

Open Space and Recreation Plan Public Hearing

August 11, 2022 @ 6:30 pm

City Hall Annex, Room 203, Robert Hubbard Conference Room

Open Space and Recreation Plan Survey Results

A mailing went out to Gardner's residents regarding providing input on the Open Space and Recreation Plan through a survey. The survey could be completed online, or a physical copy could be found and returned to the Levi Heywood Library or Gardner City Hall.

There were 231 respondents at the time of presentation, with a 97 percent or greater response rate on all but three questions. The public survey results are as follows:

- The city is not adequately served by open space
- Respondents are satisfied with the places for children and youth to play and recreate
- It is extremely important to preserve city-owned open space:
 - For active recreation
 - specifically for children
 - for passive recreation and aesthetics
 - to meet our water supply needs
- It is extremely important to preserve the following:
 - Historic places
 - Farmlands
- Dunn Pond, City sidewalks, Mount Wachusett Community College (MWCC), and the North Central Pathway are the top recreation areas visited by respondents in the last twelve months
- Top three recreation facility improvements needed:
 - Additional/improved city sidewalks
 - Additional/improved children's play areas
 - Improvements to Greenwood Pool
- 15% of respondents have a family member requiring accessibility accommodations
- Household members travel to adjacent communities for playgrounds, hiking, and walking
- It is extremely important for members of the household to use sidewalks in their neighborhoods for recreation and travel, but least important for use of bike lane facilities
- Recreational exterior lighting, benches, picnic tables, and sport facilities improvement investment is only somewhat important
- Almost a 50%/50% split in favor to support an increase in taxes to pay for improvements and/or new recreational facilities
- 210 respondents live in the city. Others work, have family, or own property in the city

Open Discussion and Questions

Splash Pad/Spray Park

Abutters would like to see another splash pad/spray park like the one at the Greenwood Memorial Pool somewhere else, such as South Gardner's Bickford Playground. Expressed concern that the current spray park needs lifeguards on duty as the spray park is on the deep end side of the pool. Also suggested expanding the existing one at the pool, maybe fencing it so people can enter without a lifeguard present. Abutter also noted the last few times she went with her kids the lifeguards did not know how to operate the spray park, so it was not available for use.

Open Space/Parks/Trails

Abutters requested printable maps of the conservation trails and parks and suggested a potential app that will show you where you are on the trail. Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC) does have printable maps, but abutters desire maps where they can see the trail details and parking clearly to plan their trips.

Better Marketing of What to Do in the City

Website listings, brochures and social media postings of amenities, trails, MWCC, pool, monument park events, etc. Make the information easy to find in various formats – "sell it better".

Sidewalks

Request for new sidewalks in residential areas, specifically Brookside Drive and Clark Street leading to Leo Park and leading to the Rome Conservation Area.

Trevor Beauregard, Director of Community Development and Planning and Rob Oliva, City Engineer noted that it is a good idea. However, with the current budgets the goal is to maintain and fix the existing sidewalks. Request is noted if the opportunity of more funding arises.

Greenwood Pool

Suggested adding a shade pavilion and snack bar.

Rear Main Street/Derby Drive

Asked what was happening behind the police station, would there be more open space added with the bike trail/complete streets there?

Trevor Beauregard explained the plans for the City Plaza, public/private parking lot, and private residential development that would be coming to Rear Main Street.

Parkers Pond

There is public access to Parkers Pond with North County Land Trust. Parkers Pond needs more maintenance as it is the lowest point in the city. It has high salt levels and needs weed and plant treatments. Suggested signs notating the water bodies names on street level to make people aware they are near a body of water.