



**Town of Arlington  
Open Space and Recreation Plan  
2002-2007**



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**Town of Arlington**  
**Open Space and Recreation Plan**  
**2002-2007**





# **Town of Arlington Open Space and Recreation Plan 2002-2007**

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## **Preface**

The Division of Conservation Services (DCS) of the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA) reviews applications for open space funding from state programs, such as Self-Help and Urban Self-Help, and federal programs, such as the Land and Water Conservation Fund. The acceptance of this Open Space and Recreation Plan by DCS makes Arlington eligible to compete for such funds, which the Town can use for land acquisition and maintenance and improvement of parks and other open spaces. This plan is also useful to the Town as a community information resource and for government planning.

All sections of this Open Space and Recreation Plan follow the format mandated by the EOEA/DCS according to the Open Space Planner's Workbook (revised edition February 2001). A preliminary Open Space and Recreation Plan Update for 2001-2006 was submitted to EOEA in July 2001. A more complete Open Space and Recreation Plan was resubmitted in July 2002, and was "conditionally approved through August 2007." Additional information was gathered during fall 2002 and winter 2003, and the revised Plan was resubmitted to EOEA in April 2003.

## **Acknowledgments**

The Open Space Committee thanks all the contributors to the Arlington's 1996 Open Space and Recreation Plan for preparing that excellent document, which formed the basis for this updated version for 2002-2007. In addition, we wish to thank John FitzMaurice for providing information on pre-Colonial Arlington (Menotomy) history and Jane Howard for providing information about various Vision 2020 committee activities and surveys.

## **Open Space Definition**

The Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EOEA) defines the term open space as "conservation land, recreation land, agricultural land, corridor parks and amenities such as small parks, green buffers along roadways or any open area that is owned by an agency or organization dedicated to conservation." In a broader sense, the EOEA defines open space as "any undeveloped land with particular conservation or recreation interest" (EOEA 1993, 1).



## Profiles of Open Space Committee Members

**Karsten Hartel** is an ichthyologist and researcher at Harvard University and a former member of the Massachusetts Non-game and Endangered Species Advisory Committee. He is a former cochair of Arlington's Vision 2020 Environmental Task Group and is a member of Friends of Menotomy Rocks Park. He has been the chair of the Open Space Committee since 1996.

**Roland Chaput** is a wireless communications consultant, currently under contract with the City of Somerville. He has served in Arlington Town Meeting for 30 years and has been involved in many Town committees and other organizations, including the Redevelopment Board (serving as chair in 2001-2003), Arlington Conservation Commission, Bracket Elementary School Council, Friends of Robbins Farm Park, the Telecommunications Committee and the Community Preservation Act Study Committee. He is also an active member of the Association of Public Safety Communications Officers.

**Michele Hassler** joined the Open Space Committee in January 2002, representing the Arlington Cemetery Commission. She previously served on the Arlington Human Rights Committee. Michele is a lifelong resident of Arlington and received a Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing at Northeastern University. She has been a Bone Marrow Transplant ICU nurse at Brigham and Woman's Hospital in Boston for 13 years and also teaches nursing studies to LPN students at Massachusetts Bay Community College in Framingham.

**Bernice Jones** is a member of Arlington's Park and Recreation Commission and a Town Meeting member. She has served the Town in both capacities for more than 25 years.

**Patsy Kraemer** is director of Human Services for the Town of Arlington. In that capacity she oversees the operations of the Recreation Department and the Park and Recreation Commission.

**Ann LeRoyer** is senior editor and manager of publications at Lincoln Institute of Land Policy in Cambridge, Massachusetts. She is a member of Arlington Town Meeting and is active in various town committees and organizations, including the Arlington Land Trust, Vision 2020 Reservoir Committee and the Community Preservation Act (CPA) Study Committee. She is also a member of the Sanctuary Committee of Massachusetts Audubon Society's Habitat Education Center in Belmont.

**Alan McClennen, Jr.** is director of the Department of Planning and Community Development for the Town of Arlington. He has served as director for over 28 years and currently leads a staff of nine, including two planners. One of his career highlights is the realization of the Minuteman Bikeway after 20 years of work. Prior to working in Arlington, McClennen served as a planning consultant in the private sector for nine years.

**Oakes Plimpton** is co-manager of the Arlington Farmers' Market and director of a charitable and education farm, Waltham Fields Community Farm. He researched and wrote *Robbins Farm, A Local History* and was editor of *Stories of Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Life*, an oral history of Arlington. Trained as an attorney, he worked at The Nature Conservancy and the Conservation Law Foundation in the 1960s and 1970s.

**David White** has been involved in environmental activities both professionally and as a volunteer for over 20 years. He is a member of the Arlington Conservation Commission, and is active in the Vision 2020 Reservoir Committee and the new Friends of Arlington's Great Meadows group. He holds a Ph.D. in Civil/Environmental Engineering from MIT.

## **Profiles of Planning Department Staff**

**Alan McClennen, Jr.** is director of the Department of Planning and Community Development for the Town of Arlington. He has served as director for over 28 years and currently leads a staff of nine, including two planners. One of his career highlights is the realization of the Minuteman Bikeway after 20 years of work. Prior to working in Arlington, McClennen served as a planning consultant in the private sector for nine years.

**Kevin O'Brien** has been in the planning profession for 30 years. A Massachusetts native, he has a master's degree in City Planning from the University of Southern California and has worked in planning on the state, regional, and local levels. He has been with the Town of Arlington for 16 years and is responsible for the Planning Department's computer database and geographic information system. He also works extensively on zoning matters. In his home community of Bolton he serves on the Housing Authority.

**Joey Glushko** has been with Arlington's Planning Department since completing her graduate studies at Tufts University in 2000. Prior to redirecting her career to planning, she worked as a medical educator and laboratory supervisor.

# **Section 1**

## **Plan Summary**



# 1 - PLAN SUMMARY

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The Town of Arlington is a highly developed and densely populated community with few large open spaces remaining within its borders and limited direct access to open space resources in adjacent towns. The need to preserve and protect existing open spaces is widely recognized and deeply felt by Arlington residents.

Changing demographics in Arlington over the past decade have altered the needs for and demands on limited public resources for outdoor recreation, physical fitness and sports, such as the Marquis/ Minuteman Bikeway, playing fields, playgrounds, and other active and passive recreational facilities. Residents also regularly express their desire for more natural green spaces for walking, bird watching and other contemplative pleasures.

The Town faces serious management, staffing and financial challenges to address these diverse needs for conservation land, parks, playgrounds and outdoor sports facilities. Progress has been made over the past five years to enhance several key sites, and several volunteer Friends groups have been formed to advocate and raise funds for specific parks. However, the Town also needs to develop a stronger townwide open space management program and incorporate regionwide solutions to meet the competing demands of many different constituencies.

This document is Arlington's second Open Space and Recreation Plan. It focuses on many specific accomplishments and other steps taken to address the goals, objectives and actions outlined in the 1996 Open Space Plan. It presents an updated inventory of Arlington's open spaces, documents open space needs, and establishes open space aspirations. Overall, this Plan reaffirms Arlington's desire to meet these revised goals:

- A. Acquire undeveloped land for permanent protection as open space in neighborhoods throughout the Town.
- B. Preserve, protect and enhance existing open spaces, including watersheds and natural areas; parks, playgrounds and recreational facilities; and historic sites and cultural landscapes.
- C. Strengthen local and regional planning and management of open spaces by working in collaboration with various Town departments, commissions and volunteer groups, nearby towns and regional entities, and state and federal officials and agencies.
- D. Increase public awareness, accessibility and community stewardship of the Town's open spaces.

Arlington's open space is a precious and limited resource that has been difficult to acquire and maintain and needs to be protected ardently. This Plan presents open space goals, objectives and actions that will guide Arlington's open space philosophy, planning and management through 2007.





## **Section 2**

### **Introduction**



## 2 - INTRODUCTION

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### A. Statement of Purpose

This Open Space Plan reflects Arlington's intention to preserve, protect and enhance its valued open spaces. Through research and analysis of the Town's open space needs and past accomplishments, this Plan aims to:

- Establish Arlington's short-term and long-term open space goals, objectives and priorities;
- Present a broad statement about Arlington's long-term open space philosophy;
- Document Arlington's current open space inventory; and
- Provide updated information as required by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts guidelines for open space plans.

This Plan builds on Arlington's 1996 Open Space and Recreation Plan, reinforces the Town's original goals, reports on accomplishments to date and goals that have not yet been implemented, and outlines new goals and actions to be addressed during the next five years and beyond. An important overriding purpose of this Plan and the entire open space planning process is to foster public awareness of open space issues and to encourage the participation of Town officials and concerned citizens in the Plan's implementation.

### B. Planning Process and Public Participation

The value of the 1996 Plan as a planning tool and the ongoing need for an up-to-date comprehensive planning process have been proven by numerous recent events that have involved broad-based community participation. All of the following issues were highlighted in the 1996 Plan:

- Mugar property - The renewed and on-going discussions of development on the Mugar site in East Arlington in early 2000 mobilized many citizens and Town officials, and led to a nearly unanimous vote in Town Meeting in Spring 2000 and again in Spring 2001 to preserve the site as open space. The Mugar Advisory Committee, appointed as part of the 2000 Town Meeting vote, continues to pursue legal and financial options for acquisition;
- Reed's Brook - Continued flooding problems in the area are being addressed by an extensive remediation plan, which also includes the construction of several playing fields and other recreational facilities, and the re-landscaping of some areas for conservation and passive recreational uses;
- Reservoir dam - The Reservoir remains a very important priority because of flooding and safety concerns, as well as recreation needs in the beach and swimming area and recognition of the value of the Reservoir and its environs as a habitat for native wildlife and vegetation;
- Playing fields - Damage to soccer and baseball fields because of overuse creates serious concerns about how to meet youth sports and recreation needs;
- Regional planning - There is renewed awareness and concern for regional planning, especially in East Arlington where flooding caused in part by increasing development in Cambridge has created ongoing threats to quality of life and to potential loss of valuable floodplains and open space;
- Funding concerns - Limited funds are available in the Town budget for ongoing maintenance and capital improvements of natural open spaces and recreational facilities.

The process of evaluating the Town's accomplishments since adoption of the 1996 Plan and preparing this Plan was managed by the Town's Open Space Committee (OSC). One of the key recommendations of the 1996 Plan was establishment of a standing committee of citizens and Town representatives involved with open space issues to "facilitate, implement, update and further" the goals, objectives and actions outlined in that Plan. Town Meeting approved creation of the Open Space Committee and the first members were appointed by the Town Manager in 1996.

Since then, representatives of several Town entities (including the Park and Recreation Commission, Conservation Commission, Redevelopment Board, and the Departments of Planning and Community Development, Public Works, and Human Services) and concerned citizens have met regularly to exchange ideas and discuss ways to further protect the Town's natural resources and enhance appropriate uses of its open space sites.

The Open Space Committee (OSC) serves an oversight function but does not have direct responsibility for the management of any specific Town properties. Its primary purpose is to enhance communication and coordination among those entities that do have management authority. In addition, the OSC seeks to raise broad-based community concerns and to advocate for the planning, stewardship and use of the Town's natural resources, which are a major element in our quality of life. The OSC believes that the best way to fully address the needs and problems of the Town's open spaces is to develop goals, procedures and policies in a comprehensive way.

#### Open Space Committee Members (2000-2002)

Karsten Hartel (Citizen), Chair  
Roland Chaput (Redevelopment Board)  
Michele Hassler (Cemetery Commission)  
Bernice Jones (Park and Recreation Commission)  
Patsy Kraemer (Department of Human Services)  
Ann LeRoyer (Citizen)  
Alan McClennen, Jr. (Planning and Community Development Department)  
Oakes Plimpton (Citizen)  
Mark Shea (Department of Public Works)  
David White (Conservation Commission)

In addition to their "official" representation as listed above, Open Space Committee members participate in numerous other open-space related activities in Town. For example, several members are elected Town Meeting representatives (Chaput, Jones, LeRoyer). Members also sit on various other volunteer committees, including: Vision 2020 Standing Committee (McClennen); Vision 2020 Reservoir Committee (LeRoyer, White); Friends of Robbins Farm Park (Chaput; Plimpton); and Arlington Land Trust (LeRoyer). Through these various connections and networks, the committee members actively sought input from a broad range of perspectives, including Town officials, civic activists and concerned residents, to make this Plan as complete and wide-ranging as possible.

The level of public participation in open space and recreation issues has probably been greater during the past five years than at any time in Arlington's history. The 1996 Plan itself focused attention on open space needs, and the proliferation of volunteer citizen groups concerned with specific neighborhood parks or recreational facilities has been very exciting. As the Town's population is changing and decreasing somewhat, current residents seem to be more actively engaged in their environment and concerned about the limited resources within our highly developed community.

Following are some of the committees and Friends groups that hold regular meetings relating to open space and recreation and that have contributed to this Plan:

- Vision 2020 and Sub-Committees (Standing, Environment, Reservoir, Spy Pond)
- Open Space Committee
- Park and Recreation Commission
- Conservation Commission
- Arlington Redevelopment Board
- Arlington Land Trust
- Mugar Coalition
- Mugar Advisory Committee
- Arlington Bicycle Advisory Committee
- Friends of Menotomy Rocks Park
- Friends of Robbins Farm Park
- Friends of Spy Pond Park
- Mt. Gilboa Neighborhood Association
- East Arlington Good Neighbor Committee

In addition, Town Meeting has responded positively to a number of specific planning and open space related issues over the past few years. For example, Town Meeting voted in 2000 to approve the 1996 Plan's goal of acquiring the Mugar parcel for open space purposes, and approved new zoning regulations concerning transportation districts in Town, in particular as those regulations affect the Marquis/ Minuteman Bikeway. In May 2001, Town Meeting voted unanimously to approve a draft version of this Plan, reaffirmed its commitment to preserving the Mugar property as open space, approved actions on conservation easements and on the state's Community Preservation Act, and approved a new open space zoning district and the designation of nearly 50 sites to be transferred into that district. Each year since 1996 Town Meeting has received and approved Annual Reports from the Open Space Committee (see Appendix A).

Several recent surveys also reinforce the high level of concern and involvement with open space and recreation issues. Vision 2020 is a committee of the Town that works in a partnership with its residents, employees and leaders. As part of the annual Town Census mailing, Vision 2020 distributes a survey to help identify concerns and priorities. The results of the January 2000 Survey from some 2,500 households found that open space acquisition and maintenance was the top priority of Town citizens (53 percent), followed by affordable housing (50 percent). The next highest item was police/fire/EMT services at 36 percent, and playing fields/recreational facilities rated 30 percent (see Appendix B for complete results).

At Town Day in September 2000 the Open Space Committee sponsored an information booth and distributed a short survey to visitors. The questions duplicated those used in Census mailing of January 1995, which were reported in the 1996 Plan. While the total number of respondents in 2000 is not as high as in 1995, the results show increased concern about the maintenance of parks and playgrounds (59 percent versus 28 percent in 1995) and very strong support for appropriating more Town funds for both upgrading and maintaining existing parks and recreational facilities and for acquiring more open space (90-94 percent in 2000 compared with 54 percent in 1995). (See Appendix B for complete survey results.)

These survey findings combined with formal and informal input from the committees and groups noted above and many other individual sources help form the foundation of public participation and support for open space and recreation goals that make this planning process so relevant and timely to Arlington citizens.

## **C. Accomplishments, 1996-2001**

Following the format and outline of the 1996 Open Space Plan, this section lists many of the accomplishments that have protected and enhanced Arlington's open spaces since 1996. Some of these accomplishments were expressed only as general ideas or goals in the earlier Plan, but they took shape through the hard work and cooperation of many Town boards and commissions, residents, private groups and Town employees. The Open Space Committee wishes to acknowledge the contributions of many individuals and organizations that recognized a wide range of opportunities to advocate for and work towards protecting our Town's open space and recreation resources.

Note: This section of the Plan was drafted primarily during 2001, so some accomplishments that occurred during 2002 are not included here. They will be noted in subsequent editions of this Plan.

### ***Goal A. Preserve, protect and enhance Arlington's open space***

#### ***A-1. Preserve, protect and enhance Arlington's natural heritage.***

Develop management plans for all significant water bodies, watersheds, parks and natural areas:

- Friends of Menotomy Rocks Park prepared a management plan (1996).
- The Park and Recreation Commission commissioned a master plan and recommendations for improvements of Spy Pond Shores in 1999.
- Conservation Commission and Arlington Garden Club upgraded the path and drainage at Cooke's Hollow Park (1999).
- A management plan for the Arlington Reservoir Dam is being developed by consultants in connection with the state-mandated study of the high-hazard earthen dam.
- Meadowbrook Park was restored with native plantings during Spring 2001, under the auspices of the Conservation Commission.
- Radcliffe Seminars students designed alternative proposals for improvements at Robbins Farm Park (exhibited at Robbins Library, 2000), and a landscape architect is developing a formal master plan.
- An ecological inventory of Arlington's Great Meadows, with some management recommendations, was developed by consultant Frances Clark for the Conservation Commission and was published in late Spring 2001.

Clean up water bodies for habitat protection and recreational use:

- Alewife/Mystic River pollution study of CSO outfalls, storm and sanitary sewer issues (1999-2000) by Tufts University students and others.
- Vision 2020 Environment Task Group has established subcommittees for Arlington Reservoir and Spy Pond Park, and they are working on various projects to protect the natural environment, enhance water quality and improve access.
- Arlington Reservoir water chestnut harvesting is funded through the Conservation Commission; the program was implemented in the summers of 2000 and 2001.
- Spy Pond studies of water chemistry and underwater weed problems caused in part by storm water runoff have been completed and some are ongoing; Town Meeting 2000 approved use of a chemical herbicide (Sonar), which was applied in the summer of 2001.
- A Tufts/MIT study group has found high levels of arsenic in the sediment in Spy Pond and their investigation is continuing in conjunction with the Vision 2020 Spy Pond Committee.

- Reed's Brook area is being designed to enhance water quality, drainage and wetlands, as well as new active and passive recreational uses. The Town is working with Lexington to clean and reestablish Reed's Brook itself west of Reed Street.
- Hill's Pond in Menotomy Rocks Park was dredged, and chemistry and weed studies were completed; funds have been raised to repair the retaining wall around the Pond and bids have been released.

Encourage townwide use of native vegetation:

- Conservation Commission developed a list of native plants and trees to be shared with Department of Public Works, Park and Recreation Commission, and other Town agencies; the list is available at the Robbins Library.
- 2000 by 2000 Project was established to plant native trees and plants appropriate for this climate (plantings have been completed at Uncle Sam Park and Thompson School/North Union Playground).
- A new organization, Green Streets/Green Cities, was founded in 2001 to organize volunteers and use donated materials to restore native plants to public lands in Arlington and throughout the Mystic River watershed area. State Rep. Jim Marzilli is actively involved in this effort.
- Arlington was designated a Tree City in 1997 and 1998 by the National Arbor Day Foundation.

Expand outreach about Arlington's natural heritage:

- Birds of Arlington published on the Internet ([mrines.com/Birds/Arlington](http://mrines.com/Birds/Arlington)).
- "Arlingtonbirds" established as a list server for birding information ([mrines.com/Birds/Arlington](http://mrines.com/Birds/Arlington)).
- Study of the birds and birders at Arlington Reservoir produced and available on the Internet ([arlington2020.org/reservoir](http://arlington2020.org/reservoir)).
- Adella McLaughlin's book on Walking Tours of Arlington was published in 1997.
- Vision 2020 Environment Task Group sponsors seasonal bird walks around Spy Pond and the Reservoir.
- Residents Marj Rines and Karsten Hartel initiated a day-long spring bird count on Earth Day 2000 and 2001 (The 2000 event was rained out).
- A bird list was produced for Spy Pond and the Reservoir.
- Park Avenue Water Tower opened to the public on Earth Day 2000 and 2001 (Conservation Commission in conjunction with Massachusetts Water Resources Authority – MWRA).
- Town Day booths are sponsored by Conservation Commission, Open Space Committee and Arlington Land Trust.

***A-2. Preserve, protect and enhance Arlington's parks and other recreational space.***

- The Pine and Swallow Report commissioned by the Recreational Facilities Task Force (RFTF) in 1997 developed recommendations for restoring and maintaining active recreation sites (parks, playgrounds and team playing fields). User demands have already undermined some of those efforts and have left some soccer and baseball fields in potentially unplayable condition.
- Following the Pine and Swallow recommendation, 13 parks and playing fields were upgraded by DPW via contracts with professional landscapers (Ottoson Middle School field; Spy Pond field; North Union Street field, playground and spray pool; Florence Street/Dallin

School field; Magnolia field; Reservoir/Mt. Gilboa playground; Menotomy Rocks playground; Summer Street fields; Buck field; Hill's Hill fields; Peirce/High School baseball field; Peirce/ High School football field; Thorndike fields).

- Park and Recreation Commission developed 10-year capital improvement plans and subcommittees for specific sites.
- Playgrounds rebuilt at Parmenter School (1999), Reservoir/Mt. Gilboa (1999) and Maple Street (2000).
- CDBG funds used for Maple Street playground (1997 and 2000); North Union Street spray pool (1999).
- The Town used specialized expertise to manage open space (Pine and Swallow Report (Appendix Q) and Reservoir dam study are examples).
- Uncle Sam Park restoration and replanting (2000 by 2000 group).
- High School bleachers at Peirce Field replaced and new lighting installed (2000).
- Robbins Farm Park redesign and other infrastructure plans in final stages of development and landscape architecture firm hired in late 2001.
- Spy Pond Shores landscape design plan is completed and seeking funding for implementation (Park and Recreation Commission).
- Many grassroots initiatives have identified areas and undertaken actions, such as Reservoir playground developed with initiative from Mt. Gilboa Neighborhood Group; Menotomy Rocks playground; and Spy Pond Park.
- New benches installed at Window on the Mystic through the efforts of Conservation Commission; also at Spy Pond Park and Menotomy Rocks Park by respective Friends groups.
- Bulletin boards installed by community groups at Menotomy Rocks Park, Spy Pond Park, Robbins Farm Park, and Thompson School.

### ***A-3. Preserve, protect and enhance Arlington's historic open space sites and their surrounding lands.***

Develop an interpretative program via maps, signage, publications, lectures and tours to increase public awareness of Arlington's historic spaces:

- Old Schwamb Mill state restoration grant and private matching funds (completed in 1999) and related membership and school education programs (mill pond system, Mill Brook, etc.).
- Historical signage prepared for installation along the Marquis/Minuteman Bikeway in spring 2001.
- Jason Russell House and Smith Museum continue varied programs.
- Patriot's Day parade and Minuteman re-enactments occur annually.
- Vision 2020 Town map of open space, recreational and historic sites published and distributed.
- Menotomy Rocks Park history published (Don Mattheisen).
- Historical Commission books on Arlington history (Richard Duffy).
- New book (original novel by Trowbridge) edited by Richard Duffy, about mill ponds.
- Millennium Lecture Series in 2000 featured lectures by Richard Duffy on history of Mystic River and watershed.
- New Historic Districts established (Avon and Jason Gray).
- Cyrus Dallin Museum established at the historic Jefferson Cutter House in Arlington Center
- History of Robbins Farm (1990) by Oakes Plimpton is reprinted in 1998.
- Arlington Garden Club sponsored tour of historic sites (June 2000).



Create historically appropriate landscape and maintenance plans for significant historical sites:

- Whittemore-Robbins House and adjacent gardens around the house have been partially restored; management and maintenance plans are still in progress.
- As part of the Civic Block Master Plan, the restoration of the grotto in the Winfield Robbins Memorial Garden was completed in 1999 and the flagstaff in the Dallin Patio at Town Hall was restored in 2000 (see Appendix C).

#### ***A-4 Use state legislation and local regulations to protect and enhance open space***

- Community Preservation Act (CPA) passed by Massachusetts legislature in 2000, establishing opportunities for all cities and towns to receive matching funds for open space projects in cooperation with historic preservation and affordable housing initiatives; Town Meeting in 2001 approved establishment of a CPA Study Committee.
- Zoning Bylaw Review Committee established by Town Meeting in 1999 to review options, including an open space zoning district that was approved by Town Meeting 2001.
- Town Meeting 2000 approved some zoning changes to protect the transportation zoning district, in particular the Marquis/Minuteman Bikeway.
- Town Meeting has received and accepted Annual Reports from the Open Space Committee, thereby supporting the Committee's ongoing work.
- Public hearings on the Mugar proposal, MEPA (Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act) reviews and other citizen actions drew attention to the community's concerns about the possible development, especially regarding flood control, wetlands protection, and traffic in the Alewife/Route 2 region. The project is under Environmental Impact Review, as of 2001.

#### ***A-5 Acquire and enhance new open space lands.***

- Actions were initiated by the Board of Selectmen in early 2001 to acquire the 18-acre Symmes Hospital land, which is for sale by the current owners, Lahey and HealthSouth; the site includes medical buildings, former nurses' housing, several parking lots and more than 9 acres of undeveloped wooded land. Voters in March 2001 approved a Proposition 2 1/2 override to acquire the site and undertake a redevelopment plan.
- Town Meeting voted nearly unanimously in 2000 and again in 2001 to seek to acquire the 17-acre Mugar parcel in East Arlington, on which owners are seeking to develop a large commercial-office complex.
- Arlington Land Trust was established in early 2000 as nonprofit organization to acquire and hold easements on privately owned land for conservation purposes (see Appendix D).
- Arlington Land Trust began an analysis of unprotected open spaces that could be protected from development through conservation restrictions or other agreements with private owners.
- Town Meeting voted in 1995 to acquire Reed's Brook, a former Arlington dumpsite on the Lexington town line, primarily for flood control, conservation land and several playing fields; planning continues on its remediation and development for recreation and conservation uses.
- Town Meeting voted in 1997 to acquire two sites adjacent to Reed's Brook (36 Wright Street and Liberty Baptist Church land).
- Informal discussions continue on the acquisition of Knowles Farm or on the use of conservation restrictions to protect this historic farm at some time in the future.

***Goal B. Increase public use and awareness of Arlington's open space through increased public access and stewardship***

***B-1. Ensure access to all open space for all demographic groups.***

- In compliance with state and federal laws, handicapped access (ramps and other features) for people with disabilities is provided at every developed, redeveloped or improved site. Recent projects include Marquis/Minuteman Bikeway, Whittemore-Robbins House and gardens, Civic Block and gardens, beach and swimming area at the Reservoir, trail around the Reservoir (partially accessible), Spy Pond Park, and plans for Reeds Brook.
- Vision 2020 Spy Pond Committee published materials showing public access points.
- Increased access to open spaces by providing more benches throughout the Town:
  - benches are available along most of the Marquis/Minuteman Bikeway.
  - Menotomy Rocks Park has named benches (private fundraising).
  - Reservoir Path has benches by the beach.
  - benches in Arlington Center at Jefferson Cutter House Park, Broadway Plaza, and other places along Mass. Ave., and in Arlington Heights shopping district.
  - two benches in Cooke's Hollow donated by Arlington Garden Club.
  - six benches were installed in the Winfield Robbins Memorial Garden.

***B-2. Provide greater use of and improved access to large bodies of water for active and passive recreation.***

- The Park and Recreation Commission, Friends of Spy Pond Park and Spy Pond Committee of Vision 2020 have worked on numerous plans and projects to improve access and maintenance around Spy Pond.
- A ramp was built at the Reservoir for wheelchair access to the beach and swimming area.

***B-3. Link open space sites with pedestrian and bicycle paths.***

- The Marquis/Minuteman Bikeway provides access throughout Arlington, from Thorndike and Magnolia fields in East Arlington, to Spy Pond, Boys and Girls Club, nearby playing fields, Buzzell playing fields in Arlington Center, skating rink and playing fields near Summer Street, Hurd Field and the Reservoir in Arlington Heights and Arlington's Great Meadows (183-acre property owned by Arlington but located in East Lexington).
- Some improvements have been made to the major intersection of Massachusetts Avenue and Pleasant Street to improve safety for pedestrians and bicyclists.
- Walking in Arlington group formed in 2000 to advocate for pedestrian concerns and safe routes to schools.

***B-4. Communicate and educate Arlington community about benefits and availability of open space.***

- Regular articles and announcements about open space issues and events appear in the *Arlington Advocate*, on the Community Access Cable channel 3, on the Town's website ([www.town.arlington.ma.us](http://www.town.arlington.ma.us)), and on the Arlington email list ([arlington@pairlist.net](mailto:arlington@pairlist.net)).
- Vision 2020 Environment Task Group sponsors regular bird walks at Spy Pond and the Reservoir.

- Reservoir Committee maintains a website with historic and current information about the Reservoir (<http://www.arlington2020.org/reservoir>).
- Arlington Bicycle Advisory Committee offers tours and community bike rides.
- Open Space Committee, along with Conservation Commission and Arlington Land Trust, sponsored an information booth at Town Day, September 2000.
- Earth Day Committee sponsored a variety of events in Arlington in April 2000 and 2001, including nature walks, a series of editorials in the Advocate, and a bicycle tour, and in 2001 Friends of Menotomy Rocks sponsored a variety of activities for children and families.
- Several email groups serve birding and natural history interests (e.g., <http://mrines.com/birds/Arlington>, <http://www.arlington2020.org/reservoir>).

***B-5. Develop a stewardship program for all major open spaces.***

- The Conservation Commission is developing a stewardship program for lands under its jurisdiction, based on Lexington's model and in conjunction with the Open Space Committee.
- Many volunteer Friends groups and committees have been established around specific sites, including Spy Pond Park, Reservoir, Robbins Farm Park, Mt. Gilboa, Menotomy Rocks Park, and many playgrounds (Waldo, Cutter, Summer Street, Locke, Hibbert).
- School, scout and other groups have sponsored clean-ups on the Marquis/Minuteman Bikeway.

***Goal C. Coordinate and manage Arlington's open space effectively and economically with maximum environmental sensitivity and community input.***

***C-1. Establish mechanisms to create, review, recommend, implement, and monitor a coherent open space management policy and management plan.***

- Open Space Committee, established in 1996, meets regularly to monitor the Open Space Plan and advocate for open space needs and concerns.
- Open space issues are regularly supported by Town Meeting, the Town Manager, and the Board of Selectmen.
- Open Space Committee met with the Town Treasurer in 2000 to discuss overall capital improvements and planning for open space and recreation objectives.
- Numerous neighborhood Friends groups and other stewardship and support groups monitor and raise funds for specific sites.
- Offices for the regional Mystic River Watershed Association have been established in the Arlington Central School on Maple Street, a Town-owned building.
- Conservation Commission commissioned an ecological management study of Great Meadows (completed in Spring 2001).
- Park and Recreation Commission has established a 10-year capital improvements plan that is reviewed each year by the Commission and presented to Town Meeting (although sufficient funds to accomplish goals are not always forthcoming).
- Park and Recreation Commission has a Field Task Force and a Field Cancellation Hotline, as well as a new field permitting policy and a yearly maintenance program.

***C-2. Coordinate with federal, state, regional and local entities to maximize protection of joint resources.***

- The Mystic River Watershed Association, housed in Arlington, is a leader in coordinating interest in regional water issues. They have held numerous meetings attended by area residents, Town officials, state representatives and local academic advisors.
- Alewife Reservation area (Arlington/Belmont/Cambridge/MDC) was studied for nomination as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) by a group of concerned citizens and municipal and state officials, but it was denied by the state.
- Ecological management study of Great Meadows and coordination of improvements at Reed's Brook have involved working with Lexington Conservation Commission and other Lexington departments and citizens.
- Town is working with Mass Highway Department to remove a sandbar in Spy Pond created by runoff through the state-owned storm drain system associated with Route 2.
- Town holds a license from the MBTA to monitor and maintain the Marquis/Minuteman Bikeway.
- Department of Planning and Community Development has updated the open space inventory of all publicly owned sites and selected privately held sites as one step toward better overall management of the Town's open space resources.

***C-3. Ensure input from volunteer organizations in open space planning.***

- As noted in the previous section, many Friends groups and committees have been established to monitor and provide stewardship for specific parks and other sites (Spy Pond Park, Menotomy Rocks Park, Robbins Farm Park, Reservoir, Mt. Gilboa, Alewife Reservation, Mystic River Watershed, and many smaller neighborhood parks and playgrounds, etc.).
- Arlington Land Trust was established in 2000 as a nonprofit organization to potentially hold conservation restrictions on privately owned open space parcels.

***C-4. Fully use all methods of funding, both public and private, to protect, preserve and enhance open space.***

- CDBG grants for study or upgrading open spaces have been received for numerous parks and playgrounds.
- Park and Recreation Commission encourages sports teams and organizations to raise funds to enhance the Town's efforts to maintain playing fields (i.e., Little League, Soccer Club).
- Park and Recreation Commission's Park Beautification Fund enables and accepts donations and gifts to support park maintenance.

***Goal D. Make Arlington a “green town” that is part of a regional ecology and that meets the open space and recreational needs of all the Town’s residents and visitors.***

***D-1. Enhance Arlington’s green character by means of appropriate landscaping.***

- The Arlington Business Community Study (ABC Study) recommended a policy that parking for new developments should be located primarily in rear yards with landscaped public paths through each project to the parking area.
- The ABC Study also reviewed appropriate landscaping plans for each of the commercial areas in Arlington. Its vision for Massachusetts Ave. redevelopment would incorporate and improve upon its scenic qualities including additional street trees and landscaping.
- An extensive program of barrels planted with flowers, hanging planters, and other street landscaping and an adopt-an-island program were established by the Town Manager in the 1990s.
- 2000 by 2000 Tree Planting Program established through the efforts of State Rep. Jim Marzilli and others completed new landscaping at Uncle Sam Park, Thompson School/North Union Playground and Jefferson Cutter House).

***D-2. Encourage the creation of both private and community gardens.***

- Community gardens have been established at Magnolia Field in East Arlington and are being evaluated for installation at Robbins Farm Park and other locations.

***D-3. Support Arlington’s efforts for a more environmentally sound Town and region.***

- Sustainable Arlington was established under Vision 2020 in 2000. The group meets regularly to develop educational programs and work with Town officials on energy efficiency, climate issues and other sustainability initiatives (see Appendix E).
- The Town hired interns in 2000 and 2001 to work on climate protection and related issues, and established ClimateWise, a group of Town employees, to implement energy efficiency initiatives.
- The Arlington Bicycle Advisory Committee meets regularly to promote use of Marquis/ Minuteman Bikeway for commuting and recreation and to deal with other bicycle-related issues.
- A comprehensive townwide recycling program continues.
- Hazardous waste collection program established with neighboring towns, with monthly drop-off site in Lexington (Spring/Summer/Fall).

