

# 2

## Introduction



*Fall colors at the Arlington Reservoir. Courtesy of Open Space Committee*

### A. Statement of Purpose

This Open Space and Recreation 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 for 2015-2022 builds on Arlington's 1996, 2002, and 2007 Open Space and Recreation Plans, 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 seven 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

One of the key recommendations of the original 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 spaces and recreational facilities.

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 (2014)*

- Jane Auger (Citizen)
- Teresa DeBenedictis (Department of Public Works)
- Lisa Decker (Redevelopment Board)
- Joey Glushko (Planning and Community Development Department)
- Michele Hassler (Cemetery Commission)
- Elizabeth Karpati (Vision 2020)
- Patsy Kraemer (Department of Human Services)
- Ann LeRoy (Citizen), Chair
- Leslie Mayer (Park and Recreation Commission)
- David White (Conservation Commission), Vice Chair

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, two members are elected Town Meeting representatives (LeRoy, Mayer). Members also sit on various other volunteer committees, including: Vision 2020 Standing Committee (Glushko, Karpati); Vision 2020 Reservoir Committee (Karpati, LeRoy, White); Vision 2020 Spy Pond (Glushko) and Sustainable Arlington committees (Karpati); Tree Committee (Decker); Arlington Garden Club (Kraemer); Master Plan Advisory Committee (LeRoy), and Arlington Land Trust (LeRoy). 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 as possible.

### *Town Committees and Community Groups*

The level of public participation in open space and recreation issues has continued to increase since the 1996 Plan began focusing attention on open space needs. The proliferation of volunteer citizen groups concerned with specific neighborhood parks or recreational facilities has been very exciting. As the Town's population continues to change, current residents seem to be more actively engaged in their environment and concerned about the limited resources within our densely developed community. Representatives of Friends groups, land stewards, and other groups meet regularly on matters of common concern, including ways to raise funds for the maintenance of parks and open spaces.

Following is a sampling of the Town committees and volunteer community groups that hold regular meetings relating to open space and recreation issues:

#### **Town Committees**

- Arlington Historical Commission
- Arlington Redevelopment Board
- Conservation Commission
- Park and Recreation Commission
- Tree Committee
- Tourism and Economic Development (A-TED)
- Vision 2020 Committees (Standing, Environment, Reservoir, Spy Pond, Sustainable Arlington)

#### **Community and Nonprofit Groups**

- Arlington Bicycle Advisory Committee
- Arlington Land Trust
- Arlington Parks Alliance
- Friends of Arlington's Great Meadows
- Friends of Menotomy Rocks Park
- Friends of Robbins Farm Park
- Friends of Spy Pond Park

- Friends of Symmes Conservation Area
- Friends of Waldo Park
- Friends of the Winfield Robbins Memorial Garden
- Land Conservation Stewards Program
- East Arlington Good Neighbor Committee
- East Arlington Livable Streets
- Sunnyside Neighborhood Association

### *Town Meeting and Annual Reports*

Town Meeting has responded positively to a number of specific planning and open space issues over the past several years. In its sessions from 2002 through 2014 Town Meeting expanded and/or clarified numerous details regarding the open space district zone, historic districts boundaries, and wetlands bylaws; adopted goals for the Reservoir proposed by the Vision 2020 Reservoir Committee; established a Tree Committee and a Cemetery Expansion Study Committee; and approved bylaws to enhance the use and maintenance of parks and recreational facilities, including off-leash dog activity, playing field usage, and graffiti and vandalism.

Previously, 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 reaffirmed its commitment to preserving the Mugar property as open space and approved a new open space zoning district and the designation of nearly 50 sites to be transferred into that district.

In most years since 1996 the Town has received Annual Reports from the Open Space Committee for inclusion in the Town-wide Annual Report, which is published each spring (see Appendix A for recent reports).

### *Surveys*

Surveys are useful to gauge the level of residents’ awareness and concern 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 on a vast range of goals and projects. As part of the annual Town Census mailing, Vision 2020 distributes a survey to help identify concerns and priorities.

The January 2014 Survey addressed the following key questions related to open space: awareness and access to smaller and lesser-known open space and recreational facilities; the adequate number of various types of facilities; why residents do or do not visit local open spaces; and how they prefer to learn about open space and recreational resources and programs (see Appendix B).

Results from about 6,500 households included the following highlights:

- Among the twelve lesser-known sites listed, only three had been visited by more than 40% of respondents. Most of the sites were unknown by 30% to 56 % of respondents.
- Outdoor/indoor swimming received the highest “inadequate” response, followed by outdoor ice skating and community gardens. Other types of facilities, including playgrounds, neighborhood parks, and tennis courts, were considered to be adequately available.
- 71% of households responded that they do use Arlington’s open spaces and recreational facilities. The main reasons for not using them were lack of awareness and lack of interest.
- In response to the question about how to learn about these facilities and programs, most respondents noted websites (32%) or other on-line sources (20%), while others cited seasonal brochures (21%) or printed news media (17%).

### *Public Process for the Master Plan*

From October 2012 to May 2015, the Town undertook a comprehensive Master Plan process, including several web-based surveys and nearly 50 public meetings to address open space, recreation, and natural resources,

as well as other land use and planning elements such as land use, transportation, housing, economic development, and historic/cultural resources. The survey findings combined with formal and informal input from many committees and groups, as well as from many other individual sources, helped form the foundation of public participation and support for open space and recreation goals that make this planning process relevant and timely to Arlington residents. The chair of the Open Space Committee was one of eleven volunteer members of the Master Plan Advisory Committee, and led the committee's work on the Open Space, Recreation, and Natural Resources sections of the Plan, thus ensuring consistency and compatibility with the Open Space and Recreation Plan public process.



*Master Plan meeting at Arlington High School. Courtesy of Department of Planning and Community Development*

This annotated list highlights some of the most important meetings in the Master Plan process, especially as they pertain to open space, recreation, and natural resource issues. Publicity efforts to inform residents about all of these public meetings over two-and-a-half years included hundreds of Town-generated email announcements, notices in the local weekly newspaper and on several online blogs, and notices on the local community broadcast media, which also filmed the public hearings for immediate or subsequent viewing by those who could not attend. Meetings were held at different schools and in other town buildings to ensure access to residents in all parts of town, including those in designated environmental justice block groups near Arlington Center and in East Arlington.

- October 17, 2012, World Cafe at Town Hall. About 150 people attended this kick-off meeting for the Master Plan. The questions asked for the roundtables to discuss were: What does the community value; What is special; What is worth keeping; What is missing; What is possible; and What is worth cultivating? Consistently, "open space" or other references to the natural environment and recreation were ranked in the top ten, along with issues such as affordable housing, better business environment, schools, and civic engagement. Some specific open space items were repeatedly seen in the responses to each of the above questions (and throughout the entire process): parks and playgrounds, the Minuteman Bikeway, the Mill Brook, dog parks, street trees, bike friendliness, and walkability. Concerns most often cited were maintenance and enhancement of the valued parks and natural resources that Arlington already has.
- June and July 2013, Stakeholder interviews. The Master Plan consultants held interviews in small groups, providing input from representatives of many civic groups, Town committees, and Town government, including those involved in open space and recreation activities.
- June 2013, Three Vision Workshops and an online survey. The workshops presented SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) discussions to elicit priorities and concerns regarding Arlington's future. The survey asked respondents to rate and rank key ideas generated at the World Café to help



inform the goals and policies of the Master Plan. More than 400 participants gave additional input for the master plan in all of the key elements.

- July 2013, Workshops for Natural Resources, Open Space, and Cultural and Historic Resources. Two meetings focused on goal-setting and other ideas from invited representatives of about 35 active groups in the community, such as the Bicycle Advisory Committee, Conservation Commission, Park and Recreation Commission, several park Friends groups, Garden Club, Land Trust, Vision 2020, Historical Society, and Public Art Committee. More than a dozen people participated in the discussions, representing these groups' concerns and interests.
- September 2013, Town Day. The Master Plan Advisory Committee and Town Planning Department sponsored an information booth at this annual community block party on Massachusetts Avenue near the Civic Block.
- November 2013, Public Presentation. The Town Planning Department and consultants presented an interim report on existing conditions research and findings, including the report on Natural Resources and Open Space.
- May 2014, Public presentation for the Natural Resources and Open Space report. This public hearing on the open space element (chapter) of the Plan integrated information from previous meetings and comments on earlier draft reports, results of an online survey on this topic, and feedback from the dozen or so participants.
- August 2014, Visual Preference Survey. This online survey sought reactions to the visual "look and feel" of Arlington streetscapes, buildings, open spaces, and other features.
- September 2014, Town Day.
- November 2014, Presentation of Draft Master Plan.
- January 2014 and February 2015, Public Hearings. These were the final hearings for presenting and receiving feedback on the entire Master Plan.
- February 2015, Adoption of the Master Plan by the Arlington Redevelopment Board.
- March-April 2015, Outreach to Town Meeting Members. Meetings were held at different sites around town to inform Town Meeting members about the final plan.

- May 2015, Endorsement of the Master Plan by Town Meeting.
- Summer 2015, Establishment of the Master Plan Implementation Committee.



## **arlington master plan**

YOUR TOWN, YOUR FUTURE



*Master Plan meeting at the Hardy School. Courtesy of Department of Planning and Community Development*

### Consultant Services

In the spring of 2014, the Open Space Committee requested and received \$9,900 from the Town's Community Development Block Grant program to hire a consultant to help the committee members develop the new 2015-2022 Open Space and Recreation Plan. Town Meeting approved those funds, and in May the Town selected Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. (VHB) to prepare the Plan with the Open Space Committee. Senior planner Ralph Willmer FAICP was designated the project manager for VHB, as he had been for Arlington's 2007-2012 Plan.

## C. Accomplishments, 2008-2014

This section lists many of the accomplishments since 2008 that have protected and enhanced Arlington's open spaces and recreational facilities, and have addressed related issues of community involvement, sustainable development, climate change, and other concerns. It follows the format established in February 2010, when the Open Space Committee submitted an update for the Chapter 9 Action Plan of the 2007-2012 Open Space and Recreation Plan. That updated list of goals and objectives covered the period from 2008 to 2014, as authorized by the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs.

Some of these accomplishments were expressed as general ideas or goals in the Town's earlier Open Space Plans, 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.

### **Goal 1. Acquire undeveloped lands for permanent protection as open space in neighborhoods throughout the Town.**

#### **Elizabeth Island**

The major success over the past seven years is the Arlington Land Trust's 2010 acquisition of Elizabeth Island in Spy Pond. Long privately owned and zoned decades ago for two housing lots, the 2-acre island was put up for sale in 2006. The owner first tried to sell it for housing for nearly one million dollars, but after receiving no offers she was eventually convinced to sell it for a more modest sum. The Arlington Land Trust (ALT), established in late 1999 as a nonprofit organization that works to acquire and hold easements on privately owned land for conservation purposes, conducted the lengthy negotiations with technical help from the Massachusetts Audubon Society.





*Elizabeth Island in Spy Pond. Courtesy of Arlington Land Trust*



## The Campaign to Protect Elizabeth Island

The state Conservation Partnership Grant Program contributed \$85,000, and ALT ran a local fundraising campaign that brought in \$180,000 in private donations. The island was purchased by ALT in December 2010. It will remain undeveloped, with minimal improvements planned to enable it to be used safely for public access and environmental education. Mass Audubon and the Arlington Conservation Commission jointly hold the conservation restriction.

### Symmes Hospital Site

After many years of uncertainty, more than 8.7 acres of open space at the 18-acre former Symmes Hospital site have been preserved, including two new landscaped parks and other wooded areas open to the public. The Arlington Conservation Commission and Arlington Land Trust hold the conservation restriction on these privately owned lands, and a neighborhood Friends group is being established to monitor the site. Maintenance and use of the open space is overseen by the management company.



*View of Boston from Hattie Symmes Park. Credit: Ann LeRoy*

The former hospital property had been put up for sale in 2001 by then owners, Lahey Clinic and HealthSouth. It was acquired by the Town in 2004 after an extensive community planning process, including a Proposition 2½ override, in order to control redevelopment of the site and preserve its open space. After many delays and revisions due to subsequent problems in the housing market, the Town sold the land to developers and construction began in 2012. The project, now known as Arlington 360,

includes 12 townhouse condos and 164 apartments, of which 15 percent are set aside as affordable units. A separate 90-unit assisted living facility is owned and managed by BrightView. Sales and rentals at both properties began in 2013, and residents began moving into them in spring 2014.

### **Mugar Site**

The 17-acre Mugar property in East Arlington remains the highest priority goal for acquisition and protection as open space and floodwater storage. Town Meeting voted nearly unanimously in 2000 and again in 2001 to seek to acquire the property. The Arlington Land Trust and Town officials negotiated an acquisition agreement with the owner in 2010, however, the owner withdrew once the ballot question to abolish MGL 40B failed to pass. In the last five years a developer working with the Mugar family has expressed intentions to pursue some development.

In 2010 FEMA released updated floodplain maps that show much of the Mugar land encumbered by several levels of flood zones, making extensive development difficult. The Arlington Redevelopment Board voted in 2011 to formally adopt the Open Space and Recreation Plan, thereby making the Plan, including acquisition and preservation of the Mugar property, Town policy, and thus signaling the Town's discouragement of any development of the property.

### **A Lost Opportunity**

One example of a lost acquisition opportunity was a narrow plot of undeveloped land at the southeast corner of Spy Pond in the Kelwyn Manor neighborhood which was sold for a house lot despite efforts by the Town to acquire it from the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston. A small benefit of the sale was that the new owner cleared it of a tangle of invasive plants, mainly oriental bittersweet, that had spread to nearby open areas including the path next to Spy Pond along Route 2.

**Goal 2. Preserve, protect, and enhance existing open spaces, including watersheds and natural areas; parks, playgrounds, and outdoor recreational facilities; and historic sites and cultural landscapes.**

### **2-a. Preserve and protect the Town's natural heritage, including watersheds, water bodies, native flora and fauna, and all existing natural areas.**

#### **Management Plans**

The management plans for major open spaces and recreational facilities developed under the previous Open Space Plan were reviewed and updated, but no new plans were added. It was determined to be difficult to implement the plans because many different entities hold responsibility for the oversight of parks and conservation areas, and the Open Space Committee has no authority to enforce use of the site-specific management plans.

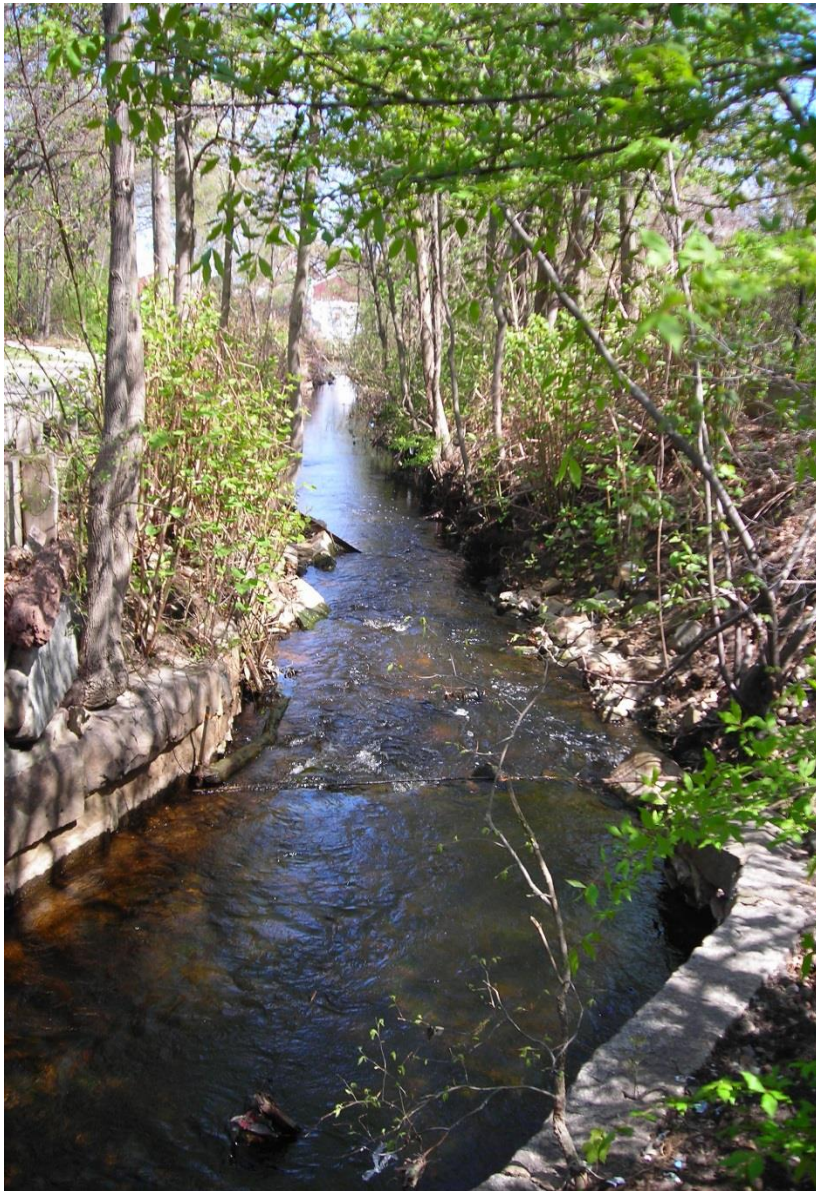
#### **Mill Brook**

Mill Brook flows nearly three miles through the central valley of Arlington and was the site for much of the early, water-powered commercial activity in the town. The waterway has remained essentially unchanged for decades, since extensive channeling and culverting were done to control its flow and fill in former mill ponds for town playing fields and other uses (Arlington Historical Commission 1976).

Several recent efforts to enhance the physical and ecological integrity of the Mill Brook corridor have been made during occasional clean-ups and some improvements by abutters, such as landscaping at the Old Schwamb Mill historic preservation site. The developers of the former Brigham's property, adjacent to an open stretch of the brook and a small park at the Arlington High School, renovated the area as part of their housing project.

A linear park along Mill Brook was first proposed in the 1920s, and was revisited in a graduate student design study by Mia Lehrer (now a well-known landscape architect) in 1976. The idea was revived again in 2009 by the Open Space Committee (OSC) with participation from other interested





*Mill Brook in Arlington Heights. Credit: Brian Barber*

individuals and representatives of groups such as the Park and Recreation Commission, Conservation Commission, and Redevelopment Board. The study group inspected current conditions along the brook, which is now about one-third each culverted, channeled, and free-flowing, and listed the ownership of the lands through which it flows, which is largely private and developed. The group prepared a report, Mill Brook Linear Park Report, describing these conditions and offering a vision of what could be done, such as a series of “pocket parks” on still-available land. The report was presented to the Board of Selectmen in 2010. It was publicized through an exhibit in Robbins Library and is displayed at the annual Open Space Committee booth on Town Day.

Interest in the Mill Brook corridor has been heightened as an element of the Arlington Master Plan, a major planning initiative that will be completed in 2015. Pending any funding for further feasibility studies and implementation, the report serves to show what could be done and perhaps to inspire private projects in the area to be planned.

#### **Trees and Native Vegetation**

Arlington currently has around 18,000 trees on public property which are cared for by the Department of Public Work’s Natural Resources Division. Many of the trees planted years ago are not native, including the abundant and invasive Norway Maples. The DPW website offers some helpful links about Arlington’s tree population and what to do if residents suspect a Town tree is diseased or damaged, recommended trees for planting, and other tree- related information.

The DPW also works with the Arlington Tree Committee, which was established in 2010 by the Arlington Board of Selectmen, to promote the protection, planting, and care of trees by residents in Arlington. The BOS, DPW, and committee have expressed ongoing concern with NStar’s severe pruning of street trees that causes damage to the trees and unsightly streetscapes. This oversight must weigh appropriate tree trimming against the potential loss of power from storm damage and fallen trees or branches.

Arlington values its street trees, but has lost a lot of trees in microbursts and other storms that hit East Arlington in particular over the past several years. The Tree Committee created a list of recommended native trees for replanting. The Town also maintains a tree program that includes sales of street trees to residents, who are asked to keep the new trees watered until they are well established, and the replacement of trees that must be removed because of disease or safety concerns.

Rain gardens are a relatively new idea for creating native perennial gardens in areas that can capture rain and runoff. In 2011 The Arlington Garden Club worked with the DPW and Sustainable Arlington to create a demonstration rain garden at Spy Pond Park, and in 2012 gardens were established at the Hardy School and near Hurd Field. A simultaneous EPA demonstration project repaved half of the parking lot at Hurd Field with pervious pavement and half with conventional material. This project is intended to prevent erosion and runoff into the adjacent Mill Brook.

### **Invasive Plants**

Invasive plants, notably Japanese knotweed, buckthorn, black swallowwort, garlic mustard, and Oriental bittersweet, are found throughout Arlington. On Town properties and along the Minuteman Bikeway, the DPW and/or volunteer Friends groups regularly work to remove invasives, but it is a continual struggle. Sustainable Arlington, the Garden Club, Conservation Commission, and other groups actively promote public education around invasives and encourage the use of native plants for private landscaping.

Spy Pond is periodically treated with the chemical Sonar to control the resurgent population of Eurasian water milfoil. This compound works by interfering with photosynthesis and thus does not harm animal life.

Two large stands of phragmites in Spy Pond, at Kelwyn Manor Park and on the south side of Elizabeth Island, have existed for years, and had begun to spread to other shoreline properties, including that of the chairman of the Vision 2020 Spy Pond Committee. He and the committee spearheaded an effort to control the spreading reeds, carried out a fundraising campaign, and obtained the consent of the abutters to continue treatments. The

Town manages the contract (with the same company that treats the pond for underwater weeds) and handles the money as a subset of the Water Bodies Fund. Beginning in 2009, three years of spraying killed most of the plants; the dead stalks were knocked down by volunteers and carted away by DPW. Control of small patches that regenerate from surviving roots is ongoing, and the cleared areas have been seeded with appropriate native plant species.

The Water Bodies Fund also supports regular removal of water chestnuts in Arlington Reservoir and treatment of Eurasian milfoil, nonnative curly-leaved pondweed, and filamentous algae in Hill's Pond in Menotomy Rocks Park.

### **Accomplishments at Selected Major Sites**

#### **Spy Pond**

The Vision 2020 Spy Pond Committee's Trails Days project of improvements along the state-owned path between Route 2 and the south end of Spy Pond celebrated its 10th anniversary in 2014. This effort has enlisted the help of various groups, notably the Appalachian Mountain Club, which supplied muscle and the needed expertise for building steps in several places, using broken curbstone pieces donated by Arlington DPW. Now fishermen and other visitors can reach the water's edge without eroding the slope. Poison ivy has been nearly eradicated, and volunteers from the committee and the community have cleaned up massive amounts of trash. The worn and bumpy footpath at the southern end of Spy Pond, connecting Pleasant Street and Lake Street, was repaved in 2011 by MassHighway, which owns it, to the delight of both walkers and bicycle commuters.

The Vision 2020 Spy Pond Committee also continues to produce its annual flyer asking people to use low- or no-phosphorus fertilizer to protect the pond from having excess phosphorus washed into it and thereby unintentionally promoting weed growth. The effect is hard to measure, but it probably keeps the weed problem from being even worse. The leaflets are distributed by students from the high school "Workplace" program

throughout the Spy Pond watershed. Several volunteers have been trained and licensed to addle Canada Geese eggs each spring to keep that population from increasing, with some success.

The nonprofit Friends of Spy Pond Park is another very active volunteer group. From April to October they have monthly work days for cleanup and removal of invasive plants in the park, enlisting both community groups and casual park visitors in the effort. They consult with DPW to try to mitigate erosion along the park paths, and members are on the alert to explain to people seen feeding the Canada Geese that this is both harmful and contrary to Town bylaws. The Friends group also sponsors an annual Fun Day with activities for all ages. In collaboration with the Arlington Land Trust and the Arlington-Belmont Crew, the day includes boat trips to Elizabeth Island and guided tours by Land Trust members. The Crew's high school students, who train on Spy Pond, have participated in a variety of other community programs, including the removal of invasive plants.



*At the boat launch during Spy Pond Fun Day. Credit: Ann LeRoyer*

The Park and Recreation Commission has overseen several improvements on their recreational facilities around the pond, including replacement of the safety surfacing at the Spy Pond Playground to eradicate a sand wasp issue in 2009, replacement of tot ride-on equipment, and the repair of cracks at the Spy Pond Tennis Courts, with funds raised through volunteer friends groups. The courts will be completely rebuilt in 2015. The use of Spy Pond for water sports has also been enhanced with canoe and kayak rentals during the summer months. In 2009 and 2010, a private company oversaw the rentals, and since 2011 the Recreation Department has managed the rental program. The private Boys and Girls Club, located on the pond, also hosts a number of water-based activities for children in its programs.

#### Arlington Reservoir

After the Reservoir dam was reinforced and a new spillway was completed in 2006, an anonymous donor gave \$3,000 for beautification of the area. After some delays in planning, a volunteer landscape architect designed a Wildlife Habitat Garden, which was installed in the spring of 2010 on both sides of the bridge over the new spillway. It features native plantings, grasses, and flowers on the sunny side and a few trees, shrubs, and other flowers on the shady side, as well as some rocks and logs to provide habitat for small wildlife and seating for visitors. Arlington DPW was very helpful in preparing the site with its heavy equipment, providing large rocks and logs, wood chips, and mulch, and installing a water line. A small but dedicated group of volunteers planted the garden and has been maintaining it. Most of the plants have grown exuberantly and the garden has garnered appreciative comments from people walking around the Reservoir.

The Reservoir regularly becomes badly infested with water chestnuts, which are removed by mechanical harvesters and by volunteers in canoes. The Water Bodies Fund supports this nearly annual project to keep the invasives under control.

In 2012 the Reservoir Committee of Vision 2020 created a calendar with members' photographs of the Res and the habitat garden and sold it at



Town Day and through several local stores to raise funds for additions to the garden. The committee also organizes occasional work days to clean up around the Reservoir and to spread wood chips on the perimeter path. The high school cross-country team, which uses the path for practice, has participated vigorously in the latter effort.

Since 2010 the Reservoir Beach has been named one of the state’s top 10 “swimming holes” by Boston.com. A 2013 survey of residents about the usage, concerns and suggestions for improvements at the Reservoir revealed the continuing popularity of the beach for family-oriented activities and year-round use as a passive recreation destination. Many suggestions for improvements will be prioritized in the coming years. The sale of seasonal beach tags and daily passes for families and individuals has remained strong over the past six years, and several concerts for youth and adults were sponsored by the Recreation Department during beach hours in 2014. The proceeds from beach tags and other events are used to maintain the beach environment.

#### Arlington’s Great Meadows

This important 183-acre wetland area is owned by the Town of Arlington, but is located within Lexington. This unusual arrangement has made it difficult to establish permanent protection of the property as conservation land. In 2009-2010 the Friends of Arlington’s Great Meadows, with the help of experts from Mass Audubon, determined that a growing wooded area of the Great Meadows should remain open, and they carried out a tree-cutting project to restore and maintain the area as an upland meadow. Other recent Friends projects include construction of two boardwalks, a footbridge, trail maintenance, educational programs, and control of invasive plants.



*All ages enjoy the Reservoir beach. Courtesy of Open Space Committee*



**2-b. Preserve, protect and enhance Arlington’s parks, playgrounds, playing fields, and other outdoor recreation spaces.**

**Upgraded Park and Recreation Facilities**

The Town's Park and Recreation Commission and Recreation Department have policy and management oversight for parks, playgrounds, playing fields, and other facilities, but the Department of Public Works is responsible for regular maintenance. Capital plans for parks and recreational facilities are reviewed and approved by the Town's Capital Planning Committee.

In 2009, a Master Plan was completed for the Summer Street Sports Complex and approval was received from Town Meeting for a one million dollar rink facility renovation project, followed in 2010 by a major overhaul to the Town’s only ice skating facility. Replacement and expansion of the rink bed and board system, installation of a lower ceiling for energy efficiency, and dehumidification improvements were among the enhancements made to the aging facility. On December 28, 2010, a dedication ceremony was held to celebrate the naming of the renovated Ed Burns Arena.

In 2010, upgrades and safety improvements to the Thorndike Field parking area were completed. The area, adjacent to the Minuteman Bikeway, sees heavy use by cyclists, pedestrians commuting to the Alewife T-station, and field users. Off-site overflow parking alternatives and signage to help control access were identified. The project focused on improving pedestrian and vehicular safety, traffic flow, drainage, and landscaping improvements in an environmentally sensitive location.

Renovations were completed in 2011 on the Summer Street Playground, basketball court and multi-generational area. The project was designed to work within the context of the Sports Complex Master Plan, and incorporated recommendations from the Arlington Police Department to help improve safety and reduce vandalism. A highlight of the renovation is a large completely handicapped accessible children’s play structure with zero-entry ramp, located between Buck and Hill’s Hill fields. A tree-shaded

multi-generational area behind Summer Street Field provides bocce courts, game tables, a circular walking path with fitness stations, and young child play elements.



*Accessible play structures at Buck Field off Summer Street. Credit: Ann LeRoy*

In 2012 the Wellington Tennis Courts were completely renovated, and lights were installed, making it Arlington’s first lighted tennis facility.

In the fall of 2013, the renovation of the Florence Avenue Playground, in the park adjacent to the Dallin School, was completed. The new playground area was laid out along the front side of the park and includes play elements and swings for multiple ages, a zip line, and a splash pad. A new welcoming entrance and landscaping were incorporated, and the area that formerly had outdated toddler play equipment was left as a grassy area for more passive recreation.

The renovation of Hibbert Street Park/Playground in 2014 replaced outdated play equipment and improved the layout and entrances of this small neighborhood “pocket park.”

The 2014 North Union Spray Park project focused on total replacement of all water play features and the outdated systems for this recreational asset that is heavily used by many in the warm days of summer.

### **Public/Private Partnerships**

Several recreational facilities have benefited from collaborative projects. Buck Field, the youth baseball field located on Summer Street, was renovated with funds and oversight provided by the Arlington Youth Baseball and Softball Association as a gift to the town. With financial assistance from the Friends of Robbins Farm Park, the two hill slides at the playground were replaced in 2011. Through the efforts of the Friends of Waldo Park, an installation of public art was completed in 2013. A swan sculpture was created for and installed in Spy Pond Park in 2014, with support from the Town's Public Art Fund.

### **Fundraising**

In 2014, a fundraising event to benefit the parks in Town was held at the Arlington Reservoir in coordination with members of the Arlington Parks Alliance. An Annual Golf Tournament to raise funds for recreation programs is held at the Hillview Country Club. Other recent fundraising campaigns have supported Phragmites control efforts in Spy Pond and maintenance of the Wildlife Habitat Garden at the Reservoir.

### **Other Amenities**

A successful pilot program was approved and monitored for the seasonal installation of portable restrooms at many parks and fields over the past several years. With help from the Disability Commission in obtaining CDBG funds, this commitment ensures that all of the portable restrooms, which are funded by donations from local sports organizations and Friends groups, are handicapped accessible units.

### **Off-leash Recreational Area (OLRA)**

In the spring of 2010, Town Meeting approved a bylaw amendment for limited off-leash morning hours at selected Town parks. The Recreation Department and Park and Recreation Commission have developed rules

and regulations for where and when off-leash dog activity is allowed and published a brochure for reference. In addition, following a feasibility study highlighting several potential options, Thorndike Field was selected as the location for Arlington's first dedicated fenced off-leash recreation area (OLRA) for dogs and their owners. Funding for the project came mainly from a gift by the Stanton Foundation, and construction of the facility was completed in the spring of 2012.

### **Minuteman Bikeway**

The Minuteman Bikeway is a rail conversion amenity which extends from Arlington's eastern border near the MBTA Alewife Station through the Town and on to Lexington and Bedford; it is almost 11 miles in length. The three communities each have jurisdiction over the segment in their own town. With funding from the State's Recreation Trails Program in 2011, the three communities worked with a consultant on a report (Navigating the Minuteman Commuter Bikeway) to develop programs to unify the policies and look of the Bikeway; they produced a new bikeway map in 2013, and are working on a signage and way-finding program.



*The Minuteman Bikeway is popular all year. Credit: Ann LeRoyer*

Representatives from the three communities meet at least annually to work on common and coordinated efforts. The Arlington Bicycle Advisory Committee organizes clean-up efforts and monitors the Bikeway for safety issues, and promotes the ease of cycling around town with an annual spring family-oriented bike tour. In May, July, and September Bikeway User Counts are performed by volunteers to document the high (and increasing) user volume on the Bikeway. While pedestrian and cyclist numbers have increased each year, a marked increase in the use of the Bikeway by joggers has also been noted. This increased activity, in types of users as well as numbers, speaks to the Bikeway's popularity, as well as the need to fund regular maintenance for the amenity.

**2-c. Preserve, protect, and enhance Arlington's historic open spaces and cultural landscapes.**

**Identify, Protect, and Maintain Key Sites**

Arlington values its historical and cultural landscapes, and has several Town commissions, nonprofit organizations, and other volunteer groups that work to identify, protect, and maintain key sites. These include the Historical Commission, Historic District Commissions, Arlington Historical Society, Arlington Commission on Arts and Culture, the Old Schwamb Mill Preservation Trust, and the Cyrus Dallin Art Museum in the historic Jefferson Cutter House.

The Battle Road Scenic Byway links four towns – Arlington, Lexington, Lincoln, and Concord– through which the British regulars passed on April 19, 1775 at the beginning of the American Revolution. These towns, with Minute Man National Historical Park, the Massachusetts Department of Transportation, and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, are collaborating to highlight the historic, cultural, recreational, scenic, and natural resources along this route.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts officially designated the Battle Road Scenic Byway on November 6, 2006, and MAPC completed a Corridor Management Plan for the Byway in Spring 2011. It proposes strategies to manage transportation, land use, and tourism along the Byway. The plan

provides a guide for preserving and promoting Byway resources while recognizing that development pressures and opportunities exist in close proximity to these esteemed resources. In Arlington some of these resources along Massachusetts Avenue are the Old Schwamb Mill, Benjamin Locke house and store, and Foot of the Rocks in the Heights; Jason Russell House, the Civic Block, and Mt. Pleasant Cemetery in the Center; and the Butterfield-Whittemore House and Alewife Brook Reservation near the Cambridge border.

Related to this project, in 2013, the Freedom's Way Heritage Association launched Patriots Paths, an outreach effort to identify Revolutionary sites and compile local stories from ten participating communities, including Arlington. The Freedom's Way website includes a list of venues in Arlington that represent the path of the patriots in 1775. These sites include historic houses, civic buildings, burial grounds, and sites.



*Historic Jason Russell House. Credit: Ann LeRoyer*



The Arlington Committee on Tourism and Economic Development (A-TED) serves as a link between history, art, culture, and economic development. Board members include a Selectmen, the Planning Director, and representatives from the Redevelopment Board, Cultural Council, Historical Commission, Chamber of Commerce, and School Committee. ATED's mission is to promote and develop Arlington as a destination for business, culture, recreation, and entertainment. The group recently co-hosted a Summer Arts Festival, funded in part with a grant from the Cultural Council.

In addition, A-TED secured funding from Town Meeting to construct a small interpretative center near the Uncle Sam Monument. The visitor center opened in the late summer of 2014. Other projects include the development of distinctive directional signage for Arlington's four museums/cultural institutions and other cultural resources, and development of a website to promote cultural and economic resources.

**Selected Interpretative Programs**

- Old Schwamb Mill maintains active membership and school education programs relating to historic mill operations, the mill pond system, and Mill Brook, and offers walking tours of the area with other organizations such as Walking in Arlington.
- Jason Russell House and Smith Museum, owned and managed by the Arlington Historical Society, continue varied programs on Arlington history.
- Patriot's Day parade and Minuteman Revolutionary War re-enactments occur annually.
- Cyrus Dallin Art Museum, located in the historic Jefferson Cutter House in Arlington Center, offers regular exhibits, educational programs, and other events relating to the work of well-known sculptor Cyrus Dallin who lived and worked in Arlington for nearly 40 years. A special gallery in the lower level of the house is available for changing exhibits by local artists.

- The Friends of Menotomy Rocks Park and Friends of Robbins Farm Park, with the Arlington Center for the Arts and local businesses, cosponsor outdoor performances of Shakespeare plays.
- Other public art programs in the parks and around town are being sponsored by the Vision 2020 Public Art Committee, in cooperation with other Town boards and committees. The first Art Rocks Menotomy project, a temporary installation of artwork in that park, was held in the summer of 2014. Art Rocks Spy Pond will occur in 2015, and other events are planned for the future. The Public Art Committee also sponsors an annual decorated chair exhibit, "Chairful Where You Sit," and has begun a program for local artists to paint transformer boxes on public streets.
- Friends of Arlington's Great Meadows offers natural history tours and other education programs in that historic 183-acre watershed.

**Goal 3. Coordinate and strengthen local and regional planning and management of open spaces in conjunction with various Town departments, commissions, and volunteer groups, and work closely with nearby towns and regional entities and with state and federal officials and agencies.**

**3-a. Work within the Town of Arlington to better coordinate and manage open space goals and objectives.**

**Role of the Open Space Committee**

The OSC submits annual reports to the Town Meeting for publication in the Town's Annual Report (see Appendix A). Diverse representation on the committee (Conservation Commission, Planning Dept., Redevelopment Board, Public Works Dept., Cemetery Commission, Human Services Dept., Park and Recreation Commission, Vision 2020) encourages the coordinated efforts of users and caretakers in the management of open spaces. The committee meets with Friends groups and other interested parties to hear about concerns and helps to coordinate efforts to address roles,



interaction, and support of DPW personnel with volunteers and stewards. The committee also worked with the Master Plan Advisory Committee and Planning Department on drafting sections of the master plan relating to open space, natural resources, and recreation.

### **Cemetery Expansion**

The Cemetery Expansion Study Committee established by Town Meeting in 2006 recommended establishing a columbarium in Cooke’s Hollow, but this proposal was not approved by Town Meeting in 2011. After reexamination of an area formerly thought unsuitable for burials, some additional space for cremains purposes was found within the boundaries of Mount Pleasant Cemetery. Currently the Cemetery Commission is in the process of finding a bidder for the columbarium project based on the approved architectural design. It is hoped that the Mt. Pleasant Columbarium will be finished by July 1, 2015.

In addition to this project, the cemetery has set aside two areas for expansion. One area is for the start of a green cemetery for cremains only and the other area is to be the next dedicated veterans section for those who have served in the Gulf and Middle Eastern conflicts. After the last of the earth burial space has been used, the columbarium and green cemetery will be the only options available in the 59-acre cemetery.

### **Town Policies on the Use of Open Space**

The Park and Recreation Commission has developed and revised a number of policies regarding the use of parks and recreational facilities under its jurisdiction. A Policy Handbook of all existing PRC policies was published in 2014. Following are some of the highlights:

- The playing field policy was reviewed in 2010 with an eye to the increased use of lights and amplification equipment. The policy was enhanced to control the use of these amenities to minimize disruption to neighborhoods and to require compliance with independent monitoring and the provision of penalties. In its first year of implementation, 100 percent compliance by field users was achieved.

The policy defines “no loitering” time limits for groups with permits to use parks and fields.

- To help ensure equity and the protection of Town properties a policy for the placement and use of storage sheds on Town fields was developed. Sports league expansions and the use of Town facilities continues to be monitored, including working with the Arlington/Belmont Crew program to insure its compliance with the Town’s motorboat bylaw in its use of Spy Pond.
- In 2013 policies and forms for members of the community to request picnics and special events at Arlington’s parks were reviewed and updated, and are available online. The field permit policy, gifting policy and a Town-wide policy on leaving toys and other items at parks, fields and playground were all reviewed and updated in 2013. Efforts to develop an equitable policy related to requests for hanging informational banners about special events on Park and Recreation properties were met with obstacles and were abandoned. Policies related to the temporary and permanent installation of art in the parks and a standard design for park and field entrance signs are currently being developed.

### **Natural Resources Staffing**

OSC appreciates the ongoing cooperation of DPW as described in other sections of this report, but the planning and budgeting needed for a senior natural resources professional and additional workers have not yet been approved or implemented. These human resources are badly needed.

### **Ecological Impacts**

The warrant article passed by Town Meeting to create a fund to support regular water quality testing and monitoring of all the Town’s water bodies, and treatment as found to be needed, was approved by the State Legislature in 2008. The Water Bodies Fund receives annual appropriations from Town Meeting, which has made possible weed control in several water bodies at the most appropriate time in the weeds’ life cycle.

Sustainable Arlington, a committee of Vision 2020, and other groups work on various projects related to environmentally sensitive areas that may be subject to climate change impacts, such as flooding in East Arlington, control of invasive plants, and energy efficiency initiatives.

### **Capital Improvements Planning**

The Park and Recreation Commission continues to develop and manage a multi-year capital plan for open space and recreation improvements, maintenance and new upgrades of facilities, but specific projects and progress are dependent on funding availability each year (Appendix C).

### **Electronic Communications and GIS Tools**

A new Town systems manager and director of GIS (Adam Kurowski) is producing more and better GIS-based maps. See the Town-wide maps throughout this report and the site maps in chapter 5 for examples. The Town also enhanced its website in July 2014, making more information about resources and services, including maps, available to residents and other users.

### **Collaborative Planning for Open Space**

There are many cases of Town boards and other organizations collaborating with the Open Space Committee, Park and Recreation Commission, and Conservation Commission on specific open space projects. For example, the Arlington Redevelopment Board worked with the developer of the former Brigham's site to enhance an adjacent park and areas along Mill Brook, and to use ecological designs for swales and plantings around the large new apartment building.

The Department of Public Works collaborates regularly with PRC and CC on maintenance and special projects on Town-owned properties. Many recreational projects and cleanup efforts at parks and trails have also received support for equipment and refreshments from town businesses including: local grocery and hardware stores, Bowes Realtors, Starbucks, Dunkin' Donuts, Trader Joe's, Cambridge Savings Bank, the Fields Pond Foundation, and others.

The Workplace Program, an alternative high school program, has helped with volunteer maintenance efforts at several parks and open space areas, and students distribute the annual Spy Pond fertilizer flyer. In addition, arts programs offered at local parks seasonally have been supported by the Regent Theatre and the Arlington Cultural Council.

### **3-b. Work at the regional level to coordinate planning and development initiatives that protect and enhance open space across jurisdictions.**

#### **Coordinate with Regional Organizations and Nearby Towns**

The Mystic River Watershed Association (MyRWA) sponsors many programs on watershed education, including removal of invasive plants, water quality testing, and seasonal monitoring of herring runs. Arlington provides office space to MyRWA at no charge at the Central School.

The ABC (Arlington, Belmont, Cambridge) Tri-Community group (created in 2002 and reauthorized in 2014) has been working to resolve flooding and CSO issues in the Alewife Brook and nearby areas.

Sustainable Arlington and other local groups and individuals have been working with Friends of Alewife Reservation, Coalition to Protect the Belmont Uplands, and other groups to prevent development of nearly 300 apartments in the Silver Maple forest, which is part of the flood-prone wetland area on the Belmont-Cambridge border, adjacent to Route 2 and East Arlington. In spite of years of work, the developer was authorized to begin clearing the area for construction in late 2014.

More positive activities in the Alewife Brook area include working with the state Department of Conservation and Recreation on construction of the Alewife Brook Greenway, a bicycle and pedestrian trail on DCR land in Arlington.

Several important open spaces are shared by Arlington and Lexington. Great Meadows, owned by Arlington but located entirely in East Lexington, is served by cooperative efforts of the Friends of Arlington's Great

Meadows, Lexington’s Conservation Commission, students of the nearby Waldorf School, and scouts in creating an informational signboard, boardwalk, and invasive plant removal efforts. ACROSS Lexington is a new project to mark and enhance walking trails throughout that town, and in cooperation with the Arlington Conservation Commission on Arlington land.



*Arlington's Great Meadows next to the Minuteman Bikeway. Credit: David White*

The Arlington Reservoir, also partly in Lexington, has experienced vegetative clearing and the deposition of yard debris from nearby residents. At the request of the Vision 2020 Reservoir Committee, Lexington Conservation Commission sent letters to Lexington abutters of the Reservoir to explain Arlington’s ownership of the land around the Reservoir, and to discourage dumping and clearing of vegetation. Arlington is attempting to get Lexington to share the cost of water chestnut removal, but to date has not been successful.

When the former Busa Farm property adjacent to the Arlington Reservoir was sold by the Busa family and purchased by the Town of Lexington using Community Preservation Act funding, many Arlington residents and Town officials and organizations supported its continued use as a community farm. That effort was successful and most of the acreage is now managed

as Lex Farm. However, Arlington is concerned about housing being planned on part of the land abutting the Reservoir due to storm drainage and runoff issues. Mutual discussions are continuing.

### **Regional Historic Connections**

The Battle Road Scenic Byway links four towns – Arlington, Lexington, Lincoln, and Concord– through which the British regulars passed on April 19, 1775 at the beginning of the American Revolution. These towns, with Minute Man National Historical Park, the Massachusetts Department of Transportation, and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, are collaborating to highlight the historic, cultural, recreational, scenic, and natural resources along this route. See section 2-c for more information.

### **3-c. Engage state officials and state and federal agencies in Town efforts to acquire, maintain, and manage space and recreation resources.**

#### **Community Preservation Act**

The Community Preservation Act was enacted by the state in 2000 to enable cities and towns in Massachusetts to create a local dedicated fund for open space, historic preservation, affordable housing, and outdoor recreation projects. Cities and towns that adopt the act also receive funds from the statewide Community Preservation Trust Fund each year to help fund these projects. In spring 2014, Arlington Town Meeting voted to put adoption of CPA on the ballot in November, and the initiative passed by a 54 to 46 margin. All of Arlington’s state legislators supported this effort. Next steps are for Town Meeting to appoint a local Community Preservation Committee which will administer the funds and recommend projects for approval in subsequent Town Meetings.

#### **Goal 4. Increase public awareness, accessibility, and community stewardship of the Town’s open spaces.**

#### **4-a. Support volunteer groups for major open spaces and recreational facilities.**

Many volunteer Friends groups and informal committees have been established around specific sites, including Spy Pond Park, Arlington Reservoir, Robbins Farm Park, Menotomy Rocks Park, and many playgrounds (Waldo, Summer Street, North Union, and Greeley Park at Stratton School). A new Friends of Symmes Conservation Area was formed in 2014 to monitor the new conservation lands and parks at the former hospital site, now partially developed as the Arlington 360 housing complex and BrightView assisted living facility.

The Arlington Parks Alliance (APA), started in 2006 as Friends of Parks, continues to meet with representatives of the Park and Recreation Commission and Recreation Department to share concerns and plans for park maintenance and new ideas for fundraising strategies. The APA sponsored a Reservoir Beach Party in September 2014 as a fundraiser for the parks.

The Land Stewards program coordinated by the Conservation Commission has been reactivated under a new coordinator in 2014, with active members attending to Turkey Hill, Hill's Hill, Crusher Lot, Arlington's Great Meadows, and other sites.

DPW supports various Friends groups by providing trash pick-up for their clean-up efforts, and delivery of wood chips and other items for trail improvements. The recycling coordinator has established and publicized procedures for keeping compostable plant materials that are collected as yard waste separate from trash and invasive plants, which need to be destroyed.

School, scout, and other groups have also sponsored clean-ups on the Minuteman Bikeway and participated in other cleanups.

**4-b. Increase public awareness and educate Town residents about open space and recreational resources.**



*High School cross country team spreading wood chips on the Reservoir trail. Credit: Rachel James*

**Develop Materials and Resources, Public Meetings**

The Recreation Department prepares and distributes seasonal catalogues on all its programs, and posts information online, along with online registration for adult and children's programs.

Bulletin boards host information at many sites, including Menotomy Rocks Park, the Reservoir, Robbins Farm Park, Spy Pond Park, and Waldo Park.

Sustainable Arlington, the Arlington Garden Club, and the Department of Public Works have been cooperating since 2009 to organize an annual "EcoFest" which brings together information presented by groups promoting sustainable and energy efficient practices and vendors of appropriate products. Past topics have included water and food; the spring 2014 theme was "Rethink Recycling: Reduce, Reuse, Repurpose," and one exhibit showed how broken pieces of curbstone were repurposed for erosion-preventing steps to the water's edge at Spy Pond. The 2015 program will focus on energy awareness and related issues.



The Public Works Department has an active public education program on composting, rainwater storage, hazardous waste disposal, and stormwater awareness programs and presentations. The DPW makes compost bins and rainwater barrels available at a very reasonable cost. It also distributes to every household a schedule of recycling information.

### **Environmental Education Programs**

Friends groups regularly conduct activities like nature walks and special educational events in their areas. For example, Friends of Spy Pond Park sponsors an annual Fun Day in collaboration with the Arlington Land Trust and the Arlington-Belmont Crew, which transports visitors to Elizabeth Island for guided tours by ALT members.

Organizations like the Mystic River Watershed Association (headquartered in Arlington) and Friends of Alewife Reservation also conduct activities which may take place wholly or partly in Arlington.

The Menotomy Bird Club, which was formed in 2003, sponsors seasonal birding trips and monthly lectures and maintains a very informative website. Lists of birds recorded in specific areas such as the Reservoir, Spy Pond, Great Meadows, and Menotomy Rocks Park have been compiled and printed. These lists are available at Town Day and are updated periodically as additional species are spotted.

### **Educate Landowners**

The Arlington Land Trust works with private homeowners who are interested in protecting their land with a conservation restriction or easement to prevent future development. Several CRs are now in place on privately owned lots.

### **Adopt-an-Island and Streetscapes**

The Arlington Garden Club works with support from the Town's Department of Public Works and other entities to coordinate the adoption of street planters and islands by residents and businesses to beautify intersections and small public spaces. Around 60 areas are usually adopted

due to the Club's encouragement of citizen participation through publicity and offers of assistance on plant selection. Invited volunteer judges select winning sites each year.

The Club has maintained concrete planters at Broadway Plaza in Arlington Center in cooperation with the Chamber of Commerce for many years. In 2014-2015, a redesign program removed the planters and future plans include policy development on how nearby businesses and the public may use this space. Club members also designed and planted an authentic eighteenth-century herb garden at the historic Jason Russell House in 1975 for the Bicentennial celebrations, and they maintain it and another flower garden on the property. They have adopted several areas within the historic Civic Block, including the Town Hall Gardens, Whittemore Robbins House Garden, and planters around the Cyrus Dallin flagpole, and they maintain a demonstration rain garden at Spy Pond Park.

### **Town Day**

Arlington's annual Town Day is an important event for promoting awareness and information and all kinds of community activities. Groups like the Open Space Committee, Arlington Land Trust, and Conservation Commission have their own booths and hand out materials, and the Spy Pond and Reservoir Committees are featured prominently at the Vision 2020 booth. A number of Friends groups concerned with various parks and playgrounds, including the Friends of Spy Pond Park, Menotomy Rocks Park, Robbins Farm Park, and Great Meadows, also traditionally have their own Town Day booths.

### **Local and Regional Media**

The Town's website ([www.arlingtonma.gov](http://www.arlingtonma.gov)) was significantly upgraded in 2014 and includes information pages for the Open Space Committee (including the current Open Space and Recreation Plan), Park and Recreation Commission, and Recreation Department activities, among many other resources and links to Friends groups and other committees. Recreation program sign-ups can be completed online.

The Open Space Committee, Park and Recreation Commission, Vision 2020 committees, and Conservation Commission hold regular monthly or bimonthly meetings that are announced on the Town website, and are open to the public. Minutes are available online and at the Robbins Library.

Regular articles and announcements about open space issues and events appear in the weekly *Arlington Advocate* (in print and online), on the Community Access Cable channel (ACMi), on the Town's website, and on the Arlington email list (arlington@arlingtonlist.org). In 2014, at the suggestion of the Open Space Committee, the *Advocate* published a series on "Hidden Gems" to highlight some of the Town's smaller and less known open spaces. The newspaper also ran a major story about the protection and public accessibility of Elizabeth Island in Spy Pond.

More specialized media are also used. For example, the newsletter of the Friends of Spy Pond Park is publishing a series of articles on various invasive plants that infest or are trying to infest the park.

#### **4-c. Provide greater use of and improved access to key water bodies, natural areas, and recreational facilities.**

##### **Review Accessibility Concerns**

Working with the Institute for Human Centered Design (IHCD), the Town conducted an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) study in 2014 focused on surveying the Park and Recreation sites and programs with the following goals:

- Provide an evaluation for the Town Recreation Department of services and programs to determine compliance with ADA regulations;
- Provide an evaluation of Town Park and Recreation Commission facilities, including buildings, playgrounds, fields and parks;
- Prepare a Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan that complies with the current ADA standards;

- Establish a grievance procedure and public notice that conforms to ADA/504 requirements;
- Provide the Town with a cost estimate for remediation work required as a result of the evaluations.

##### **Increase Recreation Options for Varied Demographics**

In addition to the many organized and pick-up sports activities, Arlington's parks and open spaces continued to provide the community with venues for a wide variety of recreational opportunities. Organized star gazing, movie nights, picnics, school fairs and field days, a fishing derby, Shakespeare performances, an arts festival, concerts, a tennis tournament, and "Spooky Walk" are some of the special events held.

Collaborations between the Recreation Dept. and other groups have resulted in recreational events such as the Town Day Road Race, Daddy Daughter Dance, Egg Hunt, Halloween and Special Winter Public Skate and a Special Needs Skate Program assisted by the Arlington Catholic High School Boys' & Girls' Hockey teams and their coaching staff.

New programs offered by the Recreation Department over the last several years have included: archery, futbol, Saturday Night Lights Flag Football, lacrosse for girls grades K-4, Lego classes, toddler art classes, Stroller Fit classes, Rock & Roll Babies, Special Needs soccer classes, volleyball clinics, Thundercats After School Sports program at three elementary schools, Middle School Ski Club, film making, game design, youth and adult golf classes, zumba and tai chi for adults, expanded adult tennis lessons, Fit Doggie and Me Training and the I Can Shine Learn to Bike program for youth with special needs.

##### **Improve Access to Various Water Bodies**

The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) has built a boardwalk in part of the Alewife Reservation creating the Alewife Brook Greenway linkage from Alewife T Station to the Mystic Valley Parkway area, near the future extension of the Green Line subway into Medford. DCR

also built a new dam and spillway area between Upper and Lower Mystic Lakes, though most access is on the Medford side. This has become an active site for watching Bald Eagles and many other permanent and migratory birds.

Mill Brook has become better known as a result of a 2010 report by an Open Space Committee study group that drew attention to areas along the brook that are Town-owned and publicly accessible. That report is also used by the Arlington Redevelopment Board and the Master Plan Advisory Committee as a basis for reevaluating both economic development potential and passive recreational opportunities along the Mill Brook corridor.



*Granite steps built by volunteers at Spy Pond. Credit: L. Stroker Rogovin*

Most of the land around Spy Pond is privately owned and not accessible to the public. Spy Pond Park on the north side of the pond and the pathway on the south side are accessible and widely used. The Spy Pond Committee has received help from the professional trail crew of the Appalachian Mountain Club as well as town residents for its annual Trails Days project

of improvements on property under the jurisdiction of MassHighway along Route 2. The Town is continuing to work with MassHighway for the removal of runoff deposition of particulates at the Route 2 storm drain, which empties into Spy Pond.

In spite of substantial interest by residents, additional outdoor or indoor swimming facilities have not found sponsors or locations in Arlington. Currently the Reservoir Beach offers summertime outdoor swimming, and the private Arlington Boys and Girls Club has an indoor pool.

#### **4-d. Support Arlington's efforts for a more environmentally sound Town and region.**

##### **Link Open Space and Sustainability Concerns**

As part of the Green Communities program, the state awarded Arlington a \$247,894 grant aimed at implementing energy reduction initiatives in 2014. A total of \$7.9 million in grants to 43 communities across the Commonwealth were awarded in this latest round of the Green Communities Competitive Grants. This is the third Green Communities Grant awarded to Arlington with a cumulative total of \$698,000. This latest award will go toward energy improvement projects at the Ottoson Middle School and Arlington High School.

Town officials and representatives of Sustainable Arlington cooperate in an Energy Working Group which has made a number of efficiency improvements in the Town. In the beginning of 2013, the Town appointed its first Energy Manager under the direction of the Town Manager. The Energy Manager is charged with the task of finding new ways for the Town to reduce its energy costs and consumption as well as seeking out alternative ways to fund these efforts through grants and other available funds. This part-time position is shared with the Town of Bedford.

A Town-wide recycling program has been in effect for many years. Recycling formerly was picked up every other week, but many residents



asked for weekly pickup. This was accomplished in 2013 when the time came for the Town to negotiate a new contract for household waste and recycling hauling. Under this contract trash won't be picked up unless it is accompanied by some recycling. Recycling bins and trash containers are now located in selected parks during the outdoor recreation season.

DPW prepares and distributes an annual leaflet with recycling instructions and yard waste pickup dates, and offers compost bins at reasonable prices. A half-time Recycling Coordinator was hired in 2012. She has developed instructions for separating trash and noxious/invasive weeds from other plant material that is safe to compost. In addition, a volunteer Recycling Committee publishes periodic tips in the *Arlington Advocate* and on the Town website and Town email list, holds regular "community collection" days, and generally works to promote recycling in many ways.

The community education program at Arlington High School includes some classes every year on sustainable practices like composting.

Arlington participates in a hazardous waste collection program with neighboring towns. The collection site is in Lexington, with monthly drop-off dates in spring, summer, and fall. The DPW leaflet lists the dates and what materials will be accepted.

### **Public Transportation and Bicycle Commuting**

The MBTA operates more than ten bus routes that travel through Arlington, connecting town residents to the Alewife T Station, Harvard Square, Burlington Mall, and other destinations outside of Arlington. In 2014 LEXpress expanded its service from Lexington into Arlington Heights. This bus allows users to get on or off where they wish on the designated route, primarily along Mass Ave. Another form of public transportation, ZipCar, has offered pick-up and drop-off sites in Arlington since 2008.

The Arlington Bicycle Advisory Committee (ABAC) meets regularly to promote use of the Minuteman Bikeway for commuting and recreation, and to deal with other bicycle-related issues. For example, their efforts with the Town have led to a redesign plan for Arlington Center to improve

safety and access for Bikeway users passing through the busy Mass Ave./Pleasant St. intersection. Bike lanes and sharrows have also been marked on many sections of Mass Ave. and other major streets.

Since 2011, ABAC and the Town's Planning Department have participated in a statewide program that counts users of bikeways, trails, and paths. These Bikeway user surveys, held in May, July, and September from 7 am to 7 pm, count all types of users who pass through Arlington Center on designated dates, including weekdays and weekends. Data sheets track men, women, and children on bicycles, walking, skateboarding, or rollerblading. The statistics from these surveys are used for planning purposes and to determine changing needs and demands on the Bikeway.

### **Community Gardens**

Community gardens have been established at Magnolia Field in East Arlington and Robbins Farm Park in the Heights. 2010 was the pilot year for the Robbins Farm Community/Educational Garden Project. This communal garden saw all participants work a single large plot at Robbins Farm Park and share the harvest, unlike the Magnolia Park Community Gardens where individuals work their own small plots. The Robbins Farm garden also provided an opportunity for gardening education for adults and children, including organized school trips. The Recreation Department administered the program, which was open to all residents, and after a successful first year, an expanded pilot was approved and has become a standard offering.

The Sustainable Arlington Committee has encouraged Arlington citizens to establish private gardens for their personal use. They have also espoused a program of eating food produced within 100 miles of one's home. This committee has provided information to Arlington citizens on the use of composting to help reduce the amount of garden and yard waste collected by Arlington's trash and recycling contractor.

A weekly Farmers Market brings fresh produce from surrounding farms to Arlington's Town Center parking lot on Wednesdays from late June through late October. The market is managed by a volunteer committee.



*Farmer's Market Tomatoes. Photo by Lindsey Beyerstein*