

Town of Bridgewater Open Space and Recreation Plan Update



Public Forum May 14, 2026
Presented by: Beals and Thomas, Inc.



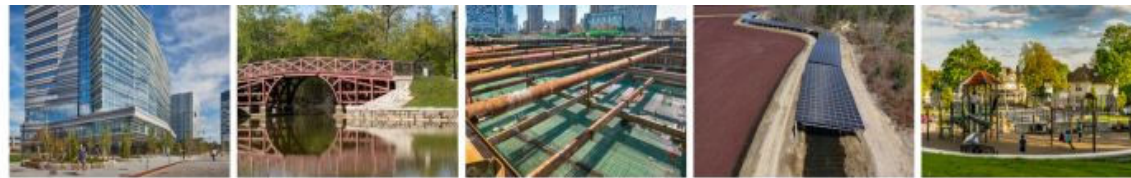
Guiding Principles for Today's Forum

- Be present!
- Assume good intentions and be mindful of others
- Be open to different perspectives
- Make space/take space
- You don't need any expertise to be an active participant
- No question is silly or bad! Ask and we will respond to the best of our ability

About Us



- For over 40 years, Beals and Thomas, Inc. (B+T) has provided professional services that support the development and conservation of land and water resources throughout New England, with a focus in Massachusetts
- Thoughtful planning and active stewardship play a vital role in protecting and maintaining a community's open spaces, plants and animal habitats, neighborhood parks, and outdoor recreation facilities
- B+T has prepared OSRP's for other communities and is well suited to provide these services to Bridgewater



Investing in People. Delivering for Clients.

What Is Open Space?



Undeveloped land that provides recreational opportunities for citizens while preserving scenic views & supporting wildlife habitat



Conservation land, forested land, recreation land, agricultural land, green buffers along roadways



Can be owned by an agency or organization dedicated to conservation or recreation, or has conservation or recreation potential.



What Is Recreation Land?

Passive Recreation

- Outdoor activities that occur in a natural setting with minimal disturbance of natural/cultural resources
 - Walking, hiking, bird watching, horseback riding, nature study



Active Recreation

- Outdoor activities that occur in parks, athletic fields or similar areas which require significant alteration of the natural landscape
 - Playgrounds, sports facilities, athletic fields

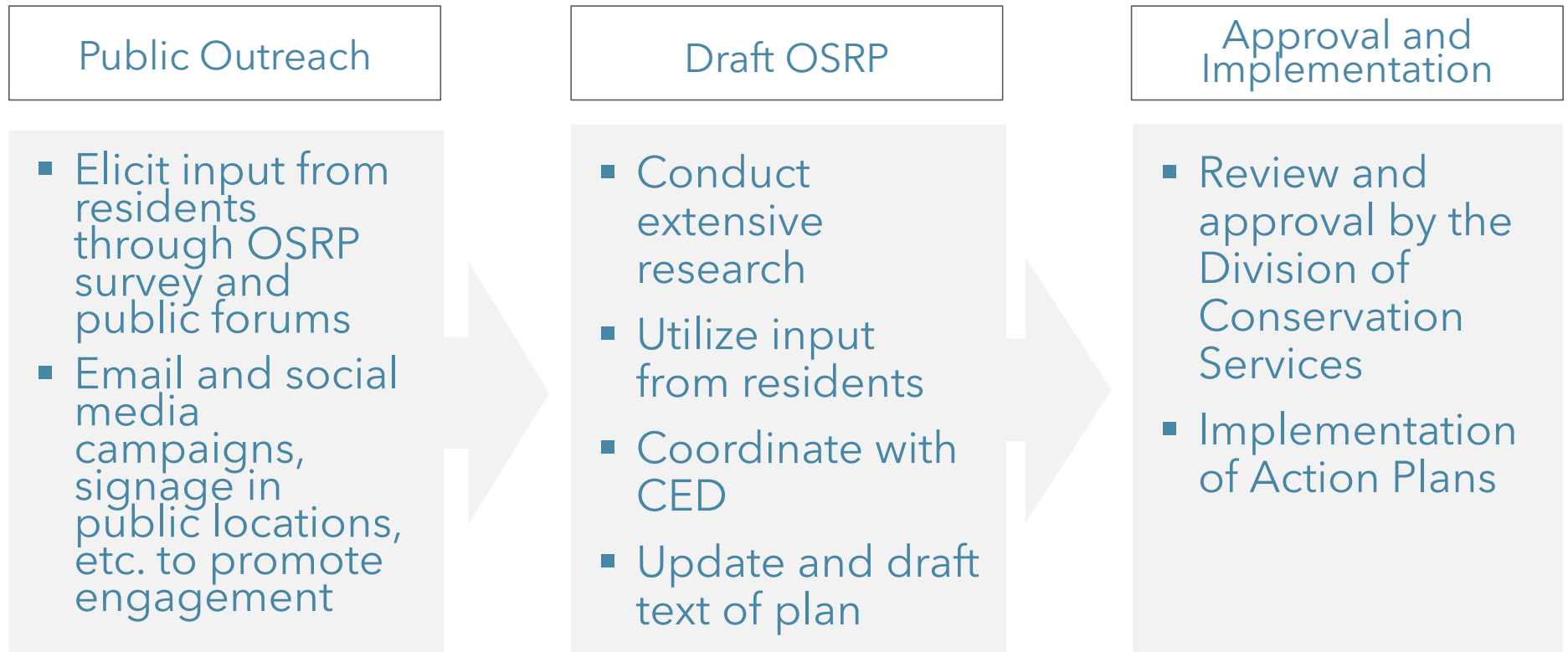


Why Write an Open Space and Recreation Plan?



- Maintain eligibility for state grant programs to fund projects identified therein
- Protect Bridgewater's open space and recreation resources to enhance their benefits
- Manage growth and development in a way that preserves and protects the environment
 - Prevent dramatic alterations
 - Enhance the attractiveness of the community
 - Encourage compatible growth in the future

Open Space and Recreation Plan Update Process

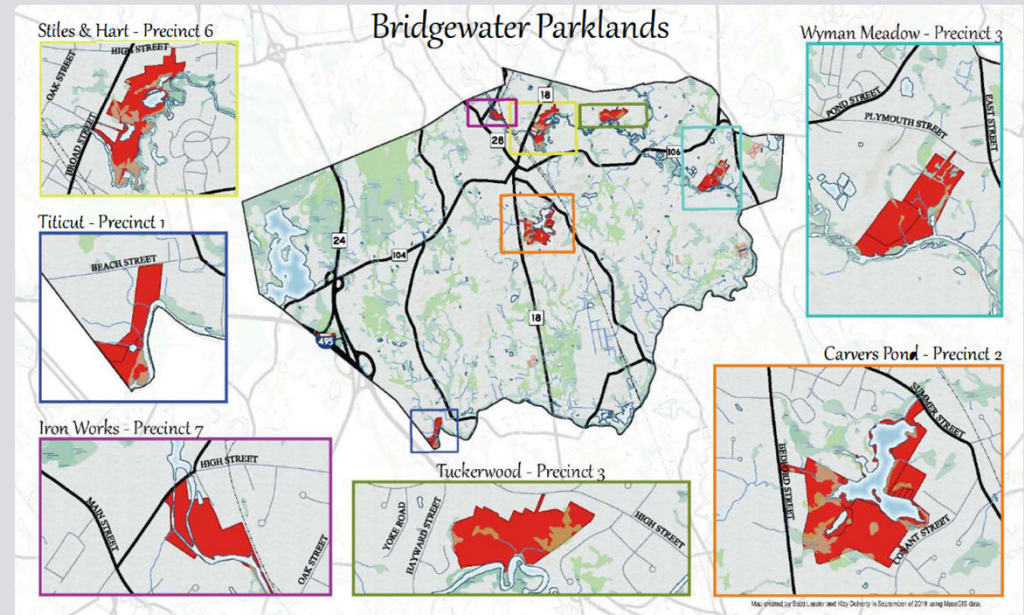


Process is anticipated to take approximately 6 months from engagement of B+T through DCS approval and finally implementation

Content of OSRP

Follows format of 2025 Open Space and Recreation Planner's Workbook

- Plan Summary and Introduction
- Community Setting
- Environmental Inventory & Analysis
- Inventory of Lands of Conservation & Recreation Interest
- Analysis of Needs
- 10-year Action Plan
- Public Comments



Draft OSRP

OSRP is currently in draft form



Includes information from:

- ❖ Previous OSRPs
- ❖ 2017 Plan Goals and Objectives
- ❖ Various Town plans and initiatives
- ❖ Results of environmental and historical research
 - ❖ Initial input from Town staff
 - ❖ Public input received to date

Action Plan

- Consist of 8 Goals the Town would like to achieve through this OSRP
- Under each goal is a list of actionable items that can be implemented to assist in achieving each goal
- Developed based on:
 - Outstanding goals/action items from previous OSRP
 - Other Town Plans
 - Feedback from Town
 - Results of Public Outreach



Goal 1: Explore acquisition and enhancement of active and passive recreation opportunities

- Key Action Items:
 - Evaluate opportunities to expand existing recreational facilities including Olde Scotland Links Golf Course and pickleball courts
 - Provide or enhance parking availability at existing open space and recreation areas and identify potential funding sources. Specifically, explore space for peak-period overflow parking at Legion Field.
 - Establish priority areas for accessibility improvement at recreational facilities, parks, playgrounds and walking/hiking trails based on ADA Transition Plan and identify funding opportunities for implementation.



Goal 2: Create and preserve town-wide, regionally linked trails and parks system that connect neighborhoods with various open space and recreation amenities

■ Key Action Items:

- Identify and prioritize gaps among existing bicycle/pedestrian path, and hiking trail systems in town and with the regional network.
- Extend existing walking trails, where appropriate, to connect to other nearby trails.
- Develop a master trail system design with publicly accessible way-finding (physical and electronic).



Goal 3: Protect the quantity and quality of drinking water and other water resources



■ Key Action Items:

- Evaluate improvements to water quality conditions of rivers and other surface water bodies in Bridgewater
- Continue to enforce local regulations for wetlands, riverfront protection and aquifer protection
- Acquire additional land for conservation around water resources including Lake Nippenicket, Carver's Pond, Town River, Matfield River and Taunton River.

Goal 4: Increase public awareness of available open space and recreation opportunities

- Key Action Items:
 - Develop consistent naming schemes for open space and conservation area signage and wayfinding resources, with acknowledgement of historical use or ownership of the property, if applicable
 - Develop a uniform branding and wayfinding signage plan for the Town's recreation facilities and conservation areas, in coordination with existing local and regional signage systems as appropriate
 - Prepare a schedule to implement a phased signage plan.



Goal 5: Preserve and cultivate public and private agricultural lands

- Key Action Items:
 - Prioritize use of CPA funding of projects that encourage the protection of Bridgewater's agricultural legacy and preserve opportunities for local food production.
 - Identify and pursue state funding to support agricultural activities.
 - Communicate with and encourage landowners to protect agricultural lands through CR and APR



Goal 6: Protect and preserve environmentally sensitive areas that promote local and regional ecological and environmental integrities

■ Key Action Items:

- Communicate with and incentivize landowners to protect parcels of habitat significance from development impact.
- Acquire additional land for conservation and passive recreation with focus on parcels contiguous with existing open space or conservation areas to improve connectivity and protect wildlife corridors.
- Amend Zoning Ordinance to require all new residential developments incorporate conservation areas or open space components.



Goal 7: Improve recreation opportunities for people of varying abilities and ages, including both teenage residents and seniors

■ Key Action Items:

- Conduct outreach to teenagers and their parents to more specifically identify recreation programming needs
- Establish community sports programs and summer programs for all ages.
- Coordinate with Senior Center to identify opportunities for outdoor activities and programs such as land for bird watching, a community garden, and walkways with shaded seating and wind protection.



Goal 8: Improve maintenance activities and consider opportunities to incorporate ecologically-friendly practices

- Key Action Items:
 - Conduct continued community outreach for coordinated volunteer efforts to assist with maintenance needs at open space and recreation areas.
 - Evaluate funding opportunities to establish or maintain full-time maintenance staff including Town funds or grant opportunities.
 - Revitalize citizen trail stewardship group to assist with volunteer and coordination efforts. Organize, train, support, and recognize the efforts of volunteer park stewards to help maintain and protect public parks and open space.

Town Clean Up Day



Q&A



What additional goals or action items would you like to see carried in the Action Plan?

Please also provide any questions you may have in the chat under the Q&A function!

Additional Public Input

Draft OSRP can be viewed on the Town Website & [Towns Open Space & Recreation Plan Webpage](#)



Public comment period will be open from today (May 14, 2026) through May 31, 2026

Please email all comments to Shane O'Brien, Town Planner at sobrien@bridgewaterma.org



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