

6 | OPEN SPACE & RECREATION

Overview

The Town's many parks and open space parcels serve a variety of purposes: swimming and walks along the shore at Town Beach; hiking at Osamequin Park, Haines Park, Veterans Park and elsewhere; boat-launching at Walker Farm; and baseball, football and other sports at parks such as Sherwood and Chianese. These resources — together with open space owned by the State, Land Trust, Audubon Society and others — contribute to community character, serve as recreational assets, enable farming operations in the George Street area to maintain a presence in town, and preserve the environment by preventing development within sensitive areas.

Existing Conditions

Open Space Parcels - Inventory

The Town of Barrington, the Barrington Land Conservation Trust, Audubon Society and oth-

er private interests have acquired a substantial amount of open space throughout town, totaling more than 900 acres. These properties, sorted by owner, are depicted on **Map OSR-1** and summarized below. (See related information in the Natural and Cultural Resources section.)

Town- and State-Owned Open Space

The Town owns many parcels of protected open space: neighborhood parks, large multi-use parks, woodlands with trails and other passive recreation features, and undeveloped parcels with wetlands and other important conservation values.

The State also owns open space in town — Haines Memorial State Park, and parcels on Rumstick Point and in 100-Acre Cove. Most of these parcels are open to the public for active and/or passive recreation; in some sensitive areas, public access and use may be limited or restricted.



View of Narragansett Bay from Bay Spring.

These parcels can be categorized as follows (for greater detail see **Appendix ___**):

- *Multi-Use Parks and Recreation Areas*

Barrington maintains nine Town-owned parks and recreation areas totaling approximately 192 acres of land. The parks range in size from 3.25 acres in Latham Park on Bullock Cove to more than 200 acres within Veterans Memorial Park, including the 100-acre Brickyard Pond.

Under a lease agreement with the State, the Town maintains the portion of Haines Memorial State Park within the town limits. The 73-acre park, on Washington Road and Narragansett Avenue, features three baseball fields and several multi-use fields, a fenced-in dog park and a meandering trail system bifurcated by Annawamscutt Brook that runs through the middle of the park.

- *Town Open Space: Use to be Determined*

The Town owns several open space parcels where the future use has not yet been determined. For example, the Town razed the old barn known as “The Place” on College Lane, but there are no formal plans for the vacant 4.5-acre site. The sites are not necessarily to be preserved as open space, and could eventually be developed as parks or some other use as yet determined.

- *Natural Areas with Restricted Public Access*

The Town owns open space properties where public access is restricted on part or throughout the particular site due to the presence of environmentally sensitive areas such as coastal or freshwater wetlands, or endangered habitat areas. These sites lack sufficient upland suitable for development to convert to an active park. However, most of these lots have areas within which trails have been or could be extended such as the Hampden Meadows Greenbelt, which features a trail that follows a sewer easement through a forested wetland.

- *Natural Areas: Conservation Areas*

The Town owns conservation properties—parcels with significant environmental constraints – totaling approximately 64 acres of land. The State owns approximately 39 acres of conservation lands – several small parcels in 100-Acre Cove and properties at the tip of Rumstick Point. Public access in these areas is discouraged.

- *Cemeteries*

The Cemetery Commission manages cemeteries across the town, and range greatly in size from less than one acre (the historic Watson, Allin and Tyler Point cemeteries), to 7 to 8 acres (Prince’s Hill and Forest Chapel). The Town recently acquired more than 7 acres on George Street for a future cemetery.

Private Open Space Properties

- *Privately Owned Protected Open Space*

Within Barrington’s town limits, approximately 110 acres of privately owned open space is protected by deed restriction or other similar mechanism. Properties with conservation zoning – Wildlife Resources, Conservation and Open Space-Passive – are also considered “protected”, though it is possible these areas could be rezoned in the future. Much of the privately owned open space, in particular Land Trust holdings, is open to the public on a limited basis for passive recreation use (for example trails), while others are not open to the public. The Barrington Land Conservation Trust and Audubon Society are the two largest private owners of open space within the town.

- *Privately Owned Unprotected Open Space*

The majority of privately owned open spaces in Barrington are not permanently protected and therefore may be available for development, though environmental restrictions such as the presence of wetlands are found on many of these

Figure 1: Farm field on George Street

Horse field on east side of George Street (zoned Residence 40-Conservation Development)

parcels. [Appendix ___](#) lists privately owned open space parcels that have not been protected in perpetuity. The list includes properties are institutional sites that include buildings but also open space areas, including the former Zion Bible Institute campus, St. Andrews School, Tillinghast Estate (owned by the RI School of Design) and the RI Country Club. Though the areas noted in the table may not be entirely open space, all contain significant open space areas.

Two large parcels on George Street, zoned Residence 40-Conservation Development, are currently unprotected—leaving an area of prime farmland with no water or sewer or adequate roads at risk to development.

Several privately owned tracts of open space are currently enrolled in a tax incentive program that is intended to encourage property owners to manage their land for forestry, agriculture, and open space. Property owners enter into an agreement with the Town to keep their properties undeveloped for at least 15 years in exchange for lower property tax assessments. Should a property owner decide to remove land

that has been designated under the tax program, back taxes would be owed to the Town. As such, these properties are not protected in perpetuity, unless, for example, there is also a permanent conservation easement in place.

- *Unprotected Open Space – Unknown Owners*

Along the shoreline of the Palmer River, 100-Acre Cove and Allin's Cove are open space lots of unknown ownership. These lots, totaling approximately 90 acres, all have severe environmental constraints – including several partially underwater. They also are located in proximity to protected open space areas owned by the Town, the Land Conservation Trust and the Audubon Society.

Open Space Acquisitions

Recent acquisitions within Barrington have added to the open space inventory, including:

- *St. Andrews Farm, Middle Highway.* The Town acquired the 28.5-acre tract from St. Andrews School for active and passive rec-

reation. The Town constructed a soccer field on the front portion of the property. The rear of the site consists of an open field to be preserved for passive recreation.

- *Sowams Road open space parcel.* An upland area within the 5.9-acre site near Sowams Road has been converted to a practice field with parking. The rear portion of the site, within the “Hampden Meadows Greenbelt,” has the potential for new trails.
- *The “Brickyard Wetlands.”* Property is located between the Barrington Shopping Center and the YMCA. The 10-acre site, which is mostly wetlands, was purchased using State Open Space bond funds with a local match; a conservation easement restricts the type of activities and land disturbances that may take place at the site.
- *Vitullo Farm* on Wampanoag Trail. A portion of the 21.5-acre site is leased for farming. Environmental constraints include wetlands and a high water table. A volunteer-led effort is underway to establish a community garden and trails on the site.
- *George Street parcel.* In 2009, the Cemetery Commission acquired approximately seven acres of upland in the George Street area for a future cemetery.

The Land Conservation Trust also has played a vital role in protecting sensitive properties throughout Barrington. One of the more significant acquisitions was made in 2007, with the purchase of “Sowams Woods” on Washington Road. The 12.3-acre site, which abuts Echo Lake, was purchased from RI Country Club using several funding sources. A conservation easement is in place for the site, which features an Indian archaeological site. The Land Trust has established trails on the property. Sowams Woods is included in the Land Trust’s proposed “Sowams National Heritage District” (discussed in detail in the Issues and Opportunities section).

Parks/Recreational Facilities

*For a full listing of park and recreation facilities and protected open spaces in Town, see **Map OSR-2**.*

Barrington’s parks include Latham Park, Bicknell Park, Sherwood Park and other neighborhood-oriented parks; large community parks including Veterans Memorial Park, Chianese Park and the Town Beach; and, serving the greater region, the State’s 80-acre Haines Park and a 3.5-mile section of the East Bay Bike Path.

Town voters helped address recreational needs in 2006, approving a \$2 million bond to help the Town make needed park improvements, including:

- Reconstruction of the Lincoln Avenue Tennis Courts, including new lighting and an additional court (for a total of six). Grant funding offset \$225,000 of the cost.
- Reconstruction of the Middle Highway Basketball Courts, replacing two outdoor courts on Lincoln Avenue removed as part of the tennis court project.
- Kids Kove Playground. Bond funds together with private donations built the playground, located outside the Library
- Sherwood Park. Projects included reconstruction and relocation of the Little League field, development of a walking path and establishment of a small multi-use field.

Other recent park improvements, completed or underway, include:

- Town Beach. The Town in 2011, utilizing unspent recreation bond funding, replaced a 1950s cinderblock restroom building with an elevated office/restroom facility elevated out of the flood zone. In 2014, the Town completed a \$360,000 overhaul of the beach parking area, which also included drainage and erosion control-related improvements and new site amenities.

- Chianese Park. The Town created two new multi-use athletic fields through the closure of Landfills Number 1 and 2 on either side of Princess Hill Avenue. The project included the addition of parking within the Princess Hill Avenue right of way.
- “Police Cove” park. Plans for the park at Police Cove involves the redevelopment of a waterfront site formerly occupied by the Police Station, demolished in 2001. The park will feature a seating plaza with public art on the water, a large landscape lawn, an expanded parking lot, bike racks, walkways, benches, picnic tables and an area with hook-ups for food trucks. The reconstruction of the boat ramp is also included in the project. Funding is coming from RIDOT, RIDEM and the federal CMAQ program.
- Latham Park. The park redevelopment project includes reconstruction of the parking lot, a rebuilt stone revetment with a new small boat access ramp to the shore, and a walkway along the water with benches.

Trail System

The Town has a network of trails throughout Barrington that provide a variety of experiences, passing through woods and open fields, and along the shore. Some are well-known, such as the Osemequin Nature Trails that provide views of 100-Acre Cove. The most expansive trail systems are within Veterans Park and Haines Park. Others sites mostly serve adjacent neighborhoods, such as those that wrap around a large meadow at St. Andrew’s Farm, a Town park on Middle Highway.

The Town has begun creating a more consistent, coherent trail system. The trails within Veterans Park, for example, have been the focus of a volunteer-Town effort that began with planning assistance from the National Park Service. A \$100,000 trail improvement grant from RIDEM will fund upgrades to most of

the trails within Veterans Park in 2014, to include new bridges over wetlands, overlooks, and resurfaced trail treads that have become eroded or wet.

The Veterans Park project included development of trailhead kiosk and trail marker prototypes that are being used elsewhere, to create more consistent trail infrastructure. The trail markers have been used at the Tall Cedars conservation area, installed by the Land Conservation Trust. Other sites are being considered for similar trail markers and kiosks.

Issues and Opportunities

Threatened Farmland

The Town’s most critical agricultural land is in the George Street area, which includes the Doug Rayner Wildlife Sanctuary at Nockum Hill and significant parcels farmed by Four-Town Farm. However, the area also has undeveloped parcels that, despite a lack of water and sewer and adequate roads, are under development pressure.

The conversion of farmland to housing in this area consumes land historically used for agricultural purposes, diminishes the rural character and potentially impacts environmentally sensitive areas, in particular the terrapin habitat within Nockum Hill. Also, more people living in close proximity to active farming operations could make farming more difficult due to complaints from dust, noise, etc.

Action is needed to further protect this area from overdevelopment—which could include zoning changes, purchase of development rights or easements, or land acquisition.

Future Land Acquisitions

Acquisitions of significant parcels throughout town for park development and open space pro-

tection purposes may become more difficult over time due to the increasing land values associated with the limited supply of available property in town, in particular with regard to developable upland outside conservation areas. Input on proposed land acquisitions from groups with potentially competing interests — such as the Park and Recreation Commission, Cemetery Commission, Conservation Commission and Housing Board of Trustees — would help the Town weigh potential future uses of various sites.

Management of Parkland/Open Space

With the Town accumulating open space properties scattered throughout Barrington, ensuring adequate management of the properties becomes a challenge. The Open Space Ad Hoc Committee in 2007 identified a number of concerns with regard to open space management, including encroachment into the property by neighboring property owners, illegal dumping, and uncontrolled access into sensitive areas. These issues are most prevalent in isolated open space areas such as Osemequin Park and Nockum Hill, but can also be found at in-town properties such as St. Andrew's Farm and the State-owned Haines Park.

With the Open Space Ad Hoc Committee no longer intact, the Town lacks one board responsible for the development and monitoring of management plans that have been put in place for at least five Town-owned conservation areas/parks. The Land Trust has worked with the Town to develop and monitor implementation of management plans for Osemequin Park and the Doug Rayner Wildlife Sanctuary at Nockum Hill.

The Conservation Commission has taken the lead on developing management plans for the Hampden Meadows Greenbelt and Veterans Park/Brickyard Pond. The Town also has a management plan recorded for St. Andrews Farm, specifying acceptable activities under the terms of the land donation to the Town.

A coordinated system is critical for effective proactive management of open space areas. This could involve the Conservation Commission taking the lead, or a new Open Space Committee with representation from the Land Trust, Conservation Commission and other stakeholders.

Need for New/Upgraded Playing Fields and Park Facilities

Athletic Fields

A need for additional athletic fields has been an ongoing issue since at least 1987, when the Park and Recreation Commission released a report on recreational needs. The issue: Heavy demand for fields from Barrington's numerous organized leagues, both youth and adult, has resulted in a shortage of available playing fields for the various sports. As a result, scheduling and long term proper maintenance of the fields has proven difficult. The 2002 Comprehensive Community Plan, based on findings made in 1992, identified a need for 20 additional fields.

In 2007, The Park and Recreation Commission updated its field needs analysis for the 5-Year Update of the Comprehensive Plan. The document, "Report on Athletic Field Use in Barrington and the Need for New Fields," utilized the methodology developed by the National Recreation and Park Association and other variables as the means of determining the number of athletic fields needed in the town of Barrington. It predicted growth of all youth sports except lacrosse (expected to grow by 150%) to be "somewhat flat" in Barrington, based on projected enrollments of the Barrington public schools.

The report concluded that to meet current demand, Barrington needs one new Little League field, one new softball field and two new large multiuse fields, one of which would be for periodically resting the heavily used fields that typically suffer overuse. Also recommended in the report is the replacement of under-sized Little League fields at Nayatt, Primrose and

Table 1: Comparison of Athletic Field Needs Assessments

Field Purpose	Need: 1992	Need: 2014
Little League	9 additional fields: 5 regulation 2 transitional (75 foot base paths) 2 full (90 foot base paths)	1 new Little League field 3 replacement baseball/softball fields*
Soccer	8 additional fields: 4 regulation 4 smaller	
Softball	2 additional fields	1 new field
Rugby	1 additional field	
Multi-Use Fields		2 new fields*
Total	20 new fields	4 new fields 3 replacement fields**

* This number requires re-evaluation with the addition of two new multi-use fields added on either side of Prince's Hill Avenue as part of the closing of Landfills 1 and 2

**Replacement of the "unsafe" fields at Nayatt, Primrose and Sowams Schools may require new sites.

Source: 2002 Comprehensive Community Plan (1992 numbers), 2007 Report on Athletic Field Use in Barrington and the Need for New Fields

Sowams Schools.

Table 1 shows the need for additional playing fields as determined in 1992, compared to the updated assessment completed in 2007 by the Park and Recreation Commission. Note that the projected need varies because of differing methodology used for the analyses, not due to a change in the number of athletic fields in Barrington (just one new multi-use field has been built since 1992).

It is unclear whether the Town owns sufficient land to meet the goal of additional athletic fields. The landfill closure process resulted in two new regulation-sized multipurpose fields on either side of Prince's Hill Avenue. The master plan for the site proposed a second Little League field at Chianese; however, there is no room to add one at the site.

One potential location for an additional baseball or multi-use field is on the front of the St. Andrew's Farm property on Middle Highway where a house and a storage building are located. Site planning completed for the Sowams Road parcel revealed that, due to site con-

straints, a full-sized field along with sufficient parking does not appear feasible at that location (though a smaller practice field for football, lacrosse, etc., may be suitable).

Given the scarcity of available land, options should be explored to minimize the need for new sites for athletic fields. For example, rebuilding the three under-sized Little League fields at Nayatt, Sowams and Primrose Hill Schools in the same location should be studied in greater detail by a professional before considering alternative sites. Fields that are slightly smaller than regulation size may be preferable to the costly option of developing fields in new locations, which could also involve land acquisition. Also, the conversion of a grass field to an artificial turf field, as has been proposed for Victory Field at the High School, would allow for greater utilization of the facility and reduce the wear and tear of other natural turf fields.

Playgrounds and Parks

The community has access to playgrounds at elementary schools – Nayatt, Primrose Hill and Sowams Schools – as well as at Latham Park,

behind the Bay Spring Community Center and behind Town Hall. The Town Hall playground, called “Kids Kove,” is unique in that it features equipment that appeals to older children as well as a section that is handicap-accessible.

While most established areas of Town are within a short drive or walk to a playground or neighborhood park, development of the Zion Bible Institute site as a “mixed-use village”, as contemplated in the 2009 Comprehensive Plan, would create greater demand for parks and recreational amenities in that area of town. Opportunities to add a new neighborhood park and playground, either at Zion or at the former site of the Place, should be considered as a requirement as part of future development of that site as a mixed-use neighborhood.

In addition, the Town is in the process of constructing a new park on Town-owned waterfront property at the Barrington River – the “Police

Cove” site (see **Figure 2**, previous page). Given its proximity to County Road, the East Bay Bike Path, RIPTA and the Barrington River, the park should be planned as a destination park serving all of Barrington. The Town also is in the process of completing improvements at Town Beach, with a new restroom/office building built out of the floodplain, and new drainage projects designed to capture storm water runoff, addressing water quality and erosion issues.

Needs—Trail System

In addition to coordinating and prioritizing future open space acquisitions, a desired outcome of this Plan is consistency within these areas for the trails within these open spaces, in particular Town and Land Trust properties where public access is promoted. Consistent infrastructure – for example, the use of materials, signage and trail markers – would help create a cohesive trails network for Barrington.

Figure 2: Park at “Police Cove”



The “Police Cove” site on County Road at the Barrington River will be redeveloped as a park.

The Open Space Ad Hoc Committee evaluated the need for adding new and improving existing trails throughout the town. The design of the trail network should identify opportunities to create well-marked trail loops connecting destinations such as scenic vistas within open space properties or recreation areas, ultimately returning to the point of origin. The initial improvement should target areas where there would be a community-wide benefit – in areas where there are convenient places to park in proximity to trailheads. Trail needs are described below.

- Veterans Park.** In 2011, the Town of Barrington began working with the National Park Service (NPS) Rivers & Trails Program on a plan to improve Veterans Park, with a focus on trails (see **Figure 3**). The Town sought the services of the NPS to create a plan for the park, to serve as a template for improvements to parks and trails throughout the town. The plan calls for establishing a trail loop around Brickyard Pond; designating areas where bikes are appropriate and where they are not permitted; creating a “water trail” on the pond; fixing erosion problems; improving trail surfaces; creating new trails at and near the YMCA and bike path; and other improvements. The plan also provides specifications for trail markers and other types of signage, tables and benches, and other types of improvements. The Town in 2013 received a \$100,000 RIDEM grant to improve the trails based on the plan developed with NPS assistance. Construction was to begin in 2014.
- Hampden Meadows Greenbelt.** The main trail in the Hampden Meadows Greenbelt provides access from Linden Avenue north to Kent Street, a wide path with a gravel surface suitable for bikes. The trail north of Kent Street to the rear of Sowams School follows along a creek, a narrow pathway that is accessible by foot despite uneven surfaces and wet areas. It

narrows further from Sowams School to Christine Drive. Another trail segment, just north of Linden Avenue, provides east-west access to the main trail from New Meadow Road. These trails, with proximity to Sowams and Hampden Meadows Schools, are alternative routes to school for students. Efforts should be made to improve the trail surfaces and enhance signage, to address safety concerns and improve visibility. The Town should also explore extending the trail south to New Meadow Road from Linden Road, which would require either acquiring easements or property, and east through the Town-owned park on Sowams Road north of Sowams Nursery. Another opportunity is the extension of the trail north of Christine Drive to Land Trust property at the end of Ferrier Avenue.

- St. Andrews Farm and Tall Cedars.** St. Andrews Farm is strategically situated on Middle Highway, at the end of Federal Road where there are plans to extend a biking/walking trail along the north side from the High School to the park. A short walk from St. Andrews Farm is the Tall Cedars conservation area, which also includes trails. A few blocks to the west are more trails, in Haines State Park. The trail system at St. Andrews Farm is well-marked, looping around the rear perimeter of the site as well as crossing through to the end of Fountain Avenue.

Improved trailblazing signage for each trail segment and directional signage near Middle Highway and from points to the south and west of the park would help encourage neighborhood use of the park. The easement on the property restricts the use of bicycles in the park; it is recommended this be revisited to allow limited bicycle use on the east-west trail segment, which connects at Fountain Avenue and at the park’s parking lot. The Town should also improve linkages (for example, with signage) from

the park to Tall Cedars and Haines State Park to the west.

- **South Lake Drive.** South Lake Drive is a narrow, winding and scenic Town street that passes to the south and east of Echo Lake, past the Land Trust's "Sowams Woods" site on Washington Road and alongside the RI Country Club golf course.

The street is in poor condition. People have voiced concerns about potential safety issues that arise as vehicles and pedestrians and bicyclists share the same narrow roadway. The Town should consider measures to slow vehicles, as well as designate areas on a portion or just off the street for pedestrians. The Town should also improve the connection between South Lake and the nearby East Bay Bike Path.

- **Haines Memorial State Park.** State-owned and Town-maintained, Haines Park has an established, well-used network of trails. The trails have been mapped by the Town using GPS. A more detailed trails assessment is needed to identify and close off duplicate trails, as there are areas where trails run parallel to one another. The trails would also benefit from clear trailhead markers and trailblazing signs.

Past plans for the park called for extending a pedestrian bridge across Annawumscutt Creek; this idea needs further evaluation and consultation with the State. An informal trail runs through the old O'Bannon Mill property into the park from the south, along the eastern shore of a pond, an important habitat and nesting area. Requiring a formalized trail connection as part of the future redevelopment of the former mill site, or acquisition by the Town or other entity for open space / trail purposes, either of the property or an easement, should be evaluated.

- **Osamequin Park / Walker's Farm.** Osamequin Park has a well-marked network of trails and features a location map at the

parking area on Wampanoag Trail. The location map is in need of replacement, and eventually the trailblazing signs, though effective, should be replaced with markers that are consistent with those to be installed at Veterans Memorial Park.

The Town should also consider creating a connection through to the public parking area in Walker's Farm. Currently a trail in Osamequin Park terminates at Walker's Farm at the leaf refuse area. There are no signs directing people from Walker's Farm to the Osamequin trails. The Barrington Garden Club is co-steward of the property, along with the Department of Public Works.

- **Vitulo Farm.** Vitullo Farm on the Wampanoag Trail features cultivated farmland near the road, but also forested wetland areas and unused open fields to the rear. The site has a gravel parking area near the road, at a farm stand, that could also serve as parking for users of any future public trails developed at the site.

"Blueway" Trails

The Town has multiple sites that could become part of the Blueway trail maps maintained by the RI Land Trust Council. Warren and Bristol have canoeing and kayaking routes on the map. No routes are shown within Barrington, despite opportunities to launch at sites across town, including Police Cove, the Barrington Beach, Haines Park, and Walker Farm.

The Town should work to become part of the Blueway mapping project and seek to add new sites where feasible. One new launch will be added on the Barrington River near the Public Library building. As part of a passive park improvement project, with funding from a \$84,000 RIDEM grant, the Town will be adding a canoe/kayak launch at the water's edge within a Town-owned grassed area that abuts the water.

Public Access Points

Public rights of way provide connections to the water at the shore, often at the ends of streets, but also through open space properties such as Walker's Farm and Osamequin Park. To date, the Coastal Resources Management Council (CRMC) has designated only two shore access points as public Rights of Ways where CRMC for the general public's use: the Daunis Right of Way at end of Nayatt Road along Mussachuck Creek, and Teed Avenue at the west end of Mason Road. However, there are many more public access points to the shore throughout town, according to the Town's Harbor Management Plan. That Plan identified 45 access points in Barrington based on reports and other information from CRMC, the Coastal Resources Center, Town Assessor's Plat maps and public input at Town Council meetings on the issue.

Please refer to the Harbor Management Plan for the complete inventory of access ways, as well as a list of recommendations to identify, regulate and manage public access points to the water. The development of hiking trails, as well as "Blueways" trails on the water, should take advantage of these rights of way, in a manner that is consistent with the Harbor Management Plan.

"The Place," Bay Spring Community Center

Another site that could become a recreational asset in the future is the 5-acre parcel on Middle Highway near Zion Bible Institute that once included a barn that housed "The Place" teen center (see **Figure 3**, previous page). The Town demolished the building in 2007. While the sloping site has no formal use at this time, the property still must be mowed and otherwise maintained by the Town.

Sowams National Heritage District

The Land Conservation Trust, an owner of open space properties a throughout Town, has

proposed establishment of the "Sowams National Heritage District" in the Echo Lake/Brickyard Pond area. The district would be a more comprehensive approach to managing this area, focusing on the area including the Land Trust's Sowams Woods parcel on Washington Road, Echo Lake and Brickyard Pond. The proposed area includes:

- *Open Space.* The proposed area includes roughly 700 acres of open space including approximately 350 acres already protected

Figure 3: Former Location of "The Place"



After "The Place," a former teen center, was demolished, the five-acre site has remained vacant.

by the Town of Barrington and other large tracts of open land.

- *Natural Habitat.* The proposed area includes the watershed of Big Mussachuck Creek, one of just 18 original herring runs remaining in Rhode Island. The rich and varied habitats also provide forage and shelter for birds seasonally migrating along the eastern North American flyway. Unprotected endangered and threatened plant species are present as well as numerous uncontrolled invasive plants.
- *Passive Recreation.* The district includes a central portion of the East Bay Bike Path, the oldest and most popular bike path in the state which is part of the national East Coast Greenway running from Florida to Maine. Biking trails could be added. Year round opportunities for hiking, fishing, picnicking, bird-watching and biking with important coastal access.
- *Historic Resources.* The district includes at least three layers of history each eligible for the National Register of Historic Places:
 - Native American Archeological site: 5500 year old Archaic Period crescent shaped stone hearths unique in Northeast adjacent to burial mounds. Historical Pokanoket territory of Sowams including village sites.
 - The Brickworks site long proposed for historic recognition.
 - Nearly century old championship, 18 hole golf course in Rhode Island designed by the legendary course architect Donald Ross. Landscape plans by the renowned Olmstead Brothers in the National Archives.
- *Scenic.* The area's roadways included on state scenic map, as expansive views of Narragansett Bay and green open space views.

A management plan would build on the area's unique features cited above and target key goals for the district, potentially helping lever-

age grants and private funds to protect and highlight the unique qualities of the area, including additional conservation acquisitions or easements. A district approach could be particularly helpful in coordinating efforts to control invasive plants and to improve water quality throughout the herring run.

Haines Park Lease Agreement

The Park and Recreation Commission's 2007 field needs analysis cited above assumes that the Town would continue to have access to the athletic fields at Haines Park (one senior league, two Little League plus two multi-purpose fields). Finding alternative sites for the athletic fields within Barrington would be difficult and expensive, underscoring the importance of the facilities at Haines Park. The Town's lease with the State for utilizing the portion of Haines Park within the Town of Barrington is a non-issue at this time, as the Town in 2014 extended the lease to 2019.

Maintenance

The heavy use of the facilities, in particular athletic fields, has taken its toll over the years, resulting in maintenance and management challenges for Town staff. Expansion of athletic fields, trails, playgrounds, parking areas, and other features envisioned in the parks master plans would require additional maintenance responsibilities, potentially increasing operating expenses. Management plans, an issue discussed previously, can be an effective resource guiding how the Town maintains open space parcels, either through utilization of Town staff or volunteers.

Goals, Objectives, Policies and Actions

Goal 1: Provide vibrant, multiple-use parks that are sensitive to the environment, well-connected, accessible, safe, aesthetically pleasing and integrated into the existing land use patterns.

Objective 1.1: Offer a range of active and passive recreation facilities that meet the multi-generational needs of the present and future population of Barrington.

Policy 1.1.1: Ensure Town has sufficient capacity to maintain parks at a high level.

Policy 1.1.2: Balance the need to protect natural resources with the need to provide adequate, active and passive recreational facilities.

Policy 1.1.3: Emphasize improving existing recreation facilities over acquisition of new properties in order to fully realize the potential of the Town's assets while meeting current and future recreational needs.

Actions

- A. Re-evaluate existing Master Plans for Town Parks and complete development plans for additional parks in order to establish realistic capital improvement priorities. New master plans, in order of priority, are needed for the following sites:
 - i. Veterans Park (east side)
 - ii. St. Andrew's Farm on Middle Highway
 - iii. Walker Farm on County Road
 - iv. "The Place" on Middle Highway and College Lane
 - v. Currier Park on Old County Road
- B. Include park improvements in long-term capital budget planning based on master plan priorities. Budgeting for the park improvements will put the Town in the position of leveraging local funding with grants that require a match, such as the R.I. Department of Environmental Management's recreation development grants.
- C. Continue lease with State for use of facilities at Haines Park within town.

Goal 2: Create an "emerald chain" of parks by establishing and improving linkages between

and within recreational areas throughout town, including facilities at schools, to provide passive recreation opportunities and alternative routes to parks and other areas throughout town.

Policy 2.1: Support creation of a cohesive system of open space properties and trails.

Actions

- A. Generate a plan for developing trails and other connections between recreational areas in coordination with open space planning.
- B. Work with State to identify opportunities to build on linkages from the Bike Path to improve pedestrian and bicycle access to parks and other Town recreational sites.
- C. Create standards for trail markers, park signage and other improvements are needed to create a consistent, high-quality system of open space, trails and passive parks throughout town. The trails network at Veterans Park, when complete, should serve as a template for consistent park and trail signage/maps, tables and benches, and other passive park improvements throughout town.
- D. Establish a sustainable funding program to continue with the trail improvement program and assist with acquisition. The funding source could be used to provide the local match for open space acquisition grants or trails grants and help cover soft costs related to acquisition, such as surveys and legal fees.
- E. Complete trail improvements, starting with Veterans Park, including updating trailblazing signs, and adding informational signage and maps
- F. Seek to acquire property or easements to extend trails at Veterans Park and in the Hampden Meadows Greenbelt.
- G. Establish South Lake Drive between Washington Road and North Lake Drive as a multimodal facility providing a safe walking/biking area within the right of way

while also maintaining vehicular traffic.

- H. Require trail connections when key sites are developed, including the O'Bannon Mill site and the former Zion Bible Institute campus.
- I. Work with State to improve trail system at Haines Memorial State Park.
- J. Develop trails at the Vitullo Farm-Divine Vargas conservation area.
- K. Work with East Bay communities on locating and mapping water trails. In Barrington, the mapping should show access points, destination areas and significant features along the trail route within the Barrington River and 100-Acre Cove, and the Providence River / Narragansett Bay / Bullock Cove.

Goal 3: Expand protection of critical open space properties, publicly and privately owned, within Barrington.

Policy 3.1.1: Provide a framework for the Town to identify and prioritize for protection open space properties throughout town, for purposes such as farmland preservation, stormwater management, habitat protection and/or enhancement of the Town's system of parks and trails.

Policy 3.1.2: Evaluate potential open space protections based on the following criteria:

1. Cost: allows the Town to maximize its assets and leverage additional resources including grants, landowner donations, funding partnerships, and donations.
2. Community benefit: promotes benefits for the town at large—such providing land for recreational areas, expanding an existing open space network, or enhancing buffers.
3. Connectivity: adds to the existing or planned open space system and enhances ecological, hydrological, and recreational vitality.
4. Ecologically significant habitat (rare or endangered flora or fauna).

5. Farmland preservation (preserve agricultural properties that may also qualify for protection under other programs).
6. Historic value (within a Historic Register District and/or of significant cultural value).
7. Scenic value (aesthetic value and/or preservation of community character).
8. Property provides storm water storage, flood protection, or groundwater recharge.
9. Size of parcel (based on acreage);
10. Feasibility of purchase and likelihood of acquisition, including time seller can provide to allow Town to secure necessary funding

Actions

- A. Create a protocol for approaching landowners about key open space parcels, in particular properties that are high priorities based on the Open Space acquisition criteria. This would allow the Town to proceed with a more systematic approach for deciding whether to acquire property in the future, and for what purpose – for example, conservation land; new parks, trails or other recreational use; or for the development of community facilities.
- B. Protect existing Town-owned parks and recreation areas that are currently not protected as open space through the use of conservation easements and other mechanisms, working with the Barrington Land Conservation Trust. Priorities include: Osamequin Park and Walker's Farm, Vitullo Farm, the RI Country Club, and the RI School of Design's Tillinghast Estate. Portions of Veterans Park should be subject to a conservation easement; however, the easement should account for the potential addition of a community center to the west of the Bayside YMCA, as suggested in the 2009 Barrington Town-Wide Facilities Study.
- C. Evaluate and prioritize unprotected privately owned open space parcels for per-

manent protection through easements or acquisition by the Town or Land Trust.

- D. Work on select open space issues with adjacent towns, to include the following areas: 100-Acre Cove and dams on the Runnins River (Swansea, Seekonk, East Providence), debris removal, clearing of invasives on Annawamscutt Brook (East Providence).

Goal 4: Manage open space properties to protect the recreation, conservation, historic and other values that contribute to the community's quality of life.

Objective 4.1: Maintain management plans for all parks, including the Town Beach.

Policy 4.1.1: Manage open space properties in coordination with stakeholders, including the Barrington Land Conservation Trust, the State and private property owners.

Actions

- A. Create a process for consistent oversight of management plans for individual sites. The

success of management plans will require assigning responsibilities and a monitoring process to track implementation.

- B. Annually review status of approved and pending Management Plans.
- C. Encourage cooperation with private owners of open space parcels to establish public access, enhance trail connectivity, expand wildlife corridors, coordinate management responsibilities and other.
- D. Create park management plans needed to identify maintenance items for each parcel, and assign responsibilities for maintenance and oversight. Priority areas for new or updated Management Plans include: Vitullo Farm/Divine Vargas, St. Andrews Farm, Walker's Farm and Osamequin Park, Prince's (Tiffany's) Pond and the proposed Sowams National Heritage District. The management plans should address routine tasks such as monitoring, and include a plan for assigning and ranking tasks across properties. The Town should use volunteers to the extent feasible.
- E. Work with the Land Trust and other stake-

Figure 4: "Sowams Woods" on Echo Lake



The "Sowams Woods" property on Echo Lake across from the RI Country Club would be featured in the proposed Sowams National Heritage District

holders to establish the proposed Sowams National Heritage District (see **Figure 4**, previous page), to enhance and protect the scenic, historic, natural and recreational open spaces within the district. Reinforce public awareness of the district through maps, logos, educational panels and other measures.

- F. Continue open space maintenance efforts, focusing on removal of invasive plants and trail maintenance. Invasive plants should be eradicated in a coordinated effort with the Public Works Department, through parks and road maintenance activities.
- G. Work to eliminate encroachments into open space properties. This action requires a Class 1 survey, which can be costly. To minimize costs, the Town should focus on identifying the most blatant encroachments first. Areas of concern include Vitullo Farm (the southerly property line), and portions of the Hampden Meadows Greenbelt.
- H. Evaluate maintenance needs at all public rights of way to the water. The Harbor Commission should work to ensure the rights of way are clearly marked and safe for pedestrians. Surveys might be needed to identify and eliminate encroachments.

Goal 5: Meet the recreation program needs of residents of all ages in Barrington.

Policy 5.1.1: Support the expansion of recreational opportunities in Barrington, and provide cost effective coordination of existing recreational facilities, resources and personnel.

Actions

- A. Establish a formal Parks and Recreation director position. In response to the issue regarding a town recreation department, it is recommended that the Town Council hire a full-time Parks and Recreation Director for better coordination of recreation and leisure activities and oversight of park and recrea-

tion maintenance through a self-sustaining recreation department.

- B. Coordinate development of recreation program with the Senior Center, School Department, the Community School, Bayside Y and other agencies that offer recreation opportunities in town.

DRAFT