

SECTION 6

COMMUNITY GOALS

A. DESCRIPTION OF PROCESS

The Town of Whately's open space and recreation goals were developed through the following planning process:

- A review and discussion of the Vision Statement, findings and recommendations presented in the 2004 Whately Community Development Plan, which contained an expanded Open Space and Resource Protection chapter.
- In April of 2006, Open Space and Recreation Plan surveys were mailed to 650 households in Whately. Of these, 94 were returned and counted as responses, which represents a 14% rate of return. (See Appendix A for a copy of the survey). Although the responses may not reflect the opinions of all residents, they do represent a significant source of community input, which was used to develop the preliminary draft Section 8-Goals and Objectives.
- Between January and June 2006, the members of the Whately Open Space Committee and staff from the Franklin Regional Council of Governments Planning Department developed this Open Space and Recreation Plan. The planning process used several methods for encouraging public participation:
 - The results of the 2006 Open Space and Recreation Survey were used as the basis for the development of Section 8 - Goals and Objectives as well as the overall open space and recreation vision.
 - Six (6) public meetings were held by the Open Space Committee between January and June 2006.
 - A Public Forum was held on June 14, 2006, where residents reviewed and discussed the major findings of the OSRP and the 5-Year Action Plan. All public comments were recorded and considered for incorporation into the OSRP.

B. STATEMENT OF OPEN SPACE AND RECREATIONAL GOALS

Whately residents have a deep appreciation of the town's historic buildings, forests, agricultural lands, and breathtaking scenery. Whately's landscape - its working farms, extensive forests, steep hillsides and broad, flat floodplain corridors - gives the town its unique character and charm.

Residents who responded to the Open Space and Recreation Survey and participated in the process of developing this Open Space and Recreation Plan have a shared vision for the future of Whately's natural, historical, and recreational resources.

Our vision for the Town of Whately is to preserve our valued agricultural landscapes and working farms, to protect the beauty and unique rural character of our community, to protect our water resources and drinking water supplies, to preserve contiguous tracts of forested land, and to support sustainable economic development that protects our natural, historic, and cultural resources, strengthens the tax base, provides services, and provides a diverse mix of housing opportunities for residents. We envision a proactive planning process that encourages land uses that sustain the health of our waters, forests, wildlife and working farms, preserves historic resources, and helps the Town to permanently protect its most valued open spaces.

We envision a process in which the Town actively assists landowners and developers in designing projects that sustain and enhance our community's shared assets and character. This Open Space and Recreation Plan is a vital component of a proactive, sustainable land planning and development process which will strive to effectively and equitably manage the growth pressures facing Whately while preserving natural resources and wildlife habitat, historic features, scenic roads and vistas, and recreational opportunities for current and future residents of our town.

As described in the Vision Statement, Whately's large blocks of forested land and farmland will be protected as a result of cooperative efforts between private landowners, and local and state agencies and private non-profit organizations. These lands will remain under private ownership and control, continuing to provide income to the town via property taxes. The town's rivers and streams will be clean enough for fishing and swimming. Residents will continue to enjoy clean drinking water from aquifers that have been protected from contamination.

In an ideal Whately, there will be a diverse local economy, anchored by businesses and agricultural operations. Residents will speak proudly of their successful efforts to maintain and restore historic buildings throughout Town. The Town will continue to be supportive of local farmers and the value they offer to the town. A result of supporting local agricultural and forestry businesses will be access to fresh vegetables, dairy products, fruit and meat produced close to home, as well as the opportunity to buy forest products raised by neighbors. Promoting these agricultural enterprises will help farms stay viable and maintain open space.

The Town and other public agencies will acquire land so that residents of all ages and abilities will enjoy a system of well-maintained trails in Whately that offer opportunities for bird watching, wildlife viewing, hiking, cross-country skiing, and snowmobiling. Pedestrian and bicycle trails will be developed to connect residents with recreational destination points throughout Town. Trails, picnic areas, and watercraft put-ins will provide public access to the Connecticut River. In addition, the town will have been successful at attracting state and federal grants towards the development of recreational programs for both youth and adults that support residents' respect and appreciation for their heritage and the natural world.