

# Land – Community – Connection

*2023 Stow Open Space and Recreation Plan*

*Public Review Draft*





# Forum Agenda

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- Introductions
- Why a Plan? - Current and Historical Perspective
- Update Process & Survey
- What's Changed since the Last Plan?
- Plan Recommendations
- Comments and Discussion



Town Center Park Clean Up Crew

# What Do We Mean by “Open Space” ?

## Open Space = Protected Conservation and Recreation Land

- Owned and Maintained by Governmental Agency (Town, State, Federal)
- OR by Conservation Nonprofit (e.g. Stow Conservation Trust, Sudbury Valley Trustees)
- OR protected by a permanent, legally enforceable Conservation or Agricultural Restriction
- OR protected by conditions of permit and homeowners association (e.g. subdivision open space)

Approximately 4450 of Stow's 11,584 acres are protected open space – or roughly 38% of the Town

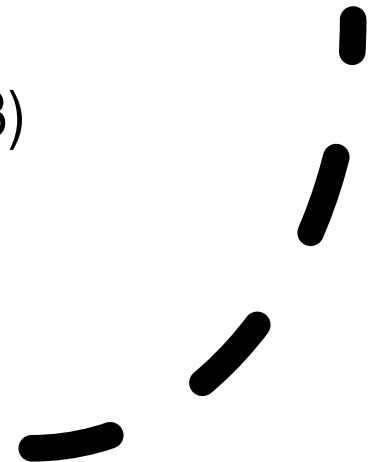
# Why Do We Protect Open Space?

- Trails
- Wildlife Habitat
- Air and Water Quality
- Climate Resilience
- Opportunity for Community to Gather
- Recreation
- Health and Fitness
- Maintain Agriculture and Soils
- Preserve Forests
- Sense of Elbow Room in Community

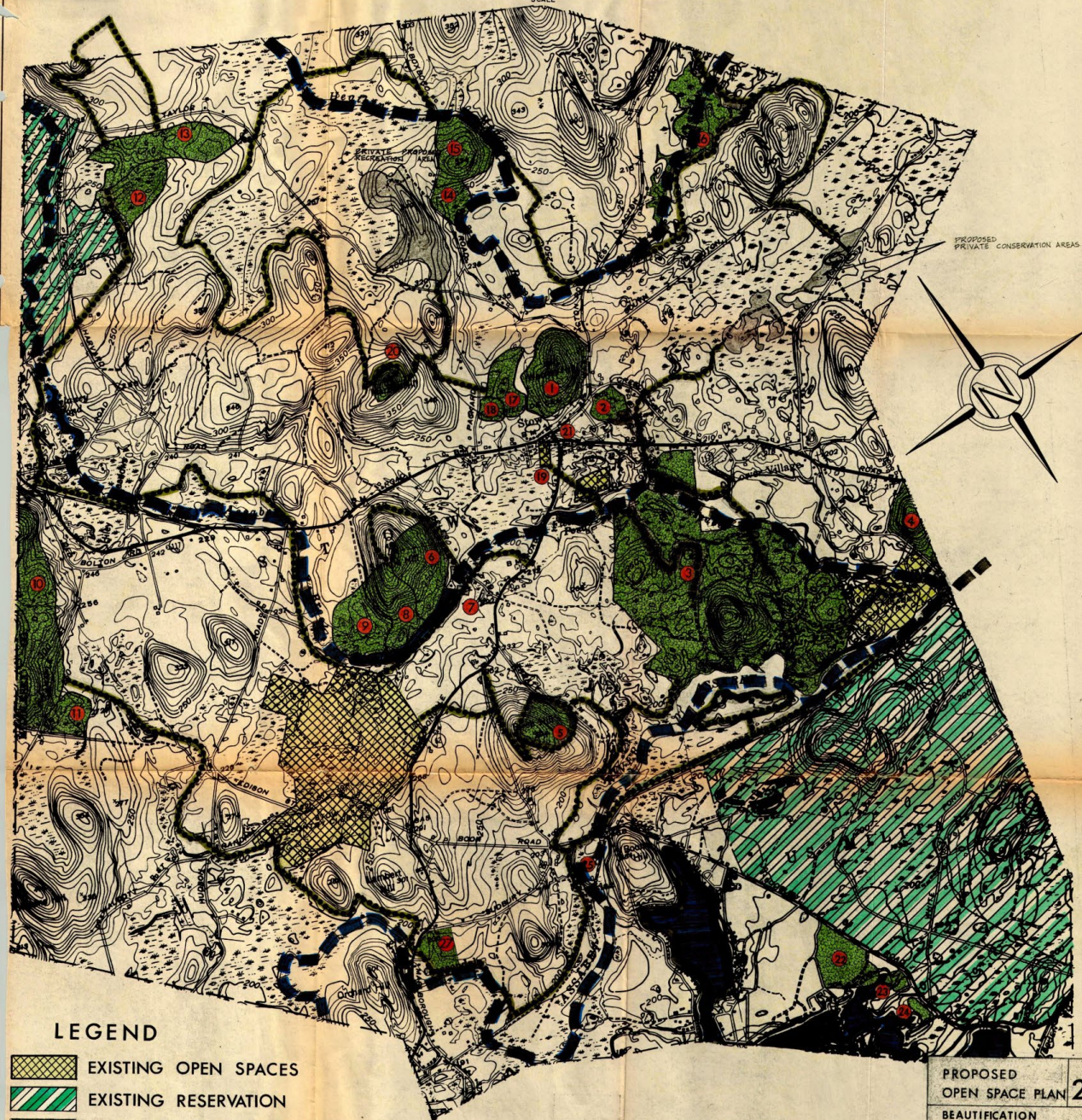


# Why an Open Space & Recreation Plan?

- Vision & Priorities for Land Conservation & Recreation in Stow
- Serve as Blueprint for Local Efforts
- Coordinate Activities of Town Boards
- Guide Town Partnerships with Nonprofits and Other Agencies
- Eligibility for State Grants  
(most recent plan expired 3/23)












PROPOSED  
PRIVATE CONSERVATION AREAS



# 1968 Open Space Plan

## LEGEND

-  EXISTING OPEN SPACES
-  EXISTING RESERVATION
-  PROPOSED OPEN SPACE ACQUISITION
-  PROPOSED NATURE TRAIL
-  EXISTING PONDS BROOKS & RIVERS

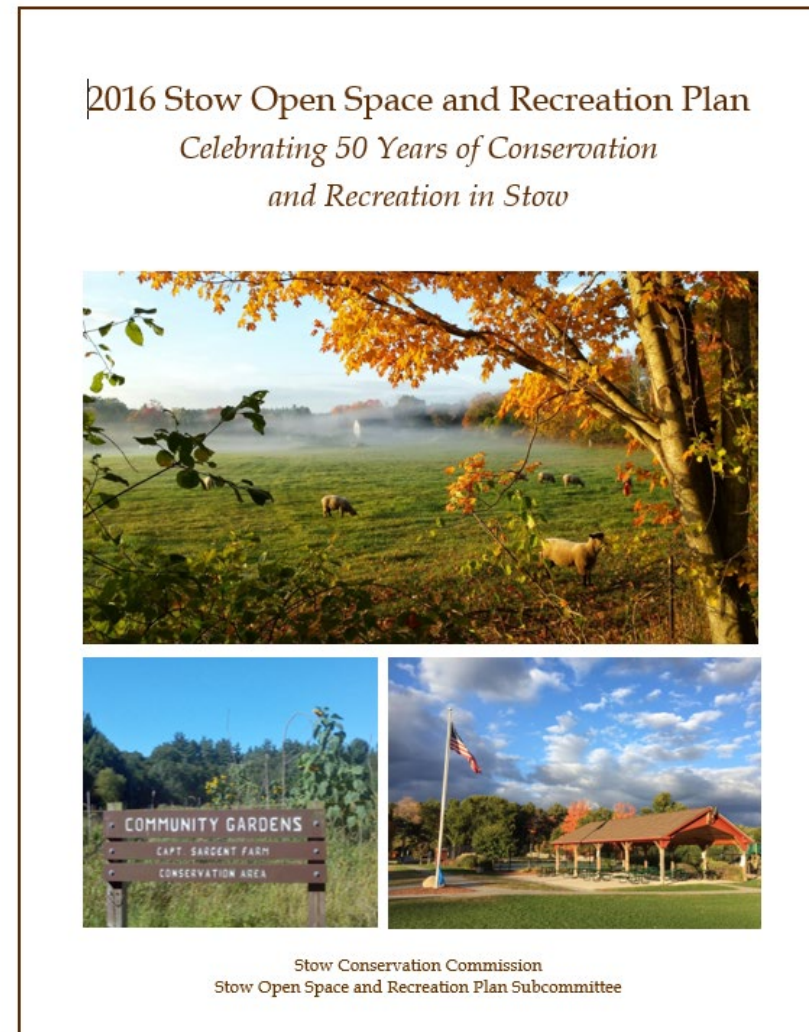
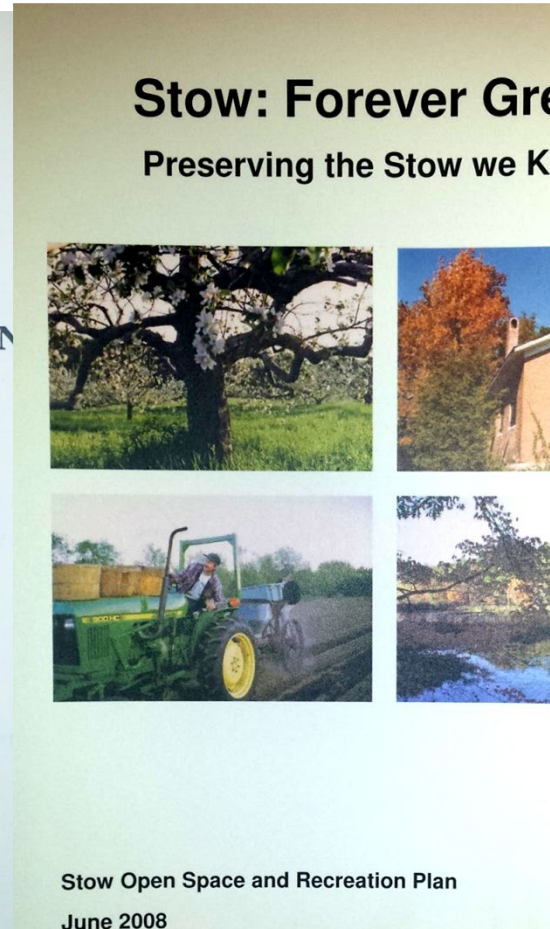
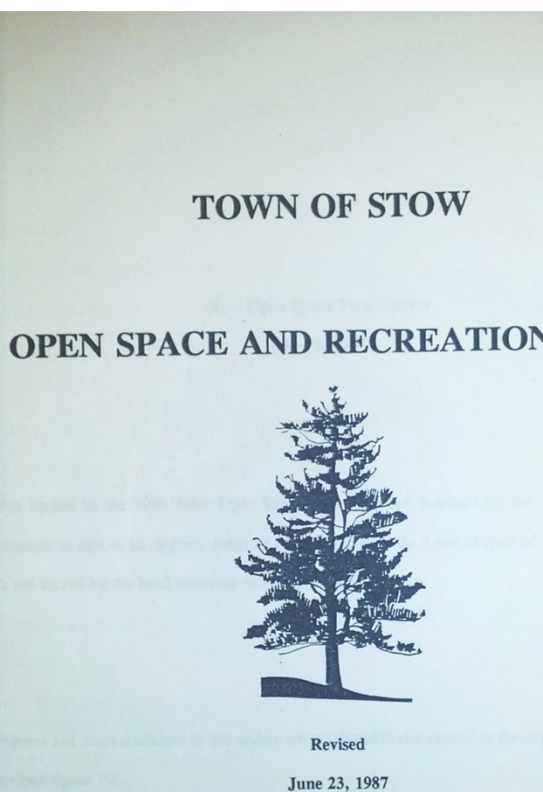
PROPOSED  
OPEN SPACE PLAN 2

BEAUTIFICATION  
PROGRAM  
STOW MASSACHUSETTS

MORICE & GARY INC.  
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS  
THOMAS ASSOCIATES  
COMMUNITY PLANNERS



# Regular Updates – Last Plan in 2016





# How We Updated the Plan

- Open Space and Recreation Plan Update Working Group Created Early 2022
- Reviewed and Updated Data in the 2016 Plan
- Reviewed Local/Regional Population and Development Trends
- Resident Survey
- Reviewed Open Space Plans for Surrounding Towns/MAPC Regional Plans/Relevant State Plans & Initiatives
- Mapping Support from Planning Department
- Updated Needs, Recommendations and Actions
- Compliant with EOEEA Guidelines
- Public Forum & Comment Period



# What You Told Us

- Resident Survey – 2022
- Online and Paper – Distributed via Website, Social Media, COA, Library
- Signs with QR Code at Conservation Areas
- ~400 Responses

Open Space  
and Recreation  
Plan

2022 Survey Results

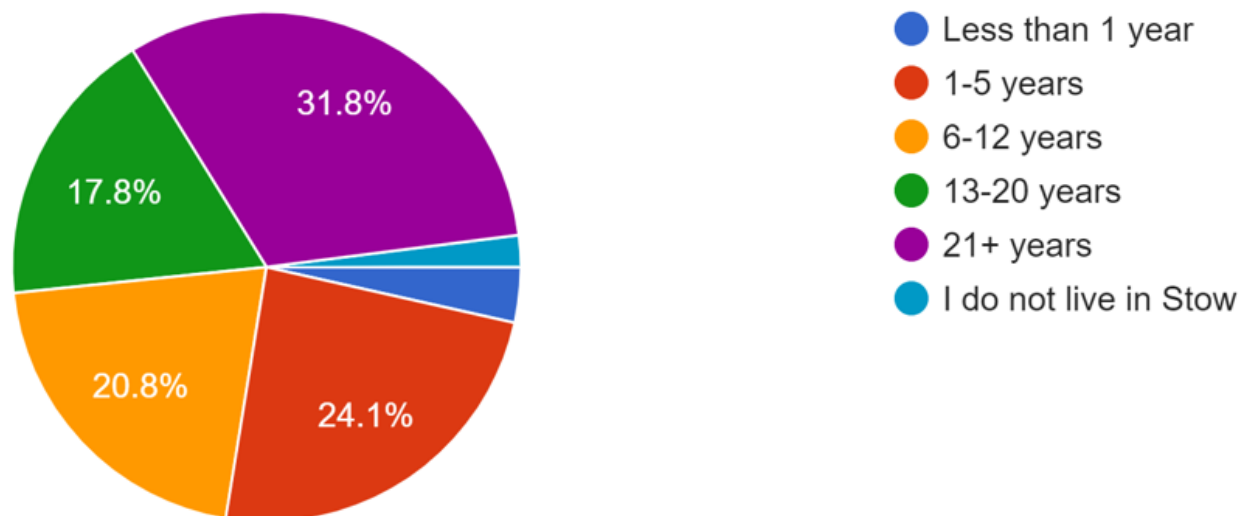


# Residents' Survey – 2022

## Survey Demographics

How long have you lived in Stow?

399 responses



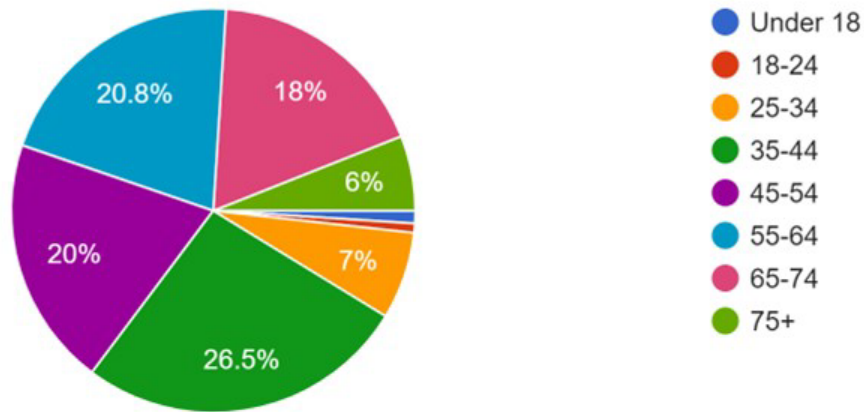


# Residents' Survey – 2022

## Survey Demographics

What is your age?

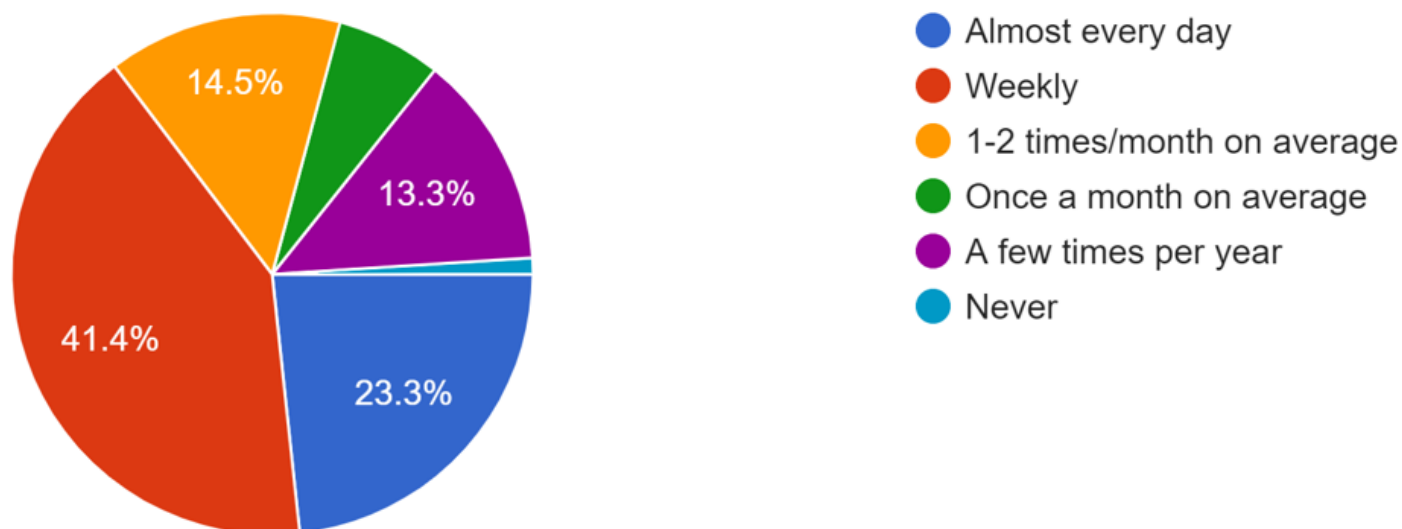
400 responses



# Residents' Survey – 2022

How often do you use Conservation/Recreation land or facilities in Stow?

399 responses



# Residents' Survey – 2022

## Outdoor Recreation Participation Rates in Stow

### High

- Informal Individual or Group Exercise – 65%
- Use Parks/Playgrounds/Picnic Areas – 64%
- Dog Walking on Conservation Land – 46%
- Bird Watching/Wildlife Watching Nature Study-44%

### Medium

- Recreational Boating – 28%
- Community/Youth League Sports – 27%
- School Sponsored Recreation Activities/Team Sports – 26%

### Low

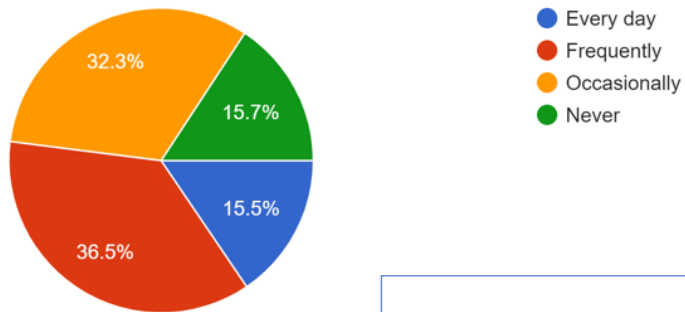
- Camp Stow (16%)
- Adult League Activities (6%)
- Rec Commission Programs (13%)
- Competitive Events (12%)
- Private/Formal Instruction(14%)
- Hunting & Trapping (4%)



# Residents' Survey – 2022

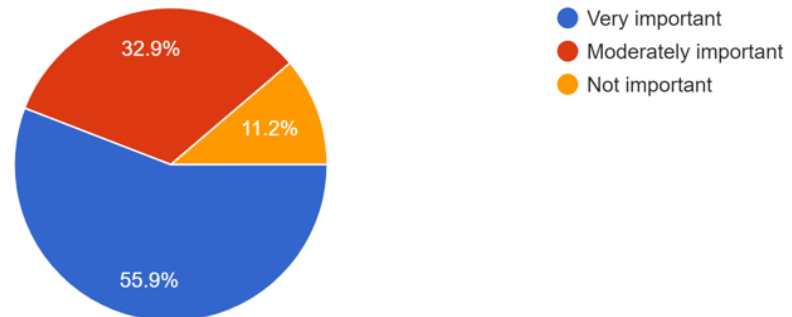
How often do you travel to Stow's open spaces and/or recreation facilities by walking or biking (weather permitting)?

400 responses




How important is it for you to be able to access Stow's open space and natural areas, trails, and/or recreation destinations by walking or biking?

401 responses



# Residents' Survey – 2022

A photograph of a forest path with a large tree trunk in the foreground and a list of sites to the right.

Most Visited Sites  
(respondents self-report as "frequent" visitors)

- Area farms and orchards (223)
- Delaney (147)
- Stow Town Forest (108)
- Assabet River NWR (105)
- Other Town Conservation Lands (111)
- Stow Community Park (90)
- Pine Bluff Fields (74)
- Stow Conservation Trust Lands (68)



# Residents' Survey – 2022



Least Visited Sites  
(respondents self-report as “never” visitors)

- Private health clubs or pools (248)
- Lake Boon Boat Ramp (242)
- Stow Community Gardens (229)
- Private golf courses (224)
- Pompo Fields (219)
- Memorial Field (196)
- Assabet River Canoeing



# Residents' Survey – 2022

## Favorite Conservation and Recreation Areas

Stow Town  
Forest

Stow  
Community  
Park

Delaney WMA

Town Center  
Park

Assabet River  
NWR

# Residents' Survey – 2022

## What Kind of Land Should be Prioritized for Future Acquisition?

Land for Wildlife Habitat (60%)

Land for Groundwater Protection (53%)

Land Important to Mitigating the Impacts of Climate Change (49%)

Land for Trails (44%)

Land that Creates Connections to Other Protected Land (41%)

*Lower scoring were land for active recreation, land abutting conservation land, ag land, scenic land, land providing access to water*

# Residents' Survey – 2022

Facilities that Residents would like to see more of...

Most Desired Additional Facilities (most to least)		Least Desired Additional Facilities
<b>Sidewalks (267)</b>	Ice Skating (124)	Lawn Games (Bocce, etc.) (87)
<b>Farmers Market (237)</b>	Dog Park (123)	Frisbee Golf (75)
<b>Paved Bike Trails (226)</b>	Neighborhood Pocket Parks (123)	Tennis Courts (68)
<b>Bike Lanes Along Roads (218)</b>	Formal Playground (113)	Formal Playing Fields (67)
<b>Indoor Swimming Pool (200)</b>	Picnic Area (113)	Community Gardens (64)
Walking/Hiking Trails, including accessible trails (158)	Unpaved Bike Trails (112)	Skateboard Park (57)
Public Access to Waterbodies (144)	Informal Nature Play (110)	Camping Facilities (56)
Splash/Spray Park (140)	Expanded Community Center (110)	Basketball Courts (52)
Outdoor Performance Space (140)	Teen Center (109)	Horseback Riding (29)
Walking/Running Track (125)	Pickleball (90)	Golf (14)

# Residents' Survey – 2022

## Places People Would Like to Walk

- Town Core – Schools, Library and extending outward
- Ericksons
- Four season sidewalk on 117
- Stow Community Park
- Route 62 & Gleasondale
- Red Acre Road to Lower Village
- West Acton Road & Shelburne Farm
- Hudson Road
- Marble Hill to Flagg Hill
- Sudbury Road/Pine Bluff; Honey Pot
- Harvard Road & Delaney
- Bradley Lane
- Whitman Street & Leggett
- Taylor Road
- Boxboro Road

Anywhere! And many say they are fine...

# What Has Changed Since the Last Plan?





# What Has Changed Since the Last Plan?

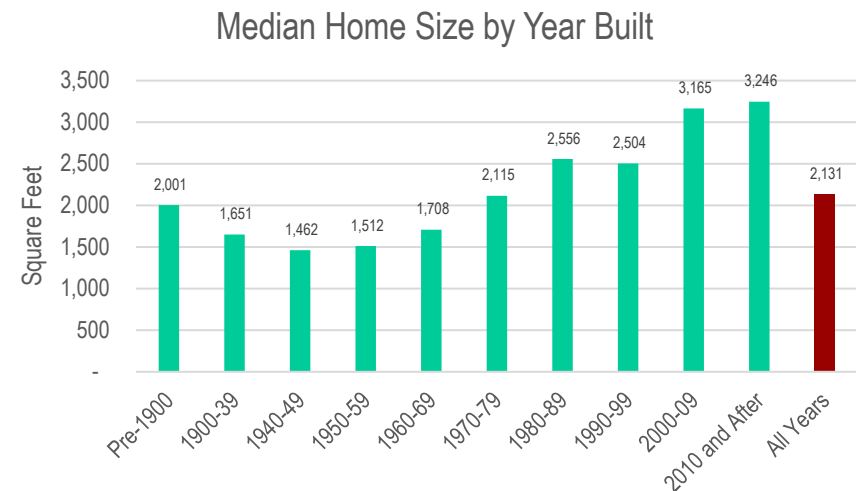
- Relatively Slow Period of Population Growth

– 2000	5,902
– 2010	6,590 (+688)
– 2020	7,159 (+569)



*But some large projects on the horizon that are likely to increase our rate of growth...*

*And house sizes and prices have increased dramatically, increasing affordability challenges*



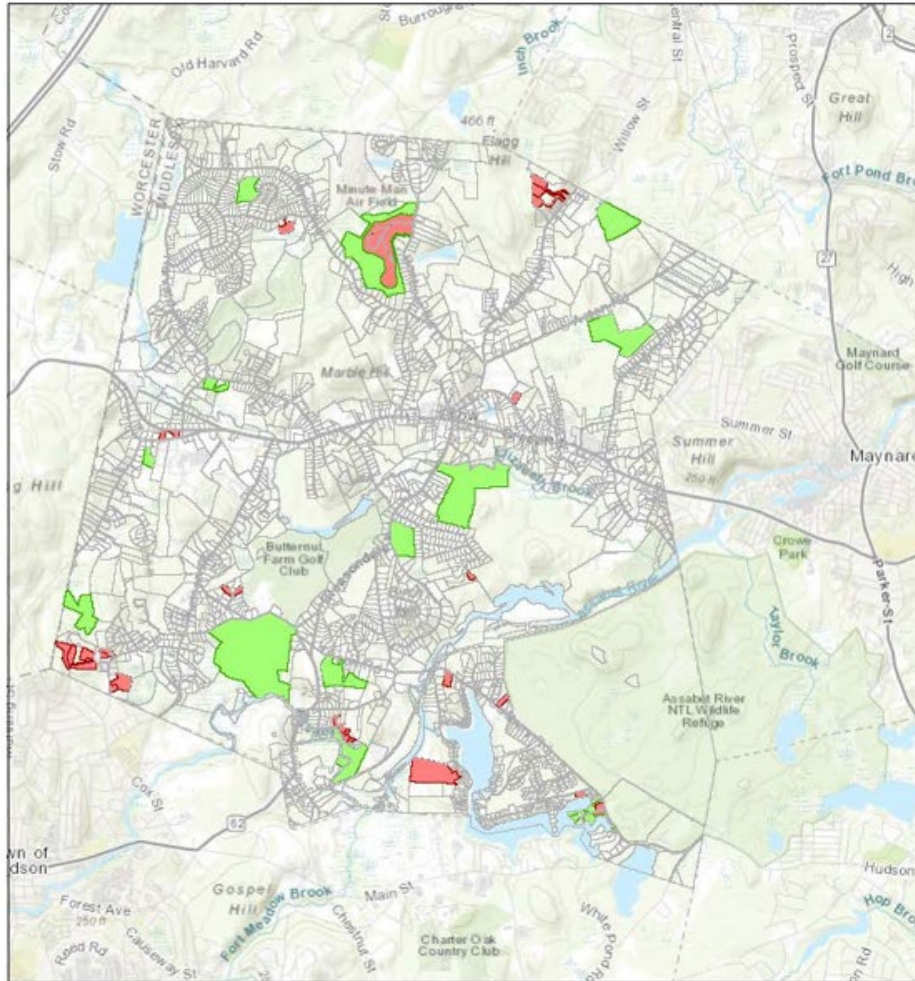
# What Has Changed Since the Last Plan?

- Households with individuals 65+ have continued to increase dramatically
  - More than 1 in 5 Stow residents is over 60
  - 30% of households have an individual 65 or over
- The percentage of households with an individual 18 or younger is also growing faster than regional/state averages
  - 45% of households have an individual 18 or younger. The statewide average is 29% and declining.



# What Has Changed Since the Last Plan?

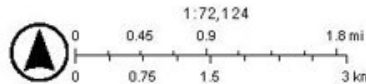
Protected and Developed Land 2016-2022



11/18/2022

Protected and Developed Lands

- Developed
- Protected



## New Development

- Regency at Stow
- Joanne Drive
- Pennie Lane
- Scattered Houses

## New Open Space & Rec Areas

- Carver Hill CR
- Small Farm CR
- Kunelius Property
- Hallock Point Acquisition
- Assabet Overlook Acquisition
- Boon Road Ag Restriction
- Other OS Dedications: Spring Hill, Regency, Shepherd CR,



# What Has Changed Since the Last Plan?

## Acquisition and Creation of Town Center Park





# What Has Changed Since the Last Plan?

## Pine Bluff Accessibility Improvements Completed





# What Has Changed Since the Last Plan?

## Stow Acres Conservation, Recreation and Housing Initiative

- South Course Conservation Restriction & Mapledale Trail
- North Course Purchase
- Climate Resilience Master Plan Underway
- Mixed Use Housing Development Planned





# What Has Changed Since the Last Plan?

Federal Funding for Design of Assabet River Rail Trail  
Extension on “Track Road”



# What Has Changed Since the Last Plan?

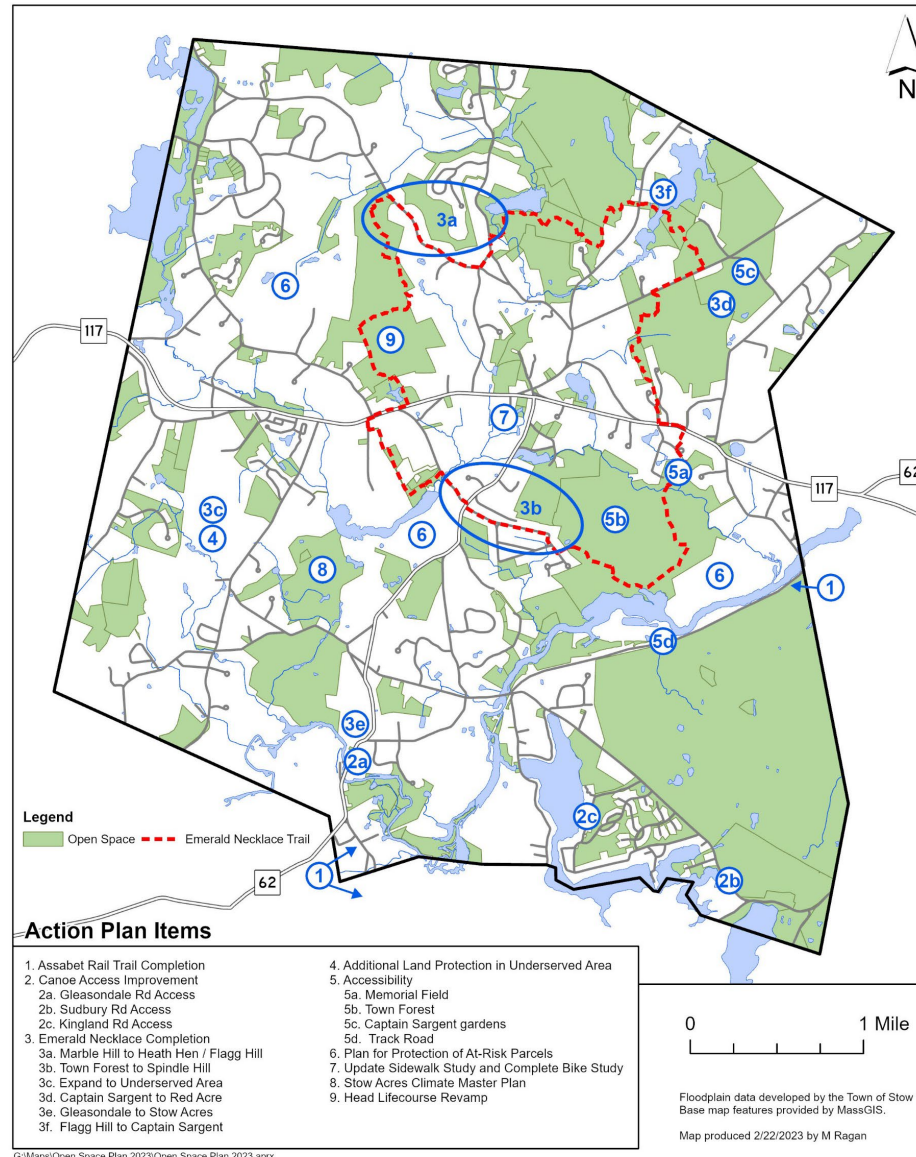
## Increased Focus on Climate and Resilience

- Green Advisory Committee/Sustainable Stow
- Climate Action Plan in Progress
- Two Year Study of Lake Boon Water Quality and Response to Climate Change
- Increased Interest in Energy Conservation & Efficiency, Carbon Sequestration (Forests), Habitat Restoration, Local Food and Sustainability





# Key Open Space & Rec Plan Priorities

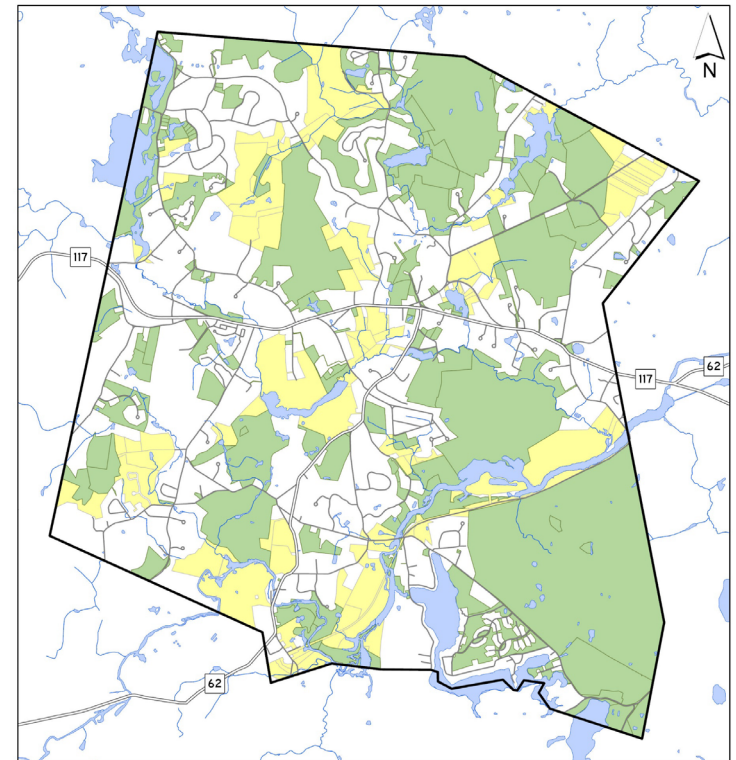


# Key Open Space & Rec Plan Recommendations

## Protect high priority parcels identified in the Plan

- Protect agricultural lands & maintain viability of farms
- Protect forest lands
- Protect land in underserved area of SW Stow and provide recreational opportunities
- Protect lands important for climate resilience
- Protect key portions of remaining high-risk golf courses

*Stow - Unprotected Parcels Significant for Climate Resiliency*



Legend

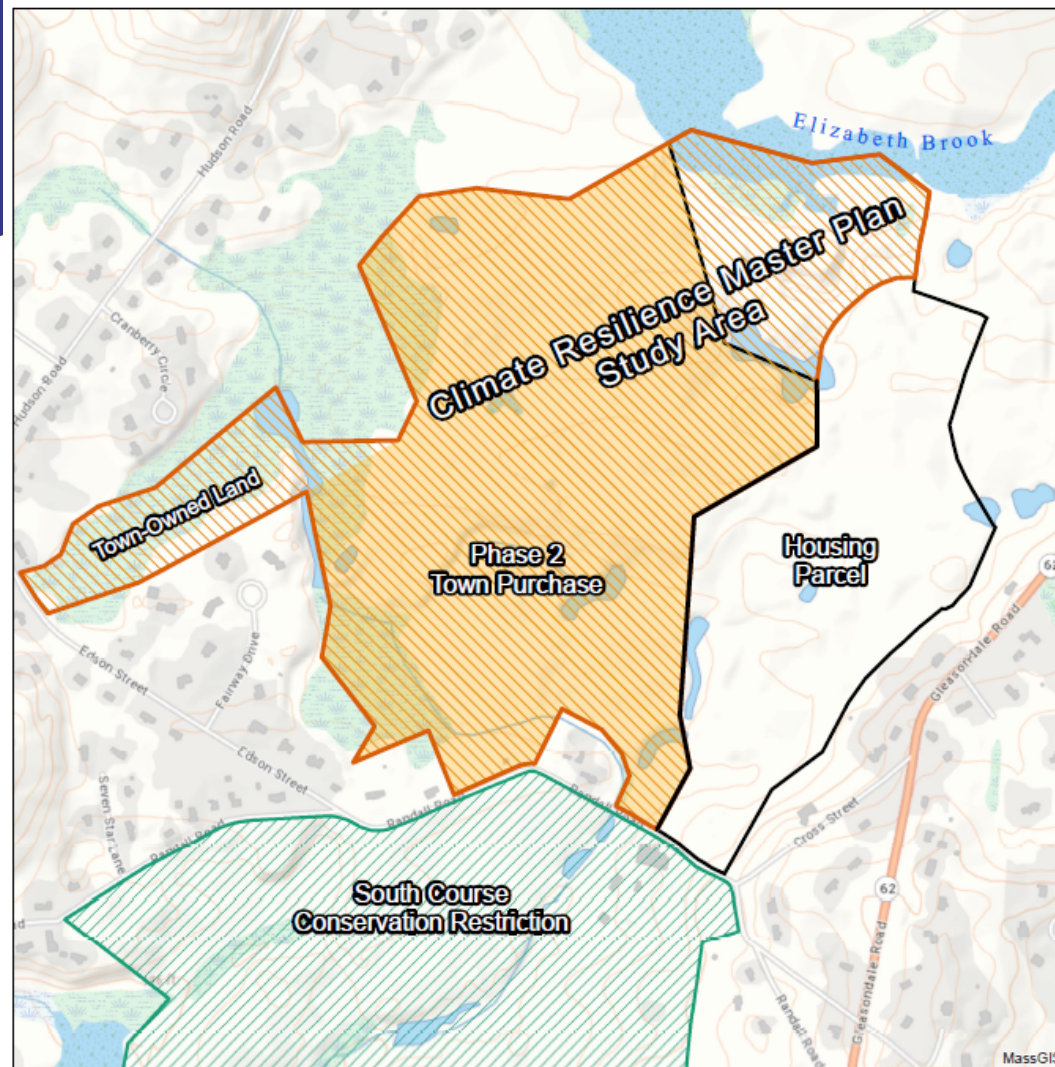
- Parcels Significant for Climate Resiliency
- Protected Open Space Lands

0 1 Mile

Floodplain data developed by the Town of Stow MA.  
Base map features provided by MapGIS.

Map produced 2/17/2023 by M Ragan

# Complete Stow Acres Climate Resilience Master Plan

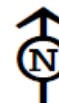


**Town of Stow**  
stow-ma.gov

## Stow Acres Open Space, Recreation, & Housing Project

*Map 3  
Climate Resilience  
Master Planning Locus*

- Climate Resilience Master Plan
- Phase 2 Town Purchase
- Housing Parcel
- South Course Conservation Restriction



0 500 1,000  
Feet

Sources: Town of Stow, MassGIS  
Coordinate System:  
NAD 1983 State Plane Massachusetts  
Mainland FIPS 2001 (Meter)  
Map Created: 4/27/2022 by M Ragan



# Butternut Golf Course



0 1 Mile

Floodplain data developed by the Town of Stow MA.  
Base map features provided by MassGIS.  
BioMap data courtesy of MassWildlife and  
The Nature Conservancy  
Map produced 2/17/2023 by M Ragan



## Link Existing Conservation and Recreation Lands

## Expand Walking & Cycling Opportunities

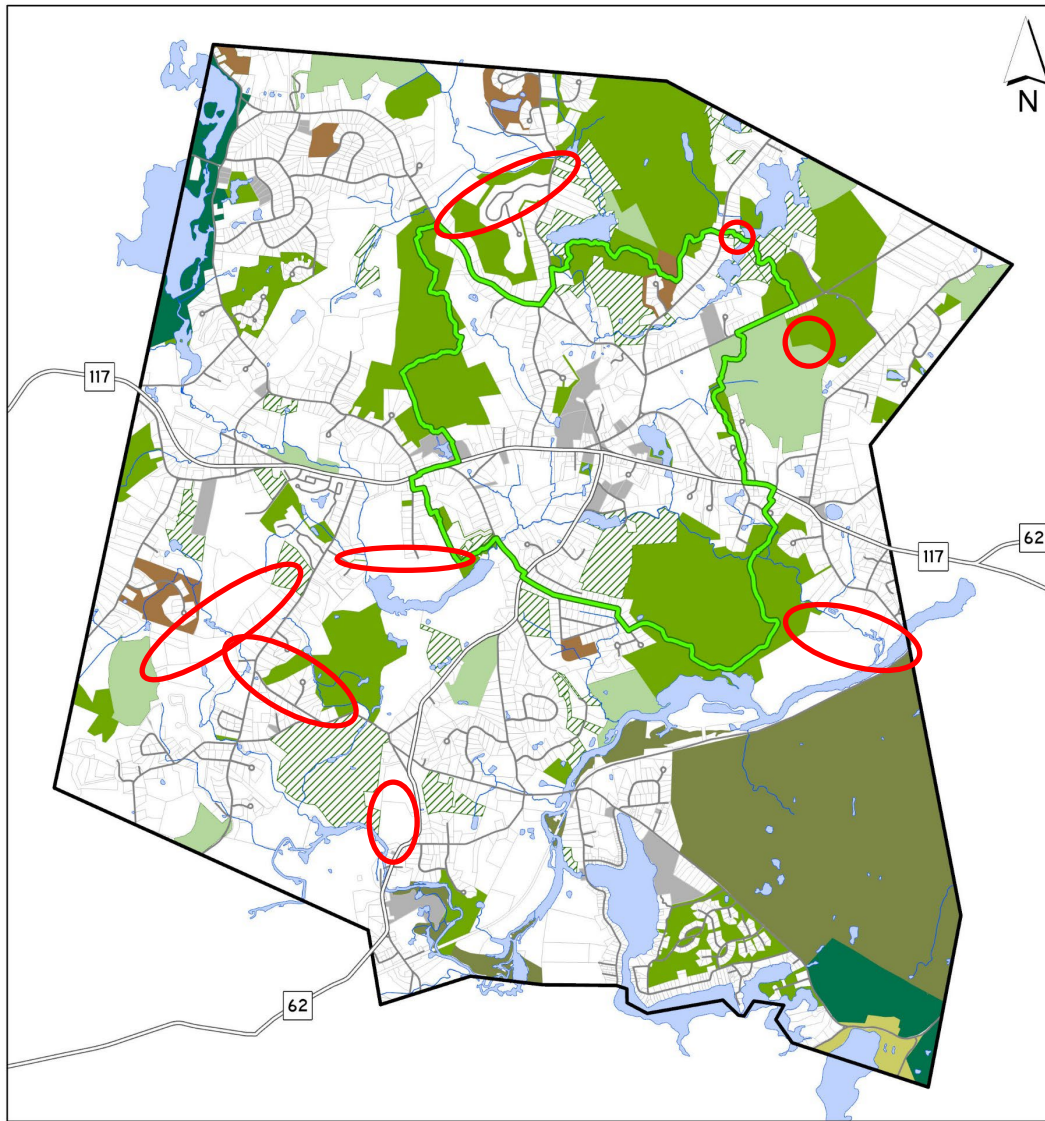
- Complete Streets – Pedestrians and Bicycles
- Assabet River Rail Trail
- Mass Central Rail Trail
- Complete High Priority Connections Linking Conserved Lands
- Develop a Bicycle Study for Stow
- Complete and Expand Stow's Emerald Necklace



## Stow - Emerald Necklace

### Priority Connections

- **Cap. Sargent to Red Acre Woods**
- **Town Forest to Assabet NWR**
- **West Acton Causeway**
- **Flagg Hill to Marble Hill**
- **Gleasondale to Stow Acres**
- **Stow Acres to Athens Lane**
- **Arbor Glen to Hale/Corzine**
- **Wheeler Pond to Hudson Road**



### Legend

Town of Stow - Open Space	Federal - Open Space
Town of Stow - Not protected	Other Public Lands
Non-profit - Open Space	Conservation or Agricultural Preservation Restriction
Home Owners Association	Emerald Necklace
State - Open Space	

0 1 Mile

Floodplain data developed by the Town of Stow MA.  
Base map features provided by MassGIS.

Map produced 2/17/2023 by M Ragan



# Enhance All Persons Accessibility





# Improve Access to Water-Based Recreation





# Continued Support for Active Recreation Facilities





# Education & Stewardship

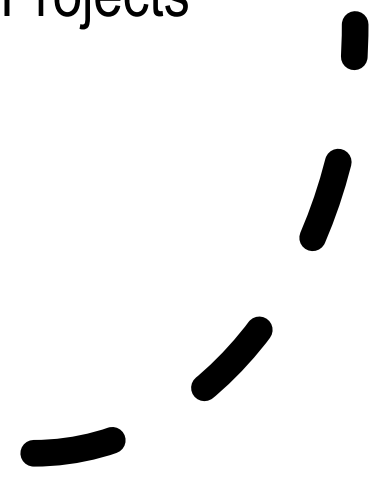
- Education on Community and Fiscal Importance of Protecting Open Space and its Role in Mitigating the Impacts of Climate Change
- Continue Strong Land Stewardship Efforts on Existing Protected Lands





# In Summary

## Much will Continue from 2016 Plan...

- ✓ Protect Key Parcels
  - ✓ Track Road
  - ✓ Continue to Implement Emerald Necklace Vision
  - ✓ Continued Efforts to Enhance Accessibility
  - ✓ Focus on Southwest Stow – Underserved Area
  - ✓ High Priority Invasive Species Projects
- 

# New Actions and Focus Areas

- Planning for Remaining Golf Courses
- Integrate adjacent open space into Lower Village Planning & Redevelopment
- Stow Acres North Course Master Plan
- Focus on specific gaps in trail network
- Connector sidewalks and footpaths, bicycle paths
- Create single “all trails” map of Stow
- Climate and Resilience – Integrate Open Space and Recreation Plan with Master/Comprehensive Plan and Climate Action Plan



# Next Steps

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- Review & Incorporate Public Comments (til July 14)
- State Approval
- Finalize & Distribute Plan
- Implementation – Oversight by Open Space Committee and Coordination with Other Boards





Questions...  
Comments...  
Thoughts...

- What did you hear that you like?
  - What would you change?
  - What is missing?
  - Do you think Stow need additional recreational opportunities? What?
  - What lands do you think are most important to protect?
- 