

Section 1: Executive Summary



View of Lawrence above the Great Stone Dam looking east.

Groundwork Lawrence, under contract with the City of Lawrence's Community Development Department, has completed the 2009 Open Space and Recreation Plan with the Community Development Department and additional research as requested by the Conservation Commission. The City of Lawrence finds importance in improving the quality of life for residents through support of community initiatives and open space improvements. These open space improvements require capital investment, dedicated city officials and an engaged populace. Lawrence suffers, like many cities in the Commonwealth, from a diminished budget in the current fiscal climate but has

a wealth of active, engaged, and dedicated residents who will be vital in helping the City achieve the goals set forth in the 2009 Open Space Plan.

The City of Lawrence is a community facing numerous challenges emblematic of those in other older northeastern urban centers and unique to its particular history. A compact textile manufacturing "machine" built in 1847 that enjoyed about 70 years of industrial prosperity, this densely-built city has experienced a long period of decline and disinvestment. Today our population, estimated around 70,000, is on the rise, particularly among our 65% Latino community although the City still has a per capita income of just \$13,360, a high school equivalency rate of 47%, and unemployment rates routinely twice the state average. In addition, being one of the youngest communities in the Commonwealth, demand in Lawrence for parks, open space and recreational amenities is high. The challenges of many vacant properties, abandoned alleyways, brownfield sites, and underutilized riverfront areas are opportunities for creative and innovative open space development.

Lawrence's diverse population desires a variety of open space and recreation amenities that meet their needs. The 2009 Open Space Plan Goals are a framework to improve the City's infrastructure and maintain it as a vibrant place to live, work, and play. To achieve this vision, the 2009 Open Space and Recreation Plan establishes the following goals:

- Goal Number 1. Increase regular maintenance by dedication of more resources and decrease the amount of litter and debris in parks and open space
- Goal Number 2. Improve safety and perception of safety through increased enforcement of illegal and unsafe activities in parks and open space.
- Goal Number 3. Decrease dependence and burden on the DPW by encouraging public-private partnerships to protect and maintain public space.
- Goal Number 4. Increase activity and attendance in parks by creating and implementing more active in-parks programming.
- Goal Number 5. Increase attendance in parks by creating and implementing more passive park elements.

- Goal Number 6. Increase pedestrian and biking activity by encouraging walking and biking for exercise and enhancing safety and connectivity between schools, neighborhoods, and parks.
- Goal Number 7. Reclaim vacant lots and other abandoned and under-utilized land.
- Goal Number 8. Increase access to waterfront resources (i.e. rivers, canals) through enhancement and protection.

Section 8: Goals and Objectives

The Goals and Objectives were compiled by the responses to survey question #11-What overall goals should the City set for recreation and open space, the community meetings' discussions of the same question and by responses to the needs of the community and resource protection needs outlined above. A desire for safety, cleanliness, and enforcement permeates every survey response and discussion with officials and community members. Lawrencians want and deserve safe clean places to play and socialize. They recognize the vast opportunities in the community as well as the very real obstacles to continued improvement and enhancement of natural areas and playscapes. Below are eight quite broad goals created by the community through meetings and surveys. The number one goal is safety through increased maintenance, without which, further park or policy improvements will suffer. Larger investment in park maintenance can lead to increased safe activity in the parks which in turn fosters community pride, a sense of ownership, and improved health of the community.

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- Goal Number 6. Increase pedestrian and biking activity by encouraging walking and biking for exercise and enhancing safety and connectivity between schools, neighborhoods, and parks.
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Section 9: Five Year Action Plan

The elements of the Five Year Action Plan are formulated to achieve the goals outlined above. It is also necessary to recognize the changing community of Lawrence that will be demonstrated with the

completion of the 2010 Census. This Plan update relied on 9 year old census data and may not accurately depict the face of the city. All points in the Action Plan increase activity and programming in the city's open space as desired by Lawrencians but can not be successful and thrive without increased maintenance and enforcement of safety in the city.

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| <i>To achieve Goal 1</i> |
| <i>Increase regular maintenance by dedication of more resources and decrease the amount of litter and debris in parks and open space:</i> |
| Develop a detailed needs assessment for DPW parks maintenance operations and identify potential funding sources to supplement the existing budget. |
| Conduct a city-wide tree survey that accounts for street trees, park trees and trees on private property. |

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| <i>To achieve Goal 2:</i> |
| <i>Improve safety and perception of safety through increased enforcement of illegal and unsafe activities in parks and open space</i> |
| Build on existing Neighborhood Associations and police relationships to identify, track, and respond to crime in neighborhood parks. |
| Work with Neighborhood Associations and police to create and implement educational programming about public safety for youth and adults. |

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| <i>To achieve Goal 3:</i> |
| <i>Decrease dependence and burden on the DPW by encouraging public-private partnerships to protect and maintain public space</i> |
| Encourage public private partnerships to protect and maintain parks and open spaces. |
| Work with existing Neighborhood Associations to create "friends of" type groups for parks in their neighborhoods. |
| In collaboration with the Lawrence Historic Commission and Lawrence History Center, outline a plan for a Friends of the North Common that includes studying existing "friends of" type groups and Business Improvement Districts to fund capital investments in the Common. |
| Create a plan for systematic inventory and improvements to the North Common focusing on its significance to the history of the city and the health and age of the trees. |
| Enhance collaboration between DPW, Recreation, and the Planning and Community Development Departments with regular meetings between department heads in discussion of planning open space and healthy community initiatives. |
| Address the barriers to hiring Lawrence youth to maintain parks and trails in the summer months. |
| Establish City-wide day of service with Lawrence Public Schools in schoolyards, parks and open space across the city. |

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| <i>To achieve Goal 4:</i> |
| <i>Increase activity and attendance in parks by creating and implementing more active in-parks programming</i> |
| Using the existing open space inventory, work with Neighborhood Associations, local non-profits, and existing recreation programs to create recreational programming in the parks for youth, teens and adults. |
| Work with schools, Neighborhood Associations, local non-profits, and existing recreation programs to create educational environmental education programming in the parks. |
| Identify sources of and implement funding support for city led recreational programming. |

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| Establish and promote regular concert series in the parks. |
| Establish and promote a regular movie series in the parks. |
| Establish a youth jobs initiative and apprenticeship to train Lawrence youth (ages 18-24) in landscaping and park maintenance. |

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| To achieve Goal 5: |
| <i>Increase attendance in parks by creating and implementing more passive park elements</i> |
| Continue to invest in park benches, picnic tables and trees and plantings in existing open spaces. |
| Establish new passive recreation spaces in vacant lots and alleyways. |
| Improve the quality of the open lawn space of parks and open spaces by systematic improvements and regular maintenance. |

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| To Achieve Goal 6: |
| <i>Increase pedestrian and biking activity by encouraging walking and biking for exercise and enhancing safety and connectivity between schools, neighborhoods, and parks.</i> |
| Identify and map highly used pedestrian/bike corridors within the city and to surrounding regions. |
| Build walking/bike paths in parks and between parks. |
| Install signage in parks and along highly traveled pedestrian corridors indicating distances traveled. |
| Conduct a “walkability” study for the entire city. |
| Build on the walkability study by creating a plan to improve safety and connections within highly used pedestrian/bike corridors. |
| Build walking/bike paths between parks such as the Spicket River Greenway and expansion of the Shawsheen River trail and the proposed Riverwalk Trail. |
| Create trails and linkages between trails along all the waterways including the canals. |
| Highlight regional trail connections and work with neighboring communities to collaboratively improve regional trails including implementing a “Rails to Trails” feasibility study. |

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| To achieve Goal 7: |
| <i>Reclaim vacant lots and other abandoned and under-utilized land</i> |
| Re-evaluate the open space demands and population statistics after the 2010 census and complete a buildout analysis that includes residential mill redevelopments. |
| Inventory and create a plan for reuse of vacant lots and other abandoned/under utilized land, including alleyways. |
| Work with Planning Department to find safe garden locations for squatter gardeners and homeowners with contaminated soil. |
| Build upon Groundwork Lawrence’s Alleyway LID Report and Environmental Site Analysis of the alleyways to establish criteria for systematic improvements of the alleyways that meet community needs. |

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| To achieve Goal 8: |
| <i>Increase access to waterfront resources (i.e. rivers, canals) through enhancement and protection</i> |
| Create a plan to remove invasive plants along the river using a Natural Resource Management Plan as a guide. |
| Initiate discussions around permanent cleanup and repair of the canals. |
| Support and encourage river cleanups on all three rivers. |
| Build walking/bike paths between parks such as the Spicket River Greenway and expansion of the |

Shawsheen River trail.

Create trails and linkages between trails along the waterways including the canals.



**Young kids at Manchester Street
Park**