

PLAY

Canton will offer community spaces that enable people of all ages to be active and socialize.

Recreation, leisure activity, relaxation, and play are integral to our health and social wellbeing. Since the early 1900s, park and open space advocates have voiced the importance of these spaces for individuals, particularly those in more urban environments. These activities have physiological and mental health benefits, offering opportunities to be active with our bodies and “unplug” our minds from everyday stress, reconnecting with nature. They are also important as community-wide resources because they provide places for informal gatherings as well as organized community events and recreational programming.

Beyond benefits to people, parks and open spaces also have ecological and economic functions. For example, land conserved as open space for activities like hiking can provide habitat for wildlife, recharge areas to protect water quality, and floodplain protection to help manage floodwaters. Parks and open spaces also contribute to the local economy. Protected open space enhances property values and provides an attractive amenity to new residents and business owners. Visitors to local parks and open spaces will spend money locally, supporting businesses.

PLAY focuses more on the recreational aspect of the Town’s parks and open spaces. **PROTECT** more directly addresses the natural resource protection aspects of open space conservation.

Build on Existing Planning Efforts

The Town continues to dedicate resources to plan for recreation and open space resources. These plans and studies allow for more detailed analyses and recommendations. Moving forward, the Town will:

1. Implement the Canton Open Space and Recreation Plan through its:
 - 7-Year OSRP Action Plan.
 - ADA Transition Plan to improve access for those with disabilities.
2. Implement the Trails Master Plan, including, but not limited to:
 - Improve trail visibility, access, and use through Canton trails information online; trailhead signage; trail signage and markers; information kiosks; parking, vehicular access, and accessibility; and trail maps and descriptions, among other initiatives.
3. Implement the Pequitside Farm Master Plan, including, but not limited to:
 - Improve circulation through the site to park and access buildings.
 - Program new activities that enhance existing uses and features of the site.
 - Enhance and manage natural resources, including a management plan, restoration of the open meadow, long-range plan to manage successional growth trees, and creation of an environmental education center.
4. Implement the Earl Newhouse Waterfront Plan, including, but not limited to:
 - Implement invasive species management.
 - Improve trail maintenance and access.
 - Improve drive access and parking.
 - Add site amenities such as benches, picnic areas, signage, and kayak launch, among others.

Build Awareness of Local Resources

Building awareness of local resources to residents, local employers, and their employees will give more opportunities to be active but will also increase the number of users at these places. The Town must manage and balance operations and maintenance for the long-term. Moving forward, the Town will:

1. Develop new communication strategies that will increase public knowledge about local parks, open spaces, and recreational opportunities. Use multi-media approaches and consider high and low-tech options.
2. Promote the use of parks and open spaces resources to local businesses. Discuss partnering to expand or improve amenities.
3. Work with Department of Health and cross-departmental teams to encourage healthy activities for adults, youth, and children.

Increase Access to Parks and Open Spaces

Physical access to local parks and open spaces is a challenge for some residents. The Town recognizes that it must provide opportunities for all residents. Moving forward, the Town will:

1. Build connections between residential areas and local amenities and town facilities. Use existing plans and policies to build a walking and biking network, including, but not limited to:
 - Trails Master Plan
 - Town’s Complete Streets policy and prioritization plan
 - See others discussed in **CONNECT**.
2. Increase recreation and open space resources in and near residential areas that are more than one quarter mile of a park and open space.
 - Evaluate walking and biking routes used by residents to refine access needs. This can include a walking or biking audit. See **CONNECT**.
 - Meet with residents in areas that could benefit from new recreational resources to discuss what they would like to see in their neighborhood.
3. Work with local businesses to develop recreational opportunities for their employees that also offer access for residents.
 - Focus on potential opportunities along Route 138. See **ROUTE 138** and **WORK**.
4. Improve/maintain accessibility of recreation and open space areas.

What’s missing?

