



FITCHBURG, MA
Open Space and
Recreation Plan
Update
2022 – 2029

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SECTION 1: PLAN SUMMARY

The City of Fitchburg is rich in history and notable for its post-industrial character and defining landscapes. Populated by a diverse and growing community, it has become a priority for Fitchburg to preserve its natural resources and equitably expand open space access for all. The City of Fitchburg's 2022-2029 Open Space and Recreation Plan outlines updated open space, conservation, and recreation goals and objectives, and lays out a seven-year action plan for achieving these goals.

As with earlier plans, this document emphasizes the preservation of the natural and rural assets of the northern, western, and south-central areas of the city, and the provision of recreational opportunities within the city's older urban neighborhoods. Many green spaces are near densely developed areas and close to the Nashua River, providing aesthetic value and recreational resources for the city. The more rural sections of the city exhibit working farms and scenic roads within a five-minute drive of densely populated neighborhoods. While there are large areas of protected open space in Fitchburg, including watershed lands in the rural northern section and parks, cemeteries, and farms, some of Fitchburg's important green areas have no formal protection. This Plan Update represents Fitchburg's desire to provide, protect, maintain, and enhance its open spaces and recreational facilities and programming.

In early Spring 2022, the City formally launched the process to update its Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) by forming an Open Space Plan Update Advisory Committee to engage a broad spectrum of the Fitchburg community in developing the 2022–2029 OSRP. The Advisory Committee has provided comments, advice, recommendations, and support throughout the process, meeting multiple times from March 2022 to October 2022. The general intentions of this Plan Update focus on maintaining and upgrading City-owned open space properties, increasing park use by a variety of populations, making parks more accessible to all residents, and ensuring that resources are resilient and sustainable for future generations. Overall, this plan reaffirms Fitchburg's desire to meet the following goals:

1. Develop and maintain a safe and sought-after park system in Fitchburg that provides a variety of active and passive recreational and cultural opportunities for all Fitchburg residents.
2. Provide enhanced and expanded walking and biking paths for recreation and commuting.
3. Provide equitable access to high-quality and inclusive recreational opportunities.
4. Protect and promote Fitchburg's watershed.
5. Preserve, restore, enhance, and promote open space and natural resources that increase Fitchburg's resilience to the effects of climate change.
6. Promote green space in the urban core.

Specific objectives for accomplishing these six goals have been outlined in Section 9 of this document. Over the next seven years, this OSRP will guide the City's efforts and provide direction as decisions are made and new projects are undertaken that will affect the overall quality of life for Fitchburg residents. This plan reflects the City's commitment to improving and protecting its open spaces and natural resources, providing equitable access and recreational opportunities for all, increasing resilience, and promoting urban green space and a biodiverse ecosystem.

SECTION 2: INTRODUCTION

Statement of Purpose

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the important role that public open space plays in the community. Throughout the pandemic, public spaces offered respite as a safe gathering place and promoted active, healthy lifestyles. When stores shuttered, people turned to the outdoors – parks, playgrounds, and trails – and this increased use continues. These experiences strongly influenced the development of the goals and objectives outlined in this OSRP, whose purpose is to serve as a guide for current and future conservation, management, and development of public open space and assets.

Prior versions of the City's open space plans focused on two broad themes – the need for preservation of Fitchburg's natural and rural assets, and the provision of recreational opportunities in the City's urban neighborhoods. The goals of this updated OSRP plan focus on maintaining and upgrading city-owned properties, expanding park use by diverse populations, improving accessibility for all, and ensuring that resources are resilient and sustainable. A focal point of this OSRP is the emphasis on land conservation and mitigating the impacts of climate change, especially within the Nashua River Watershed. This OSRP provides an action plan for achievable goals for the Fitchburg community over time, along with historical guidance and relevant demographic context.

Planning Process and Public Participation

A public participation process was conducted to ensure the community's values regarding parks, recreation, open space, and related topics are accurately reflected in this Plan. As mentioned, the City formed an OSRP Update Advisory Committee that met on multiple occasions – both virtually and in person – to offer feedback on various parts of the plan and act as a sounding board.

Additionally, an online survey was conducted from May–June 2022 to collect information about community priorities and receive feedback about Fitchburg's parks and open spaces, in conjunction with a Community Input Mapper where people could provide specific geographic feedback. The survey was conducted in Spanish and English and was distributed by the City through a variety of means including the City's website, social media, email blasts, outreach to the public schools and community organizations, distributing post cards at area agencies, businesses, and city buildings, and through outreach by OSRP Update Advisory Committee members. Residents were asked to rank the importance of preserving, protecting, and enhancing various types of open space and natural resources. The City received a total of 105 responses.

To advertise the survey, webpage, and public forums, postcards in Spanish and English were distributed throughout the city to major businesses as well as City Hall and the Fitchburg Public Library. Information was also posted on the City of Fitchburg's website and Facebook page with several subsequent posts including extension dates to ensure advanced notice was provided for all events. Residents that were registered with InTown, a downtown group, received direct notice via email. Notices were also e-mailed to external organizations and all city employees who were encouraged to share events and engagement materials amongst their networks. The city also utilized the City Hall Electronic Bulletin Board and local broadcasting network FATV to advertise the public forum and survey.

In April 2022, the City held a focus group with representation from various open space and recreation stakeholders in the community, including members from the Nashua River Watershed Association, North County Land Trust, Making Opportunity Count, Fitchburg Greenway Committee, and the Fitchburg Conservation Commission. The event collected input about updated goals and objectives based upon the prior OSRP.

Our first public forum was held on June 9, 2022. After a brief presentation outlining the purpose and process of an Open Space Plan, individuals voted at various tables and had the opportunity to speak with City staff and planners.

Finally, a community forum outlining the seven-year action plan was held on August 24, 2022. The information presented at this meeting was posted on the City website and a public comment period followed this event. To conclude public engagement efforts, a draft of the Open Space Plan was posted to the Fitchburg Planning Division web page where public input was collected. Community members had the opportunity to comment on specific items within the draft which were incorporated into the final document.

Enhanced Outreach and Public Participation

Fitchburg is an environmental justice (EJ) community composed of various Census block groups with EJ populations (minority, income, and minority and income). This OSRP thoroughly considers the presence of EJ populations and the relationship to recreational and open space opportunities as well as vulnerability to flood zones. During the public outreach process for this OSRP update, the City reached out to diverse community-based organizations requesting participation. In addition, the online survey and all promotional materials were provided both in English and Spanish. Spanish is the second most common language spoken in Fitchburg. Approximately 29% of Fitchburg residents speak a language other than English at home, with 22% of residents speaking Spanish. The City also maintains a contract with Language Line Solutions to have translation and interpretation services available for 240 languages. The City is committed to providing equitable access to high-quality and inclusive recreational opportunities, improving access for underserved populations, and supporting the acquisition of land for new open spaces in areas that lack existing or usable open spaces. Fitchburg also wishes to partner with community-based organizations on programming that connects residents of environmental justice neighborhoods to parks.

SECTION 3: COMMUNITY SETTING

Regional Setting

Located in north central Massachusetts, Fitchburg is a mid-sized city situated approximately 25 miles north of Worcester and 46 miles northwest of Boston. As part of Worcester County, Fitchburg is bordered by Ashby to the north, Lunenburg to the east, Leominster to the south, Westminster to the west, and a small portion of Ashburnham to the northwest (see *Map 1: Regional Context*). According to the 2020 Decennial Census, Fitchburg is the third largest city in Worcester County with a population of 41,946, behind Worcester (206,518) and just behind Leominster (43,782). Fitchburg is a member of the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC), which encompasses 21 other constituent communities across the Montachusett region. Route 2 runs along most of the city's southern border with Leominster. By car, Fitchburg is approximately 30 minutes to Worcester and 60 minutes to Boston. The Fitchburg commuter rail line enables residents to commute from Fitchburg to Boston and its environs. At the time of the last Fitchburg OSRP, the MBTA commuter rail from North Station in Boston terminated at the Intermodal Transportation Center on Main Street in Fitchburg. Since that time, a new station was added in West Fitchburg, four miles west of the Intermodal Center. This new end of the Fitchburg Line is known as Wachusett Station.

Fitchburg is comprised of 27.8 square miles of land and 0.3 square miles of water. It is one of eighteen (18) communities in the Nashua River Watershed, and the North Nashua River is the physical and historic heart of the city. The river runs from northeast to the city's center, where it then bends and courses southeast through Downtown, and beyond, forming the boundary between South Fitchburg and East Fitchburg, to the airport where it crosses the Leominster town line. Nine dams and flood control retaining walls dominate the river as it passes through Fitchburg. It receives discharges from both the East Fitchburg and Leominster Wastewater Treatment Plants and stormwater runoff from the cities of Leominster and Fitchburg. The North Nashua River flows through Leominster State Forest and agricultural fields before joining with the South Nashua River in Lancaster.¹

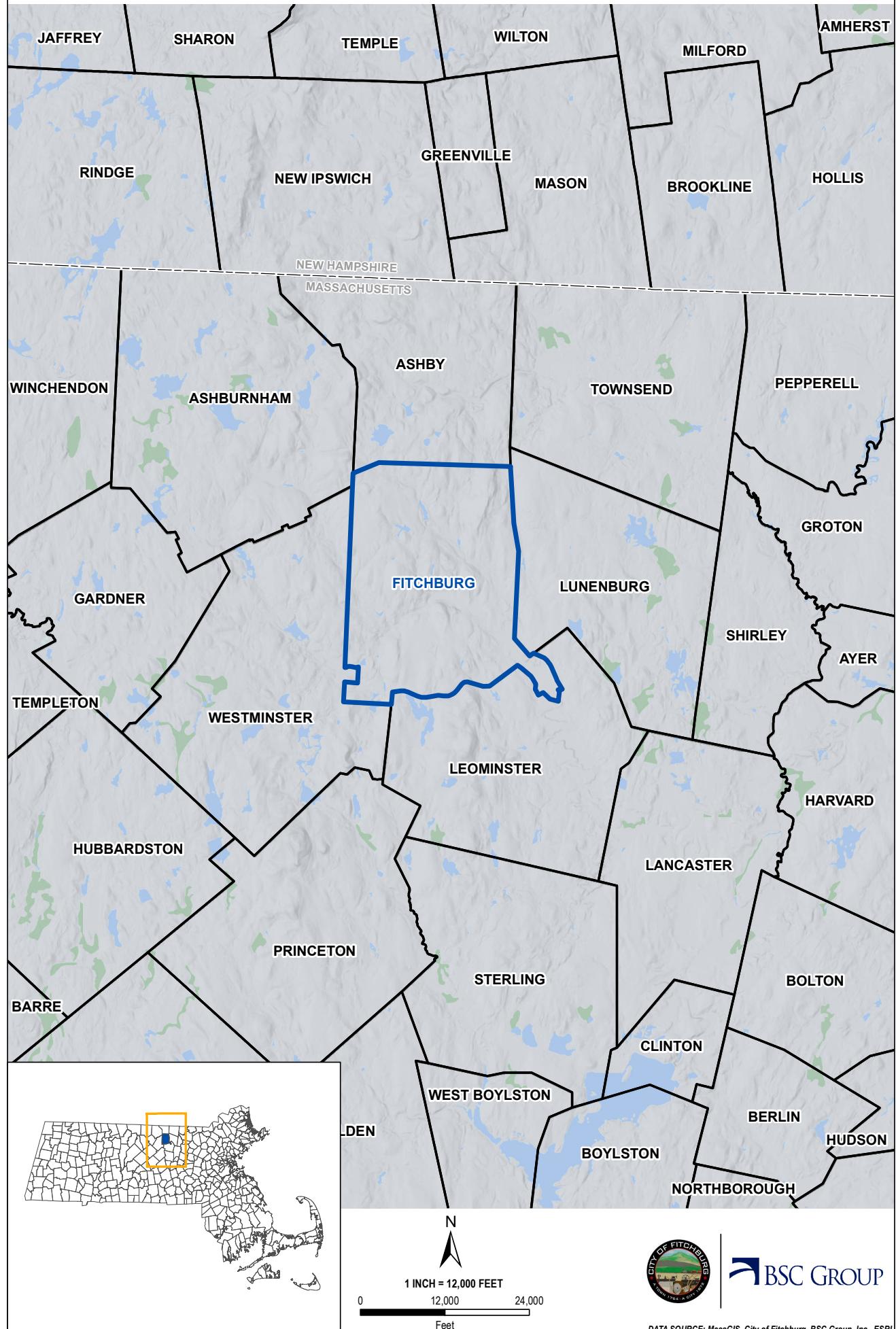
History of the Community

Fitchburg's past is like many other New England cities whose once-prosperous mills and factories served as a lifeline to a dynamic urban center. For Fitchburg, the anchor to its glorious past was the Nashua River. It was the river that initially attracted industrious Puritans to build the mills and factories that would draw power from its current. With the addition of rail lines on the Boston Albany Line, the city quickly became an industrial and manufacturing center. Cotton mills, textiles, paper, and heavy manufacturing created the wealth that would enrich the downtown with the many impressive buildings, houses, and institutions that still exist today. At the same time, many different immigrant groups were drawn to Fitchburg to work in the mills and factories, and for the railroad, and settled in the neighborhoods around the downtown. Like other New England cities, Fitchburg saw its strong industrial economy dwindle with the turn of the twentieth century. Numerous economic and social forces have significantly impacted the city over the last several decades. While efforts continue to revitalize the once-vibrant downtown and surrounding neighborhoods, the City has been unable to recover fully from the effects of the changing economy and suburban sprawl.

¹ Nashua River Watershed Association. (n.d.). *Our Watershed*. Retrieved June 8, 2022, from <https://www.nashuariverwatershed.org/our-watershed/our-rivers-and-streams.html>

CITY OF FITCHBURG OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN

FIG. 1: REGIONAL CONTEXT



A brief chronology of Fitchburg's history is presented below.²

1663 – 1764

The area Fitchburg encompasses was a wilderness until 1718. Records indicate that an absentee proprietor purchased this wild country in 1663, and in ensuing years this property changed hands many times. Conflict with the various Native American tribes discouraged settlements in this area any closer than Lancaster, but the Nashaway Indians fled almost completely after the unsuccessful war of King Phillip in 1675. In 1764, Fitchburg was incorporated as a township.

Revolutionary War

Fitchburg's tranquil development was shattered by the advent of the Revolution. With a total population of about 800, at least 169 Fitchburg men joined the Continental Army and fought in the battles for independence from England. Many of the soldiers faced worse economic tyranny and poverty upon their return home. Many residents moved on; many more moved into Fitchburg.

Town Center Location Debate

Shortly after the Revolution, Fitchburg citizens were embroiled in a debate over where to locate the town center - either on the fertile Dean Hill or along the Nashua River. The river location was finally chosen when Captain William Brown donated his land for the town meeting house. This turned out to be a wise decision since the river was to play a major role in the development of Fitchburg in the 1800s.

Value of the River

As early as 1750 the value of the river had been recognized, and by 1804, mills and associated mill ponds were being developed. The river was vital to this industrial economy and eventually approximately 18 dams were built along the river. Generally, the mills were diversified in activity and owned by residents: Brown's Clothier Works, Farwell's Scythe Shop, Kimball's Fulling and Carding Mills, and Burbank's Paper Mill. Factory Square was the center for the bustling industrial community. Many of these mill buildings and workers' housing still stand as witness to Fitchburg's industrial heritage.

Railroad Construction and 19th Century Industrial Growth

Fitchburg's potential as a water-powered industrial city was hampered by the city's rocky and hilly terrain, which made the transportation of goods difficult. By 1845, however, the railroad reached Fitchburg from Boston. This ushered in three-quarters of a century of industrial expansion, rapid growth, prosperity, and fame for Fitchburg. Fitchburg was somewhat unique in that several local people discerned the city's potential, and with their own resources and creative inventions spurred the rapid development of a great and diversified manufacturing city. Large quantities of paper, textiles, machines, saws, chains, guns, axle grease, bicycles, and shoes were produced. Alvah Crocker helped the local industries when he initiated and advocated the extension of the railroad to the West by drilling the Hoosac Tunnel. By 1875, Fitchburg was linked to the vast western markets by direct rail connection, and industry was thriving.

² Adapted from Fitchburg Downtown Urban Revitalization & Development Plan Amendment #9 (2022), Fitchburg Preservation Plan (1978), and City of Fitchburg website <http://www.ci.fitchburg.ma.us/443/Brief-History-of-Fitchburg> (Accessed 06/10/2022)

19th Century Neighborhood Growth

Along with the growth of industry came the growth of neighborhoods. Most buildings were constructed during this Victorian era. This was directly related to the rapid population growth from 3,883 people in 1845 to 31,531 people in 1900. See Figure 1 for a map of Fitchburg in 1882³.

Different industries and decades of time attracted various ethnic groups. People settled either near industries or in certain neighborhoods. Older New England families had established themselves near the downtown. The Irish and later the Italians lived near Water Street. The Finnish lived near Mechanic Street and the Greek neighborhood was on W. Main Street. The English, many of whom worked in the Crocker-Burbank Paper Mills, lived in West Fitchburg while the French-Canadians settled in Cleghorn. Churches and small commercial businesses became the focal point of the neighborhoods.

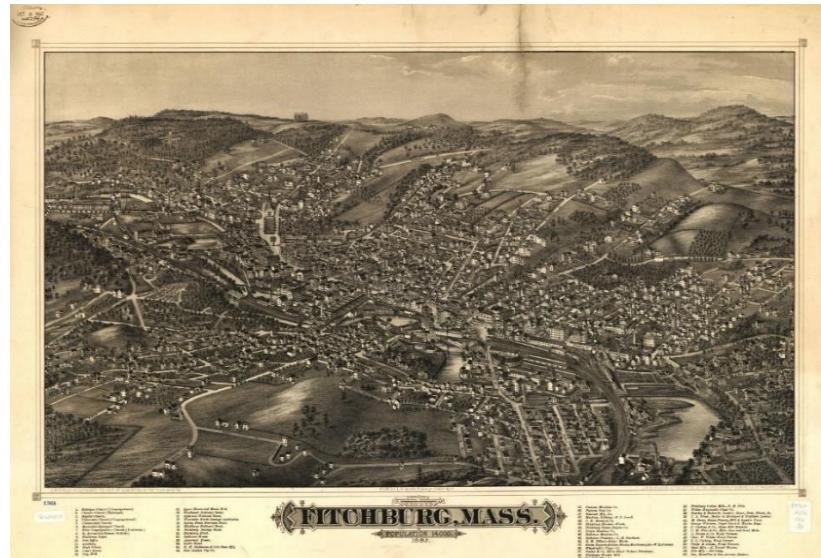


FIGURE 1. MAP OF FITCHBURG, MA 1882

Social Reform Movements

During this time of materialistic prosperity, Fitchburg was not without its social reform movements. The issues of child labor, prison reform, women's suffrage, temperance, and slavery, as well as ethnic prejudice within Fitchburg were important topics of conversation and action. The Underground Railroad was supported by many prominent people in the city. Fitchburg lost 142 soldiers in the Civil War. Fitchburg industries were pouring out products like shoes, uniforms, blankets, and guns for the war effort. Civil War soldiers returned, expanding productivity, especially in the direction of mechanized industry.

City Establishment

Fitchburg became a city in 1872. The major commercial area in the downtown flourished, and the primary institutions such as the courthouse, hospital, library, opera house and municipal buildings were nearby. The pattern of the built environment was simple and clear. Factories were next to the river. Residential neighborhoods grew on the slopes of the hills near the river. Commercial areas developed between the residential and industrial areas, especially where the floor of the river valley was wide. Transportation affected development – everything was situated compactly for one walking to shop or to work. Major roads and rail lines followed the river. Later, streetcars followed the river with loops extending into the more built-up neighborhoods.

Close of Golden Years and Changes Caused by Automobiles

Industrial expansion and growth continued until shortly after the turn of the century. By 1900, the major growth in the country was occurring further west. Fitchburg's growth leveled off and the "Golden Years" of the city ended.

³ Burleigh, L. R. & C.H. Vogt. (1882) Fitchburg, Mass. Troy, N.Y. [Map] Retrieved from the Library of Congress, <https://www.loc.gov/item/75694573/>.

In the 1900s, the upper middle class began to move out to more "suburban" homes. This was in part made possible by the advent of the car. Neighborhoods began to lose their economic diversity and stability. Neighborhoods comprised by a poorer population began to decline. Later in the 1900s, the local industries began to change ownership. Local owners sold out to national corporations. The industrial leadership, which for so long had controlled much of the city, was passed on to a leadership with limited interest in the city other than those things directly connected with their industries.

20th and 21st Century Changes

Industrial decline left many decaying buildings and a polluted river. The North Nashua River in the mid-1960s was badly polluted with industrial waste which took decades of action to resolve. Additionally, since the 1970s, suburban style development in outlying areas of the city has greatly increased. In more recent decades, high-density condominium projects have appeared. While remnants of the city's agricultural past can be seen in the farms on the periphery of the city, the fieldstone walls crisscrossing through second-growth forest, and the occasional granite foundation, most development is occurring on this former agricultural land, either on parcels which were converted directly from agricultural use, or in second growth forest which was at one time used for farming. The downtown has also changed. What had been an attractive and vibrant place, with its mix of uses - shops, theaters, hotels, factories, churches, schools, and banks - slowly declined. Car ownership encouraged the growth of new strip commercial streets and shopping centers. The downtown, however, remains a commercial area with a truly urban character: a mix of uses and users, and attractive buildings. The creation of dense urban areas in the 19th and early 20th centuries, and the abandonment of those areas by the economic engines which produced them, has left a number of urban neighborhoods which look to public facilities to fulfill the recreational needs of their residents.

Population Characteristics

To properly plan for Fitchburg's open space and recreational needs, the size, density, and composition of the population was considered. The city's population peaked at 43,343 in 1970, then declined to 39,102 (a loss of 9.8%) by 2000. In 2020, Fitchburg's population increased once again to 41,946⁴ with a density of 1,492.7 persons per square mile. This number is not illustrative of Fitchburg, as the core of Fitchburg is densely settled, and rural sections are more sparsely settled.

Table 3.1: Changes in Fitchburg Household Characteristics, 2000-2020

Household Characteristics	2000	2010	2020	% Change from 2000 - 2020
Population	39,102	40,318	41,946	7.3%
Households	14,943	14,615	15,555	4.1%
Households with individual(s) < 18 years	34.1%	34.7%	30.7%	-3.4%
Average Household Size	2.50	2.55	2.50	0
Average Family Size	3.13	3.10	3.12	-0.3%

Source: U.S. Decennial Census 2000, 2010 and 2020; 2006-2010 and 2016-2020 American Community Survey Estimates

⁴ U.S. Census Bureau (2020). U.S. Decennial Census.

Race and Ethnicity

The heavy industries which developed in Fitchburg created a demand for labor which attracted large numbers of European immigrants to the city. The families that came seeking work usually chose to settle close to others with the same background, producing ethnic neighborhoods which retain much of their identity today. Already a diverse city, Fitchburg has seen its ethnic and racial diversity increase even further over the last several decades.

In 1980, 98% of the population was White and the Hispanic population was 3%. According to the 1990 Census, approximately 94% of the population was White, 3% was Black or African American, 2.5% was Asian, and the Hispanic/Latino population increased to 10%. The 2000 Decennial Census saw more change in race/ethnicity in Fitchburg's population with 82% White, 4% Black or African American, 4% Asian, and 15% Hispanic/Latino. The 2010 Decennial Census captured a population that was 78% White, 5% Black or African American, 4% Asian, and 22% Hispanic/Latino. According to the 2020 Decennial Census, for the Fitchburg population reporting one race, approximately 70% were White, 8% were Black or African American, and 4% were Asian. Additionally, about 16% reported some other race alone, and 30% of the population in Fitchburg is Hispanic/Latino.

Languages

According to 2020 American Community Survey (ACS) estimates, 28.5% of Fitchburg residents speak a language other than English at home, which is greater than the estimates for Massachusetts overall (23.9%). Moreover, approximately 8.5% of residents speak English less than "very well." As shown in the table below, the non-English language spoken by the largest group is Spanish, with approximately 22% of residents speaking Spanish at home.⁵

Table 3.2: Language Spoken at Home (2020 ACS 5-Year Estimates)

Language	% Speak English Only or Speak English "Very Well"	% Speak English Less Than "Very Well"
Speak only English	71.5%	N/A
Spanish	21.9%	70.7%
Other Indo-European languages	3.9%	66.1%
Asian and Pacific Island languages	1.5%	62.1%
Other languages	1.2%	84.4%

Source: 2016-2020 American Community Survey Estimates

Age

The population of people under the age of 18 in Fitchburg is 21.7%, which is slightly higher than Massachusetts as a whole (19.8%). The percentage of residents aged 65 and over has risen to 13.1% from the 12.4% noted at the time of the last OSRP, which is lower than the Commonwealth overall (16.5%).⁶

Based on the 2020 ACS 5-Year Estimates, the median age in Fitchburg is 35.6 years. Of all households, 60.1% are families. 30.7% of households had one or more individuals under 18 years of age; and 35.9% of all households had individuals 60 years and over.

⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, 2016-2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, 2016-2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates.

The Massachusetts Housing Partnership has identified six common 'age typologies' that capture demographic composition trends. Each of these typologies corresponds with a variety of strengths and weaknesses that have implications for open space and recreation planning. Fitchburg is considered a 'Millennial Peak' community, which is characterized as having disproportionately high levels of young adults aged 20 to 35, like several other Gateway Cities.⁷ As shown in Figure 2, Fitchburg has the highest percentage of residents that are aged 34 and under when compared with surrounding communities.

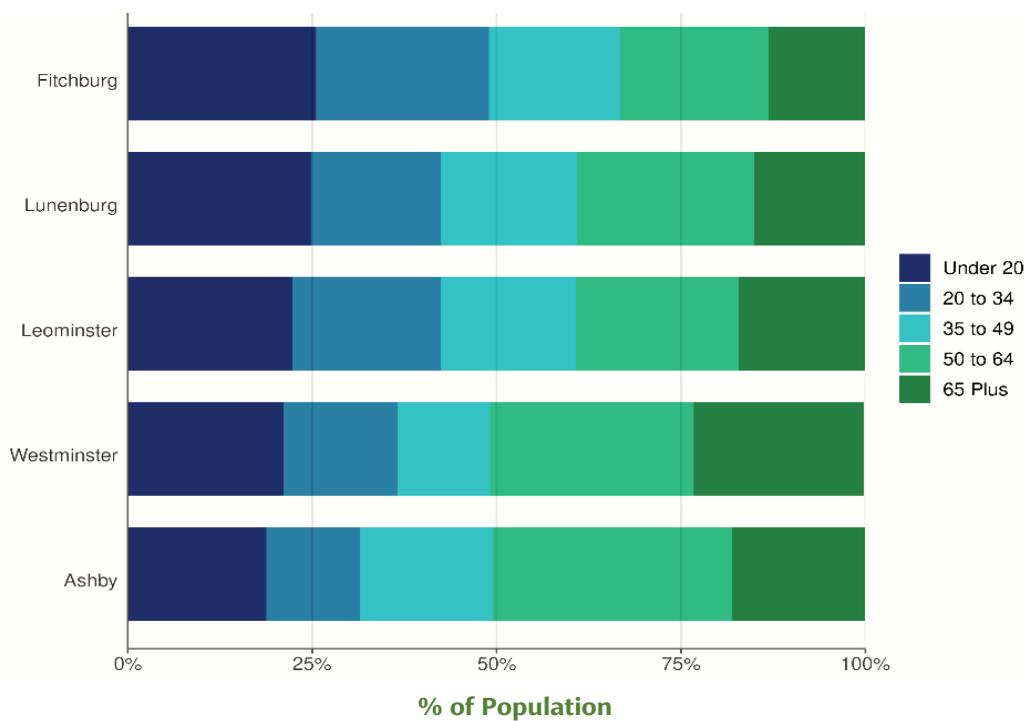


FIGURE 2. AGE DISTRIBUTION IN FITCHBURG AND SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES (2020 ACS 5-YEAR ESTIMATES)

Income

According to the 2020 ACS estimates, Fitchburg has a per capita income of \$27,887, which is just 61.2% of the state average of \$45,555. Fitchburg also has a significantly higher percentage of persons living below the poverty line, with 14.5% compared to 9.4% statewide. Fitchburg's 2020 median household income is \$54,683, compared to \$84,385 for the state. Within Fitchburg, median household incomes are not evenly distributed, but follow a pattern similar to the City density. Census Tract 7111, which makes up the northern part of Fitchburg, has a population of 5,108 spread out over 13.1 square miles and a median household income of \$95,625, while tract 7105, located in the central part of Fitchburg with a population of 3,212 in just .4 square miles, has a median household income of \$43,587.⁸

The table below shows that this income is not evenly distributed by race. Residents that identify as having two or more races or as being of Hispanic or Latino origin have the lowest median household incomes.

⁷ Massachusetts Housing Partnership Center for Housing Data, using 2016-2020 American Community Survey 5Year Estimates, <https://mhpcenterforhousingdata.shinyapps.io/DataTown/>

⁸ U.S. Census Bureau (2020). *American Community Survey 5-year estimates*. Retrieved from Census Reporter Profile page for Fitchburg, MA <http://censusreporter.org/profiles/16000US2523875-fitchburg-ma/>.

Table 3.3: Household Income by Race and Hispanic or Latino Origin of Householder

Upper Common, Main Street (Photo: BSC Group)

Race	Median Income
White	\$57,306
Black or African American	\$44,485
Asian	\$101,354
Some other race	\$43,125
Two or More Races	\$41,985
Hispanic or Latino Origin (of any race)	\$42,560
White Alone, not Hispanic or Latino	\$58,835



Source: 2016-2020 American Community Survey Estimates

Industry and Employment

According to 2020 ACS estimates, approximately 61.1% of the Fitchburg residents 16 years of age and older were employed. Only 2.4% of the workforce used public transportation to commute to work. The mean travel time to work was 26.3 minutes. Within Fitchburg, the highest number of jobs is within the Health Care and Social Assistance sector, followed by Educational Services and Retail Trade.

Table 3.4: Jobs by NAICS Industry Sector

NAICS Industry Sector	Count	Share
Health Care and Social Assistance	3,090	23.1%
Educational Services	1,926	14.4%
Retail Trade	1,600	12.0%
Accommodation and Food Services	1,545	11.6%
Manufacturing	1,327	9.9%
Transportation and Warehousing	543	4.1%
Construction	478	3.6%
Public Administration	473	3.5%
Administration & Support, Waste Management and Remediation	428	3.2%
Other Services (excluding Public Administration)	391	2.9%
Finance and Insurance	375	2.8%
Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services	368	2.8%
Wholesale Trade	341	2.6%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	125	0.9%
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	109	0.8%
Management of Companies and Enterprises	89	0.7%
Information	81	0.6%
Utilities	60	0.4%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting	12	0.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics (2019)

Vulnerable Populations

The Massachusetts Environmental Justice Policy administered through the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA EJ policy) is intended to foster the equitable distribution of environmental benefits and to improve environmental quality for communities of color and low-income communities. This is to be accomplished both through protection from environmental pollution and ensuring access to parks, green spaces, and recreational opportunities. Per the EEA EJ policy, a neighborhood is defined as an environmental justice (EJ) population if any of the following is true:

1. The annual median household income is not more than 65% of the statewide annual median household income;
2. Minorities comprise 40% or more of the population;
3. 25% or more of households lack English language proficiency; or
4. Minorities comprise 25% or more of the population and the annual median household income of the municipality in which the neighborhood is located does not exceed 150% of the statewide annual median household income.

Fitchburg has a large concentration of EJ populations. Using population data from the 2020 Census, 78.1% of block groups in Fitchburg were designated as EJ communities, with 72.9% of the city's population residing in an EJ Census block group.

Table 3.5: 2020 Environmental Justice Populations

EJ Criteria	Block Groups Overall (#)	EJ Block Groups (#)	EJ Block Groups (%)	Total Population	EJ Block Groups (Population)	Population in EJ Block Groups (%)
Minority, Income, and Minority and Income	32	25	78.1%	40,702	29,679	72.9%

Climate impacts and extreme weather events can affect anyone, but some people have the potential to be more affected than others. How adversely a person or group will be affected depends not just on exposure to the event, but on social vulnerability⁹ – that is, how well they are able to cope with and respond to events like floods and heatwaves due to poverty, physical or mental disabilities, age, lack of transportation, crowded housing, and other factors. People and communities experiencing multiple causes of social vulnerability are the most at risk to the impacts of climate change.

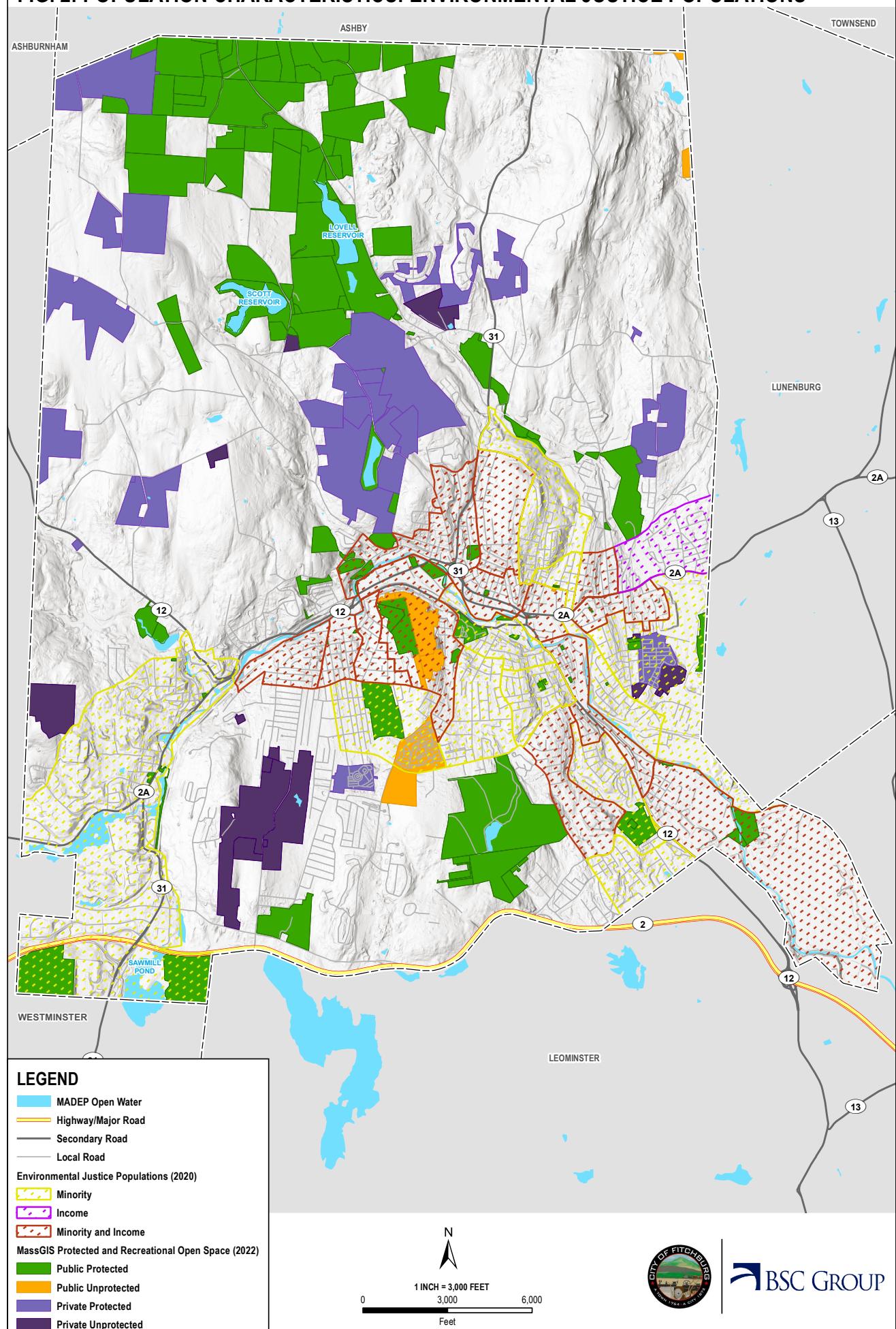
In addition to EJ populations, additional vulnerable populations include Fitchburg's seniors, youth, people with disabilities, and low-income residents. These were noted in Fitchburg's 2020 *Hazard Mitigation Plan – Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Plan*¹⁰ as residents most at risk for experiencing the negative effects of climate hazards. According to 2020 ACS 5-Year estimates, 15.7% of Fitchburg residents are managing a disability, which is four percent (4%) higher than Massachusetts overall (11.7%). Persons with disabilities include those with physical disabilities that require the use of a wheelchair, walker, or cane, visual impairments, hearing impairments, or mental disabilities. The acquisition or upgrading of any open space areas for recreational access and uses should consider the needs of this segment of the community.

⁹ <https://svi.cdc.gov/factsheet.html>

¹⁰ *Draft City of Fitchburg Hazard Mitigation Plan – Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Plan* (2020). Prepared by Weston & Sampson.

CITY OF FITCHBURG OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN

FIG. 2: POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS: ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE POPULATIONS



Growth and Development Patterns

Patterns and Trends

Fitchburg can be envisioned as a dense urban core surrounded by suburban and rural areas. The inner city is characterized by a mix of single and multifamily homes on small lots with commercial, industrial, and institutional uses located on major arteries near the residential neighborhoods, and occasionally within the neighborhoods themselves. Main Street is in the center of the city, and remains a major commercial and business area, although its focus has changed from primarily retail businesses to business offices and services. Much of the northern tier of the city remains undeveloped. The largest retail area is along the John Fitch Highway, with commercial uses also occurring along other major arterial roads. Industrial uses are predominately located along the North Nashua River and in the areas of Princeton Road and Airport Road.¹¹

According to the MA Department of Revenue (DOR) Municipal Databank for fiscal year 2022, nearly three-quarters of parcels in Fitchburg have a residential use. Of the 10,307 residential use parcels, 6,614 are classified as single-family homes (64.2%), 1,521 as two-family homes (14.8%), 1,080 as condominiums (10.5%), and 1,059 as three-family or apartment developments (10.3%). Slightly more than 5% of land parcels are categorized as commercial and 5.4% are categorized as exempt, which includes publicly owned open space.¹² Less than 1% of parcels within Fitchburg are enrolled in Massachusetts Chapter 61 Current Use Tax Programs, which offer a property tax break for landowners willing to commit to keeping some or all their undeveloped land for forest, agricultural, or recreational purposes for a specified time.

Table 3.6: Land Use in Fitchburg (Parcels)

Land Use	# of Parcels	% of Parcels
Residential	10,307	73.2%
Commercial	734	5.2%
Multi-Use	104	0.7%
Industrial & Utilities	239	1.7%
Chapter 61 Land - Forest	35	0.2%
Chapter 61A Land - Agriculture	25	0.2%
Chapter 61B Land - Recreation	16	0.1%
Vacant/Accessory Land	1,235	8.8%
Exempt	767	5.4%
Other	620	4.4%
TOTAL	14,082	100.0%

Source: Massachusetts Department of Revenue (DOR) Municipal Databank, Fiscal Year 2022

The *City of Fitchburg Hazard Mitigation Plan – Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Plan* (2020) provides a residential buildout analysis based on the City of Fitchburg Vision2020 Comprehensive Plan (1998), which compares the number of constructed homes in each Census Tract to the total number of homes that could be built in that area. This analysis, while a bit outdated, indicates that the highest potential for additional development would be in the South Side neighborhood. In addition, the MVP Plan includes a flood exposure

¹¹ *Draft City of Fitchburg Hazard Mitigation Plan – Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Plan* (2020). Prepared by Weston & Sampson.

¹² All property which is totally exempt from taxation under various provisions of the law and owned by the Federal government, State government, local government, housing/transportation/utility authorities, charitable and religious organizations, and educational institutions. This category includes municipally owned open space. Source: *Property Type Classification Codes - Non-arm's Length Codes and Sales Report Spreadsheet Specifications* (2019). Prepared by the Bureau of Local Assessment.

analysis, which found that 4,315 acres of land in Fitchburg are vacant and developable, with 20% of that land located within the 100-year flood zone and an additional 19% in the 500-year flood zone.¹³

Published in February 2020, MassAudubon's *Losing Ground: Nature's Value in a Changing Climate* reports on the pace and patterns of land development and land protection in Massachusetts between 2012 and 2017. This report notes that over the past 40 years, the landscape of Massachusetts has been transformed by new residential and commercial development, including the conversion of open space to solar arrays. Eastern and southeastern Massachusetts have undergone the most change, but virtually every community in the Commonwealth has experienced rapid growth driven by economic and demographic factors. Between 2012 and 2017, 83 acres of land in Fitchburg was developed, putting Fitchburg in 138th place in relation to the 350 other municipalities in Massachusetts. Meanwhile, between 2012 and 2019, 492 acres of land were permanently conserved.

In terms of future commercial growth and associated development, the health care, social services, and education industries are expected to experience the most growth in the region (Economic Development Strategic Plan, City of Fitchburg, 2018). Fitchburg envisions a future with more mixed-use development and is encouraging its identity as a university city. Revitalization efforts in the urban core are a priority, with significant residential and institutional development planned or recently completed south of the Fitchburg State University campus and in the downtown area.

Infrastructure

Roads and Bridges

Downtown Fitchburg is a walkable area, with a mix of uses in many neighborhoods and residential zones located near Main Street and other older commercial areas. Its physical layout was largely determined by its development as a 19th century industrial city. Much of the city is built on steep grades. This is especially true of the residential neighborhoods adjoining the downtown, and in the more remote areas of northern Fitchburg. Fitchburg has furthered walkability by converting Main Street and Boulder Drive to two-way traffic, implementing several Complete Streets improvements along the way to slow traffic, ease congestion, and be more pedestrian-friendly. This work includes dedicated bike lanes on Boulder Drive, along with enhanced crosswalks at key sites, and continued promotion of non-vehicular transportation alternatives. Other infrastructure improvements include the Twin Cities Rail Trail, which when completed will connect downtown Fitchburg with downtown Leominster and provide commuters with a direct link to Fitchburg's Intermodal Station.

Additional multimodal improvements are planned and underway in and adjacent to downtown Fitchburg as of the writing of this Plan. As part of state-wide efforts to address structurally deficient bridges multiple bridges in Fitchburg are scheduled to be replaced or upgraded. Two Water Street bridges are included – one over the railroad and one over the Nashua River. Route 12, also known as Water Street, is one of the main routes into downtown. The proposed Water Street bridge improvements include a complete bridge replacement. The new bridge will have a wider footprint to allow for bicycle accommodating shoulders and a shared use path. In addition to the two Water Street bridge projects, a proposed River Street bridge project includes retaining and rehabilitating the pier and replacing the remaining bridge alongside improving ADA accommodations at both approaching sidewalks.

¹³ *Draft City of Fitchburg Hazard Mitigation Plan – Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Plan* (2020). Prepared by Weston & Sampson. p. 4-21.

Transportation System

The Intermodal Transportation Center in the downtown provides Fitchburg with access to multiple modes of transportation, including the MBTA commuter rail and local bus service via Montachusett Regional Transit Authority (MART). The MBTA provides commuter rail service to North Station in Boston, through the Fitchburg Line. Fitchburg is also connected to the larger regional area by MART, with bus routes that service Fitchburg, Leominster, and Gardner. The Intermodal Transportation Center is also within walking distance to surrounding neighborhoods, government services, and Fitchburg State University. The Intermodal Transportation Center is also the planned northern terminus of the Twin Cities Rail Trail, phase II of which is scheduled to begin construction in 2024.

Water and Sewer

Most of Fitchburg is connected to the public drinking water supply. A small portion of homes in the northern rural areas of the city have private wells and septic systems, and failure of these systems is a significant concern, especially in areas near the city's reservoirs. The Fitchburg Department of Public Works, Water Division, is responsible for the treatment and delivery of water. There are seven (7) surface water reservoirs from which Fitchburg receives its water. Together, these reservoirs hold more than 4.8 billion gallons of water:

- Bickford Pond
- Fitchburg Reservoir
- Lovell Reservoir
- Mare Meadow Reservoir
- Meetinghouse Reservoir
- Scott Reservoir
- Wachusett Lake

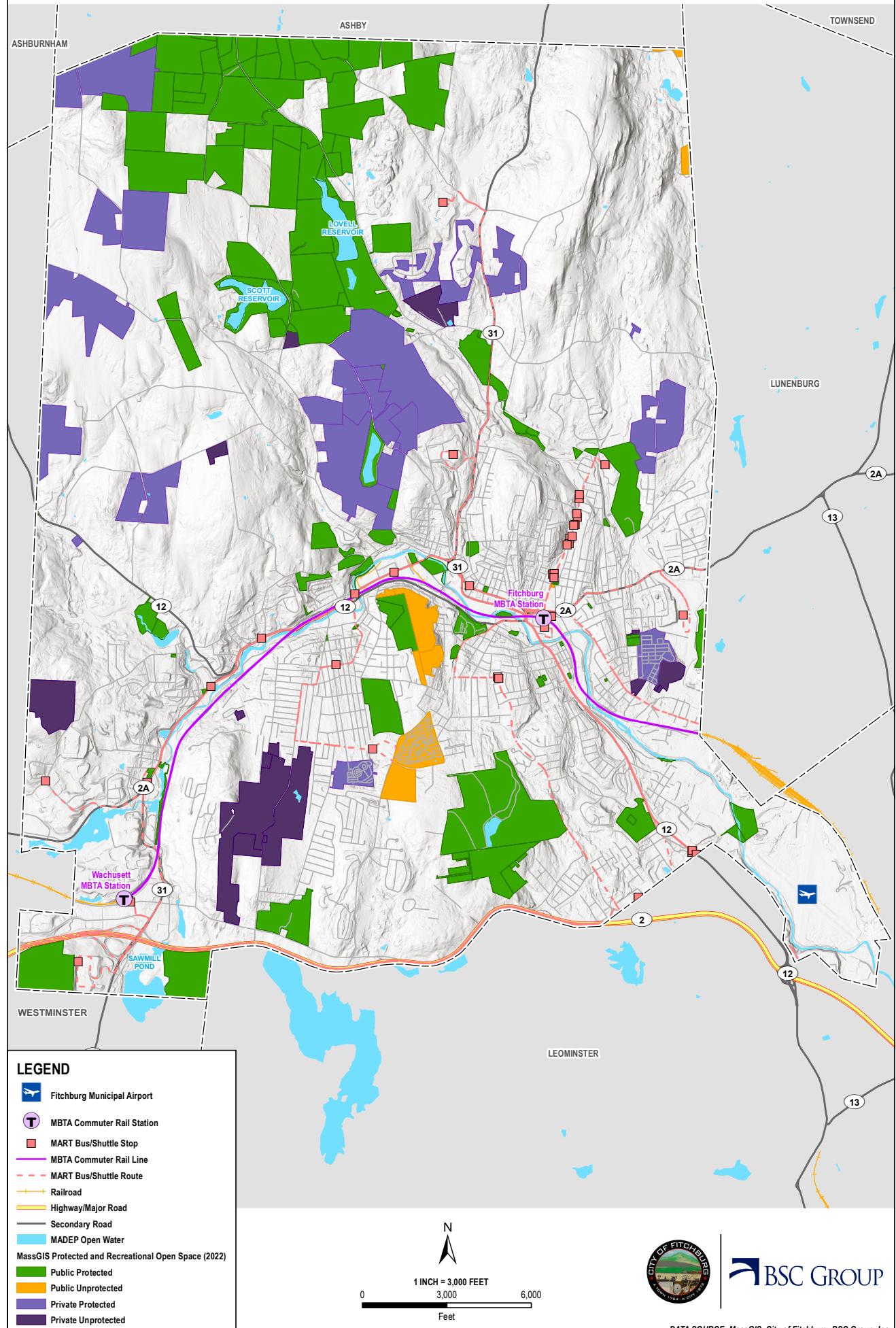
The City sources most of its drinking water from the Meetinghouse and Lovell Reservoirs, where two filtration plants, the J.A. Provencial and Regional Water Treatment Facilities, are located to treat and distribute water. The J.A. Provencial facility is designed to meet the drinking water needs of Fitchburg by processing 6 million gallons a day (mgd). The Regional Water Filtration Facility processes 12 mgd, with potential expansion to 15 mgd in the future, if needed. While the water supply appears to be adequate for sustained growth, there is doubt as to the level of protection from pollution.

Presently, there are no known water quality problems that cannot be handled by Fitchburg's water treatment plants, and regional efforts have led to the protection of important watershed lands. For example, it was announced in June 2022 that the North County Land Trust, in collaboration with the City of Fitchburg, secured a Massachusetts Drinking Water Supply Grant to fund a Conservation Restriction (CR) for 49 acres of watershed protection land in Ashburnham. The private property owners will place a CR on their land on Russell Hill Road, which is in a source water area for the Lovell Reservoir in Fitchburg.¹⁴ As this and other efforts demonstrate, proper open space planning and management remains critical for maintaining the supply of potable water in Fitchburg. Wetlands, forests, and floodplains maintain water quality and water quantity, thereby reducing costs for drinking water treatment and storage.

¹⁴ North County Land Trust (June 13, 2022). *Forty-Nine Acres of land to be conserved in Ashburnham to protect Lovell Reservoir in Fitchburg*. Retrieved June 13, 2022, from <https://northcountylandtrust.org/kerlingerawardannounced/>.

CITY OF FITCHBURG OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN

FIG. 4: TRANSPORTATION NETWORK



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As storm events and drought become more severe, threats to water supply and water quality grow. Both increased flooding and increased drought and low flow have the potential to degrade water quality. Flood waters pick up upland contaminants and toxins and introduce them to waterways and water bodies. Droughts and low flows cause concentration of contaminants and toxins as flow volumes decrease. Wetlands, floodplains, and forests absorb stormwater and rainfall, reducing peak flood volumes and velocities, thereby reducing opportunities for the introduction of contaminants and toxins into water supplies. Wetlands provide base flow during drought thereby providing water supply and reducing the concentration of pollutants.

Approximately 93% of the Fitchburg population is serviced by the public sewer system and the remaining 7% is supported by on-site septic. The oldest sewers in Fitchburg were built in the late 1800s. Wastewater treatment began in the early 1900s and was replaced with the present-day East Wastewater Treatment Plant, built in the early 1970s. The East Plant is located in the southeast corner of the city at 24 Lanides Lane, across the Nashua River from the Fitchburg Municipal Airport. The East Plant provides preliminary, primary, and secondary treatment of the incoming wastewater, and has a rated design treatment capacity of 12.4 mgd. By plant optimization, the plant is capable of fully treating peak flow capacities of 20 mgd or more, before engaging surplus flow bypassing of secondary treatment. Treatment removes pollutants including solids, organic matter pollution, nutrients, pathogenic microbes, and toxic metals, preventing adverse impacts to the North Branch of the Nashua River. Treatment also ensures that effluent discharge has enough dissolved oxygen and has a neutral pH (between pH of 6.5 and 8.3).¹⁵ Fitchburg is like many older cities in New England where a significant portion of its wastewater is serviced through combined sewers. This refers to pipes that carry both rainwater and sewage. Combined sewer systems are at risk during storm events to greatly exceed capacity. Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) Outfalls are key relief points throughout the system, designed to release raw sewage discharge into the North Nashua River in order to prevent back up into homes. The City is currently working to eliminate all combined stormwater-sewer systems to reduce water pollution and provide better service as part of a Consent Decree with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, with a goal to complete the work by 2030.

Since 2012, the City has successfully completed three sewer separation projects, two phases of a sewer system evaluation survey, a hydraulic model and capacity assessment, a Water Management Plan, and a chemically enhanced primary treatment upgrade project. The Fitchburg Department of Public Works is also undertaking a utility reconstruction project called *Build Fitchburg – Downtown Infrastructure Modernization*, which will include modernizing and replacing water, sewer, and stormwater infrastructure. Specifically, this project proposes to separate combined sewers, improve drainage in the downtown area, repair sewers at risk of failure that could result in sewer basement backups, and replace aging water mains to improve water quality and provide reliable water by reducing the risk of water main breaks. The elimination of all CSO discharges will have significant public and environmental benefits. The separation of the combined sewer will also result in a dedicated stormwater system. The modernization project will evaluate the condition of culverts and drainage throughout the downtown to prevent major flooding in the event of a critical asset failure. This work is scheduled to begin in 2023.

Long-Term Development Patterns

Since the 1940s, Fitchburg's growth and development has been guided by the Fitchburg Zoning Ordinance. The City of Fitchburg is currently divided into thirteen (13) zoning districts including four residential districts, five business districts, two industrial districts, and two institutional districts (see *Map 3: Zoning Map*).

¹⁵ City of Fitchburg Department of Public Works. (n.d.). Wastewater Division Brochure. Retrieved from <http://www.ci.fitchburg.ma.us/846/About-Us---Printable-Brochure>.

CITY OF FITCHBURG

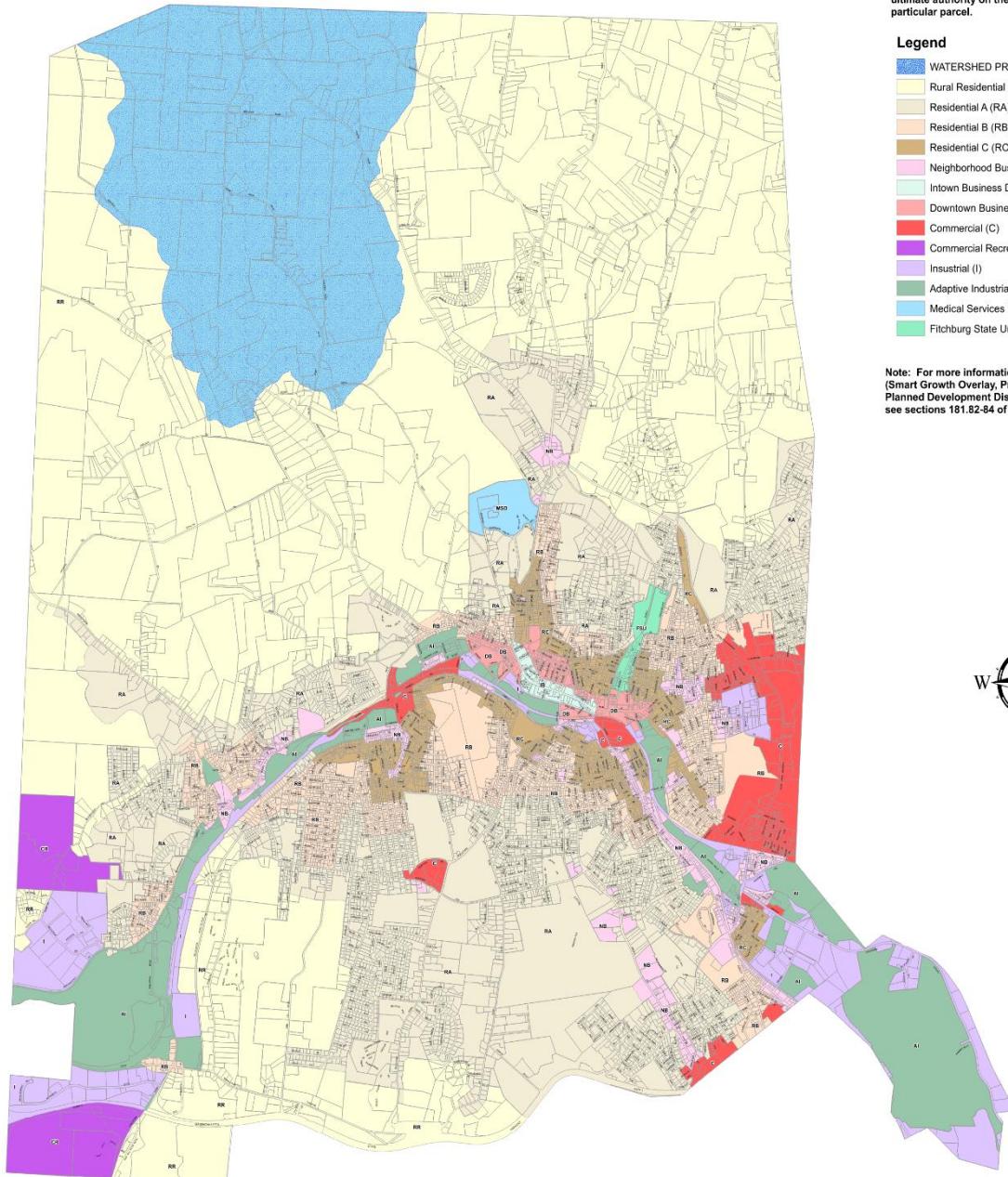
ZONING MAP

This map was created from the best available data, but it may contain errors. It should be used for planning purposes only. The Building Commissioner is the ultimate authority on the zoning classification of a particular parcel.

Legend

	WATERSHED PROTECTION OVERLAY DISTRICT
	Rural Residential (RR)
	Residential A (RA)
	Residential B (RB)
	Residential C (RC)
	Neighborhood Business District (NB)
	Intown Business District (IB)
	Downtown Business District (DB)
	Commercial (C)
	Commercial Recreation (CR)
	Industrial (I)
	Adaptive Industrial District (AI)
	Medical Services District (MS)
	Fitchburg State University (FSU)

Note: For more information pertaining to overlay districts (Smart Growth Overlay, Priority Development Site Overlay, Planned Development District Overlay), see sections 181.82-84 of the Zoning Ordinance.



0 0.25 0.5 1 1.5 2
Miles

Prepared By:
City of Fitchburg
Department of Public Works
Engineering Division
June 15, 2022

The City has modified its Zoning Ordinance numerous times, including a comprehensive rewrite in 2020-2021. This rewrite stemmed from recommendations set forth in the City of Fitchburg Economic Development Strategic Plan (2018). Certain changes to the Zoning Ordinance will help support recreational uses and ensure that new growth and development reinforces the historic settlement pattern of a compact urban center surrounded by suburban and rural areas, which will in turn foster the efficient use of land, infrastructure, and resources. These include the following:

- Indoor and Outdoor Recreation were added to the Definitions and Table of Use Regulations. Both uses are allowed by right in the Downtown Business and Neighborhood Business districts and Indoor Recreation is allowed by right in the Commercial district.
- Dimensional requirements for the Residential C district were reduced, including reducing the minimum lot size from 10,000 SF to 7,500 SF (non-single-family home) and 5,000 SF (single-family home). This change is intended to encourage infill development in the densest residential neighborhoods in Fitchburg.
- The recently approved Chapter 40R provisions (Smart Growth Overlay District) were incorporated into the Zoning Ordinance. Ch. 40R seeks to substantially increase the supply of housing and decrease its cost by increasing the amount of land zoned for dense housing.
- Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) are allowed by Special Permit from the Board of Appeals in the Residential B district. The Zoning Ordinance was revised to remove the five-year recertification requirement for ADUs.
- The Multi-Family Housing provision was renamed “Multi-Family Developments” and amended to establish a transparent and predictable process for the permitting of Multi-Family Developments (MFD) with specific guidelines and criteria. The MFD provisions are intended to encourage multi-family development and re-development in sensible locations in terms of services, compatibility with surrounding uses, economic opportunity, transportation, and infrastructure.
- The Adaptive Industrial (AI) District was established to replace the Mill Conversion Overlay District and “create a district to promote the adaptive reuse of Fitchburg’s historic mills, warehouses, brownfields and previously developed properties while preserving the character of the property and nearby residential and commercial neighborhoods.” The owner of a property within the AI District may seek a special permit for Adaptive Reuse Projects or elect to have the property governed by the provisions of the Industrial (I) District.
- Provisions for agriculture and related activities were adopted to enhance the agricultural viability of farm operations and foster agricultural uses in Fitchburg.
- Large scale ground-mounted solar photovoltaic facility provisions were adopted to provide standards for the placement, design, construction, operation, monitoring, modification, and removal of such installations that address public safety and minimize impacts on scenic, natural, and historic resources.

Portions of the existing Fitchburg Zoning Ordinance have been designed to protect natural resources in the context of development. These provisions, including the Floodplain Protection Overlay District and the Water Resource Protection Overlay District, help to ensure that public benefits from green spaces continue to be enjoyed by the community while allowing healthy growth.

Floodplain Protection Overlay District (FPOD)

The Floodplain Protection Overlay District (FPOD) is defined by the 100-year floodplain as designated by FEMA. The FPOD regulates certain activities within a flood zone, thereby enhancing federal/state laws. The City of Fitchburg requires a permit for all proposed construction or other development in the district. The FPOD is enforced by the City's Building Inspector, while the Board of Appeals is responsible for considering variances to the regulation.

Water Resource Protection Overlay District (WRPOD)

The Water Resource Protection Overlay District (WRPOD) is intended to regulate land uses to protect the surface water and groundwater used for drinking water supplies. The Planning Board is the Special Permit Granting Authority for the WRPOD. A special permit may be granted if the Planning Board determines that the intent of the WRPOD as well as certain criteria are met. In making such a determination, the Planning Board must consider the simplicity, reliability, and feasibility of the control measures proposed and the degree of threat to groundwater quality which would result if the control measures failed.

Other Relevant Provisions

Fitchburg's Zoning Ordinance contains certain provisions designed to promote more efficient growth. The Flexible Development provisions (Section 181.71) are meant to serve as an alternative to standard subdivision development. Its stated purpose is to encourage the preservation of open land for its scenic beauty and to enhance agricultural, open space, forestry, and recreational use; to preserve historical and archeological resources; to protect the natural environment, including Fitchburg's varied landscapes and water resources; to promote more sensitive siting of buildings and better overall site planning; and to perpetuate the appearance of Fitchburg's traditional New England landscape. A minimum of ten percent (10%) of the parcels are required to be permanently protected contiguous open space and preserved for exclusively agricultural, horticultural, educational, or recreational purposes.

The Planned Unit Development provisions (Section 181.72) allow greater density and a more creative mix of uses than would be achieved by a standard subdivision. The objectives of Planned Unit Development include encouraging a less sprawling form of development which makes more efficient use of land, permanently preserving existing natural topography and wooded areas within developed areas and providing usable open space and recreation facilities near homes.

In addition, the minimum lot size provision for each zoning district is increased to 65,000 square feet if municipal sewer is not provided. This feature encourages development near existing infrastructure, provides an incentive for developers to construct sewer lines, and guarantees that there will be adequate space for septic systems when buildings are constructed without sewer service. At the same time, this "sewer density bonus" has the potential to increase the rate, volume, and amount of growth.

Fitchburg has also adopted a Smart Growth Overlay District in accordance with M.G.L. Chapter 40R to promote compact residential and mixed-use development. This provision encourages by right high-density residential and mixed-use development near transit nodes. While this overlay district is intended to foster the development of affordable housing, it includes provisions to encourage preservation and rehabilitation of historic structures and buildings, limit the expansion of surface parking within the district by encouraging shared parking, and promote the adoption of energy efficient building practices and sustainable construction methods.

Fitchburg's Zoning Ordinance serves to direct and guide planning and development throughout the municipality and to protect natural resources. This existing regulatory and planning instrument represents a strength, but one that can be further strengthened by incorporating climate change considerations.

SECTION 4: ENVIRONMENTAL INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

Geology, Topography and Soils

Fitchburg is a city of hilly upland terrain, bisected by the Nashua River and its floodplain. A few tributaries feed into the Nashua, most of which run in a southerly direction. Bordering vegetated wetlands are often associated with these streams. Elevations in Fitchburg range from 340 feet above sea level at the municipal airport in the City's southeastern corner to 1,200 feet above sea level on the top of Brown's Hill, one of the seven hills distributed throughout the City.

Fitchburg's geology came about as a result of glaciers which covered New England approximately 10,000 years ago. The advance and retreat of the glaciers formed features of drumlins, moraines, kames, eskers, kettles, and erratics. Rollstone Boulder, which was originally located on top of Rollstone Hill, is an example of an erratic. The nearest source of the type of stone of which this boulder is comprised is in central New Hampshire. It is surmised that this stone was carried south with an advancing glacier and deposited on top of Rollstone Hill as it retreated.

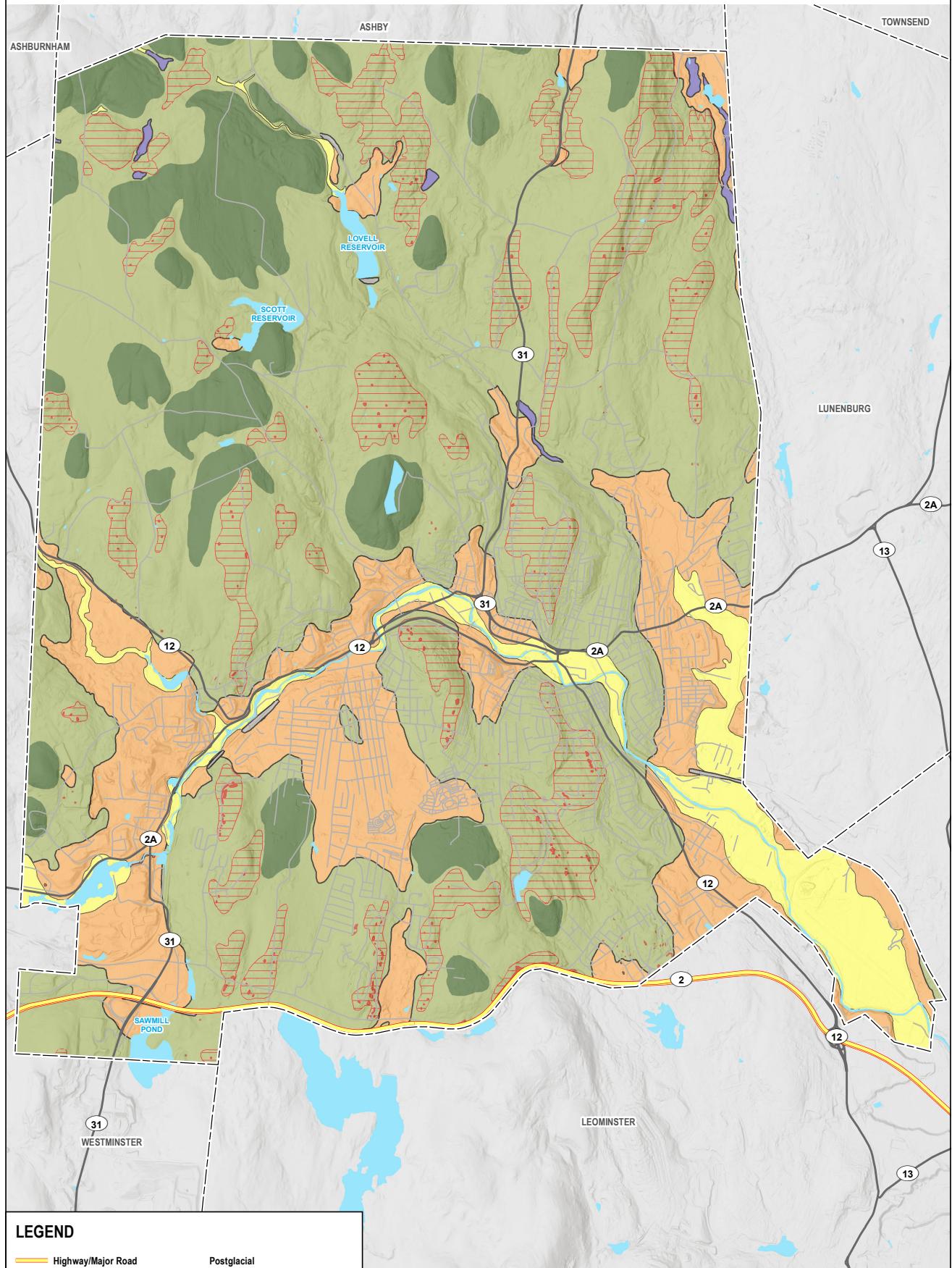
Fitchburg's farms are typically located in flat areas with deep, good soil. In fact, prime agricultural soils are found scattered throughout Fitchburg. The attractiveness of this land for development, and the relative lack of other easily developable sites, has caused many of Fitchburg's farms to be lost to residential development. Relatedly, outside of the Nashua River valley, much of the city is located on steep slopes. There is also a great deal of ledge throughout the city. The combination of these two features makes much of Fitchburg's land area difficult to develop. Of the areas of the city with good access to Route 2, most are undeveloped sites constrained by steep slopes, ledge, or wetlands. According to a 1985 Soil Conservation Service (now Natural Resource Conservation Service) study, there are seven major soil associations in Fitchburg. These associations are shown in the following table.

Table 4.1: Fitchburg Soils

Soil Series	Description	Land Area	Use	Slopes
Paxton	Well drained, underlain by impermeable hardpan, generally rocky	31% 5,625 acres	Agriculture, woodlands, some limitations for commercial uses	3% - 35%
Hinkley	Rapidly drained, may be stony	20% 3,587 acres	Depending on slopes, industrial, residential, commercial, roads	0% - 35%
Hollis	Highly drained, thin glacial till, deposits of schist and granite underlain by bedrock	17% 3,050 acres	Development limited by bedrock	3% - 25%
Woodbridge	Moderately drained, evolved into compacted stony glacial till	13% 2,260 acres	Severe limitations for on-site sewer	0% - 15%
Canton	Well drained sandy layer over gravelly loam sand glacial till	8% 1525 acres	Limitations depend on slope	3% - 35%
Urban Land	Developed land: buildings, roads, parking lots, etc.	8% 1444 acres	Requires on-site investigation	-
Ridgebury	Poorly drained	3% 640 acres	Severely limited by wetlands, environmentally valuable	0% - 8%

CITY OF FITCHBURG OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN

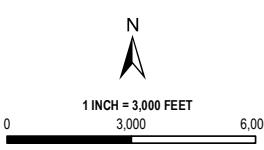
FIG. 5A: GEOLOGICAL FEATURES



LEGEND

Highway/Major Road	Postglacial
Secondary Road	Swamp & Marsh
Local Road	Alluvium
MADEP Open Water	Artificial
Shallow	Glacial Stratified
Abundant Outcrop & Shallow Bedrock	Coarse
Bedrock Outcrops & Thin Bedrock	Till
Bedrock Outcrop	Thick Till
	Thin Till

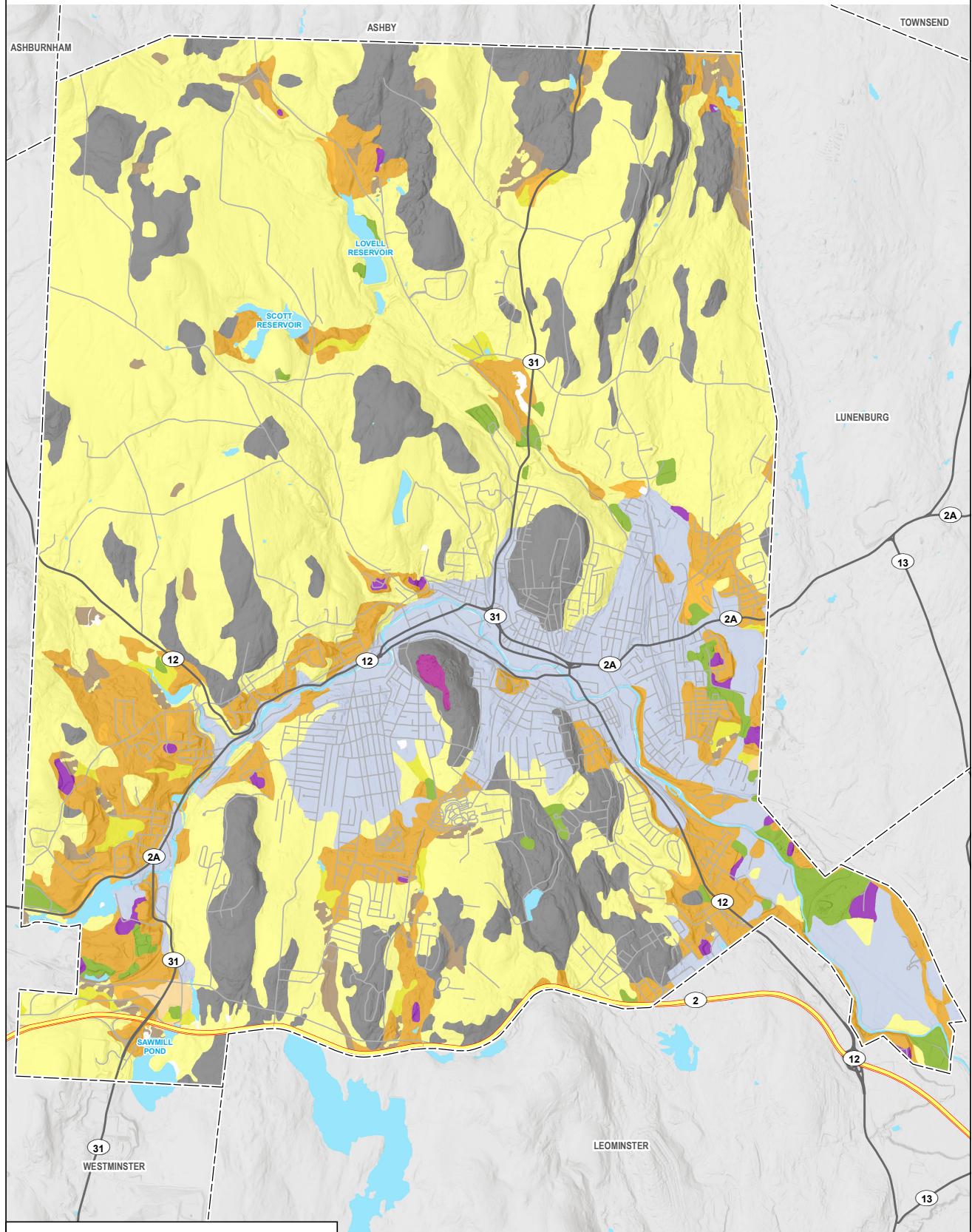
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Shallow	Glacial Stratified
Abundant Outcrop & Shallow Bedrock	Coarse
Bedrock Outcrops & Thin Bedrock	Till
Bedrock Outcrop	Thick Till
	Thin Till



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CITY OF FITCHBURG OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN

FIG. 5B: SOIL TYPES



LEGEND

Highway/Major Road	Silt Loam
Secondary Road	Muck
Local Road	Mucky Fine Sandy Loam
MADEP Open Water	Uderthents
NCRS SSURGO Soil Types	Gravel Pits
Fine Sandy Loam	Quarry Pits
Sandy Loam	Urban Land Complex
Loamy Fine Sand	Rock Outcrop Complex
Loamy Sand	

N

1 INCH = 3,000 FEET

3,000

6,000

Feet



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Landscape Character

Much of Fitchburg's character is defined by the variety of different landscapes found near each other. Green spaces located directly adjacent to densely developed areas, such as Rollstone Hill, Coggshall Park, and the banks of the Nashua River, are aesthetic and recreational resources for the city. The rural sections of the city boast working farms and scenic roads and are within a five-minute drive of neighborhoods with population densities as high as 10,000 people per square mile. While there are large areas of protected open space in Fitchburg, including watershed lands in the rural northern section and parks, cemeteries, and farms enrolled in the Agricultural Protection Program, some of Fitchburg's important green areas, including Oak Hill Country Club and a significant portion of Rollstone Hill, have no formal protection. Most of the land along the Nashua River is privately owned and zoned for industrial uses.

Fitchburg's residents recognize that the city's urban landscapes are as valuable as its scenic rural areas, and that they go beyond the revered Upper Common with its fountain and statues and Monument Park with its historic cannons to lesser known but still important heritage landscapes that may lack formal protection. In 2006, the City of Fitchburg, in partnership with the Freedom's Way Heritage Association, conducted a Heritage Landscape Inventory as part of the Massachusetts Heritage Landscape Inventory Program. This document describes Fitchburg's priority heritage landscapes, discusses planning issues identified by the City, identifies planning tools that are available and concludes with preservation recommendations for Fitchburg's important heritage landscapes. Among the features identified by this report were the Academy Street School - The Annex, Coggshall Park, Dean Hill Cemetery, Mt. Elam Road, the Nashua River, the Upper Common, Prichard and Pleasant Street neighborhoods, Waite's Corner, the Rapids footpath system, and Rollstone Hill. The Freedom's Way National Heritage Corridor is made up of 45 Cities and Towns within Massachusetts and New Hampshire that share unique historical, natural, and cultural resources. The Corridor was designated as a Regional Priority Preservation Area by the Commonwealth in 2011.

Water and Wetland Resources

Fitchburg is home to several surface waters, including the North Nashua River, streams, and ponds, along with adjacent and upstream wetlands that are essential to supporting the health of the surface waters. The long-term protection of these water bodies, waterways, and wetlands requires several activities including monitoring of water quality, hazardous waste disposal, and protection under the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act and the Fitchburg Wetlands Protection Ordinance. Fitchburg's water and wetland resources are described below and depicted in *Map 7: Water Resources*.

As described in *Section 3 Community Setting*, Fitchburg lies within the Nashua River Watershed, and the North Nashua River is the physical and historic heart of the city. The Nashua River watershed can be divided into four major sub-watersheds: North Nashua River, Wachusett Reservoir, Nashua River mainstem, and the Squannacook and Nissitissit Rivers watersheds. Fitchburg is located entirely within the North Nashua River sub-watershed. The North Nashua begins at the confluence of the Whitman River and Flag Brook in west Fitchburg and flows through the city into Leominster and Lancaster. The Nashua River Watershed Association, founded in 1969, is a non-profit organization that aims to foster a healthy ecosystem with clean water and open spaces for human and wildlife communities in the Nashua River watershed. The organization acts as a regional leader in natural resource protection and environmental education for the 32 watershed communities, including Fitchburg, in north central Massachusetts and southern New Hampshire. Several tributary streams, both seasonal and perennial, are in the city. All of Fitchburg drains to the Nashua River with the northern two-thirds of the city draining primarily through the Falulah and Baker Brook tributaries. The southern portion of the city drains primarily to Monoosnoc Brook, and one of its primary sources, Notown Reservoir. Besides the Nashua River, the longest waterway in the city is Falulah/Baker Brook, which starts in the city's northwestern corner and eventually meets the Nashua near Fitchburg Municipal Airport.

CITY OF FITCHBURG OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN

FIG. 7: WATER RESOURCES

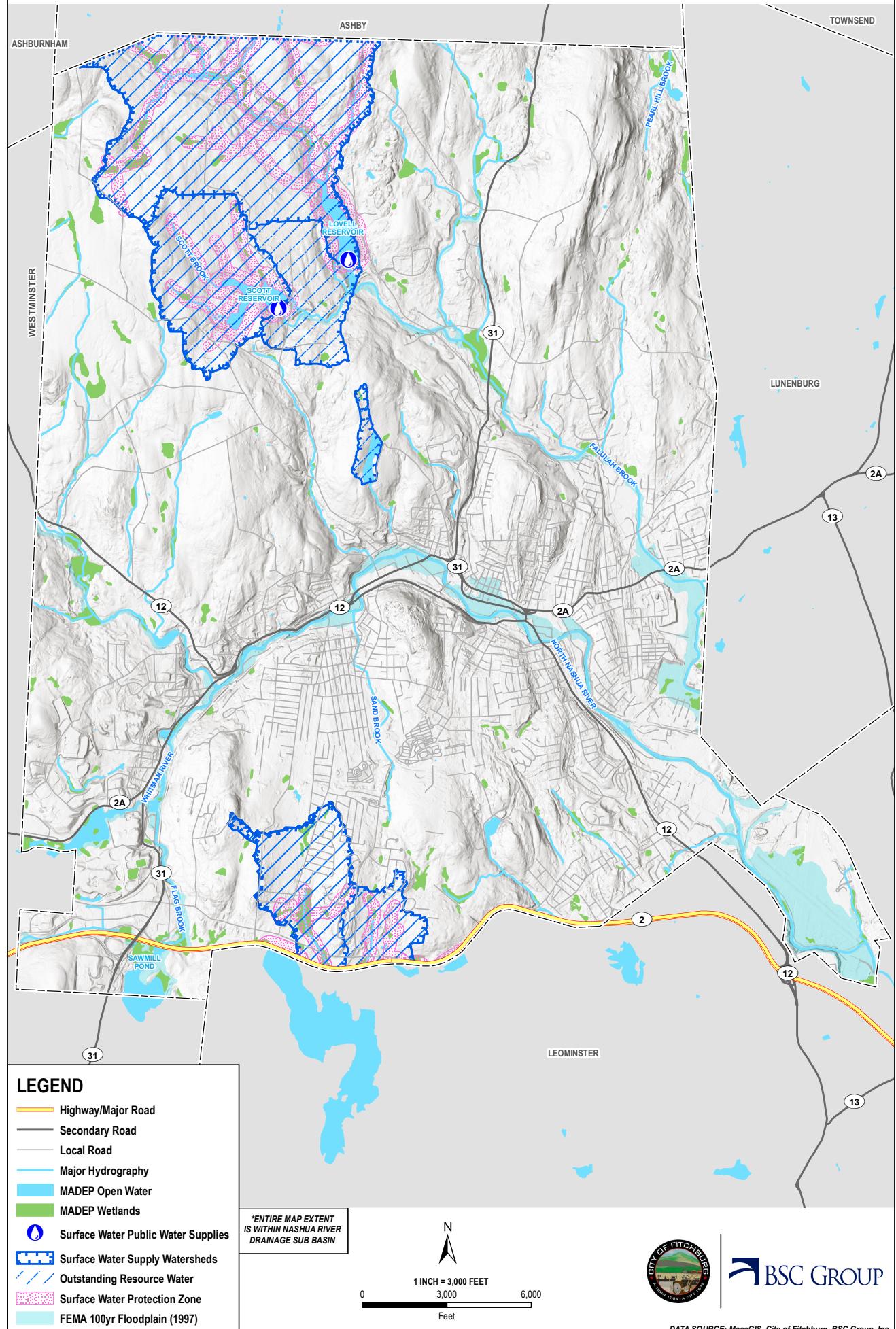


Table 4.2: Fitchburg Waterways

Waterway	Source	Length (mi.)
Flagg Brook	Westminster	3.0
Whitman River	Lake Wampanoag	8.1
Phillips Brook	Ashburnham	7.5
Wyman Brook	Wyman Pond	2.0
Scott Brook	Brown's Hill	5.0
Falulah/Baker Brook	Ashby	8.6
West Fitchburg Sand Brook	Parkhill Park	.25
North Nashua River	Confluence of Flagg Brook & Whitman River	18.6

Most of Fitchburg is connected to the public drinking water supply, which is served by surface water reservoirs that can withdraw water with a combined storage capacity of more than 4.8 billion gallons. These include the Bickford Pond, Fitchburg Reservoir, Lovell Reservoir, Mare Meadow Reservoir, Meetinghouse Reservoir, Scott Reservoir, and Wachusett Lake.

The City sources most of the drinking water from the Meetinghouse and Lovell Reservoirs, where the drinking water treatment plants are located.

Since Fitchburg's drinking water is provided by surface reservoirs, the City has a significant public health and economic interest in maintaining the environmental integrity of the watersheds of these reservoirs. A watershed is defined as the land area which drains into a particular waterbody. Existing and potential sources of drinking water supplies in Fitchburg are protected through a Water Resource Protection Overlay District (WRPOD), an overlay zoning district. The Fitchburg Water Department, recognizing the value of these lands for protection of its water supplies, has aggressively pursued acquiring additional parcels in the watershed. As of 2022, the Water Department owns 1,322 acres. It is important to note that protecting and promoting Fitchburg's watershed is one of the Conservation Commission's main concerns.

Table 4.3: Fitchburg Reservoirs

Reservoir	Acreage
Scott*	35.07
Falulah*	3.0
Lovell*	39.0
Meetinghouse Pond, Westminster	152.7
Wachusett Lake, Westminster	134.0
Fitchburg Reservoir, Ashby	153.36
Mare Meadow, Westminster	300
Bickford Pond, Westminster	70
Ashby Compensating Reservoir	40.8

* Reservoirs within Fitchburg city limits

Surface water supply watersheds are located predominantly in the northwest of Fitchburg (associated with the Scott Reservoir and Lowell Reservoir), with smaller areas in central Fitchburg (associated with Overlook Reservoir), and south Fitchburg (land adjoining the Notown Reservoir in Leominster).

Since 2009, the Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game Division of Fisheries & Wildlife (MassWildlife) has held a conservation restriction (CR) that assures permanent protection of its northern drinking water supply watershed. This 1,875-acre CR also protects the property's important wildlife habitat resources and provides non-motorized outdoor recreational opportunities for the public and is part of a larger network of contiguous protected open spaces totally over 2,765 acres. A Land Management Plan is in place to control the use of this parcel.

Fitchburg's northern drinking water supply watershed supplies 3 million gallons per day of high-quality drinking water.

Measures to protect forest habitats within these areas will have the combined effect of helping to protect surface water supply areas. As such, these areas also provide good target areas for land acquisition, habitat enhancement and water quality improvement measures. Areas nearest the tributary streams should be the first priority, due to their value for wildlife habitat and water quality. Areas that provide connections between existing protected open space and watershed landholdings should be the next priority. Within South Fitchburg are tributaries that feed the Notown Reservoir in Leominster. These areas contain a region that is identified as priority habitat for State-protected Rare Species and Estimated Habitat for Rare Wildlife.

Based on MassGIS data, Fitchburg has aquifer recharge areas in several parts of the city. These areas are principally located in the southeast corner of the city near the airport, with small aquifer areas also located near the southwestern corner of the city bordering Westminster and along the Nashua River and the Whitman River. These recharge areas are not located near either Fitchburg or Leominster surface water reservoirs, nor are they currently used as drinking water supplies by any municipality. Several ponds are found in Fitchburg, most of which were created by mill dams built on streams to supply power and water. Other dams, such as Mirror Lake Dam, were designed specifically to create a recreational resource. Many of these dams are decades old. The City's major ponds are listed in the following table. Ponds less than a half-acre in size are not listed.

Table 4.4: Fitchburg Ponds

Pond	Location	Area	Fed By
Sawmill Pond	Westminster/Fitchburg Line	75 acres	Flag Brook/Wyman
Snow's Mill Pond	Westminster/Fitchburg Line	40 acres	Whitman River
Mirror Lake	Coggshall Park	10 acres	Coggshall Park
Saima Pond	Northeast Fitchburg	1 acre	Falulah/Baker Brook feeds Saima, Green's, Putnam, and Coolidge Ponds
Green's Pond	Northeast Fitchburg	18 acres	Falulah/Baker Brook
Putnam Pond	Northeast Fitchburg	5 acres	Falulah/Baker Brook

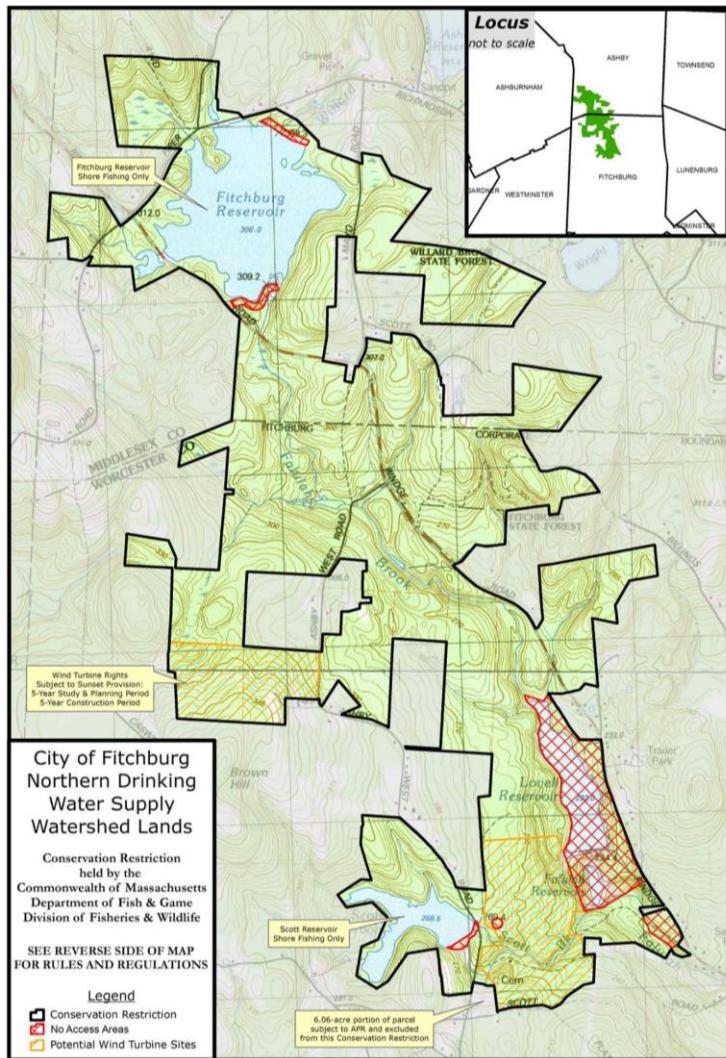


FIGURE 3. NORTHERN DRINKING WATER SUPPLY WATERSHED LANDS (SOURCE: MASSWILDLIFE)

According to the City of Fitchburg and the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation's (DCR) Office of Dam Safety, there are 31 dams in Fitchburg. Information from the Army Corps of Engineers related to these dams is summarized in the table below.¹⁶

The City is pursuing the removal of McTaggart's Pond Dam, which is rated as unsafe by the Massachusetts Office of Dam Safety. A study completed in 2020 found that the dam provides no flood control attenuation and negatively affects the ecology of the natural environment by preventing the flow of the associated stream and warming the waters, though the dam provides recreational use to abutters in the form of swimming, fishing, and canoeing. The study proposed alternatives for McTaggart's Pond Dam, including rehabilitating the dam at a cost of \$3.4 million, lowering the dam height, or removing the dam at a cost of \$1.4 to \$1.9 million depending on extents. The City hired a consultant in early 2022 to design and complete the permitting process for dam removal, and Fitchburg DPW submitted a grant application to the Massachusetts Dam and Seawall Repair and Removal Program to fund outstanding final design elements, perform additional sediment sampling to satisfy regulatory agencies, and design aesthetic improvements to the site that memorialize the historic use of the site such that it remains a recreation destination for Fitchburg residents. Dam removal will allow the stream to revert to a natural state and better support fish due to cooler temperatures.

In terms of other City-owned dams, Scott reservoir is still used for drinking water purposes, and Fitchburg residents and municipal staff have proposed removing the Overlook Reservoir Dam. Two dams – Parkhill Park and Coolidge Park – have already been removed. The Fitchburg DPW maintains a schedule of Dam Safety Inspections for City owned dams based on the individual dam's hazard potential.

Table 4.5: Inventory of Dams in Fitchburg

Dam Name	Location	Dam Owner
Arden Mills Dam	Fitchburg	Arden Mills, LLC c/o Global Property Development Corp.
Arden-Duck Mill Dam	Fitchburg	Arden Mills, LLC c/o Global Property Development Corp.
Electric Station Dam	Fitchburg	Fitchburg Gas & Electric Light Co.
Falulah Reservoir Dam	Fitchburg	Fitchburg
Greene's Pond Dam	Fitchburg	Fitchburg, Dept. of Public Works
James Pond Dam	Fitchburg	No. 1 Mill Warehouse, LLC
Kimball Rd. Dam	Fitchburg	Unknown
Lovell Reservoir Dam	Fitchburg	Fitchburg, Division of Water Supply
Lovell Reservoir Dike	Fitchburg	Fitchburg, Division of Water Supply
Lower Spring Pond Dam	Fitchburg	Unknown
Marshal Reservoir Dam	Fitchburg	Fitchburg
McTaggart's Pond Dam	Fitchburg	Fitchburg
Mill Pond #1 Dam	Fitchburg	Munksjo Paper Inc.
Mirror Lake Dam	Fitchburg	Fitchburg, Parks Department
Nichols Pond Dam	Fitchburg	Unknown
Nichols St. Dam	Fitchburg	Thomas E. Donnelly
North Nashua River Mill #4 Dam	Fitchburg	Munksjo Paper Inc.
North Nashua River Mill #6 Dam	Fitchburg	Fitchburg

¹⁶ Draft City of Fitchburg Hazard Mitigation Plan – Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Plan (2020). Prepared by Weston & Sampson.

Dam Name	Location	Dam Owner
North Nashua River Mill #9 Dam	Fitchburg	291 Westminster Street, LLC
Overlook Reservoir Dam	Fitchburg	Fitchburg
Overlook Reservoir Dike	Fitchburg	Fitchburg
Putnams Pond Dam	Fitchburg	Fitchburg
Saima Pond Dam	Fitchburg	Finnish American Club of Saima
Scott Reservoir Dam	Fitchburg	Fitchburg, Division of Water Supply
Snows Mill Pond Dam	Fitchburg	Caraustar Fitchburg Paperboard
Swimming Pool Dam	Fitchburg	Unknown
Upper Sawmill Pond Dam	Fitchburg	Fitchburg
Upper Spring Pond Dam	Fitchburg	Unknown
Wastewater Treatment Plant Dam	Fitchburg	Fitchburg
Weyerhauser Dam	Fitchburg	Unknown

Source: Draft City of Fitchburg Hazard Mitigation Plan – Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Plan (2020).

Prepared by Weston & Sampson. Pp. 4-23 & 4-24

Wetlands are found throughout Fitchburg. Most of the larger wetland resource areas are associated with streams. The urbanized areas along the Nashua River and Baker Brook are the only areas of the City with a noticeable lack of wetlands, due to hundreds of years of human alteration, including channelization, filling, and the construction of retaining walls. Smaller wetlands are generally produced by groundwater and stormwater.

Flood hazard areas are represented by FEMA's Flood Insurance Rate Maps that show the locations of the 100-year and 500-year floodplain. For the most part, the floodplain is limited to the banks of the Nashua River and Baker Brook. Streams, wetlands, floodplains, and other information related to Fitchburg's water resources are found on the *Map 7: Water Resources*. As part of an EPA Consent Decree, the City is continuing the implementation of the Combined Sewer Separation (CSS) Remediation Plan developed to relieve the problem of combined sanitary and storm sewers that pollute the Nashua River during storm events. Areas that are most at-risk are abutting the Nashua River and tributaries to the west feeding into McTaggards Pond and Snows Millpond. The Falulah Brook flood plain to the east neighboring the border to Lunenberg encroaches on Coolidge Park.

Vegetation

A variety of vegetation types are found in Fitchburg's forests, fields, roadsides, and wetlands. Many of the city's extensive woodlands are found in the northern area of the city, and in a few isolated spots in the south. Most of Fitchburg's woodlands are mixed, second-growth forest which was at one time cleared for agricultural use. The majority of trees are 80 years or older, and between 40 and 60 feet in height. Wooded wetlands are found throughout the city, along with other vegetated wetlands such as marshes, riverbanks, and open water.

Fitchburg's forests serve many purposes, including habitat for plant and animal species, absorbing, and storing water to minimize flooding and erosion, protecting drinking water by providing a buffer around the city's reservoirs, improving air quality through natural processes, and providing recreational opportunities for city residents. While not all parcels of open space can be protected, it is essential that the wooded areas which are important to the above interests be identified and preserved.

The conservation restriction (CR) held by MassWildlife that assures permanent protection of the northern drinking water supply watershed precludes development but permits timber harvesting. Under the terms of a registered Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) entered in 2017, the 205-acre portion of the Northern

Watershed lands designated by the City as "The Baker Family Public Forest Reserve" is protected from timber harvesting for 30 years (through 2047). The MOU includes a provision whereby this protection can be renewed under similar terms in the future. This forest reserve, while not old growth, is a mixed-age, biodiverse northern hardwood/white pine forest with many mature trees. It includes a large, wooded swamp, occupies the highest elevation land (>1,000 ft above sea level) within the Northern Watershed lands, and is accessible to the public via an informal, unmarked trail.¹⁷

Bay State Forestry Services, Inc. completed a Forest Management Plan in 2005 for Coggshall Park and the adjacent Conservation Lands and Bird Sanctuary located on approximately 288 acres in southern Fitchburg. Mirror Lake, which sits in the middle of the park, is home to Canada geese, ducks, and swans. The dominant timber species in the park is white pine, followed by red oak, hemlock, red maple, black birch, red pine, and black oak, providing habitat for amphibians, reptiles, birds such as red-tailed hawks and mammals. Norway maple and burning bush were noted to be invasive species that have made inroads at Coggshall. Flying squirrels and barred owls have been seen in the park. However, this Plan reports that the Massachusetts Natural Heritage Atlas indicates there are no Rare, Threatened, or Endangered (RTE) species anywhere in this area of Fitchburg. Furthermore, Bay State Forestry staff did not see any RTEs during its survey of the park for the purpose of writing a Forest Management Plan.

Public shade trees are located throughout Fitchburg in parks and as street trees. Each year some of these trees become ill or damaged and reach a point where they become a hazard. The City's Tree Warden holds a public hearing in such cases before the tree is removed. As part of the City's ongoing efforts to support the urban tree canopy, Fitchburg became a member of the Massachusetts Greening the Gateway Cities Program (GGCP) in 2020. This program is designed to reduce household heating and cooling energy use by increasing tree canopy cover in urban residential areas and makes available financial assistance to municipalities and non-profits for activities that support urban tree planting in coordination with the GGCP and the DCR Urban and Community Forestry program.

Fisheries and Wildlife

Large tracts of woodlands in the city's northern section provide habitat for numerous plant and animal species. This area is a combination of protected open space and privately owned parcels, which have not been heavily developed. Fitchburg's Watershed Wildlife Conservation Easement protects a wildlife corridor in the northern part of the city and in adjacent Ashby, MA. White tailed deer, ruffed grouse, snowshoe hares, grey and red squirrels, red tailed hawks, woodchucks, beaver, ermine, skunk, red fox, fishers, Canada geese, wood ducks, and a variety of owls and songbirds are found regularly in this area. There have also been reports of moose, fishers, and black bear. While tracts of open space are found in southern and central Fitchburg, they are smaller and more isolated. As a result, the biodiversity of these areas is less than that of the northern section of the city. Commonly found are deer, mice, raccoons, opossums, skunks, and a variety of amphibians and songbirds. The exception in South Fitchburg is the Priority Habitat for State-protected Rare Species near Notown Reservoir. The protected areas of the city's southern watershed in Hubbardson, Princeton and Westminster, the protected open space of Coggshall Park, Bird Sanctuary and the protected Water Department land in northern Fitchburg, Ashby and Ashburnham provides a flyway for several bird species.

Fitchburg is abundant with woodlands that experience seasonal pooling and display characteristics of vernal pools, which are temporary pools of water that provide habitat for distinctive plants and animals. Vernal pool habitat is extremely important to a variety of wildlife species including some amphibians that breed exclusively in vernal pools, and other organisms such as fairy shrimp, which spend their entire life cycles confined to vernal

¹⁷ Ralph Baker (April 2, 2018). "Baker Family Public Forest Reserve – Fact Sheet" <http://www.ci.fitchburg.ma.us/DocumentCenter/View/3159/Baker-Family-Public-Forest-Reserve---Fact-Sheet?bidId=>

pool habitat. Many additional wildlife species utilize vernal pools for breeding, feeding and other important functions. According to Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program (NHESP) mapping, only two Certified Vernal Pools are located in Fitchburg, while numerous potentials but unverified vernal pool habitats have also been identified (see *Fig. 10 Environmental Challenges*). The City should undertake efforts to protect these fragile ecosystems with state certifications to limit the adverse impact of development.

The city's wetlands and waterbodies provide habitat for wood ducks, mallards, geese, great blue herons, egrets, kingfishers, and green winged teal. Many of the city's streams and ponds sustain communities of fish and other aquatic creatures. Fishing is popular at Snow's Mill Pond, Putt's Pond, and Green's Pond, as well as in the city's larger streams. Formerly a highly polluted river teeming with industrial pollutants from the mills along the river, the Nashua's water quality has made substantial progress, and wildlife is making a comeback. A 2006 study by the Army Corps of Engineers in the section just upstream of the dam at the Central Steam plant showed approximately ten species of fish present. Despite these positive trends, the two segments of the North Nashua River that flow through or near Fitchburg's densely populated urban neighborhoods indicate that the overall status of this 8.6-mile section of the river is impaired with waters too polluted or degraded to meet state water quality standards. Primary recreational contact such as swimming and secondary recreational contact such as fishing or wading is not advised. See *Environmental Challenges* below for additional information.

According to data compiled by the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, Fitchburg is home to Coldwater Fisheries Resources (CFRs), which are streams, rivers, or tributaries in which reproducing cold-water fish are found. Within Fitchburg, the following CFRs have been identified: Falulah Brook and one of its unnamed tributaries; Pearl Hill Brook; Phillips Brook; Gagne Brook (which flows through the Montachusett Industrial Park); and Whitman River in southwest Fitchburg. CFRs are particularly sensitive habitats, and changes in land and water use can reduce the ability of these waters to support trout and other kinds of cold-water fish.

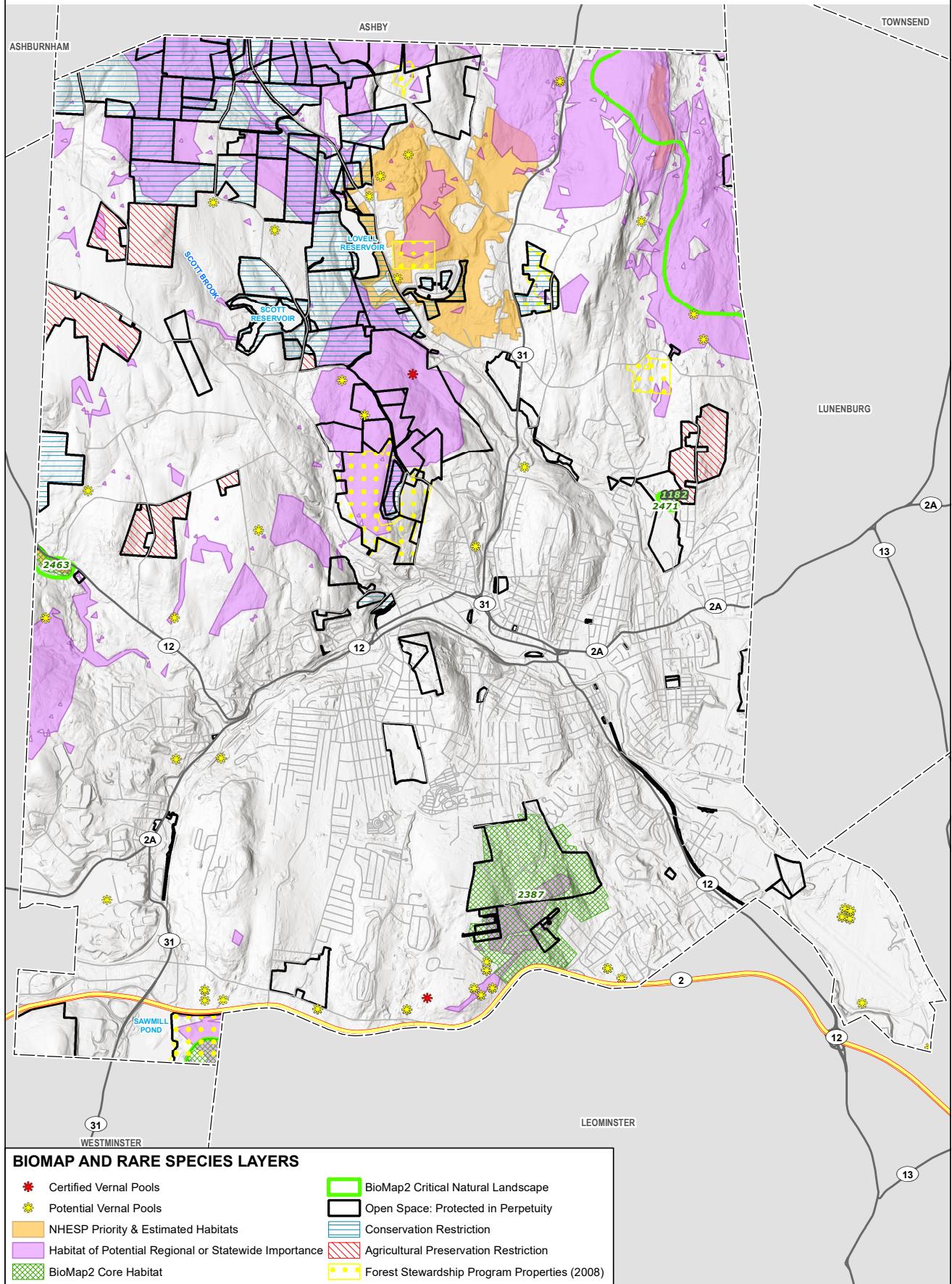
The Division of Fisheries and Wildlife lists rare species in Fitchburg. Spotted Turtles and Blanding's Turtles have been observed in Fitchburg as well as a large population of Eastern Pearlshell in Phillips Brook. Also, Eastern Pearlshell (*Margaritifera*), an unusually fecund freshwater mussel that inhabits cool waters where trout are found, is also present. A population of Common Loons, a species of Special Concern, has taken up residence in the Fitchburg Reservoir in Ashby.

The Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, Natural Heritage, and Endangered Species Program (NHESP) and The Nature Conservancy's Massachusetts Program developed BioMap2 to guide strategic biodiversity conservation in Massachusetts by focusing land protection and stewardship on the areas that are most critical for ensuring the long-term persistence of rare and other native species and their habitats, exemplary natural communities, and a diversity of ecosystems. The Fitchburg BioMap2 Map shows that Fitchburg contains several areas of Core Habitat and Critical Natural Landscape, as identified by NHESP. Core Habitat represents areas critical for the long-term persistence of rare species, whose protection will conserve specific elements of biodiversity. Critical Natural Landscapes represent broader areas of minimally impacted land, which provide habitat for numerous species, support ecological processes, and maintain connectivity between habitats. They also include wetland and stream buffers and corridors.

Within Fitchburg, Core Habitat is located to the southeast of the city (around Coggshall Park), while Critical Natural Landscape is mostly to the northeast, bordering Pearl Hill State Park. Two (2) smaller aquatic core areas (one of which supports two species of conservation concern) are located to the east and west central region of Fitchburg. A large core area (comprising both aquatic and forest habitats), is in Leominster, bordering Fitchburg to the south. While Fitchburg has done relatively well at protecting Core Habitat areas for rare species (54% of 427 acres protected), very little of the Critical Natural Landscape is protected (3.3%). Land acquisition or issuing of conservation easements to protect Critical Natural Landscape, as well as the surrounding areas (to provide a buffer to critical landscape, as well as connectivity between these areas), should be a priority.

CITY OF FITCHBURG OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN

BIOMAP & NHESP RARE SPECIES MAP



1 INCH = 3,000 FEET

3,000 6,000

Feet



BSC GROUP

Scenic Resources and Unique Environments

Fitchburg's undulating terrain, agricultural resources, and water bodies create numerous scenic resources and special places. The 2006 Fitchburg Reconnaissance Report states:

"The City of Fitchburg's developmental history is linked to its geology. The hills and valleys - the steepness of the hills and the river (Nashua) running through the valley - have shaped the way in which the City grew. The bowl-shaped area in which the City was built was formed in the Ice Age and is part of the geological story of this area. There are several types of rocks in Fitchburg, including gneissic rock in the northwest section of the City; Merrimack schist in the southeast part of the City; and the granite of Rollstone Hill. Fitchburg's geology is evident throughout the City in the many stone retaining walls and bridges that have come from the quarry on top of Rollstone Hill."

The Reconnaissance Report lists Rollstone Hill and the Nashua River as Priority Heritage Landscapes worthy of protection. Another essential part of the City's visual character are its cemeteries. Laurel Hill Cemetery is located near Rollstone Hill. Besides the excellent views it provides, its winding granite walls and historic markers make it an aesthetic resource unto itself. Significant volunteer efforts in recent years have restored the landscape of this cemetery to approach its former glory. Historic locations such as South Street Cemetery and the Dean Hill Cemetery on Caswell Road, both dating from the Revolutionary War, are visual reminders of Fitchburg's past and important historical landscapes.

Ten of Fitchburg's roads are designated Scenic Roads in accordance with M.G.L. Chapter 40, Section 15C. These are Mt. Elam Road, Williams Road, Caswell Road, Rindge Road from John Fitch Highway to North Street, Pearl Hill Road, Dean Hill Road, Alpine Road, McIntire Road, Sheldon Road, and Stickney Road. The latter four were designed in 2021. These roads are notable for their rural charm, including field stone walls and ancient hardwoods. Alterations to these roads or removal of roadside trees require Planning Board approval.

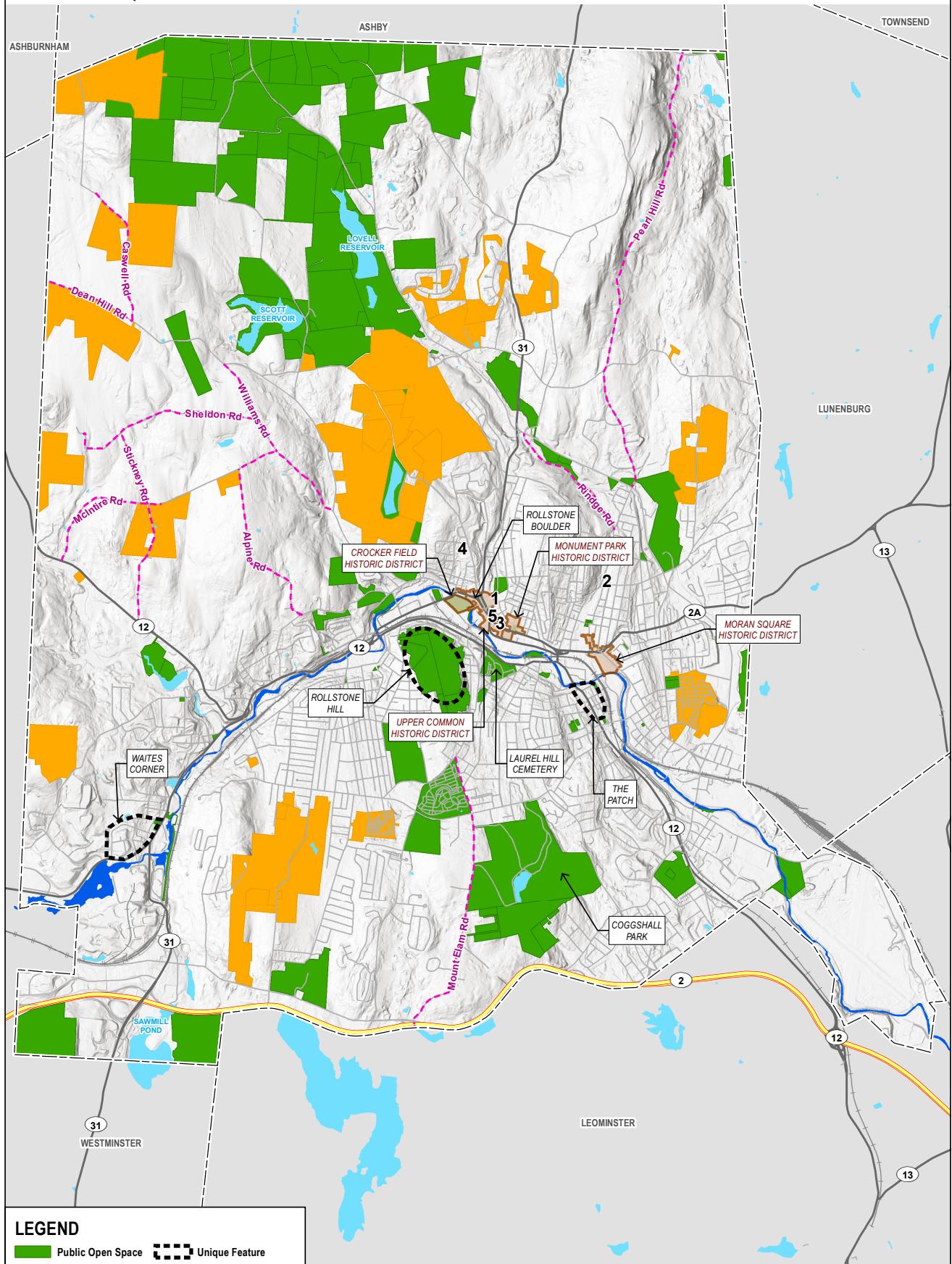
In northern Fitchburg, the view from Flat Rock Road and Pearl Hill Road has long been noted. On clear days, Manchester, New Hampshire is visible to the north and Boston to the east. Though the peak of this vista is privately owned, the Massachusetts Audubon Society owns a large parcel of land off Flat Rock Road and the North County Land trust owns a large adjacent parcel.

Fitchburg has one documented ancient Native American site of an unknown date and 12 documented historic archaeological sites. Because of the known information about this region as well as the apparent Native American activity in Fitchburg, it is assumed that there is significantly more archaeology potential in the city. Additionally, Fitchburg has three National Register Districts: the Crocker Field Historic District, Monument Park Historic District, and Moran Square Historic District. This designation helps to preserve the historic character and culture of these areas of the city.

The Nashua River has been recognized for its tremendous potential as a scenic resource. The river crosses through the densest areas of the city and provides an almost unbroken route between Fitchburg and Leominster. Found along its banks are numerous historic features, including brick mills, granite retaining walls, arched stone bridges, and other legacies from Fitchburg's 19th century history. The City has improved the access and views of the river in recent years through the development of three parks (Riverfront, Gateway, and the Steamline Trail), and Phase 2 of the Twin Cities Rail Trail will take the trail over the Nashua River and the Commuter Rail tracks in Fitchburg to connect to the Fitchburg's Intermodal Center, thereby providing increased visual access to this scenic resource.

CITY OF FITCHBURG OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN

FIG. 6: UNIQUE & HISTORICAL FEATURES



LEGEND

Public Open Space	Unique Feature
Private Open Space	Scenic Road
Nashua River	
MADEP Open Water	Cultural Resources
Highway/Major Road	
Secondary Road	
Local Road	
Railroad	
Historic District	

1. Fitchburg Art Museum
2. Fitchburg State University
3. Fitchburg State Theater Block
4. Stratton Theater
5. Fitchburg Historical Society

1 INCH = 3,000 FEET
0 3,000 6,000
Feet



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Environmental Challenges

While Fitchburg is fortunate to have a significant amount of open space and natural resources, especially outside of the urban core, the City faces several existing and potential environmental challenges that affect open space and recreational planning. These challenges are the result of a variety of factors including climate change, past land use, flooding, sedimentation and erosion along waterways, and forestry-related issues.

As identified during Fitchburg's MVP Planning project,¹⁸ climate change is impacting Fitchburg in multiple ways including increasing flooding; severe thunderstorms, wind, and tornadoes; extreme temperatures; and nor'easters, ice storms, and severe snowstorms. These challenges affect people, infrastructure, and the environment. Moreover, the Nashua Basin climate projections below show that climate changes are anticipated to increase for Fitchburg over the coming decades.

Table 4.6: Climate Change Projections – Nashua Basin

Temperature Metrics	2030		2090	
Average Temperature Increase	3.3 degrees		7.45 degrees	
Additional Days > 90°F	11.5 days		41.5 days	
Days < 32°F ¹⁹	-19.5 days		-43.5 days	
Precipitation Increase by Season ²⁰	Winter: 17%	Summer: 13%	Winter: 23%	Summer: 10%
	Spring: 19%	Fall: 9%	Spring: 13%	Fall: 1% ²¹

Source: Resilient MA, Climate by Basin, <https://resilientma.mass.gov/resources/resource::2152>

Climate change has already had observable effects on the environment and will continue to do so as the average temperature continues to rise, and precipitation patterns change. Climate change is expected to increase the occurrence and intensity of natural hazard related weather events. During the 2020 MVP planning efforts, stakeholders identified the top natural hazards for the City of Fitchburg. Flooding and snowstorms were discussed by participants, citing building placements in flood zones and limited parking during snowstorms as major concerns. Extreme winter events as well as wind causing power outages were also highlighted as significant concerns. Another prevalent natural hazard identified for Fitchburg was flooding of the North Nashua River. Collectively, it was agreed upon by the group that the city of Fitchburg's top hazards present ongoing and cumulative adverse impacts on the community's most important infrastructural, societal, and environmental resources.

Hazardous Waste

Like many New England communities, Fitchburg has environmental challenges linked to its industrial past. The numerous industrial sites often have real or perceived issues of soil and groundwater contamination, and several have been remediated. Since many of these sites are located along the Nashua River, the danger exists that the contamination may spread downstream. See *Map 10: Environmental Challenges* for the location of contaminated and previously contaminated sites listed in the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) waste site cleanup database.

¹⁸ *Draft City of Fitchburg Hazard Mitigation Plan – Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Plan* (2020). Prepared by Weston & Sampson.

¹⁹ Due to projected increases in average and minimum temperatures throughout the end of the century, the Nashua basin is expected to experience a decrease in days with daily minimum temperatures below 32°F.

²⁰ Projections for the summer and fall seasons are more variable and could see either a drop or increase in total precipitation throughout the 21st century.

²¹ The fall season projections for the Nashua basin could see a decrease of 12% to increase of 13%.

Landfill

The Fitchburg/Westminster landfill, located just over the municipal line on Rt. 31 in Westminster, is managed by Waste Management and overseen by the Health Department. As of 2022, the Health Department and Waste Management were collaborating on permitting to have the landfill elevations raised to allow it to operate for an additional three to five years, and the City continues to work on land acquisition to increase the size of the landfill to expand operations for the longer-term.

Flooding

Flooding was among the four main hazards identified by participants during Fitchburg's MVP Community Resilience Building (CRB) Workshop. Flooding can be caused by various weather events including hurricanes, extreme precipitation, thunderstorms, nor'easters, and winter storms. Flooding can be both riverine (topping the banks of streams, rivers, and ponds) and from stormwater that is not properly infiltrated into the ground. While Fitchburg experiences these events, the impacts of climate change will likely lead to increasingly severe storms and increasingly severe impacts.²²

Construction in floodplains was common for most of Fitchburg's history. The most evident case of this is John Fitch Highway, Fitchburg's primary commercial strip. Most of the properties along both sides of the road are within the 100-year floodplain of Baker Brook, which was diverted to allow the construction. Flooding of the parking lots adjacent to the brook is a frequent occurrence, resulting in property damage, pollution of the brook, and erosion. The City is currently working on a flood reduction plan for the Falulah/Baker Brook watershed, funded by the Massachusetts Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Grant Program. The project is working on identifying flood prone areas through stormwater modeling, as well as sites to reduce impervious surfaces (roads, buildings, etc.). Once identified, the project will design green infrastructure solutions for public and private properties for flood reduction. In addition, the project is developing and implementing the plan by prioritizing the projects that most benefit Environmental Justice communities.

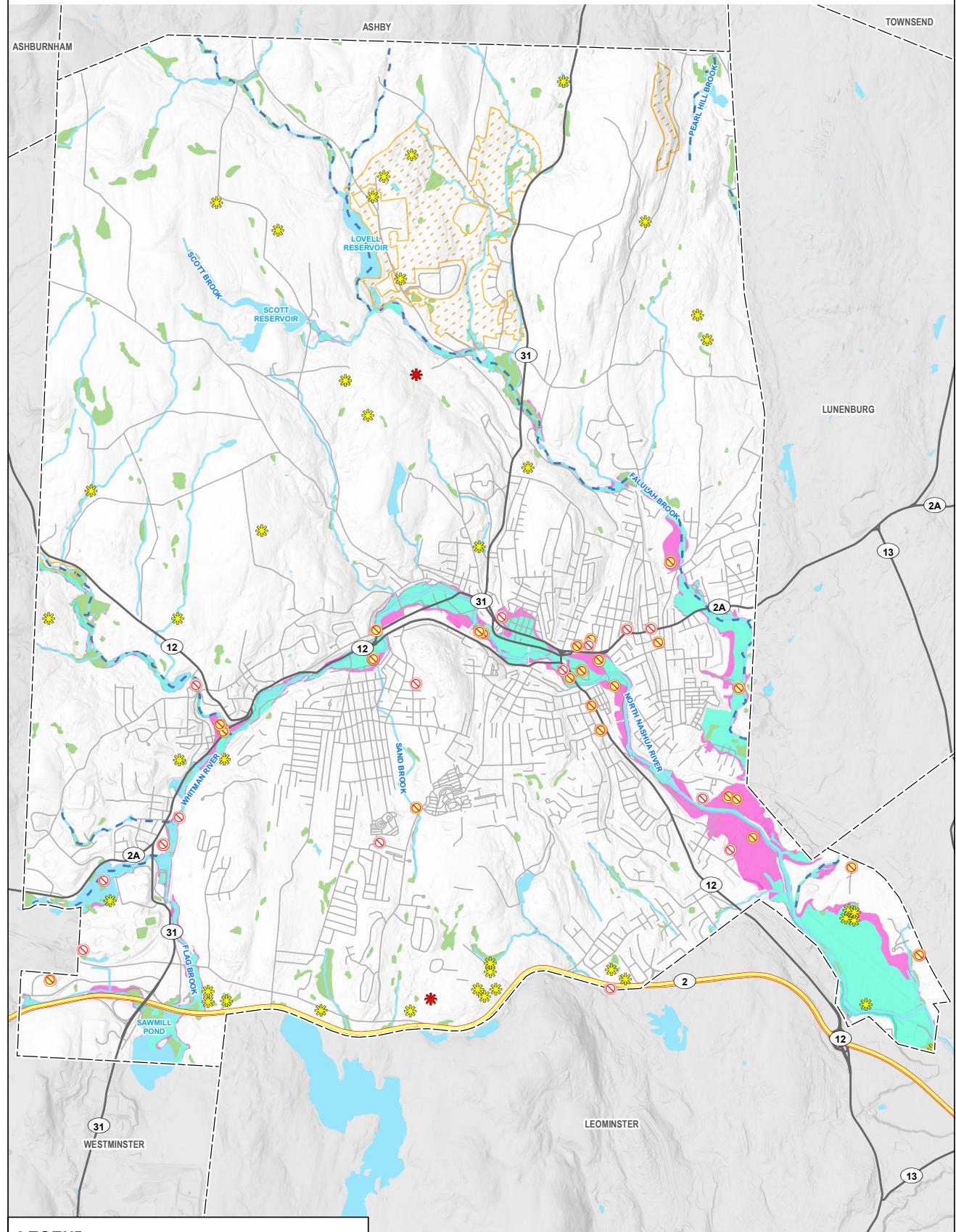
Sections of downtown Fitchburg, Cleghorn, and the industrial area around Airport Road are also in the 100-year floodplain, as is most of the airport property. Given this, it is not surprising that between 2000 and 2019, the City of Fitchburg had 14 floods and flash flood events. Although some of the events caused property damage, there were no deaths reported. During Fitchburg's CRB Workshop, stakeholders discussed concerns about flooding and residents who may experience social isolation, including elderly residents and children. 58 Census Blocks in Fitchburg with a higher concentration of youth or seniors and 16 Census Blocks with a higher concentration of Environmental Justice Communities are located partially within a FEMA flood zone.²³

²² *Draft City of Fitchburg Hazard Mitigation Plan – Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Plan* (2020). Prepared by Weston & Sampson.

²³ Ibid.

CITY OF FITCHBURG OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN

FIG. 10: ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES



LEGEND

Highway/Major Road	FEMA 100yr Floodplain (1997)
Secondary Road	FEMA 500yr Floodplain (1997)
Local Road	NHESP Priority Habitats
Major Hydrography	Coldwater Fisheries Resources
MADEP Open Water	MADEP 21E Site
MADEP Wetlands	MADEP AUL Site
	Certified Vernal Pools
	Potential Vernal Pools

N

1 INCH = 3,000 FEET

3,000

6,000

Feet



BSC GROUP

Erosion, Sedimentation, and Stormwater Runoff

Flood hazards are directly linked to erosion, which can compromise receiving water quality, slope stability, and the stability of building foundations. This puts current and future structures and populations located near steep embankments at risk. Erosion can also undercut streambeds and scour around stream crossing, creating a serious risk to roadways.²⁴

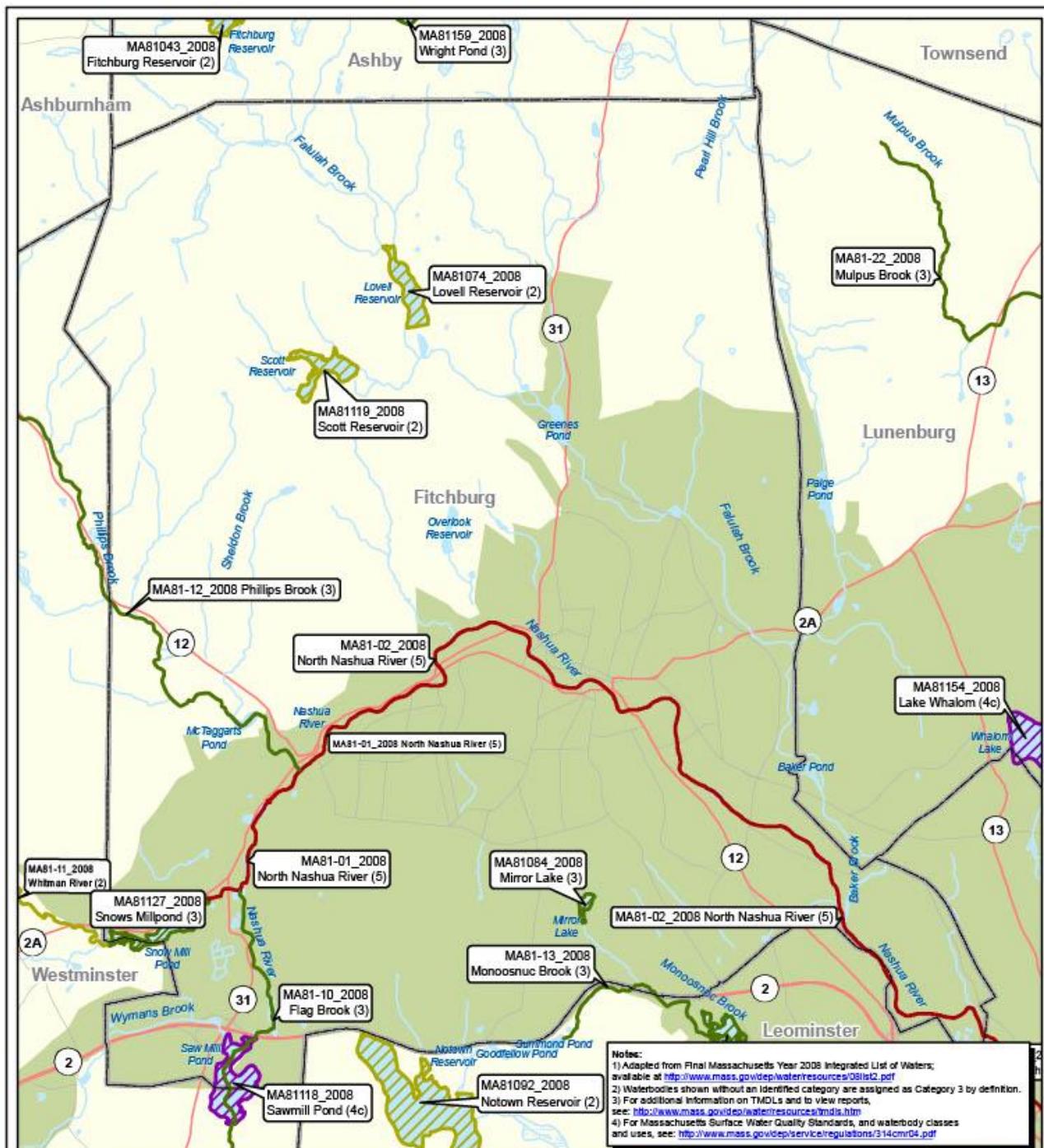
Large amounts of Fitchburg's land area contain slopes, shallow bedrock, and silty or clay soils. All these factors increase the likelihood that the disturbance of soil and removal of vegetation, which accompanies development, will lead to erosion and sedimentation problems. The more easily developed areas of the city have largely been developed. Therefore, much of the new development in the city occurs on difficult sites. In response to these concerns, a Stormwater Management Ordinance has been adopted by the City, requiring the filing of an application for a Stormwater Management Permit when substantial amounts of land will be disturbed, when the disturbance occurs in a critical area, or when the disturbance is on a parcel of land having more than 5,000 square feet of existing impervious area and ultimately results in a net increase of 30% or more of impervious area. Despite that ordinance, and despite EPA regulations requiring an EPA Stormwater Permit for disturbance in excess of one acre, the City is occasionally plagued by siltation and run-off from development sites with inadequate erosion control measures. In addition, Fitchburg suffers from surface water contamination caused by runoff from impervious surfaces, such as roads, roofs, and driveways. The EPA's 303(d) list, which is a state's list of impaired and threatened waters (e.g., stream/river segments and lakes), assesses waterbody or waterbody segments in one of the five following categories:

- Category 1 – Attaining all designated uses
- Category 2 – Attaining some designated uses, and insufficient or no data information to determine if remaining uses are attained
- Category 3 – Insufficient or no data and information to determine if any use is attained
- Category 4- Impaired or threatened for one or more uses but not needing a total maximum daily load (TMDL)²⁵ because:
 - TMDL has been completed
 - Expected to meet standards
 - Not impaired by a pollutant
- Category 5 – Impaired or threatened by pollutant(s) for one or more designated uses and requiring a TMDL. These are the waters entered onto a states' 303(d) list.

The EPA's 303(d) list for Fitchburg includes the entirety of the North Nashua River flowing through Fitchburg (State Waterbody ID: MA81-01 and MA81-02) as a Category 5 impaired waterbody. According to 2020 EPA assessment data, the confirmed contaminant for the North Nashua River is Escherichia Coli (E. coli), and the probable sources contributing to this impairment include combined sewer overflows, discharges from municipal separate storm sewer systems, illicit connections / hook-ups to storm sewers, wet weather discharges (point source and combination of stormwater), and wet weather discharges (non-point source).

²⁴ *Draft City of Fitchburg Hazard Mitigation Plan – Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Plan* (2020). Prepared by Weston & Sampson.

²⁵ Every two years states are required to submit Water Quality Assessment Reports under Sections 305(b) and 303(d) of the Clean Water Act describing the condition of waters in the state. These reports include water quality information on rivers, lakes, estuaries, and coastal waters, and an analysis of the extent to which waters are meeting water quality standards. Waters are assessed as impaired when an applicable water quality standard is not being attained. Impaired waters require a total maximum daily load (TMDL) or alternative restoration plan to reduce pollutant loadings and restore the waterbody.



Waterbody Assessment and TMDL Status Fitchburg, MA



0
0.5
Miles

Map produced by EPA Region I GIS Center
Map Tracker ID 6678, February 25, 2010
Data Sources: TeleAtlas, Census Bureau,
USGS, MassDEP

Waterbody Label
State ID,
Waterbody Name (Category)
(TMDLs approved for this waterbody)

Assessment of Waterbody Segment

- Category 2: Attaining some uses; other uses not assured
- Category 3: Insufficient information to make assessment for any use.

- Category 4a: TMDL is completed and approved for one or more pollutants
- Category 4c: Impairment not caused by a pollutant
- Category 5: Impaired or threatened for one or more uses and requiring a TMDL

Waterbodies
 Swamp/Marsh
 MS4 Urbanized Areas (2000 Census)
 Municipal Boundaries

FIGURE 4. FITCHBURG, MA WATERBODY ASSESSMENT, 305(B)/303(D), AND TOTAL MAXIMUM DAILY LOAD (TMDL) STATUS MAP (SOURCE: EPA REGION I GIS CENTER)

The presence of water bodies that are impaired and monitored for TMDLs underlines that the projected increase in annual precipitation and extreme precipitation events related to climate change will only exacerbate existing water quality challenges and their impacts on recreational opportunities.

Forestry Issues

Based on forest change data derived using Landsat time-series imagery, 4.5% of Fitchburg experienced forest loss between 2001 and 2020.²⁶ As shown in the accompanying table, between 2001 and 2005, 179 acres of forest were lost in Fitchburg, while the period between 2016 and 2020 saw almost double that amount – 352 acres of forest cover lost. Based on forest cutting plans submitted to the Fitchburg Conservation Commission, forest cutting has continued with a total of 95 acres cut across different private properties in 2021. As of June 2022, 79 acres were lost to cutting, with more forest cutting plans submitted for 2023.

There have been 15 recent cutting plans since 2019 that total a proposed cutting of 554 acres. One primary proposed cutting plan is for a large-scale solar array by Alpine Ridge LLC. Other explanations for forest loss include residential development. Recognizing the need for action, the Fitchburg Conservation Commission hosted a Fitchburg Forest Forum in June 2022. The free educational event targeted forest landowners and residents concerned about the increase in forest cutting in recent years. The event was intended to help educate landowners about their wood lots and the benefits of older forests. Protecting and managing large, continuous forest areas is integral for many ecological functions, including carbon capture, water cycling and recharge, and ecological connectivity between habitats.

Table 4.8: Forest Loss in Acres by Location & Year

Location	Acreage Cut/Year
Westminster Hill Rd, access via St. Jude	221 / 2022-23
Ashburnham St.	40 / 2021
Caswell Rd.	55 / 2019
Alpine Rd.	15 / 2021
Alpine Rd.	20 / 2021
154 Williams Rd.	8 / 2021
34 Williams Rd.	4 / 2021
Fisher Rd. opposite Marshall Rd.	47 / 2022-23
Flat Rock Rd (Heathland cut)	20 / 2021-22
340 Ashburnham Hill Rd	8 / 2021
Franklin Rd. E side next to condos	29 / 2022
Franklin Rd. E side opp. Depot St.	35 / 2022
Stickney Rd. North of Sheldon	15 / 2022
Ashburnham St. on Phillips Br.	19 / 2019
Old Northfield Rd. (Ashby line)	18 / 2019

Table 4.7: Forest Cover Loss in Fitchburg (2001-2020)

Time Interval	Forest Loss (Acres)	Forest Loss (%)
2001-2005	179	0.99
2006-2010	130	0.72
2011-2015	158	0.88
2016-2020	352	1.95

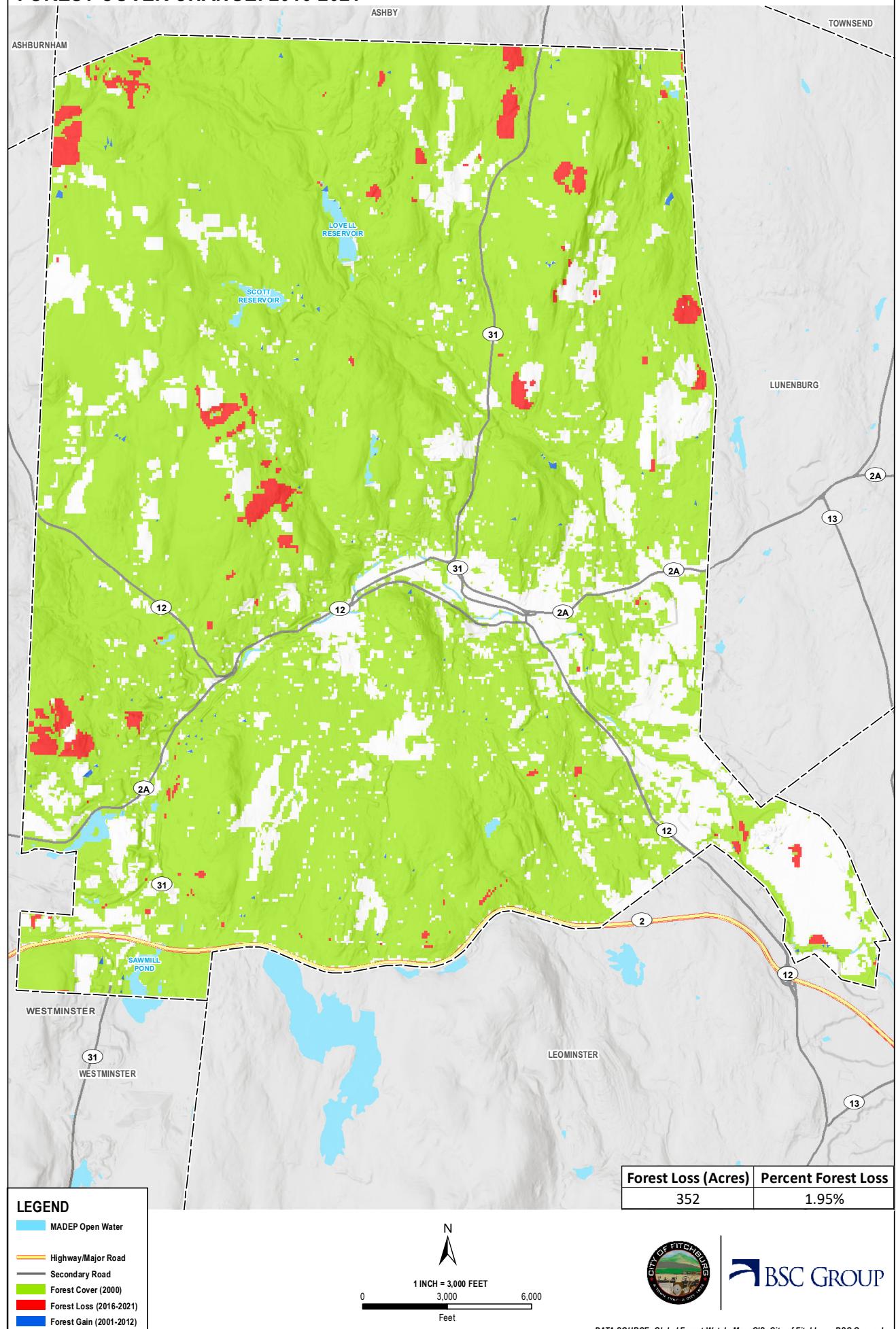
Broad strategies for Fitchburg include the following:

- Protecting existing large forest areas, and preventing their fragmentation (from development, logging, roads, etc.), wherever possible.
- Looking to improve connectivity between forest areas through strategic land acquisition (to link up larger forest blocks).
- Looking to reduce fragmentation effects caused by existing roads/development within forest areas (such as installing wildlife underpasses/overpasses).
- Improving habitat quality and availability in between forest areas, for example through tree planting and small-scale rewilding within parks and city areas, to provide pathways of habitat patches in between more continuous habitat areas.

²⁶ Data available on-line from: <https://glad.earthengine.app/view/global-forest-change>.

CITY OF FITCHBURG OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN

FOREST COVER CHANGE: 2016-2021



Promoting Ecological Climate Resiliency

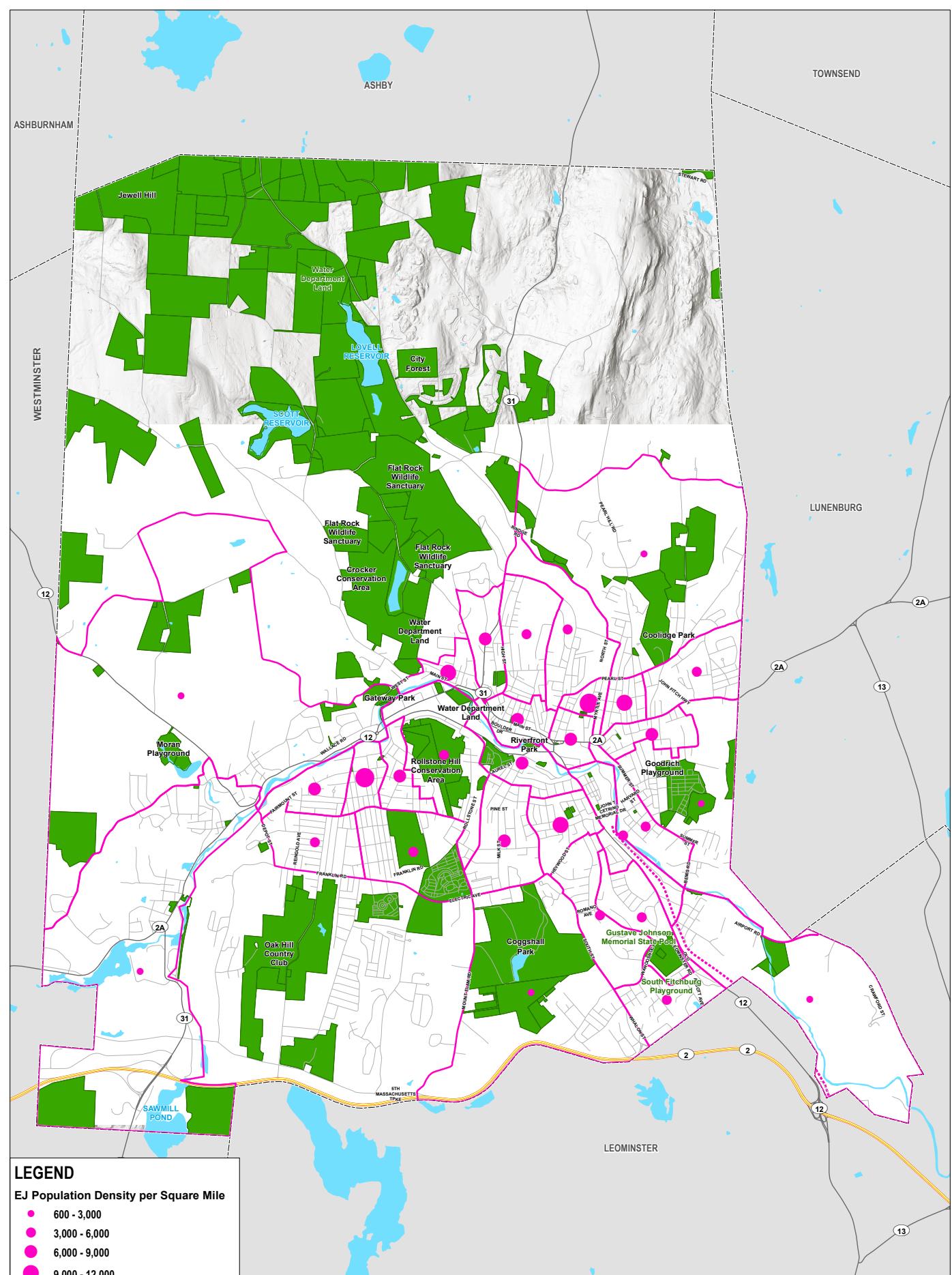
Although Fitchburg is an older, industrial mill city, over two-thirds of its land area is undeveloped forest, field, water, or farmland. Continued efforts to protect and enhance this natural resource infrastructure will therefore go a long way toward supporting community and ecological resilience to the changing climate. At a very broad level, the following strategies should be pursued for different levels of landscape development:

- **Low development/high-quality natural environment** – Aim to protect and preserve these areas, perhaps through a combination of land acquisition, conservation easements, and policies to reduce future fragmentation. Generally, more “passive” management to protect these areas from harm.
- **Low development/semi-natural environments (parks, cemeteries, greenspaces)** – Aim to implement more conservation-centric management practices to improve the ecological value of these areas and create new high-quality connecting habitat between undeveloped and unmanaged habitats. More “active” management approaches (particularly habitat creation) are applicable in these semi-natural areas. Measures including no-mow zones, wildflower margins, creation of microhabitats with log and woody debris piles, installation of bird nest boxes and bat boxes, invasive plant management and native plant planting schemes, have a greater potential for providing significant ecological improvements within these semi-natural areas.
- **Moderate development/built environments** – Aim to minimize environmental impacts to more pristine environments while providing smaller islands of habitat where available (such as road medians and margins, traffic islands, vegetated street areas, etc.). Measures including no-mow zones and wildflower margins along road and around parking lots, street tree planting, installation of rain gardens and/or swales for stormwater control and improved aesthetics, and conversion of impervious asphalt to permeable paving in suitable areas, could be appropriate. Creating even small habitat areas such as wildflower beds and margins can provide important habitat connectivity for insects, while improving the visual appeal of more developed areas.

Additional measures that will help protect and promote important habitat and ecological connectivity in Fitchburg are described in *Appendix A*.

Environmental Equity

Environmental justice populations reside primarily in the dense downtown of Fitchburg along the Nashua River. The environmental justice population density map depicts the relationship between EJ populations and protected and recreational open space in the city. There are multiple green spaces of considerable size north of the Nashua River, including Flat Rock Wildlife Sanctuary and the Crocker Conservation area. South of the river, the Rollstone Hill Conservation Area and other smaller green spaces provide recreational opportunity, however, these are not forested parks. Within the densest EJ areas, there are primarily pocket parks and smaller green space opportunities due to the level of development that exists downtown. The City of Fitchburg is prioritizing the necessary improvements to create a safe and accessible network of parks and open spaces. The community survey conducted in May and June of 2022 identified barriers that community members face when utilizing parks, such as safety, trash, lack of lighting, and unreliable sidewalks.



LEGEND

EJ Population Density per Square Mile

- 600 - 3,000
- 3,000 - 6,000
- 6,000 - 9,000
- 9,000 - 12,000

- 12,000 - 16,000
- MADEP Open Water
- Twin Cities Rail Trail
- Highway/Major Road
- Secondary Road
- Local Road

CITY OF FITCHBURG OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN

OPEN SPACE INVENTORY AND 2020 ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE POPULATIONS



BSC GROUP

46

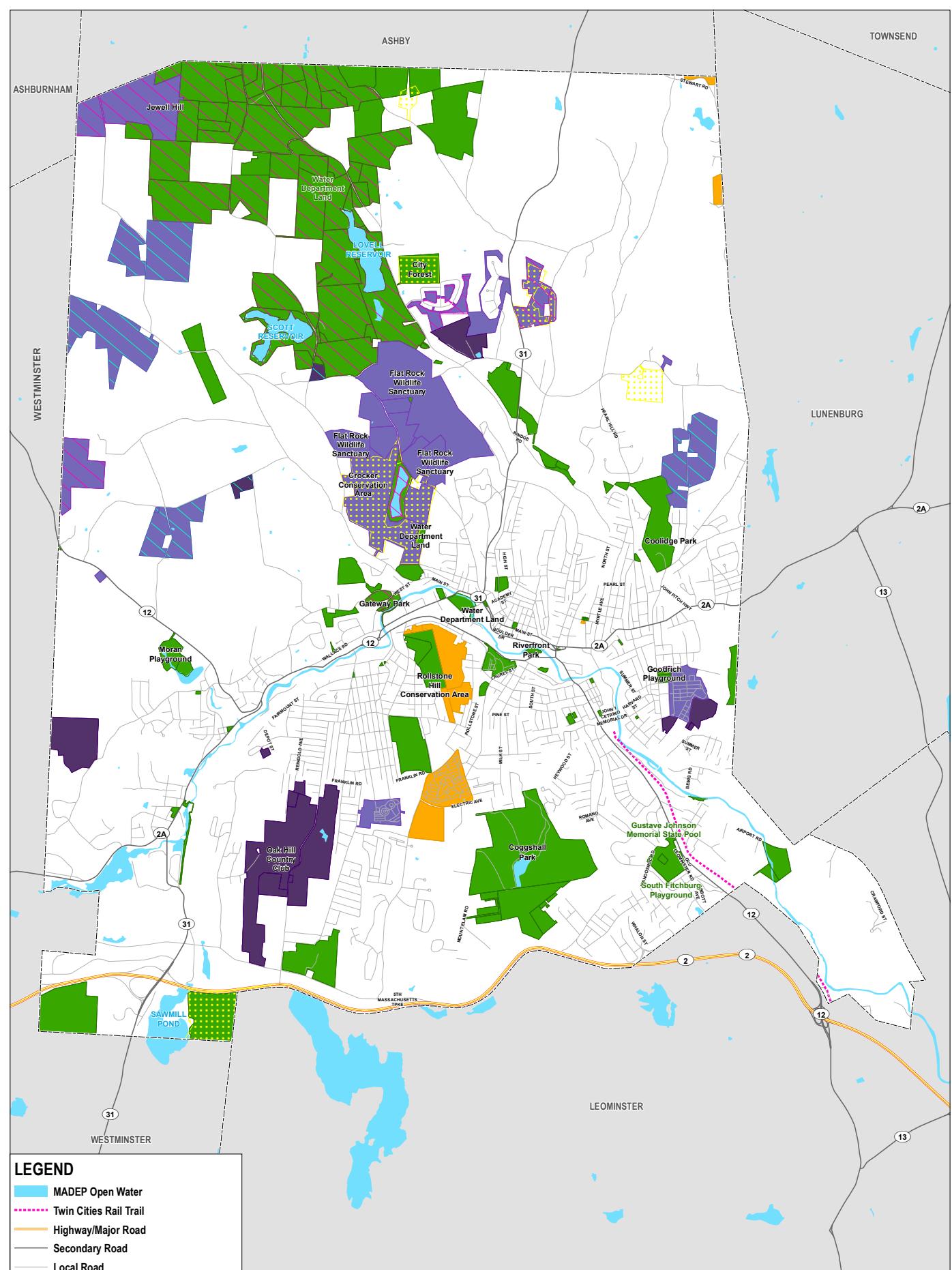
DATA SOURCE: MassGIS, City of Fitchburg, RSC Group, Inc.

SECTION 5: INVENTORY OF LANDS OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION INTEREST

An Open Space and Recreation Plan helps guide the protection and management of natural resources and recreational facilities within a municipality. Besides enhancing the quality of life and providing aesthetic, public health, and social benefits, open space planning can provide economic, ecological, and climate resiliency benefits by proactively managing natural resources for multiple co-benefits. Fitchburg has a considerable amount of land dedicated to open space or recreational use, and a variety of mechanisms are used to protect these lands. For planning purposes, it is important to be aware of the degree of existing protection for each parcel. Knowing the level of current protection (or lack thereof) will point out how easily some properties assumed to be open space can be developed. This knowledge can help in identifying those open space and recreation areas that require additional efforts to ensure their long-term preservation and protection. *Map 11A: Open Space Inventory* depicts open space in Fitchburg using the levels of protection defined below:

- **Protected** - Legally protected in perpetuity and recorded as such in a deed or other official document. Land dedicated to park and recreation purposes in its deed is protected under Article 97. Land is considered protected in perpetuity by Article 97 if it is held in the care, custody, and control of the city's conservation commission or, sometimes, by the water department; if a city has a conservation restriction on the property in perpetuity; if it is owned by one of the state's conservation agencies; or if the city received federal or state assistance for the purchase or improvement of the property. Private land is considered permanently protected if it has a state-approved Conservation Restriction or Agriculture Preservation Restriction that is held by a qualified entity, such as a non-profit land trust (e.g., North County Land Trust), a state conservation agency, or a municipality (typically under the care, custody, and control of the Conservation Commission).
- **Unprotected** – Unprotected by any legal means. This land could be sold without restriction at any time for another use (e.g., development). This designation also includes land that is temporarily conserved through an existing functional use. For example, some water supply lands are only temporarily conserved while water resource protection is their primary use. These lands could be developed for other uses when their functional use is no longer necessary. This designation also includes lands that are likely to remain open space for other reasons (e.g., cemeteries). Lastly, this designation includes lands enrolled in one of three Massachusetts Chapter 61 tax programs (Chapter 61, 61A or 61B). Each tax program provides a means to assess land at its current use (forest, agriculture, or open space/recreation) as opposed to its development value. Each of the Chapter 61 laws provides a voluntary and temporary form of conservation. The owner commits a property to agricultural, forest or recreational use. In exchange, the City reduces taxes and is granted the right to purchase the property at fair market value when it is removed from Chapter 61, 61A or 61B classification to be converted or sold for residential, commercial, or industrial use.

Some of Fitchburg's largest privately owned parcels have been subdivided for residential development. Unfortunately, this includes large amounts of agricultural land. Although state programs such as the Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) program and Chapter 61, 61A, and 61B restrictions are available to provide an incentive for property owners to preserve their land from development, funding for APR projects is severely limited, and this type of land designation provides limited protection.



CITY OF FITCHBURG OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN

FIG. 11A: OPEN SPACE INVENTORY - OPEN SPACE BY LEVEL OF PROTECTION

N

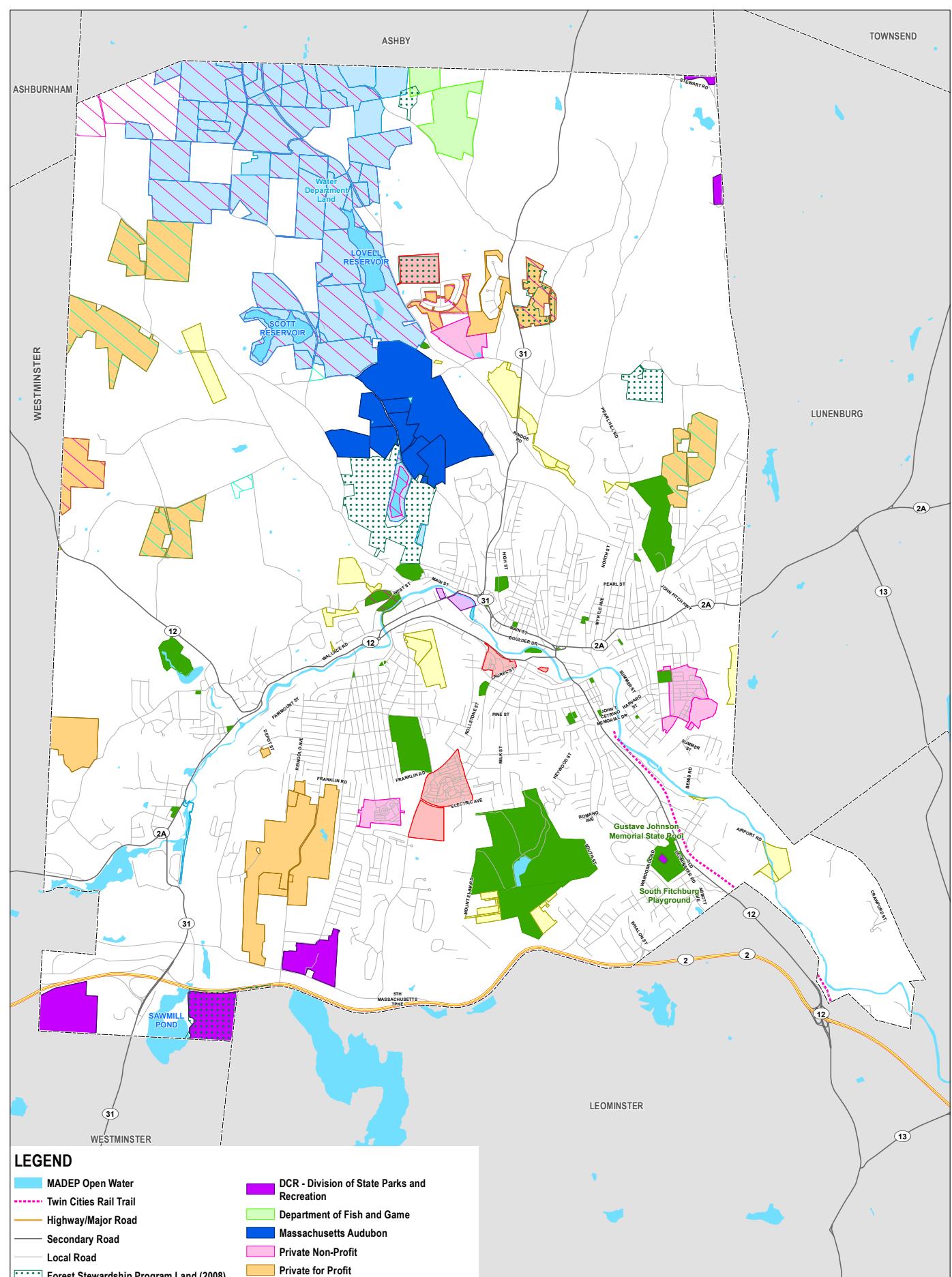
1 INCH = 1,400 FEET

0 1,400 2,800 5,600

Foot



BSC GROUP



CITY OF FITCHBURG OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN

FIG. 11B: OPEN SPACE INVENTORY - OPEN SPACE BY OWNER

FIG. 11B: OPEN SPACE INVENTORY - OPEN SPACE BY OWNER



 BSC GROUP

Private Parcels

Chapter 61, 61A, and 61B under Massachusetts General Laws, are designed to encourage the preservation and enhancement of forests, agricultural and horticultural lands, and open space. These programs offer local tax benefits to property owners who are willing to make long-term commitments to preserving land.²⁷ Many of these lands are woodlots and small farms. As development increases around these properties, taxes may rise to cover the costs of expanded city services. Without these benefits, increased taxes could force landowners to sell property and conservation lands.²⁸ Three land programs are available: Chapter 61-forestry land, 61A-Agricultural and Horticultural Land, and 61B-Recreational Land. In Fitchburg, there are a total of 506.66 acres enrolled in Chapter 61 (forest land), 457.54 acres of Chapter 61A (agriculture), and 20.11 acres of chapter 61B land (recreation).

Table 5. Chapter 61, 61A, and 61B Lands

FC: Field Crops - hay, wheat, tillable forage, cropland, etc... (Ch. 61A, not classified as Open Space)

O: Orchards - pears, apples, grape vineyards, etc... (Ch. 61A, not classified as Open Space)

NF: Necessary Farm- related land-farm roads, ponds, land under farm buildings (Ch. 61A, not classified as Open Space)

PW: Productive Woodland - woodlots (Ch. 61A, not classified as Open Space)

P: Pasture (Ch. 61A, not classified as Open Space)

NS: Nature Study - areas specifically for nature study or observation (Ch. 61B, not classified as Open Space)

#	Site Address	Property ID	Zoning	Lot Size (acres)	Designation	Note
1	ASHBURNHAM ST	S7-29-0	RR	49.3	61	Ch. 61
2	STICKNEY RD	S28-19-0	RR	16	61	Ch. 61
3	SHELDON RD	S27-15-0	RR	9.52	61	Ch. 61
4	CASWELL RD	S10-2-0	RR	7.59	61	Ch. 61
5	RINDGE RD	69R-17-0	RR	20	61	Ch. 61
6	BENNETT RD	69R-14-0	RR	12.2	61	Ch. 61
7	ASHBURNHAM HILL RD	S5-26-0	RR	65	61	Ch. 61
8	SHELDON RD	S27-15-B	RR	26.8	61	Ch. 61
9	ASHBURNHAM ST	S7-83-0	RR	59.88	61	Ch. 61
10	ALPINE RD	S1-24-0	RR	25	61	Ch. 61
11	0 PEARL HILL RD	S19-25-0	RR	13	61	Ch. 61
12	0 HIGH ROCK RD	79R-41-0	RR	4.8	61	Ch. 61
13	0 PEARL HILL RD	S19-34-0	RR	32.88	61	Ch. 61
14	0 PEARL HILL RD	S19-24-0	RR	25	61	FC
15	0 NEW WEST TOWNSEND RD	S12-4-0	RR	15	61	FC
16	0 NEW WEST TOWNSEND RD	S31-12-0	RR	17.5	61	FC
17	0 RICHARDSON RD	321-4-A	RR	21.02	61	FC
18	0 NEW WEST TOWNSEND RD	S31-8-0	RR	9.35	61	FC
19	0 BILLINGS RD	S9-19-0	RR	35.8	61	FC
20	0 FRANKLIN RD	113-31-0	RR	41.02	61	FC
21	0 SHELDON RD	S27-18-1	RR	1.86	61A	FC
22	0 ASHBY WEST RD	69R-49-0	RR	1.43	61A	FC

²⁷ Pioneer Valley Planning Commission

²⁸ Mass Woods Conservation and Land Use Planning

23	0 ASHBY WEST RD	78R-43-0	RR	3	61A	O
24	0 ASHBURNHAM HILL RD	S6-23-0	RR	91	61A	NF
25	393 ASHBY WEST RD	78R-44-0	RR	6.5	61A	NF
26	0 ASHBY WEST RD	78R-45-1	RR	6.06	61A	NF
27	0 ASHBY WEST RD	69R-37-0	RR	45	61A	NF
28	0 ALPINE RD	87R-18-1	RR	8.16	61A	PW
29	0 STICKNEY RD	S28-13-1	RR	25.8	61A	P
30	0 PEARL HILL RD	79R-39-0	RR	16.24	61A	O
31	0 ASHBURNHAM HILL RD	78R-67-0	RR	41.6	61A	NF
32	0 CASWELL RD	S10-9-0	RR	37	61A	NF
33	0 ASHBY WEST RD	69R-36-0	RR	45	61A	NF
34	0 CASWELL RD	S10-1-0	RR	73.19	61A	NF
35	0 PEARL HILL RD	S19-28-1	RR	14.2	61A	NF
36	0 STICKNEY RD	S28-13-2	RR	41.5	61A	P
37	576 SHELDON RD	79R-39-0	RR	2.11	61B	NS
38	0 ARN-HOW FARM RD	78R-67-0	RR	18	61B	NS

Source: City of Fitchburg Assessors' Database

When development does occur, the use of the Flexible Development and Planned Unit Development provisions of the City's zoning ordinance can preserve open space, while still allowing the property owner to realize a profit. Unfortunately, too often the preserved open space is of limited utility. While each of these options provides benefits to the owner, they are all voluntary, and are not necessarily well known. Therefore, the City must take an active role in promoting them before the owner proceeds with development.

Protected Parcels

Approximately 3,458 acres of Fitchburg's land area is permanently protected for conservation and recreational uses. The method of protection varies widely including City and state ownership, permanent deed restrictions, ownership of land, and conservation easements by private organizations. During the late 1800's, large parcels were deeded to the City for parks, with Cogshall and Parkhill Parks being among the most notable of these.

Parks

Fitchburg is fortunate to have several large parcels dedicated to public use near its most densely populated areas. The character of these properties varies greatly, including tracts of forest, play areas such as Howarth Park, passive parks such as Gateway and Riverfront Parks, athletic facilities such as Crocker Field, historic urban green spaces such as the Upper Common, and monuments such as Moran Square and Monument Park. In addition to the standalone parks and playgrounds, many of the City's schools provide playgrounds, fields, basketball courts and gymnasiums for neighbors.

Providing adequate park facilities for inner city residents and promoting environmental equity is a priority for Fitchburg. The city is fortunate to have a variety of parks, playgrounds, and other open space within the urban center, and throughout the city's densely populated Environmental Justice neighborhoods. These green spaces include a multitude of neighborhood playgrounds, passive parks, unprotected open space such as portions of Rollstone Hill, sport fields and one of the City's largest parks, Parkhill. According to MassGIS data, the City's Parks and Recreation Department owns and manages 458 acres of open space.

Over the years, Fitchburg has dedicated a significant amount of its Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds to improve CDBG-eligible parks and playgrounds. The City has applied for additional funds from various grant programs to update eligible recreational areas over the years with much success. Most recently,

the City was awarded funds from the State's Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities (PARC) grant program to install an inclusive play area adjacent to the existing play structures at Parkhill Park. PARC grant funds were supplemented with CDBG funds, a state earmark, and donations from the community to complete this exciting project.

Since the submission of the 2014-2021 Open Space and Recreation Plan, additional park improvements include the following: The full renovation of 1st and RR Street Park now known as DeCaria Park (CDBG, PARC, and EPA funding); improvements to the field at Goodrich Park (CDBG); the development of a dog park at Coolidge Park (Stanton Foundation funds); establishment of the new Fitchburg Abolitionist Park on Snow Street (CDBG, Foundation funding, donations); development of the Rock Walk trail on Rollstone Hill (Recreational Trails Grant) and upgrades to the splashpad at Parkhill Park (CDBG). Additionally, phase I of the Twin Cities Rail Trail (MassDOT) has been completed and phase II is at the 25% design phase. The development and installation of kiosks and wayfinding signage for the City's trail systems is underway, as is the design of an accessible pathway to the gazebo at Coggshall Park, both utilizing Recreational Trails Grants. CDBG funding is in place for improvements to Parkhill Park including updates to the trail, the BMX park and skatepark which will take place in 2022-2023.

Funding is also in place to renovate Joann "Mama" Fitz Park and replace old playground equipment at the Parkhill Playground (CDBG and ARPA). These park projects improve recreational opportunities for residents of Fitchburg, bring play areas into compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Consumer Product Safety Guidelines, and meet many of the other goals established in the prior Seven-Year Action Plan. This Action Plan has been updated as part of the process of updating the Open Space and Recreation plan and will continue to be used as a tool when developing projects and making other decisions related to open space and recreation in the City (please see Section IX).

Conservation Parcels

The Conservation Commission manages 33 parcels in the City, comprising approximately 209 acres, as follows:

Green's Pond Area

Located on both sides of Ashby State Road, approximately 1,000 feet north of the intersection of John Fitch Highway and Route 31, the conservation area comprises 28.5 acres. The pond, originally built for harvesting ice, covers approximately 14 acres. Today the pond can be used for fishing, walking, bird watching, and picnicking. A trail goes around about two-thirds of the pond. It is also an important resource as a flood storage area.

Putnam Pond

Located at the corner of John Fitch Highway and Pearl Hill Road, only half the pond, commonly referred to as Putt's Pond, is owned by the City. Erosion and runoff from winter sanding operations on John Fitch Highway as well as nearby construction increase eutrophication in Putts Pond. The Conservation Commission and DPW have recently worked to clear nuisance vegetation and brush from around this water body. It also serves as a flood storage area.

Littlefield Conservation Area

These parcels on either side of Ashburnham Hill Road, comprising 32 acres are located approximately halfway between the intersections of Caswell Road and Williams Road in northwest Fitchburg. The heavily wooded parcel is a good example of Fitchburg's scenic quality.

Dolloff Conservation Area

Located near Coggshall Park and the Bird Sanctuary, this 14.04-acre parcel is a stand of mixed hard and softwoods with an understory of Mountain Laurel.

Gillman Conservation Area

This 13.3 acre gently rolling upland area also abuts the Bird Sanctuary near Coggshall Park.

Airport Conservation Areas

Two parcels, comprising a little more than 20 acres, abut the Nashua River and Baker Brook confluence near the Fitchburg Municipal Airport in southeast Fitchburg.

Brown Land Conservation Area

Located across John Fitch Highway from St. Bernard's Cemetery, this 12-acre parcel is in the marsh and flood plain area of Baker Brook. Use of the land by dirt bikes and ATVs has led to significant erosion.

DeNeufville Conservation Lands

These 16 acres of wooded lowland and wetlands border Falulah Brook downstream from Greene's Pond. When the parcels were donated to the City in 1970, it was stipulated that the lands would be used in perpetuity exclusively for conservation.

Rollo Property

This 1.96-acre parcel was donated to the Conservation Commission in 1993 to serve as a buffer to Falulah Brook. It is adjacent to the DeNeufville property and will serve to protect the scenic quality of the southern end of Rindge Road.

Westminster Hill Properties

These parcels are located on the periphery of a subdivision south of Westminster Hill Road. One parcel, approximately 9 acres, is located along Westminster Hill Road. Another parcel, approximately 1/3 acre, is located behind the homes at the end of Almont Terrace. Both parcels were donated by the developer of the subdivision to the Conservation Commission.

Valley View Properties

These three parcels of 15.3, 1.8, and 0.2 acres located north of Westminster Hill Road and southwest of the Valley View Estates Planned Unit Development. These parcels were donated in 1990 by the developer, and serve as a buffer for an unnamed stream, which flows into the Nashua River.

Central Nashua River

This 1-acre parcel on the southern bank side of the Nashua between Rollstone & Circle Streets serves as a break in the surrounding industrial land.

Cressey Conservation Area

This half acre parcel is located near Falulah Brook off Rindge Road.

Southern Nashua River Areas

These two parcels comprising a half-acre, bordering the Nashua River off Airport Road.

Triangular Conservation Area

This .61-acre parcel located off Flat Rock Road is completely surrounded by Mass. Audubon Society Land.

Viewig Conservation Area

This triangular .11-acre parcel, borders Phillips Brook on Ashburnham Street at the Westminster town line.

Non-Profit Conservation Land

Three conservation nonprofits preserve over 600 acres of land, primarily around the Mass Audubon Flat Rock Wildlife Sanctuary, North County Land Trust's Crocker Conservation Area, and the Trustees of Reservations' Jewell Hill.

Watershed Land

Approximately 1,125 acres in Fitchburg are owned by the City and managed by the Water Division. According to MassGIS data, all parcels managed by the Water Division are permanently protected.

Conservation Restrictions

Parcels in public and private ownership can be permanently protected without the City taking ownership via conservation restrictions and easements. Conservation Restrictions (CRs) are written into the deed for the property, and limit the uses which are allowed, usually allowing only conservation and recreation. CRs allow a party other than the owner to restrict the property to a certain use, in this case, conservation. The developers of PUDs often use conservation restrictions to protect the project's common land, which is owned by the homeowners' association. Two land trusts own CRs on private land in Fitchburg: the North County Land Trust, which protects 43 acres along High Rock Road (the Kelly CR), and the Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust, which has a CR on over 55 acres at the end of Sheldon Road. In 2009, the Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game purchased an 1,875-acre conservation restriction (CR) from the City of Fitchburg to assure permanent protection of its northern drinking water supply watershed.

Agricultural Preservation Restrictions

There are currently three farms in Fitchburg under the APR program: the Marshall Farm, which protected 99 acres off Marshall Road, the Hertel Farm, 207 acres on Ashburnham Hill Road, and the 67-acre Rossbach Farm on Stickney Road. Also, two City-owned parcels totaling 14 acres are protected under this program. One parcel near the intersection of Alpine and McIntire Roads, and one parcel near the intersection of Ashby West and Scott Roads were placed into the APR program as mitigation for the loss of agricultural land when the new Fitchburg High School was built in 1999. Under this program, the state purchases the development rights to prevent the land's conversion to residential or commercial use and keep the land in agriculture. This allows the owner to realize a profit from the sale of the rights, while still owning the land and using it for farming. The City benefits by preserving agricultural land for agricultural use without expensive land purchases.

Unprotected Parcels

Several important recreation and open space resources in Fitchburg have little or no formal protection and could succumb to development unless action is taken to preserve them. In addition, increasing demand for new housing will endanger the large rural areas in Fitchburg's northern and south-central areas. *Figure 11: Open Space Inventory* shows important open space parcels which lack formal protection.

Farmland

Although there are over 300 acres of farmland enrolled in the APR, and therefore protected from development forever, this represents only a quarter of the City's total agricultural acreage. Although 689 acres of farmland are enrolled in the 61A program designed to preserve agriculture, Fitchburg continues to see farmland subdivided for residential development. Since agricultural land usually has deep soil, little bedrock, few wetlands, and gentle slopes, and is located in rural areas, it is attractive for residential development, so developers too often repay the tax subsidy or take the land out of the program for five years to eliminate the restrictions imposed by the Chapter 61A program.

Private Recreational Land

Three private entities, the Finnish American Club of Saima, the Oak Hill Country Club, and Fitchburg Soccer LLC, own large tracts of land in the city that are classified as Recreational Land. Saima Park located off Richardson Road, has served as a gathering place for the City's Finnish population since 1912 for festivals, dances, track, and swim meets, etc. Saima Park is adjacent to the protected open space created by the Candlewood Park and Stoneybrook Village subdivisions. Saima Pond is located on the 51-acre property, 33 acres of which is in the Chapter 61B program. Saima also includes a 350-meter stone dust track, hiking and cross-country skiing trails, a baseball field, and a gathering hall. Oak Hill Country Club, an 18-hole golf course established in 1918 on 311 acres in south central Fitchburg, is also in Chapter 61B. Fitchburg Soccer LLC owns the Game On Fitchburg sports complex, which encompasses four parcels totaling 78.4 acres featuring both indoor and outdoor sports facilities. While these organizations have not indicated plans to sell or develop any land in the near future, no permanent preservation restriction is in place.

Rollstone Hill

The City owns approximately 101 acres of woodlands and former quarry on Rollstone Hill, in the center of the City, between Cleghorn and the South Side. This property is primarily used for hiking. It has been a prominent part of Fitchburg's landscape since before the first English settlers and continues to be a defining characteristic of the City. Despite its importance, a significant portion of Rollstone Hill has no formal protected status – three of the five parcels totaling 63.7 acres are currently unprotected.

Nashua River/Riverfront Land

The Nashua River's presence in Fitchburg, particularly in the downtown area, is important to note. With the abundance of historic mills, bridges, walls along the river, and proximity to dense areas, the Nashua River is a real asset to the City's economy and vibrancy. The river provides an opportunity for an enhanced Riverfront Park and an expanded network of trails. It also offers the opportunity to take advantage of this unique resource for the conversion of riverfront property for conservation and recreational purposes, or sensitive commercial and residential development. Waterfront property is valuable, and the development of riverfront areas may lead to area-wide revitalization of the adjacent commercial and residential properties.

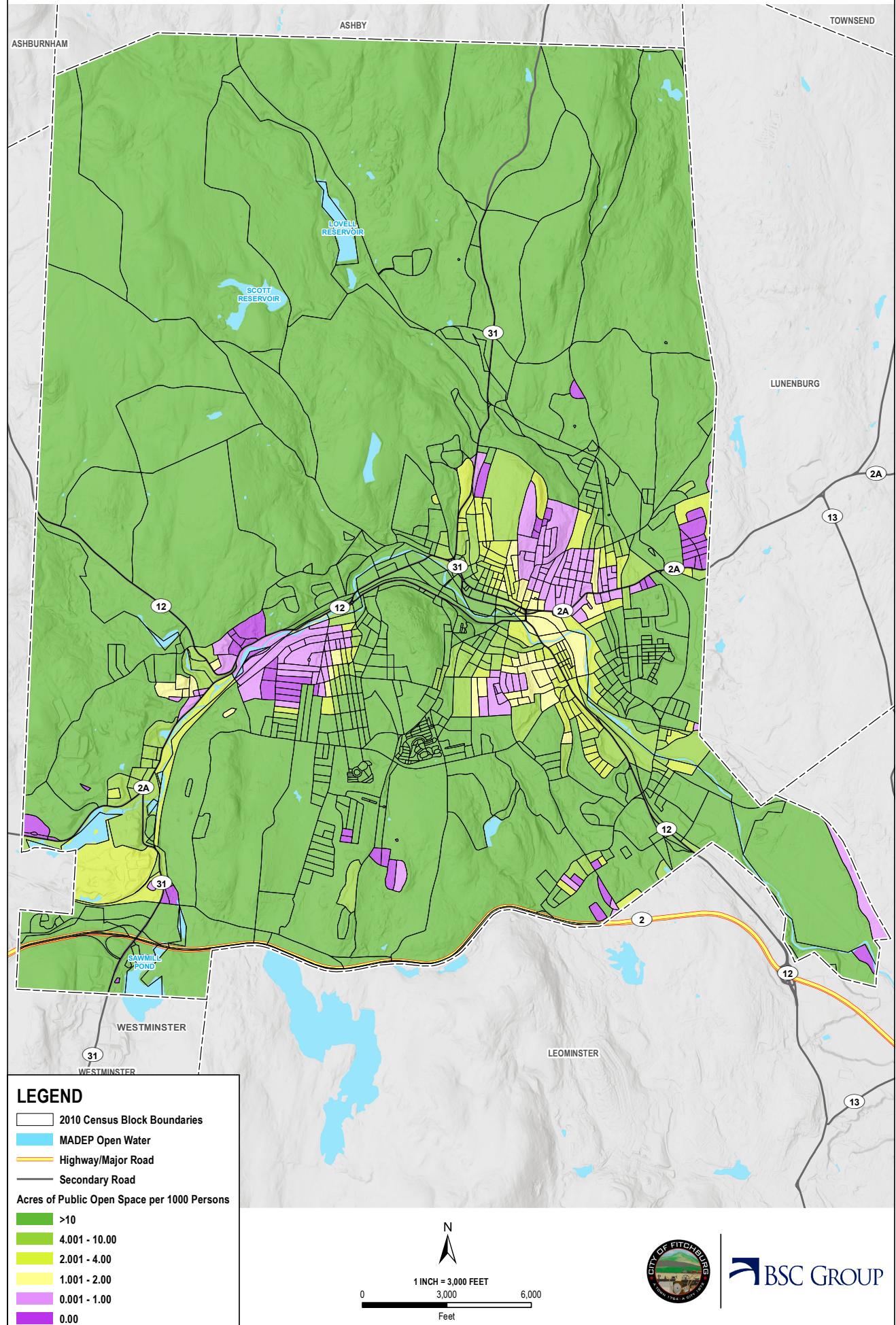
A matrix with all city-owned recreation and open space parcels is in Appendix A of this report.



CROCKER CONSERVATION AREA, 215 FLAT ROCK ROAD

CITY OF FITCHBURG OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN

FIG. 13: POPULATION DENSITY AND PUBLIC OPEN SPACE



BSC GROUP

SECTION 6: COMMUNITY VISION

Description of Process

The City of Fitchburg, in conjunction with BSC Group, launched the process of updating the Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) in early Spring 2022. An Open Space Plan Update Advisory Committee was formed to engage a broad spectrum of the Fitchburg community in developing the 2022–2029 OSRP. The role of the Advisory Committee, which held its first meeting in March 2022, has been to provide comments, advice, and recommendations on the OSRP as it is developed. The Advisory Committee met periodically from March 2022 through October 2022 to review plan elements and provide feedback.

A public participation process was undertaken to ensure the community's values regarding parks, recreation, open space, and related topics are reflected in the OSRP. As part of this process, an online Open Space and Recreation Plan Community Survey was administered in May and June 2022.

The survey largely mirrored the 2013 community survey that was undertaken for the prior OSRP and was distributed by the City through a variety of means including the City's website, social media, email blasts, outreach to the public schools and community organizations, by distributing post cards at area agencies, businesses, and city buildings and by outreach by members of the Advisory Committee to their contacts. In total, 105 responses were received. The responses generated valuable information about changes in the needs, concerns, and priorities of the community, and a summary of the results is included in *Appendix F: Community Survey Results*. The online survey was complemented by a Community Input Mapper that allowed members of the public to provide additional feedback about Fitchburg's parks and open space.

A focus group session was held in May 2022 with participants representing open space and recreation stakeholders including the Nashua River Watershed Association, North County Land Trust, Making Opportunity Count, Fitchburg Greenway Committee, and the Fitchburg Conservation Commission. The session solicited input about goals and objectives from the prior OSRP and current needs.

In addition, a community forum was held on June 9, 2022, at the City of Fitchburg Legislative Building. The event began with a presentation that provided an overview of the OSRP update process, goals, and successes from the 2014 OSRP, and next steps for public input. After the presentation, participants were invited to provide input at four (4) open house activity stations. At these stations, participants interacted with BSC Group and City of Fitchburg staff and provided feedback on post-it notes and through dot voting.



FIGURE 5. FITCHBURG OSRP SURVEY FLYER (BSC GROUP)

The four Open House stations were:

- Station 1: Open Space and Recreation Opportunities (Dot Voting)
- Station 2: Open Spaces in Your Neighborhood (Comment on Map)
- Station 3: Goals and Objectives for 2022 and Beyond (Dot Voting)
- Station 4: "Ask a Planner" (Talk to a City Staff Person)

A second community forum was held August 24, 2022. The agenda included an overview of the process, highlights from the 2014 OSRP, a brief description of the 2022 OSRP planning process and survey results, and discussion on the draft action plan. The Conservation Commission also provided comments on the draft OSRP, which was discussed at a September 7, 2022, meeting.

Statement of Open Space and Recreation Goals

Parks and open space are a key part of Fitchburg's infrastructure for maintaining and increasing quality of life for everyone. Protecting, maintaining, and improving these resources appropriately is essential to the City's efforts to enhance the quality of life for current and future residents, attract and retain businesses, and promote the health of the environment and the community. The goals of this plan therefore focus on maintaining and upgrading City-owned open space properties, increasing park use by a variety of populations, making parks more accessible to all residents, and ensuring that resources are resilient and sustainable for future generations.

Goal 1: Develop and maintain a safe and sought-after park system in Fitchburg that provides a variety of active and passive recreational and cultural opportunities for all Fitchburg residents.

Goal 2: Provide enhanced and expanded walking and biking paths for recreation and commuting.

Goal 3: Provide equitable access to high-quality and inclusive recreational opportunities.

Goal 4: Protect and promote Fitchburg's watershed.

Goal 5: Preserve, restore, enhance, and promote open space and natural resources that increase Fitchburg's resilience to the effects of climate change.

Goal 6: Promote green space in the urban core.



PHILLIPS PLAYGROUND, 842 WESTMINSTER HILL ROAD

SECTION 7: ANALYSIS OF NEEDS

Summary of Resource Protection Needs

Fitchburg continues to face many of the same environmental challenges identified in the 2014 OSRP. While incremental progress has been made to address these issues, the resource protection needs identified in the prior OSRP – protecting watershed lands and improving the quality of the waterbodies – remain relevant and of high priority.

Protection of Watershed Land. The continued protection of watershed land safeguards the quality of surface water and stormwater runoff in areas which drain into the City's reservoirs, which is essential for the provision of safe drinking water to residents. Targeting these lands for protection also helps preserve wildlife corridors along perennial brooks. Improving the quality of the Nashua River and other water bodies is a related and important resource protection need. Runoff from roads and buildings along the Nashua River, as well as effluent from combined sewers, harm the Nashua and the species that live in it. The ongoing extensive Combined Sewer Separation project is an important part of this improvement effort, as are efforts to increase access to the Nashua River, because when people are aware of the river, they are more likely to want to keep it clean.

Restoration of Natural Resources. Relatedly, restoration of natural resources is an important need in Fitchburg. The City is currently undertaking an effort to remove the dam at McTaggart's Pond for safety purposes, which will allow the stream to revert to a natural state and better support fish due to cooler temperatures. This dam removal project and other restoration projects – such as the removal of invasive species – will go a long way toward supporting the ecological resiliency of Fitchburg's natural resources. Maintaining forest cover and restoration of wetlands will help alleviate downstream flooding and sequester carbon, both key facets of climate resilience.

The ecological importance of watershed land and waterbodies within Fitchburg is reinforced by the community's values captured by the 2022 Fitchburg Open Space and Recreation Plan Survey. Residents were asked to rank the importance of preserving, protecting, and enhancing various types of open space and natural resources. While all twelve of the natural resources were ranked highly in terms of importance, the top three were the Nashua River (74%), conservation land and wildlife habitat (73%), and tied for third place at 71% were forest land and natural resources (ponds, wetlands, streams, habitat, etc.). The preservation of forested land has emerged as another significant resource protection need in Fitchburg. The local forests serve many purposes, including habitat for plant and animal species, absorbing and storing water to minimize flooding and erosion, protecting drinking water by providing a buffer around the City's reservoirs, improving air quality through natural processes, and providing recreational opportunities for residents. While not all parcels of open space can be protected, given the increased rate of forest cover loss over recent years as described in Section IV, it is essential that the wooded areas which are important to the above interests be identified and preserved.

To sustain the Fitchburg community, green infrastructure systems – parks, trails, water bodies, drinking water sources, agricultural and forest lands, biodiversity areas, and other open space – must function and remain viable at the regional scale. Accordingly, coordination amongst the City, local conservation groups, and regional conservation and planning organizations would facilitate a regional approach. Lastly, while climate change is already having profound effects on people, infrastructure, ecosystems and wildlife, open space such as undeveloped lands and urban green spaces contribute to mitigating climate change by reducing greenhouse gases and helping us adapt by increasing resilience in the face of unavoidable changes.²⁹ Therefore, it is important to ensure that investments in land protection benefit not only natural resource protection, landscape

²⁹ Losing Ground – Nature's Value in a Changing Climate (Sixth Edition), prepared by Mass Audubon, 2020.

connectivity, and the recreational needs of the Fitchburg community but also incorporate other intersectional aspects of resiliency to climate change.

Summary of Community Needs

Fitchburg parks and open spaces provide residents and visitors with a variety of passive and active recreational opportunities; however, certain recreational uses are underserved, and high levels of use alongside deferred maintenance and budgetary and staffing constraints have created significant challenges for the City's existing parks and recreational facilities.

Provide Adequate Resources for Park Maintenance. The 2014 OSRP identified a need for providing adequate resources for park maintenance, noting that the extensive number of parks within the City and the small Department of Public Works (DPW) staff and budget available to care for them does not always allow for the

most adequate care. This need continues, with recent public input reinforcing the theme. At the community forum held on June 9, 2022, attendees were asked to provide input at various stations. As shown in the image to the left, Station 3 addressed Goals and Objectives for 2022 and Beyond. Those in attendance voted Goal 1, Action 2: Support

Station 3: Goals and Objectives for 2022 and Beyond (Dot Voting)	
At the third station, participants voted on the proposed Goals/Objectives/Actions they found most important for the Open Space and Recreation Plan Update. They also had the opportunity to leave sticky notes with comments. Below is a summary of the votes.	
GOAL 1: Develop and maintain a safe and sought-after park system in Fitchburg that provides a variety of active and passive recreational and cultural opportunities for all Fitchburg residents.	(32 votes total)
Objective 1. Expand City capacity (staff and resources) to maintain existing playgrounds and open space areas.	0
Action 1. Explore charging user fees to fund positions in parks to focus on cleanup and maintenance.	1
Action 2. Support increased resources for the Department of Public Works and the Parks & Recreation Department.	7
Objective 2. Evaluate, repair, and upgrade existing facilities to current standards.	0
Action 1. Continue to evaluate and assess the condition of all existing playgrounds to accepted	

increased resources for the Department of Public Works and the Parks & Recreation Department as important. A written summary of the full results of this public engagement effort can be found in *Appendix F*.

Increase Opportunities for Biking and Walking. The City has adopted a Complete Streets Policy that aims to make incremental improvements to the City's transportation network by integrating the needs of all prospective users (including pedestrians and bicyclists) into the planning, design, and construction of city streets. While public sidewalks are important recreational resources in urbanized areas, trails have also become popular with city residents and visitors. The Fitchburg Trails Vision Committee was formed to review all existing public trails in Fitchburg and explore potential extensions and new trails. *See Figure 9: Trail System.* This effort resulted in the Fitchburg Trails Vision Plan 2020-2024. This group is now known as the Fitchburg Trail Stewards. Their efforts have now turned to the installation of wayfinding signage throughout the City's trail systems utilizing a Recreational Trails grant the City received.

The 2022 Open Space and Recreation Plan Survey asked respondents about Fitchburg's recreational options for various demographic groups. More than half of respondents were satisfied with recreational options for children (76.9%), seniors (66.3%), and adults (59.6%), while about half of respondents indicated that the recreational needs of teenagers (51.6%) and people using mobility devices (48.1%) are not being met. While the community survey results indicate that respondents felt the recreational needs of seniors are being met, it is important to keep in mind that seniors, especially those living alone, are more vulnerable to social isolation and physical and mental health issues. This is particularly true during a public health crisis such as COVID-19, where social distancing may be required. Parks, open space, and recreational facilities provide settings where seniors can socialize, exercise, and enjoy the beauty of their natural surroundings. The open space and recreational needs of seniors varies between the younger, more active senior citizens and the frail elderly. Elderly residents may have similar needs to those of residents with disabilities in terms of their ability to access recreation facilities. Particularly with open space, the City needs to ensure that it provides opportunities for active older adults and intergenerational recreation with an emphasis on accessibility.

The input received from the public related to the OSRP - including the online survey, community forums, and community input mapper - reflect the continuation of needs identified in the 2014 OSRP. Common themes emerged, including the following:

- Improving the perception of safety and comfort in parks.
- Enhancing or adding facilities to existing parks.
- Improving the built environment to support connectivity, including walkability and bikeability to parks and other recreational opportunities.
- Supporting and expanding environmental education.
- Marketing recreational opportunities to encourage participation by Fitchburg's diverse residents.
- Partnering with environmental and conservation organizations to increase City capacity.
- Providing additional recreational opportunities which may include things like pickle ball courts, opportunities for fishing, an additional disc golf course, and bike trails.

The Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) is the Commonwealth's statewide open space plan. SCORP plans are developed by individual states to be eligible for federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) grants. In 2017, the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs completed the Massachusetts SCORP to help guide the distribution of federal funding to state agencies and municipalities for the acquisition of open space, renovation of parks, and development of new parks. The SCORP is a planning document that discusses the available recreational resources in a state, as well as its needs, and identifies the gaps between the two. The goals and objectives of the 2017 SCORP are to:

Goal 1: Improve Access for Underserved Populations

1. Support the acquisition of land and development of new open spaces in areas that lack existing or useable open spaces, such as Environmental Justice neighborhoods.
2. Develop parks and open spaces that offer amenities that go above and beyond ADA requirements for people with disabilities.
3. Consider the needs of underserved demographic groups – senior citizens and teenagers – in park and open space designs.
4. Encourage establishment of programming endowments.

Goal 2: Support the Statewide Trails Initiative

1. Support the acquisition of land and development of new open spaces that can provide a trail network.
2. Fill in the gaps of existing trail networks.
3. Ensure that any existing or new trails are fully accessible to people with disabilities.

Goal 3: Increase the Availability of Water-based Recreation

1. Support the acquisition of land that will provide for water-based recreation.
2. Support the acquisition of land that will increase drinking water supply protection.
3. Develop water-based recreational facilities, including swimming areas, spray parks, boating facilities, fishing areas, etc.

Goal 4: Support the Creation and Renovation of Neighborhood Parks

1. Promote the acquisition and development of neighborhood parks where none currently exist.
2. Develop amenities supported by neighborhood parks, such as playgrounds, off leash dog parks, and community gardens.
3. Work with community development organizations to improve walking access to local parks.

The Fitchburg OSRP is consistent with and helps further these Commonwealth's SCORP goals and objectives. As detailed in *Section 8: Goals and Objectives*, Fitchburg is attempting to expand recreational activities for all residents through thoughtful public engagement. They hope to reach more individuals by enhancing their marketing for local programming and cultural opportunities provided at local parks. By prioritizing accessibility improvements, the city hopes to make recreational opportunities more possible for disabled or handicapped residents. The statewide trails initiative is supported through the continued development of the Twin City Rail Trail and overall pathway and trail improvements. These actions aim to create connectivity of Fitchburg's recreational spaces. The city also hopes to expand off-road trails and shared use pedestrian paths, expanding the local trails network.

Remaining consistent with SCORP goal number 3, Fitchburg has set a goal to integrate more green infrastructure and identify opportunities to restore natural aquatic environments and habitats. Another objective in *Section 8* expresses the city's interest to improve access to, and awareness, of the Nashua River and other waterbodies as City assets. Lastly, Fitchburg will promote green space in the urban core of the city and overall expand passive and active recreational opportunities. This will be accomplished by expanding city staff and resources dedicated to expanding conservation and recreation opportunities as well as maintaining existing parks and spaces.

Management Needs, Potential Change of Use

The Department of Public Works (DPW) currently maintains the City's parks, playgrounds, cemeteries, trees, municipal building grounds, and other City-owned infrastructure. Several athletic organizations have agreements with the City for use of specific athletic fields, and the onus is on the organizations to maintain the facilities for their use. Over the years, facilities have been added while the DPW Parks & Recreation Department operations budget has remained fairly level, and the Superintendent of Parks position had been eliminated.

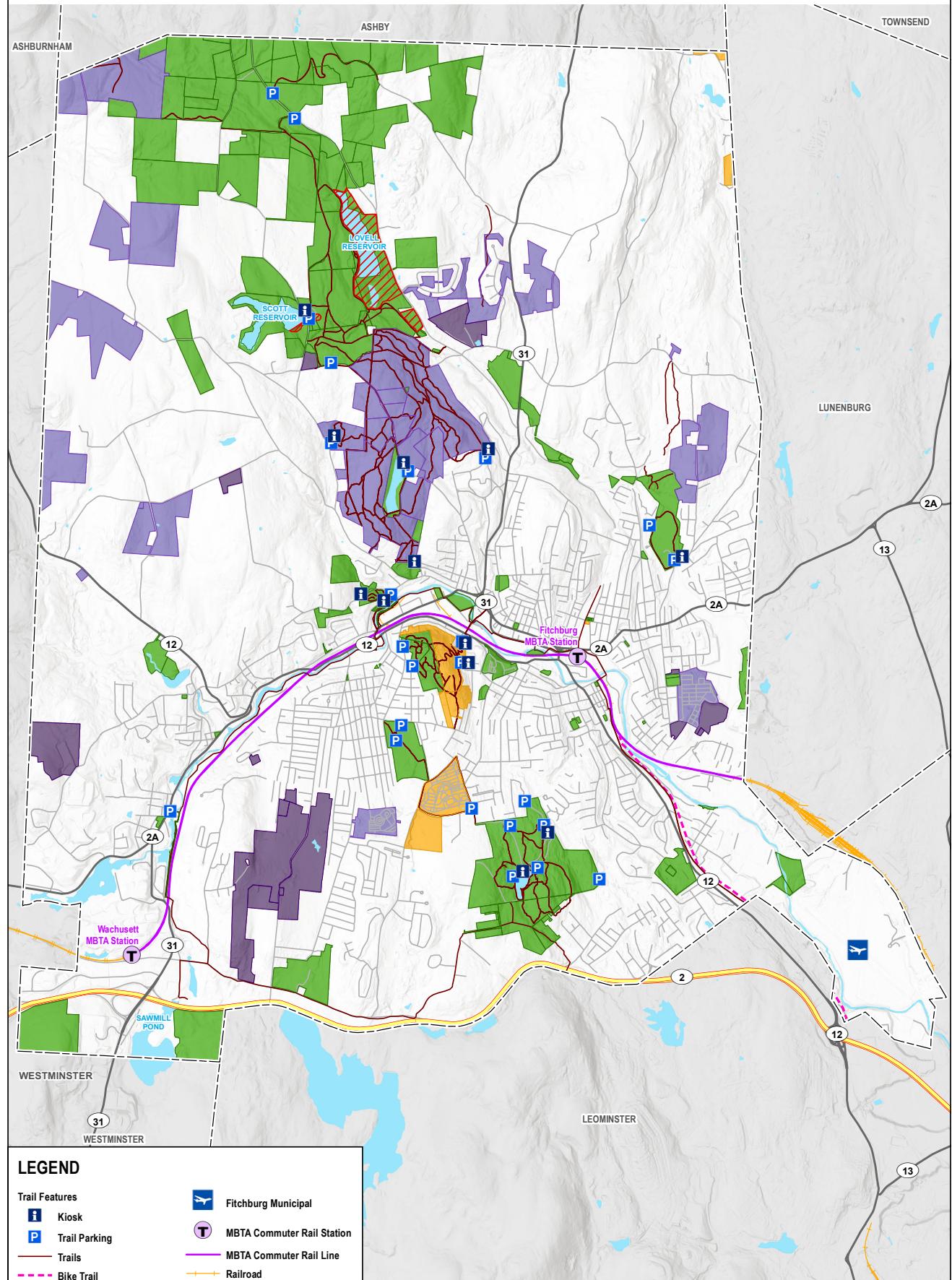
As a result, the department is limited in its ability to maintain the properties. The climate of dwindling local funding resources over recent years adds strain to the DPW's personnel to maintain a diverse portfolio of facilities. Expanded maintenance funding is critical to maintaining a high quality of life for Fitchburg residents. The recent reinstatement of the Superintendent of Parks position is a step forward, however, there is still a need to discover new and unique sources of funding for maintenance, repairs, staff, and materials, such as charging user fees for certain recreational facilities. Relatedly, there is a need to leverage and increase partnerships between the City and other organizations to expand capacity.

In addition, only one City-owned open space property has a formal comprehensive management plan to aid in the efficient and effective management of the site. In 2005, Bay State Forestry Services, Inc., completed a Forest Management Plan for Coggshall Park. The need for management plans is important to address because they are essential tools for guiding community decision-making, clarifying ownership and management responsibilities, enumerating community values, goals, and objectives for a particular property, describing uses, and laying out plans of action. The value of management plans is demonstrated by the State's Land Management Plan for the northern drinking water supply watershed lands. Planning and decision-making for City-owned properties will continue to be hobbled by the absence of management plans.

The City's Conservation Agent is currently a part-time position. Having a dedicated full-time Conservation Agent would greatly assist the Conservation Commission with fulfilling its purpose and full set of responsibilities, such as administering local ordinances as well as the Wetland Protection Act, conserving the City's natural resources, assisting with natural resource and forestry management plans, and pursuing funding for conservation projects.

CITY OF FITCHBURG OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN

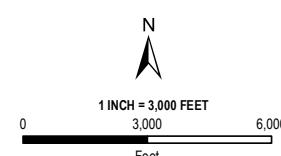
FIG. 9: TRAIL SYSTEMS



LEGEND

Trail Features	
Kiosk	
Trail Parking	
Trails	
Bike Trail	
No Access	
MassGIS Protected and Recreational Open Space (2022)	
Public Protected	
Public Unprotected	
Private Protected	
Private Unprotected	

	Fitchburg Municipal
	MBTA Commuter Rail Station
	MBTA Commuter Rail Line
	Railroad
	Highway/Major Road
	Secondary Road
	MADEP Open Water



BSC GROUP

SECTION 8: GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The following objectives were identified to meet the general goals identified in this Plan. Unified in intent to safeguard and enhance the diversity and sustainability of Fitchburg's open space and recreational resources, they focus on expanding access to all people, including those with disabilities.

GOAL 1: Develop and maintain a safe and sought-after park system in Fitchburg that provides a variety of active and passive recreational and cultural opportunities for all Fitchburg residents.

OBJECTIVES

1. Expand City capacity (staff and resources) to maintain existing playgrounds and open space areas.
2. Evaluate, repair, and upgrade existing facilities to meet current needs.
3. Improve coordination and collaboration among departments, committees, local organizations, leagues, and businesses to support the maintenance of the parks and recreation system.
4. Continue and expand recreational opportunities at City parks for individuals of all abilities and ages. Research the need and opportunity for an additional Dek Hockey rink, a new disc golf course, and pickle ball courts, where appropriate.
5. Continue to include resident input, including youth, in the park renovation and design process.
6. Support efforts to foster outdoor learning and community service projects involving parks.
7. Encourage beautification efforts and other private investment in public facilities.
8. Improve safety and the perception of safety in public parks.

GOAL 2: Provide enhanced and expanded walking and biking paths for recreation and commuting.

OBJECTIVES

1. Continue to develop/enhance the Twin Cities Rail Trail.
2. Maintain and improve sidewalks and walking paths in developed areas, including accessibility improvements.
3. Integrate the Pedestrian Generator Checklist into the park design and review process and implementation of the Fitchburg Trails Vision Plan 2020 – 2024 in order to identify how best to accommodate pedestrians when designing projects.
4. Improve connectivity – trails, sidewalks, and bike accommodations – among open spaces, recreational facilities, and other important city resources.
5. Keep the Fitchburg Trail Guide updated.
6. Continue developing and expanding off-road pedestrian and shared use paths.

GOAL 3: Provide equitable access to high-quality and inclusive recreational opportunities.

OBJECTIVES

1. Improve marketing to increase awareness of Fitchburg's park and open space system. Better utilize social media in this effort.
2. Improve the process for implementing and marketing organized recreational and cultural opportunities provided at Fitchburg parks and open spaces. Better utilize social media in this effort.
3. Provide park access and programming that is safe, inclusive, culturally relevant and welcoming to everyone.
4. Improve signage to and within City parks and trails.
5. Provide universally accessible facilities at existing parks.

GOAL 4: Protect and promote Fitchburg's watershed.

OBJECTIVES

1. Protect Fitchburg's watershed land within Fitchburg and adjacent communities.
2. Routinely assess the condition of dams, ponds and reservoirs within Fitchburg and identify opportunities for restoration of the natural environment.
3. Continue efforts that result in improved water quality of the Nashua River and its tributaries.
4. Integrate green infrastructure for stormwater management into planning and capital projects for parks and open space.
5. Continue to improve access to and awareness of the Nashua River and other waterbodies as City assets.

GOAL 5: Preserve, restore, enhance, and promote open space and natural resources that increase Fitchburg's resilience to the effects of climate change.

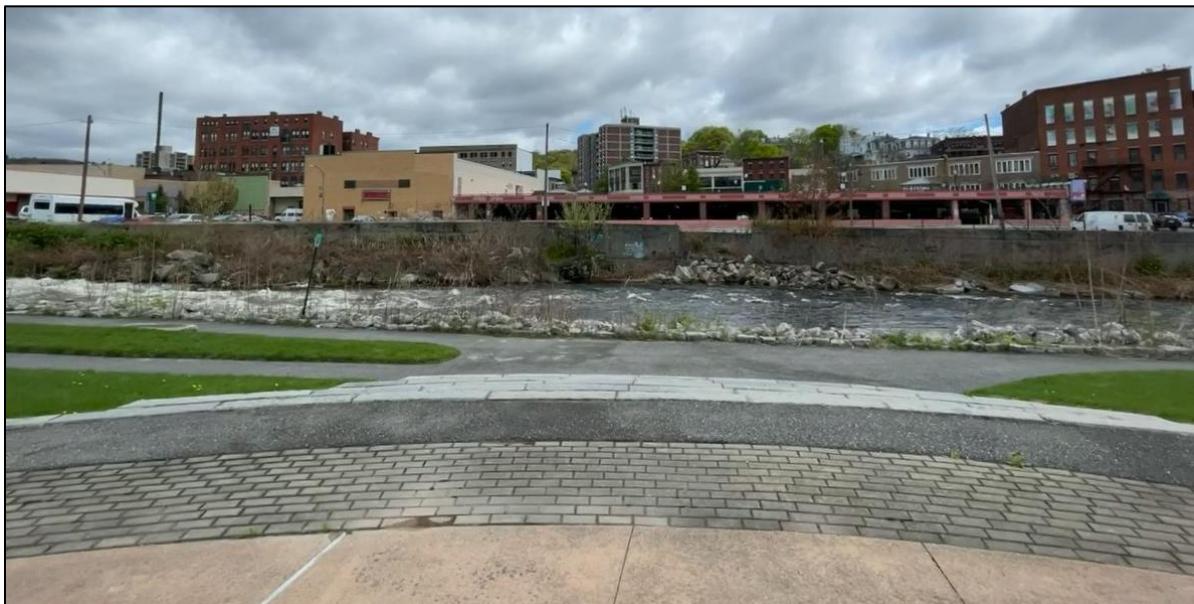
OBJECTIVES

1. Properly maintain City-owned forested areas.
2. Implement or enforce regulations to limit sprawl and preserve/enhance natural resources.
3. Work with local, regional, and state organizations to preserve open space and wildlife habitat.
4. Support continuation of environmental programming in parks and trails.
5. Work to eradicate invasive species.
6. Foster the permanent protection of privately-owned open space, including farmland and forests.
7. Implement nature-based solutions to enhance the ecological integrity of Fitchburg's natural resources.

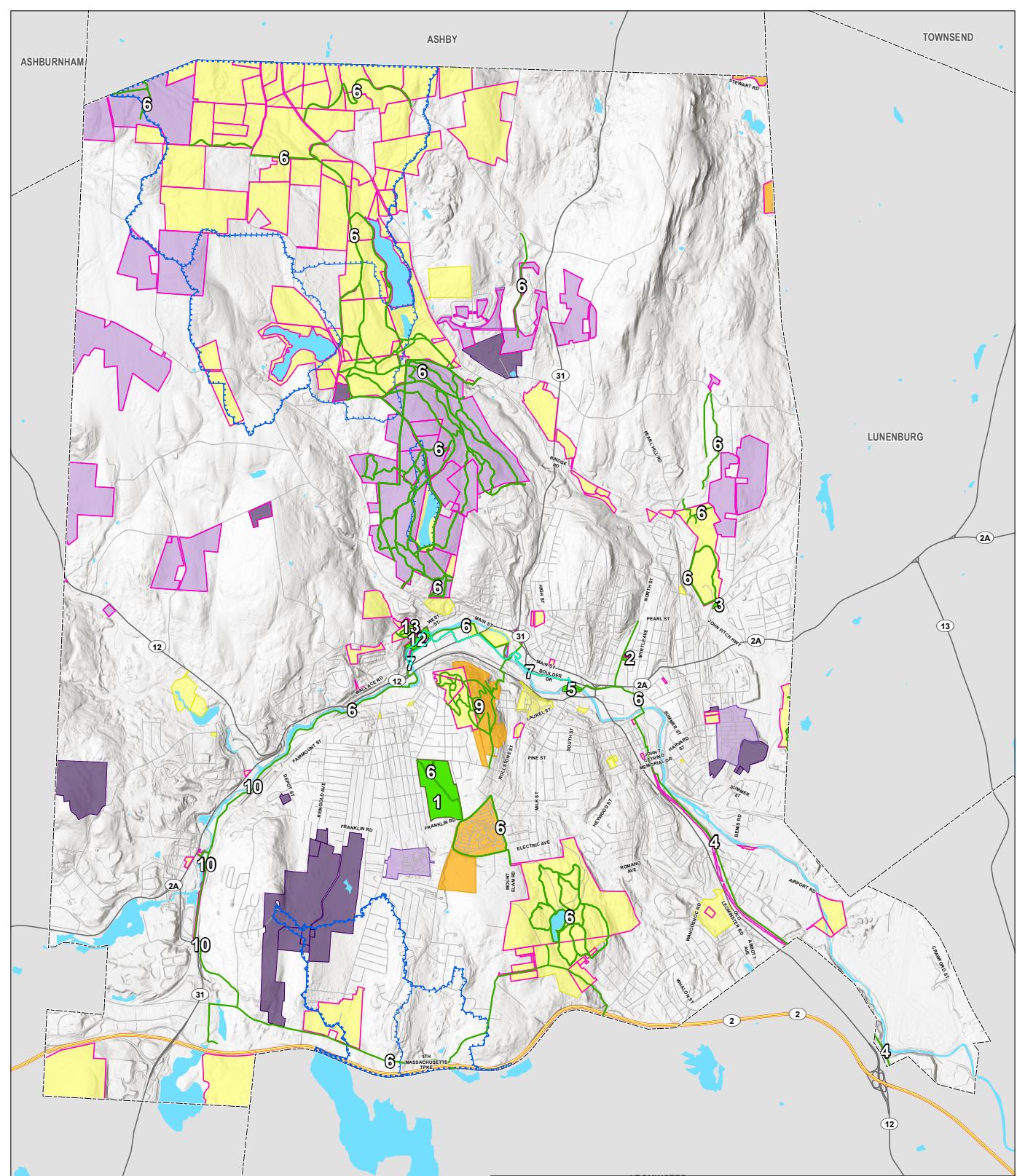
GOAL 6: Promote green space in the urban core.

OBJECTIVES

1. Create urban shade and a biodiverse urban forest system.
2. Support urban agriculture and the local food system.
3. Capture undervalued land for new recreational and open space purposes.



RIVERFRONT PARK, 51 COMMERCIAL STREET



LEGEND

- Trails
- Parks
- Highway/Major Road
- Secondary Road
- Local Road
- MADEP Open Water
- Surface Water Supply Watersheds
- Open Space: Protected in Perpetuity

Protected and Recreational Open Space

- Public Protected
- Public Unprotected
- Private Protected
- Private Unprotected

ID#	Site Name	Park Improvements
1	Parkhill Park	Update equipment
2	Fitz Memorial Playground	Update playground equipment
3	Coolidge Park	Provide small parking lots at strategic locations to make trails more accessible
4	Twin Cities Rail Trail	Maintenance and Improvements, expanding to Intermodal Station
5	Riverfront Park	Development of performing arts stage, host programming to showcase river
6	Existing Trails Network	Install wayfinding signs and kiosks for existing trails
7	Marion Stodhart Trail	Complete design and secure funding
8	North-South-East-West Trail	Development of trail linkages
9	Rock Walk / Rollstone Hill	Expand length and usage of trail
10	Streamline Trail	Completion of trail in West Fitchburg
11	Designated Critical Open Spaces	Protect critical spaces and watershed properties to lessen flooding
12	Gateway Park	Host programming to showcase river
13	Knoll Trail	Addition of Westminster Street parking and point of access

CITY OF FITCHBURG OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN FIGURE 8: ACTION PLAN



BSC GROUP

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SECTION 9: SEVEN-YEAR ACTION PLAN

Responsible Parties

There are multiple responsible parties for the implementation of this seven-year action plan. They include City Administration (**CA**), Department of Public Works (**DPW**), Parks and Recreation Department (**PRD**), Community Development & Planning Department (**CDP**), Board of Park Commissioners (**BPC**), Fitchburg Greenway Committee (**FGC**), Fitchburg Public Schools (**FPS**), Water Department (**WD**), Wastewater Division (**WW**), Conservation Commission (**CC**), Disability Commission (**DC**), and Fitchburg Trail Stewards (**FTS**).

In addition, for each action item listed, a responsible party, timeframe, priority level, and potential funding source is listed, where applicable.

Goals, Objectives, and Actions	Priority High Med Low	Responsible Party	Timeframe	Potential Funding Source
GOAL 1: DEVELOP AND MAINTAIN A SAFE AND SOUGHT-AFTER PARK SYSTEM IN FITCHBURG THAT PROVIDES A VARIETY OF ACTIVE AND PASSIVE RECREATIONAL AND CULTURAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL FITCHBURG RESIDENTS.				
Objective 1. Expand City capacity (staff and resources) to maintain existing playgrounds and open space areas.				
Action 1. Increase City funding for the Department of Public Works and the Parks & Recreation Department.	H	CA, DPW, PRD	Ongoing	City
Action 2. Reinstate the Superintendent of Parks position.	H	CA, PRD	In Process	City
Action 3. Allocate a full-time Conservation Agent to the Fitchburg Conservation Commission.	H	CA, CC, CDP	Years 1-2	City
Objective 2. Evaluate, repair, and upgrade existing facilities to meet current needs.				
Action 1. Create a formal capital improvement plan for parks and open space that is consistently updated. Research tracking software to develop and maintain an up-to-date plan.	H	CA, DPW, PRD	Years 1-2	City
Action 2. Identify opportunities to adaptively reuse existing parks to meet current recreational needs.	H	DPW, PRD	Ongoing	City
Action 3. Create a formal maintenance plan for parks and open space. Research potential options for tracking software to develop and maintain an up-to-date plan.	H	DPW, PRD	Years 1-2	City
Action 4. Schedule periodic park audits to evaluate and assess the condition of all existing playgrounds to accepted industry standards. Rec Director certification for playground safety inspections.	M	PRD, BPC, DC	Ongoing	City, CCC
Action 5. Seek discretionary grants and commit City funds and entitlement grants for the renovation of parks. (i.e., update equipment at Parkhill and Mama Fitz park or others)	H	CA, CDP, BPC, PRD, DPW	Ongoing	PARC, City
Action 6. Provide and maintain restrooms at major parks. Explore options for extending the open season of bathrooms at Coolidge and Parkhill.	H	PRD, BPC, DPW, DC	Years 2-4	City / Grant
Action 7. Provide additional seating areas at parks to meet current demands.	M	PRD, BPC, DPW, DC	Year 3-5	City / Grant
Action 8. Continue to have the Disability Commission review park improvement plans to ensure that accessible elements are incorporated.	H	PRD, BPC, CDP, DPW, DC	Ongoing	N/A
Action 9. Review additional DEK Hockey Rink at Coolidge Park.	H	PRD, DPW, CDP, BPC	Years 1-2	City/Grant
Action 10. Review the need and location for a second disc golf course.	L	PRD, DPW, CDP, BPC	Years 1-2	City
Action 11. Review location for pickle ball courts (i.e., Lowe Park).	L	PRD, DPW, CDP, BPC	Years 1-2	City
Action 12. Support the development of a performing arts stage at Riverfront Park.	M	PRD, DPW, CDP, BPC	Ongoing	City/ Grant
Objective 3. Improve coordination and collaboration among departments, committees, local organizations, leagues, and businesses to support the maintenance of the parks and recreation system.				

Action 1. Leverage and increase partnerships between the City and other organizations to assist with trail maintenance.	M	PRD, BPC, FGC	Ongoing	N/A
Action 2. Explore using District Improvement Financing (DIF) to fund downtown open space improvements.	M	CA, CDP	Years 3-4	N/A
Action 3. Reinvigorate the Adopt-a-Park program.	M	PRD, BPC, DPW	Years 1-2	N/A
Action 4. Foster and support "friends of" groups to assist with maintenance at more existing city parks.	L	PRD, BPC, DPW	Years 3-5	N/A
Action 5. Improve coordination and communication between leagues about maintaining fields/areas. Consider the formation of a recreation working group among the recreation leagues that utilize city parks.	M	DPW, PRD, CA	Ongoing	N/A

Objective 4. Continue and expand recreational opportunities at City parks for individuals of all abilities and ages.

Action 1. Continue to provide and promote organized recreational opportunities at City parks.	H	PRD	Ongoing	N/A
Action 2. Provide additional recreational opportunities for adults to meet demand as interests arise (i.e., potential for pickle ball and Lowe and/or Goodrich Park, additional Dek Hockey rink at Coolidge).	M	PRD	Years 3-5	N/A
Action 3. Maintain partnerships with leagues and programs that utilize city parks.	M	PRD	Ongoing	N/A

Objective 5. Continue to include resident input, including youth, in the park renovation and design process.

Action 1. Continue to hold public meetings in the planning stage of projects.	H	CDP, PRD, BPC	Ongoing	N/A
Action 2. Develop systems with community-based organizations to increase awareness of public meetings.	M	CDP, PRD, BPC	Years 2-4	N/A

Objective 6. Support efforts to foster outdoor learning and community service projects involving parks.

Action 1. Engage schools and community-based organizations to raise awareness and appreciation of parks and open space.	M	PRD, FPS	Ongoing	N/A
Action 2. Explore opportunities for putting educational/historical information signage at points of interest.	M	DPW, CDP PRD, FPS, FTS	Year 1-2	City/Grant

Objective 7. Encourage beautification efforts and other private investment in public facilities.

Action 1. Develop and pilot a model to engage local organizations and businesses in park upkeep and beautification.	M	PRD, BPC, CDP	Years 3-5	N/A
Action 2. Strengthen the partnership with Intown Fitchburg to beautify and maintain spaces downtown.	H	CDP, DPW	Ongoing	N/A

Objective 8. Improve safety and the perception of safety in public parks.

Action 1. Add park safety elements to existing parks as appropriate, such as added lighting.	H	DPW, PRD, BPC	Ongoing	City / Grant
Action 2. Design parks based on crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) principles, when appropriate and feasible.	M	DPW, PRD, BPC	Ongoing	N/A
Action 3. Research opportunities for adding public art in the parks.	M	CDP	Ongoing	City / Grant

GOAL 2: PROVIDE ENHANCED AND EXPANDED WALKING AND BIKING PATHS FOR RECREATION AND COMMUTING.

Objective 1. Continue to develop/enhance the Twin Cities Rail Trail.				
Action 1: Continue collaborating with the Twin Cities Rail Trail Association for maintenance and enhancement of the Twin Cities Rail Trail.	H	PRD, CDP	Ongoing	N/A
Action 2: Continue to work with MassDOT to move the development of Phase II of the Twin Cities Rail Trail forward. Expanding to Intermodal Station.	H	CDP, DPW	Ongoing	City, DOT

Objective 2. Maintain and improve sidewalks/walking paths in developed areas, including accessibility improvements.

Action 1: Develop a Sidewalk Prioritization Plan.	M	CDP, DPW	Years 2-3	N/A
Action 2: Continue to seek grant funds for additional projects.	H	CDP, DPW	Ongoing	N/A

Objective 3. Integrate the Pedestrian Generator Checklist into the park design and review process; Apply the Fitchburg Trails Vision Plan 2020–2024 to identify when and how to better accommodate pedestrians when designing projects.				
Action 1: Identify which City departments should review the Pedestrian Generator Checklist during the park design and street upgrade process around parks and open spaces and support the usage of the tool.	M	CA, CDP	Years 1-2	N/A
Action 2: Identify which City boards and commissions should review the Pedestrian Generator Checklist during the park design and street upgrade process around parks and open spaces and support the usage of the tool.	M	CA, CDP	Ongoing	N/A
Objective 4. Improve connectivity – trails, sidewalks, and bike accommodations – among open spaces, recreational facilities, and other important city resources.				
Action 1: Incorporate pedestrian and bicycle access into plans for new recreation facilities and modifications to existing recreation facilities.	H	DPW, CDP, BPC	Ongoing	City / Grant
Action 2: Install wayfinding signs and kiosks for existing trails.	H	DPW, PRD, FGC, CDP	In Process	City / Grant
Action 3: Identify and design thoughtful connections between highly used open spaces.	L	DPW, PRD, CDP	Year 5	N/A
Action 4: Complete design and secure funding for the Marion Stoddart Trail.	M	PRD, FGC	Years 3-4	City / Grant
Action 5: Develop the North-South and East-West links identified in the Fitchburg Trails Vision Plan.	L	PRD, FGC	Year 5	N/A
Action 6: Develop a network plan to link on and off-road bicycle paths throughout the City.	L	DPW, CDP	Year 3	City / Grant
Action 7: Review all streetscape projects for suitability of Complete Streets.	H	DPW	Ongoing	N/A
Objective 5. Keep the Fitchburg Trail Guide updated.				
Action 1: Continue supporting the Fitchburg Trails Stewards and encourage its collaboration with MRPC to assist with this effort. Update trail guide as trails evolve.	H	PRD, FGC	Ongoing	N/A
Objective 6. Continue developing and expanding off-road pedestrian and shared use paths.				
Action 1: Continue supporting efforts to develop and expand the Rock Walk.	H	CDP, FGC	Ongoing	N/A
Action 2: Continue efforts to resolve easement issues, seek out grant opportunities to expand trails and work with/engage community groups to assist with completing the Steamline Trail in West Fitchburg.	M	CDP, FGC	Years 2-3	City / Grant
GOAL 3: PROVIDE EQUITABLE ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY AND INCLUSIVE RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES.				
Objective 1. Improve marketing to increase awareness of Fitchburg's park and open space system.				
Action 1: Enhance efforts to promote parks and open spaces through community-based organizations, schools, and the Senior Center. Continue expanding social media presence to promote our open spaces.	H	PRD, BPC, FPS	Ongoing	N/A
Objective 2. Improve the process for implementing and marketing organized recreational and cultural opportunities provided at Fitchburg's parks and open spaces.				
Action 1: Integrate cultural competency and language access into marketing plans.	H	PRD	Ongoing	N/A
Action 2: Improve the City of Fitchburg's online presence to market recreational and cultural opportunities.	M	PRD	Ongoing	N/A
Action 3: Create a well-marketed and user-friendly permitting process for using public open space.	M	PRD	Years 2-3	N/A
Objective 3. Provide park access and programming that is safe, inclusive, culturally relevant, and welcoming to everyone.				
Action 1: Partner with community-based organizations on programming that connects residents of Environmental Justice neighborhoods to parks.	H	PRD	Ongoing	N/A
Action 2: Provide programming that meets the demands of Fitchburg residents.	H	PRD	Ongoing	N/A
Action 3: Ensure language access is incorporated into programming.	H	PRD	Year 1	N/A
Objective 4. Improve signage to and within City parks and trails.				
Action 1: Review existing signage and develop a parks and open space wayfinding system to provide cohesive and recognizable signage.	M	PRD, FGC	Years 3-5	City / Grants
Action 2: Continue improving wayfinding signs and maps on recreational trails.	M	FGC	Ongoing	City / Grants

Action 3: Integrate language diversity into the design of new and upgraded park signage.	H	PRD, BPC	Years 1-2	City / Grants
Action 4: Secure funding for new signage.	M	PRD, FGC	Ongoing	City / Grants
Objective 5. Provide universally accessible facilities at existing parks.				
Action 1: Identify opportunities to add universally accessible restroom facilities at parks.	M	DPW, PRD, DC	Years 3-5	City / Grants
Action 2: Continue adding universally accessible recreational areas during park upgrades.	H	PRD, BPC, DC	Ongoing	City / Grants
Action 3. Provide small parking lots at strategic locations to make trails more accessible (i.e., Knoll Trail head).	M	DPW, PRD, DC	Years 3-5	City / Grants
GOAL 4: PROTECT AND PROMOTE FITCHBURG'S WATERSHED.				
Objective 1. Protect Fitchburg's watershed land within Fitchburg and adjacent communities.				
Action 1: Identify and protect critical open space areas, including watershed properties, for temporary slowing of floodwaters and to lessen the effects of future flooding. (Contact DEPT regarding land of concern)	H	DPW, WD, CC	Ongoing	City, MVP
Action 2: Ensure compliance with the land management plan(s) in place for land that is already protected.	M	DPW, CC	Ongoing	City / Grants
Objective 2. Routinely assess the condition of dams, ponds, and reservoirs within Fitchburg and identify opportunities for restoration of the natural environment.				
Action 1: Continue regular inspections by a registered professional engineer of dams that are the City's responsibility.	H	DPW, CC	Ongoing	City / Grants
Action 2: Prioritize restoration of the natural environment when performing maintenance and upgrading dams and water resources.	H	DPW, CC	Ongoing	City / Grants
Objective 3. Continue efforts that result in improved water quality of the Nashua River and its tributaries.				
Action 1: Continue the combined sewer separation (CSS) project.	H	DPW, WW	Ongoing	City
Action 2: Promote citizen education about water quality and collaborate with community organizations and stakeholders.	M	DPW, WD	Years 3-4	N/A
Action 3: Maintain collaboration with NRWA for protection of the Nashua River.	H	DPW, WD	Ongoing	N/A
Objective 4. Integrate green infrastructure for stormwater management into planning and capital projects for parks and open space.				
Action 1: Consider options for integrating rain gardens, permeable pavement, and other green infrastructure when capital projects are undertaken.	H	DPW	Ongoing	City, MVP
Objective 5. Continue to improve access to and awareness of the Nashua River and other waterbodies as City assets.				
Action 1: Promote a public education campaign about water issues and collaborate with community organizations and stakeholders.	M	DPW, WD, CC	Years 2-3	N/A
Action 2: Continue holding events at the Riverfront Park and Gateway Park that showcase the Nashua River.	M	PRD	Ongoing	N/A
GOAL 5: PRESERVE, RESTORE, ENHANCE, AND PROMOTE OPEN SPACE AND NATURAL RESOURCES THAT INCREASE FITCHBURG'S RESILIENCE TO THE EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE.				
Objective 1. Properly maintain City-owned forested areas.				
Action 1: Develop and adopt forest management plans for City-owned forestland.	M	DPW, CC	Years 3-5	City / Grant
Objective 2. Implement or enforce regulations to limit sprawl and preserve/enhance natural resources.				
Action 1: Continue to implement smart growth tactics when developing or updating plans and ordinances.	H	CDP	Ongoing	N/A
Action 2: Review Fitchburg zoning and conservation ordinances and incorporate green infrastructure and conservation of functioning natural ecosystems and other nature-based solutions as requirements.	L	CDP	Years 3-5	N/A
Objective 3. Work with local, regional, and state organizations to preserve open space and wildlife habitat.				

Action 1: Support efforts of the North County Land Trust and other agencies to purchase and protect open space in the City.	H	DPW, PRD, BPC, CC	Ongoing	N/A
Objective 4. Support continuation of environmental programming in parks and trails.				
Action 1: Partner with and support the efforts of organizations such as the North County Land Trust and the Trustees of Reservations to provide environmental programming.	M	DPW, PRD, BPC, CC	Ongoing	N/A
Action 2: Continue allowing groups to use City property and promote activities on City website and social media.	M	CA, DPW, PRD, CDP	Ongoing	N/A
Objective 5. Work to eradicate invasive species.				
Action 1: Provide public education on invasive species, including both flora and fauna (e.g., invasive trees and spotted lanternfly).	H	DPW	Ongoing	N/A
Action 2: Partner with groups such as the Fitchburg Greenway Committee to work toward eliminating knotweed & other invasives in parks.	H	DPW	Ongoing	N/A
Action 3: Ensure new plantings in parks and open spaces are selected appropriately.	H	DPW, CDP	Ongoing	N/A
Objective 6. Foster the permanent protection of privately-owned open space, including farmland and forests.				
Action 1: Work with the City Assessor's Office to support and promote participation in the Chapter 61/61A/61B programs to help preserve forestland, agricultural land, and open space and recreational land.	H	CDP, CC	Years 2-3	N/A
Action 2: Develop a notification procedure for City consideration of Chapter 61/61A/61B properties should the property owner decide to remove the land from the program.	H	CDP, CC	Years 2-3	N/A
Action 3: Provide public education about the value of open space and alternatives to forest cutting.	H	CDP, CC	Ongoing	N/A
Action 4: Create a tracking system for Conservation Restrictions.	H	CDP, CC	Years 2-3	N/A
Action 5: Reinvigorate the Agricultural Commission.	L	CA, CDP	Year 5	N/A
Action 6: Identify and promote financial incentives for preserving farmland of local importance.	M	CDP	Year 3-4	N/A
Objective 7. Implement nature-based solutions to enhance the ecological integrity of Fitchburg's natural resources.				
Action 1: Incorporate nature-based solutions into the design of new and improved open space and recreation facilities.	H	DPW, BPC	Ongoing	City / Grant
Action 2: Encourage native tree and vegetation planting in high pavement areas, like parking lots, to help manage stormwater runoff and increase shade.	H	DPW, CDP	Ongoing	City / Grant
GOAL 6: PROMOTE GREEN SPACE IN THE URBAN CORE.				
Objective 1. Create urban shade and a biodiverse urban forest system.				
Action 1: Leverage the partnership with the Greening the Gateways Program working with the City to bolster the urban forest.	H	CDP	Years 1-2	GGC
Action 2: When street trees are planted, ensure the proper species is selected and that they are planted properly for sustainability.	H	DPW	Ongoing	N/A
Action 3: Develop and adopt a street tree/tree replacement policy.	H	DPW	Years 1-2	City / Grant
Objective 2. Support urban agriculture and the local food system.				
Action 1: Develop a policy for starting and maintaining community gardens.	M	CDP, PRD	Years 1-3	N/A
Action 2: Continue supporting community-based organizations that promote regional food access strategies and environmental sustainability.	M	CA, CDP	Ongoing	N/A
Objective 3. Capture undervalued land for new recreational and open space purposes.				
Action 1: Explore downtown and other densely populated, underserved areas where open space is limited to identify opportunities to capture underperforming properties for establishing pocket parks to provide both urban recreation opportunities and green space.	H	CDP, DPW	Years 1-5	City / Grant

Potential Funding Sources

Along with a general allocation of funding from the City, other sources of funding that could be utilized for park and open space improvements include:

- **U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)** – Community Development Block Grant Funding (CDBG)
- **MA Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)** – MassTrails Grant Program, Urban and Community Forestry Challenge, Greening the Gateway Cities (GGC)
- **MA Division of Conservation Services (DCS)** – Conservation Partnership Grant, Local Acquisitions of Natural Diversity Grant, Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund, DCS Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities Grant, Outdoor Recreation Legacy Partnership Grant Program, Drinking Water Supply Protection Grant Program, Gateway Cities Parks Program
- **MA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)** – 604(b) Water Quality Management Planning, Water Utility Resilience Program, Clean Water State Revolving Fund
- **MA Division of Ecological Restoration (DER)** – Streamflow Restoration Programs, Dam Removal Program, Urban River Revitalization Program, Wetlands Restoration Program, Culvert Replacement Municipal Assistance Grant Program
- **MA Community Compact Cabinet (CCC)** – Best Practices Compact
- **MA Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development (EOHED)** – Community One Stop for Growth (includes MassWorks)
- **MA Department of Transportation (MassDOT)** – Chapter 90 Program, Transportation Enhancement Program, Complete Streets Program
- **MA Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA)** – Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program (MVP), Dam and Seawall Repair or Removal Program, Environmental Trust General Grant, EEA Planning Assistance Grant
- **MA Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS)** – Landover Incentive Program Grant
- **National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF)** – New England Forests and Rivers Fund
- **U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service** – Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Program

The City of Fitchburg has not adopted the Community Preservation Act, which is a smart growth tool that helps communities preserve open space and historic sites, create affordable housing, and develop outdoor recreational facilities by allowing communities to create a local Community Preservation Fund. This fund is raised locally through the imposition of a surcharge of the tax levy against real property. A municipality must adopt CPA by ballot referendum. To date, 189 municipalities in the state have adopted CPA.

SECTION 10: LETTERS OF REVIEW



The City of Fitchburg
Massachusetts

Office of the Mayor

Natalia Oliver
Chief of Staff
noliver@fitchburgma.gov

STEPHEN L. DINATALE

Joan David
Executive Administrative Assistant
jdavid@fitchburgma.gov

December 29, 2022

Melissa Cryan
Grant Programs Supervisor
Division of Conservation Services
100 Cambridge Street, 9th floor
Boston, MA 02114

Dear Ms. Cryan,

It is with great pleasure that I endorse the City's 2022 – 2029 Open Space and Recreation Plan Update. I have reviewed the plan and enthusiastically support the goals and objectives outlined.

Over the past year, Fitchburg's Community Development Department has worked with BSC Group consultants and the Open Space Advisory Committee to update the City's Open Space and Recreation Plan. They met with relevant groups and agencies, and other City Departments. They distributed a community survey and held two community meetings to ensure public input.

As with past plans the overarching goals of this update are the protection of Fitchburg's natural and rural assets and the provision of diverse and inclusive recreational opportunities for our residents. Additionally this update expands on the role these areas play in Fitchburg's resilience to the effects of climate change.

Provision and protection of recreation areas and open spaces are essential steps in achieving a healthy and vibrant community. The 7 year Action Plan will guide the City and its Boards and Commissions in our stewardship of these important resources.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephen L. DiNatale".

Stephen L. DiNatale
Mayor

December 21, 2022



Amy LeBlanc
Senior Project Manager
City of Fitchburg
718 Main Street
Fitchburg, MA 01420

Re: City of Fitchburg Open Space & Recreation Plan

Dear Ms. LeBlanc:

The Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC) staff completed a review of Fitchburg's Open Space and Recreation Plan (2022-2029) that has been recently prepared by the City of Fitchburg with the assistance of BSC Group Consultants. MRPC staff used the *Open Space and Recreation Plan Requirements* guidebook published by the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, Division of Conservation Services, to determine if the plan was consistent with the required sections and content.

We find the plan to be well-researched, and well-written indicating to us that both the City, and their consultant tasked completion of the Plan, were most serious in their efforts. The MRPC is pleased to support Fitchburg's Open Space and Recreation Plan 2022-2029 (OSRP). We would like to take this opportunity to congratulate local residents and officials for completing a well-prepared document capable of achieving its intended purposes.

If you have any questions or desire further information, please contact us.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Legros
Principal Planner



CITY OF FITCHBURG
PLANNING BOARD

718 MAIN STREET
FITCHBURG, MASSACHUSETTS 01420

(978) 829-1891
PHONE

(978) 345-9687
FAX

January 30, 2023

Amy LeBlanc
Community Development Department
718 Main St.
Fitchburg, Massachusetts 01420

Re: 2022 Open Space & Recreation Plan Update

Dear Amy:

Thank you for the opportunity to review the Open Space & Recreation Plan. The Fitchburg Planning Board has reviewed the Open Space & Recreation Plan update and have no objections to its adoption. It will serve as a guide for the Board's land use policy decisions in the coming years.

Thank you & the BSC Group for your efforts on this project.
If you have any questions, please free to call me at 978-829-1891.

Sincerely,

Michael J. O'Hara
Principal Planner

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael J. O'Hara". The signature is fluid and cursive, with "Michael J." on the top line and "O'Hara" on the bottom line.

SECTION 11: REFERENCES

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A – Inventory of Lands of Conservation & Recreation Interest

CC- Conservation Commission

U- Unimproved Condition

WOD- Watershed Overlay District Zoning

P- In Perpetuity: Legally protected in perpetuity and recorded as such in a deed or other official document. Land is considered protected in perpetuity if it is owned by the City's conservation commission, or sometimes, by the water department; if a city has a conservation restriction on the property in perpetuity; if it is owned by one of the state's conservation agencies; if it is owned by a non-profit or land trust; or if the city received federal or state assistance for the purchase or improvement of the property.

LWCF- Land and Water Conservation Fund

CDBG- Community Development Block Grant

Open Space- Used to refer to undeveloped, conservation, and/or forested land.

Site	Ownership	Location	Parcel ID	Acres	Manager	Primary Use	Recreation Potential	Public Access	Level of Protection	Type of Protection	Condition	Funding	Zoning
Conservation Parcels													
Littlefield Conservation Area	Fitchburg	Ashburnham Hill Rd	S5-22-0	34.99	CC	Open Space	Passive	Yes	Permanent	P	U	Gift	RR
Dolloff Property (1)	Fitchburg	Mt. Elam Rd.	112R-32-0	1.22	CC	Open Space	Passive/ Trails	Yes	Permanent	P	U	Gift	RA
Dolloff Property (2)	Fitchburg	R. Mt. Elam Rd.	112R-33-0	0.55	CC	Open Space	Passive/	Yes	Permanent	P	U	Gift	RA
Dolloff Property (3)	Fitchburg	Mt Elam Rd.	112R-34-0	3.20	CC	Open Space	Trails	Yes	Permanent	P	U	Gift	RA
Dolloff Property (4)	Fitchburg	Mt Elam Rd.	112R-35-0	0.38	CC	Open Space	Passive/	Yes	Permanent	P	U	Gift	RA
Dolloff Property (5)	Fitchburg	Mt Elam Rd.	112R-36-0	1.99	CC	Open Space	Trails	Yes	Permanent	P	U	Gift	RA
Dolloff Property (6)	Fitchburg	Mt Elam Rd.	112R-37-0	4.76	CC	Open Space	Passive/	Yes	Permanent	P	U	Gift	RA
Gillman Conservation Area	Fitchburg	Wanoosnoc Rd.	120R-25-A	13.33	CC	Open Space	Passive/ Trails	Yes	Permanent	P	U	Gift	RA
Airport Conservation Area (1)	Fitchburg	Crawford St	149-3-0	15	CC	Open Space	Passive	No	Permanent	P	U	Gift	I
Airport Conservation Area (2)	Fitchburg	Elswick Avenue	184-9-0	4.13	CC	Open Space	Passive	No	Permanent	P	U	Gift	I
Brown Farm Conservation Area	Fitchburg	Bakers Brook	73-1-A	11.96	CC	Open Space	Passive/ Trails	Yes	Permanent	P	U	Gift	C
DeNeufville Conserv Area (1)	Fitchburg	John Fitch Hwy	88R-21-0	1.99	CC	Open Space	Passive	Yes	Permanent	P	U	Gift	RR
DeNeufville Conserv Area (2)	Fitchburg	John Fitch Hwy	88R-22-0	7.8	CC	Open Space	Passive	Yes	Permanent	P	U	Gift	RR

DeNeufville Conserv Area (3)	Fitchburg	John Fitch Hwy	1-11-0	1.7	CC	Open Space	Passive	Yes	Permanent	P	U	Gift	RR
Westminster Hill Properties	Fitchburg	Wallace Road	37-8-0	9.10	CC	Open Space	Passive/ Trails	Yes	Permanent	P	U	Gift	RA
Valley View Properties (1)	Fitchburg	Westminster Hill Rd	16-1-0	1.8	CC	Open Space	Passive/ Trails	Yes	Permanent	P	U	Gift	RA
Valley View Properties (2)	Fitchburg	Westminster Hill Rd	16-8-0	0.18	CC	Open Space	Passive/ Trails	Yes	Permanent	P	U	Gift	RA
Valley View Properties (3)	Fitchburg	Ashburnham Hill Rd	S6-9-B	15.3	CC	Open Space	Passive/ Trails	Yes	Permanent	P	U	Gift	RA
Rollo Property	Fitchburg	John Fitch Hwy	88R-20-A	1.96	CC	Open Space	Passive	Yes	Permanent	P	U	Gift	RR
Key Fitchburg Conservation Land	Fitchburg	John Fitch Hwy	86-3-0	0.90	CC	Open Space	Passive	Yes	Permanent	P	U	Gift	C
Cressey Conservation Area	Fitchburg	Scott Rd	286-13-0	0.5	CC	Open Space	Passive	Yes	Permanent	P	U	Gift	RR
Southern Nashua R Areas (1)	Fitchburg	Airport Rd	133-18-0	0.6	CC	Open Space	Passive/ Trails	Yes	Permanent	P	U	Gift	NB
Southern Nashua R Areas (2)	Fitchburg	Airport Rd	142-11-0	0.4	CC	Open Space	Passive/ Trails	Yes	Permanent	P	U	Gift	I
Triangular Conservation Area	Fitchburg	Flat Rock Road	78R-58-0	0.61	CC	Open Space	Passive	Yes	Permanent	P	U	Gift	RR
Viewig Conservation Area	Fitchburg	Ashburnham St	S7-33-A	0.11	CC	Open Space	Passive/ Trails	Yes	Permanent	P	U	Gift	RR
Rollstone Hill (1)	Fitchburg	Rollstone Hill	41-2-A	43.77	City of Fitchburg	Open Space	Hiking/ Trails	Yes	--	N	U	Gift	RB
Rollstone Hill (2)	Fitchburg	Rollstone Hill	40-26-0	26.07	CC	Open Space	Hiking/Trails	Yes	Permanent	P	U	Gift	RB
Rollstone Hill (3)	Fitchburg	Rollstone Hill	39-8-0	11.34	CC	Open Space	Hiking/Trails	Yes	Permanent	P	U	Gift	RB
Rollstone Hill (4)	Fitchburg	Rollstone Hill	66-38-0	14.29	City of Fitchburg	Open Space	Hiking/Trails	Yes	Permanent	P	U	Gift	RB
Rollstone Hill (5)	Fitchburg	Pratt Road	92-5-B	5.6	City of Fitchburg	Open Space	Hiking/Trails	Yes	Permanent	P	U	Gift	RB
Rollstone Hill (6)	Fitchburg	Leighton St	40-24-0	2.6	City of Fitchburg	Open Space	Hiking/Trails	Yes	--	N	U	Gift	RC
Nashua Bridge Greenery	Fitchburg	Wallace Rd & River Street	27-2-A	1.73	City of Fitchburg	Open Space	Passive	Yes	Permanent	P	U	Gift	C
Nashua River Greenway (1)	Fitchburg	Melrose St.	133-18-0	0.28	CC	Riverfront	N/A	No	Permanent	P	U	Gift	NB
Nashua River Greenway (2)	Fitchburg	Airport Rd.	142-11-0	0.34	CC	Riverfront	N/A	No	Permanent	P	U	Gift	I
Landmark Conservation Area (1)	Fitchburg	Westminster Hill Rd.	16-1-0	1.80	CC	Open Space	Passive/ Trails	Yes	Permanent	P	U	Gift	RA
Landmark Conservation Area (2)	Fitchburg	Westminster Hill Rd.	16-8-0	0.18	CC	Open Space	Passive/ Trails	Yes	Permanent	P	U	Gift	RA
Adj. Bird Sanctuary	Fitchburg	Battles Av	186-4-0	1.06	CC	Open Space	Passive	Yes	Permanent	P	U	Gift	RA
Cressey Conservation Area	Fitchburg	Scott Rd.	286-13-0	0.52	CC	Open Space	Passive	Yes	Permanent	P	U	Gift	RR
Conservation Area	Fitchburg	High Rock Rd.	288-6-0	1.06	CC	Open Space	Passive	Yes	Permanent	P	U	Tax Title	RR

Green's Pond	Fitchburg	Ashby State Rd.	170-27-0	28.5	City of Fitchburg	Wetland	Passive	Yes	Permanent	P	Fair	Gift	RA
Downstream Green's Pond (1)	Fitchburg	Fisher Rd	170-28-0	7.5	CC	Wetland	Passive	Yes	Permanent	P	U	Gift	RA
Downstream Green's Pond (2)	Fitchburg	Fisher Rd	S11-38-A	0.24	CC	Wetland	Passive	Yes	Permanent	P	U	Gift	NB
Adjacent to Greene's Pond	Fitchburg	Richardson Rd	283-13-0	0.54	CC	Open Space	Passive Rec.	Yes	Permanent	P	U	Gift	RA
Putnam Pond	Fitchburg	John Fitch Hwy and Pearl Hill Rd	159-2-0	1.9	CC	Open Space	Passive Rec.	Yes	Permanent	P	Shoreline cleared	Gift	RA
Central Nashua River	Fitchburg	Circle Street	29-51-0	1	CC	Open Space	Passive Rec.	Yes	Permanent	P	U	Gift	DB
Nashua River	Fitchburg	Airport Rd & Bemis Rd	133-18-0	0.8	CC	Open Space	Passive Rec.	Yes	Permanent	P	U	Gift	NB
Scripture Hill WMA	MA Dept. of Fish & Game	Billing and Arn-How Farm Road	S22-32-0	47.5	MA Dept. of Fish & Game	Trails	Passive/ Trails	Yes	Permanent	P	Fair	Gift & \$600,000 Federal Grant	RR
Gustav A. Johnson Swimming Pool	MA DCR	Wanoosnec Rd	147-6-1	13.3	MA DCR	Recreation Pool	Swimming Pool	Yes	Permanent	P	Good	Gift	RB
Flat Rock Wildlife Sanctuary (1)	MA Audubon Society	Flat Rock Rd	78R-57	211.68	MA Audubon Society	Trails, Open Space	Passive Rec. Only	Yes	Permanent	P	Good	Gift	RR
Flat Rock Wildlife Sanctuary (2)	MA Audubon Society	Flat Rock Rd	S13-3-0	25.35	MA Audubon Society	Trails, Open Space	Passive Rec. Only	Yes	Permanent	P	Good	Gift	RR
Flat Rock Wildlife Sanctuary (3)	MA Audubon Society	Flat Rock Rd	S13-6-0	19.69	MA Audubon Society	Trails, Open Space	Passive Rec. Only	Yes	Permanent	P	Good	Gift	RR
Flat Rock Wildlife Sanctuary (4)	Fitchburg	Flat Rock Rd	S13-4-0	0.88	City of Fitchburg	Trails, Open Space	Passive Rec. Only	Yes	Permanent	P	Good	Gift	RR
Flat Rock Wildlife Sanctuary (5)	MA Audubon Society	Flat Rock Rd	S13-20-0	27.5	MA Audubon Society	Trails, Open Space	Passive Rec. Only	Yes	Permanent	P	Good	Gift	RR
Flat Rock Wildlife Sanctuary (6)	MA Audubon Society	Flat Rock Rd	78R-59-0	9.89	MA Audubon Society	Trails, Open Space	Passive Rec. Only	Yes	Permanent	P	Good	Gift	RR
Flat Rock Wildlife Sanctuary (7)	MA Audubon Society	Ashburnham Hill Rd	87R-61-0	24	MA Audubon Society	Trails, Open Space	Passive Rec. Only	Yes	Permanent	P	Good	Gift	RR
Jewell Hill Farm Project (1)	MA Land Conservation Trust Inc.	Crocker/ Caswell Rd	S10-5-0	59.3	Trustees	Conservation Farmland	Passive Rec. Only	Yes	Permanent	P	Good	Multi Parcel Sale	RR
Jewell Hill Farm Project (2)	MA Land Conservation Trust Inc.	Crocker/ Caswell Rd	S10-4-0	34	Trustees	Conservation Farmland	Passive Rec. Only	Yes	Permanent	P	Good	Multi Parcel Sale	RR
Jewell Hill Farm Project (3)	MA Land Conservation Trust Inc.	Crocker/ Caswell Rd	S10-16-0	20	Trustees	Conservation Farmland	Passive Rec. Only	Yes	Permanent	P	Good	Multi Parcel Sale	RR
Jewell Hill Farm Project (4)	MA Land Conservation Trust Inc.	Crocker/ Caswell Rd	S10-15-0	24	Trustees	Conservation Farmland	Passive Rec. Only	Yes	Permanent	P	Good	Multi Parcel Sale	RR

Water Resources														
Overlook Reservoir	Fitchburg	Flat Rock Road	87R-64-0	28	Water Department	Reservoir	Passive/ Trails	Yes	Permanent	P	Good	Gift	RR	
Scott Reservoir	Fitchburg	Ashby West Rd	78R-65-0	73.56	Water Department	Reservoir	Passive/ Trails	Yes	Permanent	P	Good	Gift	RR	
Lovell Reservoir (1)	Fitchburg	Rindge Road	69R-26-0	79	Water Department	Reservoir	Passive/ Trails	Yes	Permanent	P	Good	Gift	RR	
Lovell Reservoir (2)	Fitchburg	1200 Rindge Rd	78R-55-0	100	Water Department	Reservoir	Passive/ Trails	Yes	Permanent	P	Good	Gift	RR	
Parks														
Ansin Park	Fitch Western Little League Inc.	Appleton Cr	176-1-0	1.25	Fitch Western Little League Inc.	Park	Baseball field	No	--	U	Good	Parcel Sale	RA	
Bartley-Nolan Playground	Fitchburg	Providence St	82-164-B	0.46	Parks Board	Park	Sports fields, pickleball, active rec.	Yes	Permanent	P	Good	CDBG	RB	
Bird Sanctuary	Fitchburg	Coggshall Park	112R-28-A	50	Parks Board	Park	Passive	Yes	Permanent	P	U	Gift	RA	
Brigham Park	Fitchburg	off Holt Street	45-122-0	0.14	Parks Board	Park	Passive	Yes	Permanent	P	Good	Gift	RC	
Caldwell Park (1)	Fitchburg	Caldwell & Main Streets	17-6-0	6.7	Parks Board	Park	Passive, Trails	Yes	Permanent	P	Good	CDBG	RR	
Caldwell Park (2)	Fitchburg	Caldwell & Main Streets	17-2-0	0.08	Parks Board	Park	Passive, Trails	Yes	Permanent	P	Good	Gift	RB	
Caldwell Park (3)	Fitchburg	Caldwell & Main Streets	17-1-0	1.5	Parks Board	Park	Active, sports courts, playground	Yes	Permanent	P	Good	Gift	RB	
City Forest	Fitchburg	off Rindge Road	314-26-0	31.2	Parks Board	Park	Passive	Yes	Permanent	P	U	Gift	RR	
Cleghorn Pocket Park	Fitchburg	Daniels St. And Allen Pl	51-25-0	0.08	Parks Board	Park	N/A	Yes	Permanent	P	Good	Gift	NB	
Cleghorn Square	Fitchburg	Daniels and Fairmount Streets	51-1-A	0.19	Parks Board	Park	N/A	Yes	Permanent	P	Good	Gift	NB	
Coggshall Park	Fitchburg	0 South St	S36-2-0	212.7	Parks Board	Park	Hiking, trails, passive rec.	Yes	Permanent	P	Good	Gift	RA	
Coolidge Park	Fitchburg	Pearl St.	14-6-0	63.8	Parks Board	Park	Active, sports courts, fields, swimming	Yes	Permanent	P	Very Good	CDBG, Urban Self-Help, Water Cons. Fund	RA	
Crocker Field	Fitchburg	Broad & River Streets	29-5-0	1.55	School Department	Park	Active, track	Yes	Permanent	P	Very Good	CDBG	DB	
Crocker Playground	Fitchburg	Wachusetts & Westminster Streets	244-1-0	1.38	Parks Board	Park	Active, playground	Yes	Permanent	P	Very Good	Gift	RB	
Decaria Park	Fitchburg	First & Railroad St	69-37-0	0.32	Parks Board	Park	Sports court, low	Yes	Permanent	P	Good	Parkland Acquisitions	RC	

												& Reno for Commun.	
Falulah Park	Fitchburg	Ridge Road	286-14-0	1.4	Parks Board	Park	Passive, trails	Yes	Permanent	P	Good	Gift	RR
Gateway Park	Fitchburg	Sheldon and West Street	27-5-0	5.3	Parks Board	Park	Passive, walking trail	Yes	Permanent	P	Good	Gateway Cities, CDBG	RA
Game On Fitchburg (1)	Fitchburg Soccer LLC	Game on Way	S32-14A	34.5	Fitchburg Soccer LLC	Sports Performance Center	Active / Sports fields	No	--	U	Good	Multi Parcel Sale	CR
Game On Fitchburg (2)	Fitchburg Soccer LLC	Game on Way	S32-5-0	0.34	Fitchburg Soccer LLC	Sports Performance Center	Active / Sports fields	No	--	U	Good	Multi Parcel Sale	CR
Game On Fitchburg (3)	Fitchburg Soccer LLC	Game on Way	S32-10-0	43.5	Fitchburg Soccer LLC	Sports Performance Center	Active / Sports fields	No	--	U	Good	Multi Parcel Sale	CR
Game On Fitchburg (4)	Fitchburg Soccer LLC	Game on Way	S32-7-0	15.7	Fitchburg Soccer LLC	Sports Performance Center	Active / Sports fields	No	--	U	Good	Multi Parcel Sale	CR
Goodrich Park	Fitchburg	Goodrich St & Bouteille St	71-40-0	2.83	Parks Board	Park	Active	Yes	Permanent	P	Good	CDBG, Community Partnership Grant	RB
Goodrich Playground	Fitchburg	Bouteille St	71-39-A	1.19	Parks Board	Park	Active	Yes	Permanent	P	Good	Gift	RB
Grant Park	Fitchburg	Daniels St & River Street	27-2-A	1.73	Parks Board	Park	Passive	Yes	Permanent	P	Good	Gift	C
Heritage Park	Fitchburg	Main St & Boulder Dr (east)	55-68-A	0.13	Parks Board	Park	N/A due to size	Yes	Permanent	P	Good	Private Funds	DB
Howarth Park	Fitchburg	Walton St & Laurel St	66-7-0	2.48	Parks Board	Park	Active	Yes	Permanent	P	Good	CDBG	RB
JoAnn "Mama" Fitz Memorial Playground	Fitchburg	Green St & North St	44-89-0	0.53	Parks Board	Park	Active	Yes	Permanent	P	Fair	CDBG	FSU
Litchfield Park	Fitchburg	Upper Common - Main St	29-43-A	0.88	Parks Board	Park	N/A due to size	Yes	Permanent	P	Good	Gift	DB
Lowe Playground	Fitchburg	Elm Street	19-2-A	4.15	Parks Board	Park	Active	Yes	Permanent	P	Good	CDBG, Our Common Backyards, LWCF	DB
Monument Park	Fitchburg	Main, Hartwell, Elm, Grove St	42-47-0	0.64	Parks Board	Park	N/A	Yes	Permanent	P	Good	DCR, CDBG	DB
Moran Field	Fitchburg	Ashburnham St	S7-19-0	14.2	Parks Board	Park	Active	Yes	Permanent	P	Good	Gift	RA
Moran Square	Fitchburg	Main St & Lunenburg St	N/A	0.01	Parks Board	Park	N/A traffic island	Yes	Permanent	P	Good	not specified	--
Parkhill Park	Fitchburg	Pratt Rd & Beech St	103-65-0	46.4	Parks Board	Park	Active	Yes	Permanent	P	Good	CDBG, Urban Self-Help, Parkland Acquisitions + Reno for	RA

												Commun., LWCF	
Phillips Playground	Fitchburg	Westminster Hill Rd & Phillips St	225-11-0	0.4	Parks Board	Park	Active	Yes	Permanent	P	Fair	UDAG Repayment Funds	RB
Riverfront Park	Fitchburg	Boulder Dr & Commercial St	55-56-0	1.62	Parks Board	Park	Passive	Yes	Permanent	P	Very Good	CDBG, Urban Self-Help, Parkland Acquisitions & Reno. for Commun.	DB
Sadie Quatralle Playground	Fitchburg	Middle & Cetrino	82-66-0	0.37	Parks Board	Park	Playground, Active	Yes	Permanent	P	Good	CDBG	RC
Saima Park	Finnish American Club of Saima	Scott Road	287-1-0	30.27	Finnish American Club of Saima	Park	Passive	No	--	U	Good	Involved Charity	RR
South Fitch Playground	Fitchburg	Wanoosnoc Rd & Water St	147-6-1	19.29	Parks Board	Park	Sports fields, Active	Yes	Permanent	P	Good	Gift	RB
Salem Street	Fitchburg	Beekman St & Cliff St	82-164-B	1.4	Parks Board	Park	Playground, Sports court, field, Active	Yes	Permanent	P	Good	Urban Self-Help	RB
Stanley Park	Fitchburg	Westminster St & Simonds Rd	175-22-0	0.69	Parks Board	Park	Passive	Yes	Permanent	P	Good	UDAG Loan Repayment	NB
Upper Common	Fitchburg	Main St & Mechanic St	29-43-A	1.04	Parks Board	Park	Passive	Yes	Permanent	P	Very Good	CDBG	DB
W. F. Steam Line Trail	Fitchburg	Westminster St & Ward St	W-2-1B	0.75	City of Fitchburg	Park	Passive, trail	Yes	Permanent	P	Good	CDBG, Urban Self-Help	AI
W. F. Steam Line Trail	Fitchburg	Westminster St & Ward St	249-35-1	1.25	City of Fitchburg	Park	Passive, trail	Yes	Permanent	P	Fair	Gift	I
W. F. Steam Line Trail	Fitchburg	Westminster St & Ward St	W-2-3A	1.73	City of Fitchburg	Park	Passive, trail	Yes	Permanent	P	Fair	Gift	I
Woods Haven Park	Fitchburg	Lincoln St & Rice St	13-72-0	0.76	Parks Board	Park	Passive	Yes	Permanent	P	Good	Gift	RA
Watershed													
Site	Ownership	Location	Acres	Manager	Primary Use	Recreation Potential	Public Access	Level of Protection	Type of Protection	Condition	Funding	Zoning	
59R 2 0	Fitchburg	Rindge Rd	11.3	Water Department	Watershed	Passive / None due to wetlands	No	Permanent	P	U	none	RR, WOD	
59R 1 0	Fitchburg	Caswell Rd	66.2	Water Department	Watershed	Passive / None due to wetlands	No	Permanent	P	U	none	RR, WOD	
60R 25 0	Fitchburg	Rindge Rd	3.9	Water Department	Watershed	Passive / None due to wetlands	No	Permanent	P	U	none	RR, WOD	

60R 24 0	Fitchburg	Ashby West Rd	8.3	Water Department	Watershed	Passive / None due to wetlands	No	Permanent	P	U	none	RR, WOD
60R 23 0	Fitchburg	Ashby West Rd	8.6	Water Department	Watershed	Passive / None due to wetlands	No	Permanent	P	U	none	RR, WOD
60R 12 0	Fitchburg	Rindge Rd	13.9	Water Department	Watershed	Passive / None due to wetlands	No	Permanent	P	U	none	RR, WOD
60R 11 0	Fitchburg	Rindge Rd	10.7	Water Department	Watershed	Passive / None due to wetlands	No	Permanent	P	U	none	RR, WOD
60R 9 0	Fitchburg	Rindge Rd	16.6	Water Department	Watershed	Passive / None due to wetlands	No	Permanent	P	U	none	RR, WOD
60R 26 0	Fitchburg	Bennett Rd	12.3	Water Department	Watershed	Passive / None due to wetlands	No	Permanent	P	U	none	RR, WOD
60R 10 0	Fitchburg	Ashby West Rd	17.3	Water Department	Watershed	Passive / None due to wetlands	No	Permanent	P	U	none	RR, WOD
60R 13 0	Fitchburg	Rindge Rd	12.1	Water Department	Watershed	Passive / None due to wetlands	No	Permanent	P	U	none	RR, WOD
60R 8 A	Fitchburg	Ashby West Rd	11	Water Department	Watershed	Passive / None due to wetlands	No	Permanent	P	U	none	RR, WOD
60R 13 0	Fitchburg	Ashby West Rd	12.1	Water Department	Watershed	Passive / None due to wetlands	No	Permanent	P	U	none	RR, WOD
59R 3 0	Fitchburg	Rindge Rd	40	Water Department	Watershed	Passive / None due to wetlands	No	Permanent	P	U	none	RR, WOD
60R 28 0	Fitchburg	Rindge Rd	28	Water Department	Watershed	Passive / None due to wetlands	No	Permanent	P	U	none	RR, WOD
59R 4 0	Fitchburg	Rindge Rd	15	Water Department	Watershed	Passive / None due to wetlands	No	Permanent	P	U	none	RR, WOD
60R 22 0	Fitchburg	Ashby West Rd	88	Water Department	Watershed	Passive / None due to wetlands	No	Permanent	P	U	none	RR, WOD
59R 5 0	Fitchburg	Rindge Rd	9.2	Water Department	Watershed	Passive / None due to wetlands	No	Permanent	P	U	none	RR, WOD
S10 18 0	Fitchburg	Caswell Rd	10	Water Department	Watershed	Passive / None due to wetlands	No	Permanent	P	U	none	RR, WOD

60R 18 0	Fitchburg	Rindge Rd	45.6	Water Department	Watershed	Passive / None due to wetlands	No	Permanent	P	U	none	RR, WOD
59R 6 0	Fitchburg	Ashby West Rd	25	Water Department	Watershed	Passive / None due to wetlands	No	Permanent	P	U	none	RR, WOD
60R 22 0	Fitchburg	Ashby West Rd	88	Water Department	Watershed	Passive / None due to wetlands	No	Permanent	P	U	none	RR, WOD
60R 21 0	Fitchburg	Rindge Rd	14.7	Water Department	Watershed	Passive / None due to wetlands	No	Permanent	P	U	none	RR, WOD
69R 34 0	Fitchburg	Rindge Rd	7	Water Department	Watershed	Passive / None due to wetlands	No	Permanent	P	U	none	RR, WOD
69R 19 0	Fitchburg	Rindge Rd	6.5	Water Department	Watershed	Passive / None due to wetlands	No	Permanent	P	U	none	RR, WOD
69R 18 0	Fitchburg	Bennett Rd	14	Water Department	Watershed	Passive / None due to wetlands	No	Permanent	P	U	none	RR, WOD
69R 33 0	Fitchburg	Rindge Rd	37.4	Water Department	Watershed	Passive / None due to wetlands	No	Permanent	P	U	none	WOD
69R 44 0	Fitchburg	Ashby West Rd	41.7	Water Department	Watershed	Passive / None due to wetlands	No	Permanent	P	U	none	WOD
S4 8 A	Fitchburg	Ashby West Rd	78.4	Water Department	Watershed	Passive / None due to wetlands	No	Permanent	P	U	none	WOD
69R 20 0	Fitchburg	Rindge Rd	10.8	Water Department	Watershed	Passive / None due to wetlands	No	Permanent	P	U	none	WOD
69R 32 0	Fitchburg	Rindge Rd	8	Water Department	Watershed	Passive / None due to wetlands	No	Permanent	P	U	none	WOD
69R 20 0	Fitchburg	Rindge Rd	10.8	Water Department	Watershed	Passive / None due to wetlands	No	Permanent	P	U	none	WOD
69R 26 0	Fitchburg	Rindge Rd	79	Water Department	Watershed	Passive / None due to wetlands	No	Permanent	P	U	none	WOD
78R 55 0	Fitchburg	Rindge Rd	100	Water Department	Watershed	Passive / None due to wetlands	No	Permanent	P	U	none	WOD
78R 66 0	Fitchburg	Ashby West Rd	37.5	Water Department	Watershed	Passive / None due to wetlands	No	Permanent	P	U	none	WOD

78R 62 0	Fitchburg	Ashby West Rd	69.3	Water Department	Watershed	Passive / None due to wetlands	No	Permanent	P	U	none	WOD
78R 65 0	Fitchburg	Ashby West Rd	73.6	Water Department	Watershed	Passive / None due to wetlands	No	Permanent	P	U	none	WOD
78R 42 0	Fitchburg	Ashby West Rd	3.4	Water Department	Watershed	Passive / None due to wetlands	No	Permanent	P	U	none	WOD
78R 56 0	Fitchburg	Rindge Rd	3.8	Water Department	Watershed	Passive / None due to wetlands	No	Permanent	P	U	none	WOD
78R 64 0	Fitchburg	Ashby West Rd	1.4	Water Department	Watershed	Passive / None due to wetlands	No	Permanent	P	U	none	WOD
78R 63 0	Fitchburg	Ashby West Rd	1.6	Water Department	Watershed	Passive / None due to wetlands	No	Permanent	P	U	none	WOD
78R 61 0	Fitchburg	Ashby West Rd	52	Water Department	Watershed	Passive / None due to wetlands	No	Permanent	P	U	none	WOD
78R 41 0	Fitchburg	Ashby West Rd	8.7	Water Department	Watershed	Passive / None due to wetlands	No	Permanent	P	U	none	WOD
87R 64 0	Fitchburg	Flat Rock Road	28	Water Department	Watershed	Passive / None due to wetlands	No	Permanent	P	U	none	WOD
8 2 0	Fitchburg	Caldwell Road	3.9	Water Department	Watershed	Passive / None due to wetlands	No	Permanent	P	U	none	WOD
60R 8 0	Fitchburg	Billings Rd	33.9	Water Department	Watershed	Passive / None due to wetlands	No	Permanent	P	U	none	WOD
Crocker/Rice	Conservation Restriction City of Fitchburg	Rindge Rd Russell Hill Rd	175	Water Department	Watershed	Passive / None due to wetlands	No	Permanent	P	U	Open Space Institute & MA Watershed Grant	WOD
Kulkkula/Pernaa/Continentel	Fitchburg	Billings Rd Piper Rd	96	Water Department	Watershed	Passive / None due to wetlands	No	Permanent	P	U	Fed. Forest Legacy Grant	WOD
Donelan	Fitchburg	Billings Rd	24	Water Department	Watershed	Passive / None due to wetlands	No	Permanent	P	U	Fed. Forest Legacy Grant	WOD
Kirby	Fitchburg	Wilker Rd	164	Water Department	Watershed	Passive / None due to wetlands	No	Permanent	P	U	MA Watershed Grant	WOD
Zins	CR Fitchburg	Rhodes Rd	7.4	Water Department	Watershed	Passive / None due to wetlands	No	Permanent	P	U	Donation	WOD

APPENDIX B- ADA Access Self-Evaluation I.

Location:	Bartley Nolan/Salem Street Playground (Babe Diconza Memorial)
Type of Facility:	Active .46 acres
Activity / Equipment:	Notes:
Play Areas*	Updated in 2001 - designed to meet or exceed accessibility standards of the time. Strategically placed poured in place surfacing supplements fibar and improves access at this park.
Walking Path	Bituminous walking path encircles the park. A few small areas of path have partial overgrowth. Roots have heaved the path in three areas. Sidewalk in area of accessible entrance is uneven.
Shade Structure	On Accessible route, flat/solid surfacing
Providence St Entrance	There is a lip between two surfaces at this entrance hindering accessibility.
Benches and Tables	2 standard picnic tables with clear space under and around 4 benches, backs no arms. Picnic tabletops, which were originally metal have been replaced with wood and are showing wear.
Field	Open grass field encircled by walkway
Half Court Basketball	Adjacent to accessible path, level, smooth surfacing
Actions Required:	Supplement Fibar. Correct lip at rear entrance. Redo sidewalk at main entrance. Replace picnic tables (or just tops) when feasible. Replace one broken slat on bench. Periodically review PIP surfacing to ensure concrete base is not exposed.
Location:	Bird Sanctuary
Type of Facility:	Passive 50 Acres
Activity / Equipment:	Notes:
None	Unimproved woodland. The city has no plans for improvements to this property other than potential future timber management activities
Actions Required :	None
Location:	Brigham Park
Type of Facility:	Passive
Activity / Equipment:	Notes:
Walkway	This is a small green space in the middle of a secluded residential neighborhood.
Actions Required:	Two curb cuts must be installed to make the pathway into the park accessible.
Location:	Caldwell Park
Type of Facility:	Active 3.12 Acres
Activity / Equipment:	Notes:
Play Areas*	The play equipment was replaced in 2002 strategically placed poured in place supplements fibar surfacing and improves access at this park.
Basketball Court	Rebuilt in 2002, adjacent to an accessible pathway. Players benches are missing, and the remaining posts are a safety issue.
Pathways	Bituminous walkways provide access from HP parking to court and to play area. In good condition other than one spot that needs patching.
Benches	6 benches, no arms, on path of travel
Parking	There are only two parking spaces at the upper level - both accessible. One accesses the play area, the other the court. While the painting is faded, the upright signage is in place. Remaining parking is at lower level on West Street.
Actions Required:	Remove bench posts. Patch walkway.
Location:	City Forest
Type of Facility:	Passive 33.19 acres
Activity / Equipment:	Notes:
None	Unimproved woodland. There are no plans to provide formal facilities in this location.
Actions Required:	None
Location:	Cleghorn Pocket Park (Emile J. Goguen Park)

Type of Facility:	Passive .08 Acres
Activity / Equipment:	Notes:
Walkways	Unimpeded access off Daniels Street Sidewalk, concrete sidewalks within this very small park
Monument, Flagpole, Plantings	
Benches	Located adjacent to accessible path of travel (three)- Backs but no armrests
Actions Required:	None
Location:	Coggshall Park
Type of Facility:	Active 212.7 acres
Activity / Equipment:	Notes:
Play Area*	Most recent play features installed to code in 2002. Wood fibar safety surfacing was noted to be low impeding safety and accessibility. Entrance to area has rough surfacing.
Trails	Many of the trails at Coggshall are throughout the wooded area of the park on sloped and rough terrain. A level stone dust pathway runs adjacent to the western side of mirror lake. An accessible path is currently being designed to access the gazebo (phase I) and improve access the remainder of the way around Mirror Lake (phase 2).
Stone House	The Stonehouse was destroyed by fire in 2009. It was rebuilt to current code in 2011. The AAB granted a variance request to allow the two floors of the building to be accessed independently with no access between floors. The only facility on the basement level is bathrooms. A bathroom was installed on the first floor.
Ballfield	Dirt Parking with no striping or signage. Dirt pathway to field is rutted.
Disc Golf	Course is through wooded trails and is not accessible.
Parking	There are 4 HP spaces with upright signs - in four different areas of the park. Sign near playground needs to be straightened
Patio	Located behind the Stonehouse. Bituminous pathway. One of the three picnic tables is designed with long "accessible" ends. One of the three grills is at a lower height more easily accessible from a wheelchair.
Actions Required:	Install additional wood fibar safety surfacing at playground. Regrade entrance to the play area to improve surface condition. Improve curb cuts at Eastern Ave by Mirror Lake and regrade stone dust path. Add HP parking at ball field lot. Grade or pave lot and walkway at ball field. Fix HP sign by playground. Patch walkway leading to Stonehouse from adjacent HP space. Continue efforts to find funding to construct phase I and II of the accessible pathway around Mirror Lake which was recently designed.
Location:	Coolidge Park
Type of Facility:	Active 63.8 acres
Activity / Equipment:	Notes:
Play Area	The play area was updated in 2009 with new equipment and poured in place safety surfacing.
Swimming Pool & Bathhouse	This facility is accessible. There is a textured ramp allowing access into the pool. There is a waterproof wheelchair available for use by patrons.
Basketball Court	Surface has some deficiencies. Access is over level grass.
Baseball/Softball Fields	Adjacent to accessible path of travel with curb cuts where needed.
Soccer Fields	The soccer fields are large open areas of lawn that are striped differently each year. Only access is over lawn.
Street Hockey Rinks	The three street hockey rinks are off the stone dust pathway. Access to one is over level grass. Two courts have had gravel installed on approach and under seating. One is level and one is on a slight slope. There is a step up to the concession stand which is operated by the Street Hockey Association.
Parking	In 2009 the layout of the parking lots was changed, the lots were paved, striped and proper signage was installed. Upright signage marks 8 accessible spaces.
Dog Park	Built in 2015 with accessible entrance and level pathways to the shade structure.

Walking Path	Wide stone dust path encircles the park. Bituminous or poured concrete pathways access some features.
Benches	Some are located on accessible path of travel.
Actions Required:	<p>Refurbish basketball court. Add accessible path.</p> <p>Add bituminous base under seating at the DEK hockey rinks.</p> <p>Add accessible pathways to DEK hockey rinks.</p> <p>Continue to maintain stone dust pathway around park.</p> <p>Approach Hockey association to determine if concession stand is utilized and if so, how access can be improved.</p> <p>Add small section of pathway to provide additional access to stone dust path from HP spaces by Dick Charlton Field.</p>
Location:	Crocker Field
Type of Facility:	Active
Activity / Equipment:	Notes:
Football Field	The stadium itself is accessible and there is access to the field.
Track	Track access, track refurbished in 2012.
Seating	The historic stadium seating is not wheelchair accessible. A person using a wheelchair must view events from in front of the permanent seating.
Bathrooms	The women's restroom is accessible, the men's is not.
Field House	This historic building is used by players and coaches only. There is access only to the ground floor, the rest of this three-story facility is not accessible. Bathrooms are not ADA compliant.
Entrance	Both entrances have been improved since the last review and are accessible.
Actions Required:	<p>Research possible adaptations to provide better seating for wheelchair users.</p> <p>Update restroom facilities to provide better access.</p> <p>Options for making the field house accessible should be considered under future renovation plans.</p> <p>Accessible spaces should be located on adjacent street. (This venue has no dedicated parking)</p>
Location:	Crocker Playground
Type of Facility:	Active 1.38 acres
Activity / Equipment:	Notes:
Play Area*	Equipment was updated in 2000 to meet or exceed the accessibility standards of the time.
Route of Travel	In 2014 an accessible bituminous pathway was installed that provides access from one end of the park to the other. The entrance at the playground has been blocked off as it opens on to the street as adjacent lot is not owned by the city.
Basketball Court	Court has some uneven surfacing. Players benches are not plumb.
Parking	There is no parking connected with this park. Users tend to park in an adjacent lot owned by LUK although there is no formal agreement. LUK lot has two HP spaces recently painted but no upright signage.
Shade Structure	Installed in 2014, fully compliant.
Picnic Tables	One of three has the accessible long end.
Splashpad	Installed in 2014, fully compliant
Actions Required:	<p>Must maintain fibar surfacing.</p> <p>While not urgent, resurfacing of the basketball court should be undertaken.</p> <p>Address issue of accessible entrance at Playground end.</p>
Location:	Dextraze Circle
Type of Facility:	Not Passive nor Active .18 Acres
Activity / Equipment:	Notes:
None	Landscaped Traffic Island.
Actions Required:	None
Location:	First and Railroad (DeCaria Park)
Type of Facility:	Active and Passive .33 acres
Activity / Equipment:	Notes:

Seating area and Raingardens	A full renovation of this park was completed in 2017 utilizing EPA, CDBG, and PARC funding. New features are accessible.
Basketball Court	Porous pavement was utilized in this space.
Actions Required	None
Location:	Heritage Park
Type of Facility:	Not Passive nor Active 0.9 acres
Activity / Equipment:	Notes:
Several flags of many nations	There are no pathways or access points into this park It is located at a very busy location which would not lend itself to parking or even stopping.
Bushes	It appears this park is meant for aesthetic value and not active or passive recreation.
Actions Required:	None
Location:	Forest Park
Type of Facility:	Passive .43 acres
Activity / Equipment:	Notes:
None	This is a long narrow traffic median with grass and trees. There are no curbs or other obstacles preventing access but also no formal or informal pathways. Located within a small neighborhood of single-family homes and every home has its own yard.
Actions Required:	None
Location:	Franco Park
Type of Facility:	Passive .14 acres
Activity / Equipment:	Notes:
3 Flag Poles and 1 Monument	This is a very small memorial park located on a steep slope. Access to the park is difficult due to the running slope of the adjacent roadway. The pathway into and within the park is a relatively flat mix of bituminous and poured concrete. Two other entrances require the use of stairs.
Walkway	There are no activities, not even benches in this park. There is no adjacent parking and a HP space on this road would not be feasible due to the extreme slope.
Actions Required:	There does not appear to be a feasible way to ameliorate the effect of the steep sidewalk adjacent to the park. This section of Madison Street, is one of the steepest streets in the city.
Location:	Gateway Park
Type of Facility:	Passive 5.3 acres
Activity / Equipment:	Notes:
Walkways	All pathways meet running and cross slope guidelines.
Community Gardens	Gardens are on an accessible route of travel.
Picnic Tables/Benches	Tables and benches are immediately adjacent to accessible route. One (of three) picnic table has an accessible end.
Parking	Parking for 5 cars, one appropriately marked HP space.
Actions Required:	Add level pad adjacent to one of the benches for seating.
Location:	Goodrich Street Playground
Type of Facility:	Active 3.97 acres
Activity / Equipment:	Notes:
Play Areas*	Updated in 1998 - designed to meet or exceed the accessibility standards of the time. Equipment is still in decent shape. Two benches with backs on accessible path.
Walking Path	Paths in play area are accessible bituminous. Roots have heaved the pathway in three locations.
Softball Field	Renovated in 2020. Access is level onto grass from roadway.
Tennis Courts	Abandoned years ago. Removed and area returned to field in 2019.
Actions Required:	Replace sidewalk adjacent to accessible entrance. Repair area of walkway that has heaved. Ensure fibar surfacing level is maintained.
Location:	Grant Park

Type of Facility:	Passive .12 acres
Activity / Equipment:	Notes:
Walkway	Concrete walkway off city sidewalk goes through this small green space.
Benches	1 bench located along walkway
Actions Required:	A curb cut onto the adjacent sidewalk exists but should be improved. This action is outside of the park property. Bench is in poor condition and should be replaced and extended pad poured.
Location:	Green Corners Park (Mama Fitz Playground)
Type of Facility:	Active 1.0 acres
Activity / Equipment:	Notes:
Play Areas	Play equipment was installed in the late 1990's to the accessibility standards of the time. Pathways are level and accessible. Combination of poured in place pads and fibar safety surfacing.
Basketball Court	Is on an accessible path of travel.
Entrances	Three accessible entrances off North Street, one off Snow.
Benches	four benches with backs only at playground two players benches at court no backs no arm rests very small bleachers with pad for wheelchair seating adjacent allows wheelchair user to be at same height.
Actions Required:	Funding is in place to renovate the play equipment and basketball court at this park. While this park is currently accessible, accessibility and play value will be enhanced through this renovation. Public input and design: 2022; Construction: 2023
Location:	Fitchburg Police Memorial
Type of Facility:	Passive .13 acres
Activity / Equipment:	Notes:
Walkway	There is a short path into the park to the monument. The pathway is off an accessible path of travel. A portion of the path is cobbles which is accessible but not ideal.
Monument, Statue and Flagpole	
Parking	There is no parking at this park and as it is located adjacent to one of the busiest intersections in the city, adjacent parking is not feasible or practical.
Actions Required:	This park was recently renovated. No actions required.
Location:	Howarth Park
Type of Facility:	Active 2.48 acres
Activity / Equipment:	Notes:
Play Area*	Installed in 1996, upgrades in 2006 - designed to meet or exceed accessibility standards of the time. There are two play structures, swings, picnic tables, benches. Accessible concrete paths connect all components. Two spring riders have been removed, leaving concrete bases.
Basketball Court	Accessible pathway to this court, installed in 2012, needs to be upgraded
Field at Lower Level	Pedestrian access from sidewalk is too steep.
Parking	Parking is a gravel lot with no striping or defined spaces.
Actions Required:	Pave and stripe parking at lower level and define a handicapped space. Regrade pathways at lower level. Ensure fibar surfacing is adequately maintained. Remove bases from old spring riders.
Location:	Litchfield Park
Type of Facility:	Traffic Island .01 acres
Activity / Equipment:	Notes:
Boulder and Plantings	This is the home of the Fitchburg "Boulder". It is a "monument" not meant to be accessed.
Actions Required:	No Actions
Location:	Lowe Playground
Type of Facility:	Active 4.15 acres
Activity / Equipment:	Notes:
Baseball Field	Access needs to be reconfigured due to new adjacent development. 2 players benches (no arms or back) one bench with back.

Basketball Court	Access has been improved since last review with a curb cut at this location. Area is flat. Two players benches on concrete pads, courtside.
Play Equipment	New play equipment was installed in 2015 to meet accessibility standards. Access is compliant slope with railings. Walkways within the park are level concrete.
Horseshoe Pits	Adjacent to concrete walkway
Picnic Tables	3 tables along accessible path. One with accessible end.
Actions Required:	Reconfigure access to ballfield based on new development. Ensure fibar surfacing is adequately maintained. Funding is currently being sought for design to renovate the Field area of this park.
Location:	Middle Street (Sadie Quatral Park)
Type of Facility:	Active .37 acres
Activity / Equipment:	Notes:
Play Areas*	Entire Park was renovated to current standards in 2003. The foundations of the swing set are visible, and overgrowth is beginning to encroach on the area.
Parking	There is no parking dedicated to this play space.
Walkway	The walkway is mostly concrete. A small section is stone dust. Accessible path of travel is from Middle Street through the park. A second accessible entrance comes from the adjacent apartment complex. There is a third entrance that is not accessible.
Benches	Adjacent to walkway
Actions Required:	Maintain stone dust pathway. Refresh fibar safety surfacing. Clear overgrowth. Repair broken slats on benches.
Location:	Monument Park
Type of Facility:	Passive .64 acres
Activity / Equipment:	Notes:
Walkways and Benches	Access into this historic park was achieved by the installation of an accessible walkway in 1998. Within the park, walkways are level stone dust. Benches are adjacent to the walkway.
Monument, lights, cannon	
Actions Required	Ensure stone dust pathway is maintained to keep a level surface. Add Handicap parking space on Elm.
Location:	Moran Field
Type of Facility:	Active 15 acres
Activity / Equipment:	Notes:
Soccer/Ball Field	This is the only activity at the park. No formal walkway system exists and there is no formalized parking areas. While there are no barriers to access such as curbs or steep slopes, the path of travel is over grass. Currently the gate at this location remains locked except for when the facility is in use by the Youth Soccer League.
4 Stone Benches	
Parking	Open gravel area, no lined spaces
Actions Required	If improvements are made to this area investigate the feasibility of installing accessible pathways and formalizing the parking area. This work is on the City's Capital Improvement Plan.
Location:	Moran Square
Type of Facility:	Passive .1 acres
Activity / Equipment:	Notes:
None	This is a traffic island with a monument and statue. Sidewalk intersects one end to allow pedestrians to cross Lunenburg Street.
Actions Required	None currently.
Location:	Pat Moran Park
Type of Facility:	Passive .07 acres
Activity / Equipment:	Notes:
None	Traffic Island with a monument and shrubs

Actions Required:	None at this time
Location:	Parkhill Park
Type of Facility:	Active 46.4 acres
Activity / Equipment:	Notes:
Play Areas	A new, fully inclusive play area was installed in 2021 adjacent to the existing area. There is poured in place safety surfacing throughout the play envelope and accessible equipment, seating, and pathways. Funding has recently been secured to renovate the older adjacent play area. Design with public participation will take place in 2022 and construction in 2023.
Splash Pad	This area was refurbished in 2017 and is in good shape with no barriers
Bathhouse	Renovated in 2000 to bring into compliance with access and building codes. New anti-slip flooring was installed more recently. While the interior is accessible there is a lip at the threshold of both the men's and women's room.
Basketball Courts	Renovated in 2006, an accessible path of travel was added.
Skateboard Park	Located off accessible path of travel.
Tennis Courts	Renovated in 2006, accessible path to court was added.
Babe Ruth Field	The pathway to the spectator seating on one side is too steep. There is no pathway to the seating on the other side of the field.
Baseball Field	Field is located adjacent to parking lot. While no barriers exist between parking and field, there is also no formal path. A bituminous path should be added and extended to the spectator seating. A pad should be added under seating with room for a chair adjacent to the bench.
BMX Park	Off accessible pathway
Walking Path	.37-mile bituminous path through the park. Some areas of heaving or ruts. Funding is in place for repairs to take place in 2022 including a curb cut from Causeway Street.
Parking	Both lots needs restriping. An additional HP space will be installed adjacent to the new inclusive play area. Large lot needs upright signs at HP spaces
Multi-Use Field	There are no curb cuts onto the sidewalk near entrances. The field, while flat and level has no formal path of travel. Pop Warner maintains a small storage, media building at this field which is not open to the public.
Actions Required:	Parking lots need to be restriped, accessible spaces with upright signage need to be added. Accessible walkways to spectator seating need to be added at Babe Ruth and John Clifford field. Curb cuts and interior path of travel need to be added at Nikita's Field (this area will be improved under a Safe Routes to School grant). Lips at door thresholds into bathhouse need to be remedied.
Location:	Phillips Street Playground
Type of Facility:	Active .4 acres
Activity / Equipment:	Notes:
Play Area*	Area was updated in 2000 to meet or exceed access standards of that time.
Basketball Court	Refurbished in 2000, bituminous walkway provides access from sidewalk however a lip has formed between the path and the court that needs to be sealed. Player's bench needs to be replaced.
Walkways/Entrances/Parking	There is no parking in this park. Access is off of Phillips Street and Westminster Hill Road. There is an accessible path of travel to the basketball court and one into and through the play area, but the two sections of the park do not have a connection. Pathways are level bituminous.
Benches	2 Benches adjacent to pathway.
Actions Required:	Monitor fibar surfacing, replace as needed. Replace players' bench. Fill gap between access pathway and basketball court.
Location:	Riverfront Park
Type of Facility:	Passive 1.63 acres
Activity / Equipment:	Notes:
Walkways	The park was improved in 2010 and meets current access standards.

	There is no dedicated parking, accessible pathways lead in from two entrances and through the park.
Benches	Adjacent to pathways.
Actions Required	None
Location:	Stanley
Type of Facility:	Passive .69 acres
Activity / Equipment:	Notes:
Walkways and Benches	Access into the park is a level pathway off the Westminster Street Sidewalk. and one adjacent to the interior pathway. There is no dedicated parking for this park.
Gazebo	Access to the Gazebo is provided by the pathway but the gazebo itself is not accessible (stairs).
Bocce	There is no formal access to this court. Users must cross an open grass area.
Actions Required	This park is rarely used, and the gazebo seldom programmed. None-the-less the feasibility of making this feature accessible should be explored. Install a formal pathway to provide access to the bocce court. Add a solid surface, level pad adjacent to middle bench along Westminster Street to allow accessible seating.
Location:	South Fitchburg Playground
Type of Facility:	Active 11 acres
Activity / Equipment:	Notes:
Baseball Fields	Park has two little league size ball fields. One has seating, one does not. This park appears to be safely accessible by vehicle only as it is off a busy road with no sidewalks or crosswalks providing access.
Driveway/Parking	Driveway into site is steep. Driveway is a mixture of bituminous pavement and gravel and is in very poor condition. There is no striping or signage in the parking lot. There is a second "upper" gravel lot with no striping or signage and no access path.
Actions Required	If improvements are made to this area investigate the feasibility of installing accessible pathways and formalizing the parking area. Upgrading this area is on the City's Capital Improvement Plan.
Location:	Upper Common
Type of Facility:	Passive 1.04 acres
Activity / Equipment:	Notes:
Walkways	Walkways provide access throughout the two separate sections of this park. The area with Monuments and the area with the fountain, gazebo and benches are not connected but the adjacent sidewalk provides an accessible connection. The bricks at the pathway entrances were reset in 2019.
Gazebos	The gazebo is not accessible, stairs provide the only access
Benches	14 benches with backs and arms are located along the pathway.
Fountain	Can be reached via the pathways. Benches are adjacent
Parking	There is no dedicated parking. Access is off adjacent accessible sidewalks.
Actions Required:	Research options for making the gazebo accessible.
Location:	West Fitchburg Streamline Trail Park
Type of Facility:	Passive 3.74 acres
Activity / Equipment:	Notes:
Picnic Tables	2 picnic tables are provided at flat lawn area adjacent to path. Tables do not have extended end with clear space under.
Trail	The trail is constructed of reclaimed bituminous. This surfacing is firm; however, the nature of the area and site constraints prevented the running and cross slopes from meeting the definition of a truly accessible pathway for portions of its length.
Parking Area	Parking area is level. HP parking needs new paint and appropriate upright signage The pathway adjacent to the curb cut from the parking needs to be regraded.
Interpretive Signs	Funding is in place to update/replace these signs.
Actions Required	Install appropriate signage for HP spaces and repaint spaces. Consider new surfacing for pathway as funds allow or ensure reclaimed bituminous is kept well graded. Improve access from parking lot to pathway. Clear vegetation that is

	beginning to grow into path in some sections. Environmental hazards at an adjacent site should be corrected before resurfacing of the trail is considered. Environmental remediation is on-going.
Location:	Wood Haven
Type of Facility:	Passive .76 acres
Activity / Equipment:	Notes:
None	Corner lot with grass and trees. There are no pathways or other facilities. There is no apparent entryway. Open edges are not impeded by curb, you access the park from the roadway directly onto the grass. While this park provides nice green space for the neighborhood, it does not appear to be utilized by the residents as the surrounding homes have yards.
Actions Required:	None

*Funding options for replacing play equipment need to be explored as existing parks age.

Conservation Parcels	
The following parcels are held under the control of the Fitchburg Conservation Commission. These parcels are to be "forever retained in a predominantly natural, scenic and open condition, and to forever to be used for purposes of Conservation and Passive Recreation". While citizens are allowed to undertake activities such as hiking on these parcels, the lots are unimproved and the City has no plans for future development on these sites.	
Airport Conservation Area	Green's Pond Area
Bilotta Parcels/Burma Road	High Rock Road
Brown Land Conservation Area	Nashua Bridge Greenery
Central Nashua River	Putnam Pond
Cressney Conservation Area	Rollo Property
Deneufville Conservation Lands	Rollstone Hill
Dolloff Conservation Area	Southern Nashua River Areas
Falulah Brook	Triangular Conservation Area
Falulah Park	Valley View Properties
Franklin and Kimball	Viewig Conservation Area
Littlefield Conservation Area	Westminster Hill Properties
Gillman Conservation Area	

Watershed Parcels	
Northern Watershed land is unimproved but open to passive recreation. Activities such as hiking, snow shoeing, cross country skiing and some hunting are allowed. Fishing is allowed on Fitchburg Reservoir and Scott Reservoir.	
Crocker/Rice	59R 2 0
Kulkkula/Pernaa/Continentel	59R 1 0
Donelan	60R 25 0
Kirby	60R 24 0
Zins	60R 23 0
60R 8 A	60R 12 0
60R 13 0	60R 11 0
59R 3 0	60R 9 0
60R 28 0	60R 26 0
59R 4 0	60R 10 0
60R 22 0	60R 13 0
59R 5 0	69R 20 0
S10 18 0	69R 32 0
60R 18 0	69R 20 0
59R 6 0	69R 26 0
60R 22 0	78R 55 0
60R 21 0	78R 66 0
69R 34 0	78R 62 0
69R 19 0	78R 65 0
69R 18 0	78R 42 0

69R 33 0	78R 56 0
69R 44 0	78R 64 0
S4 8 A	78R 63 0
87R 64 0	78R 61 0
8 2 0	78R 41 0
60R 8 0	59R 2 0

APPENDIX C – ADA Access Self-Evaluation II.

It is the continuing goal of the City of Fitchburg, Massachusetts, to provide equal access and opportunity to all persons, regardless of physical or mental capacity, in all of its facilities and programs. It is the policy of the City of Fitchburg to meet this goal through aggressive compliance with the spirit and intent of related Federal and State laws..

During the winter and spring of 2002, City Staff, in coordination with the City of Fitchburg's Disability Commission, reviewed the properties under the jurisdiction of the Conservation Commission and Recreation Department, the programs provided at these sites, and the Administrative and Employment practices of the City. In the fall of 2006 City staff, in consultation with the Disability Commission, reviewed new park properties and properties that had issues in 2002. In 2012 the city again reviewed our park properties and in 2014 a complete facilities review was undertaken with the assistance of volunteers through the Fun & Fit program. Most recently city staff reviewed properties and updated this document in 2022. Under consideration was compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

What follows is the outline of our findings regarding each of these facilities, programs and practices.

Part I: Administrative Requirements

On January 17, 1984, then Mayor, Bernard F. Chartrand designated Richard N. Sarasin, City Auditor, as the City's 504 Coordinator. Mr. Sarasin fulfilled that role until his retirement in 2017. Subsequently the City appointed Amy LeBlanc, Senior Project Manager to fill the role of ADA Coordinator. A copy of Ms. LeBlanc's appointment letter is Attachment D of this document.

Also attached (Attachment E) is a copy of the official grievance procedures adopted by the City to handle related complaints.

The City of Fitchburg does not discriminate on the basis of disability. This fact is posted on public bulletin boards within City Hall, on our City Website and an "EEO" clause is included on all recruitment material.

Part II: Program Accessibility

The City of Fitchburg continues to make progress on improving the accessibility and usability of its parks and playgrounds. Since 1995 over \$15,000,000 has been invested in park development, upgrades and renovations with more in the pipeline. The majority of these improvements were funded with CDBG dollars, Urban Self-Help Funds/PARC grants and other federal and state grants. As work has been and continues to be done on these parks, the renovated areas are brought into compliance with current accessibility guidelines. Most recently, in 2021, a universally inclusive playground was built at Parkhill Park utilizing donations, a state earmark, CDBG funding and a PARC grant. This is the only park of its

kind within twenty miles of Fitchburg.

In the early spring of 2002, City Staff and members of the City's Disability Commission reviewed City owned parcels under the control of the Conservation Commission or Parks Department and created a facilities inventory of these parcels. This inventory was reviewed and updated in the fall of 2006, again in 2012 and 2014 and most recently in 2022. Attachment B is a copy of this updated facilities inventory.

The City's recreation department runs a park program and nutrition program each summer at various facilities throughout the city. Only parks that have undergone renovations, including accessibility improvements, are chosen as sites for these activities. Over the summer the city also staffs both a spray park and a city pool. These facilities meet accessibility standards and provide a great recreational opportunity for all users. The city responds on an individual basis to requests to further accommodate participants in the programs offered at our parks and at other city sponsored activities.

Part III: Employment Practices

The City of Fitchburg does not discriminate against qualified individuals with disabilities in any of its employment practices, including job application procedures, hiring, firing, advancement, compensation, training, and other terms, conditions, and privileges of employment. The city also does not discriminate in employment practices related to recruitment, advertising, tenure, layoff, leave, fringe benefits, and all other related activities.

From the City of Fitchburg's website: *"The City of Fitchburg is proud to be an Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action employer. We highly value diversity in our workplace. Candidates will be considered without regard to race, color, religious creed, gender, national origin or citizenship status, ancestry, disability, age, genetic information, sexual orientation, gender identity, pregnancy or pregnancy-related condition, veteran status or any other protected classifications. Interested individuals, who meet the minimum requirements, are invited to apply for consideration."*

APPENDIX D- ADA Coordinator Appointment Letter



The City of Fitchburg
Massachusetts
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

STEPHEN L. DINATALE

MAYOR

166 BOULDER DRIVE

FITCHBURG, MA 01420

TEL. (978) 829-1801

AARON TOURIGNY

CHIEF OF STAFF

ATOURIGNY@FITCHBURGMA.GOV

JOAN DAVID

ADMINISTRATIVE AIDE

JDAVID@FITCHBURGMA.GOV

July 13, 2017

Ms. Amy Leblanc
Senior Project Manager
City of Fitchburg
Fitchburg, MA 01420

Dear Ms. LeBlanc,

In accordance with the guidelines set forth in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 Regulations, you are hereby appointed as the ADA/Section 504 Coordinator for the City of Fitchburg.

Sincerely,


Stephen L. DiNatale
Mayor



The City of Fitchburg
Massachusetts
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

STEPHEN L. DINATALE

MAYOR

166 BOULDER DRIVE

FITCHBURG, MA 01420

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JOAN DAVID

ADMINISTRATIVE AIDE

JDAVID@FITCHBURGMA.GOV

ADA Coordinator Designation Form

ADA Coordinator Name: Amy LeBlanc

Department: Community Development Department

Job Title: Senior Project Manager

Email: ALeBlanc@fitchburgma.gov

Phone: (978) 829-1893

Address: 166 Boulder Drive, Suite 102, Fitchburg, MA 01420

Date Appointed: July 13, 2017

Appointment type: Permanent

ADA Coordinator report directly to appointing authority: No

ADA Coordinator duties full or part time: part time

Direct Supervisor: Thomas Skwierawski, Executive Director,
Community Development

Appointing Authority signature:

Stephen L. DiNatale
Stephen L. DiNatale, Mayor

Date: July 13, 2017

ADA Coordinator Signature:

Amy LeBlanc
Amy LeBlanc

Date: July 13, 2017

APPENDIX E- Official Grievance Procedure



City of Fitchburg

MASSACHUSETTS

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

- A. A formal complaint (should be in writing - or could be written up by 504 coordinator) must be filed with the Town or City's Section 504 Coordinator designated to handle compliance with federal handicapped regulations.
- B. Within 10 days, the Coordinator will either (1) resolve the complaint through reasonable accommodation, (2) dismiss the complaint as not relevant to the handicapped regulations, or (3) refer the complaint to the self-evaluation team for review. The complainant, the self-evaluation team and the legislative body must be notified of which ever action is taken, either in writing or by other appropriate formal notification.
- C. If complainant is dissatisfied with the coordinator's action, within 10 days they may file the formal complaint with the self-evaluation team.
- D. Within 10 days of formal notice to the complaint, the self-evaluation team will meet to review the complaint. The Section 504 Coordinator shall not participate as a member of the team. The complainant must be notified of such meeting and may be present with counsel if they so choose.
- E. Within 10 days of their meeting, the self-evaluation team (without the Section 504 coordinator) will either (1) resolve the dispute through reasonable accommodation, (2) dismiss the complaint as not relevant to the handicapped regulations; or (3) devise a plan for the needed structural or program changes to reach compliance and immediately notify the legislative body of such plans. The complainant, the Section 504 coordinator and the legislative body must be notified, either in writing or by other appropriate formal notification.
- F. If the complainant is not satisfied with the self-evaluation team actions, within ten days they may file a formal complaint with the legislative body.
- G. Within 10 days of formal notice of the complaint, the legislative body will meet to review the complaint. The complainant must be notified of such meeting and may be present with counsel if they so choose.
- H. Within 10 days of their meeting, the legislative body will either (1) resolve the complaint through reasonable accommodation, (2) dismiss the complaint as not relevant to the handicapped regulations, or, (3) adopt plans for needed structural changes to reach compliance. The complainant, the self-evaluation team, and the Section 504 coordinator must be notified, either in writing or by other appropriate formal notification.
- I. The decision of the legislative body shall be final.

APPENDIX F- Community Survey Results



33 WALDO STREET, WORCESTER, MA 01608 - www.bscgroup.com

MEMORANDUM

To: City of Fitchburg
From: BSC Group, Inc.
Re: City of Fitchburg Open Space and Recreation Plan – Community Survey Results

Date: August 3, 2022

BSC Group is working with the City of Fitchburg to update the City's 2014 Open Space and Recreation a Plan (OSRP). As part of this process, an online Parks and Open Space Community Survey was administered in May and June 2022. The survey largely mirrored the 2013 community survey that was undertaken for the prior OSRP. In total, 105 responses were received. This memo serves to outline differences between the survey results in 2013 and 2022 to help identify shifts in the community's needs, strengths, and priorities.

Question 1. How important is it to you to preserve, protect, and enhance the following? (Very Important, Important, Neutral, Less Important, Not Important):

1. Forest land
2. Shade trees
3. Conservation land and wildlife habitat
4. Farmland and pastures
5. Scenic views and/or land
6. Nashua River
7. Natural resources (ponds, wetlands, streams, habitat, etc.)
8. Hiking, biking and walking trails
9. City-owned recreation areas (sports fields, playgrounds, parks, swimming areas, etc.)
10. Organized recreational/athletic activities (sports leagues, etc.)
11. Cultural/art events
12. Open space that supports climate resilience (e.g., permanently protected open space located in a floodplain)

Open space that supports climate resilience was added as a subject area to the 2022 survey, with 57% of respondents rating it as “Very Important” and another 31% rating it as “Important.” In 2013, all subject areas were rated as “Very Important” by the majority of participants, with most percentages being either 60% or 70%.” The 2022 survey results were similar; however, there are some notable differences. The percentage of respondents rating *Organized recreational/athletic activities (sports leagues, etc.)* as “Very Important” fell from 62% in 2013 to 44% in 2022, and *Cultural/art events* fell from 60% in 2013 to 45% in 2022. The top three subject areas rated as “Very Important” in 2022 were *Nashua River* (74%), *Conservation land and wildlife habitat* (73%), *Forest Land* and *Natural Resources* (tied with 71%).

Question 2. Identify locations in Fitchburg that you think are important for the City to protect and preserve.

This was an open-ended question with a variety of responses. Coggshall was mentioned numerous times, along with the Nashua River and Coolidge Park. There were also some general responses such “All ponds” or “All open spaces.” When compared to the 2013 Survey, Coggshall was also the top response, followed by Coolidge Park, and a general “Parks” response.

Question 3. When you consider the quality of life in the City of Fitchburg, indicate how important each of the following statements are (Very Important, Important, Neutral, Less Important, Not Important):

1. Creating neighborhood gathering places
2. Making neighborhoods more attractive places

3. Offering recreational areas for adults
4. Offering recreational areas for children and youth
5. Preserving environmentally sensitive areas
6. Protecting open space from development
7. Protecting scenic views
8. Building resilience to a changing climate

This question was a new addition to the 2022 survey. There were only two subject areas where the highest percentage of responses did not fall under “Very Important”— *Creating neighborhood gathering places* and *Offering recreational areas for adults*; these two options had the highest percentage of ratings reporting “Important” with 40% and 45% respectively. The top three subject areas rated as “Very Important” are *Preserving environmentally sensitive areas* (68%), *Offering recreational areas for children and youth* (62%), *Protecting open space from development* (58%).

Question 4. How often do you or members of your household participate in the following activities in Fitchburg’s parks and open spaces (Regularly (once a week or more), Occasionally (once a month or less), Rarely or Never)?

1. Hiking, walking, running
2. Birding, wildlife observation
3. Swimming
4. Biking
5. In-line skating/skateboarding
6. Ice-skating
7. Athletic team activities (baseball, soccer, etc.)
8. Organized recreational activities (yoga, aerobics, etc.)
9. Pick-up games or informal activities with friends (disc golf, basketball)
10. Children's playground areas
11. Passive recreation (sitting, picnicking)
12. Pet exercise
13. Attending events

Passive recreation (sitting, picnicking), Pet exercise, and Attending events were added to the 2022 survey. The highest percentage for *Passive recreation (sitting, picnicking)* was “Occasionally (once a month or less)” at 43%, for *Pet exercise* it was “Rarely or Never” at 45%, and for *Attending events* it was “Occasionally (once a month or less)” at 59%.

While reported participation rates for certain activities were similar in 2013 and 2022, certain activities were notably different.

- For *Hiking, walking, running*, “Regularly (once a week or more)” received the highest percentage of responses in both 2013 and 2022. However, the percentage reporting hiking, walking, or running regularly increased from 57% in 2013 to 70% in 2022.
- *Birding, wildlife observation* activities in 2013 saw the highest percentage of responses for “Rarely or Never” at 60%. In 2022, that changed to a more even distribution with 37% of respondents reporting “Regularly (once a week or more),” 33% reporting “Occasionally (once a month or less),” and 30% reporting “Rarely or Never”.
- For *Swimming*, responses in 2013 were more evenly distributed. 28% of respondents reported swimming “Regularly (once a week or more),” 43% reported swimming “Occasionally (once a month or less),” and 38% reported swimming “Rarely or Never.” In 2022, 64%, the highest percentage of responses, reported swimming “Rarely or Never.”
- “Rarely or Never” received the highest percentage of responses for *In-line skating/skateboarding*, *Ice-skating*, *Athletic team activities (baseball, soccer, etc.)*, *Organized recreational activities (yoga, aerobics, etc.)*, and *Pick-up games or informal activities with friends (disc golf, basketball)* for both the 2013 and 2022 survey. The important trend here is that the percentage of “Rarely or Never” has grown since 2013.

- Children's playground areas in 2013 was also more evenly distributed with 37% reporting "Regularly (once a week or more)," 36% reporting "Occasionally (once a month or less)," and 30% reporting "Rarely or Never." In 2022, the highest percentage of responses shifted to 49% "Rarely or Never".

Question 5. Where do you usually go in Fitchburg for recreation? (list names of parks, trails, playgrounds)

Question 5 was an open-ended question. Coggshall and Coolidge were the most common responses in both 2013 and 2022.

Question 6. What could Fitchburg do to increase your usage of the parks, trails and playgrounds? What barriers do you face in using the parks, trails and playgrounds?

In 2022, the top three responses were **Better maintenance and less trash** (77.1%), **Reduce inappropriate activity (drinking/drugs etc.)** (59%), and **Better lighting** (42.9%). In 2013 **Safer/wider sidewalks** was the dominant response, followed by **Better maintenance and less trash** and **More sidewalks**. Like other open-ended question in this survey, many of the responses reflected the theme of safety.

Question 7. Do Fitchburg's recreational programs and facilities meet the needs of the following groups? If not, why?

This question was broken down by age group in order to assess the community's needs more accurately.

2013				2022			
Group	Yes	No	Example Response	Group	Yes	No	Example Response
Children	Yes 76%	No 11%	If no, reason: Need better programming. Dirty	Children	Yes 76.9%	No 23.1%	If no, reason: Not safe enough. Poorly maintained and dirty areas. Lack of public bathrooms.
Teenagers	Yes 62%	No 19%	If no, reason: need activities to keep kids out of trouble. Boring. Lame. Need more hangout spots. More tennis. Better fields need	Teenagers	Yes 51.6%	No 48.4%	If no, reason: Not enough programing. Lack of public bathrooms.
Adults	Yes 64%	No 21%	If no, reason: Unaware of any programs. Need swings for adults. More softball Leagues. There are some nice places to get exercise but limited facilities for adult activities. Tennis would be nice at Coolidge	Adults	Yes 59.6%	No 40.4%	If no, reason: Unaware of any programs. Not enough programs. Not enough restaurants or downtown activities. Lack of bathroom facilities.

2013				2022			
Group	Yes	No	Example Response	Group	Yes	No	Example Response
Seniors	Yes 53%	No 19%	If no, reason: more places to sit are needed along walkways. More curb cuts and sidewalks needed. Better transportation needed	Seniors	Yes 66.3%	No 33.7%	If no, reason: Safety. Bathrooms and accessibility.
Mobility impaired (wheelchair, walker, etc)	Yes 44%	No 17%	If no, reason: need more activities for disabled. Need ramps. Too many steps. Not accessible enough	Mobility impaired (wheelchair, walker, etc)	Yes 48.1%	No 51.9%	If no, reason: Not accessible. Side walk conditions.
Other impairment	Yes 34%	No 10%	If no, reason: Need universal accessibility auditor signals at crosswalks				

Question 8. What type of facilities/spaces do you feel are needed and where? (bike trails, rail trail, conservation areas, children's play areas, neighborhood parks, basketball courts, soccer fields, spray parks, etc.)

Certain themes were common throughout the open-ended responses, including **conservation areas, disc golf, splash parks, and restroom facilities at existing parks**.

Question 9. To preserve open spaces, Fitchburg should (please check all that apply)

In both 2013 and 2022, the top three survey results were **Accept donated land, Apply for outside funding/grants to fund land purchases, and Encourage/support community and regional land trusts.**

Question 10. Other Comments, Concerns or Suggestions (this can be things you would like to see, issues that you are having, or any other comments or ideas):

Similar common themes emerged in both the 2013 and 2022 comments. **Maintenance of existing parks**, such as trash pickup and beautification, was commonly cited as a need in both surveys. **Safety and drug use** also emerged as a major concern. In 2021, **road maintenance** was mentioned several times, as well as an aversion to any increase in taxes. Please see the enclosed *City of Fitchburg Recreation and Open Space Survey Open-Ended Responses*.

Optional Demographic Questions

95% of respondents were current residents of Fitchburg. The two largest age categories were the ages of 36-65 (68.6%) and 66+ (25.5%). 92.1% of respondents reported that they identify as White, with 2% identifying as Black or African American, and 2% identifying as Asian.

To view all responses, please visit:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/14bVm3tnC6e_2ZR9jM5La2KzAJHPz7_UU9VEDCoYG9Kk/viewanalytics

APPENDIX G- Community Engagement

Fitchburg Open Space and Recreation Plan Update Community Forum Summary

June 9, 2022

Introduction

A Community Forum for the Fitchburg Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) Update was held on June 9th, 2022, at the City of Fitchburg Legislative Building. In total, 13 community members participated. Jeanette Tozer from BSC Group, and Tom Skwierawski, Executive Director of Fitchburg's Department of Community Development and Planning, kicked off the event with an Open Space and Recreation Plan Overview presentation. The presentation (see Appendix A) included:

- What is Open Space?
- Benefits of Parks and Open Space
- What are Open Space and Recreation Plans?
- Goals + Successes from the 2014 OSRP
- Developing the 2022 OSR Plan
- Next Steps – Public Input
- General Questions
- Open House Stations

After the presentation, participants were invited to provide input at four (4) open house activity stations. At these stations, participants reviewed a wall map depicting open space in Fitchburg, interacted with BSC Group and City of Fitchburg Staff, and provided feedback on post-it notes and through dot voting. The four Open House stations were:

- **Station 1:** Open Space and Recreation Opportunities (Dot Voting)
- **Station 2:** Open Spaces in Your Neighborhood (Comment on Map)
- **Station 3:** Goals and Objectives for 2022 and Beyond (Dot Voting)
- **Station 4:** “Ask a Planner” (Talk to a City Staff Person)

Station 1: Open Space and Recreation Opportunities (Dot Voting)

At the first open house station, participants were given twelve (12) sticky dots each and asked to vote on the open space and recreation opportunities they would most like to see provided or enhanced in Fitchburg. They were also encouraged to leave comments on sticky notes. A summary of the votes is provided below.

Opportunity	Total Votes
Field-Based Recreational Activities (8 total votes)	
Tennis	0
Lacrosse	1
Soccer	0
Football	0
Field Hockey	0
Pickle Ball	4
Basketball	1
Baseball/Softball	0
Track Running	2
Volleyball	0
Other/Comments	N/A

Non-Field Based Recreational Activities (9 total votes)	
Tot Lots	1
Playground	0
Spray Pads	0
Outdoor Fitness Park	1
Inclusive/Accessible Playground	1
Disc Golf	0
Skate Park	1
Multi-Purpose Open Lawn	1
Swimming Pool	1
Bike Paths and Lanes	3
Pump Track (Bike Park)	0
Other/Comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outdoor Fitness Stations for adults • Bike lanes (more) • Bike paths (off street) • Hunting
Community-Based Recreation (8 total votes)	
Dog Parks	1
Commons	1
Community Garden Plots (Accessible)	1
Outdoor Group Fitness Classes	0
Outdoor Performance Space	5
Other/Comments	N/A
Nature-Based Activities (22 total votes)	
Meditation Space	0
Mountain Biking	3
Trails/Hikes	5
Wildlife Watching/Observation	4
Fishing	5
Snowshoeing/Cross-County Skiing	5
Other/Comments	N/A
Amenities at Existing Facilities (13 total votes)	
Benches	2
Shade Structures	1
Urban Tree Canopy	4
Water bottle Filling Stations	3
Parking	1
Turf	0
Restrooms	2
Phone Charging Stations	0
Other/Comments	N/A
Other (30 total votes)	
Nashua River Access	7
Forest Management	6
Walking Connections	2
Hybrid Flood / Recreation Park	3
Environmental Education	2
Organized Environmental Stewardship (Volunteers)	2

Invasive Species Management	5
Green Infrastructure	3
Other/Comments	N/A

Opportunities listed under **Other** received the most votes (a total of 30), including the top two opportunities overall – **Nashua River access and forest management**. For the Field-Based Recreational activities, the category that received the most votes was **pickle ball**. For Non-Field Based Recreational activities, **bike paths and lanes** received the most votes. **Outdoor performance space** received the highest number of votes for Community-Based Recreation. Next, there was a tie between **trails/hikes, fishing, and snowshoeing/cross-county skiing** for Nature-Based Activities. Lastly, in terms of enhancing Amenities at Existing Facilities, the **urban tree canopy** received the most votes.

Residents were also asked to respond to the question "What other recreational opportunities would you like to see in Fitchburg?" Two responses were received:

- Biking trail
- I am concerned about adding parks/pocket parks without more thought on ongoing maintenance

Station 2: Open Spaces in Your Neighborhood (Comment on Map)

At Station 2, participants were asked to leave sticky notes about what they would like to see for open spaces in their neighborhood and what they like about existing open space resources. Responses are transcribed below.

What do you like? (Blue)

- (An Arrow pointing to Flat Rock Wildlife Sanctuary)
- Hollis Hills
- Bike Lanes Plantings
- Hiking trails @ Crocker, Coggshall + behind the old Burbank
- The parks + playgrounds
- The ponds + bike lanes i.e., summer street
- Landscaping in the downtown area
- Cemeteries important as open space!
- (Three exclamation points pointing to Coggshall)
- Variety of activities at Coolidge
- Trails in watershed + at Crocker
- Between spaces connection by walking/bike



What would you like to see? (Yellow)

- L. T. forest management plan for city forest
- L. T. protection for Saima Pond
- Game On property protected ditto! Right now it isn't
- Hiking trail in upper area
- Open space at Steam Line trail utilized for programs
- Bike lanes
- Gardens for senior housing
- Parkhill tennis court expanded
- Cleaning up the litter on streets
- Signs to promote keeping the area litter free
- Foliage at edge of parking lot + both sides of fence cut so you can see the park
- Baker Brook trail access

Station 3: Goals and Objectives for 2022 and Beyond (Dot Voting)

At the third station, participants voted on the proposed Goals/Objectives/Actions they found most important for the Open Space and Recreation Plan Update. They also had the opportunity to leave sticky notes with comments. Below is a summary of the votes.

GOAL 1: Develop and maintain a safe and sought-after park system in Fitchburg that provides a variety of active and passive recreational and cultural opportunities for all Fitchburg residents.	(32 votes total)
Objective 1. Expand City capacity (staff and resources) to maintain existing playgrounds and open space areas.	0
Action 1. Explore charging user fees to fund positions in parks to focus on cleanup and maintenance.	1
Action 2. Support increased resources for the Department of Public Works and the Parks & Recreation Department.	7
Objective 2. Evaluate, repair, and upgrade existing facilities to current standards.	0
Action 1. Continue to evaluate and assess the condition of all existing playgrounds to accepted industry standards.	2
Action 2. Seek discretionary grants and commit City funds and entitlement grants for the renovation of parks.	1
Action 3. Schedule periodic park audits.	2
Action 4. Continue to have the Disability Commission review park improvement plans so that opportunities for accessible elements are not overlooked.	2
Objective 3. Foster stewardship by improving coordination and collaboration among departments, committees, local organizations, and businesses working toward common goals for open space, natural resources, and recreation within Fitchburg and with abutting municipalities.	0
Action 1. Establish a stewardship group to assist with trail maintenance.	8
Objective 4. Continue recreational opportunities at City parks for individuals of all abilities and ages.	0
Action 1. Continue to provide and promote organized recreational opportunities at City parks.	2
Objective 5. Continue to include resident input, including youth, in the park renovation and design process.	1
Action 1. Consider a design review process for pocket parks.	0
Action 2. Continue to hold public meetings in the planning stage of projects.	1
Action 3. Develop systems with community-based organizations to increase awareness of public meetings.	1
Objective 6. Support efforts to foster outdoor learning and community service projects involving parks.	2
Action 1. Engage schools and community-based organizations to raise awareness and appreciation of parks and open space.	0
Objective 7. Encourage beautification efforts and other private investment in public facilities.	1
Action 1. Develop and pilot a model to engage local organizations/businesses in park upkeep and beautification.	1

Objective 8. Improve perception of safety in public parks.	0
Action 1. Add park safety elements to existing parks, such as added lighting.	0
GOAL 2: Provide enhanced and expanded walking and biking paths for recreation and commuting. (16 votes total)	
Objective 1. Continue to develop/enhance the Twin Cities Rail Trail.	1
Action 1: Continue collaborating with the Twin Cities Rail Trail Association for maintenance and enhancement of the trail of the Twin Cities Rail Trail.	0
Objective 2. Maintain and improve sidewalks and walking paths in developed areas, including accessibility improvements.	0
Action 1: Develop a Sidewalk Prioritization Plan.	2
Action 2: Continue to seek grant funds for additional projects.	3
Objective 3. Integrate the Pedestrian Generator Checklist into the park design and review process and implementation of the Fitchburg Trails Vision Plan 2020 – 2024 in order to identify when and how to accommodate pedestrians when designing projects.	0
Action 1: Identify which City departments should review the Pedestrian Generator Checklist during the park design and street upgrade process around parks and open spaces and support their usage of the tool.	0
Objective 4. Improve connectivity – trails, sidewalks, and bike accommodations – among open spaces, recreational facilities, and other important city resources.	1
Action 1: Incorporate pedestrian and bicycle access into all plans for new recreation facilities and modifications to existing recreation facilities.	3
Action 2: Install wayfinding signs and kiosks for existing trails.	2
Action 3: Design thoughtful connections between highly used areas.	0
Action 4: Review all streetscape projects for suitability of adding sidewalks or bike lanes.	1
Objective 5. Keep the Fitchburg Trail Guide updated.	1
Action 1: Continue supporting the Fitchburg Trails Vision Committee's and encouraging their collaboration with MRPC to assist with this effort.	1
Objective 6. Complete the Steamline Trail in West Fitchburg for walking and bicycling.	1
Action 1: Continue efforts to sort out easement issues, seek out grant opportunities to expand trail and work with/engage community groups to assist with the process.	0
GOAL 3: Provide equitable access to high-quality and inclusive recreational opportunities. (14 votes total)	
Objective 1. Improve marketing to increase awareness of Fitchburg's park and open space system.	1
Action 1: Enhance efforts to promote parks and open spaces through community-based organizations, schools, and the Senior Center.	1
Objective 2. Improve marketing of organized recreational and cultural opportunities provided at Fitchburg parks and open spaces.	1
Action 1: Integrate cultural competency and language access into marketing plans.	2
Objective 3. Provide park access and programming that is safe, inclusive, culturally relevant and welcoming to everyone.	0

Action 1: Partner with community-based organizations on programming that connects residents of Environmental Justice neighborhoods to parks.	0
Action 2: Ensure language access is incorporated into programming.	1
Objective 4. Improve signage to and within City parks.	2
Action 1: Review existing signage and develop a parks and open space wayfinding system to provide cohesive and recognizable signage.	0
Action 2: Integrate language diversity into the design of new and upgraded park signage.	1
Action 3: Secure funding for new signage.	0
Objective 5. Provide universally accessible facilities at existing parks.	1
Action 1: Identify opportunities to add universally accessible restroom facilities at parks, including adult changing tables.	2
Action 2: Continue adding universally accessible play structures and areas during park upgrades.	2
GOAL 4: Protect and promote Fitchburg's watershed. (17 votes total)	
Objective 1. Protect Fitchburg's watershed land within Fitchburg and adjacent communities.	1
Action 1: Identify and protect critical open space areas for temporary slowing of floodwaters.	2
Action 2: Ensure compliance with the land management plan(s) in place for land that is already protected.	2
Objective 2. Routinely assess the condition of dams, ponds and reservoirs within Fitchburg and identify opportunities for restoration of the natural environment.	1
Action 1: Continue regular inspections by a registered professional engineer of dams that are the City's responsibility.	2
Action 2: Prioritize restoration of the natural environment when performing maintenance and upgrading dams and water resources.	0
Objective 3. Continue efforts that result in improved water quality of the Nashua River and its tributaries.	1
Action 1: Continue the combined sewer separation (CSS) project.	1
Action 2: Promote citizen education about water quality and collaborate with community organizations and stakeholders.	0
Action 3: Maintain collaboration with NRWA for protection of the Nashua River.	2
Objective 4. Integrate green infrastructure for stormwater management into planning and capital projects for parks and open space.	0
Action 1: Consider options for integrating rain gardens, permeable paving and other green infrastructure when park projects are undertaken.	1
Objective 5. Continue to improve access to and awareness of the Nashua River and other waterbodies as City assets.	1
Action 1: Promote a public education campaign about water issues and collaborate with community organizations and stakeholders.	0
Action 2: Continue holding events at the Riverfront Park and Gateway Park that showcase the Nashua River.	3

GOAL 5: Preserve, restore, enhance, and promote open space and natural resources that increase Fitchburg's resilience to the effects of climate change. (25 votes total)	
Objective 1. Properly maintain City-owned forested areas.	2
Action 1: Develop and adopt forest management plans for City-owned forestland.	0
Objective 2. Implement or enforce regulations to limit sprawl and preserve/enhance natural resources.	0
Action 1: Continue to implement smart growth tactics when developing or updating plans and ordinances.	0
Action 2: Review Fitchburg zoning and conservation ordinances and incorporate green infrastructure and conservation of functioning natural ecosystems and other nature-based solutions as requirements.	0
Objective 3. Work with local, regional and state organizations to preserve open space and wildlife habitat.	0
Action 1: Support efforts of the North County Land Trust and other agencies to purchase and protect open space in the City.	5
Objective 4. Support continuation of environmental programming in parks and trails.	0
Action 1: Partner with and support the efforts of organizations such as the North County Land Trust and the Trustees of Reservations to provide environmental programming.	1
Action 2: Continue allowing groups to use City property and promote activities on City website and social media.	0
Objective 5. Work to eradicate invasive species.	0
Action 1: Provide public education that invasive species include both flora and fauna (e.g., invasive trees and spotted lanternfly).	1
Action 2: Partner with groups such as the Fitchburg Greenway Committee to work toward eliminating knotweed & other invasives in parks.	2
Action 3: Ensure new plantings in parks and open spaces are selected appropriately.	2
Objective 6. Foster the permanent protection of privately-owned open space, including farmland and forests.	1
Action 1: Work with the City Assessor's Office to support and promote participation in the Chapter 61/61A/61B programs to help preserve forestland, agricultural land, and open space and recreational land.	1
Action 2: Develop notification procedure for City consideration of Chapter 61/61A/61B properties should the property owner decide to remove the land from the program.	2
Action 3: Provide public education about the value of open space and alternatives to forest cutting.	3
Action 4: Create a tracking system for Conservation Restrictions.	0
Action 5: Reinvigorate the Agricultural Commission.	0
Action 6: Identify and promote financial incentives for preserving farmland of local importance.	1
Objective 7. Implement nature-based solutions to enhance the ecological integrity of Fitchburg's natural resources.	1
Action 1: Incorporate nature-based solutions into the design of new and improved open space and recreation facilities.	0

Action 2: Encourage native tree and vegetation planting in the downtown area and other high pavement areas, including large parking lots, to help manage stormwater runoff and increase shade.	3
GOAL 6: Develop and promote green space in the urban core. (13 votes total)	
Objective 1. Create urban shade and a biodiverse urban forest system.	0
Action 1: Leverage the partnership with the Urban Forester working with the City.	2
Action 2: When street trees are planted, ensure the proper species is selected and that they are planted properly for sustainability.	4
Action 3: Develop and adopt a street tree/tree replacement policy.	1
Objective 2. Support urban agriculture and the local food system.	0
Action 1: Develop a policy for starting and maintaining community gardens.	3
Action 2: Continue supporting community-based organizations that promote regional food access strategies and environmental sustainability.	1
Objective 3. Capture undervalued land for new recreational and open space purposes.	0
Action 1: Explore downtown and other densely populated, underserved areas where open space is limited to identify opportunities to capture under-performing properties for establishing pocket parks to provide both urban recreation opportunities and green space.	2

Goal 1, to “develop and maintain a safe and sought-after park system in Fitchburg that provides a variety of active and passive recreational and cultural opportunities for all Fitchburg residents”, received the most votes overall, with 32 dots placed on corresponding objectives and actions. Objective 3 – Action 1, to “**establish a stewardship group to assist with trail maintenance**”, received the largest share of votes with 8 in total. Coming in second with 7 votes was Objective 1 - Action 2: “**Support increased resources for the Department of Public Works and the Parks & Recreation Department.**”

Goal 5, to preserve, restore, enhance, and promote open space and natural resources that increase Fitchburg’s resilience to the effects of climate change, received the second highest number of votes overall, with 25 dots placed on corresponding objectives and actions. The proposed action to “**support efforts of the North County Land Trust and other agencies to purchase and protect open space in the City**” received the largest share of votes for this goal.

Under Goal 2, which received 16 votes overall, the proposed actions “**Continue to seek grant funds for additional projects**” and “**Incorporate pedestrian and bicycle access into all plans for new recreation facilities and modifications to existing recreation facilities**” were tied for the top spot with 3 votes each.

For Goal 4, which received 17 votes overall, the most votes (3) went to the proposed action “**Continue holding events at the Riverfront Park and Gateway Park that showcase the Nashua River.**” Votes were spread nearly evenly across all other objectives and actions.

Goal 6 received the lowest number of votes overall, with 13 dots placed on the proposed objectives and actions. Despite this low total overall, the proposed action “**When street trees are planted, ensure the proper species is selected and that they are planted properly for sustainability**” received the most votes (4), followed by “**Develop a policy for starting and maintaining community gardens**” with 3 votes.

APPENDIX H: Measures to Protect and Promote Important Habitat and Ecological Resiliency

Measure	Benefits / How it fits within Scope of the Fitchburg Open Space and Recreation Plan
1. Protect Core Habitats & Critical Natural Landscape - Forest	
<p>Possibility of land acquisitions to help protect the large Critical Natural Landscape to the northeast of Fitchburg – focus should be on acquiring areas of high ecological value for protection in perpetuity.</p>	<p>Protecting Core Habitat Areas is important for the preservation of rare species and their habitats, as well as broader ecological services and species diversity. If land acquisition is a possibility, the focus should be on acquiring areas of high ecological value, preferably large (or connected) parcels, for protection in perpetuity.</p>
<p>Possibility of land acquisitions to help protect the large forest and aquatic core area to the south of Fitchburg (adjoining the Leominster State Forest and Notown Reservoir).</p>	<p>While the Core Habitat itself is outside of Fitchburg, protecting adjoining areas will reduce edge effects to the Core Habitat (including encroachment from roads, residential or commercial development), as well as providing an additional buffer for habitat continuity, water quality and ecological services associated with large, continuous forest habitats (carbon capture, air quality, water quality, groundwater recharge, etc.). This would also fit with the goal of providing linkages to major forest resources in adjoining communities.</p>
<p>Coggshall Park is identified as a Core Habitat area, featuring a species of conservation concern (sharp-shinned hawk). The area is primarily mixed forest, with a manmade lake in the center of the park. The area has relatively good connectivity to the wider landscape, through forest areas which are occasionally interrupted by mostly small, low-density residential roads. Park management should aim to promote the ecological diversity and value of the park, which will then also feed into the wider connected area. Measures to consider here (and in other semi-natural / partly managed areas, including parks, cemeteries, and greenways), might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education & public engagement opportunities, promoting broader goals of the OSRP, and why connectivity is important. This could include explanations of measures being employed in the park, as well as measures people could be encouraged to implement at home, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Low mow/no-mow areas for pollinators and invertebrate diversity, as well as water retention and flood control; 	<p>Implementing ecologically focused management practices in Coggshall Park could potentially have a number of benefits for ecological quality and connectivity, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protecting existing Core Habitat Area by promoting management practices which will improve/maintain the ecological condition of this area (invasive plant management, designated no disturbance areas, providing nest/bat boxes, etc.); • Improving connectivity and habitat quality within semi-natural, managed park areas, which will help buffer Core Habitat Areas while also providing connectivity in between this area and the surrounding forest; • Provide opportunities for public engagement and education, including measures which can be implemented at home to help the City achieve its wider OSRP goals for ecological connectivity.

Measure	Benefits / How it fits within Scope of the Fitchburg Open Space and Recreation Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Wildlife habitat provision (bat & bird boxes, log piles for insects and amphibians); ○ Planting native species, and awareness of invasive ones to avoid; ○ Reducing herbicide and fertilizer application, and understanding how this impacts water quality and wildlife. 	
<p>Conducting ecological surveys (bat, bird, vegetation), to establish the current status of the park, and identify possible threats (such as invasive species, disturbance/erosion from visitors, habitat degradation, etc.). Surveys could be conducted in collaboration with the Friends of Coggshall Park.</p>	<p>Surveys provide a necessary baseline against which to assess conservation management goals and help identify key areas/threats which need addressing.</p>
<p>Design & implement management plans based on the results of ecological surveys. These might include (as applicable, based on survey results);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Invasive plant management (Norway maple & burning bush are known to be present, and other species are likely to occur); ● Measures to protect water quality in the lake (See section 3 of table); ● Measures to protect key areas of high ecological value from disturbance (through fencing or changes in trail locations); ● Provision of bat and bird boxes in suitable habitats. 	<p>Measures can help to enhance ecological diversity, and resilience to impacts such as climate change.</p>
<p>Forest management to promote tree health, mixed age structure, and survival of native trees (with areas of dense and more open forest canopy to support wildflowers and understory vegetation).</p>	<p>Promotes health and ecological diversity of larger patches of forest.</p>
2. Protect other habitat areas of high ecological value - Upland	
<p>Possibility of land acquisition to maintain and restore the communities' ecological network. Areas to prioritize may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Areas containing/abutting NHESP Estimated/Priority Habitat, particularly if some portions are already owned by the City; 	<p>Building ecological connectivity is essential for the preservation of species (which need to be able to move between populations, as well as have enough habitat to meet their foraging, breeding and territorial needs), and also for the preservation of ecological functions, such as carbon capture, water quality and infiltration, and temperature regulation. Larger, more continuous habitats are more resilient to climate change and other</p>

Measure	Benefits / How it fits within Scope of the Fitchburg Open Space and Recreation Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Areas containing/abutting broader natural and semi-natural habitats, particularly if some portions are already protected (such as WMAs, Conservation Areas, Parks or Water Supply Land); Areas connected to the Watershed Wildlife Conservation Easement in the northeast of Fitchburg. 	impacts, so protecting connected areas is an efficient way of bolstering both habitat quantity and quality. If the City is able to acquire land parcels for protection in perpetuity,
<p>Improve connectivity between habitat patches fragmented by roads by installing/promoting the installation of wildlife crossings (including under or overpasses, and culvert improvements), replacing existing barriers with wildlife friendly barriers, installing wildlife crossing signs, and promoting/establishing wildlife crossing events (such as spring amphibian migration patrols, and turtle patrols).</p>	Roads provide a major barrier and mortality risk to wildlife, particularly to small and slower moving species (reptiles and amphibians), which also have pronounced seasonal migration periods. Because many of these species have high breeding site fidelity, and often follow the same routes between breeding sites and terrestrial territories year after year, measures to reduce road mortality and improve connectivity can be targeted to locations where they will provide the greatest impact.
<p>Improving connectivity and habitat quality within semi-natural, managed park areas, by creating space for wildlife within these areas. Measures might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low/no-mow areas (insect and pollinator habitat, including dead stems for hibernating over winter); Planted wildflower/pollinator strips along roads and field edges (provides corridors for wildlife, as well as improved run-off control and infiltration); Creating log piles and woody debris piles (invertebrate & amphibian habitat). 	Provides improved connectivity between ecologically important areas of Core Habitat and Critical Natural Landscape. May also act as a buffer to reduce impacts to these core areas, for example from road run-off and stormwater (in the case of no-mow and wildflower margins), and from population isolation (by providing connectivity for wildlife to move between core areas).
<p>Implement habitat enhancement measures outlined for Core Habitats & Critical Natural Landscape (where applicable).</p>	
<p>Work with local farmers to promote awareness and interest in ecologically sensitive farming practices (particularly as agricultural activities are exempt from many environmental regulations). Target areas might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Soil management and planting practices to improve soil health and reduce run-off (beneficial for both farmers and water courses); 	Farmland makes up a relatively small portion of Fitchburg's open space areas, but may provide an important open habitat type (in contrast to the mature mixed forest found more predominantly). Measures to promote ecologically sensitive farming practices, ranging from timing of fertilizer application to reduce run-off, to active habitat creation along field margins, could improve ecological connectivity across farmland, and support species which use these more open habitat areas.

Measure	Benefits / How it fits within Scope of the Fitchburg Open Space and Recreation Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information on best practices for reducing fertilizer run-off, and herbicide and pesticide drift (including timing and weather conditions); Promoting the planting of grassland/wildflower field margins to provide ecological connectivity across farmland. 	
3. Protect Core Habitats & Critical Natural Landscape - Aquatic	
<p>Fitchburg already regulates wetland protection areas in addition to those stipulated in the WPA (including regulation of the 100-ft Buffer Zone, and the No Disturb Zone for unmanaged natural vegetation). Additional measures to further the protection of aquatic habitats might include:</p>	<p>Continue to enforce buffer zone regulations and No Disturbance Zones for wetland and water quality protection.</p>
<p>Promoting the active planting/enhancement of unmanaged vegetation zones (where suitable), along waterways within Core and Critical Landscapes. Appropriate target areas could be where invasive vegetation is abundant, or where there is otherwise particularly low diversity or low density of vegetation regrowth. Measures could include tree planting (where appropriate), to provide stream shading and habitat, and planting of native plants with different growth forms and root systems to improve soil stability and water uptake.</p>	<p>While preserving areas of undisturbed vegetation can often be the best approach to protecting wetland habitats, in some instances (for example where invasive species have gained a foothold, or where existing vegetation is predominantly lawn/agricultural grass), appropriate habitat enhancement within the Buffer Zone can improve its ecological value and functionality. Rivers and streams provide important corridors for wildlife, so making sure that their buffer zones are as ecologically diverse as possible will help enhance ecological connectivity, while enhancing the ecological services provided by the buffer zone.</p>
<p>Phillips Brook - A core habitat for freshwater mussels (creepers) is identified to the west of Fitchburg, associated with Phillips Brook. The species is sensitive to water quality and substrate alterations (requiring sand and gravel substrate in low-gradient stream reaches). Measures to protect and/or improve water quality, as well as extend/improve habitat availability in upstream and downstream areas, could promote the spread of this (and other) aquatic species. Measures might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordination with local fishing clubs (or conservation and neighborhood groups), interested in the health of the stream to identify priority areas for management/restoration. Work with local groups and neighbors to raise awareness of the importance of good water quality in the stream and promote measures to reduce fertilizer and herbicide run-off from yards & lawns within the catchment area, as well as run off from activities such as car washing and dumping into drains/catch basins. 	<p>Enhancing habitat quality along Phillips Brook could benefit not only creepers, but many other (less charismatic) stream species as well. Targeted restoration of habitat patches along the banks could improve both in-stream water quality, and also provide connecting habitat for a host of other species.</p>

Measure	Benefits / How it fits within Scope of the Fitchburg Open Space and Recreation Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Look for areas of bank-side habitat along the stream which could benefit from restoration/improvement (such as areas where invasive species have taken foot, or areas dominated by agricultural grasses or other low-quality vegetation). 	
<p>Coggshall Park: This park is identified as a Core Habitat feature, supporting a breeding pair of sharp-shinned hawks. The park is predominantly forested, with a manmade lake (Mirror Lake) and bird sanctuary. Management within the forested areas of the park should aim to promote tree health and diversity of age structure and species assemblages, while creating areas of different canopy cover to promote the growth of different understory communities. If invasive plant species are present (would require a survey), eradication/control of these could provide ecological benefits, while enhancing the visual appeal of understory areas near public trails.</p> <p>Due to the mostly forested nature of the catchment, water quality in Mirror Lake at Coggshall Park is likely to be less heavily impacted by surrounding land use but may be impacted by waterfowl density/feeding (this requires local knowledge of the site to identify potential issues). Appropriate management options might include control of waterfowl numbers (for example through egg-addling), or signage to reduce feeding of waterfowl by the public.</p>	<p>Management at Coggshall Park should focus on preserving existing habitat features, while allowing the continued enjoyment of the park by the public. Coordination with the Friends of Coggshall Park group could promote community engagement and help identify any areas of concern which may impact the ecological value or public enjoyment of the park.</p>
4. Protect other habitat areas of high ecological value - Aquatic	
<p>Implement habitat enhancement measures outlined for Core Habitats & Critical Natural Landscape (where applicable). Measures such as bank-side habitat enhancement and native plantings may be appropriate along various waterways and waterbodies, where native vegetation is currently lacking. In particular, a project of bank stabilization through a combination of hard engineering and native plantings may be appropriate near the airport & wastewater treatment plant.</p>	<p>Rivers and streams provide essential habitat and connectivity across the landscape. Improving bankside vegetation conditions through native plantings helps to stabilize soil, improve rainwater up-take, provide habitat both within the stream channel and above it, and provide shade and stream cooling. According to Fitchburg's Hazard Mitigation Plan and Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Plan (HMP/MVP), riverbank near the airport is suffering from erosion, and a targeted plan implementing hard and soft engineering approaches (including plantings and habitat enhancement), may be appropriate for fulfilling the goals of the HMP/MVP, as well as the OSRP.</p>

Measure	Benefits / How it fits within Scope of the Fitchburg Open Space and Recreation Plan
Implement broad measures to improve water quality, such as education/incentives to reduce fertilizer application to lawns, and promoting the conversion of lawn to native vegetation.	When implemented at a wide scale, measures to improve water quality and increase vegetation cover (at the watershed/catchment level), will provide broad-scale habitat and water quality improvements benefiting all waterbodies.
Potential for stream restoration projects through dam removal.	According to Fitchburg's HMP/MVP, the City contains several aging dams, as well as roadways and bridges prone to flooding. Dam removal could potentially help alleviate several of these issues, which providing enhanced ecological connectivity along currently obstructed streams. Dam removal provides improved stream geomorphological, hydrological and ecological function, and can provide increased flood storage capacity (depending on the nature of the dam, but generally replacing an impounded waterbody with restored stream channel and associated floodplain will provide improved flood storage capacity). Removal of aged dams also removes the potential flood and safety risk associated with a dam failure.
If/where applicable, consider other stream restoration measures which would improve habitat connectivity and flood water control. These may include the restoration of floodplain (bank removal and stream naturalization), to allow flooding within suitable designated areas; installation of large woody debris within human-modified stream channels to create in-stream habitat and reduce the flow rate of water travelling downstream; re-meandering of historically straightened stream reaches; and replacement of undersized or damaged culverts to improve stream hydrology and connectivity.	Natural floodplains provide important habitat for a range of species, as well as flood water storage and water quality services. Allowing natural flooding to occur in upstream areas where development is low (and impacts to buildings can be avoided), helps to slow the flow of floodwaters downstream. Both the installation of large woody debris and re-meandering of streams provides increased habitat availability, and improved flood control downstream by slowing the flow of water during high rainfall events. Culvert replacements are a common stream restoration technique for improving habitat connectivity while often reducing localized flooding (due to undersized or obstructed culverts).
Fitchburg has only one mapped, certified Vernal pool, but many mapped Potential Vernal Pools. Initiate a program to survey and certify additional vernal pools.	Understanding the distribution of and value of vernal pools within the city provides information about the habitat value of the parcels and other habitat features where they are located, or that are nearby. Contributes to the City's ability to evaluate areas for protection.
5. Provide Connectivity & Improve Ecological Function of developed areas – Upland, moderate development (including paved and built-up areas)	
Provide public shade trees in parks and along streets. Fitchburg already has a number of public shade trees, so considerations for the expansion of this resource might include;	Trees provide key habitat for invertebrates, birds, and bats, helping to provide corridors between more natural areas. Shade trees are also important for people, reducing street level temperatures, improving air quality, and improving water infiltration and retention.

Measure	Benefits / How it fits within Scope of the Fitchburg Open Space and Recreation Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Choosing planting areas – look to connect up larger green spaces (where possible), as well as providing trees in areas which currently have very few (particularly within Environmental Justice areas); Considering tree requirements – look to see why some current plantings are failing, and either address issues (does the soil need enriching? Is a larger permeable area for water infiltration needed?), or choose different planting areas. Trees may need continued management, particularly when young, if they are to successfully establish. Choosing species – picking trees appropriate to the local environment (dry, wet, lots of heat exposure, higher pollution levels in some areas, etc.). Ideally, trees should also be native (where tolerant of conditions), or at a minimum, non-invasive. 	
Consider a “request a tree” program for people to obtain shade trees for public spaces and/or private gardens.	Promotes habitat connectivity and fosters public engagement and participation in making ecological improvements along city streets.
Implement stormwater improvement measures such as swales and/or areas of impervious paving in parking lots (and other large, currently impermeable areas).	Measures to improve the infiltration of rainfall into the ground will (if conducted at a sufficient scale and in the right locations), reduce flooding and improve water quality. Measures
Install green roofs on public buildings, and promote their installation on private property (possibly through the provision of grants, as well as information on where and how to construct them).	Green roofs help promote habitat and ecological connectivity across otherwise developed areas, where ground level habitat may be lacking. They can also provide improved water quality (by reducing the volume and improving the filtration of run-off from roofs).
Install rain gardens on public buildings, and promote their installation on private property (possibly through the provision of grants, as well as information on where and how to construct them).	Rain gardens help improve the infiltration and retention of rainfall, reducing surface run-off and improving water quality. They also provide small habitat patches for native plants and invertebrates (particularly pollinators, depending on plantings), as well as aesthetic value for people.
Implement no-mow zones (with possible wildflower planting to enhance plant diversity and improve aesthetics for the public), along roadside verges, park edges, and other low foot traffic areas - particularly along watercourses.	Complex herbaceous and scrubby vegetation provides important habitat for pollinators and other wildlife, improves water quality and infiltration, reduces flooding, and provides improved aesthetic value for people (so long as trash and littering concerns are managed). Allowing the development of natural vegetation strips around parks, playing fields, and

Measure	Benefits / How it fits within Scope of the Fitchburg Open Space and Recreation Plan
	along roadways and streams, is a cheap and very effective way of bolstering ecological connectivity, while improving ecological functions within the buffer strip itself. Reducing/avoiding mowing has the dual effect on water quality of providing more complex vegetation (which slows the flow of surface water, while different root types and depths improve infiltration), and reducing soil compaction from driving mowing machinery over an area repeatedly.
6. Provide Connectivity & Improve Ecological Function of developed areas – Wetland/aquatic, moderate development (including paved and built-up areas)	
Promote the creation/planting of vegetated buffer strips along streams and waterbodies in urban areas.	Creating/improving the vegetation status of buffer zones within more urban areas can provide water quality and habitat improvements, provide aesthetic value, and reduce flooding and improve storm-water absorption.
Implement water storage and infiltration measures described above (rain gardens, green roofs, use of porous pavement). Priority areas should include those within 100-year and 500-year flood zone, although measures to reduce stormwater inputs and flow rates up-slope of flood zone are also important in reducing the volume of water being received by these areas during storm events.	Provides habitat connectivity and flood storage.
Where possible, consider the restoration of floodplain (bank removal and stream naturalization), to allow flooding within suitable areas. While more likely appropriate outside of developed areas, there may be some smaller potential areas where flood storage could be restored (such as in riverside parks).	Provides habitat connectivity and flood storage.