

SECTION 6

COMMUNITY VISION



Chatham High School
Photo by Jeff Thibodeau, Helios Land Design

PUBLIC REVIEW DRAFT

A. Description of Process

See Section 2B, Planning Process and Public Participation, for a description of the planning process. A major component of this process involved development and distribution of the *2008 Chatham Open Space and Recreation Plan Survey*. The final survey form and distribution process is provided in Section 2B.

Town of Chatham Open Space and Recreation Plan survey results are summarized as follows:

Question 1: Please check the top 5 recreational facilities you feel are needed in the town:

1. Conservation Areas (15.4% of responses)
2. Public Access to Waterbodies (12.5% of responses)
3. Bike Trails (10.5% of responses)
4. Children's Play Areas (6.6% of responses)
5. Hiking and Skiing Trails (5.9% of responses)

Analysis:

Answers indicate a need for all types of recreational facilities.

Question 2: What should the town's policy be in regards to Open Space and Conservation?

1. Improve maintenance levels and expand facilities (29.1% of surveys)
2. Preserve existing maintenance levels and expand recreational facilities (24.8% of surveys)
3. Preserve existing maintenance levels w/no further expansion of facilities (20.5% of surveys)
4. Improve maintenance levels with no further expansion of facilities (22.2% of surveys)

Analysis:

Responses are relatively even in all four categories, which makes it difficult to determine the best course of action. However it does suggest that both increased maintenance and expansion of facilities should be considered.

Question 3: What is your favorite historic, open space or recreational facility in Chatham?

1. Lighthouse Overlook/Beach (16)
2. Atwood House Museum (15)
3. Local Beaches (12)
4. Harding's Beach (11)
5. Chase Park (6)
6. Kate Gould Park (6)

Analysis:

Lighthouse Beach and the Atwood House Museum were clearly the two favorite places with other local beaches and two park areas close behind. A total of 32 other areas were listed. These are shown in the complete survey results provided in the Appendices.

Question 4: In preserving open space, how important is each of the following?

1. Water Supply Protection (94.7% ranked as important)
2. Place of historic value (75.2% ranked as important)
3. Wildlife Protection (72.6% ranked as important)
4. Places of scenic beauty and recreation ties for fourth (35.4% ranked as important)

Analysis:

Water supply protection was not surprisingly ranked the highest with historic places and wildlife protection about even at around 75%.

Question 5: Please rank the following methods you would support the town using to preserve and purchase Open space and recreation areas (1 most preferable, 7 least preferable)

1. Purchase by Town or State
2. Grants from State/Federal
3. Gifts from Residents
4. Zoning Controls
5. Purchasing the Development Rights
6. Tax on Real Estate Sales over \$150,000
7. Tax Title

Analysis:

Purchases by the town or state were seen as most preferable, an opinion reiterated with responses to question number 9.

Question 6: Do you feel that Chatham is doing a good job in protecting:

- Groundwater (57.3% Yes, 25.6% No, 17.1% No Opinion)
- Surface Waters (49.6% Yes, 28.2% No, 22.2% No Opinion)
- Wetlands (55.6% Yes, 26.5% No, 17.9% No Opinion)
- Forest/Uplands (42.7% Yes, 27.4% No, 29.9% No Opinion)

Analysis:

The majority of people feel that natural resources are being well protected however it is not an overwhelming majority. Approximately 25-30% of responses indicated that the town was not doing a good job at protecting the resources listed, which should be considered as an important need for the immediate future.

Question 7: How important is it to you for the town to acquire and preserve conservation areas?

1. Very Important (65.0%)
2. Important (23.1%)
3. Less Important (5.1%)
4. Not at all Important (4.3%)
5. Neutral (2.6%)

Analysis:

There is a strong majority that considers it important or very important for the town to acquire and preserve conservation areas. Only 4.3% considered it not at all important.

Question 8: Are you satisfied with the amount and quality of active and passive recreational areas in the town for:

Responses:

- Adults 18-45 (45.7% Yes, 24.1% No, 30.2% No Opinion)
- Adults 45 and over (57.8% Yes, 28.4% No, 14.7 No Opinion)
- Children (48.3% Yes, 24.1% No, 27.6% No Opinion)

Analysis:

Between 45 and 58% of responses indicated satisfaction with the availability and quality of recreational areas for all age groups. About a quarter of responses indicated dissatisfaction.

Question 9: To preserve open space in Chatham, would you:

- Contribute some land to the town (9.6% Yes, 47.0% No, 19.1% Maybe)
- Donate money to buy land (31.3% Yes, 27.0% No, 25.2% Maybe)
- Rewrite your deed to limit future use (18.3% Yes, 45.2% No, 11.3% Maybe)
- Sell land to the town at a bargain price (8.7% Yes, 49.6% No, 15.7% Maybe)
- Sell land to the town at fair market value (36.5% Yes, 24.3% No, 12.2% Maybe)
- Vote for a Town supported land acquisition (72.2% Yes, 7.0% No, 12.2% Maybe)

Analysis:

Responses suggest that respondents prefer protecting land primarily through town supported acquisitions and are less interested in donating or selling their own land, although 36.5% did indicate a willingness to sell at fair market value.

Question 10: What age group do you fall within?

1. Adults 45 and over (77.8%)
2. Adults 18-45 (16.2)
3. No response (3.4%)
4. Children (2.6%)

B. Open Space and Recreation Goals

The development of open space and recreation goals is critical to the planning process because it provides the framework within which specific actions are set and prioritized. This 2008 Plan is an update and revision of the 1985 Plan and those goals provided the basis for discussion. In addition, the results of the survey summarized above earlier provide publicly supported guidelines for the development of the broad open space and recreation goals discussed below.

The development that has occurred during the last few decades has raised concerns and awareness over the preservation of open spaces and community character. The town is mostly built out and a very small percentage of the Town remains undeveloped. While a significant portion of the Town's total land area is protected, most of this is concentrated in the Monomoy National Wildlife Refuge (2700 acres) and new steps need to be taken to ensure that the goals of this Plan are met through additional land acquisitions and other protective measures throughout town. The Town cannot rely on environmental constraints or regulations to prevent development, but must actively regulate or acquire lands that should be protected. Survey respondents indicated a desire to continue to preserve lands for water supply protection, historic resources and wildlife protection and recreation. The preferred means of doing so continues to be through town or state supported purchases. Survey responses also indicate that the town could do more to protect its natural resources and to provide and maintain adequate recreation facilities.

The goals listed in this 2008 Plan are related in some way to the 1985 goals and have been crafted to better reflect the needs and desires of the residents at the present time. Maintaining existing facilities is an ongoing goal that will always be a priority. It doesn't make much sense to expand facilities if you cannot or are not taking care of what you already have. Providing present and future residents of the Town with the opportunity to enjoy the recreational, open space and natural resources in and around the Town is also an ongoing goal that the Town will always be striving to achieve.

It is essential to protect the water supply to provide a pollution free environment for both the human population and the natural environment. It goes without saying that domestic water quality and quantity for the future needs of the Town cannot be overstated or ignored. It must continue to be farsighted and proactive in this regard. The need to protect these resources also illustrates the need to provide fully functional sewage disposal systems to prevent pollution of existing and future water sources and resource areas.

To summarize, the Town of Chatham 2008 Open Space and Recreation Plan establishes the following broad goals:

- It is very important for the Town of Chatham to continue to preserve open space in order to protect the environment, provide recreational opportunities and slow or control development;
- It is essential to protect important sensitive areas from development;
- It is essential to protect ground and surface water resources in order to provide a pollution-free environment for both the human and natural environments;
- It is important to protect wildlife habitat and species including forest, wetlands and fisheries;
- It is very important to protect the appearance and character of Chatham in order to maintain and improve the economy and overall quality of life that attracted and keeps people here.
- It is important to maintain existing open space and recreation facilities at a level that sustains their inherent qualities and values as ecological and cultural systems;
- It is important to provide present and future residents of Chatham with the opportunity to enjoy the recreational, open space and natural resources in and around the Town; and,
- Beaches and other open space and recreation areas are considered to be the most important assets of the town and should be protected and managed as vital natural and cultural resources.

These broad goals are further refined and presented along with proposed objectives and actions in Sections 8 and 9.