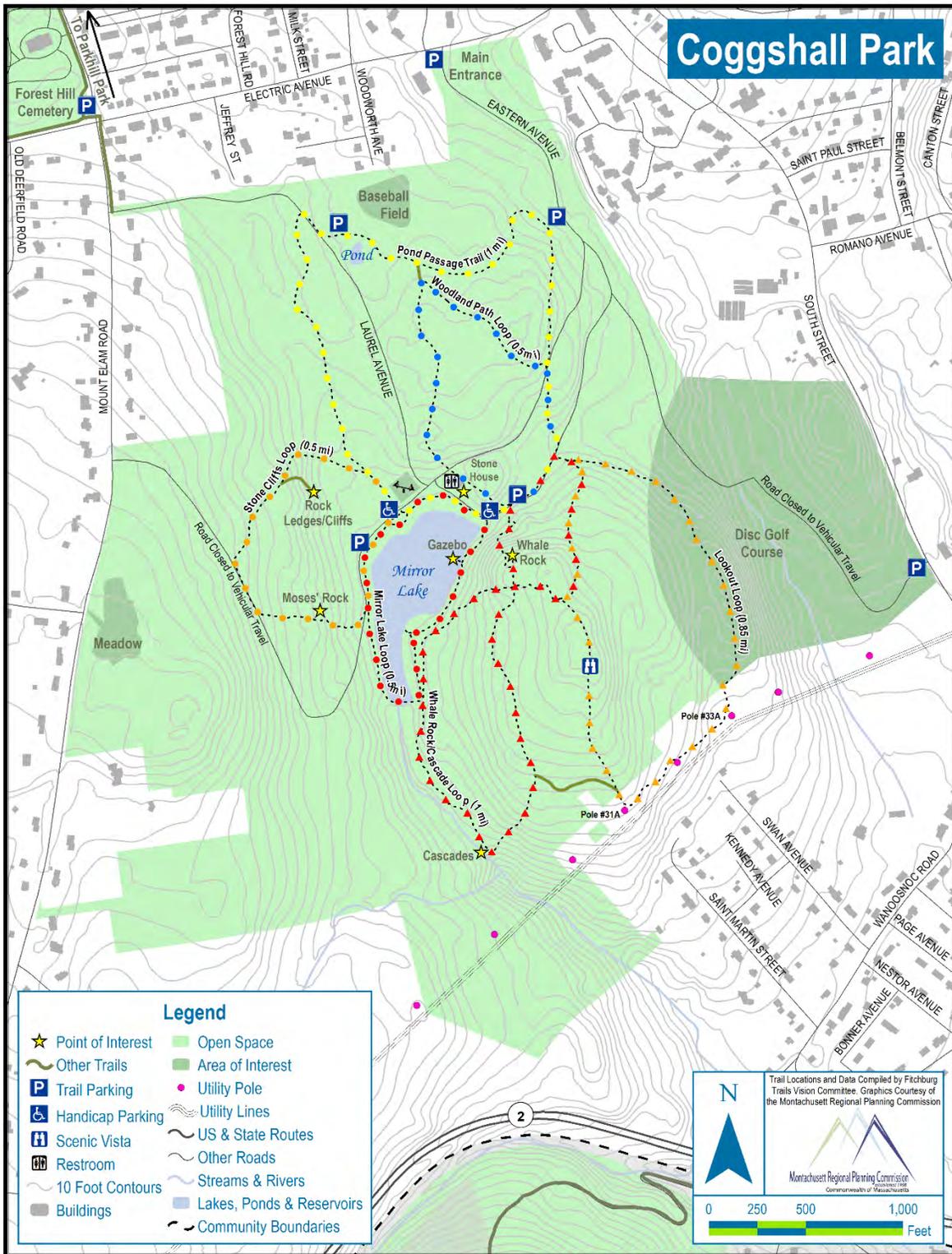


Figure 5 Map of Coggs Hall Park

opportunities for the park's typical hiker/walker. Three trails have been proposed for acceptance by City and Park officials with completion dates extending to 2022 if approved. Except for the accessible trail segment around Mirror Lake, the majority of the park's trails are single-track, natural-surface trails, although some of these incorporate segments of old woods roads as well.

In 2017/18, an effort was begun to better define the location of the major loop trails in the park by updating the blazing and signage along the trails thus giving users greater assurance that they would not get lost if they ventured on trails other than the Mirror Lake Trail. The trail blazing program at Coggshall uses four basic colors (bright red, bright orange, safety yellow, and bright blue) and two simple shapes (circle and triangle) to mark the trail loops. It uses white to mark all connector trails, spur tails and other trail segments in the park. Any trail that is not blazed with one of the four basic colors or with white paint is not an authorized nor an approved trail. The user is asked to use only approved trails.

The Park Trails Booklet, revised in 2011, is no longer applicable. This trail vision plan provides an updated map of the major loop trails at the Park. See Figure 5.

Using the US Forest Service standard trail classification system, as modified by the MA DCR (See Table 1, Page 18), Coggshall Park's trail network can, in general, be categorized as Class 3 trails with the exception of the Mirror Lake Trail (a Class 5 accessible trail for two thirds of its length). Class 3 trails are natural trails with some development of the trail and with minor protrusions and a tread width of 24-36 inches. Sections of some of these trails have conditions that meet Class 2 trails (slightly rougher trails; narrower tread and large protrusions). They are designed to be clear with easily discernible treadways and sufficient trail markings to reassure users and adequate structures to minimize damage to the environment through which they pass. They were designed to require easy to moderate physical exertion to complete and enjoy. This system also includes portions of the park's paved roadways that are used by many to walk on and the numerous spurs or side trails that have been created by users over the years that lead to lesser points of interest within the park or are short-cuts connecting other trails. The total mileage of the trail system is approximately 6.7 mi. with 6 mi. of this system able to be classified as Class 3 trails requiring a slight or moderate level of physical exertion to enjoy. If the three proposed trails are created, it would bring the trail mileage up to 11.4 mi. Some of the words used to describe the current trail network by longtime park users are: beautiful, enjoyable, confusing, and neglected. The overall impression most visitors have of the trail network is one of unrealized potential.

Given the age of the park and its trail network, the overall condition of the trails should reflect much greater use by the visiting public. The lack of wear and tear on the trails is both a good and bad sign. It suggests that users are primarily using the main loop trail around Mirror Lake and, therefore, are not getting out to enjoy the many other attractions the park offers.

Current conditions in general include:

- Insufficient, inconsistent, and confusing trail marking (few assurance blazes and even less wayfinding signage)
- Hidden trailhead kiosk with outdated trail map
- Trail signs with trail names not referenced in the trail booklet
- Many trail corridors that need brushing back and some need downed trees removed or hazard trees dropped
- Several unsafe, too challenging, or degraded fall line trail sections
- Several sections of trail with excessive trail braiding (multiple trail segments) leading to confusion on the part of the user
- Some interesting features with no trails going to them or with abandoned trails
- Some old trails abandoned

Future recommendations for the trail network (and general recommendations for the trail system as a whole):

- Develop simplified trail marking (assurance blazing and directional signage) system and implement
- Develop a new, updated map panel and mount on conveniently located trailhead kiosk
- Consider an interpretive experience for the user with signage, self-guided brochure, use of QR codes to provide access to historic, cultural and natural resource information
- Clear trail corridors (encroaching brush and downed trees) as needed
- Address fall-line trail sections (trail rerouting or hardening of treadway) for the identified areas.
- Re-establish old trails or design and build new trails to significant features. (Wait until leaves have fallen to get better sight lines when determining trail routes)
 - Create a new, separate Waterfall Loop that travels to the base of the waterfall and travels to the southwest of the stream connecting to the Mirror Lake outflow stream and then connects at the bend in Sweeney Ave.
 - Create a loop that reconnects to the southwest portion of the park and to Sweeney Ave. by the Mt. Elam Rd. intersection.
- Update the Coggshall Park Trails booklet for sale/distribution to public
- Create annual trail maintenance plan and implement
- Establish trail stewards team to care for trails

7.1.3 Coggshall Park trail descriptions and assessments

The following narrative provides basic trail information for six existing loop trails within Coggshall Park. See Figure 5 for the map. It also provides basic information for three proposed trails including along the power line right-of-way on the south end of the park. The descriptions are meant to give a general idea of each trail and its location. The assessment is an overall view

of the condition of that trail. None of the write-ups have detailed materials and labor estimates for implementing the recommendations to improve or enhance the trail.

Please note that users of the Coggshall Park trail system can also access the Parkhill Park Trail and Forest Hill Cemetery loop via Mt. Elam Rd. and Elective Ave. as further described in Section 7.6 of this plan.

7.1.3.1 Mirror Lake Trail

Owner: City of Fitchburg

Trailhead: Coggshall Park, directly across from Stone House sidewalk

Trail class: One third of this trail is a Class 3 natural, single track, pedestrian trail. The other two-thirds of this trail is a Class 5 accessible trail designed for pedestrian and wheelchair use.

Length: 0.6 mi.

Difficulty: Accessible portion – Easy; Non-accessible portion – Moderate

Accessibility: Wheelchair accessible for two thirds of loop. Non-wheelchair accessible for remaining third.

Surface: Level, firm, and stable compacted gravel for two thirds of the loop; natural and stone for the remaining third. Stone steps and climb on the section leading from the Stone House to the Gazebo.

Trail description: This is a loop trail, blazed with red circles, that encircles Mirror Lake. The origins of this trail may have pre-dated the creation of the park itself, but if not, it was surely one of the first trails created after the park formed in 1894. It had a major renovation in 2011 when the current compacted gravel path



Figure 6 Winter hikers on Mirror Lake Trail

and stone edging were installed around a good deal of the lake. Two-thirds of the trail has now been brought up to Class 5 -ADA accessibility standards for wheelchair users. The remaining third is a Class 3 trail designed for able-bodied walkers/hikers and is not wheelchair accessible. The trail is set at the center of the park and travels around Mirror Lake and the wooded environment of Coggshall Park. It offers very pleasant views of the surrounding wooded hillsides, the Stone House, the Gazebo, and the stone edged shoreline of the lake as well as the views of the lake itself.

Current trail condition: Very good. Loose and missing stone occur on the hardened section from the paved road to the amphitheater. Loose and missing cribbing stone occur on the lake

side edge of the trail from the gazebo to the dam and need to be re-installed. The path to the rock outcrop viewing area on the edge of the lake is not defined enough to see readily.

Recommendations:

- 1) This complete loop trail around the lake should be made Class 5 - fully accessible. This can be accomplished by adding a section of raised boardwalk in the water that would begin at the paved road just east of the Stone House and run along the edge of the shore to the raised walkway connector to the Gazebo. The boardwalk would continue on the other side of the connector walkway and run along the shore to a



Figure 7 Gazebo

- This section of the trail would need to be brought up to accessible standards as well.
- 2) Consider more cuts in the curbing between the accessible path and the roadway/parking area to allow access to the accessible path by wheelchair users.
- 3) Add some “game” tables and chairs for those who wish to enjoy some checkers, chess or cards while they enjoy the setting around the lake, consider sun umbrellas for these tables for hot, sunny days.
- 4) Enhancement of the section of trail from the current end of the accessible trail to the south side of the dam so that it is ADA compliant as an accessible trail.
- 5) Consider adding attractive night lighting around the pond for special evening events/performances.

7.1.3.2 Lookout Loop Trail

Owner: City of Fitchburg

Trailhead: Beginning on the east side of Laurel Ave. 200-300 yards NE of the Stone House

Trail class: Class 3, natural, single-track, pedestrian trail. Mountain biking, equestrian and motorized use are prohibited.

Length: 1.1 mi.

Difficulty: Predominantly Easy, but the initial climb up the hill is long and Moderate.

Accessibility: Not wheelchair accessible; able bodied hikers/walkers only

Surface: Mostly firm natural tread, frequent stone/rock outcrops and roots on the trail treadway, but nothing to stop the user’s progress or significantly impact their hiking experience.

Trail description: This is a loop trail, blazed with yellow triangles, that travels through a logged mixed pine/hardwood woodlands east of Laurel Ave. The trail climbs a rocky ledge on this side of the park and leads to a scenic vista on a rock outcrop looking north over parts of

Fitchburg. The mix of older, mature trees with recent regeneration of seedlings and saplings filling in the openings is very pleasant. The trail heads south to the power line and flows east for a short distance before heading north back into the park and through the disc golf course area back to the trailhead. The trail travels on top of a rocky ledge offering views down into the woodlands on the north side of the park.

Current trail conditions: Good - but, the classic “fall-line” layout at the beginning of the trail shows some erosion, which will continue unless addressed. The assurance blazing on this trail needs upgrading to provide consistency and quality to the effort. Some directional signage would be helpful to the user so as to keep hikers on the correct trail. Additionally, the trail corridor exhibits some encroachment from overgrown brushy conditions that need to be addressed. The Treadway has frequent small stone and root protrusions, but consistent with conditions expected for a Class 3 trail and which do not deter the hiker’s progress.

Recommendations:

- 1) Needs better assurance blazing and trail signage, especially on the top of the ridge.
- 2) The growth to the north & east of the lookout needs to be cut to re-establish the full viewshed.
- 3) Some brush clearing in the trail corridor is needed.
- 4) No tread work is needed at this time other than a few water dips on the fall-line section of trail climbing the hill to the top of the ridge at the beginning of the trail.
- 5) Some selective thinning of young regeneration at this point would pay big dividends 10-20 years down the road in terms of biodiversity and aesthetics along the trail corridor.

7.1.3.3 Woodland Loop Trail

Owner: City of Fitchburg

Trailhead: Begins on NW side of Stone House

Trail class: Class 3, natural, single-track, pedestrian trail. Mountain Biking, Equestrian and Motorized use are prohibited.

Length: 0.6 mi.

Difficulty: Easy except for a short section SE of the Stone House which is Moderate.

Accessibility: Not handicap accessible. Section to the southeast of Stone House difficult for those with mobility impairments.

Surface: Natural, firm soil with some minor rock and stone protrusions, but relatively level. Climb from Laurel Ave. to back of Stone House on rock ledge outcrop; stable, but challenging for those with mobility issues.

Trail description: This is a short, relatively easy woodland loop trail, blazed with blue circles, that begins at the Stone House and crosses a paved road and heads north through pleasant woodlands that are growing back from the timber salvage/harvest operation necessitated by the 2008 ice storm. The mature overstory has a lush understory of native mountain laurel that is very attractive when in bloom. The trail loops back across Longwood farther to the east and flows down to Laurel Ave. where it heads SW towards Mirror Lake. Just before the handicap

parking at Mirror Lake, the trail climbs up the rock outcrop to pass behind the Stone House to the beginning of the loop.

Current trail conditions: Good. This trail has excessive blue assurance blazing and the shade of blue is too dark to be seen well at dawn and dusk. Directional signage is lacking. Old blazing and additional markings add to confusion on this trail and excessive marking of stone along the trail is evident. The trail tread conditions are very good with few protrusions, but there is one wet spot on the trail that will require this section to be re-routed to higher ground. The tread width varies from single track width (18"-24") to woods road width (96"). Some sections of the trail corridor have brush encroaching from the sides, and will require brushing back.

Recommendations:

- 1) A consistent method of blazing and signage should be approved and installed on this trail and the outdated blazing should be removed.
- 2) Some corridor clearing is also needed along the trail.
- 3) A short section of the trail that is very wet should be rerouted to higher, drier ground.
- 4) Another change to consider is to address the scramble up the rock outcrop on the east side of the Stone House so that it is an easier ascent or to re-route this section onto Laurel Ave. so the trail goes in front of the Stone House. This would make the entire trail a consistent Easy difficulty level. This trail could be upgraded to a Class 4 trail with a little effort.

7.1.3.4 Whale Rock & Cascade Trail

Owner: City of Fitchburg

Trailhead: Laurel Ave. just south of Stone House on the side of the roadway

Trail class: Class 2, natural, single-track, pedestrian trail. Mountain Biking, Equestrian and Motorized use are prohibited

Length: 1.2 mi.

Difficulty: Moderate due to some steep, fall-line ascents/descents on this loop

Accessibility: Not handicap accessible. Difficult for mobility impaired users.

Surface: Natural, soil, sod, and stone, frequent rock/ledge outcroppings, some loose leaf/duff matter on slopes. Typical conditions on a Class 2 trail.

Trail description: This wooded loop trail, blazed with yellow circles, begins with a steep, tricky climb up to Whale Rock. From there it travels south toward the power line then turns west and descends to the top of the "cascades" on the Mirror Lake outflow stream. It then heads north along the stream back to the east side of the dam and proceeds along the Mirror Lake Trail for a short distance. It then ascends back up and over the ridge and down to Laurel Ave. It finishes by following Laurel Ave. for a short distance to the point of beginning. The cut-over, mixed pine/hardwoods overstory and mountain laurel understory setting coupled with the hilly terrain makes for an interesting hike. The elevation change makes this a moderately difficult hike without too much effort. The "Whale Rock" and the "Cascades" are two of the more interesting destinations along this trail and within the park.

Current trail conditions: Fair. The trail has insufficient assurance blazes and trail signage leading to extensive trail braiding. There are areas where brush is encroaching into the trail corridor. The trail exhibits several “fall-line” conditions that are eroding and will continue to do so. Some trail rerouting is called for. There are also some soft, wet sections that should be addressed.

Recommendations:

- 1) The current blazing does not correctly follow the route of this trail. Additionally, because it is yellow circles that are not well defined, the user can confuse this trail with the adjacent Lookout Trail Loop. Install some directional signage and add blue assurance blazing to this trail.
- 2) Do some brush clearing in the trail corridor.
- 3) Install some water dips on the trail climbing the ledge on the return trip.
- 4) Consider doing some technical rock work on the very beginning of the trail to make the ascent “safer,” but not any less challenging.
- 5) Consider installing some “switchbacks” on the hillside leading up to Whale Rock and from the ridge top down to the cascades through the dense mountain laurel thicket as this is one of the worst laid out sections of trail in the park.

7.1.3.5 Pond Passage Trail

Owner: City of Fitchburg

Trailhead: This trail loop begins on the west side of the Stone House

Trail class: Class 3; mountain biking, equestrian, and motorized use not allowed

Length: 1.5 mi., the longest trail loop in the system

Difficulty: Easy

Accessibility: Not handicapped accessible. Challenging for someone with mobility impairments.

Surface: Primarily a natural tread, except for the short distances on paved roads

Trail description: This is a loop trail, blazed with orange circles, that is located primarily in the mixed pine/hardwood woodlands north of Longwood Ave. It begins at the Stone House and travels along Longwood Ave. before heading north into the woods. It flows along relatively level trails over to the pond, and crosses Laurel Ave. and heads south back to Mirror Lake. It finishes with a short section along Longwood Ave. going back to the Stone House. The gently rolling grade, the mixed tree species, both mature and young, the pervasive presence of mountain laurel, and the dense hemlock stand give this trail a nice quality and will ensure that it is a popular trail.

Current trail conditions: Good. Trail lacks adequate blazing and trail signage, sections of trail corridor are experiencing encroachment from the growth of young seedlings/saplings along the sides of the trail.

Recommendations:

- 1) Remove outdated assurance blazes and redo the orange blazes to be more visible and more distinct circles on entire trail, add directional signage as needed at trail intersections.
- 2) Clear brushy encroachment from trail corridor.

7.1.3.6 Stones, Cliffs and Rock Loop Trail

Owner: City of Fitchburg

Trailhead: Begins on the west side of Mirror Lake

Trail class: Class 3

Length: 0.7 mi.

Difficulty: Moderate due to grade of trail and rough conditions at the beginning of the trail.

Accessibility: Not handicapped accessible; difficult for those with mobility impairments

Surface: Mostly natural conditions except for short sections of paved road and a section of man-made rock steps; typical protrusions for a Class 3 trail.

Trail description: This loop trail, which is currently not blazed, begins on the far side of the parking lot on the west side of Mirror Lake. It meanders through the large rock boulders at the base of the cliffs gradually climbing in elevation. The trail skirts around the north end of the cliffs and eventually leads to the top of the cliffs. It provides a dramatic view of the tumbled boulders below the cliffs. From there it heads southwest up the grade to meet Longwood Ave. After a short hike along the road, it heads back into and down the hill to Moses Rock. From the rock, it travels down to the road again and travels along the lake to the point of beginning. The dramatic display of the jumbled boulders and rock cliffs and the singular rock deposit known as Moses Rock are the attractions along this trail. The hardwood forest on the hillside will be compelling in the fall and spring as well.

Current trail conditions: Fair. The trail lacks assurance blazing and directional signs, has several trees down across the trail, some steep sections at the beginning and some “fall-line” conditions on the trail leading to Moses.

Recommendations:

- 1) Blaze with yellow circles and sign the trail.
- 2) Clear downed trees off the trail.
- 3) Consider re-routes for the steep and fall-line sections at the beginning of the trail and leading to Moses Rock.
- 4) Consider creating a connection from Moses Rock to the top of the cliffs that flows through the woods and does not come back out into the parking area alongside Mirror Lake.

7.1.3.7 Power Line Passage

Trail Proposed: 12/2018, **Expected Completion:** 9/2021)

Owner: City of Fitchburg; easement to Power Company

Trailhead: South St.

Trail class: Class 3, maintenance road to service the power line

Length: 1.7 mi.

Difficulty: Moderate due to steep rocky ravine and brushy areas along the trail

Accessibility: Not handicapped accessible. Difficult for those with mobility impairments

Surface: Sod, soil and stone

Trail description: The trail begins at Laurel Ave. and follows the eastern section of the Lookout Trail Loop out to the power line maintenance road/trail from South St. to Mt. Elam Rd. It runs southeast through natural habitat that is mechanically and chemically maintained by the power company for some distance down and out of the Mirror Lake outflow ravine to a point where it will turn north and head back to Longwood Ave. From there, hikers follow the park roads back to the point of beginning. Most of the growth on the powerline is grasses and herbaceous growth that can be waist high and wet.

Current trail conditions: Trail is periodically cleared, but not annually. During the growing season, this trail is covered with heavy herbaceous/grassy growth.

Recommendations:

- 1) Explore formalizing this trail into the park's network of trails.
- 2) Sign and blaze as needed.
- 3) Create third connection on the southwest end of the trail back into the core of the park.
- 4) Probably should not show up on any trail map until agreement with Power Company is secured for liability reasons.

7.1.3.8 Southwest Passage

Trail Proposed: 12/2018, **Expected Completion:** 9/2022)

Owner: City of Fitchburg

Trailhead: Off Longwood Rd. across from Mirror Lake and south of children's playground

Trail class: Class 3

Length: Approximately 2 mi.

Difficulty: Easy to Moderate due to elevational changes and length of trail

Accessibility: Not handicapped accessible. Difficult for those with mobility impairments.

Surface: Soil, sod and stone with some paved roadway.

Trail description: This trail loop would begin at Longwood Ave. just south of the children's playground and follow the same route as the Pond Passage Trail for a ways. It would eventually connect to Laurel Ave. and travel west on the road for a short distance. It would turn south and head into the woods and eventually connect to Longwood Ave. crossing this road and continuing south to make a large turn to the east and eventually heading north back to Longwood Ave. It would travel along the road to the point of beginning to complete the loop. The trail would

travel through several different woodland and other habitats and provide the hiker with a varied experience.

Current trail conditions: Not applicable since the trail has not been constructed at this time.

Recommendations: Flag a preliminary route for the trail for discussion and consideration of the City and Friends of Coggs Hall Park.

7.1.3.9 Waterfall Trail

Trail Proposed: 12/2018, **Expected Completion:** 9/2021

Owner: City of Fitchburg

Trailhead: On Longwood Ave. where the Moses Rock trail begins

Trail Class: Class 3

Length: Approximately 1 mi.

Difficulty: Moderate due to expected terrain and length

Accessibility: Not wheelchair accessible and difficult for those with mobility impairments

Surface: Mostly soil, sod and stone with some paved roadway

Trail description: This trail would begin at the SE corner of Mirror Lake and follow the existing trail south to the cascades. It would then cross the stream and head west along the stream flowing down the hill. After a short distance the trail would turn north and travel back to connect to Longwood Ave. From there, hikers would follow Longwood Ave. back to Mirror Lake and back to the point of beginning.

Current trail conditions: N/A since the trail has not been flagged at this time.

Recommendations: Flag a preliminary route for discussion and consideration by the City and Friends of Coggs Hall Park.

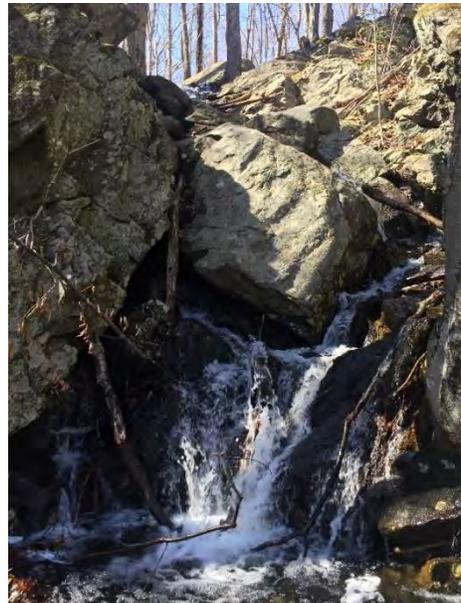


Figure 8 Cascade along proposed Waterfall Trail

7.2 Coolidge Park

Coolidge Park was given to the City of Fitchburg by Senator Marcus A. Coolidge in 1939 for the purpose of converting the Pearl St. Fairgrounds into a recreational park and playground. In the park's history it has been home to a harness-racing track, tennis courts, little league fields, basketball, ice skating, and a swimming hole. As well as the loop trail, described below, Coolidge Park now hosts Fitchburg Youth Softball, Fitchburg Street Hockey, Fitchburg State University Softball, Fitchburg Youth Soccer, a playground, the Crowley Swimming Complex, a sand volleyball court, basketball, and the Fitchburg Dog Park. The following narrative provides basic trail information for the trail within Coolidge Park. See Figure 10 on the following page.



Figure 9 View of Coolidge Park

Coolidge Park Loop Trail

Owner: City of Fitchburg

Trailhead: At Coolidge Park accessed by Townsend St. entrance which is located across the street from 198 Townsend St. Ample parking is available off the Townsend St. entrance adjacent to the Trail. Additional parking is available from this entrance farther into the park.

Trail class: Primarily Class 5, modified, natural stone dust pedestrian trail.

Length: ~0.90 mi. one way

Difficulty: Easy

Accessibility: The loop trail is a wide and level pathway that is functionally accessible, although the trail is occasionally subject to some erosion.

Surface: Stone dust

Trail description: This trail is a heavily used walking/running trail that follows the perimeter of Coolidge Park. A portion of the trail parallels Falulah Brook (indicated as “Bakers Brook” on Figure 10, but it does not become Baker Brook until Pearl Hill Brook joins it farther downstream).

Current trail conditions: Walking path is subject to erosion in some areas. Some areas of the trail have become damaged due to maintenance vehicle access and need leveling.

Recommendations: Ongoing maintenance of trail is required to maintain an accessible surface. Installation of drainage at key points would enhance usability.

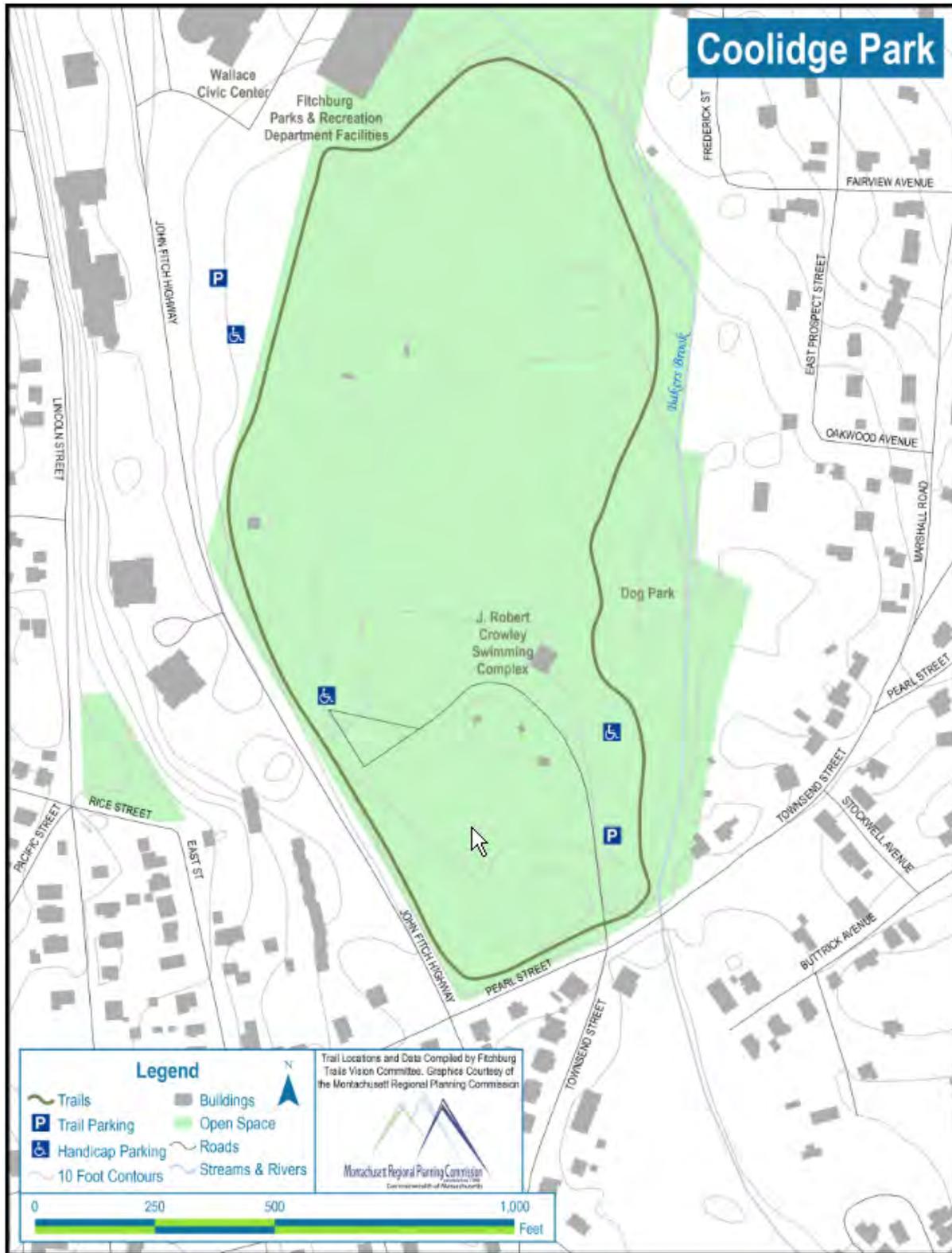


Figure 10 Map of Coolidge Park

7.3 Crocker Conservation Area

The following narrative provides basic trail information for 12 trails within CCA. The descriptions are meant to give a general idea of each trail and its location and the assessment is an overall view of the condition of that trail. None of the write-ups have detailed materials and labor estimates for implementing the recommendations to improve or enhance the trail. See Figure 13 on the following page.

7.3.1 Big's Bushwhack

Owner: North County Land Trust

Trailhead: 224 Flat Rock Rd., Fitchburg; Parking plowed in winter

Trail class: Class 3, natural surface, single-track, pedestrian trail.

Length: 0.7 mi.

Difficulty: Moderate

Accessibility: Not handicapped accessible

Surface: Natural

Trail description: The trail is marked with trail name signs at either end and blazed with white triangles. From the north end the trail gently descends following a skidder road from the recent timber harvest. Making a turn to the south it follows an old stone wall. Approaching the southern end of Roey's Ramble the trail narrows, and the footing becomes rockier as it meanders through stands of mountain laurel, which are a sight to behold around the Summer Solstice. It then starts a much steeper descent until it reaches its southern end at the Lower Loop Trail.

Maintenance needs: Routine annual maintenance but some mowing or weed whacking is desirable during the summer months at the northern end of the trail.



Figure 11 Mountain Laurel beginning to bloom

7.3.2 The Cart Road

Owner: North County Land Trust

Trailhead: 224 Flat Rock Rd. or Caldwell St., Fitchburg. Plowed in winter. Limited parking and easy access available from Caldwell St.

Trail class: Class 3, natural surface pedestrian trail.

Length: 0.3 mi.

Difficulty: Moderate

Accessibility: Not handicapped accessible

Surface: Gravel and dirt cart road

Trail description: Trail marked with signs at either end with white circle blazes. From its northern end the Cart Rd. starts on the



Figure 12 The Cart Road

right-hand side of the Water Department Access Rd. in a grassy area below the Overlook Reservoir dam. It soon turns sharply to the left and starts its rather steep descent to Caldwell St. **Maintenance needs:** Severe erosion from runoff in places. Repairs needed.

7.3.3 Cush's Coast

Owner: North County Land Trust

Trailhead: 224 Flat Rock Rd., Fitchburg; Parking plowed in winter

Trail class: Class 3, natural surface pedestrian trail.

Length: 0.3 mi.

Difficulty: Easy

Accessibility: Not handicapped accessible

Surface: Dirt woods road

Trail description: The trail, which is marked by trail name signs at either end and yellow circle blazes, begins a little distance southeast of the parking area on the paved section of Flat Rock Rd. The entrance is on the left upon approaching the parking area. Beginning at Flat Rock Rd., the trail is



Figure 14 Cush's Coast Trail

a beautiful old woods road that is relatively flat and wide, bounded by stone walls. Towards its end it turns sharply to the right and narrows substantially before connecting with the Water Department Access Rd. just across from the Overlook Reservoir dam.

Maintenance needs: Regular maintenance only.

7.3.4 Flat Rock Road

Owners: North County Land Trust, City of Fitchburg, Mass Audubon

Trailhead: Flat Rock Rd., Fitchburg; Parking plowed in winter

Trail class: Class 3, natural surface pedestrian trail. Well used and in good overall condition.

Length: Parking area to Overlook Trail 0.2 mi.; Parking area to Flat Rock Link Trail 0.25 mi.

Difficulty: Easy, relatively level trail along unpaved road. Sections of granite ledge slippery when wet.

Accessibility: Not handicapped accessible

Surface: Unpaved dirt road with some grass cover



Figure 15 Flat Rock Road

Trail description: Flat Rock Rd., a former City of Fitchburg road, is a paved and maintained road until the CCA trailhead parking area. At the trailhead it is gated preventing vehicle access. A wooden trail name sign is located at this point and the road is marked with red triangles as it continues along CCA property. The red triangles are not continued once it reaches Mass Audubon Flat Rock Wildlife Sanctuary. It ends at Scott Rd. in the wildlife sanctuary.

Maintenance needs: Regular routine maintenance

7.3.5 Jay's Way

Owner: North County Land Trust

Trailhead: 224 Flat Rock Rd., Fitchburg;
Parking plowed in winter

Trail class: Class 3, natural surface
pedestrian trail.

Length: 500 feet

Difficulty: Easy

Accessibility: Not handicapped accessible

Surface: Dirt

Trail description: The trail is marked by trail name signs at either end and blazed with yellow X's. A single track, dirt relatively flat trail that follows an old skidder road and links the Overlook Trail to Big's Bushwhack.

Maintenance needs: Regular annual
maintenance



Figure 16 Jay's Way

7.3.6 Lower Loop Trail

Owner: North County Land Trust

Trailhead: 224 Flat Rock Rd., Fitchburg; parking plowed in winter. Easy access and limited parking is also available at Caldwell St., Fitchburg

Trail class: Class 3, natural surface pedestrian trail.

Length: 0.4 mi.

Difficulty: Easy

Accessibility: Not handicapped accessible

Surface: Dirt

Trail description: A little known and little used but beautiful and easy loop. The trail is marked by trail name signs in three locations around the loop and blazed with blue circles. Starting at the northern end where it meets the Cart Rd., the trail bears to the right and passes over a small stream. This area is beautiful in April when large areas of spicebush are in bloom. The trail soon passes the southern end of Big's Bushwhack and eventually turns sharply to the left. The trail continues and then turns sharply to the left again. It returns on the eastern side of

the loop as it passes by a narrow, unmarked single-track trail (providing a connection to Caldwell St) before arriving back at the starting point at the Cart Rd.

Maintenance needs: Routine annual maintenance

7.3.7 Overlook Trail

Owner: North County Land Trust

Trailhead: 224 Flat Rock Rd., Fitchburg; Parking plowed in winter.

Trail class: Class 3, natural surface pedestrian trail.

Length: 0.7 mi.

Difficulty: Easy

Accessibility: Not handicapped accessible

Surface: Dirt

Trail description: The most popular and well used trail at the CCA, the trail is marked by signs at either end of trail and red circle blazes. Beginning at the northern end where it leaves Flat Rock Rd., the Overlook Trail is a flat, dirt woods road. Shortly after passing the intersection with The Cutoff it narrows to a single track trail, the surface becomes a little more uneven with some rocks and it starts a very gradual descent which continues until its southern end where it intersects with Big's Bushwhack. A very popular loop that is a little more than a mile in length is to begin at the parking area at Flat Rock Rd., follow Flat Rock to Overlook. Stay on Overlook but at trail marker #2 (see map) take a left to cross the Overlook Reservoir dam and then take a left to return to the parking lot via the Water Department Access Rd.

Maintenance needs: Regular maintenance only.



Figure 17 Overlook Trail

7.3.8 Roey's Ramble

Owner: North County Land Trust

Trailhead: 224 Flat Rock Rd., Fitchburg; Parking plowed in winter.

Trail class: Class 3, natural surface pedestrian trail.

Length: 0.4 mi.

Difficulty: Moderate/Difficult

Accessibility: Not handicapped accessible

Surface: Mostly dirt with some rocks in certain locations

Trail description: The newest trail in the overall

CCA trail system, this trail is marked by signs at either end and blazed with yellow squares.

Starting from its northern end on Big's Bushwhack the trail starts descending gradually through



Figure 18 Roey's Ramble

the woods, crosses the power line and continues its gentle descent until it turns sharply to the left and climbs steeply, crossing the power lines and eventually again connecting with Big's Bushwhack at its southern end.

Maintenance needs: Routine annual maintenance with some weed whacking advisable in the summer months where it crosses the power line.

7.3.9 The Cutoff

Owner: North County Land Trust

Trailhead: 224 Flat Rock Rd., Fitchburg; Parking plowed in winter.

Trail class: Class 3, natural surface pedestrian trail.

Length: 0.1 mi.

Difficulty: Moderate

Accessibility: Not handicapped accessible

Surface: Dirt single track.

Trail description: A short, fairly steep, single track trail that connects the Overlook Trail to the Overlook Reservoir dam. The trail is marked by signs at either end of the trail and blazed with white Xs.

Maintenance needs: Regular routine maintenance.

7.3.10 Water Department Access Road

Owner: North County Land Trust

Trailhead: 224 Flat Rock Rd., Fitchburg; Parking is plowed in winter. The gated road provides vehicular access to the City of Fitchburg to the Overlook Dam and the water tank.

Trail class: Class 3, natural surface pedestrian trail.

Length: 0.3 mi.

Difficulty: Easy

Accessibility: Not handicapped accessible

Surface: Dirt road

Trail description: The gated road begins at the parking area on Flat Rock Rd. and provides vehicular access to the City of Fitchburg to the Overlook Dam and the water tank. It is part of the overall CCA but is completely on property owned by the City of Fitchburg. The trail, marked by signs at either end, is part of a popular loop at the CCA that is a little more than a mile in length. Beginning at the parking area at Flat Rock Rd., follow Flat Rock to Overlook. Stay on Overlook but at trail marker #2 (see map) take a left to cross the Overlook Reservoir dam and then take a left to return to the parking lot via the Water Department Access Rd.

Maintenance needs: None. Has the potential to be made an accessible trail to the dam.

7.3.11 White Birch Trail

Owner: North County Land Trust

Trailhead: 224 Flat Rock Rd., Fitchburg; Parking plowed in winter.

Trail class: Class 3, natural surface pedestrian trail.

Length: 0.2 mi.

Accessibility: Not handicapped accessible

Difficulty: Easy

Surface: Narrow dirt trail

Trail description: A single track trail that links the Overlook Trail at CCA to the Flat Rock Wildlife Sanctuary Link Trail. On CCA land the trail crosses an area that was harvested for timber in recent years and it passes through an area of young white birch on Flat Rock Sanctuary land offering an interesting contrast in scenery. The trail is marked by signs at either end and white square blazes while on CCA land. Blazes stop once trail reaches Flat Rock Wildlife Sanctuary land.

Maintenance Needs: Routine maintenance only

7.3.12 Flat Rock Link Trail

Owner: North County Land Trust

Trailhead: 224 Flat Rock Rd., Fitchburg; Parking plowed in winter.

Trail class: Class 3, natural surface pedestrian trail.

Length: 0.3 mi.

Difficulty: Easy

Accessibility: Not handicapped accessible

Surface: Narrow dirt, single track trail.

Trail description: The trail is marked by a trail name sign at each end of trail and blue triangles along the trail. A peaceful woodland trail following an impressive stone wall that links Flat Rock Rd. to Big's Bushwhack and Mass Audubon Link Trail.

Maintenance needs: Routine maintenance only.

7.4 Flat Rock Wildlife Sanctuary

The following narrative provides basic trail information for 13 trails within Flat Rock Wildlife Sanctuary. (See Figure 20 on the following page.) The descriptions are meant to give a general idea of each trail and its location. The owner, Mass Audubon, maintains the trail network and is responsible for assessments, evaluations and trail improvements. Please note: Mass Audubon Wildlife Sanctuaries, including Flat Rock, do not allow dogs/pets, mountain bikes, or horses.

7.4.1 Flat Rock Road Path

Owner: Mass Audubon

Trailhead: North end of Flat Rock Rd. at the CCA kiosk. There are spaces for approximately eight cars to park around this cul-de-sac.

Length: 0.75 mi.

Difficulty: Moderate

Accessibility: Exposed rounded ledges along some portions; not recommended when wet or icy

Surface: Up to intersection with Pipeline Path, stones and soil. Remainder is flat, glacially eroded rock surface. Hazardous when wet or icy.

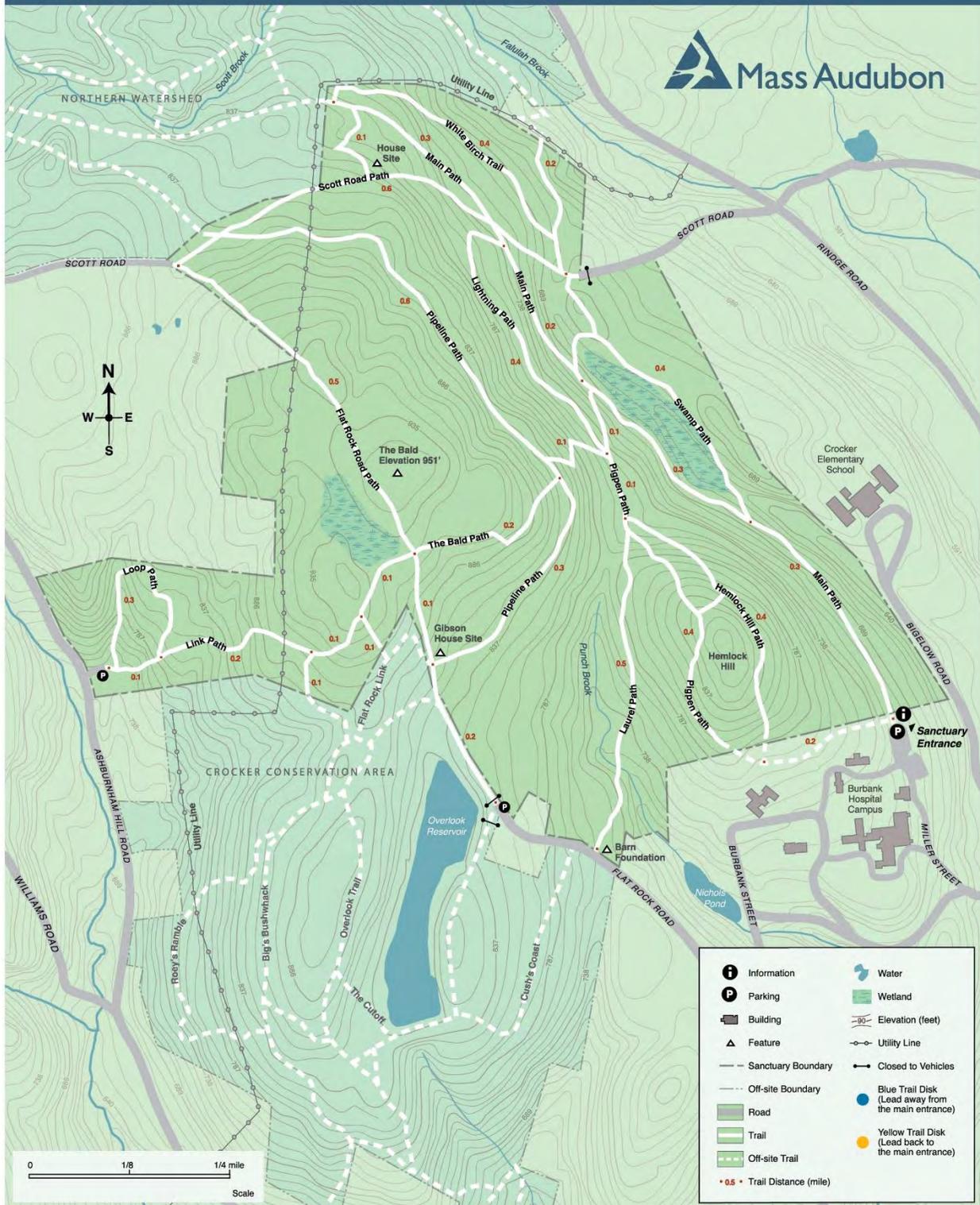
Trail description: Flat Rock Rd. Path was an old roadway and leads up to an area known as “the Bald” that dramatically contrasts to the rest of the Sanctuary. Much of the surface there is bare granite rock

covered with lichens, mosses, and accumulated pitch pine needles. As soils accumulate, pitch pine is being replaced by white pine seedlings and saplings. Flat Rock Rd. Path begins at the trailhead, traversing along the north berm of Overlook Reservoir for 0.2 mi. where it passes Pipeline Path exiting right, to the east. At 0.4 mi. from the kiosk, the Link Path diverges on the left (to the west) toward the Ashburnham Hill Rd. parking lot. About 100 yards to the west from that intersection is a highbush blueberry/peat moss swamp lying within a pocket within the otherwise flat granite. Flat Rock Rd. Path continues in a northerly direction across the high, flat area (“the Bald,” elev. 951’), then descends gradually and occasionally more steeply into the young white pine and hemlock forest to meet with Scott Rd. Path after 0.75 mi., where it terminates. A fine ~1.5 mi. loop walk begins at the trailhead on Flat Rock Rd. Path, follows Pipeline Path to the north, thence briefly west (left) on Scott Rd. Path and returns south (left again) via Flat Rock Rd. Path back to the starting point.



Figure 19 Flat Rock Road Path

Flat Rock Wildlife Sanctuary



7.4.2 Hemlock Hill Path

Owner: Mass Audubon

Trailhead: Kiosk at parking lot just north of UMass Memorial - HealthAlliance-Clinton Hospital's (Burbank's) Mechanic St. entrance, 275 Nichols Rd., Fitchburg. From that address, bear right to the northern end of the parking lot.

Length: 0.55 mi.

Difficulty: Moderate

Accessibility: Not by wheelchair

Surface: Compacted forest trails

Trail description: Begin at the kiosk by following the Main Path a short distance. After entering the woods, take the path on the left (west) up the hill, which is the Burbank Connector. Continuing up the hill, bear left at each of two intersections, which are each shortcuts that connect to the Hemlock Hill Path farther along. At 0.2 mi. from the Main Path, and just north of the Highlands Building of UMass Memorial - HealthAlliance-Clinton Hospital (Burbank), the Hemlock Hill Path and Pigpen Path each turn to the right. Although they more or less parallel each other, Pigpen Path continues to the left (west) of Hemlock Hill Path. Turn right (head north) to continue on Hemlock Hill Path. After topping a rise within a relatively pure, mature stand of Eastern Hemlock trees, a short trail exiting to the left provides a connection with Pigpen Path to the west. Continuing straight (generally north), Hemlock Hill Path ends at a tee with Pigpen Path.



Figure 21 Stone wall

7.4.3 Laurel Path

Owner: Mass Audubon

Trailhead: CCA kiosk, at the top (north end) of Flat Rock Rd. There are spaces for approximately eight cars around this cul-de-sac.

Length: 0.55 mi.

Difficulty: Easy

Accessibility: Not wheelchair accessible due to wetness

Surface: Compacted broadleaf forest trail

Trail description: Starting from the CCA kiosk, walk back down the paved road southeast toward the city. After 0.15 mi., turn left onto the Laurel Path, immediately passing an old stone foundation on the right. Laurel Path continues to the north across the headwaters of Punch Brook (a small stream) until after 0.4 mi. it ends at its intersection with Pigpen Path. A roughly parallel trail, which is slated for elimination, may be encountered just uphill (NW) of Laurel Path.

7.4.4 Lightning Path

Owner: Mass Audubon

Trailhead: Lightning Path runs between Scott Rd. Path and Pigpen Path. Parking is at either of the following: Flat Rock Rd. parking lot at the CCA kiosk, or UMass Memorial - HealthAlliance-Clinton Hospital (Burbank) parking lot at the Mass Audubon kiosk.

Length: 0.45 mi.

Difficulty: Moderate

Accessibility: Not wheelchair accessible

Surface: Compacted forest soil

Trail description: At the intersection of the Main Path and Scott Rd. Path, step across the ditch on the left while going up Scott Rd. Path, onto Lightning Path. It is a more varied treadway going to the south until one reaches a zig-zag. Just a few feet to the left (east) is the north end of Pigpen Path, and only 0.1 mi. downhill on Pigpen Path is its intersection with Main Path. Right (south) on Main Path leads back to the Flat Rock Rd. kiosk and parking lot. Continuing on Lightning Path, it zig-zags right up the hill, then left, then right again until it intersects and ends at Pipeline Path. An apparent shortcut part way up is blocked by a downed tree trunk. The zig-zag portion of the Lightning Path is an important connection between the Main Path system of trails and the Flat Rock Rd. Path trails.



Figure 22 Uneven surface of Lightning Path

7.4.5 Link Path

Owner: Mass Audubon

Trailhead: Mass Audubon entrance on Ashburnham Rd., approximately 1 mi. north of its intersection with West St., Fitchburg. Parking is at either of the following: Ashburnham Hill Rd. parking area at Mass Audubon's entrance or Flat Rock Rd. parking area at the CCA kiosk.

Length: ~1 mi.

Difficulty: Easy

Accessibility: Not wheelchair accessible

Surface: Compacted forest soil.

Trail description: From the Mass Audubon entrance on Ashburnham Hill Rd., step across the small unnamed brook running through a stone-lined channel, and follow the blue disks, signifying going away from the starting point [Note: these markers may be changed in the future as the main entrance to the Sanctuary is being



Figure 23 Link Path under the power lines

shifted to behind the Hospital.] The Link Path winds steadily uphill through a mixture of deciduous woods, conifers and boulder moraine towards the east, and at ~0.1 mi. passes the Loop Trail, which enters from the north. Continuing east on the Link Path, which rises more steeply at times, the trail crosses a powerline and terminates at Flat Rock Rd. Path just south of “the Bald.” At the intersection of the Link Path and Flat Rock Rd. Path, the Bald Path continues to the east towards Pipeline Path. The Link Path thus provides a connection from the west to the rest of the Flat Rock Wildlife Sanctuary trail network.

7.4.6 Loop Path

Owner: Mass Audubon

Trailhead: Mass Audubon entrance on Ashburnham Rd., approx. 1 mi. north of its intersection with West St., Fitchburg. Parking is at Ashburnham Hill Rd. parking area by Mass Audubon's entrance.

Length: 0.3 mi.

Difficulty: Moderate

Accessibility: Not wheelchair accessible

Surface: Compacted forest soil

Trail description: From the Mass Audubon entrance on Ashburnham Hill Rd., walk over to the small unnamed brook running through a stone-lined channel. Note the stone bench across the brook from the trailhead, on which is inscribed “In Memory of Madeleine Gaylor, Conservationist, 1901-1994.” Immediately to the right, the Link Path crosses the brook and leads uphill to the rest of



Figure 24 Brook by Loop Path

the Sanctuary. Instead, turn left and walk uphill, keeping the small brook to your right. Blue blazes signify going away from the starting point. For the first ~100 yards, an old field rises above the trail on the left. The woods on the right include large sugar and red maples, yellow and black birches, and red oaks. After climbing up ~250 yards, a Mass Audubon sign is encountered stating “Private Residence: Please do not enter the private residential area beyond this sign.” Note that the portion of the Loop Path that is shown on older maps as looping to the left through the old field is no longer in evidence. Instead, turn right following blue disks across the small brook, and enter a very different woods with many boulders (a boulder moraine – by contrast the old field had been cleared of stones), northern hardwoods, lots of young beech, mountain laurel and wintergreen. This area is too stony to ever have been cultivated. The trail has a nice surface of hemlock needles – very comfortable underfoot. After ~0.3 mi., the trail arrives at the Link Path, and a tree at the Tee has both a blue and a yellow disk. The Link Path towards the rest of the Sanctuary goes uphill to the left (blue disks), while the lower portion of the Link Path back to the starting point goes downhill to the right (yellow disks.) [Note: these

markers may be changed in the future as the main entrance to the Sanctuary is being shifted to behind the Hospital.] The Loop Path is a very enjoyable short hike.

7.4.7 Main Path

Owner: Mass Audubon

Trailhead: Kiosk at the north end of the parking lot beyond UMass Memorial - HealthAlliance-Clinton Hospital's (Burbank's) Mechanic St. entrance, 275 Nichols Rd., Fitchburg. From that address, bear right to the northern end of the parking lot to find the kiosk.

Length: 1.1 mi. to Northern Watershed property line, and then on to Ashby West Rd. at 1.5 mi.

Difficulty: Easy

Accessibility: Trail is relatively flat, but too uneven to be wheelchair accessible

Surface: Compacted soil that has been somewhat eroded in places. Stones have been exposed where extensive erosion has occurred. Was an historic carriage trail, but has not been sufficiently maintained for that purpose.

Trail description: Main Path, which was built as a carriage path, slopes gently to the northwest from the Hospital kiosk. After a short distance, the Hemlock-Pigpen Paths exit on the left and lead uphill (west) to eventually diverge as separate paths. The Main Path continues its gentle slope within a mature white pine forest, and becomes level as it passes the Swamp Path on the right at 0.3 mi., and the Pigpen Path exiting sharp left at 0.6 mi. Shortly afterwards, the Swamp Path returns from the right. At this point, looking uphill to the left one can see how the hillside was sculpted in constructing the carriage path with exposed boulders now covered with mosses and lichens, and an old stone wall within an overstory of white pine and eastern hemlock. Continuing to the north, the Main Path gently rises until reaching its intersection with Scott Rd. Path, which crosses the Main Path here diagonally. Continuing on the Main Path, as it turns generally toward the northwest through a second-growth forest of broadleaf trees interspersed with white pine, the trail surface has been degraded somewhat due to erosion. At 1.1 mi., the White Birch Path enters from the right within a powerline crossing. Shortly thereafter, the Main Path crosses onto city of Fitchburg Northern Watershed land at an open metal gate, and progresses nearly level through a timber harvesting clearing that took place several years ago, until it reaches Ashby West Rd. at 1.5 mi. This last portion is also described under the Northern Watershed Trails – Main Path.



Figure 25 Main Path

7.4.8 Pigpen Path

Owner: Mass Audubon

Trailhead: Intersection of Main Path with Swamp Path and behind the Highlands Building of UMass Memorial - HealthAlliance-Clinton Hospital (Burbank). Parking: Kiosk parking lot, to

the right of the Hospital's Mechanic St. entrance, 275 Nichols Rd., Fitchburg. From that address, bear right to the northern end of the parking lot to find the Mass Audubon kiosk.

Length: 0.5 mi.

Difficulty: Moderate

Accessibility: Not wheelchair accessible

Surface: Forest soils. Some significant erosion near and within the area known as "the Pigpen"

Trail description: Begin at the kiosk by following the Main Path a short distance. After entering the woods, take the path on the left (west) up the hill, which is the Burbank Connector. Continuing up the hill, bear left at each of two intersections, which are each shortcuts that connect to the Hemlock Hill Path farther along. At 0.2 mi. from the Main Path, and just north of the Highlands Building of UMass Memorial - HealthAlliance-Clinton Hospital (Burbank) the Hemlock Hill Path and Pigpen Path each turn to the right. Of these two trails, the trail that is further to the west (left) is the Pigpen Path, which begins by heading to the northwest. In 150 yards, an informal spur trail on the left leads south to the lawn and garden behind the Highlands Building. Pigpen Path bends further northwest and is level, becomes increasingly steeper within the actual "Pigpen," then descends toward the Main Path. The virtual absence of undergrowth under the mature Eastern Hemlocks offers a significantly different experience while traveling this complex of trails. At 0.3 mi., Laurel Path enters left from the southwest and in another 150 yards Hemlock Hill Path returns to the Pigpen Path from the east. After another 0.1 mi., the upper portion of Lightning Path leads sharply up to the west, offering a route to the Pipeline Path system of trails and Flat Rock Rd. Path. Over its final 0.1 mi., Pigpen Path descends to its terminus at the Main Path.



Figure 26 Pigpen Path

7.4.9 Pipeline Path

Owner: Mass Audubon

Trailhead: 0.2 mi. on Flat Rock Path from CCA's Flat Rock Rd. kiosk

Length: 0.9 mi.

Difficulty: Easy

Accessibility: Not wheelchair accessible

Surface: Compacted forest soils

Trail description: The Pipeline Path route follows a buried drinking water pipeline that runs from Scott Reservoir to Overlook Reservoir. Six-inch square granite markers can be seen projecting up into the treadway that marks the pipeline in several places. From the trailhead, walk north 0.2 mi. on Flat Rock Rd. Path, and turn right onto Pipeline Path. At 100 yds. a short

path bears left for 0.3 mi., avoids what is frequently a wet area on the Pipeline Path, and returns to the Pipeline Path a little further. Just beyond, at 0.4 mi., the Lightning Path exits to the east, leading down to the Pigpen Path. The Pipeline Path remains level to its intersection with Scott Rd. Path. Because when emplaced, the pipeline itself was covered by large boulders in the fill, gaps within them have offered habitat for fox dens and for other animals.

7.4.10 Scott Road Path

Owner: Mass Audubon

Trailhead: Once upon a time, Scott Rd. was a continuous public way across the northern portion of what is now the Flat Rock Wildlife Sanctuary, but now the entire central portion is closed to traffic, so there are two dead-end roads named Scott Rd. at either end, with a trailhead at each end. At the west end of the trail, there is space for one car at the end of Scott Rd. on the left (see Northern Watershed Trails – Hartwell Cemetery Loop Trail). Do not block access to the resident’s driveway. At the east end of the trail, there is no parking available.

Length: 0.7 mi.

Difficulty: Easy to moderate

Accessibility: Not wheelchair accessible

Surface: Rocky surface

Trail description: From the east, past the intersection of White Birch Path, Scott Rd. Path rises to the west intersecting the Main Path after 0.1 mi. In 0.2 mi., a link goes off to the north past a cellar hole to connect with the Main Path. After another 0.2 mi. it crosses Pipeline Path and 0.1 mi. later Flat Rock Rd. Path enters from the south. There is a dug well just a few feet from the intersection with Flat Rock Rd. Path. Scott Rd. Path continues onto the city’s Northern Watershed land up to where it encounters the paved portion of Scott Rd. at a private residence (west trailhead).

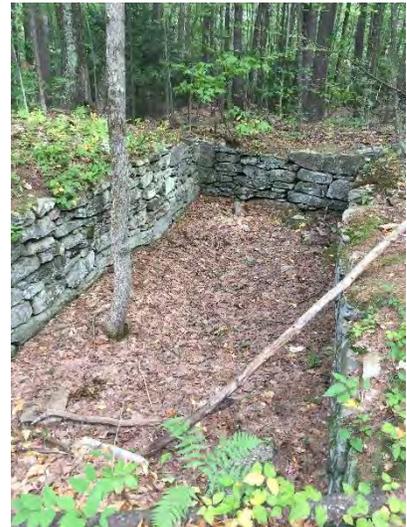


Figure 27 Home site by Scott Road Path

7.4.11 Swamp Path

Owner: Mass Audubon

Trailhead: From the parking area at the Hospital, Swamp Path begins 0.3 mi. up the Main Path. Parking is at the Main Path parking lot (at the Hospital kiosk).

Length: Almost 0.4 mi. from northern end of Swamp Path around to southern terminus of Swamp Path back onto Main Path

Difficulty: Easy, to moderate along the northern portion

Accessibility: Not accessible

Surface: Compacted forest soils

Trail description: From the Trailhead, Swamp Path begins 0.3 mi. up the Main Path. A loop from the hospital kiosk parking lot, right onto Swamp Path, and returning via the Main Path

makes a fine ~ 1 mi. walk. It progresses from a mature White Pine/Eastern Hemlock forest along the Main Path to a kettle hole shrub and sphagnum moss bog/swamp along Swamp Path, and back along the Main Path to the starting point. Note: A discontinued path may be seen on the right when you reach the swamp. Just north of the bog, at least three short connections go NE and formerly connected with another discontinued path, located a short distance to the east and parallel to the Swamp Path. Please stay on the Swamp Path, as the discontinued paths formerly known as the Crocker Path and the Bigelow Path both lead to Crocker Elementary School, which is off-limits from the Sanctuary.

7.4.12 The Bald Path

Owner: Mass Audubon

Trailhead: North end of the paved portion of Flat Rock Rd. at the CCA kiosk

Length: 1/4 mi.

Difficulty: Moderate

Accessibility: Not accessible

Surface: Compacted forest soils

Trail description: The Bald Path was formerly known as the Hill Path, for its hilly topography. The Bald Path begins on Flat Rock Rd. Path, 1/3 mi. from the trailhead. Walk up Flat Rock Rd. Path past the junction with Pipeline Path on the right. The Bald Path exits to the right approximately 0.1 mi. beyond Flat Rock Rd. Path's junction with Pipeline Path. If you arrive at "The Bald" (see Flat Rock Rd. Path), you will have traveled too far along Flat Rock Rd. Path. The Bald Path parallels a stone wall as it travels east, crossing the wall several times within a stand of northern hardwoods. After turning abruptly right, the Bald Path comes to what appears to be a tee, but a former path to the right has been abandoned. Instead, turn left at that tee, and continue along the Bald Path to the northeast for the second half of the trail, descending to its end at Pipeline Path.



Figure 28 Barred Owl seen from Bald Path

7.4.13 White Birch Path

Owner: Mass Audubon

Trailhead: End of Scott Rd. (eastern portion), or Main Path Parking Lot (at the Hospital kiosk). There is no parking available at the end of Scott Rd. (eastern portion).

Length: 0.45 mi.

Difficulty: Moderate

Accessibility: Not accessible, narrow and uphill

Surface: Firm natural soil exposed through undergrowth

Trail description: The White Birch Path offers an alternative to the Main Path that is in deciduous habitat in contrast to mature evergreen forest along the Main Path. The White Birch Path starts from Scott Rd. Path just east of Scott Rd. Path's intersection with the Main Path. After 200 yds., the Falulah Brook Trail branches to the right (northeast) and leads downhill, across a power line, and onto city of Fitchburg Northern Watershed land to Falulah Brook, where it continues upstream to the north (see trail description under Northern Watershed). The White Birch Path continues past the Falulah Brook Trail to the north and northwest, terminating at the Main Path just east of Mass Audubon's boundary with the city's Northern Watershed land.

7.5 Northern Watershed Trail Network

There are nine designated trails or trail loops in the Northern Watershed lands within the City of Fitchburg, comprising the longest network of publicly accessible trails within Fitchburg. (See Figure 31 on the following page for the map. Figure 32 shows the entry gates.) The five relatively short trails or trail loops in the southernmost portion of the Northern Watershed are in good to adequate condition, several being well marked with distinctive blazes. The four longer trails or trail loops leading north of Lovell Reservoir and across Rindge Rd. vary in their condition, being much less frequently used. Nonetheless none of the trails described here are difficult to follow for those who are familiar with them or somewhat adventurous. Wayfinding signage is needed at selected locations such as at the major intersections, as well as at a few of the more remote trail intersections to assist those without prior familiarity. Otherwise signage should be kept to a minimum to preserve the “backwoods” character of this area.



Figure 29 Trail in Northern Watershed

7.5.1 History and background on the Northern Watershed

The City of Fitchburg’s Northern Drinking Water Supply Watershed lands comprise approximately 2,000 acres, approximately two-thirds within Fitchburg, and one-third within the Town of Ashby. The major reservoirs in the Fitchburg portion of the Northern Watershed, Lovell and Scott Reservoirs, including much of the forested land around them, have been owned by the City since the reservoir dams were built between 1880 and 1930. Until 2009, this property was officially off-limits to the public and posted as “No Trespassing.” Many of the wider trails were woods roads used by the City to provide access by Water Department crews for maintenance and patrol purposes, and infrequently for forest management. Within Fitchburg, fourteen steel Entry Gates along Rindge Rd. and Ashby West Rd. mark access points into the Northern Watershed. Several of those numbered gates (#6, 7, 13 and 14) are at trailheads that are described below, while other numbered gates (#10, 15 and 16) are not at trailheads. The accompanying map shows the locations of the Northern Watershed Entry Gates, and also shows the locations of seven steel gates in Fitchburg that are no longer



Figure 30 Stream in Northern Watershed

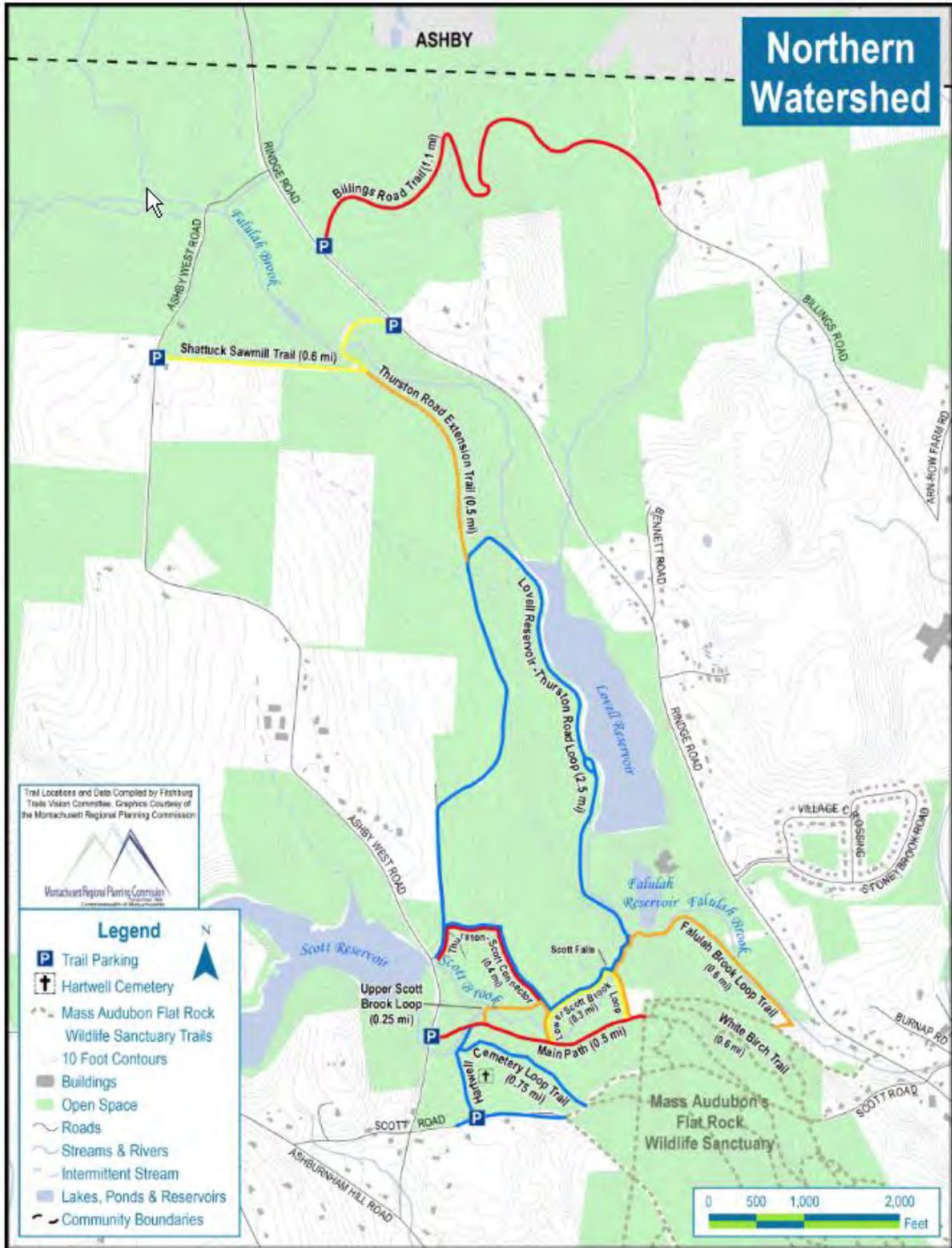


Figure 31 Northern Watershed Map

City of Fitchburg Northern Watershed Entry Gates

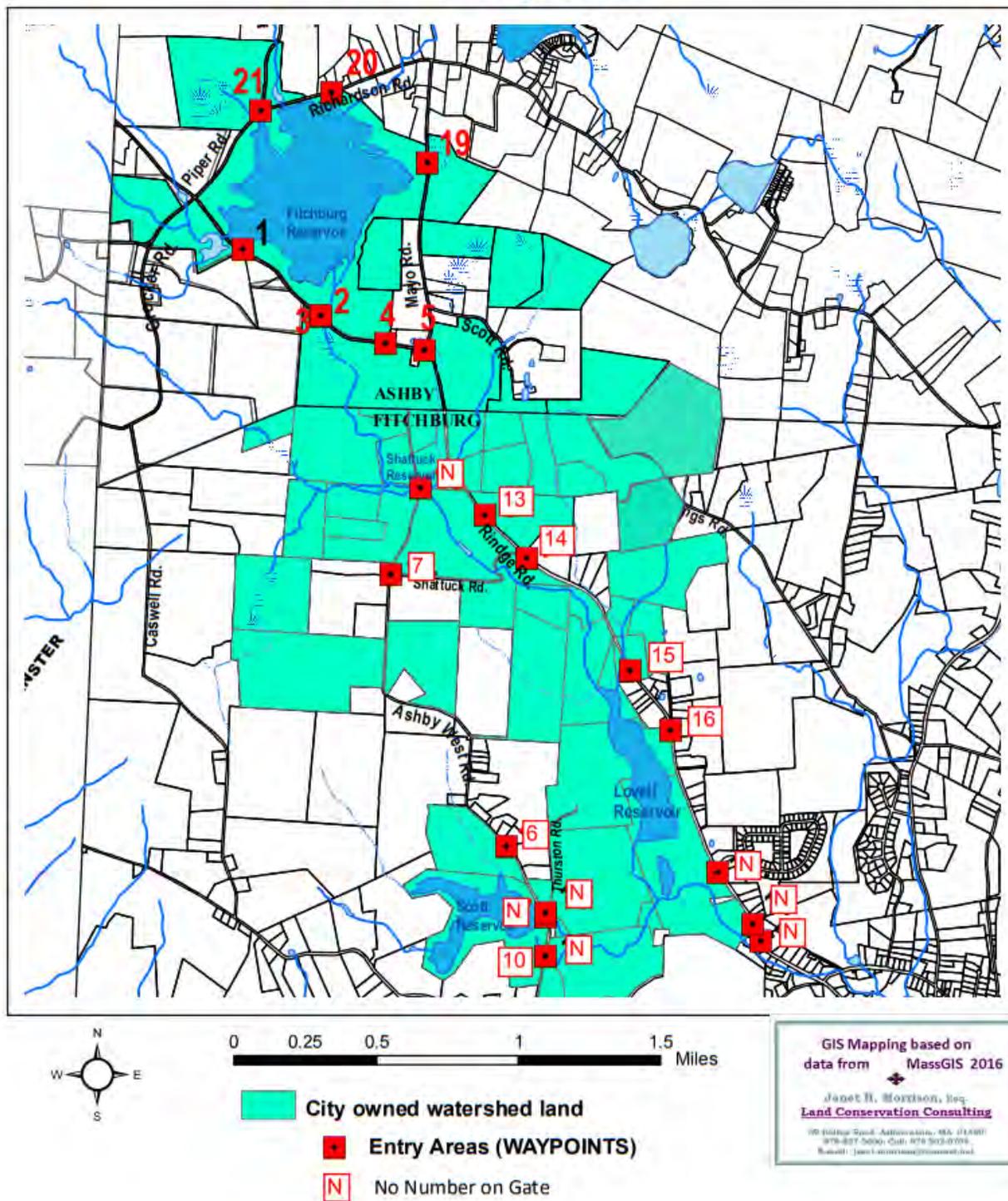


Figure 32 Northern Watershed map with gate numbers

numbered, including the gate at the trailhead to the Main Path, which parallels Scott Brook, and the gate at the trailhead to Thurston Rd. Please note that none of the seven gates depicted in Ashby are at trailheads. Furthermore, some of the gates shown in Ashby may no longer be numbered.

In June 2009, the Massachusetts DFW secured a CR from the City of Fitchburg to assure permanent protection of its northern drinking water supply watershed. The CR permanently protects the property's important wildlife habitat resources and provides quality non-motorized outdoor recreational opportunities for the general public, while maintaining a safe and reliable drinking water resource for the City. The City continues to own and manage the property consistent with these goals and in consultation with DFW. With the exception of a few designated areas (Lovell and Falulah Reservoirs, as well as their dams and the Scott Reservoir dam), the Northern Watershed lands in Fitchburg are now open to the general public for passive, non-motorized recreation. The City and DFW welcome the use by the general public of the existing trails, but do not favor the creation of new trails on this land.

7.5.2 General Rules

The following paragraphs are excerpts from the Rules and Regulations, the full text of which is available at www.ci.fitchburg.ma.us/DocumentCenter/View/2258:

- The City of Fitchburg's northern drinking water supply watershed is open to non-motorized outdoor recreational activities such as hiking, nature study, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, hunting, fishing, wildlife observation, mountain biking, horseback riding, orienteering, and similar uses. The City and DFW encourage the general public to enjoy this resource respectfully, keeping in mind that this land provides the drinking water for the City of Fitchburg. To protect this drinking water supply, and to respect others' use and enjoyment of this property, please follow these simple rules and regulations:
- Keep yourself and your pets (including dogs and horses) out of and off of all reservoirs and streams. No swimming, wading, boating, canoeing, kayaking, ice skating or other in-water or on-water activities are allowed.
- Keep away from and off of all dams, levies, spillways, water tanks and other water control and delivery structures, and respect all other areas posted to trespass by mutual agreement of DFW and the City.
- No motorized vehicles of any kind, including all-terrain or off-road vehicles, snowmobiles, dirt bikes, etc.
- No parking in front of gates.
- No camping or fires without written permission from the Water Department Superintendent.
- No alcoholic beverages.

- Follow all Massachusetts laws and regulations governing fishing.
- No ice fishing.
- No fishing in Lovell Reservoir.
- Shoreline fishing only in Scott Reservoir and Fitchburg Reservoir.
- Follow all Massachusetts laws and regulations governing hunting and trapping.
- No target practicing.

7.5.3 Baker Family Public Forest Reserve

In 2017 the City of Fitchburg and the Baker family signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) under which the 205 acres of city Water Dept. land that are situated on the west side of Ashby West Rd. between Falulah Brook on the north and the Soini and Hertel farms on the south are protected from timber harvesting through the year 2047. Fitchburg City Council designated this area as the “Baker Family Public Forest Reserve” to acknowledge the donation that the Baker family made to the city’s Water Dept. to compensate it for the timber harvesting income that it will not be able to derive during this 30-year period. The land, otherwise, remains subject to the DFW CR and is open to the public. It includes biodiverse, relatively mature forest. There is a trail on this portion of the Northern Watershed accessible from Ashby West Rd. that begins about 200 feet to the north of Gate #7 (the western trailhead of the Shattuck Sawmill Trail, described below), but since it is a relatively short, out-and-back trail that leads to several parcels of private land, and since the entrance to it is on private land, it is not featured within the Northern Watershed Trail System.

7.5.4 Overall description of trail system

The US Forest Service has developed a standard trail classification system, modified by Massachusetts DCR, (See Table 1, page 18) that categorizes trails from a Class 1 (back country, primitive trails) to Category 5 (highly developed, accessible trails). Using this five-category system, the Northern Watershed trail network can, in general, be categorized as Class 2 trails. Class 2 trails have treads that are discernible and continuous, but narrow and rough. The exceptions, which are Class 3, are:

- a) the Main Path that begins at an Entry Gate along Ashby West Rd., 0.4 mi. from junction with Ashburnham Hill Rd., and leads to the NW end of Mass Audubon’s Flat Rock Sanctuary Main Path, and



Figure 33 Damage from unauthorized ATV use in the Baker Family Public Forest Reserve

- b) Shattuck Rd., which begins at Entry Gate #7 along Ashby West Rd. and ends at Falulah Brook. Class 3 trails are natural trails with some development of the trail, minor protrusions and a tread width of 24-36 inches. The total mileage of the trail system is approximately 8 mi. with some trails being easy but most requiring a moderate level of physical exertion to enjoy. Some of the words that can be used to describe the current trail network are “beautiful,” “remote,” and “neglected.”

Current conditions in general include:

- Insufficient, inconsistent and confusing trail marking (no wayfinding signage, and no assurance blazes except for several of the southernmost trails)
- Several trail corridors need brushing back and some need downed trees to be removed or hazard trees dropped
- Several unsafe, too challenging, or degraded “fall line” trail sections need to be re-routed
- Some rather challenging stream crossings
- Clear evidence on the Main Path, and on the Billings Rd. Trail of recent, unauthorized (illegal) ATV use, which in wetter locations has degraded the trail tread.



Figure 34 ATV damage on Billings Rd. Trail

Future recommendations for the trail network (and general recommendations for the trail system as a whole:

- Augment the existing trail marking (assurance blazing) with directional signage where needed at major intersections
- Provide simple wayfinding signage at selected locations (major trail intersections) on those trails that currently have no trail marking, where it is needed
- Develop a map panel and mount on a trailhead kiosk at the entrance to the Main Path
- Consider an interpretive experience for the user with signage, self-guided brochure, and use of QR codes to provide access to historic, cultural and natural resource information
- Clear trail corridors (encroaching brush and downed trees) as needed
- Address “fall-line” trail sections (trail rerouting or hardening of treadway) for the identified areas
- Create biannual trail maintenance plan and implement

7.5.5 Northern Watershed trail descriptions and assessments

The following narrative provides basic trail information for five loop trails and four linear trails. (See Figure 31) The descriptions are meant to give a general idea of the trail and its location. The assessment is an overall view of the condition of that trail. None of the write-ups have detailed materials and labor estimates for implementing the recommendations to improve or enhance the trail.

7.5.5.1 Main Path

Owner: City of Fitchburg

History: The Main Path is an old road leading from Ashby West Rd. to the Main Path on Mass Audubon's Flat Rock Wildlife Sanctuary, and ending at the parking area located at the northeast corner of the UMass Memorial - HealthAlliance-Clinton Hospital (Burbank) campus. Prior to being donated to Mass Audubon, the 326-acre Flat Rock Wildlife Sanctuary was a private park with carriage trails. It is not known whether at one time this trail was open to through traffic.

Trailhead: Un-numbered steel gate located on the east side of Ashby West Rd., 0.20 mi. north of its junction with Ashburnham Hill Rd. This trailhead is also 0.14 mi. south of the bridge along Ashby West Rd. that crosses Scott Reservoir's upper outlet, which is just above the Scott Reservoir dam. Note: This is not to be confused with the lower outlet of Scott Reservoir, which lies in a low point along Ashby West Rd. ~240 ft. south of the trailhead. To either side of Ashby West Rd. above the steel gate, there is room for approximately six vehicles to park on the roadside. Do not block the gate.

Trail class: The Main Trail is a Class 3 or better natural, double track, pedestrian trail. Motorized vehicle use is prohibited.

Length: ~0.4 mi.

Difficulty: Easy

Accessibility: Not accessible

Surface: Level, firm, and stable woods road

Trail description: The Main Path is a short linear trail that begins at the above-mentioned gate. It is an old road, marked by triangular blazes. At its easterly end, signs are posted where it enters Mass Audubon Flat Rock Wildlife Sanctuary. The trail offers very pleasant views of woods and Scott Brook.

Current trail condition: Good

Recommendations: A general kiosk is needed at the trailhead, with a map showing the Northern Watershed trail network and connections to Mass Audubon Flat Rock Wildlife Sanctuary. Main Path had recently been degraded by ATVs in places, so in spring 2018 the Water Dept. placed large boulders at the entrance to either side of the gate, which should greatly reduce ATV access.

7.5.5.2 Upper Scott Brook Loop

Owner: City of Fitchburg

History: Portions of this trail were probably created within the past several decades by runners or mountain bikers. The two wooden bridges across Scott Brook were built ~2010 by the Student Conservation Association (SCA).

Trailhead: Approx. 0.1 mi. east of the Main Path trailhead, a Day-Glo orange-and-white plastic 55-gal. drum currently marks where this trail leaves the Main Path. Parking at the Main Path trailhead.

Trail class: Class 2 single-track natural trails

Distance: ~0.25 mi. (the loop is 0.4 mi. including Main Path portion)

Difficulty: Easy to Moderate

Accessibility: Not accessible

Surface: Natural woodland surface

Trail description: This is a short loop trail that begins at a Day-Glo orange-and-white plastic 55-gallon drum. It is currently not blazed. Within ~50 ft., the trail crosses Scott Brook at a point where the brook appears to emerge from underground, making the stream



Figure 35 One of two bridges built by the SCA across Scott Brook

crossing easy. The trail then bears left (east) along the north side of Scott Brook (don't try to recross Scott Brook at the old, fallen-down bridge). Within 650 ft. the trail meets the Thurston-Scott Brook Connector Trail at a Tee. Turn right (ESE), following single-dot blazes for a short distance (170 ft.) to another Tee. Then bear right (south) onto a trail marked by two-dot blazes. This trail soon crosses Scott Brook over a wooden bridge built ~2010, and then climbs steeply for a short distance up to the Main Path. To return to the parking area, turn right (west) onto the Main Path. This easy-to-reach loop trail offers very pleasant views of woods and Scott Brook.

Current trail condition: Good

Recommendations:

- 1) Wayfinding signage is needed at the beginning of the trail. The other main intersections are easily identified by the change in blazes.
- 2) A few assurance blazes (recommend single-dot blazes) are needed between the trail's beginning and its intersection with the Thurston Rd-Scott Brook Connector.

7.5.5.3 Lower Scott Brook Loop

Owner: City of Fitchburg

History: Various portions of this trail were probably created within the past several decades by runners or mountain bikers. The two wooden bridges across Scott Brook were built ~2010 by the SCA.

Trailhead: Approx. 0.25 mi. east of the Main Path trailhead. Park at the Main Path trailhead

Trail class: Class 2 single-track natural trails

Length: 0.3 mi. (loop is 0.5 mi. including Main Path portion)

Difficulty: Easy to Moderate

Accessibility: Not accessible

Surface: Mostly firm natural tread, some stones/rocks and roots on the trail treadway, but nothing to stop the user's progress or significantly impact their hiking experience.

Trail description: This is a relatively short loop trail that begins on the Main Path 0.25 mi. from the Main Path trailhead. Take a left (north) onto a smaller trail (marked with two-dot blazes) down a steep bank. Within ~100 ft. this trail crosses Scott Brook over a wooden plank bridge with a railing, built ~2010 by the SCA. Immediately after crossing Scott Brook, the trail turns briefly to the left and climbs the other bank. Within ~250 ft. the trail meets the Thurston Rd.-Scott Brook Connector Trail at a Tee. Turn right (ENE), continuing to follow the two-dot blazes. Trail is interesting, irregular up-and-down terrain, with large hemlocks, beech, red maple, red oak and white pine. As it draws nearer to Scott Brook, it crosses an old stone wall and soon comes to a second wooden plank bridge with railing across Scott Brook, also built ~2010 by the SCA. Just below this bridge is Scott Brook Falls (also known as simply Scott Falls, “The Chasm” or “The Gorge”), one of the most interesting geologic features within all of Fitchburg. At Scott Falls, the brook plunges through a right-angle cleft between two house-sized ledges. **CAUTION:** dangerous drops and icy rocks in the winter! Take care while climbing to the various overlooks. The two-dot trail climbs up from the brook and meets the one-dot trail within ~50 ft. Take a right (south) and follow the one-dot trail uphill along a service road to the Main Path. To return to the parking area, turn right (west) onto the Main Path, marked by triangular blazes, back to the point of origin. This loop trail offers very pleasant views of woods and Scott Brook. The mix of older, mature trees, irregular terrain, and dramatic, rocky Scott Falls makes this a very rewarding short trail.



Figure 36 Scott Falls also known as The Chasm

Current trail conditions: Good. The treadway along the smaller trails close to Scott Falls has frequent small stone, rock and root protrusions, but consistent with conditions expected for a Class 2 trail and which do not deter the hiker’s progress.

Recommendations:

- 1) Wayfinding signage is needed at the beginning of the trail, where it departs from the Main Path, at its intersection with the Falulah Brook loop trail, and at its easterly junction where it rejoins the Main Path.
- 2) Additional assurance blazing (single-dot) is needed from Scott Falls to its easterly junction where it rejoins the Main Path.

7.5.5.4 Falulah Brook Loop Trail

Owner: City of Fitchburg, Mass Audubon

History: Some of the rocky pools along Falulah Brook were popular swimming holes in the years before the City built public swimming pools, and are mentioned in Doris Kirkpatrick’s

classic history of Fitchburg, The City and the River, p.32. Mary D. Hartwell's gift of the 4-acre Falulah Park to the City of Fitchburg in 1895 was in memory of her brother William E. Hartwell, who gave the brook the name "Falulah." It derives from the heroine of a widely-read romantic novel of the mid-1850s, "Kaloolah." According to Mary D. Hartwell, her brother, while playing in the pools, dropped the "K" and substituted "F" for Fitchburg, naming the brook "Falulah." Later a rustic Cub Scout cabin was built next to the main pool, the concrete piers of which are still evident today.



Figure 37 Falulah Brook along Loop Trail

Graffiti (tagging) has recently marred the rocks beside one of the finest pools.

Trailhead: Begins on the Main Path, ≈200 ft. west of the entrance to Mass Audubon Flat Rock Wildlife Sanctuary. Refer to either the Main Path or Hartwell Cemetery Loop Trail for parking.

Trail class: Class 2, natural, single-track, pedestrian trail. Motorized use is prohibited

Length: 1.25 mi. including Main Path portion

Difficulty: Easy to Moderate

Accessibility: Not accessible

Surface: Natural, firm soil with some minor rock and stone protrusions, but relatively level except for the portion immediately below Scott Falls

Trail description: This is a relatively easy woodland loop trail that begins on the Northern Watershed lands, follows Scott Brook to Falulah Brook, and then along Falulah Brook past a series of cascades and rocky pools, and returns via Mass Audubon Flat Rock Wildlife Sanctuary. The trail begins on the Main Path, just to the west of the Mass Audubon gate. Follow the one-dot blazes, beginning along a service road and entering the woods to the north to Scott Falls. Without crossing Scott Brook, take a right downstream (NE), continuing to follow the one-dot blazes to where the Lovell Reservoir Loop Trail departs on the left. A few feet below this point, Scott Brook empties into Falulah Brook, which immediately flows into the small Falulah Reservoir. The City of Fitchburg Water Treatment Plant (FWWTP) complex is visible just across Falulah Reservoir. Continue downstream to the right (east), following the very well-marked one-dot blazes along the south and west bank of Falulah Brook. Note: Water Dept. signage prohibits crossing Falulah Brook here. Stay on the south/southwest bank. The one-dot



Figure 38 Graffiti on rocks beside a pool in Falulah Brook

blazes continue down the brook for ~0.5 mi. Near a rocky pool, at an old Cub Scout camp (concrete piers still evident), the trail turns sharp right (west) and uphill (away from the brook) and within ~200 ft. converges onto the power line. Take a left (SE) and follow the one-dot blazes along the power line to the SE for ~250 ft., to where a side trail marked by one-dot blazes climbs up to the right (south) onto a short, unnamed Mass Audubon trail. This trail proceeds ~0.1 mi. to an intersection with the White Birch Trail (on the right). Take the White Birch Trail ~1/2 mi. WNW to its end, then bear right (west) onto the Main Path to the point of origin.

Current trail conditions: Good. The tread width varies from single track width (12"-24") to woods road width (96"). Condition along the short power line portion is fair due to poor drainage, but it is not difficult to bypass the wet patch.

Recommendations: Most sections of the trail loop have adequate assurance blazing (except as noted above), but simple wayfinding signage is needed at the trail intersection at Scott Falls. Simple wayfinding signage is also needed where the trail passes between City land and Mass Audubon land. Graffiti on rocks by one of the finest pools (as noted above, see Figure 38) needs to be removed, such as by carefully removing it by soda-blasting.

7.5.5.5 Hartwell Cemetery Loop Trail

Owner: City of Fitchburg, Mass Audubon (adjoins trail along one stretch)

History: Unknown at this time. Hartwell Cemetery is one of Fitchburg's smallest historic cemeteries, with only three graves (dated from 1806 to 1850). Respect the gravesites! There is a buried water pipeline originating at Scott Reservoir and leading to Overlook Reservoir underneath the Pipeline Path.

Trailhead: End of Scott Rd., which crosses Ashby West Rd. just north of its junction with Ashburnham Hill Rd.

Note: There are other roads named Scott Rd. in Fitchburg, so avoid reliance on GPS to find this location.

Trail class: Class 2, natural, single-track, pedestrian trail. Motorized use is prohibited, as is mountain biking and equestrian use on Mass Audubon property, which abuts this trail to the south of Scott Rd.

Length: ~0.75 mi.

Difficulty: Easy to Moderate

Accessibility: Not accessible

Surface: Natural. Typical conditions on a Class 2 trail

Trail description: This wooded loop trail begins at the end of the paved portion of Scott Rd., just past the last (most easterly) house, where there is one parking space on the left – do not block the residents' access. Follow former Scott Rd., which is an old woods road, downhill to the east. In ~0.15 mi., signs are encountered showing the boundary with Mass Audubon Flat



Figure 39 Hartwell Cemetery

Rock Wildlife Sanctuary land, which lies ahead (to the east). There, at a 4-way trail intersection (with signed Flat Rock Rd. continuing straight ahead and signed Scott Rd. to the left), an old stone well is visible a few feet to the right of the trail. Take Scott Rd. to the left (ENE) – it is currently marked with blue tags. At this point, Mass Audubon land is on the right, and the City’s Northern Watershed lands are on the left. In a very short distance, the Scott Rd. trail crosses the Pipeline Path. Turn sharp left (NW) onto the Pipeline Path, re-entering the Northern Watershed lands. Follow this trail NW ~0.3 mi. The trail bears to the left (west) and comes to a Tee. Note: If one were to take a right (NE), the Northern Watershed Main Path would be encountered within a few hundred feet. Instead, take the left (south) uphill. Hartwell Cemetery, which is bordered by stone walls, is located on the top of a small knoll on the left (east side) of the trail. It has only three gravestones (1806-1850), in good condition. Continue uphill (south) ~0.1 mi. to paved Scott Rd. Turn left (east) on Scott Rd. ~0.1 mi. to the starting point (the end of the paved portion of Scott Rd).

Alternatively, one can begin this trail from Ashby West Rd. From the Main Gate, proceed E ~0.1 mi., and take a right onto a smaller trail to the SE. The Tee described in the loop above is encountered within a few hundred feet.

Current trail conditions: Good

Recommendations: There is almost no assurance blazing on this trail, but it is a relatively short, simple loop that is easy to find, so blazing is not judged necessary. Nor is wayfinding signage deemed to be needed, other than the signs at the entrance to Mass Audubon Flat Rock Wildlife Sanctuary that identify their trails.

7.5.5.6 Thurston Rd.-Scott Brook Connector

Owner: City of Fitchburg

History: Thurston Rd. leads to the former Thurston Homestead, which was the elegant residence of a well-known family in the 1800s, including Cyrus Thurston, the “Singing Master” depicted in *The City and the River* by Doris Kirkpatrick. The Fitchburg Historical Society conducted an archaeological dig at the homestead in approximately 2007. The former homestead is on the Thurston Rd. trail, not on the Thurston Rd.-Scott Brook Connector Trail. There is, however, an old cellar hole along this trail, with an unknown history. Scott Reservoir was built by the city of Fitchburg in 1880.

Trailhead: This trail begins at an unnumbered gate on the east side of Ashby West Rd., next to the Scott Reservoir dam and bridge. A City of Fitchburg road sign designates this former road as “Thurston Rd.” There are spaces for two cars, one on either side of the gate. Do not block the gate, as it is used by the Water Department to access the large water storage tank.

Trail class: Class 2; mountain biking and equestrian use allowed; motorized use not allowed anywhere on the Northern Watershed lands.

Length: ~0.4 mi.

Difficulty: Moderate

Accessibility: Not handicapped accessible; challenging for someone with mobility impairments

Surface: Natural tread, except for the short distance across an old field

Trail description: This is a connector trail that is located primarily in the mixed pine/hardwood woodlands to the east of Scott Reservoir. It begins at the above-mentioned gate. In several hundred feet, a little north of where an access road (access prohibited) leads SE to a Water Dept. Storage Tank, the trail crosses a small, currently unmowed grassy field to the right (east). Immediately, the trail enters the woods along an old woods road bordered by a stone wall, past an old cellar hole on the left. As the road begins to plunge downhill, turn 90 degrees onto the side trail on the right. Note: The trail that goes straight ahead is not a hiking trail. It is a logging road growing up to brambles, a confusing route with many offshoots. Instead, take the side trail, which is blazed with single-dot blazes, and follow it gently downhill until it ends at a Tee, at which point it intersects with the Lower Scott Brook Trail (double-dot blazes).

Current trail conditions: Fair - The upper portion of the trail lacks adequate blazing and trail signage, and several sections of trail corridor are experiencing encroachment from the growth of grass, brush, brambles and thickets. The lower portion of the trail is in Good condition.

Recommendations:

- 1) Mow the corridor across the grassy field with a bush hog to restore passage, and then maintain it.
- 2) Add directional signage at the 90 degree trail intersection described above.
- 3) Clear brushy encroachment from trail corridor from that point to the intersection with the Upper Scott Brook Trail.
- 4) With a chainsaw, clear a couple of large trees that have fallen across the trail along that corridor.

7.5.5.7 Lovell Reservoir-Thurston Road Loop Trail

Owner: City of Fitchburg

History: Refer to the History section for the Thurston Rd.-Scott Brook Connector above. The City of Fitchburg Water Department began construction of Lovell Reservoir in 1927 and completed it in 1929 as part of its network of water supply reservoirs. Runners and mountain bikers appear to have informally adopted this trail. In recent years, the trails in the Northern Watershed have undergone little or no maintenance by the city.

Trailhead: Ashby West Rd. at the gate to Thurston Rd., across from the Scott Reservoir Dam

Trail class: Class 2 and 3

Length: 2.5 mi.

Difficulty: Moderate – due to grade of trail and rough conditions along a few stretches of the trail.



Figure 40 Lovell Reservoir-Thurston Road Loop Trail

Accessibility: Not handicapped accessible; difficult for those with mobility impairments

Surface: Mostly natural conditions

Trail description: This loop trail begins at a steel gate with a street sign, Thurston Rd. Follow the entire Thurston-Scott Brook Connector Trail (described above) to its end, then turn left onto the Lower Scott Brook Trail (two-dot blazes) to Scott Falls. From Scott Falls, follow the Falulah Brook Trail (one-dot blazes) downstream along Scott Brook. Immediately before Scott Brook empties into Falulah Brook, step across rocks to cross Scott Brook (there is no bridge there anymore) and climb a small side trail uphill (to the NW). As the trail ascends, it follows roughly parallel and to the west of the prominent Lovell Reservoir spillway outlet channel. The main Lovell Reservoir dam has a 78-ft long concrete spillway, with a 450-ft long concrete and stone channel serving as the outlet. The falls over the concrete portion of the spillway stream are dramatic during high water. Once the trail has ascended above the level of the top of the spillway, much of Lovell Reservoir's earthfill dam, which is 800 ft. long and 80 ft. high, and is oriented east-west, is visible looking south across the water. Follow the trail north about 500 ft. until it diverges, with the right branch (that closer to the reservoir) dropping steeply downhill and the left branch remaining fairly level. Avoid the right branch, as its steep drop is often slippery. The two branches reconverge soon anyway. The trail soon approaches and runs north along the western shoreline of the reservoir, affording nice views. Along the eastern side of the reservoir (across the water from the trail), a 1,600-ft. long earthen dike extends north of the dam for approximately the entire southern half of the reservoir. The trail crosses several small streams that empty into the reservoir, but the unbridged crossings are not difficult. As one proceeds north, the views across Lovell Reservoir and looking south toward the knob of Hemlock Hill (which lies within Mass Audubon Flat Rock Wildlife Sanctuary) are increasingly beautiful and give this trail a rather remote feel to it. After passing the northern end of Lovell Reservoir, the trail veers uphill to the NW, soon turns to the SW, and arrives at a Tee with Thurston Rd. This is the northern terminus of the loop trail. Turn left (south) on Thurston Rd., which soon crosses a sizeable stream that runs through a nice small gorge. South of the stream, Thurston Rd., which is a fairly wide and unmistakable old woods road, has an abandoned cast iron waterline buried beneath much of its length. Along a few stretches the trail can become ponded due to poor drainage. Continuing south, one arrives at the former Thurston Homestead, with cellar holes for both the former barn and house. Continuing past the former homestead, the trail terminates at the starting point on Ashby West Rd.

Note: If you turn right at the Tee with Thurston Rd. mentioned above, the trail (denoted on the map as the Thurston Rd. Extension) continues to the north for almost a half a mile until it meets the Shattuck Sawmill Trail.

Current trail conditions: Fair to Good – Although the trail lacks assurance blazing and directional signs, it is relatively easy to follow.

Recommendations:

- 1) Provide wayfinding signage at the point where Thurston Rd. Extension begins, as described above.

- 2) Improve the drainage on the stretch just south of this point, where water tends to pond in several places during wet periods.
- 3) To preserve the somewhat wild feel to the trail, do not add blazes or provide additional wayfinding signage other than at the point where the trail crosses Scott Brook (just upstream of Falulah Brook, see above).

7.5.5.8 Shattuck Sawmill Trail

Owner: City of Fitchburg

History: All that remains of Shattuck Sawmill is some impressive stonework where the mill stood, just below the remains of a small mill pond on Falulah Brook. Uphill and to the west of the sawmill site, just off the road, is the cellar hole of a home that was occupied by a school teacher until a major forest fire swept through the area in the late 1940s and destroyed it.

Trailhead: West end: Ashby West Rd. and Shattuck Rd. at Gate #7. There is parking for a single car without blocking the gate. East end: Rindge Rd. at Gate #14. There is sufficient parking on the side of Rindge Rd. for several cars. Do not block the gate.

Trail class: Class 3

Length: 0.6 mi.

Difficulty: Moderate, due to steep sections

Accessibility: Not handicapped accessible and difficult for those with mobility impairments

Surface: Woods road and natural tread trail

Trail description: The west-end of this trail begins on Ashby West Rd. at Gate #7. Follow the old woods road (known as Shattuck Rd.), due east. The trail, which is bordered by stone walls and woods on both sides, drops down, crosses an intermittent stream, and rises again, passing an old cellar hole on the left, which marks a home that was destroyed by fire in the 1940s. At about 0.4 mi. from the starting point, the trail narrows and descends to a Tee. The left turn onto a woods road drops downhill, quickly arriving at the former Shattuck Sawmill location.

(Note: The right turn follows south along the waterline trail, denoted on the trail map as the “Thurston Rd. Extension,”

which becomes “Thurston Rd.” and joins the Lovell Reservoir-Thurston Rd. Loop Trail.) At the former Shattuck Sawmill site, carefully cross Falulah Brook on a light footbridge recently built by runners or mountain bikers. Falulah Brook descends towards the SE from this point through a relatively steep-walled valley. Falulah Brook is one of two cold-water streams in Fitchburg. The trail climbs the NE bank above Falulah Brook, bears to the right (east), and soon ends at Rindge Rd. at Gate #14.

Current trail conditions: Good

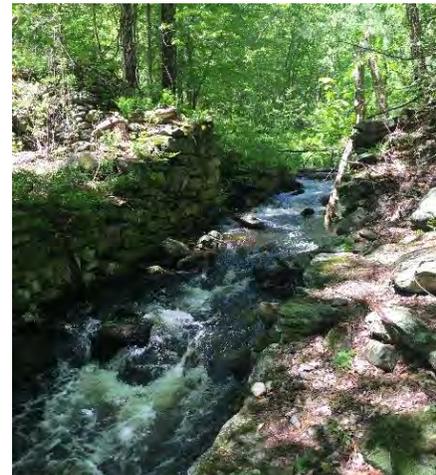


Figure 41 Site of former Shattuck Sawmill

Recommendations:

- 1) Wayfinding signage needed at the Tee described above
- 2) Need to determine whether the rather lightly-constructed footbridge across Falulah Brook next to the former sawmill is safe.

7.5.5.9 Billings Road Trail

Owner: City of Fitchburg

Trailhead: West end: Rindge Rd. at Gate #13. There is parking for two vehicles without blocking the gate. East end: NW end of Billings Rd. Park along the west side of Billings Rd., without blocking residents' access.

Trail class: Class 2 and 3

Length: 1.1 mi.

Difficulty: Moderate, due to a few somewhat steep sections

Accessibility: Not handicapped accessible and difficult for those with mobility impairments

Surface: Woods road and natural tread trail

Trail description: This is a very attractive trail with interesting hilly topography. The west end of the trail begins on Rindge Rd. at Gate #3. Follow the old woods road, initially to the NNE. In about 800 ft. the trail forks. Note: The trail that goes straight ahead continues N to the Ashby town line, coming out behind an active, privately owned farm at the end of Scott Rd. in Ashby, and is thus not recommended. The trail to the right (initially to the east) bears gradually to the left (to the north) and crosses a small stream. There, the trail forks. Note: The trail that continues straight ahead and uphill (to the N) has been degraded by recent unauthorized ATV use, and is not recommended. Take the fork to the right, downhill (SE), which is in better condition. It initially follows the east side of the small stream valley, to the SE and E, and then switches sharply back to the NW and climbs uphill to a Tee. Take the trail to the right, which descends gradually. Bear right at another Tee. The trail passes two old foundations, one on either side of the trail. At a major trail intersection, the trail to the left (heading toward the NE) is not recommended as it soon enters a large wetland with poor tread. Take the main trail to the right (to the East), which climbs gradually up to high, glacially-scoured ledges with low-bush blueberries. Continuing to the SE, the trail descends and ends at a gate next to the last house at the end of Billings Rd. A sign at this (eastern) trailhead indicates that the trail is on "Forest Legacy Conservation Land," which is owned by the City of Fitchburg.

Current trail conditions: Good

Recommendations:

- 1) Need to place boulders at points where ATVs may be entering the trail via a number of routes from Ashby to the north, to deter ATV use.
- 2) Signage at both ends of the trail should alert users that motorized vehicles are not permitted, and that violators may be prosecuted.

7.6 Parkhill Park Trail and Forest Hill Cemetery Loop

Owner: City of Fitchburg

Trailhead: Across from 228 Pratt Rd. Parking is available adjacent to the Trailhead off of Pratt Rd., adjacent to the Parkhill Park Bathhouse (28 spaces). Additional parking is available off Beech St. (70+ spaces). There is also parking at the corner of the cemetery at the Mt. Elam Rd. and Electric Ave. intersection. See Figure 44 for the map.

Trail class: Class 4

Length: 0.30 mi. one way

Difficulty: Easy

Accessibility: There are areas of heaving and washouts that need to be repaired to restore a uniform surface. Last 100 yards approaching Causeway St. have a slope that may be too steep for independent access for someone in a wheelchair.

Surface: Bituminous concrete

Trail description: The Parkhill Park Trail and Forest Hill Cemetery loop trail forms an integrated trail network as shown on the trail map, Figure 45. The Parkhill Park section begins as a designated bike path on Pratt Road and travels through Parkhill Park to Causeway St. This trail provides direct access to Memorial Middle School and the Lower Cleghorn neighborhood. The trail connects, via, sidewalks and crosswalks at Rollstone and Causeway Streets, to the 1.1 mi. paved pathway which loops around the Forest Hill Cemetery and is very popular with local residents.



Figure 42 Parkhill Park Trail and Forest Hill Cemetery



Figure 43 Entrance to Parkhill Park

The Forest Hill Cemetery loop also enables users to connect to Coggshall Park via a road crossing at Electric Ave. to either its Mt. Elam Rd. or Electric Ave. entrances. As described in Section 7.1 of this plan, Coggshall Park contains a large network of mostly forested trails.

The path through Parkhill is a mostly flat, asphalt pathway, a portion of which runs adjacent to Sand Brook. The brook at this point is channeled through a manmade rock-lined channel with some stone bridges and pools. These features are in some disrepair and are overgrown in many areas. These elements provide a unique and interesting element to the path. Because of its historic beauty and rural character in an urban setting, it would be very desirable to restore the

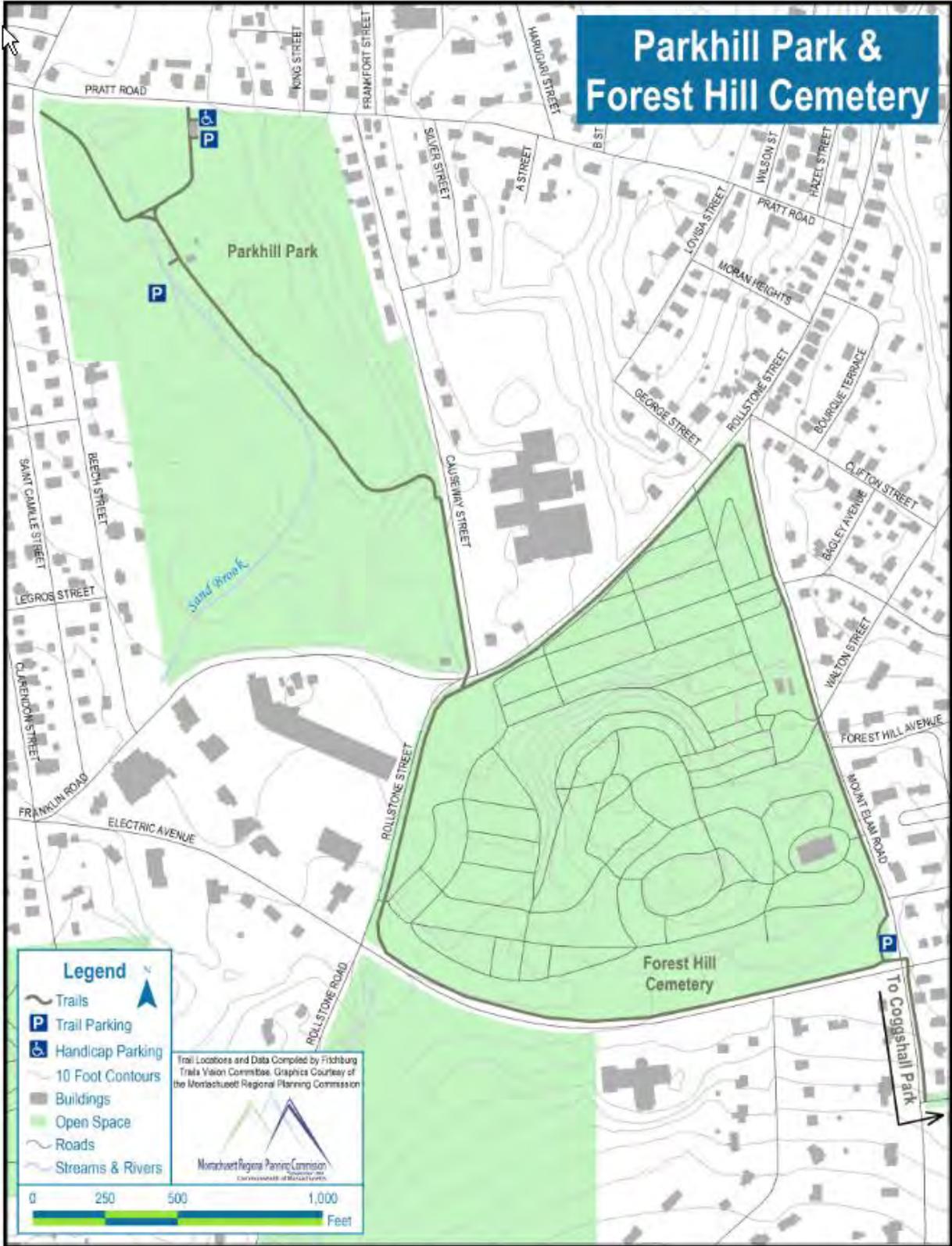


Figure 44 Map of Parkhill Park Trail and Forest Hill Cemetery Loop

dilapidated stonework, and thereby showcase the southern portion of the park. The path can also be accessed in two locations off Beech St.

Recommendations: Much of the stonework, including stone footbridges and stone-lined wading pools with small waterfalls along Sand Brook, all of which is believed to have been built by the Work Projects Administration in the 1930s, is deteriorating and needs to be repaired and updated. In addition, the side paths that used to cross Sand Brook and loop around through the adjacent forest are overgrown but



Figure 45 Stonework example at Parkhill Park

could be opened up and restored. This area could once again become an attractive picnic area for families. In places drainage would need to be designed and installed to make these paths accessible during wetter periods. A grant proposal to perform this work may attract substantial funding, since Parkhill Park is the second or third most highly visited park in the city, and this trail connects Memorial Middle School with the popular Parkhill Park playgrounds, Ryan C. Joubert Memorial Skate Park, and playing fields.

Signage at key connection points between the Parkhill Park Trail and the Forest Hill Cemetery Loop, as well as at Cogshall Park is recommended as a means of directing visitors unfamiliar with the area to the full network of interconnected trails available to them. The four connection points at which signage would be most useful are as follows:

- The corner of Electric Ave. and Mt. Elam Rd. pointing the way to the entrance of Cogshall Park;
- The entrance to Cogshall Park pointing the way to the Forest Hill Cemetery Loop and Parkhill Park Trail;
- Near the corner of Rollstone St. and Causeway St. pointing the way to the southern entrance to Parkhill Park Trail;
- At the southern entrance to Parkhill Park Trail pointing the way to the Forest Hill Cemetery Loop and Cogshall Park.

A single sign design with a map and accompanying arrow and a “You Are Here” designation would likely work well at all four proposed locations.

7.7 Sheldon Street Gateway Park

The following narrative provides basic trail information for two trails within Sheldon Street Gateway Park. The descriptions are meant to give a general idea of each trail and its location and the assessment is an overall view of the condition of that trail. See Figure 48.

7.7.1 Gateway Park Loop Trail

Owner: City of Fitchburg, Riverside Commons

History: The land for Gateway Park, a former brownfields site, was acquired in 2009 by The Trustees of Reservations with a grant from the Massachusetts' Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs' GCPP. In 2010, the land was gifted to the City through its Parks Commission and the GCPP awarded additional funding to the City for Park construction, along with design services. The City came to an agreement with the housing development across the river, Riverside Commons, to build and maintain a path on their property to make the larger loop path.



Figure 46 River view from Gateway Park Loop Trail

Trailhead: 19 Sheldon St., at Sheldon Street Gateway Park. A designated, 6-space parking lot for Gateway Park is adjacent to the trailhead.

Trail class: Class 5

Length: ~0.6 mi.

Difficulty: Easy

Accessibility: Yes

Surface: Areas of porous asphalt, bituminous asphalt, and concrete, all in good condition.

Trail description: This pathway runs along the North Nashua River. There is a short loop path within the park as well as a path that runs out to and along River St., behind the Riverside Commons complex, on to Sheldon St. and back into the Park. The trail offers scenic views of the river with benches and picnic tables.



Figure 47 Loop Trail heading south

Recommendations: In 2019, a Maintenance Plan for the Sheldon Street Gateway Park was commissioned by the Fitchburg Greenway Committee, paid for out of the Gateway Park Fund, and written by ConservationWorks LLC. Among the top 10 recommendations listed, the following pertain to the Loop Trail and/or the Knoll Trail:

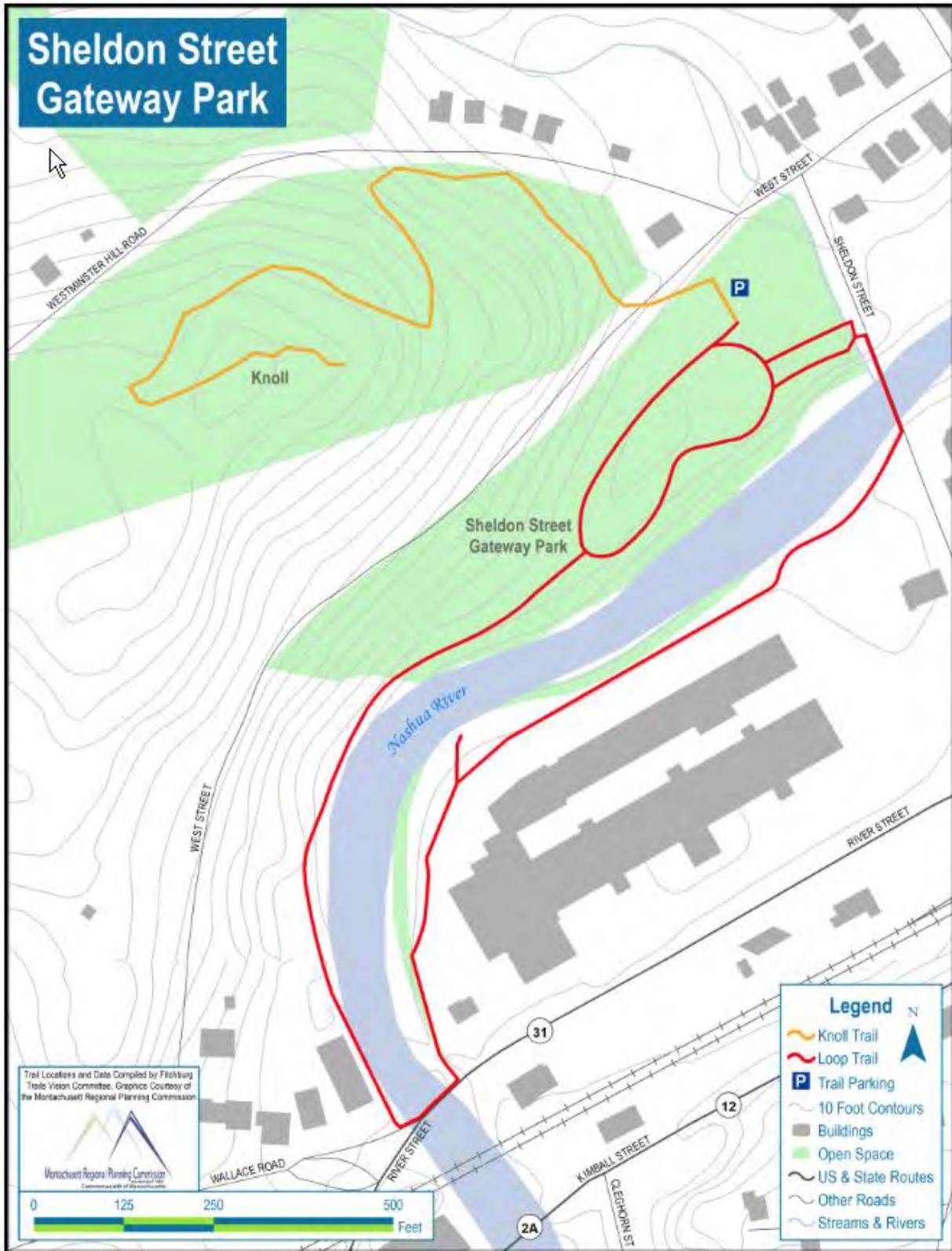


Figure 48 Map of Sheldon Street Gateway Park and Knoll Trails

- Create a “Friends” Group to take ownership for certain routine maintenance items
- Address the Dog “Waste” Issue by placement of dog mitt stations and waste repositories
- Control vehicle access to the Park by installation of additional bollards and boulders
- Install a crosswalk on West St. to make it safer for users of the Knoll Trail to access it from the lower portion of the park
- Continue control of Japanese Knotweed, which tends to grow across the Loop Trail in places
- Continue park cleanup
- Remove hazard trees along trails



Figure 49 Loop Path behind Riverside Commons

7.7.2 Sheldon Street Gateway Park Knoll Trail

Owner: City of Fitchburg

History: The Knoll Trail was initiated by the Fitchburg Greenway Committee and created by the collaborative efforts of volunteers from the Fitchburg Greenway Committee and the inmates from Worcester County Correctional Department’s Community Service Program under the guidance of trail professionals from ConservationWorks, a private conservation firm.

Trailhead: The trailhead for this trail begins at the visitor parking area at the Sheldon Street Gateway Park. Go to the far end of the parking area to begin using this trail.

Trail class: This is a Class 3 natural, single track, pedestrian trail. Not intended or designed for mountain biking, equestrian, or motorized vehicle use.

Length: Approximately 0.4 mi.

Difficulty: This trail is moderately strenuous as it climbs steadily, although gently, up from West St. to the top of the Knoll across from Westminster Hill Rd.

Accessibility: Not accessible to wheelchair users and difficult for those with mobility impairments

Surface: The surface is a 12”-18” natural, compacted soil surface with some minor root and stone protrusions

Trail description: The Knoll Trail is an “out and back” trail that begins at the north end of the parking area at Sheldon Street Gateway Park and proceeds northwest up and around the



Figure 50 Granite steps leading to West St. crossing to Knoll Trail

community garden area at the park. It then continues uphill to the opening in the chain-link fence on the south side of West St., where the trail crosses perpendicular to West St. (Users are advised to use caution when crossing since this is a public road). The trail then begins a series of three switchbacks (designed to minimize the running slope and alleviate erosion problems) as it steadily climbs up through the woods to the summit of the Knoll. This trail has been bench-cut into the side of the hill to provide a cross-slope of 5% or less which gives the user a more enjoyable hiking experience because they are not walking on uneven ground. The trail ends at the summit, which provides a pleasant wooded setting to enjoy. Glimpses of the city below can be seen during seasons without foliage, late fall through early spring.



Figure 51 Knoll Trail demonstrating a bench-cut

Current trail conditions: The Knoll Trail is usable with the treadway in good shape, the trail corridor cleared of any major obstructions and the trail blazed with yellow assurance blazes every 50’-100’ on trailside trees. Currently, there is nothing at the end of the parking area to indicate the beginning of the Knoll Trail and there is no formal pathway up to the opening in the chain-link fence. There is a set of stone steps installed by the Fitchburg DPW that helps users climb the embankment just before the fence opening. While there is assurance blazing on the length of the trail, there are no directional signs on the trail that would help users feel confident that they were on the Knoll Trail.



Figure 52 Knoll Trail Summit with view of Rollstone Hill

Recommendations: The Knoll Trail needs:

- An entrance sign at the beginning of the trail to inform potential users where it begins
- An identifiable pathway that delivers users to the chain-link fence opening
- Safety signage for those crossing West St. on the trail
- Directional signage on the trail itself consistent in style/function with what the City is doing city-wide.
- Two benches at the summit of the Knoll
- Large “inscribed” boulder for inspiration/contemplation
- Interpretive signage or post with QR code linking to interpretive material
- Some careful selective thinning of woodlands to expand the view a bit (some has already been done)

- Creation of a south-side loop from the top of the Knoll back to the trail further down the hillside
- Creation of an accessible trail and trailhead from the northwest boundary with Westminster Hill Rd. to the summit of the Knoll
- Creation of a small two-vehicle handicapped parking space off Westminster Hill Rd. adjacent to the stone foundation hole, to service the trailhead mentioned above
- Trailside vegetation enhancement to improve the aesthetics and health of this aging pine/hardwood woodlands
- Acquisition of the parcel to the west of the Knoll to be added to the park and create and extension of the Knoll Hill Trail down to the far end of West St.



Figure 53 Knoll Trail near Westminster Hill Rd

7.8 Steamline Trail

The following narrative provides basic trail information for the Steamline Trail. The description is meant to give a general idea of the trail and its location and the assessment is an overall view of the condition of the trail. See Figure 56 on the following page for the map.

Owner: City of Fitchburg

Trailhead: 465 Westminster St. (Rte. 2A).

Eight to ten space dedicated lot directly off street for parking

Trail class: Class 3

Length: ~0.6 mi. (1.2 mi. out and back)

Difficulty: Easy to Moderate (some rolling hills)

Accessibility: No. Loose gravel may be passable for some, but grade exceeds 5%

Surface: Gravel/bituminous road millings, compacted. In good condition as of 4/2017.

Trail description: This trail starts at the bridge over the Nashua River near the entrance at 465 Westminster St. and offers views of the Nashua River and Fitchburg's industrial past. Portions of the former steam pipe remain in place, along with some descriptive historical signage along the trail. Some of the signage refers to the former Central Steam Plant, which was demolished by the city in ~2015. The beginning of the trail passes above (to the east) of the former Central Steam Plant, and below the RR

embankment. Continuing to the south, there is a lookout, the "Overlook" near the halfway point that offers an outstanding view of the confluence of the Whitman River (coming from the west) and Flag Brook (from the north) to form a pond which marks the beginning of the North Nashua River. Benches are available for resting. The Overlook also affords a close-up view of the Wastewater Treatment Plant Dam. Water flowing over the dam can be very dramatic during high water periods. The dam was formerly 15 ft. higher in elevation, which is why the Overlook itself sits so high above the sill elevation of the current dam. Much of the land on which the FWWTP was constructed was inundated by the Wastewater Treatment Plant Pond prior to the removal of the upper 15 ft. of the dam in the mid-1970s to allow for the construction of the FWWTP. The FWWTP operated from 1975-2010, primarily to treat industrial wastewater from several paper mills and local domestic wastewater. The southern end of the trail passes the now closed FWWTP and currently dead-ends at a stone culvert RR bridge.



Figure 54 Entrance sign with former steam plant visible in the background



Figure 55 Heading south along the Steamline Trail

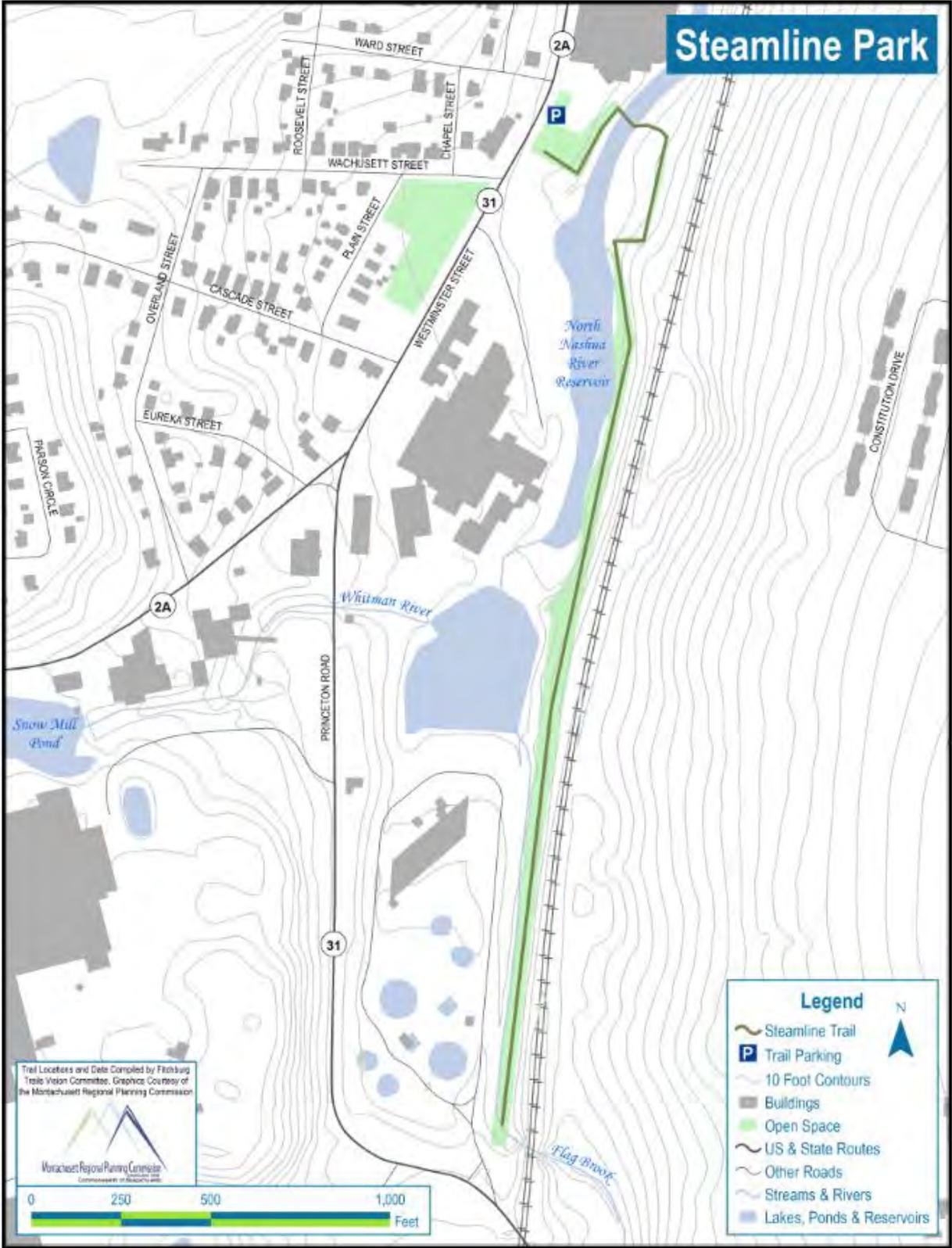


Figure 56 Map of Steamline Trail

Trail history: The Steamline Park Trail was created with state and federal grant funds in 2007. The City became owner of the land on which the trail is located when, in 2000, it accepted the former Central Steam Plant property from the now defunct Massachusetts Paper Company. Notable along the trail is the 20” wide steam pipe that runs adjacent to it for most of its length. During the halcyon days of the paper mill industry in Fitchburg (1924-1970s), these pipes were used to carry excess steam from the Central Steam plant (where it was used to make electricity from coal, natural gas and oil) to heat nearby paper mills owned by the Crocker-Burbank Company. This efficient use of energy, known as co-generation, was widely regarded in its time as a model of intelligent energy design in industry, and is still utilized in many settings, such as on university campuses.



Figure 57 Steamline pipes with view of North Nashua dam

Plans to extend the trail to the 5th Mass Turnpike failed after discussions with Pan Am Railways did not result in an easement allowing the trail to pass under its RR bridge culvert. Despite this disappointing result, city officials and trail enthusiasts remain hopeful that a future easement allowing the trail to continue may be granted. In addition to extending its length, this easement would enable trail access for pedestrian and bicycle commuters to the Wachusett Train Station.

Recommendations:

Short Term: As of October 2019, the following items require immediate attention:

- Just to the south of the fallen tree, a ~2 ft. dia. black plastic culvert that crosses under the trail has become exposed due to erosion. Although one can circumvent the erosion gully by walking up and around it, a few cubic yards of 2” stone is needed to fill the gully and make it possible for those with strollers, baby joggers, etc., to be able to continue to use the trail.
- Further to the south, a section of split rail fence approximately 150 ft. long above a steep embankment has collapsed and should be repaired and/or replaced to enhance safety.
- South of the Overlook, also known as “Lookout Point,” another smaller erosion gully has exposed a smaller culvert and needs to be repaired.
- Many of the informational signs erected by Benjamin Lessard, an Eagle Scout, in 2009 are coming into disrepair and need to be reprinted, if possible, and reinstalled. In a few



Figure 58 Steamline Trail heading south with railroad embankment to the left

instances, information on the signs is no longer correct, such as references to the Central Steam Plant as still standing close by.

Longer-Term: Encourage the City to pursue continued discussions with Pan Am Railways to obtain an easement allowing the trail to continue underneath the existing granite RR bridge culvert. Previous discussions included a proposal by the City to address ongoing erosion of the RR bed adjacent to the trail in exchange for the requested easement and a conveyance of a small portion of the existing trail, which is apparently on RR property. If negotiation efforts with Pan Am Railways as well as consultation with landowners beyond the RR bridge culvert are successful, the Steamline trail could feasibly be extended an estimated 0.5 mi. to the 5th Mass



Figure 59 Granite RR bridge with steamline maintenance superstructure

Turnpike. Once the required easements are obtained, this extension would become a high priority under the Trail Vision Plan, as it would eliminate the current dead-end of the trail at the RR bridge, and convert it to a point-to-point trail with many obvious benefits.

The Fitchburg Greenway Committee has explored the possibility of extending the existing Steamline Trail in both directions, as follows:

To the South (upstream): If permission could be obtained from the RR to enable upgrading the steel maintenance superstructure (See Figure 59) that hangs underneath the granite RR bridge culvert so that pedestrians could walk across it, then it would be possible to continue the Steamline Trail to the south, along Flag Brook. It should be noted for future reference that at least a portion of the area under the RR bridge culvert falls within the existing 100-year floodplain. For this reason, unless the existing metal framework supporting the former steamline under the bridge can be re-used to support the elevated portion of the trail under the bridge without impacting the floodplain, it may be necessary to conduct a study of any potential impacts, and take any required mitigation measures prior to constructing a new pedestrian bridge structure at this location. One or more easements would then need to be acquired to connect this southerly extension to the city's waterline and along it to 5th Mass Turnpike. From a new Steamline Trail terminus at 5th Mass Turnpike, walkers and cyclists would be able to access both Wachusett MBTA Commuter Rail Station and Rt. 31 South, which leads to a broad network of trails in the Leominster State Forest.

To the North (downstream): A trail could conceivably be built along the North Nashua River from the former site of the Central Steam Plant all the way to Depot St., although there are two old dams that would have to be circumvented, and easements would need to be acquired since the trail would pass behind several businesses. Alternatively, the trail could simply utilize the existing sidewalk along Westminster St.

7.9 Rollstone Hill

Rollstone Hill is a granite monadnock and the site of the historic granite quarrying operation that produced Fitchburg granite that was used extensively in buildings and other structures locally and beyond. The quarry operation ceased in the mid-20th century, not before removing thousands of tons of stone from the hill, and nature has been trying to reclaim the site ever since. During this almost 80-year period of time a maze of trails has developed on the hill and visitors of all ages have come



Figure 60 View of Downtown Fitchburg from Rollstone Hill

to enjoy the views from the summit, the unique natural history of the site, the opportunity to express their creativity with some artwork on the stones, and to express their support for the local high school sports teams by painting “the rock.” Additionally, a keen interest in the history of the hill has taken root and ongoing interpretive walks have led hundreds of visitors up to the summit to view the location of the famed “boulder” that sits in Litchfield Park at the north end of Main St. in downtown Fitchburg.

An effort began in 2017 to improve the trail that takes visitors from the boulder in the park to the top of Rollstone Hill and back down again. This resulted in “The Rock Walk-The Rollstone Hill Trail Plan” and its recommendations, which led to the award of \$100,000 from the MA Recreational Trails Program and \$30,000 from the Community Foundation of North Central Massachusetts to the city of Fitchburg in 2018. With guidance from the Fitchburg Greenway Committee, the city will utilize these funds in 2019-2020 to improve the trail, including but not limited to: installing trailheads at Bruce St. and Shattuck St.; improving the trail route to eliminate a few difficult segments; installing wayfinding and numbered informational granite posts from the Boulder at the Upper Common to the summit of Rollstone Hill; and developing website material that will reside on the city’s website and coordinate with each of the informational granite posts. Future phases of the project are expected to tackle additional items such as those described in “The Rock Walk - The Rollstone Hill Trail Plan.



Figure 61 Hiking group on summit of Rollstone Hill



Figure 62 Rollstone Hill with Rock Walk Trail marked in red

Rock Walk Trail

Owner: City of Fitchburg

History: The trails on the hill have been in existence for many years with abutters and neighborhood residents using the property for recreation and informal hiking. As far as is known, there has not been a formal effort to develop and maintain a network of trails on the property since the quarry operations ceased in 1941. A number of the existing trails sprang up from abandoned access roads and cart paths formerly used to transport granite off the hill.

Trailhead(s): 1. Upper Common on Litchfield Park at the Boulder; 2. Bruce St. Trailhead at the base of Rollstone Hill; 3. Shattuck St. Parking Area & Trailhead, 4. Trail Access at the corner of King and Litchfield St., 5. Trail Access off of Beech St., Parking available at Shattuck St. parking area & trailhead (6-8 cars), Bruce St. Trailhead (parallel parking for 2-3 vehicles), King & Litchfield St. Access (2 cars), Beech St. (1-2 cars), and Upper Common (parking in the general area)

Trail class: Class 3

Length: 2 mi. (1 mi. urban, 1 mi. rural)

Difficulty: Urban segments are easy, rural sections are mostly moderate with some difficult sections requiring scrambling over some large rocks

Accessibility: Yes for most of the urban section; No for the rural segment

Surface: Variable. Urban segment - paved sidewalks and roadways up to the Bruce St. trailhead. Rural sections - a combination of natural trails, old gravel access roads, smooth rock bedrock and irregular granite blocks

Trail description: The Rock Walk Trail begins at the Boulder situated in Litchfield Park on the Upper Common in Downtown Fitchburg. The trail follows city sidewalks over to the trailhead entrance on Bruce St. where it switchbacks up the hill to the Shattuck St. parking area and trailhead. From this point, users can hike in either direction around a loop trail that eventually brings them to the summit of the hill at the very spot where it is believed the boulder was located prior to 1929. Hikers then proceed to complete the other half of the loop to return to the Shattuck St. Trailhead and then return back to the boulder by the same route they followed to begin the hike. This trail takes them from the park-like environment of the Upper Common through the urban settings of the city to the wooded habitats of lower Rollstone Hill and eventually to the gradually



Figure 63 Trailhead, Litchfield Park, near Upper Common



Figure 64 Granite marker along road portion of trail

naturalizing habitats on the drastically quarry-impacted top of the Hill. The loop trail will also have spurs that provide access to the summit from Beech St., from the corner of King St. & Litchfield St., and a short extension to the Shattuck St. Trailhead.

Recommendations: See *“The Rock Walk - The Rollstone Hill Trail Plan”* for the proposed improvements to the trail network on Rollstone Hill. As of June 2019, improvements to the trail outlined in Phase 1 of the Plan were underway, including creation of trailheads at both Bruce St. and Shattuck St. This work will continue through 2020, funded by a Recreational Trails Program grant and a grant from the Community Foundation of North Central Massachusetts.



Figure 65 Portion of the Rock Walk Trail

8. Fitchburg Trails of the Future - Projects to Enhance & Expand the Trails Network

In the following sections, we provide brief descriptions of projects that are either under construction or recommended in this 2019-2024 version of Fitchburg’s Trails Vision. The projects are presented as follows:

1. Develop Blue Trails along Rivers
2. Directional, Point of Interest and Interpretive Signs
3. Complete Streets (deferring to separate program)
4. New Local and Inter-Town Pathways: Twin Cities Rail Trail. This project involves a significant addition to the pathways in Fitchburg and to adjacent municipalities
5. Increase Connectedness of Trail Network
 - a. North-South Linkages
 - b. East-West Linkages
6. Pathways along and between Roadways: “The Rapids”

8.1 Develop Blue Trails along Rivers

It may be possible to develop a water trail on the North Nashua River within Fitchburg, connecting downstream to Leominster and Lancaster. Maps could be developed to show the river in sufficient detail to aid in navigation and to identify points of interest along the river. Signage along the river could point to put-ins and destinations. Rest/picnic areas could be developed at intervals on the riverbanks, and as applicable, intersections with land trails could be developed so that a combined canoe and hike could be planned (e.g., intersecting with the Twin Cities Rail Trail).

In January 2009, a study was done for the city of Fitchburg entitled “Whitewater Site Reconnaissance Study, North Nashua River” by the McLaughlin Whitewater Design Group, funded by the NRWA. Due to low flows and safety considerations, it concluded that use of the North



Figure 66 Canoes on the North Nashua River

Nashua River upstream of Sawyer Passway for whitewater canoeing or kayaking, including for a natural whitewater course, would not be feasible. During most portions of the year, the flow is insufficient for boating. During springtime and other higher flow portions of the year, the fact that the segments of the North Nashua River that flow through the downtown have flood walls on either side mean that it could be difficult for boaters needing to exit the rapids to be able to do so. In addition, low bridges such as the RR bridge between Putnam St. and Water St. could represent a barrier to boaters during high water.

Downstream of the Water St. Bridge, below the portion that flows between flood walls, there appears to be a long segment of the North Nashua River that would not be subject to the hazards described above, and that may be well suited for boating and even for a whitewater course. This needs to be investigated further. From Sawyer Passway downstream into Leominster, there are few dams (e.g., the ones at Arden Mills), which could be portaged. Put-in and take-out locations have yet to be firmly identified.

8.1.1 Design

- Maps of the rivers could be developed for download and distribution.
- Signage could be designed and installed on trees or posts at strategic locations along the rivers.
- Rest areas with rustic benches could be created in public parcels along the rivers. Places to park boats could be created on the riverbanks where land trails come close to the river so that people could combine their boating with a hike on land.

8.1.2 Challenges

- Permission from the landowners would be required to develop rest areas and install signage.

8.2 Directional, Point of Interest, and Interpretive Signs

Trail markers are needed on many of the trails in Fitchburg to help users stay on the trails, as are trailhead posts where trails intersect Fitchburg’s roadways to highlight the trails. Signs that point to a destination such as another trail or parcel, a road or parking area, or a point of interest are also lacking. A long-term objective is to develop a consistent set of signs that can guide users to and along the trails of Fitchburg so that they can plan their use of the trails appropriately and have good experiences.

An attempt was made in 2012/13 through the Fitchburg Greenway Committee, with assistance from Fitchburg State to design and propose a universal seal/logo and a sign standard for use along many of the city’s parks and trails. The logo was reviewed and approved for use by the Fitchburg Parks Commission. The sign standard was never completed, however materials related to that effort, if still available, could be used as a basis for completing this work. Recognizing that there may be differences in the standards adopted for different park and trail uses, including blue trails, we strongly encourage future initiatives to develop, adopt, and implement such standards.



Figure 67 Fitchburg Parks and Recreation Department logo

There is potential for savings in signage by using the buying power of a region, or even the entire Commonwealth of Massachusetts. There would also be advantages to having consistency in signs for each type (directional, point of interest, recommended or prohibited trail users, etc.) through standards for size, color, lettering, logos, etc., for each type. If a region or the Commonwealth could publish a set of standards for signs, develop a list of qualified vendors, and negotiate some prices with the vendors that local trails organizations could take advantage of, this could be of significant benefit to the towns.

There are many types of signs that need to be considered. In addition to signs, some trails need to be named in such a way that it is obvious why one would choose to take such a trail. The *Fitchburg Trail Guide*, which was prepared by the Fitchburg Trails Vision Committee and published by the city of Fitchburg in 2018, and the associated detailed maps and trail descriptions that reside at <http://www.fitchburgma.gov/770/Trails>, are intended to help acquaint potential trail users with the trails, their names and locations, degree of difficulty, length, parking, points of interest, etc. Signage would greatly enhance users' ability to access these trails.

8.2.1 Design

- It is helpful if signs are small, distinctive, and consistent from parcel to parcel (and even town to town) because they will not need to be read each time they are seen and they will seem less obtrusive.

8.2.2 Challenges

- Costs are significant for the number of signs that might be needed.
- What is helpful and reassuring to one person using a trail may be “clutter” akin to billboard advertising to another. A difficult balance must be achieved between information/education, safety, and aesthetics.

8.3 Complete Streets

“Complete Streets is a transportation policy and design approach that requires streets to be planned, designed, operated, and maintained to enable safe, convenient and comfortable travel and access for users of all ages and abilities regardless of their mode of transportation.”⁸ In 2016, Fitchburg Mayor Stephen DiNatale signed an executive order adopting a complete streets policy for the city. The overarching vision being the creation of a connected integrated system that allows all users to navigate the city in a safe, comfortable and convenient manner that is context sensitive.

Designing streets with consideration of these principles contributes toward the safety, health, economic viability and quality of life in a community by improving the pedestrian and vehicular

⁸ Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Complete_streets

environments and providing safer, more accessible and comfortable means of travel between home, school, work, recreation and retail destinations promoting more livable communities (MA DOT). While this document does not address on-street trails specifically, the Complete Streets effort can provide important connections and complements the vision of this report which is to provide a safe and easy-to-use network of ways that will connect people to each other, to destinations in the city and in surrounding municipalities, and to the unique natural, cultural and historical points of interest throughout Fitchburg.

8.4 New Local and Inter-Town Pathways

Twin Cities Rail Trail (fully funded for construction in 2020) See Figure 70 on next page for the map.

Owner: City of Fitchburg and City of Leominster

History: The majority of this proposed trail will be built along a former rail corridor that runs parallel to Water St. (Rt. 12) in both Fitchburg and Leominster. After many years of planning and negotiations, the two cities purchased this corridor from CSX Corporation in 2017 with local, state and federal funding. The project design was funded by the MA Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, while the Massachusetts DOT has committed funds for its planned construction in 2020.



Figure 68 Proposed Rail Trail behind Flea Market, Water St

Trailhead: Intermodal Station, Main St., Fitchburg. There is a parking garage at the Intermodal Station. There will be additional small parking areas at other access points along the trail

Length: 4.5 mi.

Difficulty: Easy

Accessibility: Yes

Surface: Bituminous pavement

Trail description: The Twin Cities Rail Trail is a planned 4.2 mi. multi-use trail on an abandoned former rail line that will connect the downtowns of Fitchburg and Leominster. Work will be completed in two phases. Phase I, scheduled for construction commencement in 2020, will run from 1st St. in Fitchburg to Carter Park in Leominster, parallel to Route 12. Phase 2 is scheduled for construction the following year and will extend the trail at both ends; constructing a bridge over the RR tracks to connect to



Figure 69 Proposed Rail Trail near Battles St

the Intermodal Transportation Facility in Fitchburg, and adding an estimated 0.3 mi. to the southerly end of trail to extend to Mechanic St. in Leominster.

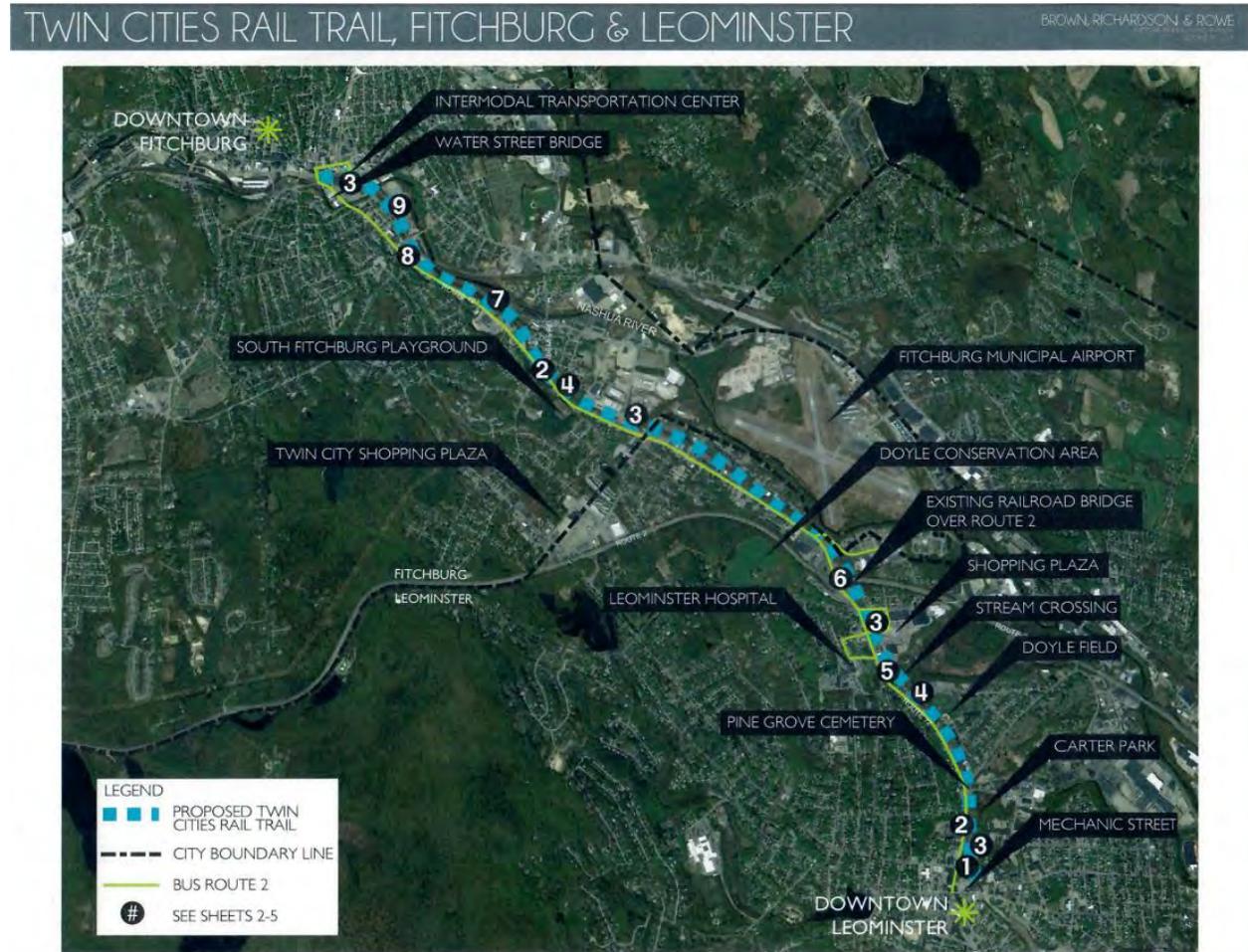
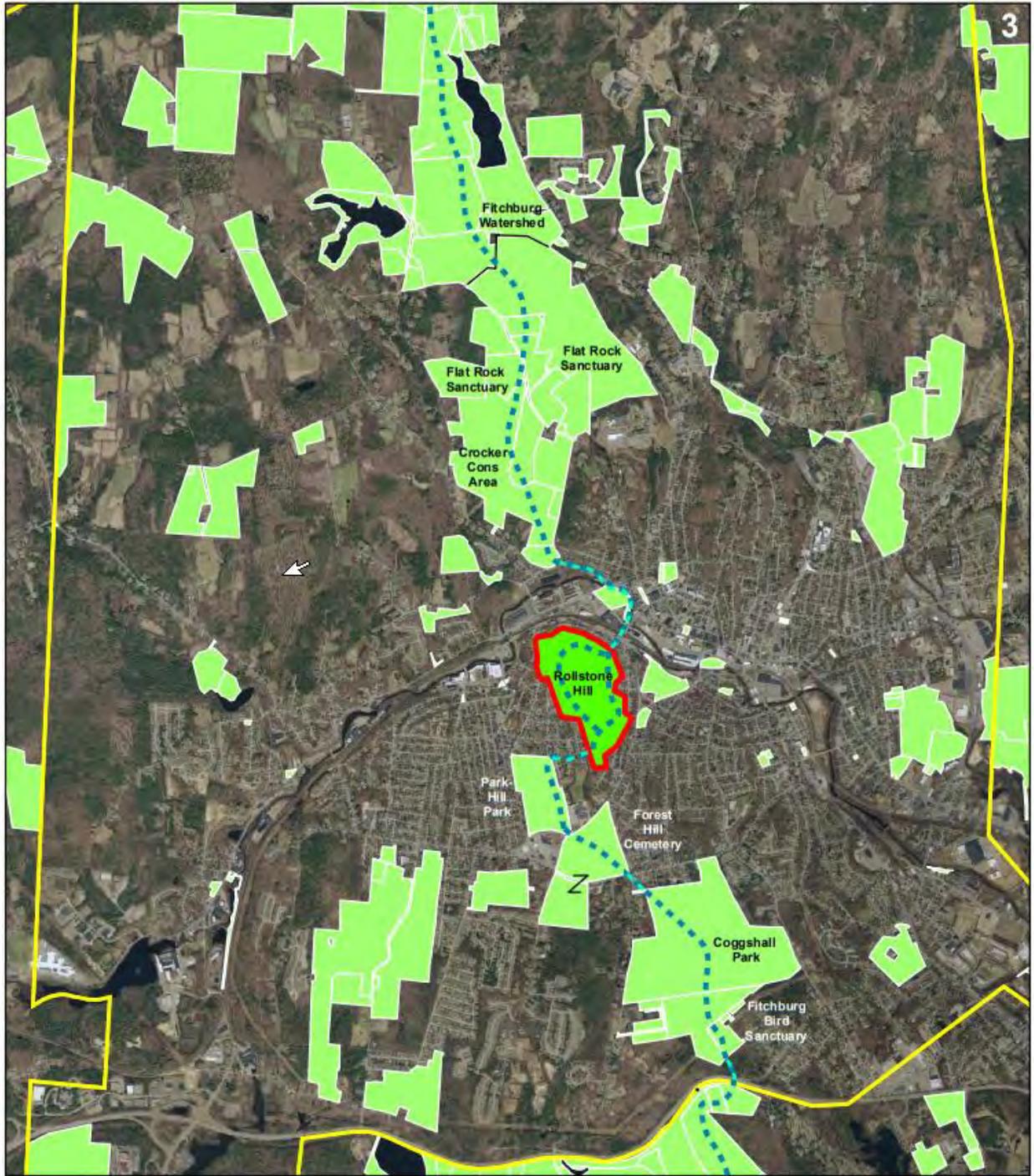


Figure 70 Twin Cities Rail Trail

8.5 Increase Connectedness of Trails Network

8.5.1 North-South Linkages

The potential exists for linkages to be made North-South across the city of Fitchburg, connecting a number of our existing trails and trail networks to create a long-distance trail. It is conceivable that such a trail could extend via the Mid-State Trail from Mt. Watatic, and from points further north via the Wapack Trail in New Hampshire, all the way south through Fitchburg to Leominster, Sterling and connecting with the Central Mass Rail Trail in Boylston and points beyond. See Figure 71 for the map showing the linkages.



Open Space Parcels
from MassGIS 2016

--- Possible Trail
(Approximate Location)

Rollstone Hill Trail Context

0 1,250 2,500 5,000 7,500 10,000
Feet

Ortho Photo from
Mass GIS 2014

This map is for planning purposes only, with specific points subject to verification on the ground.
It is not to be used by itself for legal boundary definition.

Conservation Works - January 2018



Figure 71 North-South Linkages

The following is a conceptual description of such a long-distance north to south trail. Note: there are numerous other possible routes - this is but one relatively direct possibility [see Map #3, “Rollstone Hill Trail Context” from the *Rock Walk: The Rollstone Hill Trail Plan, 2018* (p. 41)].

- Beginning at the northwest corner of the city of Fitchburg, trails coming from the direction of the Mid-State Trail in Ashburnham might conceivably be connected in the future to the northwestern corner of the city’s Northern Watershed lands. Note that the Town of Ashby has expressly requested that connections not be published between their trails and those in Fitchburg, so the remaining option is to come from Ashburnham in the vicinity of Jewell Hill. As of June 2019, steps were underway for the Trustees to acquire Jewell Hill Farm and conserve it as open space and for outdoor recreation, which would enable public access to trails through the farm from the top of Jewell Hill to the Northern Watershed lands in Fitchburg.
- Although the specific location of such a connector has not been identified, such a trail could potentially cross the city of Fitchburg’s Northern Watershed lands to the west of the northern end of Ashby West Rd. There are a number of old footpaths in that area, none of which has been designated a formal trail at this time.
- **Northern Watershed Trails:** From the northern end of Ashby West Rd., turn east on the Shattuck Rd. Trail, then without crossing Falulah Brook, turn south onto the Thurston Road Extension Trail and follow the entire eastern leg of the Lovell Reservoir-Thurston Rd. Loop Trail. At Scott Falls, take the short eastern leg of the Lower Scott Brook Trail to the Main Path.
- **Flat Rock Wildlife Sanctuary Trails:** Enter the Flat Rock Wildlife Sanctuary on the Main Path. Follow the Main Path southeast to the Pigpen Path. Take Pigpen path uphill to its junction with Lightning Path, then follow Lightning Path uphill to Pipeline Path. Take Pipeline Path southeast briefly and then southwest to Flat Rock Rd. Path.
- Follow Flat Rock Rd. Path south briefly, and then turn left (west) onto Overlook Trail (CCA).
- **Crocker Conservation Area Trails:** Take Overlook Trail south all the way to its tee with Big’s Bushwhack. Turn left onto Big’s Bushwhack. At its end, turn left onto Lower Loop Trail, traveling uphill briefly to the Cart Rd. Turn right onto the Cart Rd., and take it briefly to its end at Caldwell St. From Caldwell St., turn right (downhill) to West Main St., and then turn left along sidewalks several blocks to the Upper Common in downtown Fitchburg.
- **Rock Walk Trail:** The Rock Walk Trail begins at the Boulder on tiny Litchfield Park on the Upper Common. Cross Main St. and use the brick walkway to enter the Upper Common by the “Boys and Turtles” fountain. Proceed easterly down a brick walk to the Gazebo. Use the crosswalk to cross Main St. and proceed left along the sidewalk for a short distance. Turn right onto Rollstone St. for a short distance and use the crosswalk to cross Rollstone St. Follow sidewalks along Rollstone St. over the Nashua River and RR tracks to Kimball St. Use the crosswalk to cross Kimball St. and go left, then a quick

right and continue up Rollstone St. for a short distance. Turn right onto Bruce St. The trailhead to be constructed at Bruce St. marks the beginning of the wooded portion of the Rock Walk Trail. Proceed up either leg of the Rollstone Hill Loop Trail to the summit of Rollstone Hill, and from there walk south along the city's radio tower access road, exiting the city's land at Pratt Rd. Walk west several blocks along Pratt Rd. to Parkhill Park.

- **Parkhill Park Trail:** Walk past the Ryan C. Joubert Memorial Skatepark and past the ballparks to the Parkhill Park Trail. Proceed southeast to the trail's end on Causeway St., across from Memorial Middle School.
- **Forest Hill Cemetery Loop Trail:** Walk along sidewalks in either direction around Forest Hill Cemetery to Electric Ave. Continue walking east on sidewalks along Electric Ave. several blocks to the northern (main) entrance of Coggs Hall Park.
- **Coggs Hall Park:** Enter the park via the entrance road (Eastern Ave.) and walk to the first parking area. There, take the Pond Passage Trail, and follow it west to connect with the Woodland Path Loop. Take the westerly leg of the Woodland Path Loop to the Stone House at Mirror Lake. Take the west side of the Mirror Lake Loop south, and turn right onto the Whale Rock/Cascade Loop Trail, walking south to the Cascades in the Fitchburg Bird Sanctuary. Note: At this point the trail currently ends, but an adventurous bushwhack following the Mirror Lake outlet stream (the same stream that forms the Cascades) to the southeast eventually will bring the hiker to Wanoosnoc Rd., Fitchburg in the vicinity of Rt. 2. Respect private property. At Rt. 2, a very large culvert (Figure 72) carries Monoosnoc Brook under the highway. In high water this culvert is unsafe for hikers, but it is said that a safe passage can be made under Rt. 2 during drier periods. We must emphasize that this is an informal, unauthorized route, but one that various hikers have in the past reportedly taken. See below for alternative routes to the south.
- **Monoosnoc Trail:** Once across Rt. 2, the hiker is in Leominster at the northern terminus of the Monoosnoc Ridge Trail. It can be traveled south through Leominster city lands and into the Leominster State Park trail network to points south.
- From Coggs Hall Park, other routes to the south may also be worthy of consideration:
- **Mt. Elam Rd. /Future Pedestrian Bridge:** The western entrance of Coggs Hall Park is off of Mt. Elam Rd. Walk south along Mt. Elam Rd. to Fifth Mass Turnpike. A pedestrian bridge may in the future be built over Rt. 2 (limited access highway) in this vicinity, allowing direct passage to the portion of Mt. Elam Rd. on the other side of Rt. 2 in Leominster. From the southern end of Mt. Elam Rd. in Leominster, a trail leads



Figure 72 Monoosnoc Brook Culvert under Rt. 2

through Leominster Water Dept. land, past the southeast end of Notown Reservoir, and into the Leominster State Forest trail network.

- **Mt. Elam Rd. /Fifth Mass Turnpike/Rt. 31:** As above, the western entrance of Cogshall Park is off Mt. Elam Rd. Walk south along Mt. Elam Rd. to Fifth Mass Turnpike. Then walk west along Fifth Mass Turnpike to Rt. 31 (Princeton Rd). Turn left, and follow Rt. 31 south, over Rt. 2 (limited access highway), and continue walking south along Rt. 31 to Leominster State Forest. The first trails encountered are approximately 1.5 mi. south of Rt. 2 in the vicinity of Crocker Pond and Crow Hill. The long-distance Midstate Trail passes over the Crow Hill ridge.

8.5.2 East-West Linkages

The potential also exists for linkages to be made East-West across the city of Fitchburg, connecting a number of our existing trails and trail networks to create a long-distance trail. Such a trail logically would run parallel to the North Nashua River, as depicted in the accompanying map entitled “Fitchburg’s River Walk.” See Figure 74 on the following page. The eastern (downstream) portion of the trail enters Fitchburg from Leominster along the Twin Cities Rail trail, and then continues mostly via streets and sidewalks past Riverfront Park, Crocker Field, Sheldon Street Gateway Park, and the Steamline Trail Park to Wachusett Station on Authority Dr. in West Fitchburg. While many of the details of such a route remain to be ironed out, the following is a general description:



Figure 73 Depot Square in Downtown Fitchburg with Heritage Park in the foreground

- **Twin Cities Rail Trail:** From downtown Leominster and potentially from points to the east (e.g., Lancaster), take the Twin Cities Rail Trail (under construction) to the northwest into Fitchburg, to where the trail will terminate at the Intermodal Train Station in downtown Fitchburg.
- Walk west along Main St. several blocks through Depot Square (Figure 64). Take a left down Cushing St., cross Boulder Dr., and enter Riverfront Park.
- **Riverfront Park:** Walk the loop through the park, by the shore of the North Nashua River. The large Marion Stoddart Mural is visible on the southern side of the park, across the RR tracks. Return via the Boulder Dr. entrance of Riverfront Park.
- Walk west along Boulder Dr., past Putnam Place and Fitchburg City Hall (under renovation) to Main St. Continue walking northwest along Main St. to the Upper Common. Take a left down Circle St., over the North Nashua River, past Crocker Field, to Broad St. Take a right on Broad St. and walk to River St. Turn left on River St. and continue along sidewalks to Sheldon St. Take a right on Sheldon St., cross the North Nashua River and enter Sheldon Street Gateway Park.

Fitchburg's River Walk

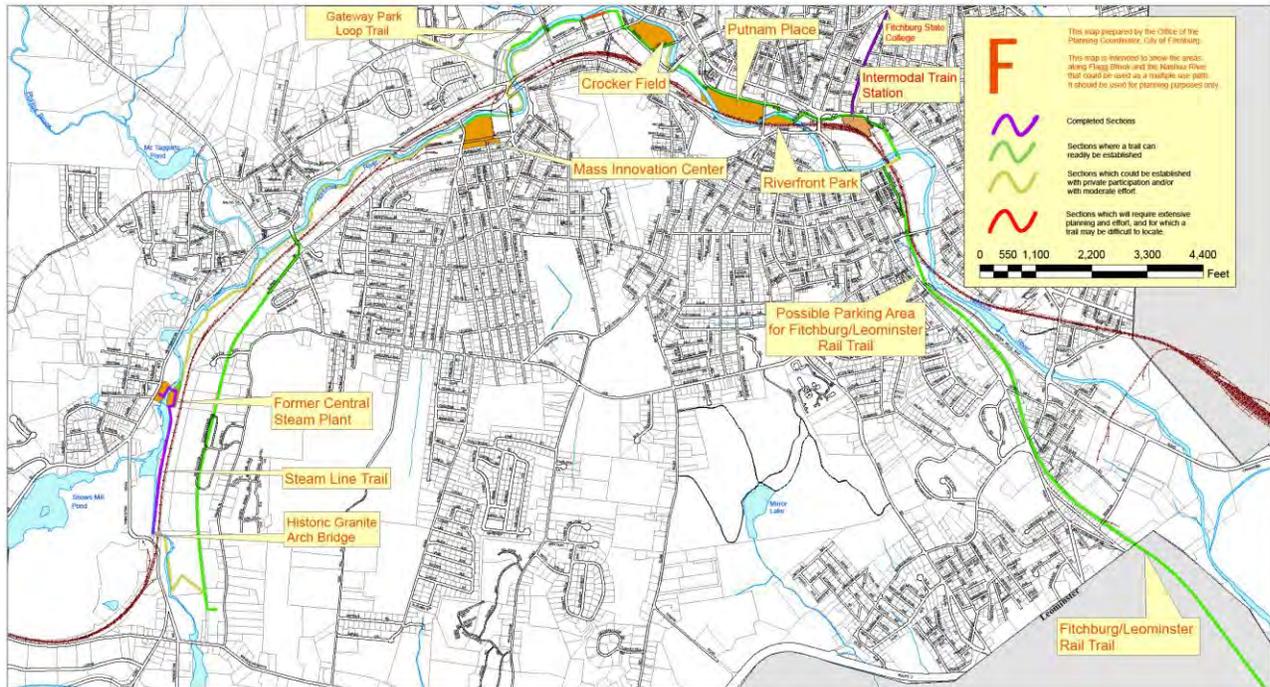


Figure 74 East-West Linkages

- **Sheldon Street Gateway Park:** Walk the loop trail along the North Nashua River west and southwest to River St.
- Walk along River St. (Rts. 31, 2A and 12) west. River St. becomes Westminster St. in the vicinity of Depot St. and Mill No. 3 Farmstand. Continue walking west along Westminster St. (Rts. 31 and 2A) past the entrance to the Steamline Trail Park, and continue along sidewalks to Princeton St. (Rt. 31 south). Continuing along Princeton St. (Rt. 31), the walker will arrive at Wachusett Station (on Authority Dr.) or be able to walk over Rt. 2 (limited access highway) along Rt. 31 south into Leominster State Park and its network of trails.

Note: in the future, various portions of this route may be able to be routed along the North Nashua River along existing easements and rights of way and/or future easements and rights of way, and thereby bypass the need to walk along sidewalks or streets in certain segments. Here are several possible examples:

- A walking path may be possible on the Crocker Field parcel next to the river, if a fence could be built to separate the path from the playing field.
- An easement was set aside along the river at the Yarn Works, 1428 Main St., between the Yarn Works building and the river. There is a pinch point, however, where the space

between the building and the river is very limited and steep, so currently access to the riverside of the building is prevented by fencing.

- It may be possible to extend the Steamline Park Trail beyond the granite arch bridge that currently carries the RR over Flag Brook at the southern end of the existing trail. An easement would need to be obtained from the RR, and in all likelihood a raised walkway would need to be suspended under the stone arch to enable walkers to pass under the bridge above the level of high water. There is sufficient headroom under the arch for such a walkway to be built. Once on the eastern side of the RR, an easement would need to be obtained to extend the trail to the south and southeast to the city's Waterline right-of-way that runs south to Fifth Mass Turnpike. Additional information concerning this potential is included in the narrative for the Steamline Trail.

8.6 Pathways Along and Between Roadways

“The Rapids”

The following quote is an excerpt from an article by Marj Lucier entitled “Running the ‘Rapids’” in the Sentinel & Enterprise published in May 2, 2001, but which originally appeared in a column in 1995:

“One of those really neat things I always liked about Fitchburg was the rapids. To those who have forgotten (or never knew) the “rapids” are those steep stairways which climb up and down the hills and enabled you to cross the city rapidly (get it?) from one side to the other. They served a need in the days when workers walked to their jobs, because many families did not have a car. “Over the years, as use of the rapids dwindled, they were no longer kept in repair, and eventually most were closed off for safety reasons. You can still see them in some areas of the city, slumped in decay. I often wished that it would have made sense to maintain these unique specimens of Fitchburg’s past. The one I used most, and that is still at least partly functioning today, ran over the hills from the East Side to Fitchburg High School.”

The Rapids Passway that Marj Lucier was referring to above ran from the intersection of Prichard St. and Oliver St. (near the former Fitchburg High School, which is now the Longsjo Middle School), uphill across Pleasant St. and Garnet St. to Mt. Vernon St. The city Assessors’ map shows that these stairways are still deeded rights of way, despite being fenced off and in varying states of disrepair. A further set of rapids dropped back downhill from Mt. Vernon St. to Blossom St., and appears to be an informal trail as of this writing (2019). Were one to travel the same route via existing roadways, a much longer and more circuitous walk would be required.

A “Form F” No. 920 describing part of this “Rapids Passway” was filed with the Massachusetts Historical Commission in March 1977. It states that the Rapids Passway from Prichard St. to Mt. Vernon St. became a public way in 1868 according to the City Engineering Dept. Its historical significance is described as follows: “This is one of several public pedestrian

passways in Fitchburg. These help make the city a very enjoyable place for pedestrians. Several of the pedestrian passways go up steep hills and therefore are a more direct route than the roads (whose grades are limited). This passway connects the Downtown with a residential area.”

Other “Rapids” that have been mentioned, some of which might be able to be reopened, include:

- Water St.: a set of stairs still exist from Water St. (Rt. 12) across from the Flea Market (formerly Grossman’s Lumber) and immediately south of the former location of the Other Side.
- Kimball St: a set of stairs is said to exist near the corner with Beech St. up to Leighton St.
- Westminster St.: two sets of stairs, not in good condition, are visible across from the Mill No. 3 Farmstand, on either side of the stonework that was the foundation of a former industrial building. They allowed ease of access from Ashburnham St. down to the former Mill No. 3, which was located where the Mill No. 3 Farmstand now is.

As a part of this Vision Plan, we envision that one or more of these sets of stairways could be repaired, brought up to current safety standards, and reopened for public use. Prominent hilly cities including Quebec City and San Francisco maintain similar sets of pedestrian stairways that offer great walking experiences for residents and visitors alike. Fitchburg should consider taking advantage of our legacy of “rapids” where it makes sense and is feasible.

9. Prioritization of Projects

The Fitchburg Trails Vision Committee assessed all of the projects included in this report on the following three dimensions:

- **Benefit** – This dimension considers both the type of benefit to be provided, as well as the relative value of the benefit to be provided. The scale ranges from + (a relatively small benefit) to +++ (a relatively large benefit). Types of benefits considered were: number of users who would benefit from the project, the project’s potential to connect major nodes/activity centers; and the project’s enhancement of accessibility and recreational/educational opportunities. Other considerations include whether a project would address environmental, health or safety issues, including those that may be urgent, and whether a project would involve either the creation of a new pathway or would significantly improve an existing one.
- **Time Period** – This dimension considers how long it might take to do all the planning, design, and implementation work for the project. Three time periods were considered: shorter term, intermediate term, and longer term. This is a relative assessment and is based on the reality that there are too many unknowns at this time in terms of availability of needed funds and/or volunteers to ascribe specific time frames for projects to be undertaken. Projects that require urgent attention would by definition be considered shorter term.
- **Cost** – This dimension provides a very rough estimate of the magnitude of the costs required for the project. The scale chosen was less than \$5,000 (\$), \$5,000-\$100,000 (\$\$), and more than \$100,000 (\$\$\$). Although we recognize that the availability of grant funds and/or fundraising could significantly advance the prospects of a particular project, this was not considered in the Committee’s assessment.

The projects were prioritized within the three major groups that the projects were organized into for this report. Within each grouping, the projects are prioritized first by Time Period (shortest to longest), then Benefit (highest to lowest), and then Cost (lowest to highest). The results are shown in Table 2. The rationale for this prioritization was that the Committee wanted to identify the best projects to work on that had the highest probability of success in the shortest period of time. Using common metaphors, the Committee wanted to focus on the “low-hanging fruit” with the “biggest bang for the buck.” The Committee felt that the community would support more of the projects if they saw several examples of what could be done within the first 5 years.

Prioritization of projects within major groupings.

See text for explanation of symbols.

Description	Section	Benefit	Time period (yrs.)	Cost
A. Existing Trails and Trail Networks				
Coggs Hall Park				
Mirror Lake Trail*	7.1.3.1	+++	1-2	\$\$\$
Lookout Loop Trail	7.1.3.2	+	1-2	\$
Woodland Loop Trail	7.1.3.3	+	1-2	\$\$
Whale Rock & Cascade Trail	7.1.3.4	++	3-4	\$
Pond Passage Trail	7.1.3.5	++	3-4	\$\$
Stones, Cliffs and Rock Loop Trail	7.1.3.6	++	3-4	\$\$
Power Line Passage	7.1.3.7	+	3-4	\$
Southwest Passage	7.1.3.8	+	3-4	\$\$
Waterfall Trail	7.1.3.9	+	3-4	\$
Coolidge Park Loop Trail	7.2	+++	3-4	\$\$
Crocker Conservation Area [defer to North County Land Trust]	7.3	+++		
Flat Rock Wildlife Sanctuary [defer to Mass Audubon]	7.4	+++		
Northern Watershed Trails				
Main Path	7.5.5.1	++	3-4	\$
Upper Scott Brook Loop	7.5.5.2	++	3-4	\$
Lower Scott Brook Loop	7.5.5.3	++	3-4	\$
Falulah Brook Loop Trail	7.5.5.4	++	3-4	\$
Hartwell Cemetery Loop Trail	7.5.5.5	+	3-4	\$
Thurston Road-Scott Brook Connector	7.5.5.6	+	3-4	\$
Lovell Reservoir Thurston Road Loop Trail	7.5.5.7	+	5+	\$
Shattuck Sawmill Trail	7.5.5.8	+	5+	\$
Billings Road Trail	7.5.5.9	+	5+	\$
Parkhill Park Trail	7.6	+	5+	\$\$\$
Sheldon Street Gateway Park				
Gateway Park Loop Trail	7.7.1	+++	1-2	\$\$
Knoll Trail*	7.7.2	+++	3-4	\$
Steamline Trail	7.8	++	1-2	\$\$

B. Proposed Trails, Under Development				
Twin Cities Rail Trail	8.4	+++	1-2	\$\$\$
Rock Walk Trail on Rollstone Hill*	7.9	+++	1-2	\$\$\$
C. Potential Connecting Pathways				
North-South Linkages*	8.5.1	++	3-4	\$\$
East-West Linkages*	8.5.2	++	3-4	\$\$\$
Rapids Passway restorations*	8.6	+	5+	\$\$
D. Other Potential Trails				
Moran Park/Phillips Brook		+	3-4	\$
5th Mass Turnpike		+	5+	\$
Blue Trail, Walnut St. south into Leominster	8.1	+	3-4	\$
E. Ongoing Needs				
Directional, Point of Interest, and Interpretive Signs*	8.2	+++	1-2	\$-\$\$

Table 2 Prioritization of projects within major groupings

10. Projects Underway or Planned

10.1 Short-Term Projects

The short-term projects that should be focused on during Year 1 are the following:

- 7.1.3.1 Mirror Lake Trail - accessible walk to Gazebo
- 7.1.3.2 Lookout Loop Trail
- 7.1.3.3 Woodland Loop Trail
- 7.7.1 Gateway Park Loop Trail
- 7.8 Steamline Trail
- 8.4 Twin Cities Rail Trail
- 7.9 Rock Walk Trail on Rollstone Hill

Of these, the only projects that have had some planning work performed, have preliminary approvals, and have potential sources of funding (e.g., a grant from DCR's Recreational Trails Program) are Mirror Lake Trail, the Twin Cities Rail Trail, and the Rock Walk Trail on Rollstone Hill. For the other projects, an advocate (individual or organization) would need to be identified who could do the necessary planning, obtaining of permits, securing of funding sources, and oversight of the implementation.

10.2 Planning Ahead

The other projects identified in the report will require more time to plan, obtain the necessary approvals and permits, and identify funding sources. Nevertheless, some should be started as soon as possible, and preferably in Year 1, because they are either: projects that serve ongoing needs that have no particular start and end dates associated with them; or projects that require a long lead-time to develop the consensus that is needed for the project to be successful. The Implementation Schedule (**Appendix A**) presents, for each trail for which detailed information is available, the trail's Section/Paragraph and page number pointing to the corresponding text of this document; the Responsible Party; Resources Needed (Tools & Equipment, Materials, Funds); Level of Permitting & Approvals Required; Benefit - Impact; Difficulty, Feasibility, Opportunity; Priority Ranking; Timeframe; and Comments. It is intended that the Implementation Schedule aid in planning and marshalling the resources to begin the work needed on the ground.

Additional discussions with stakeholders for the long-lead time projects should take place to determine the level of support that can be expected and this information should be used to re-prioritize future planning efforts as necessary. Example of such projects are as follows:

10.3 Ongoing needs

- D5 Blue Trails along Rivers
- E1 Directional, Point of Interest, and Interpretive Signs
- C1, 2, 3 Increase Connectedness of Trails Network

10.4 Other Existing/Potential Trails

D1 Moran Park/Phillips Brook

A little-used trail currently exists from Moran Field, which is a soccer field managed by the city Board of Parks Commissioners, southeast along the easterly bank of Phillips Brook to the former McTaggart's Pond beach. Although the DPW drained McTaggart's Pond in 2018 due to concerns about the safety of McTaggart's Dam, the trail is still attractive, both along Phillips Brook and through the wetlands where the pond formerly was. This trail segment is entirely on city land.

An unnamed tributary stream that originates in the vicinity of Sheldon Pond flows underneath Rt. 12 (Ashburnham St.) just north of the entrance to Moran Field, and discharges into Phillips Brook. In the 1930s, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) constructed a stone-lined channel, a trail and several stone bridges along the portion of this stream adjacent to Moran Field. With adequate funding, this former trail, which is also on city land, and the stonework along the stream could be restored.

There are other potential trail segments that could be developed along Phillips Brook, both to the west (upstream) of Moran Field, and to the south (downstream) of McTaggart's Dam and past the former Nagy Spring Mill, which was razed a number of years ago. The segment of Phillips Brook between Sanborn St. and Rt. 2A (Westminster St.) falls steeply over bare ledge, and is thus not currently safe for pedestrians, but with careful design a trail of over a mile in length could potentially be created on city land from the North Nashua River in the vicinity of Mill No. 3 Farmstand up along Phillips Brook to the vicinity of the Westminster town line. Side trails or loops off of the main trail may also be envisioned.

D2. 5th Mass Turnpike

Although several segments of 5th Mass Turnpike are paved city streets, the 0.5 mi segment of 5th Mass Turnpike between Mt. Elam Rd./Rollstone St. to the east, and Oak Hill Rd. to the west is no longer open to traffic. It is, however, a public trail. It parallels U.S. Rt. 2, just north of Notown Reservoir, part of the city of Leominster's public water supply. This stretch of 5th Mass Turnpike abuts a Dept. of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) parcel and crosses Shea Brook, which flows south into Notown Reservoir.

11. Sustaining the Vision

The development of this report by the Fitchburg Trails Vision Committee is only the first step in making progress towards the collective trails vision for Fitchburg. The Committee will need to continue to exist to provide a sustaining voice for the vision, to develop solutions that work for the City, and to identify and assist the advocates for the projects. At least one dedicated advocate for each project, and for some, many more, will be required to see it through the planning, designing, and implementing phases. As time goes on, the Fitchburg Trails Vision

Committee membership will be dynamic, reflecting the turnover of projects that are being focused on at any point in time.

New projects that are identified, as well as new information obtained during the planning of the current projects, will constantly alter planning priorities as time goes on. It is for this reason that the Trails Vision Committee recommends that the Trails Vision document be a working document, updated every 5 years so that lessons learned can be integrated and new priorities can be laid out. An update of the progress made toward achieving Fitchburg's Trails Vision should be provided to the Mayor and City Council on this same schedule, at a minimum.

Ultimately, the Fitchburg Trails Vision Committee believes the following:

- That the best measure of success of Fitchburg's Trails Vision will be how long it is sustained;
- That each successful project will increase the community's demand for more enhancements to our Trail Network.

In summary, if Fitchburg experiences how improvements to its trails network can improve quality of life, and if progress is made towards that vision via several short-term projects, we believe those improvements will result in increased support, if not demand, for more such projects. When this happens, the Fitchburg Trails Vision will become self-reinforcing and thereby sustained by a community that is safer, healthier, happier, and more connected. Fitchburg's trail system varies greatly in terms of length, setting, type of use, and level of maintenance. This plan envisions a future in which all of the city's recognized trails are maintained in a condition that makes them both passable and safe for their intended uses. It also examines the potential for extending and interconnecting these trails where possible. Some existing trails, particularly those currently owned and/or managed by North County Land Trust, the Friends of Coggshall Park, the City of Fitchburg and Mass Audubon, are currently maintained by the staff and/or volunteers and resources of those organizations. While we gratefully acknowledge these efforts, we recognize that a number of trails fall outside the direct purview of such responsible entities, and are rarely maintained in a condition that makes them welcoming and/or easy to navigate by potential users. Even the aforementioned organizations face challenges in sustaining and growing their efforts, given the limited availability of resources and volunteers to address ongoing maintenance issues such as erosion, plant overgrowth, and directional signage needs.

Ideally, this plan and the actions it will inspire will identify new volunteers and resources to better develop those trails that currently have no organized maintenance effort, while assisting those that do. It will also serve as a clearinghouse for all trail groups and citizens to ensure that well organized, coordinated and sustainable maintenance can be achieved for the city's many trails, whether it takes the form of a more formal, centralized system or one that is more informal and autonomous in nature.

To succeed in this effort, we look to those cities and towns that have already achieved considerable success in soliciting the involvement of the community at large in the development and maintenance of their trail systems. Among nearby communities, the Town of Groton stands out as having a particularly well organized and developed trail maintenance system. While we look to emulate such success and that of other communities, we recognize that every community is different and that what works in one may not be ideal for another. It is our hope that, by looking at the similarities and differences in the various strategies used by other communities, we can adopt a local strategy that makes the best use of Fitchburg's assets in terms of its people, organizations and resources. To that end, this section of our Trail Vision discusses what some of those strategies might look like.

Part 1 – Identification of a local Trail Stewards Team

Look at developing a team of trail stewards to assess progress, report on conditions, share information and assist each other in developing and maintaining the entire trail network in the city. Participants might include the North County Land Trust, the Friends of Coggshall Park, the City of Fitchburg and Mass Audubon, as well as members of the Fitchburg Greenway Committee and members of the Fitchburg Trails Vision Committee. Initial discussions in 2018 with representatives of several of these groups have confirmed their interest in the formation of a Trail Stewards Team.

Part 2 – Tapping into volunteer labor resources

Encourage abutters and local trail enthusiasts to take responsibility for maintaining, or adopting, an agreed upon section of trail they live near or use on a regular basis. Trail adopters can assess conditions on a regular basis and act when needed, either independently or with the assistance of other volunteers. Invite adopters to participate on the Trail Stewards Team and offer them available resources and volunteers when needed.

Engage Fitchburg's multitude of civic organizations and schools that participate in various community betterment activities, including neighborhood clean-ups and similar outdoor initiatives. The Trail Stewards Team could potentially utilize this volunteer pool by suggesting a trail project for adoption by one of these groups. The Trail Stewards would help to direct and coordinate such activities where possible. Fitchburg's schools, both public and private, all have a history of developing and sponsoring special projects that address local needs. Trail clean-up and maintenance would be a natural fit for such initiatives, particularly when the activity is in the locus of the school itself. For example, the Applewild School might take an interest in projects impacting the NCLT and Mass Audubon land that abuts school property or perhaps in the nearby Sheldon Street Gateway Park. Fitchburg State University, a wonderful resource not available in many communities, has an outstanding record of participation in community betterment activities and its students make regular use of the trails abutting University property as well as the nearby Mass Audubon and Northern Watershed trails.

Where longer term trail adoption is not practical, use the above resources to carry out specific short term “high priority” trail projects identified in this Vision. Tap into existing community service programs offered through Fitchburg State University, the MA Department of Corrections, the United Way Day of Caring and others wherever possible.

Part 3 – Identification of funding for trail projects and maintenance

Public Sources of Funding - There are numerous public grant programs through the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and occasionally the federal government that may fund part or all of the cost of new trail construction projects, particularly those that form part or all of a designated “park.” Typically such programs, such as the Community Development Block Grant program, are available only through a municipality, though there are exceptions. The City of Fitchburg has been a strong supporter of trail development in the city and is our most likely partner in any effort to solicit public funding for priority projects identified in this Vision. At the time of this writing, the most notable available public and private grant programs at the national, state, and local levels can be found in *Funding Sources for Trails and Greenways in Massachusetts (Appendix B)*. It was prepared by MRTC. For updated information regarding funding visit MRTC at www.MontachusettTrails.org.

Private Sources of Funding - Through area banks, businesses, organizations, the United Way and private citizens, there are many local sources of funds which could potentially be used to further the trail priorities identified in this Vision. There are both challenges and advantages in pursuing private funding. The challenges are that such funds are often very limited, they can be highly competitive with other community interests, and they often require considerable effort on the part of volunteers to solicit them. The advantages are that such funds provide a visible, measurable benefit, which grantors often prefer, and can be tailored to address a specific interest of the grantor, such as benefitting grantor employees, providing naming rights, or otherwise responding to a particular interest of the grantor. While such grants are typically small, it should be noted that trail projects are typically more labor than capital intensive and therefore do not require large amounts of funding to succeed. Finally, private funds are typically less restrictive than public funds and can therefore be used directly on the costs of needed items without additional reporting or accountability.

PHOTO CREDITS

<u>Contributor</u>	<u>Figure(s)</u>
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Paul Funch	66
Amy LeBlanc	42-43, 45-47, 49-53, 73
Mass Audubon	21-23
Michelle McGrath	Cover top & lower left, 3, 4, 7, 9
North County Land Trust	11, 12, 14-19
Parks Department	6, 67
Cindy Tuomala	25, 26

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Implementation Schedule

IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE											
Fitchburg Trails Committee											
Initiated: 1/1/2019											
Section	Summarized Task Description	Responsible Party	Resources Needed			Level of Permitting & Approvals Required	Benefit - Impact	Difficulty, Feasibility, Opportunity	Priority Ranking	Timeframe	Comments
			Tools & Equipment	Materials	Funds						
7.1.3.1	REBLAZE MIRROR LAKE LOOP TRAIL 0.6 mi	TRAIL STEWARDS	MINIMAL HAND TRAIL TOOLS	TRAIL BLAZING PAINT	UNDER \$40	RECREATION DEPT. PERMISSION	LARGE, SIGNIFICANT	EASY, VERY FEASIBLE, ANY TIME	HIGH	SHORTER TERM	NEEDS EXPERIENCED TRAIL MAINTAINER TO LEAD EFFORT
7.1.3.1	CONSTRUCT RAISED BOARDWALK IN LAKE TO CREATE FULL ACCESSIBLE TRAIL LOOP AROUND MIRROR LAKE	CITY & TRAIL CONTRACTOR	POWER TOOLS, SPECIALIZED EQUIPMENT	MARINE DOCK HARDWARE, LUMBER & MISC. HARDWARE	UNDER \$100K	REC. DEPT. & FRIENDS OF COGSHALL PARK & STATE AND LOCAL PERMISSION	LARGE, SIGNIFICANT	MODERATE DIFFICULTY, VERY FEASIBLE, NEEDS \$\$\$	HIGH	LONGER TERM	SUBJECT TO AVAILABILITY OF GRANT FUNDING/ APPROVALS
7.1.3.2	RE-ROUTE LOOKOUT LOOP TRAIL TO DESIRED LOCATION 1.1 mi	TRAIL STEWARDS	HAND TRAIL TOOLS	TRAIL BLAZING PAINT	UNDER \$40	REC. DEPT. & FRIENDS OF COGSHALL PARK PERMISSION	MODEST IMPACT & BENEFIT	EASY, VERY FEASIBLE, ANY TIME	MEDIUM	SHORTER TERM	NEEDS EXPERIENCED TRAIL MAINTAINER TO LEAD EFFORT
7.1.3.3	WOODLAND LOOP TRAIL 0.6 mi	TRAIL STEWARDS	HAND TRAIL TOOLS	TRAIL BLAZING PAINT	UNDER \$40	REC. DEPT. & FRIENDS OF COGSHALL PARK PERMISSION	MODEST IMPACT & BENEFIT	EASY, VERY FEASIBLE, ANY TIME	LOW	SHORTER TERM	NEEDS EXPERIENCED TRAIL MAINTAINER TO LEAD EFFORT
7.1.3.4	WHALE ROCK & CASCADE TRAIL 1.2 mi	TRAIL CONTRACTOR & TRAIL STEWARDS	HAND & POWER TRAIL TOOLS	STONE, GRAVEL, BLAZING PAINT	UNDER \$15,000	REC. DEPT. & FRIENDS OF COGSHALL PARK PERMISSION	MODEST IMPACT & BENEFIT	DIFFICULT, FEASIBLE, WHEN GRANT FUNDING AVAILABLE	LOW	LONGER TERM	SUBJECT TO AVAILABILITY OF GRANT FUNDING
7.1.3.5	POND PASSAGE TRAIL 1.5 mi	TRAIL STEWARDS	HAND TRAIL TOOLS	TRAIL BLAZING PAINT	UNDER \$40	REC. DEPT. & FRIENDS OF COGSHALL PARK PERMISSION	MODEST IMPACT & BENEFIT	EASY, VERY FEASIBLE, ANY TIME	MEDIUM	SHORTER TERM	NEEDS EXPERIENCED TRAIL MAINTAINER TO LEAD EFFORT

E X I S T I N G T R A I L S

Section	Summarized Task Description	Responsible Party	Resources Needed			Level of Permitting & Approvals Required	Benefit - Impact	Difficulty, Feasibility, Opportunity	Priority Ranking	Timeframe	Comments
			Tools & Equipment	Materials	Funds						
7.1.3.6	BLAZE STONES, CLIFF AND ROCK LOOP TRAIL	TRAIL STEWARDS	MINIMAL HAND TRAIL TOOLS	TRAIL BLAZING PAINT	UNDER \$40	REC. DEPT. & FRIENDS OF COGSHALL PARK PERMISSION	MODEST IMPACT & BENEFIT	EASY, VERY FEASIBLE, ANY TIME	MEDIUM	SHORTER TERM	NEEDS EXPERIENCED TRAIL MAINTAINER TO LEAD EFFORT
7.1.3.7	POWER LINE PASSAGE TRAIL 1.7 mi	TRAIL CONTRACTOR & STEWARDS	HAND TRAIL TOOLS	TRAIL BLAZING PAINT	UNDER \$40	REC. DEPT. & FRIENDS OF COGSHALL PARK PERMISSION	MODEST IMPACT & BENEFIT	EASY, VERY FEASIBLE, ANY TIME	LOW	LONGER TERM	NEEDS EXPERIENCED TRAIL MAINTAINER TO LEAD EFFORT
7.1.3.8	FLAG PROPOSED SOUTHWEST PASSAGE TRAIL ~2.0 mi	TRAIL STEWARDS	HAND TRAIL TOOLS	TRAIL BLAZING PAINT	UNDER \$40	REC. DEPT. & FRIENDS OF COGSHALL PARK PERMISSION	LOW IMPACT & BENEFIT	EASY, VERY FEASIBLE, ANY TIME	LOW	LONGER TERM	TRAIL CONTRACTOR TO LAYOUT ROUTE OF TRAIL
7.1.3.9	PROPOSED WATERFALL TRAIL ~1.0 mi	TRAIL CONTRACTOR & TRAIL STEWARDS	FLAGGING	NONE	UNDER \$250	RECREATION DEPT. PERMISSION	MODEST IMPACT & BENEFIT	EASY, VERY FEASIBLE, ANY TIME	LOW	SHORTER TERM	
7.2	COOLIDGE PARK LOOP TRAIL 0.9 mi	DPW	CITY EQUIPMENT	NONE	PROVIDED BY CITY	REC. DEPT./CONS COM	LARGE, SIGNIFICANT	EASY, VERY FEASIBLE, ANY TIME	MEDIUM	ONGOING	
7.3	CROCKER CONSERVATION AREA	NCLT									NEEDS IDENTIFIED AND DIRECTED BY NCLT
7.4	FLAT ROCK WILDLIFE SANCTUARY	MASS AUDUBON									NEEDS IDENTIFIED AND DIRECTED BY MASS AUDUBON
7.5	ALL NORTHERN WATERSHED TRAILS	WATER DEPT./VOLUNTEERS	TBD	SIGNAGE	UNDER \$10000	WATER DEPT.	MODERATE	EASY, VERY FEASIBLE, ANY TIME	MEDIUM	INTERMEDIATE TERM	SUBJECT TO AVAILABILITY OF GRANT FUNDING

E X I S T I N G T R A I L S

Section	Summarized Task Description	Responsible Party	Resources Needed			Level of Permitting & Approvals Required	Benefit - Impact	Difficulty, Feasibility, Opportunity	Priority Ranking	Timeframe	Comments
			Tools & Equipment	Materials	Funds						
7.9	PROPOSED ROLLSTONE HILL "ROCK WALK" TRAIL ~2.0 mi.	DPW W/ ASSISTANCE FROM SCA CREWS	CITY AND RENTED EQUIPMENT, SCA EQUIPMENT	STONE FROM CITY STONEYARD, SIGNAGE	\$130,000 AWARDED BY STATE AND CFNCM GRANTS	VARIOUS CITY DEPARTMENTS AND COMMISSIONS, TBD	LARGE, SIGNIFICANT	MODERATE DIFFICULTY, VERY FEASIBLE, PLANNING UNDERWAY	HIGH	INTERMEDIATE TERM	FCG IS HELPING TO GUIDE CITY
8.4	PROPOSED TWIN CITIES RAIL TRAIL ~4.3 mi.	MADOT	CONTRACTED WORK		EST. \$20 MIL IN FED/STATE GRANTS		HIGHLY SIGNIFICANT	N/A FULLY FUNDED	HIGH	SHORT TERM	2 CITIES AND TCRT ASSN WORKING W/STATE ON DESIGN
7.7.1	ENHANCING GATEWAY LOOP TRAIL	CITY REC. DEPT. & TRAIL STEWARDS	VARIETY OF EQUIPMENT & TOOLS	BOLLARDS, SIGNAGE, TREES,	UNDER \$10,000	RECREATION DEPT.	MODERATE	MODERATE DIFFICULTY, VERY FEASIBLE, AS FUNDING BECOMES AVAILABLE	HIGH	SHORTER TERM	LOOSE ENDS NOT COMPLETED WHEN PARK WAS ESTABLISHED
7.7.2	COMPLETING KNOLL TRAIL & ADDING ACCESSIBLE TRAIL SECTION AS WELL AS A RETURN LOOP	CITY REC. DEPT. & TRAIL STEWARDS	CHAINSAWS & HAND TRAIL TOOLS	SIGNAGE, STONE BENCHES, STONE STEPS, GRAVEL, TRAIL TOOLS	UNDER \$10,000	RECREATION DEPT.	MODERATE TO LARGE	MODERATE DIFFICULTY, VERY FEASIBLE, AS FUNDING BECOMES AVAILABLE	HIGH	INTERMEDIATE TERM	ADDING ACCESSIBLE TRAIL WOULD BE SIGNIFICANT
7.8	STEAMLINE TRAIL	CITY REC. DEPT. & TRAIL STEWARDS	TOOLS, BACKSHOE, SUPPLIES	REPAIR FENCE, FIX CULVERT, IMPROVE SIGNAGE	UNDER \$10,000	RECREATION DEPT.	MODEST IMPACT AND BENEFIT	EASY AND FEASIBLE	HIGH	SHORT TERM	NEEDS CITY WORK CREW, SOME FUNDS VOLUNTEERS

E X I S T I N G T R A I L S

Appendix B: Funding Sources for Trails and Greenways in Massachusetts

Funding Sources for Trails and Greenways in Massachusetts

Introduction: Trail funding comes from either **public** or **private** sources and at one of three levels: **national**, **state** or **local**. While this produces a multitude of funding opportunities, raising funds for a trail project is still a difficult and demanding task. It takes time, perseverance, and creativity to be successful. The information below is meant to help you determine which avenue is best to fund your project. Good Luck! The following information was gathered from the web in December, 2018.

Periodically changes will be made to this information. Please visit www.MontachusettTrails.org for the most up-to-date information.

I. PUBLIC FUNDING SOURCES

A. National Funding Opportunities

1. The Recreational Trails Program Grants (RTP Grants)

This federally-funded grant program is administered thru the MassTrails Program in Massachusetts. Its funds are pulled from the Transportation Alternatives funding pool which generates its funds from the federal tax on recreational vehicle gas sales. These grants can be put towards the repair and management of existing trails as well as the development of new ones, in addition to the restoration of existing trails, development or rehabilitation of trailside and trailhead facilities and linkages, acquisition of necessary easements, associated administrative costs, educational programs, trail maps and signage, and other trail uses. Private organizations are eligible if they are 501 C (3) organizations or if they secure a fiscal agent that meets the state's criteria. (*See state grant section for more information on the Recreational Trails Program (RTP)*)

Typical grants range in size from \$10,000 to \$100,000 with special projects eligible for increased funding. At least 30 percent of all RTP funds must be used for non-motorized trails, another 30% is used for motorized trail projects and the remaining 40% may be used for mixed trail uses.

The customary deadline for filing the RTP grant application is February 1st. The process is an on-line application as of 2019 and can be found on the www.MassTrails.com website. The grant is a competitive, matching cost, reimbursement program. The grant will pay up to 80% of the total project cost and the applicant is required to pay 20% of the project cost in donated labor, materials or services. The grants typically have a 2-year completion window with interim and

final progress reports required. Applicants must sign a State Contract before they can spend funding from the grant and before they can count any donated efforts toward the grant match. The application form and examples of past funded projects can be found on line through the MassTrails website. Amanda Lewis, MassTrails Program Manager, can be contacted at her office on Damon Road in Northampton, MA or by calling her at 1-413-586-8706 or at Amanda.Lewis@state.ma.us

2. Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA) within the National Park Service

The [Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program \(RTCA\)](#) is a technical assistance program of the National Park Service dedicated to helping local groups and communities preserve and develop open space, trails and greenways. RTCA is an important resource for many trail builders in urban, rural and suburban areas. While RTCA does not give out grants or loans, the program “supplies a staff person with experience in community-based outdoor recreation and conservation to work with partners” on the ground. To apply for technical assistance from the RTCA, follow their application instructions located [here](#).

3. Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Stateside Program thru the National Park Service

The [Land and Water Conservation Fund \(LWC\)](#) is a 50/50 matching grant program administered by the Massachusetts Division of Conservation Services in cooperation with the National Park Service. Program funds are intended for the acquisition and development of outdoor recreation areas; trails are one priority of this program. In particular, funds “target projects that would enhance urban parks and community green spaces,” with a focus on “developing blueways and public access to water resources and conserving large landscapes.”

4. Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG) thru HUD

Providing annual grants on a formula basis to local governments and states for a wide range of community planning initiatives, [Community Development Block Grant Program \(CDBG\)](#) funds are intended for activities that benefit low- and moderate-income persons, prevent or eliminate slums or blight, and address urgent community development needs. In the past, CDBG funds have been used for trail construction.

5. Urban and Community Forestry (UCF) thru the US Forest Service

A program of the U.S. Forest Service, [Urban and Community Forestry \(UCF\)](#) “provides technical, financial, research and educational services to local government, nonprofit organizations, community groups, educational institutions and tribal governments.” Trails and greenways are

a key part of the program, which is administered by the Massachusetts Division of Conservation and Recreation. The planting of young trees and the care and maintenance of trees along the trail corridor are ways that groups can utilize this program.

6. Economic Development Administration (EDA) Funding thru the Department of Commerce

Among the [various programs](#) administered by the [Economic Development Administration](#) (EDA) of the U.S. Department of Commerce is the Public Works program. The investment program provides funding with the goal of empowering “distressed communities to revitalize, expand and upgrade their physical infrastructure.” Among other uses, EDA Public Works funds can help redevelop brownfield sites and increase eco-industrial development. The EDA also offers limited local technical assistance to distressed areas in times of need.

7. Historic Preservation Funding Sources administered by the National Park Service

Many trail corridors contain historic structures, which are often of regional or national significance. Administered by the National Park Service, the [Historic Preservation Fund](#) awards matching grants to state and tribal historic preservation offices for the restoration of properties that are on the National Register of Historic Places. To look up your state or territorial state historic preservation officer (SHPO), visit the [National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers](#). For information on the National Register of Historic Places and the process to get a property listed, visit [National Register of Historic Places website](#).

8. Environmental Contamination Cleanup Funding Sources thru the Environmental Protection Agency

Many rail corridors are contaminated from years of industrial use. To remediate this environmental pollution, there are many federal and state funding sources from which trails can benefit. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has devoted a [section of its website](#) to funding and financing for brownfields, which are former industrial sites where contaminants or pollutants may be present. Many trails have taken advantage of brownfield funding, including Rhode Island’s [Woonasquatucket River Greenway Project](#), the [Elkins Railyard redevelopment](#) in West Virginia and the [Assabet River Rail Trail](#) in Massachusetts. A 2011 [article from the Trust for Public Land](#) shows examples of brownfields converted to parkland.

The EPA also administers Superfund, the federal government’s program to clean up some of the nation's worst uncontrolled hazardous waste sites. More information about Superfund Redevelopment, an effort to return these hazardous sites to safe and productive use, is

available on the [EPA website](#). Specific information about [rail-trails on or near Superfund sites](#) is also available.

9. Wetlands Restoration Funding Sources thru the Natural Resources Conservation Service of the Dept. of Agriculture

Related funding sources include the [Corporate Wetlands Restoration Partnership](#)—an innovative private-public partnership that provides money for wetlands restoration—and the [Natural Resources Conservation Service](#) of the Department of Agriculture, which offers technical and financial assistance programs to restore and protect natural resources and wildlife. The Environmental Protection Agency offers a [full list of federal funding sources for watershed protection](#). The NRCS may have programs where groups can secure funding to address invasive eradication in wildlife and meadow habitats along trails.

DISCLAIMER: GIVEN THE CHANGING NATURE OF FEDERAL FUNDING THROUGH THE ANNUAL BUDGET PROCESS, MRTC MAKES NO PROMISES THAT THESE PROGRAMS WILL HAVE FUNDING IN 2019 OR BEYOND.

II. Public Funding Sources (continued)

B. Massachusetts (State) Funding Sources

In Massachusetts, one of the primary funding sources for trail development is the MassTrails program. The MassTrails program is administered by the Massachusetts' Division of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). There are a variety of other programs available through divisions of the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA), including those that provide grants, matching funds and low-interest or interest-free loans.

1. Mass Trails Grants

MassTrails Grants are competitive, matching grants open to communities, public entities and qualified non-profit organizations and funded through two different sources:

a. Recreational Trails Program (RTP)

RTP grants are federally funded through the United States Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), but are administered at the State level, and provide funding for the development and maintenance of recreational trail projects. In Massachusetts, the RTP Trails Grant Program is administered by the Massachusetts Division of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). Both motorized and non-motorized trail projects qualify for assistance.

All Recreational Trails Program (RTP) grant applications are reviewed by the Massachusetts Recreational Trails Advisory Board (MARTAB), which is an independent volunteer board appointed by the DCR Commissioner.

MassTrails provides matching grants to design, create, and maintain the diverse network of trails and trails experiences used and enjoyed by Massachusetts residents and visitors.

MassTrails grants are REIMBURSABLE, meaning grantees must first pay for expenditures themselves and then submit for reimbursement using the required documentation. MassTrails grants are MATCHING grants and require that proponents provide a minimum of 20% of the total project cost. Applications are accepted annually for a variety of well-planned trail projects benefiting communities across the state. The grants are typically due by February 1st of that year. The application process is an on-line process beginning in 2019.

Grant amounts are dependent on the project and its needs, but RTP grants generally range from \$10,000 to \$100,000 (if the project is a multi-town/organization project or a project of state-wide significance).

b. Commonwealth Trails Grants (CTP)

CTP grants may range up to \$300,000. Eligible grant activities include project development, design, engineering, permitting, construction, and maintenance of recreational trails, shared use pathways, and the amenities that support trails. One applies for this grant using the same application form, the same deadline and it is sent to the same place as the RTP grant applications. The Commonwealth Trails Program is funded out of the Environmental Bond bill of 2018 and through the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA).

Both the RTP and the CTP programs are looking to award about \$2.5 million in grants for FY2020. Eligible projects require documented land owner permission and community support as well as documented match for the grant. For more information visit their website at:

<https://www.mass.gov/welcome-to-masstrails>

2. Massachusetts Department of Transportation

MassDOT divides the federal highway funding that it receives between "regional target funding," which is allocated at the discretion of the MPOs for regional priority projects on the federal aid transportation system, and funding that is allocated at MassDOT's discretion for use principally on the state-owned transportation system. Each MPO's regional target funding is composed of shares of Surface Transportation Program, Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) Improvement Program, Highway Safety Improvement Program, and Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) funding. "Statewide" funding that is allocated at MassDOT's discretion includes funding from all of the federal highway sources listed below. Bicycle, pedestrian, and recreational trails are eligible activities under the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP). TAP is a competitive grant program created by the federal Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21). TAP provides funding for a variety of transportation projects types, including projects that would previously have been eligible for funding under separate programs: the Transportation Enhancements, Recreational Trails, and Safe Routes to School programs.

In accordance with MAP-21, Massachusetts Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) funds may be used for the following types of projects:

- Construction, planning, and design of on-road and off-road trail facilities for pedestrians, bicyclists and other non-motorized forms of transportation (including sidewalks, bicycle infrastructure, pedestrian and bicycle signals, traffic calming techniques, lighting and other safety-related infrastructure, and transportation related

projects to achieve compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990)

- The recreational trails program under section 206 of title 23

For more information on MassDOT funding, visit:

<https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2017/09/21/StatewideFundingPrograms.pdf>

3. MassDevelopment

Mass Development provides grant money for programs that are specifically designed to improve economic development and competitiveness across the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. For additional information on grants funded, visit:

<https://www.massdevelopment.com/what-we-offer/financing/grants/>

C. Municipal Allocations

The most common sources of funding at the municipal and county level may include allocations from a specific department, such as the park and recreation department, a local conservation commission or the community preservation committee or open space committee. Additionally, communities can include a line item in their annual budget in a consolidated capital improvement program (CIP) budget. In some localities, a portion of an increase in the sales tax will be set aside for recreational trail or other conservation funding. Rarely, new taxes will be levied to exclusively support active trail projects.

I. 1. Community Preservation Act:

Communities that have passed the Community Preservation Act (CPA) are allowed to establish a surcharge of up to 3% on real estate transactions in their community which can then be used for preservation, open space and recreation projects. Trail construction and maintenance is one of the accepted project areas. The Department of Revenue also distributes funds to communities that have adopted the CPA from the state's Community Preservation Fund. The Community Preservation Committee in each municipality that has adopted CPA makes the decision on which projects to fund.

2. Bond Issues

Local revenues may also be raised through bond issues. Mounting a successful bond campaign is like running any other campaign: you need strong citizen support, participation by local officials and business leaders and hard work. As evidenced above, some communities have also passed referenda to specifically fund trail and greenway projects. The Trust for Public Land maintains [LandVote](#), a database of these local and state referenda.

3. Planning Board Approval

Through the Planning Board process, communities can acquire parcels of land for trails and may be able to work with developers to fund recreational trails that have a positive impact on the proposed development and the community at large. Trail groups should work to keep their local Planning Board up to date on their trail vision for the community or a specific area in the community in the event that a project presents an opportunity to design and create a trail

Revenue from the Corridor Itself

D. Salvaged Material

The rails, ties, ballast and other improvements made to the rail corridor have salvage value and should not be overlooked. Revenue generated from the selling of these items varies widely, depending on local markets, the length of the corridor and the quantity of salvageable materials. However, salvageable materials often have been sold—legally by the railroad or illegally by waste pickers or adjacent landowners—by the time a trail corridor is in public ownership. For more information on salvaged materials as a source of revenue, contact the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy for more information.

E. Leasing to Utilities

A growing source of trail development funds is coming from the leasing of subsurface rights for fiber-optic cables and other utilities. Compatible co-uses of a rail-trail corridor include sewer, water and natural gas. Occasionally, above-ground utilities such as telephone and overhead electric lines, parking areas or billboard rentals can successfully share a corridor with a rail-trail. In the past,

utility companies have also bought abandoned corridors and then donated the land for trail use. Abandoned corridors can provide key links for utility use, so working cooperatively with local utilities can help pay for your trail. For more information on this type of co-use, look in the [Utilities](#) section of the Trail-Building Toolbox.

Public Art Funding Sources

Many trails feature art as a core component, such as along the [Steel Valley Trail](#) section of the Great Allegheny Passage near Pittsburgh. Funding sources for public art can often be found at the state level; the [Maryland State Arts Council](#), for example, offers a grant program for public art. The National Assembly of State Arts Agencies can guide you to your state's arts agency with their [national directory](#). On the federal level, one of the most well-known resources is the [National Endowment for the Arts](#), which operates numerous grant programs supporting public art. The National Trails Training Partnership features a [section on art for trails and greenways](#).

III. PRIVATE FUNDING SOURCES

Funds can be attained from private sources in countless ways—from holding bake sales to soliciting foundation grants. But when fundraising, be sure to have a specific goal in mind. As one contributor to the RTC Listserv notes, “It is always easier to raise money when you have a specific operational purpose (e.g., land acquisition or land management) as opposed to general organizational needs.” Of all the potential types of funding, private funding sources provide trail builders with the greatest amount of flexibility and opportunity for creative approaches.

A. [National Funding Opportunities](#)

1. [American Hiking Society’s National Trails Fund](#)

The National Trails Fund is reserved for organizations in the Hiking Alliance that are also 501(c) (3) certified nonprofits. Members that lack that accreditation do have the opportunity to use a fiscal agent. Through this fund, the American Hiking Society has given over \$560,000 to 182 trail projects. It is the only privately funded national grants program that gives solely to the building and protecting of hiking trails.

2. [Kodak American Greenways Grant](#)

The Kodak American Greenways Awards Program is a partnership project of the Eastman Kodak Company, National Geographic and the Conservation Fund that gives

a series of small grants (\$500 to \$2500) for the planning, design and implementation of greenways. Public agencies may apply, but nonprofits are given preference.

3. Alta Planning & Design Grants

Though reserved for their clients, Alta Planning has grant specialists on staff and has leveraged over \$95 million in grants for bicycle, pedestrian and trail projects. While not giving grants directly, they have a history of success in acquiring large amounts of funding from state, national and local sources, both public and private, for their clients' projects.

4. Conservation Alliance Grants

From 1989 to 2013, the Conservation Alliance has given over \$12 million in grants to protect and preserve wild areas across North America, both for their habitat and for recreational purposes. These grants are for registered 501(c) (3) organizations that meet their criteria. While these funds are often for protecting land, they have been utilized for providing pedestrian access to wild lands, which includes trail development.

Bottom line: there *are* environmental grants out there for your trail and greenway projects

5. Fundraising Campaigns and Donations

Communities across the country have raised money for the development and maintenance of their trails and greenways through various fundraising campaigns. Some groups have "sold" pieces of trail, providing each donor with a "deed" for their segment of the trail. Other groups have also sold trail amenities, such as benches and trees. But donations can be creative; use whatever resources you have! For example, RTC worked with Bob Whittaker, who manages the tours of the rock group REM, to advance the progress of Washington's [Ferry County Rail Trail](#). As part of his fundraising effort, Whittaker asked the band for an [autographed guitar to auction off](#) for the trail. The subsequent sale on eBay earned about \$1,500 for trail development.

6. Crowdfunding for Community projects

www.ioby.org/

Raise money, find **resources**, make connections, bring your great idea to reality. keep what you raise. among the lowest fees. community of changemakers. tailored trainings. Amenities: Fiscal sponsorship, Fundraising help, Lowest fees

7. Trust Funds or Endowments

These sources can be set up to aid funding for acquisition, construction or maintenance, and can be administered by a nonprofit group or local commission. Funds can be contributed to a trust fund from government sources, private grants and gifts. One contributor to the RTC Listserv notes that transparency is important with a trust fund, stating, “If you do set up a dedicated endowment for land management, I would recommend keeping the endowment’s books open to the public and [providing] members and donors with annual financial reports for the endowment.”

8. Foundation and Company Grants

Many foundations and companies provide grants for trail and greenway projects, open space preservation, community development and community health. To obtain larger contributions from foundations or corporations, you will need a full-fledged funding proposal that illustrates the communitywide value of the trail and describes how it will be developed and maintained. Here are just a few examples of grants from private sources that can be used for trail-building:

- Community Foundation-United Way
- The [PeopleForBikes Community Grant Program](#) provides funding to bike advocacy and facility-building projects.
- The Conservation Fund’s [Land Conservation Loan Program](#) provides loans to quickly purchase high-priority lands.
- The American Hiking Society awards grants from its [National Trails Fund](#) for the establishment, protection and maintenance of trails in the United States.
- The outdoor goods store REI invites nonprofits nominated by its employees to submit proposals for funding. The company [offers grants](#) to support efforts “to care for public lands, natural areas, trails and waterways.” A recent recipient of an REI grant was Friends of the Wissahickon’s [Sustainable Trails Initiative](#).
- The [Conservation Alliance](#), a group of more than 180 outdoor businesses, including Patagonia, The North Face, and Kelty, disbursed \$1.65 million worth of grants in 2014, with a focus on habitat conservation and recreation.
- The [Walmart Foundation](#) provides grants to local communities and nonprofit organizations. These grants range from \$250 to \$2,500 and are awarded through each Walmart and Sam’s Club store.

Be Creative!

You don't need to fill out a grant application every time you need funding. From partnering with local businesses to holding a large event, there are many ways to think outside the box while raising money and awareness.

Partnerships

Explore the possibility of creating partnerships to build and maintain your trail or greenway, potentially through an "Adopt-a-Trail" program. These can be important for not only constructing and maintaining your project, but also building community pride. Try contacting businesses in your area to see if they offer any kind of community support programs. Whole Foods Market, for example, hosts several five percent [Community Giving Days](#) at each store annually to support the work of community nonprofits.

Don't be shy about appealing to local clubs for volunteer assistance. The Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Sierra Club, biking and trail clubs, birding clubs and local civic clubs are all potential sources of help.

Events

Who doesn't enjoy good music, food and company? In June 2008, the [Lassen Land and Trails Trust](#) put on Bridgefest, a two-day music festival in Susanville, Calif. The proceeds were donated to the trust's Trails Endowment Fund, which worked to raise money to rebuild a bridge along the [Bizz Johnson Trail](#), which burned in a 2000 wildfire. Trail builders and managers can organize fundraising events such as dinners, parties, festivals, fairs, raffles or concerts to raise funds near the trail. Or try events along the trail route itself, such as a hike-a-thon, walk-a-thon, bike race or foot race.

One creative RTC Listserv contributor suggested holding a "poker run" along the length of the trail, where trail supporters collect cards along the way and the finisher with the best hand wins a prize.

Volunteer Opportunities

Military units with construction expertise are sometimes willing to assist with construction of trails on federal land. One RTC Listserv contributor worked with the Washington Air National Guard and the 864th Engineering Battalion to

completely refurbish railroad bridges along the [Foothills Trail](#) in Pierce County, Wash. While not a source of funding, this resource could be helpful for some trail projects.

The [Take Pride in America](#) program, operated by the U.S. Department of the Interior, serves to mobilize civilian volunteers to help improve federal lands. The [Corporation for National and Community Service](#) runs numerous volunteer programs, including AmeriCorps, which could provide useful labor for your trail. Many national parks and other federally managed lands also operate [Youth Conservation Corps](#) programs, which could likewise provide labor for your trail project.

Still looking for more fundraising possibilities? The National Trails Training Partnership has a list of [96 innovative funding ideas](#) to keep your creative juices flowing.

For information on funding options for ongoing rail-trail maintenance, please visit our [Management and Maintenance: Financing/Funding](#) Toolbox page.