

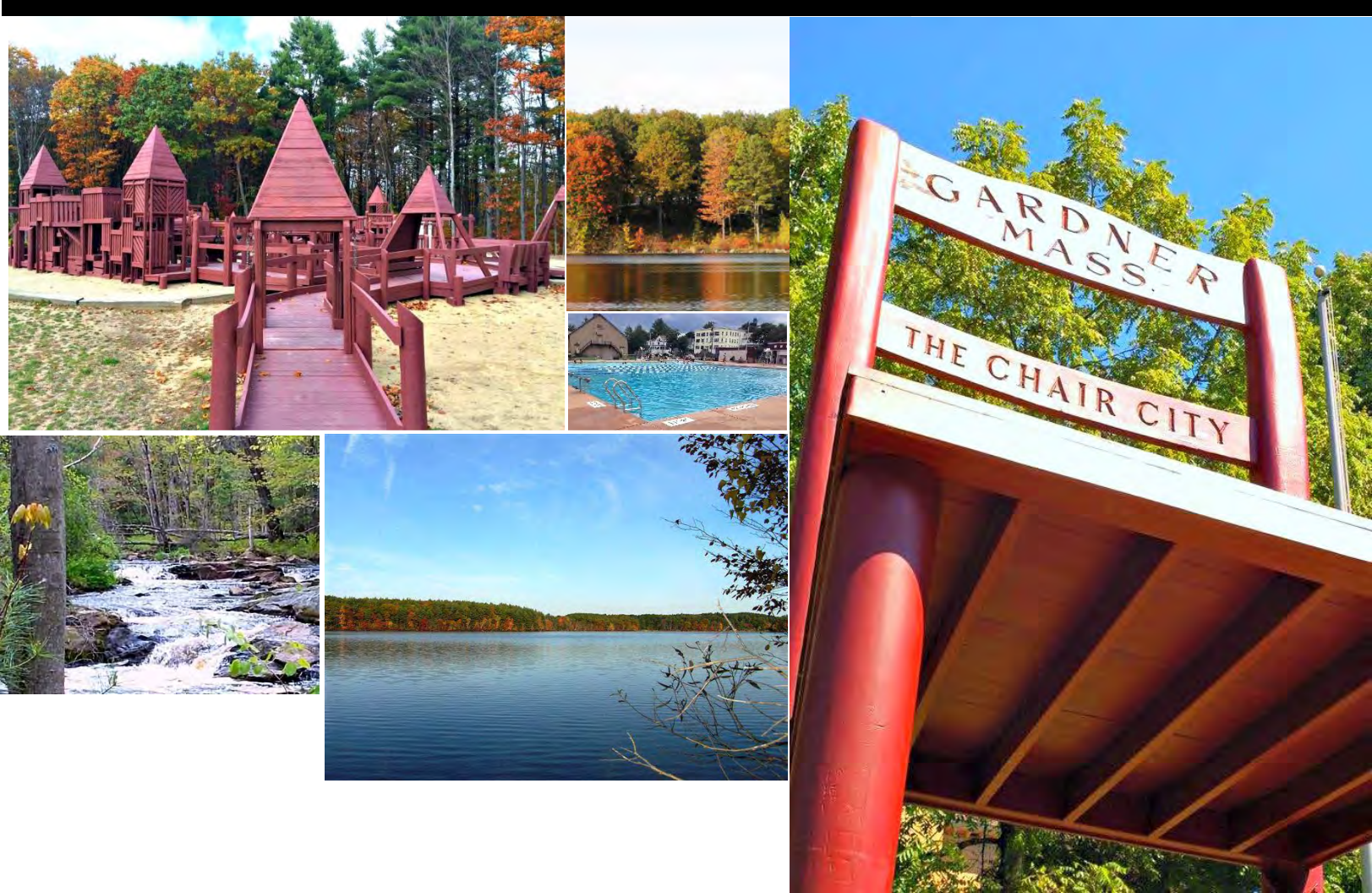
# OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION PLAN

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City of Gardner  
*Massachusetts*



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## Section 1      **PLAN SUMMARY**

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The Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) is a comprehensive planning document that guides future policies and actions by examining the City's need for new or improved conservation areas and recreational facilities. The overall purpose of the 2015 - 2019 OSRP is to provide **Gardner's** residents with a diverse system of interconnected open space areas and quality recreational opportunities that protect natural resources, promote public health, and enhance the quality of life. Enhancing the quality of life in a community must maintain a careful balance between equity, environment and economy.

Having an OSRP is very important for a number of reasons. A comprehensive plan identifies open space and recreation assets; prioritizes needs; identifies goals, objectives and actions; and allows the City to participate in state and federal grant programs to make capital improvements to recreational facilities and to protect open spaces.

The Open Space and Recreation Plan Committee built this plan on previous **OSRP's**; consultation with City Departments, in particular the Engineering, Public Works and Planning Departments; and nearly one year of public outreach. During this public outreach and planning, five specific goals were identified:

- Protect and improve the quality of existing open spaces, parks and recreational opportunities.
- Selective expansion of open spaces, parks and recreational opportunities.
- Protect water resources and improve water quality.
- Accommodate new growth where the environment can best support it.
- Increase public awareness and stewardship of the City's water resources, forests, parks and conservation areas.

Public outreach and planning also highlighted four new initiatives that resulted in several key actions contained in the plan:

- Sustain the recent focus on improved maintenance of recreational facilities.
- Insure parks and playgrounds are safe and family friendly.
- Upgrade existing sidewalks and build connections between existing sidewalks.
- Improve coordination of municipal efforts and better support volunteer initiatives.

This plan has eleven sections with appendices and conforms to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Division of Conservation Services ***Open Space and Recreation Plan Requirements***. The primary sections of the OSRP are as follows:

- Section 2 describes the planning process and public participation.
- Section 3 gives a broad picture of the City's history, demographics and growth patterns.
- Section 4 presents an inventory of the City's environmental resources.
- Section 5 presents an inventory of open space and recreation lands.
- Section 6 contains the City's open space and recreation goals.
- Section 7 examines what is needed to achieve the City's stated goals.
- Section 8 contains a comprehensive set of goals and objectives.
- Section 9 establishes the City's seven-year action plan and lists the municipal entities responsible for implementation.

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## Section 2      **INTRODUCTION**

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### A) STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The overall purpose of the 2015 - 2019 Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) is to provide **Gardner's** residents with a diverse system of interconnected open space areas and quality recreational opportunities that protect natural resources, promote public health, and enhance the quality of life. Enhancing the quality of life in a community maintains a careful balance between equity, environment and economy. More specifically, the purposes of this plan are:

- To identify open space and recreation assets;
- To prioritize open space and recreation needs;
- To identify specific goals, objectives and priority actions; and
- To allow the City to participate in Department of Conservation Services grants for capital improvements and acquisition projects.

This edition of the plan builds on previous **OSRP's**. **Gardner's** first OSRP was prepared in 1986 and comprehensive updates were completed in 1994, 2000 and 2006. Most recently, the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA) approved an extension of the 2006 plan to July 2013.

Since the last complete update of the OSRP in 2006, progress was made toward protecting and enhancing open space and recreational opportunities despite the City's significant financial constraints. Major efforts included:

- Acquiring 128 +/- acres of land coupling local resources with the Federal Forest Legacy and State Drinking Water Supply Protection grant programs;
- Constructing a tournament quality baseball field for youth;
- Improving boat access to the Otter River;
- Consolidating responsibilities for cemeteries, forests and playgrounds in the Department of Public Works and increasing the related maintenance budgets;
- Providing ADA compliant facilities at Greenwood Playground; and
- Upgrading the City's GIS capabilities.



## B) PLANNING PROCESS AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

In April 2014 the Open Space and Recreation Plan Committee met to initiate the work of updating the 2006 plan. The Committee members represented the following:

- Conservation Commission
- Planning Board
- City Council
- Municipal Grounds Commission
- Dept. of Community Development & Planning
- Engineering/Survey Dept.
- North County Land Trust
- Gardner Redevelopment Authority

The Committee met eight (8) times between April and November. Two public forums were held on May 27 and September 30. A citizen based survey consisting of fourteen (14) questions that focused on the types of recreational activities and open space priorities that respondents believe to be important. The questionnaire was made available on the City's website and at the public library, City Hall, Senior Center and Senior Housing projects. Two hundred and thirty-four (234) online surveys and 4 paper surveys were completed. Survey questions and results can be found in Appendix E – Endorsements and Public Comments.

Other means of outreach included 4 paid advertisements and 3 news articles in The Gardner News; intermittent text notices on the local cable station; announcements at City Council televised meetings; a request for comments in the Chamber of **Commerce's** weekly newsletter; and postings on several widely followed Facebook pages including the City of Gardner and Mayor Mark Hawke.

Lastly, formal presentations were made at public meetings of the Conservation Commission, Planning Board and City Council. The Planning Board meeting was videotaped and aired on the local cable network. The City Council meeting was broadcast live and rerun several times on the local cable network.

## C) ENHANCED OUTREACH and PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Environmental Justice (EJ) low income areas in Census Tract 7072, 7073 and a small portion of 7074 contain the City's Senior Center and two of the Gardner Housing **Authority's** largest projects predominately occupied by senior citizens. Special efforts were made to involve this population by placing survey forms in convenient locations and asking staff to inform the EJ population about the Open Space planning process.

The EJ minority population in Census Tract 7075 is incarcerated in the North Central Correctional Institution.

Map 1 Environmental Justice is attached in Appendix A.

## Section 3      **COMMUNITY SETTING**

### A) REGIONAL CONTEXT

Gardner is located in the north central portion of Massachusetts (aka the Montachusett Region), within Worcester County, and is 28 miles northwest of Worcester, 59 miles west of Boston, 61 miles northeast of Springfield, and 195 miles from New York City.

The City is bordered by Winchendon and Ashburnham on the north, Templeton on the west, Westminster on the east, and Hubbardston on the south. Gardner serves as the hub of regional activity housing major shopping areas, significant employment opportunities, the Greater Gardner Chamber of Commerce, Mount Wachusett Community College, Heywood Hospital and The Gardner News. The Greater Gardner area has population of approximately 60,000 and occupies 220 square miles. Map 2 Regional Context is attached in Appendix A.

The dry land area, protected open space and percentage of protected open space in each of the five area towns and the City of Gardner is listed in Table 3.1. The percentage of protected open space to dry land in Gardner is very similar to the neighboring five towns. The ownership of open space, however, is predominately municipal while open space in the area towns is predominately State-owned.

*Table 3-1-Summary of Protected Open Space in Gardner and Area Towns*

<b>Community</b>	<b>Land Use (dry acres)</b>	<b>Protected Open Space (acres)</b>	<b>% Protected Open Space</b>
Ashburnham	24,598.15	7,046.42	28.65%
<b>Gardner</b>	<b>14,144.45</b>	<b>4,374.00</b>	<b>30.92%</b>
Hubbardston	26,201.84	11,195.61	42.73%
Templeton	20,372.22	4,879.51	23.95%
Westminster	22,594.97	6,746.16	29.86%
Winchendon	27,588.22	7,912.08	28.68%
<b>Community Average</b>			<b>30.80%</b>

State Route 2, also known as the Mowhawk Trail – George W. Stanton Highway, is the major east-west highway linking Boston to upstate New York and provides access to Interstate 91 in Greenfield. A Route 2 overpass bisects Gardner with two exit rotary ramps. Interstate 190 lies 15 miles east of Gardner and interconnects with the Massachusetts Turnpike in Worcester. The Montachusett Area Regional Transit

(MART) provides bus service to the Montachusett Region. In addition to scheduled service, MART offers dial-a-ride for the elderly and handicapped. Major commercial flights are available at Logan International Airport in Boston, T.F. Green International Airport in Providence Rhode Island, Manchester Airport in Manchester New Hampshire, Bradley International Airport in Bradley Field Connecticut, and to a lesser degree, Worcester Municipal Airport in Worcester. Gardner Municipal Airport, located in Templeton, supports business and recreational light aircraft activity.

The hills of Gardner form a natural separation point for the Millers River and the Nashua River watersheds. The majority of Gardner lies within the Millers River watershed, including the historically industrialized area. The northeastern and eastern sections of Gardner, situated in the Nashua River Basin, are less developed with a more rural character.

Gardner is in the 3rd Massachusetts Congressional District, the Worcester & Middlesex Senatorial District, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Worcester State Representative District, the **Governor's** Council 7<sup>th</sup> District, and the District Attorney Middle District.

## B) HISTORY OF THE COMMUNITY

Development of industry during the late eighteenth century along many of the streams feeding into the Otter River, located in the Millers River watershed, were the basis for the formation of Gardner. Incorporated as a town in 1785, the industrial center of Gardner emerged from sections of the towns of Ashburnham, Westminster, Winchendon, and Templeton. Gardner later re-incorporated as a city in 1923.

The City of Gardner became an urban/industrial center. The City showed a dispersed, small-scale woodworking industry in the 1700's. By the early 19th century, however, this had become concentrated in a large number of chair manufacturing shops. Between 1830 and 1870, the expansion brought in immigrants mostly from England, Ireland and Canada. Russian, Finnish, Swedish, and Polish emigrants joined them in the 1890's as the chair-making industry grew. The Heywood-Wakefield chair factory complex was created and expanded between 1870 and 1897. It remained a major factor in the City's economy for the whole of the 19th century.

The Gardner Light Infantry, a voluntary military troop, formed as early as 1813 in Gardner. Mt. Gardner Seminary, a college for women, formed in 1884. The free public library was created in 1886. In 1896, the State commended Gardner for evening naturalization classes, established in the City to help immigrants become citizens. The Gardner State Colony for the Insane, built in 1904, was a pioneer in the then innovative dispersal of patients in cottage residences rather than one huge building, a model subsequently copied around the country.

Mount Wachusett Community College began operations in Gardner in the 1960s and has evolved to become a major regional influence on a modern campus located in Gardner. In addition to curricula for matriculating students, the college provides modern recreational facilities and theater to the Greater Gardner community.

## C) POPULATION CHARACTERISTICS

### Population

Between 2000 and 2010, **Gardner's** population decreased slightly from 20,770 to 20,228. The U.S. Census Bureau projects a very modest increase of 0.6% through 2020. The Donahue Institute at UMASS projects a population decrease of approximately 3% by 2020. If the Donahue projection is accurate, **Gardner's** population in 2020 will be approximately 19,440.

In 2010, **Gardner's** population density was 916 persons per square mile. That ranks Gardner 107 out of the 116 the largest Massachusetts municipalities.

### Education and Housing

The percentage of Gardner residents age 25+ graduating from high school or higher, 2008-2012, was 82.3% compared to 89.1% statewide. The percentage of Gardner residents age 25+ graduating with a **Bachelor's** degree or higher during that same 5-year period was 18.3% compared to 39% statewide.

The homeownership rate in Gardner, 2008-2012, was 55.4% compared to the state rate of 63.2%. Housing units in multi-unit structures was 47.5% compared to the state rate of 41.6%. The median value of owner-occupied housing units in Gardner was \$185,900 compared to the state median value of \$335,500.

### Income and Poverty

Annual median household income in Gardner during the period 2008 to 2012 was \$48,934 while the annual household income in Massachusetts was \$66,658. Gardner ranked 328 out of the **state's** 351 cities and towns. The percentage of persons below poverty level in Gardner during that same period was 13% while the percentage of person below poverty level in the state was 11%.

### Unemployment Trends

The unemployment rate in Gardner is consistently higher than state and national unemployment rates. In April 2014, the unemployment rate in Gardner was 7.2% while the state unemployment rate was 6.0% and the national unemployment rate was 6.3%. The average unemployment rate in Gardner during the 12 months ending in April 2014 was 9.0% while the state unemployment rate was 6.9% and the national rate was 7.0%.

### Labor Force, Employment and Ten Largest Employers

There has been a slow but steady decline in **Gardner's** labor force and employment numbers. In 2000, the labor force was 10,145 and 9,815 persons were employed in Gardner. In 2010, the labor force was 9,718 and 8,624 persons were employed in Gardner. In 2013, the labor force was 9,367 and 8,471 persons were employed in Gardner. Labor force and employment forecasts to 2020 expect these trends to continue.

<u>Name of Employer</u>	<u>Number of Employees</u>
Mount Wachusett Community College	1030
Heywood Hospital	1000
North Central Correctional Institution	400
Garlock Printing	224
Wal-Mart	220
Legend Rehab & Nursing Home	150
North Central Human Services	130
New England Woodenware	130
Advance Cable Ties	100
Wachusett Manor	100

### Environmental Justice (EJ)

Five of **Gardner's** 13 Block Groups meet the EJ criteria. Four Block Groups meet the criterion for income and one Block Group meets the criterion for race.

The four Block Groups meeting the criterion for income are **Gardner's** most densely populated neighborhoods located around the central business district.

The Massachusetts Department of **Correction's** North Central Correctional Institution is located in the Block Group that meets the race criterion. This Block Group would not meet the criteria for race if the prison population is excluded.

Map 1 Environmental Justice is attached in Appendix A.

## D) GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

### Patterns and Trends

Consistent with **Gardner's** stagnate population, residential development during the six-year period FY 2008 to FY 2013 was very limited. There was an 85% decrease in residential development compared to the prior six-year period, FY 2002 to FY 2007.

Table 3-2 - Building Permits Issued

	<b>FY08</b>	<b>FY09</b>	<b>FY10</b>	<b>FY11</b>	<b>FY12</b>	<b>Fy13</b>	<b>FY08-13 Total</b>	<b>FY02-07 Total</b>
SF Homes	11	13	9	6	5	7	51	248
Multi-F Homes	2	4	0	0	0	0	6	36
Commercial	1	0	1	1	4	2	9	19
Industrial	0	0	1	0	0	2	3	1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>304</b>

Source: Gardner Building Commissioner

In the short term, very limited residential development is anticipated. One of the two approved single-family home subdivisions, Cedar Hills, is bank-owned with no possibility of any building permits because the supporting infrastructure is far from complete. Currently there are no residential developments under review or proposed.

Table 3-3-Approved Residential Developments

APPROVED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENTS				
<b>PROJECT</b>	<b>OWNER</b>	<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>ACRES</b>
Wilder Brook Estates	Mark Dymek	Brookside Drive	85 lots — OSRD	102
Cedar Hills	Bank Owned	Keyes Road	97 lots — SFH	117
Sapphire Park	Sunshine Realty Trust	Pearl Street	130 units — 65+MHP	86
<b>Sub-Total</b>				<b>305</b>

OSRD - Open Space Residential Development, SFH = Single Family Homes, MHP = Mobile Home Park

*Table 3-4-Proposed Residential Developments*

PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENTS				
PROJECT	OWNER	LOCATION	DESCRIPTION	ACRES
<i>No developments currently under review or proposed</i>				0
<b>Sub-Total</b>				<b>305</b>
<b>TOTAL APPROVED &amp; PROPOSED RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENTS</b>				<b>305</b>

Water and Sewer Infrastructure

The vast majority of **Gardner’s** population occupying approximately 40% of the City’s land area is served by municipal water and sewer systems. Current plans for both systems focus on upgrades rather than expansion.

The wastewater treatment facility was last upgraded in the late **1980’s**. As a result, a phased plan of equipment and process renewal is underway to maintain reliability and treatment quality. Additionally the EPA discharge permit system (NPDES) progressively requires more stringent nutrient removal and effluent quality with each discharge permit issued. The existing facility has recently been fine-tuned and enhanced to achieve its maximum potential for effluent quality. A Facility Planning Study is underway to recommend upgrades to the facility both from a process control and mechanical point of view. It is anticipated that over the next 5 to 10 years a phased upgrade of the facility will be completed to address mechanical and more stringent effluent quality standards.

**Gardner’s** water treatment facilities have all been constructed or upgraded since 2000. Our surface water treatment facility at Crystal Lake is still by **today’s** standards, state of the art. Crystal Lake is responsible for providing the City with 30-40% of its drinking water from April to November. The secondary source of drinking water in the City is the Snake Pond groundwater treatment facility constructed in 2000 and located in the south eastern area of the City.

The current focus continues replacement of aged water mains, many at or near 100 years old, to better control and mitigate losses in the distribution system and thereby conserve water resources and maintain or increase revenues.

The rural areas not served by municipal water and sewer systems include most of **Gardner’s** open space. Like all Massachusetts communities that have undeveloped outlying areas, the potential exists for development of lots with frontage on existing public ways with no subdivision control by the Planning Board. Portions of these



outlying areas also include environmentally sensitive areas such as lands that recharge the City's drinking water supply.

Map 3 Water Service Area, Map 4 Sewer Service Area and Map 5 Sidewalks are attached in Appendix A.

### Transportation Infrastructure

Route 2 is the most important roadway to the City and the region, running east west through the entire region. This limited access roadway provides the area with a direct link to Boston and to the western half of the state. Route 2 connects Gardner to the **region's** other major urban communities including Fitchburg and Leominster, and includes two interchanges for convenient access to our City. Gardner is 20 minutes from Interstate 190 and 30 minutes from Interstate 495 both major north South transportation Routes that tie into the Interstate 95 and 93 corridors servicing the metropolitan Boston area. Other arterial roads that pass through Gardner are Route 140, Route 68, Route 101 and Route 2A.

Gardner is a member of the Montachusett Area Regional Transportation Authority (MARTA), which provides fixed route service within Gardner and to the Fitchburg-Leominster Area, and paratransit services to the elderly and disabled. There are two intercity operators that travel through the Montachusett Region, Peter Pan and Greyhound Bus Lines, that both stop at the junction of State Route 2 and Route 13 in Leominster. Both lines connect the cities of Leominster, Worcester, Boston, Springfield, Hartford, CT and New York City, as well as destinations in northern New England.

Commuter rail service previously existed from Gardner to Boston. The service to Gardner was drastically cut back late in 1983 and discontinued on January 1, 1987. Today, service along the Fitchburg line to North Station in Boston terminates at the MBTA Fitchburg Commuter Rail Station. Access to the Fitchburg Station is available via connecting Wilson and MARTA buses. It should be noted that the new MBTA Wachusett Station currently under construction just off Route 2 in Fitchburg, is expected to reduce commute times for Gardner commuters.

The North Central Pathway is a recreational trail that runs over 5 miles through Gardner and the neighboring Town of Winchendon. It connects downtown Gardner with the Veterans Memorial Skating Rink, Heywood Hospital, and Mount Wachusett Community College before continuing through scenic landscapes and densely forested areas of the City.

There are no formal bicycle lanes along Gardner roadways however, we have completed a Complete Streets Study of our Timpany Boulevard commercial area, which will be incorporated into the **area's** future buildout. The City is considering establishing a City-wide complete streets policy to encourage increased walking and

biking options for residents. There are also a number of City-owned conservation properties that allow for off-road biking and hiking. In terms of walking, there is a network of sidewalks within the **City's** neighborhoods and the City's Subdivision Regulations requires sidewalks for new subdivisions.

The Gardner Municipal Airport is a General Aviation (GA) facility with a 3,000 foot - by 75 foot asphalt runway.

### Long-term Development Patterns

Long-term development patterns are difficult to predict because there are numerous factors that determine how land is developed. Many of these factors, such as the economy, are beyond the control of municipal government. Municipal government control over long-term development is dependent on local planning and zoning tools.

Completed in 1988, **Gardner's** most recent Comprehensive/Master Plan is seriously outdated. A Community Development Plan under E.O. 418 was completed in 2004 and the most recent Open Space & Recreation Plan expired in July 2013. Gardner is currently implementing two Urban Renewal Plans: the Downtown Urban Renewal Plan dated July 2011 and the Mill Street Corridor Urban Renewal Plan dated September 2012.

**Gardner's** zoning ordinance was updated in 2006 and contains a number of provisions designed to regulate smart growth and to protect environmental assets. The following is a list of those planning and zoning tools:

- ***Open Space Residential Development*** — Reduces lot size and preserves common open space. 50% of the **subdivision's** land area must be set aside for permanently protected open space.
- ***Accessory Apartments*** — Allows one supplemental housing unit within a single family home.
- ***Earth Removal*** — Special Permit to regulate removal operations and restoration at closure.
- ***Mixed-Use By Right*** — Promotes commercial and residential uses in the same zoning district encouraging more compact development.
- ***Rate of Development*** — Limits the rate of development once triggered by a threshold limit.
- ***Site Plan Review*** — Subjects larger projects to an additional level of review.
- ***Infill Development and Development Overlay District*** — Special Permit allows higher density, mixed-use, and relaxation of parking and set back requirements in commercial and industrial districts.

- **Smart Growth Planned Unit Development (PUD)** — Special Permit to promote compact, mixed-use development.
- **Industrial & Commercial PUD** — Special Permit to allow adaptive reuse of older industrial buildings.
- **Water Supply and Wetlands Protection** — Establishes overlay districts to provide additional protection to the City's water supply and wetland resource areas.
- **Wind Energy** — Promotes wind energy systems in industrial districts.
- **Large-scale Ground-mounted Solar Photovoltaic** — Promotes large-scale solar PV in industrial districts.

Map 6 Zoning is attached in Appendix A.

In addition to smart growth provisions in the zoning ordinance, the City received approval of three priority development areas pursuant to MGL Chapter 43D on September 24, 2008 and was designated a Green Community pursuant to Chapter 451 of the Acts of 2008 on December 16, 2010.

#### E) Implications and Conclusions

Gardner is a small urban center with low population density except in the long established neighborhoods around the central business district and limited or no population growth. Anchoring a regional economy of almost 60,000, Gardner has historically offered residents of Greater Gardner opportunities for work, shopping and play.

Over the last several decades, manufacturing jobs concentrated to a large extent in the woodworking industry slowly disappeared. Commuting to work outside of the region is now common.

Lacking resources and capacity to rebuild and reposition the local economy, Gardner has drawn limited investments in the new economy. As a result, Gardner continues to face the stubborn social and economic challenges faced by most small, manufacturing based cities that are clearly defined in the data set out in this section. A stagnate or declining population, low income and property values, and high unemployment rates mean that local resources are limited. Funds allocated to open space and recreation should focus on protecting existing environmental assets and maintaining current recreation facilities. Protecting additional environmental assets and expansion of recreational opportunities will depend on creative alternatives such as the use of grant funding and innovative planning and zoning tools.

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## Section 4      **ENVIRONMENTAL INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS**

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### A) GEOLOGY, SOILS AND TOPOGRAPHY

#### Geology

Gardner is located in the Gardner belt of the Merrimack Terrane. Retreating ice of the Connecticut Valley-Worcester Plateau lobe left dimples of sediment and a significant esker with exploitable sand and gravel deposits.

#### Soils

A majority of the soils within the Gardner area are comprised of very deep, loamy and sandy soils formed in glacial till derived from granite, schist, and gneiss on upland fill plains and moraine. A small percentage of the soils are comprised of very deep, loamy and sandy soils formed in glacial outwash, lacustrine and alluvial sediments on outwash plains and in stream valleys.

The soils in the area can be classified into two soil associations. One is Hinckley-Merrimac Association, located in the western part of the City, identified on Map 4-1 as Sand and Gravel. The second is Paxton-Woodbridge Association, located through the rest of the City and its surrounding land, identified on Map 7 as Till or Bedrock.

#### Topography

Gardner is located in the rolling uplands east of the Connecticut Valley with some slopes greater than 10%. Development in hilly terrain is more costly and presents greater risks to the environment.

The vast majority of the **City's** streams flow into the Otter River which feeds the Millers River. A very small portion in **Gardner's** north east corner is located in the watershed of the Nashua River.

Elevations in the City range from just over 900 feet above sea level near the Otter River to 1300 feet at the crest of Reservoir Hill. Wachusett Mountain, the highest point in the state east of the Connecticut River, rising 2,006 feet, is located 12 miles southeast of Gardner.

Refer to Map 7 Soils and Geological Features in Appendix A.

**Dunn Pond is another recreational pond well used by the public. Located within Gardner Heritage State Park its facilities (public beach, picnic areas, and visitor's center) and fish-stocking program attract sizable crowds.**

The largest artificial body of water is **Wright's** Reservoir. Originally constructed by Joseph Nathaniel and David Wright on Bancroft Hill for industrial purposes, today it serves the community as the main support in the local flood-control project built in the **1940's** by the Army Corps of Engineers. This pond, although limited to public access, offers warm water fisheries and other excellent recreational opportunities.

The second largest artificial body of water is Perley Brook Reservoir. It was built in 1958 to supplement Crystal Lake as **Gardner's** water supply. Although a secondary reservoir, it is closed to public use except by permit. While shoreline fishing is currently allowed at Perley Brook Reservoir, other recreational uses are restricted and swimming and boating is prohibited.

Crystal Lake is the city's primary public water supply and provides a scenic backdrop overlooking Monument Park and the downtown commercial district beyond. While active recreational opportunities, such as swimming, boating, and fishing, which were once popular on this waterbody, are no longer allowed, the area still provides many passive recreational opportunities. For instance, the North Central Pathway bike trail begins overlooking Crystal Lake and travels for nearly a mile overlooking the shoreline of the reservoir. On the opposite shoreline walkers, photographers, birdwatchers, and many other local people enjoy the wildlife, scenic beauty, and attractive landscaping of the Crystal Lake Cemetery overlooking the reservoir. This is a popular place for walking and often hosts local residents and workers on their lunch breaks, afternoon or evening strolls, or exercise routes.

Parker Pond is an artificial pond of substantial size, totaling some twenty-nine acres and having a linear shape. Parker Pond has been heavily impacted by silt deposits and weed growth. Parker Pond has been recognized in past Open Space and Recreation Plans as in need of rehabilitation. Studies have been done on the water quality, bottom conditions and the possibility of dredging the pond. If rehabilitated Parker Pond could offer warm water fishery and recreational opportunities close to the center of the city with existing and possible additional public access.

The Otter River forms a portion of the western boundary between Gardner and Templeton. Named after the abundant Brown Bearing Otter found by the early settlers, this is the only stream in Gardner worthy of being called a river. It runs through the southwest portion of the city and has the rare quality of running in a general direction towards the north. It empties into the **Miller's** River beyond the city limits. Several brooks feed the river including Bailey, Wilder, Foster, Greenwood, Pail Factory, Pond, Mahoney, Perley, and **Baker's** Brooks. The River and tributaries offer excellent recreational opportunities, including waterfowl hunting, fishing, hiking, and nature study.

The Gardner Fish and Gun Club and the Gardner Recreation Department stock the river and brooks with trout.

The City of Gardner has developed an area along the headwaters of the Otter River with a City well identified as the Snake Pond Well. This has brought the area and adjacent lands to greater attention and interest for well-field protection and for general open space conservation.

### Flood Hazard Areas

The Federal Emergency Management **Agency's** (FEMA) Flood Insurance Rate Map for the City of Gardner indicates flood prone areas. Gardner, with its relatively steep slopes and drainage characteristics, has well defined flood prone areas. The abundance of wetland areas provides large amounts of natural storage, thus reducing flood dangers downstream. Flooding sources studied include the Otter River, Perley Brook, Wilder Brook, Pond Brook, Baker Brook, Foster Brook, and Greenwood Brook.

### Wetlands

Wetlands comprise numerous types of wet environments such as marshes, wet meadows, ponds, bogs, swamps, and water bodies providing many ecological benefits. They help to maintain water supplies, purify polluted waters, diminish the destructive power of flood and storm waters, nurture wildlife, and provide numerous recreational opportunities. The general wetlands areas of Gardner have been mapped using information obtained from the Massachusetts Geographic Information System.

*Table 4-1-Surface Water Resources*

<b>Name</b>	<b>Approx. Size</b>	<b>Water Quality</b>	<b>Public Access</b>	<b>Recreational Uses</b>	<b>Notes</b>
<b>Baker Brook</b>	1 mile	Good	Poor		Very shallow, slow moving
<b>Bailey Brook</b>	2.5 miles	Good	Fair	Fishing, stocked w/trout & hunting.	
<b>Bents Pond</b>	14 acres	Poor	Poor		Very shallow
<b>Cowee Pond</b>	21 acres	Excellent	Restricted	Fishing	Public Water Supply
<b>Crystal Lake</b>	156 acres	Excellent	Restricted	Adjacent to North Central Pathway	Public Water Supply & Great Pond
<b>Brick Yard Pond</b>	5 acres	Poor	Poor		Former clay pit
<b>Duck Pond</b>	3 acres	Poor	Poor		Mt Wachusett CC
<b>Dunn Pond</b>	18 acres	Excellent	Excellent	State Park - fishing, swimming, boating. Stocked w/trout. Handicap accessible.	
<b>Dyer Pond</b>	2 acres	Good	Restricted	Used for raising bait shiners.	Privately owned
<b>Foster Brook</b>	3+ miles	Fair to Good	Fair	Fishing	
<b>Greenwood Brook</b>	1+ miles	Fair	Poor		
<b>Hilchey Pond</b>	11 acres	Fair	Poor		Very shallow
<b>Hobbys Pond</b>	9 acres	Good	Poor	Fishing	
<b>Hubbardston Brook</b>	1+ miles	Good	Fair	Fishing	
<b>Kendall Pond</b>	14 acres	Good	Poor	Several private clubs provide access for fishing, swimming, boating.	Great Pond
<b>Mahoney Brook</b>	3+ miles	Fair to Good	Fair		
<b>Murdock Pond</b>	2 acres	Good	Poor		

Name	Approx. Size	Water Quality	Public Access	Recreational Uses	Notes
<b>Otter River</b>	6+ miles	Fair	Fair	Fishing (catch/release), stocked w/trout, boating & hunting	
<b>Pail Factory Brook</b>	1+ miles	Good	Fair		
<b>Parkers Pond</b>	29 acres	Poor	Poor	Fishing & boating	Shallow due to storm water runoff
<b>Perley Brook</b>	4+ miles	Excellent	Fair	Fishing	Public Water Supply
<b>Perley Brook Reservoir</b>	55 acres	Excellent	Fair	Fishing, stocked w/trout	Public Water Supply
<b>Pond Brook</b>	2.5 miles	Good	Poor		
<b>Quag Pond</b>	1 acre	Bog	Poor		Bog
<b>Ramsdell Pond</b>	10 acres	Fair	Fair	Fishing	
<b>Snake Pond</b>	12 acres	Fair	Poor	Fishing	Great Pond
<b>Stump Pond</b>	1 acre	Good	Fair		
<b>Travers Pond</b>	4 acres	Poor	Poor	Fishing	
<b>Lake Wampanoag</b>	107 acres	Excellent	Fair	Fishing, swimming, boating	
<b>Wilder Brook</b>	3.5 miles	Good	Fair	Fishing	
<b>Wrights Reservoir</b>	65 acres	Good	Poor	Fishing & boating	

In addition to surface water resources, Map 9 Water Resources in Appendix A depicts surface and groundwater protection areas, aquifer recharge areas, DEP approve Zone **II's**, interim wellhead protection areas and wetland resource areas.

The Federal Emergency Management **Agency's** Flood Insurance Rate Maps indicate flood prone areas in Gardner. With relatively steep slopes and drainage characteristics, Gardner has well defined flood prone areas. Flooding sources include the Otter River, Perley Brook, Wilder Brook, Pond Brook, Baker Brook, Foster Brook and Greenwood Brook.



## B) VEGETATION

Gardner contains many valuable vegetative resources. In particular, the City has a considerable amount of forested lands containing quality, harvestable timber products. In addition, there are vast areas of wetland habitats containing a large variety of wetland vegetation which supports wildlife and provides important pollution and flood control measures for the City and region.

Approximately 60% of the **City's** dry land area is undeveloped. Map 10 Developed Lands in Appendix A highlights the areas already developed. The undeveloped land is diverse and consists of woodlands, open wetland resource areas and abandoned fields. White pine, red maple and mixed oaks are the dominant tree species in the upland forest areas. Forested wetlands consist of red maple, spruce, fir, tamarack and hemlock. The timber quality ranges from poor to good throughout the forest. Invasive and non-native vegetation include barberry, buckthorn, bittersweet, autumn olive and honeysuckle. Most of the invasive species can be found growing in the abandoned fields and near the roadways.

Much of the forest and wetland vegetation communities found in Gardner are relatively undisturbed and comprised primarily of native plant species. However, non-native, introduced, and invasive species can be found in some areas. Invasive and non-native vegetation include Japanese barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*), glossy buckthorn (*Frangula alnus*), Oriental bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*), autumn olive (*Elaeagnus umbellata*), Japanese knotweed (*Polygonum cuspidatum*), purple looserife (*Lythrum salicaria*), and Japanese honeysuckle (*Lonicera japonica*). Most of the invasive species can be found growing in the abandoned fields and near the roadways. The 2004 BiopMap and Living Waters Report for Gardner is included in Appendix A.

Recently, five Forest Stewardship Management Plans have been completed for Cowee Pond Reservoir, the Perley Brook Reservoir, the Crystal Lake Reservoir, Wildwood Cemetery Forest and the Snake Pond Forest. Management will focus on promoting a healthy forest environment for the safety and enjoyment of the Gardner residents who will visit the property. In 2014 forest management of these areas began in the form of timber harvests according to the **City's** Forest Stewardship Management Plans and the guidelines of the Massachusetts Forest Stewardship Program.

Since the last Open Space & Recreation Plan the City has been actively engaged in the management of public shade trees. It has been recognized that a considerable number of old, mature trees in the City are evenly aged and have reached their maximum life-span with respect to function and regard to safety. Trees that are dead, dying, damaged, or diseased have been identified and pruned or cut down and removed. Some of these trees have been replaced with young trees suitable for planting along City streets. However, a concerted effort is needed to replace the large number of trees that have died or been damaged and will need to be removed. The Department of Public Works and Conservation Commission have identified

this need and begun efforts to raise saplings for future shade tree plantings. Further, investigation and inventory of the **City's** shade trees will be needed to coordinate this effort and prioritize the need for plantings. For instance, the status and need for public shade trees within Environmental Justice neighborhoods should be assessed and considered.

### C) FISHERIES and WILDLIFE

**Gardner's** many open spaces, forests, wetlands, lakes, ponds, rivers, brooks, and streams provide ideal habitat for a wide variety of fish and wildlife.

It is not uncommon to find deer, bear, moose, otter, weasels, foxes, coyotes, raccoons, beaver, muskrat, skunks, possums, porcupines, or any other common mammal inhabiting this area. The forests, fields, wetlands and considerable edge-land habitats occurring along their interfaces, also provide habitat for a great many different species of birds, owls, hawks, and water fowl. It is not uncommon to view, red tail hawks, woodland hawks, osprey, bald eagles, loons, wood ducks, and all other common varieties of avian species. In particular, owls seem to gravitate to the area probably as a result of the substantial matrix of habitat types found within a small area providing a complex of edge, open space, and forest, and presumably affording abundant forage prey and ideal hunting conditions. Open areas like Crystal Lake Cemetery, the Otter River Conservation Area, and the North Central Pathway bike trail provide many wildlife viewing opportunities.

Popular game species can also be found and in **Gardner's** woodlands, wetlands, and wildlife management areas. Hunting opportunities exist for ruffed grouse, woodcock, turkey, deer, bear, rabbit, hare, fox, raccoon, and ring-necked pheasant. The Division of Fisheries and Wildlife manages the High Ridge Wildlife Management Area for upland bird hunting and stocks pheasant annually. Local sporting clubs also release populations of some these game species annually on their lands.

The forests, wetlands, and waterways of Gardner also support numerous amphibians and reptiles such as salamanders, newts, snakes, and turtles.

Fishing opportunities are also prevalent and worthy in Gardner. **Wright's** Reservoir and Lake Wampanoag, two of the largest water bodies in Gardner, sustain good warm water fish populations and have been known to produce trophy bass. Warm-water fish populations in **Gardner's** ponds include large-mouth bass (*Micropterus salmoides*), chain pickerel (*Esox niger*), pumpkinseed (*Lepomis gibbosus*), bluegill (*Lepomis macrochirus*), brown bullhead (*Ameiurus nebulosus*), American eel (*Anguilla rostrata*), yellow perch (*Perca flavescens*), black crappie (*Pomoxis nigromaculatus*), and white sucker (*Catostomus commersonii*). The many different ponds which are easily accessible provide good recreational fishing opportunities.

Cold-water fisheries also exist within Gardner. For instance, Perley Brook Reservoir, another large body of water and back-up reservoir, is a cold-water resource that supports healthy populations of stocked and native trout. The network of trails

around the reservoir provides great access for fishing and the cold-water springs and feeder streams allow for hold-over trout, increasing the chances of a nice catch. Dunn Pond, Kendall Pond, Bailey Brook, and Hubbardston Brook have suitable cold water conditions and access to allow stocking of trout.

The Otter River also receives trout stockings. The entire river is a catch and release stream. The tea-stained water characteristic of this river is a result of the high mineral content of the drainage area.

The many wetlands, swamps, and streams associated with these water bodies provide ideal habitat for muskrat, beaver, mink, skunk and a variety of water fowl.

Substantial and significant wildlife corridors exist throughout the City as a result of protected lands, protected water supplies and their associated forested watersheds, unprotected forested lands, stream corridors and their riparian zones and associated bordering vegetated wetlands. In general, most of these corridors follow stream systems and their riparian buffer zones. While many such corridors exist, some are limited and bisected by road crossings and developed areas. Several of these corridors end abruptly where they are bisected by the Route 2 corridor. Specifically, Pond Brook, Foster and Mahoney Brooks as well as the Otter River and their associated wetlands provide lengthy intact corridors on both the North and South sides of Route 2, but are not connected by adequate pathways or crossings where Route 2 bisects their associated stream corridors. Currently the existing culverts are not designed to current stream crossing standards. Implementation of stream crossing best management practices to meet current standards within these areas could provide substantial benefits to wildlife and fisheries resources that would have a regional impact.

#### D) SCENIC RESOURCES and UNIQUE ENVIRONMENTS

There are no landscapes located in Gardner listed in the Massachusetts Landscape Inventory as significant features recognized by the State. However, the Landscape Inventory does list nearby Wachusett Mountain as a significant feature which is visible from many areas in Gardner. Preservation of views from the City to Wachusett Mountain should be a priority for City planners.

Another significant land area in the region is the High Ridge Wildlife Management Area consisting of 2,018 acres located in the towns of Ashburnham and Westminster as well as Gardner. The High Ridge Wildlife Management area occupies 2,018 acres of variable terrain ranging from steeply sloping hillsides to nearly level fields and marches. There are several parking sites within the area. There are a number of small, cold water streams within the area as well as some marsh habitat. Vegetation includes mixed hardwoods interspersed with agricultural and brushy fields.

### Major Characteristic or Unusual Geologic Features

In addition to NHESP and BioMap2 features, Map 8 Unique Features in Appendix A identifies two types of land areas that offer unique features. The first area of uniqueness is the Gardner Esker, partially located on land owned by the City. The esker is remote with no formal access. The recent acquisition of the Cummings Conservation Area present an opportunity to provide a walking trail to access a portion of the esker. Unfortunately, the east/west trunk line of the Pan Am Railways dissects the esker.

The second area of uniqueness is acidic bogs and peat lands. Quag Pond is a highly acidic bog where the parasite Dwarf Mistletoe dominates. Dwarf Mistletoe is a threatened species.

The unnamed Level Bog and Kettlehole Level Bog are both considered to be of good quality although the Kettlehole Bog is poorly buffered. All three bogs are relatively remote with no formal access.

The Acidic Shrub is an acidic peat land fern which is in fair condition, although degraded by its lack of buffer to development.

### Cultural, Archeological and Historic Features

Map 8 in Appendix A also depicts **Gardner's** two registered Historic Districts. West Gardner Square Historic District encompasses the current civic and commercial center of the City and significant areas that once accommodated **Gardner's** furniture industry. The most significant buildings in the district include the Gardner News Building, the Heywood-Wakefield Company Complex, and City Hall. The district was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1985.

The Gardner Uptown Historic District encompasses the former civic heart of City. The 65-acre (26 ha) area includes the old town common, an early cemetery, and a modest number of non-residential buildings among a larger number of houses. The area was the center of civic life from the incorporation of Gardner in 1785 until municipal functions were moved to West Gardner beginning in the late 1920s. The district was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1999.

## E) ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES

### Brownfields

**Gardner's** economy has been based on manufacturing since the town was first settled in the late **1700's**. By the mid-**1800's** the economy was dominated by 15 major furniture manufacturers and the City became known as the "**Chair** City Capital of the

**World**". Today, the few surviving large mill buildings that once accommodated furniture manufacturing now serve a variety of uses, including retail furniture outlets, offices and apartments and an assisted living facility.

According to the latest information from the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MADEP), and the **city's** own records, there are over 100 Brownfield sites located in the City of Gardner ranging in size from under one acre to over 30 acres. The majority of these are located within the central downtown area, the historic city center, and many others are spread throughout the City, in many cases surrounded by residential neighborhoods, and located adjacent to waterways. In fact, most residential neighborhoods grew up directly adjacent to the mills where the residents once worked, along with their schools, churches, playgrounds and stores.

The City of Gardner has an established track record of successfully using United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and MADEP funds for site assessment and remediation projects. Funds have been accessed either directly through grant awards to the City, or by intermediaries, such as the Montachusett Regional Planning **Commission's** (MRPC) site assessment funds. The City has also accessed resources from the Massachusetts Attorney **General's** Brownfields Initiative, and **MassDevelopment's** Brownfield Fund for assessment and cleanup activities. The City currently administers a \$1 million Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund and has recently completed two major cleanups with these funds.

#### Ground/Surface Water Protection

A very different challenge exists on the 2,553 City owned acres of permanently protected, forested land much of it located in the Crystal Lake watershed, the **City's** primary source of drinking water. These areas have numerous informal trails and are used for hunting, fishing (not in Crystal Lake), hiking and snowmobiling. Monitoring this usage is inadequate because of budget and staff limitation in DPW and Conservation Commission.

#### Landfills

The City Landfill located on West Street was closed in 2005 and the cap was completed in 2007. The site is still used as a transfer station. The City also maintains a sludge landfill for the **City's** Waste Water Treatment Facility. The sludge landfill is approaching capacity and the City is looking at possibilities such as vertical and/or horizontal expansion, and alternative sludge disposal methods.

#### Erosion/Chronic Flooding

The City has a very active and involved Conservation Commission which enables the City to deal quickly with any erosion and flooding issues. There is very few chronic flooding or erosion problems in the City. One exception is the Elm Street drainage system which is over capacity and undersized. Frequent flooding and surface flow

occurs within this area during periods of heavy rains. In general, the abundance of wetland areas throughout the City provides large amounts of natural storage, thus reducing flood dangers downstream.

The City maintains 8 dams and performs vegetation management with accordance of the office of damn safely and the Army Corps of Engineers. There are some private dams within the city of which 1 is in serious disrepair. This has not caused any flooding issues. There are no sites having significant erosion potential and no recent erosion problems have been identified. In terms of flooding, there is one site with documented flooding problems.

### Development Impact

Development has been very slow since the economic downturn in 2008 and has not yet recovered. As seen in Section 3, Table 3-2 Building Permits issued, both single family homes and approved residential developments are down significantly from the last OSRP. Of the approved residential developments, Wilder Brook has had little progress with only 2-3 units being built per year. Sapphire Park started construction a year ago and has less than a dozen units to date and the Foster Brooks subdivision has been tabled.

### Forestry

As part of the Forest Stewardship Program, the City is committed to promoting ecologically responsible resource management by maintaining healthy forests. We have up to date forestry management plans which can be viewed on the **City's** website here:

[http://www.gardner-ma.gov/pages/gardnerma\\_engineering/forestry](http://www.gardner-ma.gov/pages/gardnerma_engineering/forestry).

The City began the Forestry Stewardship Program in June 2011 and developed plans for five locations; Cowee Pond, Perley Brook, Crystal Lake, Snake Pond, and Wildwood which can be seen on Map 16 Action Plan, in Appendix A. A forestry consultant has performed selective cuttings at Perley Brook and Crystal Lake, and Cowee Pond cutting will be performed this calendar year. 88 acres of Perley Brook has been harvested, vista cut at Crystal Lake 18.

### Sedimentation

As with many ponds in the Northeast the City has issues with sedimentation and excessive aquatic plant growth in many of our ponds. Of the many shallow ponds, Parkers Pond has had a study done to analyze the contaminants contributing to the sedimentation problems. There is s storm water improvement plan under the Massachusetts Department of Transportation Impaired Waters program that has been approved by the Conservation Commission. The project will implement storm water Best Management Practices to help to improve the water quality of **Parker's** Pond.

### Public Shade Trees

A Shade Tree Inventory is needed to document and assess quantity, and quality/condition of our **City's** shade trees. This could coincide with and compliment the ongoing City Sidewalks Inventory.

Since the last Open Space & Recreation Plan the City has been actively engaged in the management of public shade trees. It has been recognized that a considerable number of old, mature trees in the City are evenly aged and have reached their maximum life-span with respect to function and regard to safety. Trees that are dead, dying, damaged, or diseased have been identified and pruned or cut down and removed. Some of these trees have been replaced with young trees suitable for planting along City streets. However, a concerted effort is needed to replace the large number of trees that have died or been damaged and will need to be removed. The Department of Public Works and Conservation Commission have identified this need and begun efforts to raise saplings for future shade tree plantings. A quantitative and qualitative inventory of the **City's** shade trees will be needed to coordinate this effort and prioritize the need for future plantings. The status and need for public shade trees within Environmental Justice neighborhoods should be assessed and considered as a priority.

The DPW currently replants about 25 trees per year as part of its City Shade Tree program. In the future trees raised by the City may be able to supplement this number. Trees are planted on an as-need basis determined by public requests and assessments by the DPW. Future trees will be planted in areas or specific locations where trees have been or will be removed.

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## Section 5      **INVENTORY OF LANDS**

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### A) OVERVIEW

For the purpose of this report, Open Space is defined as any substantially undeveloped property with conservation or recreation interest whether owned by a public entity, non-profit, or private party. Property intended primarily for recreation, whether developed or undeveloped and whether or not it includes open space (ex – Greenwood Pool) is included in the inventory.

Protected and unprotected properties are included and identified. A protected open space and recreation property has provision to reduce the risk of destruction or degradation on the property. Unprotected properties lack those provisions and are therefore more vulnerable to loss or conversion to non-open space and recreation uses.

Properties can experience various degrees of protection and by several methods:

- Private lands can be protected in perpetuity or for a specified time through deed restrictions or conservation easements.
- Lands under special taxation programs (Chapter 61, 61A, or 61B) are actively managed by their owners for forestry, agricultural, horticultural, or recreational use. These lands have limited protection.
- Lands acquired for watershed and aquifer protection are usually permanently protected open space.
- Public recreation and conservation lands may be permanently protected open space, provided they have been dedicated to such use by deed.
- Municipal properties may be protected via a City Council vote to acquire them as protected properties.
- Private, public, and non-profit conservation and recreation lands are protected under Article 97 of the Articles of Amendment to the State Constitution.

### B) LANDS OF CONSERVATION INTEREST

The primary objective of this section is to consider all valuable open land and identify those parcels that are protected open space, and those that are not protected and therefore vulnerable to some type of development. The vulnerable open space parcels are then prioritized to direct future preservation activities by the City, State and private conservation groups.



Table 5.1 contains a summary of all Open Space parcels. The open space parcels are categorized according to each **parcel's** level of protection: permanent, limited (time restricted or municipal, state or non-profit with no permanent protection) and not protected.

*Table 5-1-Summary of Open Space*

	<i>Number of Parcels</i>	<i>Size (Acres)</i>
<b>Permanently Protected</b>		
Municipal	85	2,553.3
State	12	1,299.5
Non-Profit / Trust	7	511.6
Private (Conservation Restriction)	1	9.8
<i>Subtotal</i>	<b>105</b>	<b>4,374.2</b>
<b>Limited Protection</b>		
Chapter 61 Forest	2	100.4
Chapter 61A Agriculture	7	301.6
Chapter 61B Recreation	12	469.4
Other (Municipal, State, Non-Profit, Trust)	26	806
<i>Subtotal</i>	<b>47</b>	<b>1,677.4</b>
<b>Total Acres of Land Having Some Level of Protection</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>6,051.6</b>
<b>Not Protected (Undeveloped Lands)</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>2,411</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>262</b>	<b>8,462.6</b>
Total Acres of Land in Gardner		14,144.5
% Open Space		59.8%
% Permanently Protected Open Space		30.9%
% Open Space Having Limited Protection		11.9%
% Open Space Having No Protection		17.0%

Table 1 in Appendix B contains the complete Open Space Inventory listing ownership, management entity or second owner, purpose (current use), zoning and level of protection for each of the 262 parcels. Map 11 Level of Protection in Appendix A depicts all 262 open space parcels and the level of protection for each parcel. Map 12 Open Space by Ownership in Appendix A depicts all permanently protected parcels by the ownership type (Municipal, State, Non-Profit/Trust, Private).

The process used to define an open space parcel for the purpose of this plan and to generate the inventory of 262 open space parcels is as follows:

#### Open Space Inventory

1. Begin with the current record of the **Assessor's** database and the City's updated GIS parcel layer as well as the MASS GIS open space layer.
2. Identify Chapter 61 parcels and Open Space/Recreation parcels by DOR use code. Add any parcel with a Conservation Restriction (Gardner has only one).
3. Identify any remaining parcels of open, undeveloped land (parcels with no structures on them) and exclude parcels less than 5 acres in size.
4. Sort the resulting list by **Assessor's** land use code to exclude industrial, commercial and other non-appropriate properties with discretion.
5. Assign protection levels: permanent, limited (time restricted or municipal, state or club owned and not otherwise protected) and not protected.
6. Review parcels of less than 5 acres removed in step 3 and add back to the inventory if special circumstances make the parcel desirable open space vulnerable to development.

The next steps identified which of the 262 open space parcels are a priority and then rank each priority parcel to focus future preservation efforts.

The process used to prioritize open space parcels for future preservation activities is as follows:

#### Prioritizing Lands of Interest

1. Remove parcels from the Open Space Inventory that are permanently protected or have a conservation restriction.
2. Remove parcels from the Open Space Inventory with limited protection.
3. Rate the remaining parcels according to the following criteria: located within a watershed protection district; adjacent to the Otter River; adjacent to Chapter 61 parcels or permanently protected open space; adjacent to other open space parcels identified in the Inventory; and identified on the MassGIS BioMap2.
4. Remove parcels of less than 10 acres that do not meet at least two of the criteria in step 3.
5. Review the less than 5 acres list (item 6 above) to extract and include as open space selected desirable parcels per criteria in item 3.

6. Remove parcels known to be inappropriate for open space. For example, properties owned by utility companies and properties with subdivision or special permit approvals.

This process reduced list to 58 open space parcels that were then ranked using the following criteria:

- Priority Rank 1 — greater than 50 acres and adjacent to protected open space.
- Priority Rank 2 — greater than 50 acres.
- Priority Rank 3 — adjacent to protected open space.
- Priority Rank 4 — in watershed or BioMap2 or adjacent to Otter River.
- Priority Rank 5 — remaining parcels.

The priority rankings were then adjusted to emphasize connected areas or corridors. If a cluster of properties had mostly 2 and 3 rankings, then they area was treated as a whole and assigned the value of the highest priority.

Table 5.2 contains a list the 24 open space parcels categorized as priority 1 and 2 for future preservation activities.

*Table 5-2- Priority 1 and 2 Properties*

<b>Street Address</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>H2O</b>	<b>Otter River</b>	<b>Adjacent</b>	<b>AdjOS</b>	<b>BIOMAP</b>	<b>Priority Rank</b>
RAYMOND ST	86.75			OS		X	1
PEARL ST	90.32			OS CH61	X	X	1
HOWARD ST	14.65				X		1
CLARK ST	112.78			CH61	X	X	1
HOWARD ST	184.35			OS CH61	X	X	1
MATTHEWS ST	22.54			CH61	X		1
CLARK ST	13.60				X		1
STONE ST & EATON ST	55.92	X				X	1
CLARK ST	16.12				X		1
RIVERSIDE RD	62.73		X	OS CH61			1
COLEMAN ST	50.81		X		X		2
WEST ST	145.51			CH61	X		2

<b>Street Address</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>H2O</b>	<b>Otter River</b>	<b>Adjacent</b>	<b>AdjOS</b>	<b>BIOMAP</b>	<b>Priority Rank</b>
BETTY SPRING RD	10.31				X		2
BETTY SPRING RD	68.72				X		2
WILLIS RD	27.13				X		2
WEST ST	21.97				X		2
CLARK ST	77.43				X		2
OTTER RIVER RD	32.62				X		2
OTTER RIVER RD	23.47				X		2
OTTER RIVER RD	48.77				X		2
WEST ST	11.34			CH61	X		2
OTTER RIVER RD	27.19				X		2
CHAPEL ST	11.80				X		2
CLARK ST	44.89			CH61	X		2

Table 2 in Appendix B contains the entire list of 58 parcels of interest ranked according to the above criteria. Map 13 Priority Ranking in Appendix A also depicts all 58 ranked parcels of interest.

Table 5.3 contains the list of the 21 Chapter 61 properties.

*Table 5-3-Chapter 61 Parcels*

<b>PID</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Acres</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Owner</b>
W37-17-2	MATTHEWS ST	50.43	61	KYMALAINEN THOMAS J & ALICE M TRSTES
W12-4-3	PARTRIDGE ST	50.00	61	SHUFFLETON BLANCHE E
W17-17-9	81 PARTRIDGE ST	94.21	61A	ANDERSON AUGUST P & SHERRY C TRSTES
R07-7-1	386 WHITNEY ST	22.01	61A	ANDERSON PAUL H & GAIL A
R07-23-14B	426 LOVEWELL ST	5.85	61A	BARRETT JAMES A & JOANNE M
W27-14-1	SMITH ST	8.00	61A	CROTEAU RUSSELL R & MARY A
M42-8-8	GREEN ST	31.50	61A	GUERTIN ANDRE E & SUZANNE G
R07-12-4	402 WHITNEY ST	25.00	61A	HALLOCK PETER E & JAYNE

PID	Address	Acres	Type	Owner
R42-21-1	827 GREEN ST	115.00	61A	ROSENBLATT DEBORAH M
M12-4-17	SAWYER ST	43.82	61B	BALDUCCI MARIO
R12-19-39	102 LOVEWELL ST	26.77	61B	BAZYDLO TODD H
M22-19-1	HARVARD ST	10.63	61B	BORIS CHARLES M & MICHAEL C TRSTES
H42-17-2E	61 HOWARD ST	13.75	61B	BOUCHER EUGENE J & CRYSTAL L
R07-3-11	LOVEWELL ST	127.49	61B	DUBZINSKI WJ JR & FISHER DANA M TRSTS
H17-7-1	W BROADWAY	5.10	61B	EAMES WARREN B & ADAMS ALICE L TRSTES
H32-4-19	538 CLARK ST	95.00	61B	GARDNER FISH & GUN CLUB
H32-5-17	CLARK ST	27.90	61B	GARDNER FISH & GUN CLUB
H37-23-1A	CLARK ST	14.00	61B	GARDNER FISH & GUN CLUB
H37-23-34	CLARK ST	10.00	61B	GARDNER FISH & GUN CLUB
W27-4-4	48 CHAPEL ST	25.89	61B	HUNTER HUGH W & GLADYS S
H27-7-2	500 NOTRE DAME RD	69.10	61B	ROUSSEAU ALAN

Map 14 Chapter 61 Lands in Appendix A depicts all 21 parcels covered by the provisions of Chapter 61.

Chapter 61 properties are listed separately from other open space properties because of **‘right of first refusal’** provision that gives the City more control over the future development of the properties. The City has a track record of exercising Chapter 61 **‘right of first refusal’** provision or assigning that right to a conservation organization. A separate listing of the Chapter 61 properties helps to highlight properties that should be considered for permanent bases if they become available.

#### C) LANDS OF RECREATION INTEREST

Municipal, State-owned and privately-owned public recreational facilities are listed in Table 5.4.

Table 5-4-Recreational Facilities

<b>Facility</b>	<b>Ac.</b>	<b>Main Activities</b>	<b>Responsible Entity</b>	<b>EJ Area</b>	<b>Condition</b>
<b>Municipal</b>					
Jackson Playground	8.1	Ballfield, Basketball and Tot Lot.	DPW	Yes	Reconstruction underway.
Greenwood Playground	3.6	Ballfield, Basketball, Tot Lot and paved walking path.	DPW	Yes	Good
Olivia Case Playground	7.7	Ballfield, Tennis, Tot Lot and hard packed walking path.	DPW	No	Excellent
Stedman Ballfield	3.0	Ballfield	DPW, School Dept.	No	Reconstruction underway.
Pulaski Playground	4.4	Basketball, 2 Tot Lots and paved walking path.	DPW	Yes	Good
Bickford Playground	3.9	Ballfield, Basketball, Volleyball, Tot Lot, 2 picnic tables and hard packed walking path.	DPW	No	Good
Otter River Conservation Area	60.5	Fishing, car-top boat launch site, hiking.	ConCom	No	Unimproved trails
Cummings Conservation Area	122.0	Hiking, fishing and hunting	ConCom	No	Unimproved trails
Gardner City Forest	2,009.0	Hiking, hunting, fishing and water supply protection.	DPW	No	Unimproved trails
North Central Pathway	5.0	Paved walking/biking path.	North Central Pathway Comm & DPW	No	Good
Monument Park	1.0	Outdoor movies and concerts.	DPW	No	Excellent
Golf Municipal Course	110.0	18 hole golf course, pro shop and restaurant/club house.	Municipal Golf Course Commission	No	Good
Municipal Driving Range	10.0	12 teeing stations	Municipal Golf Course Commission	No	Good
Greenwood Outdoor Pool	3.0	Swimming	City	Abutting	Good
Wilder Field	7.5	Ballfields	DPW	Yes	Poor (wet)

<b>Facility</b>	<b>Ac.</b>	<b>Main Activities</b>	<b>Responsible Entity</b>	<b>EJ Area</b>	<b>Condition</b>
<b>State</b>					
Mount Wachusett Comm. College	272.0	Swimming, tennis, health & wellness center, athletic fields	MWCC	No	Excellent
Veterans Skating Rink	4.5	Ice Skating	DCR	Abutting	Good
Dunn Park	116.0	Swimming, hiking, picnicking, tot lot	DCR	No	Excellent
High Ridge Wildlife Area	1,012.0	Hunting and hiking	Fish & Wildlife	No	Unimproved trails
<b>Private</b>					
Rome Conservation Area	175.0	Hunting and hiking	North County Land Trust	No	Nature trails
Lake Wampanoag Wildlife Sanctuary	368.0	Hiking	Audubon Society	No	Nature trails
Camp Collier	101.3	Camping, fishing and hiking	Monadnock Trust	No	Poor
Gardner Fish & Gun Club	146.9	Hunting, Fishing and Trap Shooting	Gardner Fish & Gun Club	No	Good
Westend Beagle Club	47.7	Hunting and Fishing	Westend Beagle Club	No	Good
Gardner Rabbit Club	42.4	Hunting	Gardner Rabbit Club	No	Good

The City significantly increased efforts to improve the conditions of its 5 playgrounds starting in July 2012 when the responsibility for maintenance was consolidated into the Department of Public Works (DPW). In addition, Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funded projects at Greenwood playground and volunteer initiatives at Olivia Case playground recently upgraded equipment and improved playing fields. DPW's reconstruction of Stedman Ballfield and a CDBG funded project at Jackson playground are also underway.

Map 15 Open Space and Recreation Facilities in Appendix A depicts the facilities listed in Table 5.4.

#### D) PARK AND OPEN SPACE EQUITY

As noted in Table 5.4, Pulaski and Greenwood playgrounds are located within an Environmental Justice (EJ) area. Pulaski and Greenwood playgrounds are 100% ADA compliant. The City's other three playgrounds are not 100% ADA compliant.

Site access and accessibility to people with disabilities for all municipally owned conservation and recreation facilities are detailed in Appendix E, Table 1.

Because of budget constraints, the Action Plan proposes only one new playground to be located in West Gardner which current has no playground facilities. West Gardner is not an EJ area.



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## Section 6      **COMMUNITY VISION**

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### A) DESCRIPTION OF PROCESS

In April 2014 the Open Space and Recreation Plan Committee met to initiate the work of updating the 2006 plan. The Committee members represented the following:

- Conservation Commission
- Planning Board
- City Council
- Municipal Grounds Commission
- Dept. of Community Development & Planning
- Engineering/Survey Dept.
- North County Land Trust
- Gardner Redevelopment Authority

The Committee met eight (8) times between April and November. Two public forums were held on May 27 and September 30 as listed in Table 6.1. A citizen based survey consisting of fourteen (14) questions that focused on the types of recreational activities and open space priorities that respondents believe to be important. The questionnaire was made available on the City's website and at the public library, City Hall, Senior Center and Senior Housing projects. Two hundred and forty-seven (247) online surveys and 4 paper surveys were completed.

Other means of outreach included 4 paid advertisements and 3 news articles in The Gardner News; intermittent text notices on the local cable station; announcements at City Council televised meetings; a request for comments in the Chamber of **Commerce's** weekly newsletter; and postings on several widely followed Facebook pages including the Facebook page of Mayor Mark Hawke.

Lastly, formal presentations were made at public meetings of the Conservation Commission, Planning Board and City Council. The Planning Board meetings was videotaped and aired on the local cable network. The City Council meeting was broadcast live and rerun several times on the local cable network. The complete meeting schedule is listed in Table 6-1.

Table 6-1- Meeting and Presentations

<b>Event</b>	<b>Date</b>
First Committee Meeting	4/11/2014
Committee Meeting	5/19/2014
Public Meeting	5/27/2014
Committee Meeting	6/25/2014
Committee Meeting	7/23/2014
Committee Meeting	9/10/2014
Public Meeting	9/30/2014
Conservation Commission Meeting Presentation	10/27/2014
Planning Board Meeting Presentation	10/28/2014

## B) STATEMENT OF OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION GOALS

The overall purpose of the 2015 - 2019 Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) is to provide **Gardner's** residents with a diverse system of interconnected open space areas and quality recreational opportunities that protect natural resources, promote public health, and enhance the quality of life. Enhancing the quality of life in a community maintains a careful balance between equity, environment and economy.

More specifically, the goals of this plan are:

- Protect and improve the quality of existing open spaces, parks and recreational opportunities.
- Selective expansion of open spaces, parks and recreational opportunities.
- Protect water resources and improve water quality.
- Accommodate new growth where the environment can best support it.
- Increase public awareness and stewardship of the City's water resources, forests, parks and conservation areas.

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## Section 7      **ANALYSIS OF NEEDS**

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The OSRP Committee, with help from various City staff and through the public input process, determined the following to be **Gardner's** most urgent resource protection, community and management needs. In addition to identifying these needs, this plan aims to address them in a manner which is consistent with the four primary goals and objectives of the Massachusetts Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP):

- Increase the availability of all types of trails for recreation
- Increase the availability of water-based recreation
- Invest in recreation and conservation areas that are close to home for short visits
- Invest in racially, economically, and age diverse neighborhoods given their projected increase in participation in outdoor recreation

This revised plan identifies several specific needs which are consistent with the targeted needs recognized by the Massachusetts Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). The Goals and Objectives and subsequent Action Plan items of this report reflects those consistencies and illustrates our plan for addressing them to meet the needs of the public of Gardner, locally, and the statewide needs outlined by the Massachusetts SCORP.

### A) SUMMARY OF RESOURCE PROTECTION NEEDS

The City has a large surface water supply (Crystal Lake) and a ground water supply well (Snake Pond). In addition, there is Perley Brook, a secondary surface water supply to Crystal Lake. Much of the land has been protected adjacent to these areas, but the protection of additional lands will lend to enhancement of water supply protection.

Some of the more recent open space acquisitions have been in the western part of the City adjacent to the Otter River Watershed. The Otter River provides habitat to a variety of wildlife and provides recreations opportunities, and this river ultimately feeds into the Long Island sound. The goal is to protect additional open space to expand large blocks of existing preserved lands.

There is a need for improved storm water management to assist with protecting our ground and surface water supplies, wildlife habitats, and preserving open space for future generations. The City has been classified by the USEPA MS4 and is required to protect water quality.

The City is in the process of implementing their Forestry Stewardship programs which covers approximately 75% of City-owned open space. These plans were developed in 2010 and the first plan was executed a year ago. Only x acres have been fixed to date.

Copies of the five Stewardship Plans and an Outreach Plan are available on the **City's** website: [http://www.gardner-ma.gov/pages/gardnerma\\_engineering/forestry](http://www.gardner-ma.gov/pages/gardnerma_engineering/forestry).

## B) SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY NEEDS

The results of the community survey yielded a need for improving **children's** play areas, improvements to City Sidewalks, and an increase in natural conservation areas. Meeting these needs is directly in line with several of the major goals outlined in the Massachusetts SCORP.

In general the Community would benefit from improved public access to waterways, additional conservation areas, enhancements to conservation and recreation areas and their associated amenities, improved visibility, security features and lighting within playgrounds and along pathways, improved trails, and improved access, promotion, and signage of City-owned conservation areas and open space lands.

Improvements to pedestrian mobility throughout the City, and especially to the schools, were identified as a top Community Need. The City has pursued some improvements to sidewalks and rail trails through grant writing and will continue to identify and pursue these opportunities. The improvements of sidewalks and additional pathways would benefit the entire Community and provide connections between neighborhoods, central business district, educational institutions, and recreational areas. The City continues planning for the extension of the North Central Pathway Rail Trail which will provide a valuable shared-use pathway that can be used by all ages. Improvements to sidewalks and increased plantings of public shade trees within the Cities Environmental Justice areas would have a substantial impact on addressing Community Needs within those areas.

The City has improved its entire playground infrastructure over the last several years and as part of the improvements, has addressed the needs of special populations. Three parks (Ovila Case, Bickford and Polaski) have had walking paths added which are popular with young families and the elderly population. These paths also meet ADA requirements for wheelchair accessibility. Most recently, accessible play areas with equipment have been installed at Greenwood and Jackson Playgrounds.

Greenwood Pool, the **City's** only public outdoor pool, has undergone recent renovations that has improved the facility and added a lift to the pool which enables handicap access into the water. The indoor pool is closed due to the deteriorating condition of the building, but there is a plan to conduct a feasibility study to address the financial outlook for rehabilitating the structure and sustaining its operation.

The City plans on conducting a parking management plan for the downtown central business district. One result of this study is to ensure there is sufficient handicapped parking. The City recently added several handicapped parking spots in the downtown area, but the planned study will aim to confirm the added spaces are adequate. There are several large apartment complexes in the downtown area that house elderly populations, so the City is working to assist this population with improvements such as signage, improved sidewalks, handicap ramps, and handicapped parking spots.

A topic that has been widely discussed as a community need is the creation of a skate park. During the design process the City requested formal ideas from students in the school system and incorporated many of the ideas into the design. Final design has been completed with construction slated to begin in the fall of 2015. This skate park is being funded by a CDBG in an economically challenged part of the City and hopes to provide an opportunity for a variety of ages; from young children to teenagers.

### Recreation Areas

The survey results indicated that more than half the community is not satisfied by the amount of Open Space, and many feel that improvements need to be made to the existing recreational areas. Of the improvements to open space and recreation areas, the focus was specifically on young children while the least important areas were for hunting and fishing, farmlands and historic preservation (see question 4 of the Survey in Appendix E). When asked what top three facilities were needed in Gardner (question 6 appendix m), the responses were the reopening of Greenwood Indoor Pool (47.5%), Improvements to **Children's** Play (37.5%), Greenwood Outdoor Pool (33.8%) and improved City Sidewalks (25.8%). It should be noted that a special interest group for the preservation of the Greenwood Pool made up a significant amount of survey respondents.

Many comments received remarked on the lack of available youth soccer fields in the City. There is only one field which is currently in a very wet area of Waterford School. All other games are played at the Mount Wachusett Community College facilities. A recommendation of the OSRP is to develop a multi-purpose Municipal park with playground equipment and athletic fields in West Gardner where there is an absence of these features.

### Sidewalks

The City has a significant amount of sidewalks which can be seen in [Map 5 Appendix E](#) and almost all respondents indicated that they had used these sidewalks (question 5). The City recently had a complete streets audit performed and will be working towards a sidewalk prioritization program. Several sidewalks in downtown Gardner have been recently updated with CDBG funds.

### Tax Base

The **City's** residential tax base has been in a decline since 2008 while the commercial and industrial tax base has been in a slight incline. The residents of Gardner are still dealing with the financial implications of the economic downturn, so the goal is to reduce pressure on residential property taxes by expanding the commercial and industrial tax base. There are several available lots in commercial and industrial zones including the Summit Industrial Park and the Mill Street Urban Renewal area.

In addition to property taxes it is equally important to hold water and sewer fees to levels necessary to meet ever increasing quality standards and to maintain maintenance programs.

### Funding for Land Protection

There are a variety of potential funding sources for open space acquisition. The community indicated that they were willing to pay an increase in taxes for additional recreational opportunities and the implementation of the Community Preservation Act (CPA) may help to achieve this. Residents should be given the opportunity to vote for or against adoption of the CPA to provide additional financial support to preserve Open Space and develop outdoor recreational facilities. Additional funds may come from DEM trail grants, land trust purchases, negotiation of easements or other sources

## C) SUMMARY OF MANAGEMENT NEEDS

In order to effectively implement the OSRP the City needs to increase capacities to manage and maintain water resources, forests, parks, conservation areas and recreation facilities. The development of an Open space and Recreation Committee as well as the addition of a Recreation and Wellness Coordinator are both needed to achieve this. This will improve coordination among City departments and with local groups, neighboring communities, and State agencies and will help to expand the funding opportunities to implement the OSRP.

There are also several aspects in the land management of conservation areas that would benefit from improvement. Many of the open space lands are in need of trail management and better signage. With constricted budgets and lack of staffing, these properties have been low on the priority listing for the City. Expanded funding and implementing a volunteer program could help tremendously with improving the conservation areas.

Enhanced public outreach and education as well as supporting public recreation programs is also an important management need. The City participates in the Forest Stewardship Program and has developed a Forest Management Plan, but is unable to

implement the outreach component due to lack of staffing. The City does have a Conservation Agent who does assist with some of the needs, but his position is part-time so **he's** limited in his availability. One of the plan recommendations is to increase the Conservations Agent hours so that the position is full time.

## D) GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

**Goal One** — Protect and improve the quality of existing open spaces, parks and recreational opportunities.

1. Continue aggressive maintenance program at parks and playgrounds.
2. Upgrade playground equipment, playing fields and walking tracks.
3. Improve management and coordination among departments and with local groups, surrounding communities and State agencies.
4. Work with Police Department to ensure that parks and playgrounds are family friendly and to curtail illegal activities.
5. Upgrade existing sidewalks and hiking trail networks.

**Goal Two** — Selective expansion of open spaces, parks and recreational opportunities:

1. Protect additional open space (refer to Table 5.2).
2. Include provisions for open spaces, parks and recreation in redevelopment plans for Brownfields.
3. Improve access to lakes, ponds and rivers.
4. Create outdoor recreational opportunities in west Gardner.
5. Expand outdoor facilities for young children.
6. Provide a place for dogs to run free without getting in trouble.

**Goal Three** — Protect water resources and improve water quality:

1. Improve storm water management.
2. Protect additional land in water supply protection districts.
3. Improve capacity to administer local wetland resource protection ordinance.
4. Improve water conservation.

**Goal Four** — Accommodate growth where the environment can best support it:

1. Concentrate growth in established neighborhoods.
2. Upgrade existing municipal infrastructure.
3. Continue implementation of **Gardner's** Urban Renewal Plans.

**Goal Five** — Increase public awareness, use and stewardship of the City's water resources, forests, parks, conservation areas and recreational opportunities:

1. Promote use and stewardship of local natural resources and the health benefits of using recreation facilities.
2. Conduct a public shade tree inventory
3. Promote family friendly parks.
4. Promote universally accessible facilities.
5. Conduct public meetings and site visits.
6. Improve management and coordination among Departments and with local groups, surrounding communities and State agencies.



## Section 8 SEVEN YEAR ACTION PLAN

The Seven Year Action Plan contains a list of prioritized action items associated with each goal along with a timeframe for each. The projects and recommendations making up the action items were developed and prioritized by the OSRP Committee considering community input and through consultation with City staff. Some of the actions listed include projects and recommendations that have been in development for many years and were contained in previous **OSRP's**.

Each of the action items identifies the responsible party(s) that will be critical to implementing and completing related tasks. Each of the action items also estimates the timeframe needed to implement the project or recommendation.

Funding is critical to the implementation of many of the action items, and the City will seek funding from a variety of sources — general City funds, grant awards, volunteer efforts and private donations. It is difficult to identify specific funding sources for each of the action items, however, we have made an attempt to match each action item with applicable funding sources. The City has a long history of securing state grants for land conservation and recreation, and has recently made significant increases in the City budget for maintenance of parks and playgrounds. A list of these possible funding sources is listed in Appendix C.

Map 16 Action Plan is in Appendix A.

Acronyms of organizations potentially responsible for implementing action items:

Organizations		Funding	
CC	City Council	CF	City Funding
CE	City Engineer	P	Private
ConCom	Conservation Commission	NP	Non-Profit Donations
DCDP	Department of Community Development and Planning	GF	Grant Funds
DPW	Department of Public Works	PD	Private Donations
GPD	Gardner Police Department	VE	Volunteer Efforts
MRWC	Millers River Watershed Council	MRWC	Millers River Watershed Council
MRPC	Montachusett Regional Planning Commission		
PB	Planning Board		

**GOAL 1** - Protect and improve the quality of existing open spaces, parks and recreational opportunities.

Goal	Responsible Party	Funding	Year						
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>Hire additional DPW Staff for maintenance of Parks and Playgrounds.</i>	DPW	CF	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
<i>Continue implementation of Forest Stewardship Program.</i>	CE, ConCom	CF, VE	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
<i>Adopt a Local Ordinance creating a Parks, Recreation, and Open Space (PROS) Coordinating Committee</i>	M, CC	N/A	●	●					
<i>Create a Recreation and Wellness Coordinator Position.</i>	M, CC	CF	●	●					
<i>Upgrade the Equipment and Playing Fields at Jackson Playground and provide Universal Accessibility.</i>	DPW, DCDP	CF, GF, VE, PD	●	●					
<i>Prepare a Financial Plan for the Operations and Maintenance of the Greenwood Memorial Pool.</i>	DCDP	GF, P, NP	●	●					
<i>Install Security Lights and Cameras at Playgrounds most vulnerable to vandalism and misuse.</i>	DPW, GPD	CF, GF			●	●	●		
<i>Prepare a Sidewalk Master Plan.</i>	DCDP, CE, DPW	CF, GF			●	●	●		
<i>Adopt Community Preservation Act (CPA).</i>	M, CC	N/A						●	●

**GOAL 2**- Selective expansion of open spaces, parks and recreational opportunities.

Goal	Responsible Party	Funding	Year						
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>Support the Otter River Blue Trails Project.</i>	MRWC, ConCom	CF, VE, P, NP	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
<i>Complete the North Central Pathway.</i>	DCDP	GF	●	●					
<i>Identify and Acquire Land in West Gardner Suitable for a Municipal Park and Playground.</i>	DCDP, M, CC	N/A	●	●					
<i>Update the 2010 Trail Inventory Report.</i>	DCDP, ConCom, MRPC	CF			●	●	●		
<i>Create Improved Access to Parkers Pond.</i>	PB	CF, P, NP			●	●	●		
<i>Investigate Promoting and Improving Public Access to Lake Wampanoag.</i>	ConCom	N/A			●	●	●		

<i>Develop Multi-purpose Municipal park with Playground Equipment and athletic fields in West Gardner.</i>	DCDP, DPW	P, NP CF, P, NP			•	•	•		
<i>Develop an Off-Leash 'Dog Park' at Pulaski Playground.</i>	DPW	GF, VE			•	•	•		
<i>Install a Tot Lot at Stedman Ballfield.</i>	DPW	CF, GF, VE			•	•	•		

**GOAL 3** - Protect water resources and improve water quality.

Goal	Responsible Party	Funding	Year						
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>Continue Implementation of Forest Stewardship Program.</i>	CE, ConCom	CF	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
<i>Continue Inflow and Infiltration (I&amp;I) Program.</i>	DPW, CE	Sewer Enterprise	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
<i>Continue Water System Maintenance and Replacement Programs.</i>	DPW, CE	Water Enterprise	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
<i>Implement the Storm Water Management Program.</i>	CE, DPW, ConCom	CF	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
<i>Identify and Protect Additional Land within the Water Supply Protection Districts.</i>	CE, M, ConCom	GF, CF	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
<i>Expand Conservation Agent Position to Full time.</i>	M, ConCom	CF	•	•					
<i>Continue Planning to Upgrade Waste Water Treatment Facility.</i>	CE, DPW	Sewer Enterprise	•	•					
<i>Prepare a Wellhead and Surface Water Supply Protection Plan.</i>	DCDP, CE, DPW	Water Enterprise, CF			•	•	•		

**GOAL 4** - Accommodate growth where the environment can best support it.

Goal	Responsible Party	Funding	Year						
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>Continued Priority on Maintenance and Replacement of Existing Municipal Infrastructure.</i>	Various	CF, GF	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
<i>Continue Use of Smart Growth Tools.</i>	PB	N/A	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
<i>Implement Projects Contained in Existing Urban Renewal Plans.</i>	Gardner Redevelopment Authority and DCDP	City funds, GRA funds, grant funds, private / non-profit donations	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
<i>Prepare a Sidewalk Master Plan.</i>	DCDP, City Engineer and DPW	Grant funds, City funds			•	•	•		

**GOAL 5** - Increase public awareness, use and stewardship of the City’s water resources, forests, parks, conservation areas and recreational opportunities.

	Responsible Party	Funding	Year							
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
<i>Adopt a Local Ordinance creating a Parks, Recreation, and Open Space (PROS) Coordinating Committee.</i>	Mayor and City Council	N/A	●	●						
<i>Create a Recreation and Wellness Coordinator Position.</i>	Mayor and City Council	City funds	●	●						
<i>Expand Conservation Agent Position to Full time.</i>	Mayor and City Council	City funds	●	●						
<i>Improve Outreach and Educational Efforts.</i>	School Department and Conservation Commission	Volunteer efforts			●	●	●			
<i>Conduct a Public Shade Tree Inventory</i>	Conservation Commission	City Funds			●	●	●			
<i>Identify the Location of Water Resources, City Forests, Parks, Conservation Areas and Other Municipal Recreation Facilities.</i>	Conservation Commission	City funds, grant funds, volunteer efforts			●	●	●			
<i>Adopt Community Preservation Act (CPA).</i>	Mayor and City Council	N/A							●	●

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## Section 9      **PUBLIC COMMENTS**

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Letters of support from the Mayor, City Council, Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Montachusett Regional Planning Commission, and DCS as well as the public survey questions and answers can be found in Appendix G.

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## Section 10      **REFERENCES**

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The following sources were used in the preparation of this Plan:

- Gardner Survey Department
- Gardner Assessing Department
- Gardner Department of Public Works
- Gardner Community Development and Planning
- City of Gardner Open Space and Recreation Plans (1994, 2000 and 2006)
- Various State of Massachusetts departmental websites: DEP, DCR, Department of Fish & Game – Division of Fisheries & Wildlife, Agricultural Resources, EOEEA, etc.,
- Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, Bio-Map, Living Waters, Natural
- Heritage and Endangered Species Program, and others.
- Various non-profit websites: North County Land Trust, Mount Grace Land Trust, and MRPC.
- All maps and acreage calculations were performed by the City of Gardner GIS Coordinator, Survey Department.
- City of Gardner Comprehensive Master Plan, 1988
- Community Development Plan, 2004
- Downtown Urban Renewal Plan, 2011
- Massachusetts Labor and Workforce Development
- US Census Bureau
- Montachusett Regional Strategic Framework Plan, 2011
- Worcester Business Journal, Jan 6, 2014
- MA SCORP <http://www.mass.gov/eea/docs/eea/dcs/fy13-gr/draft-scorp-2012.pdf>
- BioMap2  
[http://maps.massgis.state.ma.us/dfg/biomap/pdf/town\\_core/Gardner.pdf](http://maps.massgis.state.ma.us/dfg/biomap/pdf/town_core/Gardner.pdf)