



Open Space and Recreation Plan

Town of Essex, Massachusetts
2016—2023

Fall 2016 Final

Town of Essex
Open Space and Recreation Plan
2016 -2023

Updated from plan dated 2007 -2014



*In every walk with nature
one receives far more
than he seeks*

John Muir

Prepared by the Essex Open Space and Recreation Committee

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The Essex Open Space Committee wishes to extend a heartfelt note of appreciation to Stephen Winslow of Mass in Motion – Cape Ann and the Community Development Department of the City of Gloucester. Stephen agreed to lead us through the process of an Open Space and Recreation Plan Update and he did it superbly. His familiarity with the subject matter, his facility with the mapping process and his obvious appreciation of Essex itself made our collaboration as pleasant as it was successful.

And thank you also to Brendhan Zubricki for introducing us to Stephen!

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Board of Selectmen

Planning Board

MAPC

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SECTION 1: PLAN SUMMARY

This 2016-2023 update to the Essex Open Space and Recreation plan proposes to continue efforts of the 2007 plan to preserve and protect the scenic character of Essex's open space that make our town such a unique and wonderful place to live.

Wetland and sewage handling regulations constrain development of many lots in Essex; nevertheless, residential growth continues at a modest 0.5% annually. Projections indicate Essex's population of individuals 60 and over will continue to grow. Slow residential growth and an aging population means that the Town's resources will be best spent on updating existing recreational facilities to current needs rather than adding new facilities.

Modest development can result in disproportional impact on open space. Between 1951 and 2014, developed land in Essex nearly tripled from 423 acres to over 1200 acres while Essex's population doubled during the same time period. Most new development occurs on the outskirts of town center, often carved from the woods or placed in former agricultural fields. Developers have yet to take advantage of the Open Space Residential Design bylaw adopted in 2007 that encourages clustered development in return for open space protections.

The Town has expended significant time and resources since 2007 on sewage issues. Septic issues associated with Conomo Point have been addressed through septic upgrades, anticipated leases for Northern Conomo lots and with rezoning and sale for Southern and Central Conomo lots. Sewer system flows to Gloucester have been less than originally projected so some capacity exists to add additional flow from the expansion of existing facilities.

As a coastal community on the Great Marsh, Essex faces effects from climate change. The low-lying areas expected to be affected by climate change coincide with Essex's major clam flats.

This new plan has been developed by using the digitized property maps created over the past few years with Geographic Information System (GIS) software and data. The Massachusetts GIS office also offers more comprehensive mapping information. A new, detailed Open Space and Recreation Map (**see Map 14**) has been created indicating the open space status of every parcel in Essex and whether those parcels have been protected.

Despite development since 1951, 81.9% of the Town's land remains as open space with 35.0% permanently protected from development and another 17.9% with development restrictions. Unrestricted open space constitutes 29.0% of the land in Essex.

SECTION 2: INTRODUCTION

A. *Statement of Purpose*

Essex's 2016 – 2023 Open Space and Recreation Plan seeks to increase our Town's focus on environmental protection and preservation of natural resources as indicated as residents' number one priority in a 2010 town survey.

The residents of Essex – be they humans, animals, or plants – will derive the greatest benefit from living here in the future if the town's unique landscape and history is preserved while, at the same time, enough contiguous open space remains to create valuable habitats that can protect and preserve its flora and fauna.

The Town of Essex Long Term Planning Committee ("LTP") has been developing a "Plan to Preserve the Town of Essex"¹ for over five years. The LTP's process has included several community-wide surveys to identify Essex's community defining resources several which relate to open space and recreation including:

- The Great Marsh and Essex River (Ranked #1 out of 18 resources)
- The Town's Water Resource District (#2)
- Scenic byways (#8)
- Water access and recreational opportunities (#10)
- Clamming and fishing (#13)
- Woods (#14)
- Agriculture (#16)
- Chebacco Lake (#17)

The LTP's work ended with its recent report. The 2016 Essex Open Space and Recreation plan builds on the LTP's efforts to preserve and protect those key resources. A new Strategic Planning Committee, which includes representation from the Open Space and Recreation Committee, will continue the Town's overall planning effort that the LTP started.

Major actions items have been set forth in Section 9 and on the Open Space and Recreation Plan Action Map (**Map 15**), these include:

1. Preserve and protect scenic open spaces with additional focus on areas along John Wise Avenue, Island Road and Lufkin Road;
2. Support the acquisition of Sagamore Hill along the Hamilton town border;

¹ Town of Essex Long Term Planning Committee, July 2015 Report to the Board of Selectmen "Planning to Preserve the Best of Essex".

3. Support the efforts of the Memorial Park Committee to plan and improve the recreational facilities located there;
4. Preserve and protect the Manchester - Essex Woods through continued research into property ownership and support of conservation restrictions and / or acquisitions;
5. Improve the Centennial Grove Trail by encouraging local volunteers and students to update and provide stewardship for the trail; and
6. Support the creation of a River Walk along the Route 133 corridor.

B. Planning Process and Public Participation

The Town of Essex Long Term Planning Committee (“LTP”) completed its “Plan to Preserve the Town of Essex².” in July 2015. The project included several community-wide surveys to identify Essex’s community defining resources several which relate to open space and recreation including:

- The Great Marsh and Essex River (Ranked #1 out of 18 resources)
- The Town’s Water Resource District (#2)
- Scenic byways (#8)
- Water access and recreational opportunities (#10)
- Clamming and fishing (#13)
- Woods (#14)
- Agriculture (#16)
- Chebacco Lake (#17)

The scenic resources of the town are clearly central to the character of Essex. The 2010 town survey identified open space and environment as residents’ number one priority. Three-quarters of survey respondents agreed that there should be an “increased focus on environmental protection and the preservation of natural resources”

For the Great Marsh, Essex River, Watershed Protection District and Scenic byways the greatest threats include invasive species, inappropriate commercial & residential development and erosion.

Development also ranks as a high risk to agriculture. “Of the pasture, hayfields, and woods along the south side of John Wise Avenue, only 70 acres of Alprilla Farm is under agricultural restriction. The Hardy Farm, 95 acres of Alprilla Farm, and the Storey Farm remain unprotected.”

² Town of Essex Long Term Planning Committee, July 2015 Report to the Board of Selectmen “Planning to Preserve the Best of Essex”.

Water pollution scored a great risk to water recreation, clamming and fishing. Surveys of residents have reinforced their desire to continue and strengthen the shell fishing industry here in Essex. The most important way to ensure this is to maintain and improve the health of the shellfish beds. Invasive species ranked high risks for the Essex Woods and Chebacco Lake as well.

The Essex Board of Selectmen and the Essex Open Space and Recreation Committee held a joint public hearing on the draft 2016 – 2023 Open Space and Recreation Plan on Monday November 30, 2015 and the Essex Senior Center. The meeting had been publicized throughout Essex and surrounding communities via: (1) a press release to the Gloucester Daily Times, (2) a posting in the Good Morning Gloucester blog which is seen by 30,000+ people each day (3) a public meeting notice on the Town’s website and (4) direct e-mail to various Town boards, commissions, key staff and community organizations. Approximately 20 people were in attendance at the meeting including the three members of the Board of Selectmen, Town Administrator Brendhan Zubricki, former members of the Long Range Planning Committee, Shellfish Advisory Board and Open Space and Recreation Committee with the balance being members of the public.

Lead authors, Julie Scofield, Chair of the Open Space & Recreation Committee and Stephen Winslow, Mass in Motion – Cape Ann Project Manager, made a presentation on the key findings and recommendations contained in the draft plan. After the presentation members of the Board of Selectmen and public asked questions and provided comments that are detailed in Section 10.

In the summer of 2018, the Open Space Committee conducted an open space planning public survey. It was available for residents through the Town website, and paper copies were also available at the Town Library. The survey was also shared on the Town Facebook page and was shared with various boards and commissions, including the Board of Selectmen, the Planning Board and the Strategic Planning Committee, as well as local businesses through the Essex Merchants Association mailing list. Overall there were 102 responses based on the total number of households in Essex (1,500) and total population (3,500). The results of the survey are available in Appendix E.

Finally, this draft of the Plan was circulated among Town Boards, local and state officials, nonprofits, and provided for public review. Table A lists the groups and individuals receiving copies, while Table B shows the locations of copies for public review (notice of locations and availability was published in local newspapers). Public comments are summarized in Section 10.

Table 1.1 Entities Receiving Draft Open Space Plan for Comment.

Essex Board of Selectmen
Essex Planning Board and Matt Coogan Town Planner
Essex Conservation Commission
Brendhan Zubricki, Essex Town Administrator
Essex Department of Public Works (includes Water Department)
Essex Open Space Committee Contact List
Ralph Willmer, Senior Planner, Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC)
Kathy Leahy, Manchester-Essex Conservation Trust (MECT)

Ed Becker and Chris LaPointe, Essex County Greenbelt Association (ECGA)
David Santomena, Trustees of Reservations (TTOR)
Peter Phippen, Eight Towns and the Bay (8T&B)
Nick Holland, Cape Ann Trail Stewards

Table 1.2 List of Copy Locations for Public Comment.

Town Library
Town Hall

SECTION 3: COMMUNITY SETTING

A. Regional Context

Located on Cape Ann, 35 miles northeast of Boston, Essex shares spectacular natural resources with its neighbors, but is unique among them in its socioeconomic and cultural nature as a rural, predominantly working-class community (*Map 1: Regional Context*). It is bounded on the south by the town of Manchester-by-the-Sea, on the west by the towns of Hamilton and Ipswich, on the north by Essex Bay, and on the east by the City of Gloucester. The town is located in the North Coastal watershed, and contains approximately 16 square miles or 9,200 acres, 1580 of which are under water, and 2176 of which are saltmarsh (all the acreage of saltmarsh and water is considered protected under state law, which constitute over 64% of the protected open space in Essex)³.

Route 128 from Boston to Gloucester is located just to the south of Essex, with access via Southern Avenue. Routes 133 and 22 provide major access roads through Essex. In addition to its road system, Essex residents can connect to CATA buses at the Gloucester line and to the M.B.T.A.’s Rockport and Newburyport lines, by traveling to stations located in West Gloucester, Manchester, Hamilton, Beverly and Ipswich. The Essex Council on Aging operates a van service for the elderly and disabled.

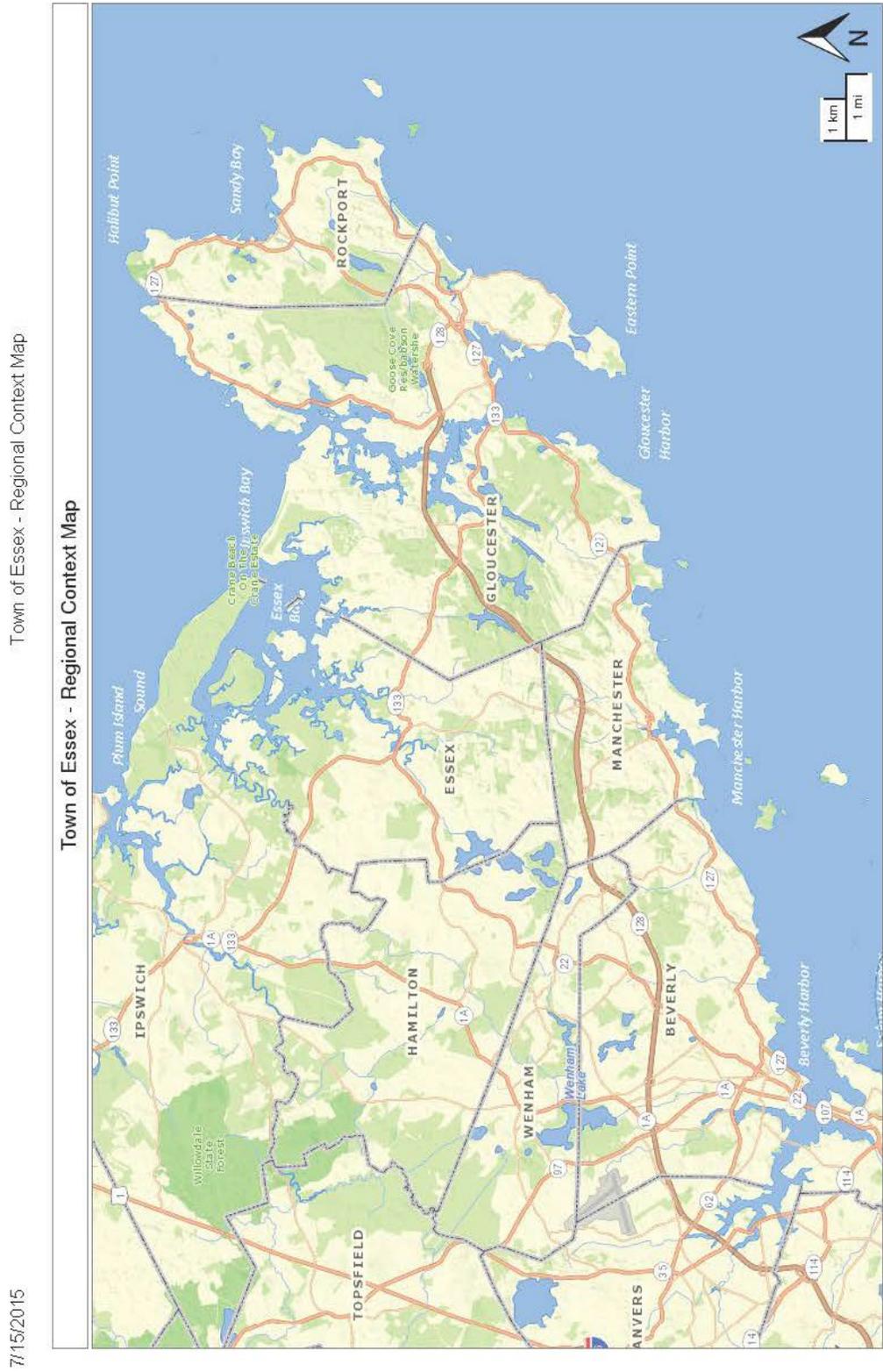
Essex shares many vibrant open spaces and natural resources with neighboring communities including Chebacco Lake (really a great pond) with Hamilton, and the Essex/Manchester Woods with Manchester, Gloucester, and Hamilton. Chebacco Lake is one of the last remaining Alewife breeding grounds on the North Shore, while the Woods are characterized as some of the most outstanding habitat remaining on the entire Atlantic seaboard, sheltering several rare and endangered species. Along with Ipswich and Gloucester, Essex makes up the Essex River estuary, which itself is a component of the Parker River/Essex Bay’s “Area of Critical Environmental Concern” (ACEC). This ACEC was designated in 1979 under the Commonwealth ACEC program. Regional planning efforts that have included multiple towns include the North Coastal Watershed Plan, and the “Campaign to Save the Woods”, driven by the Manchester-Essex Conservation Trust. Both of these initiatives have served to extensively inform this Plan.

Unlike neighboring communities, Essex has remained very rural, with a much slower rate of development due to its topography and distal relationship to most services. With a

³ Communication from Therese Smith of CAI Technologies to Stephen Winslow January 14, 2016

small tax base and a large geographic area, this means the Town faces significant challenges to preserving open space, providing affordable housing, and promoting smart growth. The adjacent communities of Manchester, Gloucester, Ipswich and Hamilton have completed extensive open space planning. The Town of Essex hopes to work closely with its neighbors to ensure that open space is protected in a coherent and cohesive regional context. To this end, Essex belongs to the North Shore Task Force, organized by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, which is a group of communities that meets regularly to discuss issues of common interest and is an excellent forum for

Map 1 - Regional Context



Town of Essex - Regional Context Map

Town of Essex - Regional Context Map

7/15/2015

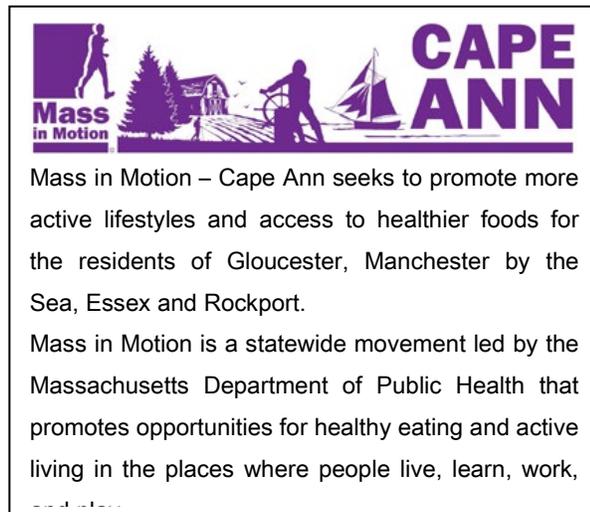
discussing regional open space issues and opportunities (refer to Section 7B for a review of the MAPC MetroFuture Regional Plan's regional open space priorities). The Town has also joined with the Gloucester, Manchester and Rockport to create Mass in Motion – Cape Ann in order to work for a healthier eating, more active Cape Ann.

B. History of the Community

Distinctive coastal landscape features were instrumental in shaping the history of Essex, from the earliest use of the land by Native Americans to its shipbuilding, fishing and farming traditions.⁴ The first Europeans settled in Essex in 1634, originally as part of Ipswich known as Chebacco Parish. Until then, and for thousands of years, the land now known as Essex and surrounding areas were inhabited by Native Americans of the Agawam tribe. In 1638, John Winthrop, the son of the Governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, purchased the land from Masconomet, the Chief of the tribe, for 20 pounds sterling. The name Chebacco is Agawam in origin, and refers to the large lake whose waters extend into neighboring Hamilton. Conomo Point, the eastern-most part of the town, is named for Chief Masconomet. Chebacco remained a parish of Ipswich until 1819, when it was incorporated as the town of Essex.⁵

The early agricultural settlement in outlying areas of Essex was sustained by growing fruit and vegetable crops as well as hemp, flax and the harvesting of saltmarsh hay. But it was the river winding through the marshes and fields of Essex that defined much of its history. Originally called Chebacco and later renamed Essex, the river flows out into Ipswich Bay, where its waters join with those of Gloucester's Annisquam River. Choate/Hog Island, the most prominent island in the River, served as a summer shell fishing ground for the native Agawams, then as a subsistence farm, and later as a summer community and retreat for the Crane Family, who later donated it for use as a Wildlife Refuge.

By the Colonial Period (1675-1775), fishing had become an important part of the local economy. The river's calm harbor, situated at the mouth of the river basin, provided a perfect location for building and launching the vessels needed by local fishermen to navigate the rich fishing grounds off New England's shores and, eventually, all over the world.



⁴ Massachusetts Heritage Landscape Inventory Program website (<http://www.mass.gov/eea/docs/dcr/stewardship/histland/recon-reports/essex-with-map.pdf>) May 2006.

⁵ Town of Essex website (http://www.essexma.org/Pages/EssexMA_WebDocs/past) December 2015.

Sawmills on the Essex River were instrumental to the substantial ship building industry. Chebacco boats, characteristic of the area, were built on the Essex River and used for fishing. At the turn of the 19th century there were more than 2,000 Chebaccos in Essex and nearby seafaring towns. In the early 1800s there was a shift to large ship building and related businesses such as the manufacturing of ropes and lines, sails, masts, pumps and blocks. Fishing, including clamming, remained important to the economic base.

The Essex Canal Company was established in 1820 and a canal was dredged from the Chebacco River to Fox Creek to bring lumber from the Merrimac Valley. Essex had three centers of industrial activity: the Falls in the west, the Causeway at the central village near the mouth of the Essex River, and South Essex. These three districts were not well linked until the mid-19th century after the construction of Martin Street between the Falls and the Causeway, which already linked the central village with South Essex.

Early vessels were primarily constructed for use by their builders. Gradually, captains from other ports came to Essex to contract for new vessels. By the 1840s, Essex no longer had her own fishing fleet but had turned to year-round shipbuilding.⁶

Direct quote from the Essex Shipbuilding Museum website:

From these beginnings, there grew an industry so specialized, it became unique in maritime history. By the 1850's, over 50 vessels a year were being launched from 15 shipyards and Essex became recognized worldwide as North America's center for fishing schooner construction. Gloucester's fleet was largely built in Essex and the town so dominated the industry that Essex vessels could be found in all major U.S. and Canadian fishing ports. One out of every 28 wooden vessels that flew the American Flag was built in Essex. The shipyards of Essex probably launched more two-mast vessels than any other town in the world.

Since many residents of Essex both fished and farmed until the town's three largest shipbuilding industries became large enough to employ many men full-time, the town established both "wood lots" and "hay lots" for each landowner. The wood lots were located along what is now Southern Avenue, in the Essex Woods, and the hay lots were located along the marsh throughout the town. Ditchings done in the 1930s account for the marsh's distinctive cross-hatched pattern.

When the Essex shipbuilding industry ceased in the late 1940s, nearly 4,000 vessels had been launched into the Essex River. While the emergence of new druggers and trawlers rendered Essex's schooners somewhat obsolete, small-scale boatbuilding continued, passed along to a few people in each generation who preserved the traditional construction methods that served thousands of vessels so well. Today, one shipyard, operated by Harold A. Burnham, maintains the traditional boatbuilding methods, and has

⁶ Essex Shipbuilding Museum website (<http://www.essexshipbuildingmuseum.org>, May 2006) [2016 note: this information no longer available at this website].

launched a number of new and restored vessels down the same winding river that brought so many ships out to sea.⁷

Essex is also home to many home-based businesses, independent clammers, tradespeople, and an increasing population of white-collar commuters. Development patterns, which historically centered around the causeway and its environs, have expanded out toward some of the wooded areas once reserved as wood lots, as well as farmlands on the west side of town. For reasons documented throughout this plan related to scenic value, habitat preservation, and ecosystem health, it is vital to protect the town's landscape features. Much of Essex's past, present, and future depends on the fragile natural resources – river, marsh, forest, agricultural land, and more – that have shaped human activity here for so long.

C. Population Characteristics

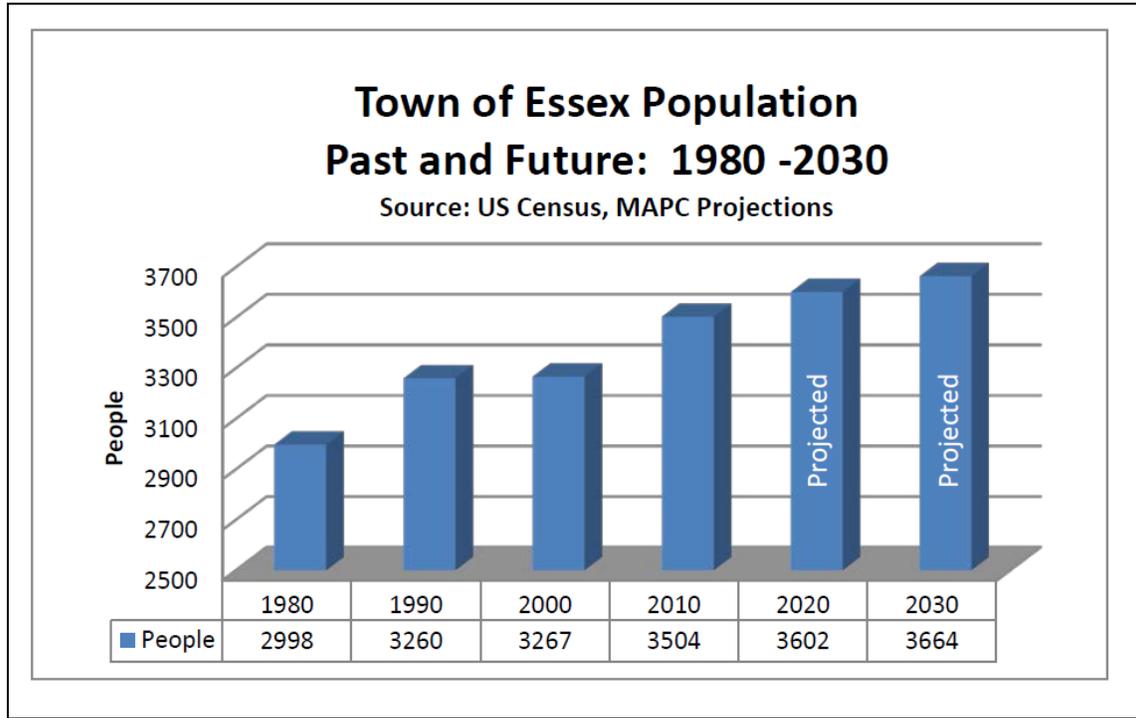
The current population in Essex (in 2013) is 3,606 persons. This compares with next-door Ipswich, Manchester-by-the-Sea and Gloucester, with 13,574, 5,249 and 29,393 respectively. Given the Town's approximately 15 square miles, its population translates to a population density of about 240 people per square mile.

Figure 2 shows the growth in the town's population from 1980 to 2010 and the projected growth through 2030⁸. The pattern is one of a gradual increase of 13 to 17 residents per year, only ½ percent a year. Essex's population continues to grow slowly despite past projections that it would decline.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ The projections shown are MAPC's January 14, 2014 "Status Quo" regional growth projections. The strong growth projections are 2% higher)

Figure 3-1. Current and Projections



Over the same periods, the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) data tracks a decline in the size of the average household which means that smaller increases in population exert greater pressure on land and housing stock than has historically been the case. The trend toward smaller households is a nationwide phenomenon, driven largely by the growing diversity of household types and lifestyle choices. People are marrying later, living in a greater variety of household configurations, and living longer, often outliving spouses as the overall population ages.⁹

Changes in household size were accompanied by changes in household composition. Of Essex’s current households, 66% are families and 34% are non-families. Of households in Essex, 30% are two-parent families with children, 10% are single-parent families and 10% are elders living alone.

In its population projections MAPC classifies Essex as a developing suburb. Along with these changes in total population come changes in the age mix that have implications for the town. Highlights of those changes include the following (changes projected through 2030):

- A 33% decline in the number of pre-school children and a 32% decrease in school-age children from 2010 to 2030

⁹ Metropolitan Area Planning Council, *Essex Community Development Plan*, 2003. Note 2015 Committee members believe that these trends continues.

- A slight 3% increase in the household formation years (ages 20-34).
- A modest 12% rise in the middle years, ages 35-54
- A modest 7% decline in the 55-64 age bracket
- A leap of 125% in the number of seniors

The rise in residents 35 and over, particularly the leap in senior residents, indicates support for passive recreational opportunities such as boating, hiking and bird-watching and the need to develop readily-accessible facilities with bathrooms. Past projections have overestimated the decline in school age children potentially due to the turnover of homes from seniors to younger families and new dwellings that continue to be built each year. Additional data on population characteristics in Essex, including family income, industries and employment trends are shown in the graphs below.

MAPC’s 2003 projection of a population decline in Essex did not occur. The 2010 Census data show a substantial increase in the number of early school age children as compared to pre-school children. That increase indicates that families with children becoming school age move into Essex perhaps to take advantage of the excellent quality of Essex’s school system. The census data indicates that the parents of these families are slightly older, in their forties and fifties, perhaps moving into homes of empty nesters sooner than the MAPC models project. Families of school age children also find that housing prices in Essex are more attractive than in Manchester and are comparable to other adjoining towns.

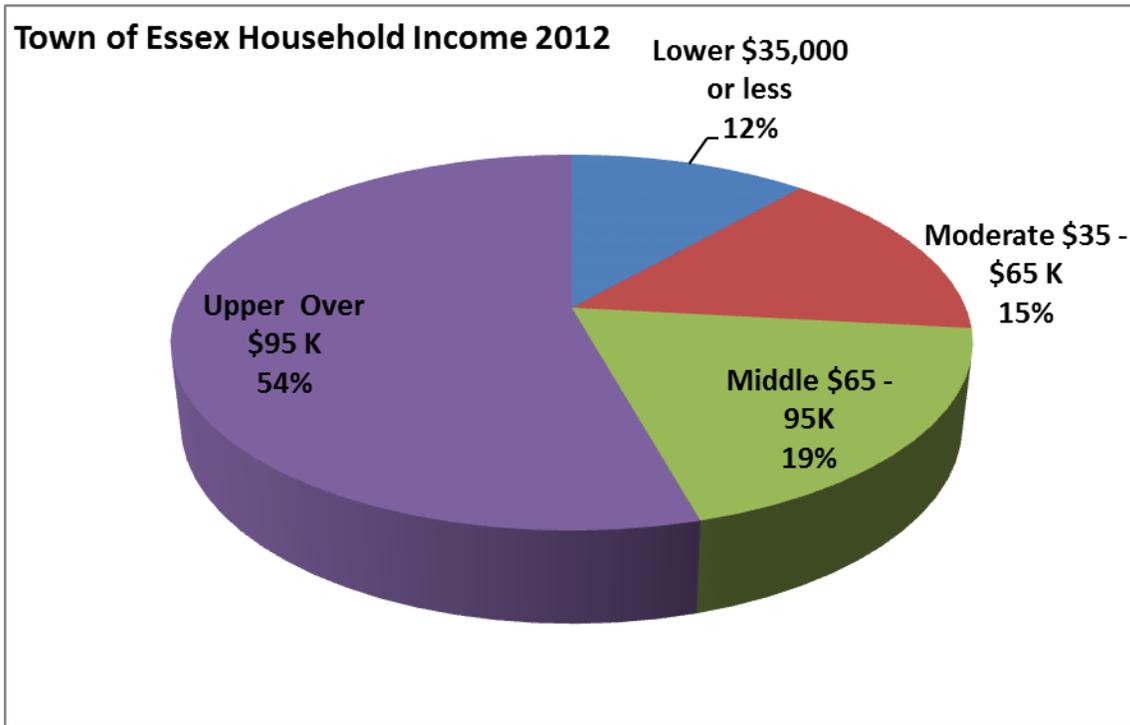
Essex household income consistently remains well above the Massachusetts median. In 2012, the Essex median household income was 25% above the state median and over 54% of Essex households earned over \$95,000.

Table 3-1. - Town of Essex – Trends in Median Household Income¹⁰

	Town of Essex (real dollars)
1980	\$16,924
1990	\$46,304
2000	\$59,554
2006	\$66,317
2012	\$82,009
	Massachusetts Median Household Income
2012	\$65,378

¹⁰ Table 1 and Figure 2 - US Census, 2012 income data

Figure 3-2. Household Income Distribution



The number of Essex residents in the labor force remains relatively steady while Essex’s unemployment rate consistently remains slightly below the state average¹¹.

Figure 3-3. Essex Unemployment Rate and Number of Residents in the Workforce

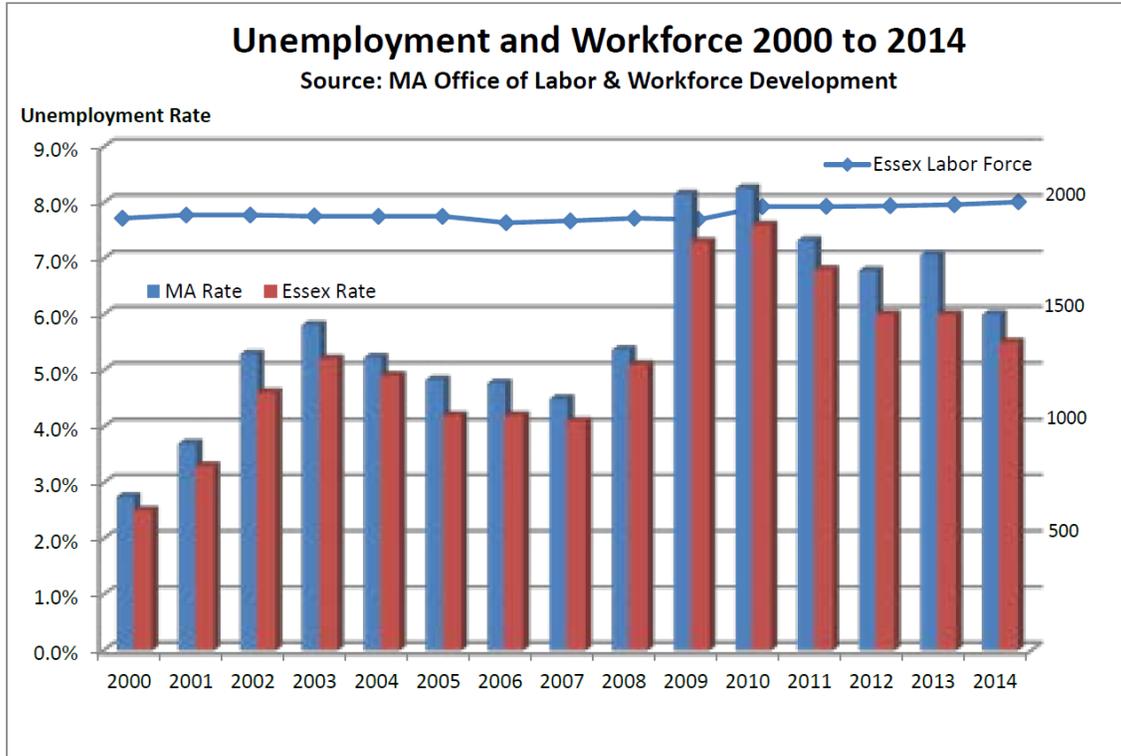
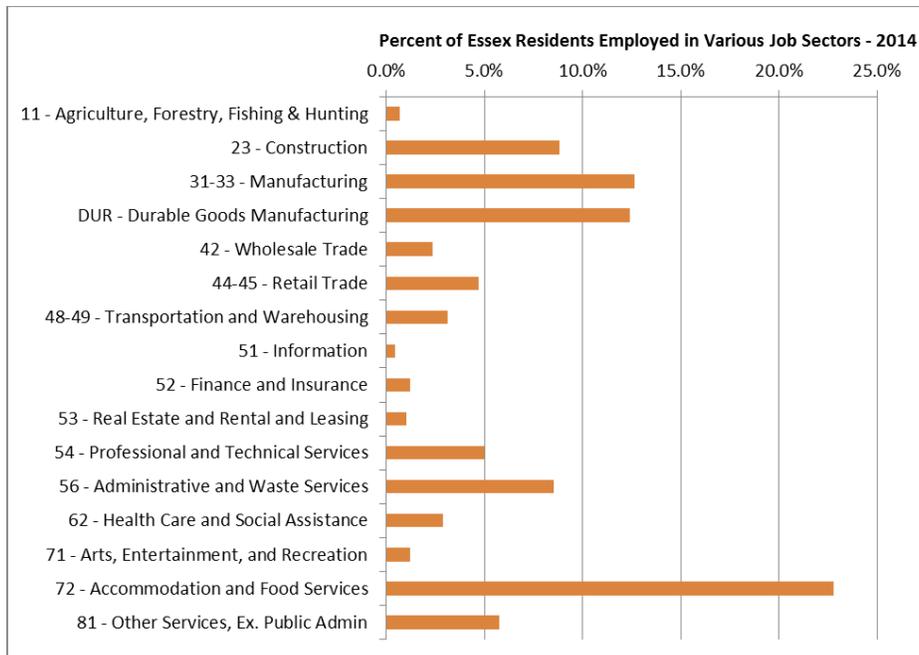


Figure 3-4. Occupation of Residents



¹¹ Source for Figures 3 and 4: MA Executive Office of Workforce and Labor Development 2015.

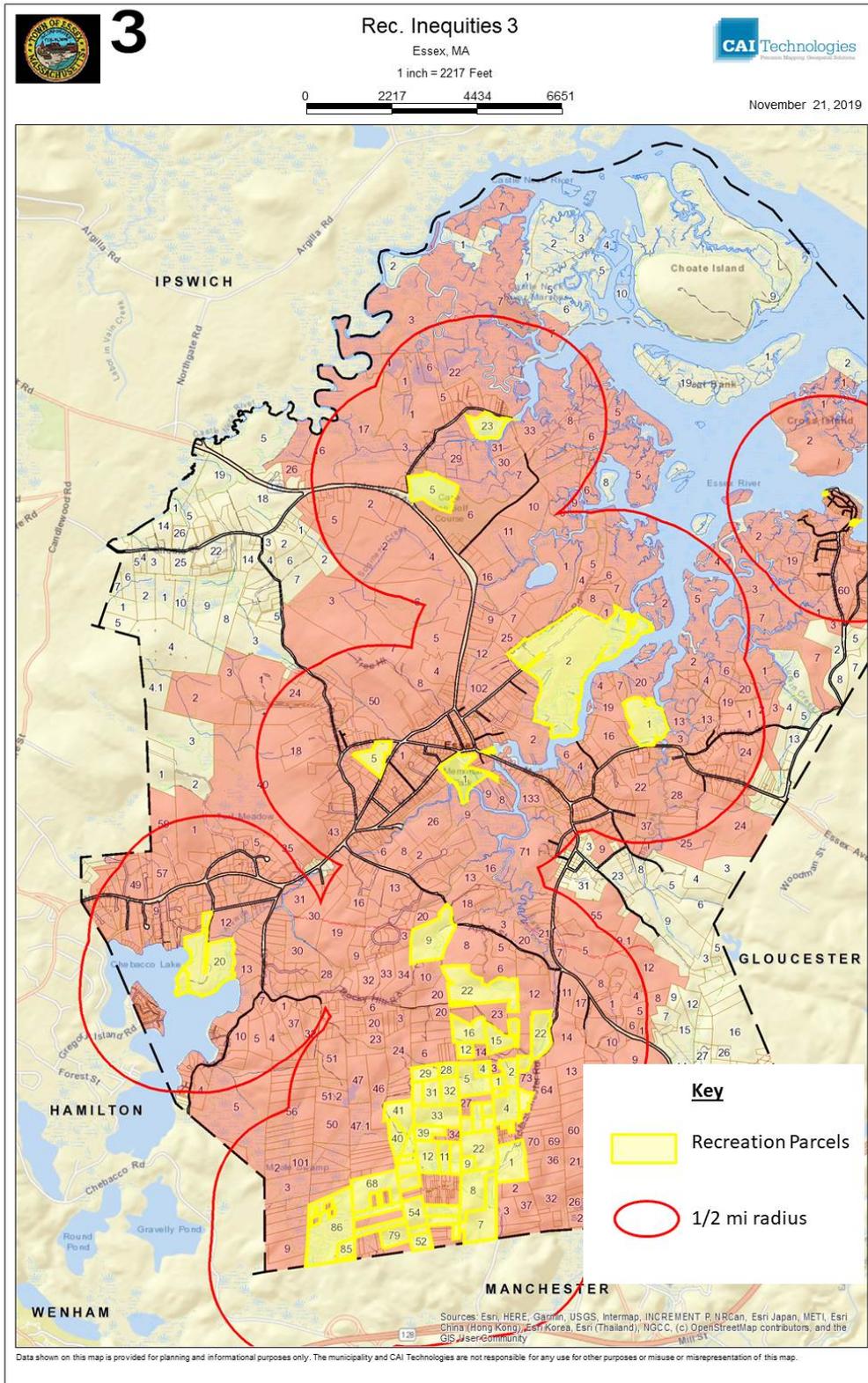
Community Diversity and At-risk Populations

Essex's population in 2010 was 96% white with small percentages of people of Hispanic, Asian or mixed race background. Undoubtedly the trend over the next twenty years will be towards more diversity as Massachusetts and surrounding communities become more diverse. (Source 2010 US Census). Essex does not have any environmental justice areas (*see Map 2- Environmental Justice Areas in the Town of Essex*)

Though the majority of Essex residents are middle or upper income, 12% of the population is low-income. Also, 7.4 % of Essex elementary students are from families with low or moderate incomes, making them eligible for free or reduced cost lunches. Ten percent of Essex Elementary students have disabilities and 1.9% are English Language Learners (Sources Manchester-Essex School District information from MA Department of Education, 2014)

Environmental Justice Areas

The vast majority of residents in Essex live within ½ mile of a recreational resource. Map 2 on p 15 illustrates how many parcels are located within ½ mile of recreational and open space resources in Essex. The map highlights parcels considered recreational use, meaning they contain playgrounds, athletic fields, trails, or open space. Only one neighborhood is located beyond 0.5 miles of an open space/ recreational area, the Choate Street/ Belcher Street neighborhood. This neighborhood, however, is made up predominantly of single family homes on large parcels of at least 1 acre in size. Based on the amount of open space and home values, residents in these homes would not be considered to have environmental challenges in terms of equity.



Ma
Map 2 – Environmental Justice Areas in the Town of Essex

D. Growth and Development Patterns

1. Patterns and Trends

As discussed earlier, Essex began as a small fishing village, surrounded by farms and woods. While the boat building industry has all but disappeared from Essex, the landscape remains very similar today, although residential density has decreased as more and more subdivisions are developed with large lot sizes. A 2006 study by the Boston Globe found that Essex had the second highest lot size per new house of 3.61 acres, topped only the Town of Boxford.¹²

Over the past decade, Essex's antiques traders and restaurants struggled due to the 2008 economic recession and the disruption caused by sewer and road construction along the Route 22 causeway. Those businesses remain important components of the Essex economy and should rebound now with the completion of construction and the improving economy. Small, resource-based businesses focused on eco-tourism such as boating and kayaking continue to grow. There has also been growth of light industrial development along the Route 22 corridor.

Between 1951 and 2014, developed land nearly tripled from 423 acres to over 1200 acres¹³. The largest gain was reflected in commercial land use; the largest loss in agricultural and open space land resulting in more land being lost since 1951 than in the prior 200 years. Since then, new dwellings have continued to be built in the town, averaging eight new dwellings per year since 2007.¹⁴ Most of these developments are subdivisions placed on the outskirts of town, often carved from the woods or placed in former agricultural fields. Not much additional development has occurred in the town center, where most new development could be centralized around services and schools.

Essex's extensive zoning requirements generally apply town-wide, rather than to designated residential, commercial and industrial zones typically found in other cities and towns. Essex does have Wetland and Flood Zone overlay districts and Southern and Central zoning districts to facilitate sale of properties in Conomo Point (***See Map 4 on Page 20***) and an Open Space Residential Design Bylaw. The Office of Coastal Zone Management has recommended that formal zoning bylaws be enacted to protect the estuary¹⁵; however, much resistance remains due to the belief that a formal zoning bylaw will facilitate development by giving developers a defined process, and that numerous problems would arise from current nonconforming uses.

A 2001 full build-out analysis indicated that Essex's population could theoretically quintuple to nearly 17,000 if all potentially developed land was densely developed¹⁶.

¹²Greenberger, Scott. "Housing Slowdown Blamed on Local Rules," *The Boston Globe*. January 1, 2006.

¹³ See Town of Essex 1997 Open Space and Recreation Plan and Section 5, Table G of this Plan

¹⁴ Town of Essex Annual Town Reports, 2007-2013.

¹⁵ Rickards, et. al., *An Assessment of Resource Management Strategies in the Parker River/Essex Bay Area of Critical Environmental Concern*, Winter 2002.

¹⁶ Essex Community Development Plan, developed under Executive Order 418 (EO 418) by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) (2001)

While it is generally agreed upon that the build-out is a worst case scenario, it is both undesirable and unlikely to occur; however, the sheer magnitude of the numbers relative to current conditions lends gravity to the mission of protecting remaining open spaces and preserving the community's character. The Town of Essex Planning Board notes that since 2001, land conservation efforts and changes in the way lot areas are calculated have resulted in significantly less developable land in Essex. For instance, large portions of properties that could theoretically be built on have been placed under the control of conservation organizations including Essex County Greenbelt, Trustees of Reservations, Manchester-Essex Conservation Trust and individual land owners obtaining Chapter 61 status. Essex's zoning by-laws by definition exclude regulated wetlands from the calculation for minimum lot size¹⁷.

Essex, like many rural communities, experiences the phenomenon of "land rich/cash poor" landowners splitting off undeveloped land as a means of generating income or providing housing lots for family members. While further breaking up open land in Essex, lot splitting has not resulted in denser development. Multi-unit housing developments possible under MGL 40B need to set aside land and money to build and operate their own sewage treatment facilities, basically making them unaffordable. .

The Planning Board is actively working on two zoning amendments related that increase affordable housing options that the Town's Strategic Planning Committee recommended in its 2015 report. If adopted those amendments will allow mixed-uses and create a downtown district that will ensure better utilization of downtown Essex.

2. Infrastructure

a) Transportation Systems

North-south and east-west roads characterize Essex's transportation corridors. Martin St (Route 22) runs generally west to Hamilton and Eastern Avenue (Route 133) runs east towards Gloucester. Southern Avenue runs south towards Manchester and Route 128, and John Wise Avenue (Route 133) runs north towards Ipswich. While in the late 19th and early 20th centuries Essex had both railroad and trolley service, it no longer has a train station but has relatively close access to the surrounding town commuter train stations in Ipswich, Hamilton, Manchester, West Gloucester and Beverly.

In terms of pedestrian facilities, some of Essex's main streets have walkable, handicapped-accessible sidewalks, mostly centering on the downtown area. In 2012, MassDOT completed reconstruction of Main Street (Route 133) from Western Avenue to Waters Street including granite curbs and new wider sidewalks on both sides of the street and the Essex River Causeway bridge. This helped fulfilled Objective B-1, Item 2 of the 2007 Open Space & Recreation Plan.

¹⁷ Essex Zoning By-Laws 2010 Reformat: 6-2.2 Definitions: "Lot". Essex was the first and is believed to be the only town in Massachusetts with this definition.

Efforts are now underway to design a Riverfront walk that will further contribute to walkability downtown. Salem State University has completed a preliminary study of the Riverwalk laying out the concept, figuring costs and identifying action steps.

Outside Essex's village core, the town is less pedestrian-friendly, with older, narrow sidewalks that are in poor condition, if provided at all.

Bicycle facilities are few and far between, and the Statewide Comprehensive Open Space and Recreation Plan of 2012 clearly reflects a strong desire for more bicycle accommodations. As other towns' infrastructure and land availability becomes saturated, commercial and residential sites in Essex may be increasingly appealing to developers and home-seekers alike. A well-planned transportation system that includes pedestrian and bicycle access can help as the town plans for managed growth. Since 2007, the Town passed on the opportunity to purchase rights to the former Essex railroad corridor that parallels Route 22 from Chebacco Lake to Memorial Park and then crosses the Essex River towards Southern Avenue. Former rail corridors have recently been converted to recreational trails in nearby communities such as Topsfield and Danvers. The Selectmen at the time indicated that it did not want to acquire the ROW due to the number of encroachments. Part of the ROW remains intact from Memorial Park towards Landing Street and near Chebacco Lake. The Village Development study proposed at developing the trail from Woodman's Beach thru Memorial Park, with a potential extension to Landing Street.

b) Water Supply Systems

The facility and resources for the Town's water system were designed and built for the potential of substantial growth. Obtaining water from two wells, the Filtration Plant is currently rated to produce approximately one million gallons of water per day. However, the Town of Essex has the authorization from the Department of Environmental Protection to pump on average only 220,000 gallons per day¹⁸. In 2013, Essex averaged 215,000 gallons per day (gpd), for an average of 61 gallons per capita per day (gpcd).¹⁹

Currently, the Town of Essex services approximately 975 year round residences, with an additional 135 summer services that are operational from mid-April through mid-October²⁰. The Town water supply is also connected to Gloucester and Hamilton, and Essex provides them with water if their resources are diminished or have an emergency situation. The municipalities are charged at a comparable rate to Essex residents. According to the Town Administrator Brendhan Zubricki, water supply does not currently constrain development in Essex.

¹⁸ MA DEP permits provide flexibility to increase withdrawals from the Zone I areas of permitted wells up to 100,000 gallons per day. Conversation with Michael Galli, Town Water Department.

¹⁹ Town of Essex 2013 Annual Report .

²⁰ Conversation with Michael Galli, Town Water Department

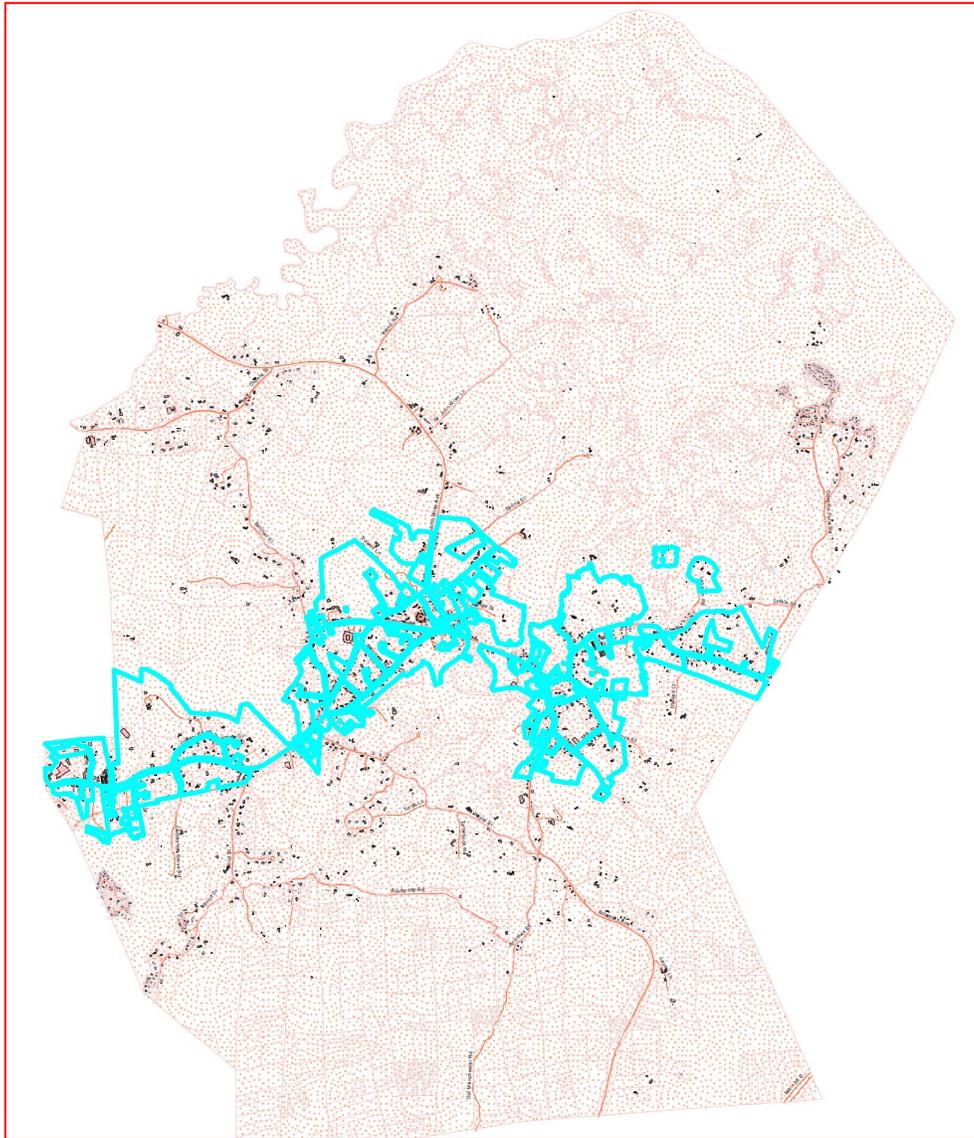
c) Municipal Sewer Service/Individual Septic Systems

In 2000, the Town entered into an Inter-municipal Agreement (IMA) to address long-standing issues with septic system failures in Essex that now serves as the blueprint for the Town's wastewater planning. The project was designed to eliminate wastewater-related pollution to the coastal environment without substantially changing the character of the Town through new development opportunities.

The project created a "Sewer Service Area" (SSA) extending along Route 133 (*see Map 3 - Town of Essex – Sewer Service Area*). The sewer extension was completed in 2006, and residents within the SSA have now been connected. The SSA serves all of the already-developed parcels (each parcel can discharge its existing flow or 330 gallons per day based on Title 5 of the State Environmental Code, whichever is greater). The SSA also serves approximately 20 vacant lots. In all, the SSA includes over 800 residences and businesses out of approximately 1200 developed parcels in Town. All properties outside of the SSA must rely on new on-site wastewater systems (for both new construction and upgrades) and parcels within the SSA that are subdivided for development may be developed only if on-site systems can be sited in compliance with Title 5 (leaving the original parcel with one sewer connection).

The Town's Sewer By-laws and Sewer Use Regulations clearly state that the new sewer system is aimed primarily at solving the pollution problem and not at allowing new parcels to be developed. In fact, since the IMA with Gloucester requires that Essex never exceed a known amount of wastewater flow each day, the capacity of the new sewer system is finite. After 6 years of operation, total sewer flows from already-developed parcels have not exceeded the IMA limit. The Town has begun to allow the expansion of existing facilities within the SSA for additional flows of up to 1000 gallons per day. Larger flows may be allotted by Town meeting.

Map 3 – Town of Essex Sewer Service Area (SSA)



Note: Sewer Service Area (SSA) boundary highlighted in [blue](#)

3. Long-Term Development Patterns

Historically, residential and commercial zoning districts have not been created by the Town of Essex. Most of the Town has been one general zoning district where each lot can have residential or commercial uses. Lots must be 30,000 square feet or greater if they are located on a road established by 1972, or 40,000 square feet or greater if they exist on a road created after 1972. The only exception to this is in the Water Resource Protection District, where a 40,000 square foot minimum lot size is required for each dwelling unit regardless of when the road was created. Business uses in this district are exempted however, and as a result, business use continues to grow along Route 22 in the Water Resource Protection District (*see Map 4*). The Town also has Wetlands and Floodplain Overlay districts that help protect those resources from damaging development. The Floodplain Overlay district is based on the latest FEMA Flood Plain maps²¹. The Planning Board has been discussing updating the Water Resource Protection District to allow better utilization of currently developed properties.

Attempts were made to pass usage districts for Essex since the 1980's, but most attempts failed. Proposals for zoning protections in northern Essex along John Wise Avenue (Route 133 north of downtown) also failed. A few zoning district changes have recently passed that will provide some open space benefits. Since 2012, the Town has established special residential zoning districts for Southern and Central Conomo Point area in conjunction with the implementation of the Conomo Point Plan (*See Maps 4B and 4C*). Plans for Northern Conomo point will open up some previously leased lands to open public use. Essex has also adopted an Open Space Residential district by-law that encourages denser development in return for protecting open space. No developers have submitted proposals under that by-law though some discussions have occurred between developers and the Planning Board.

Town data shows that slow-but-steady growth has occurred in the number of new dwellings, a rate of about eight per year. Due to large lot zoning this new development occurs on undeveloped plots often divided from larger parcels. The sewer district also limits the extent of future growth within that district. Remaining lots outside the sewer district can be on rugged terrain including granite outcroppings and rocks that make it difficult to meet septic requirements and minimum acceptable slopes for streets.

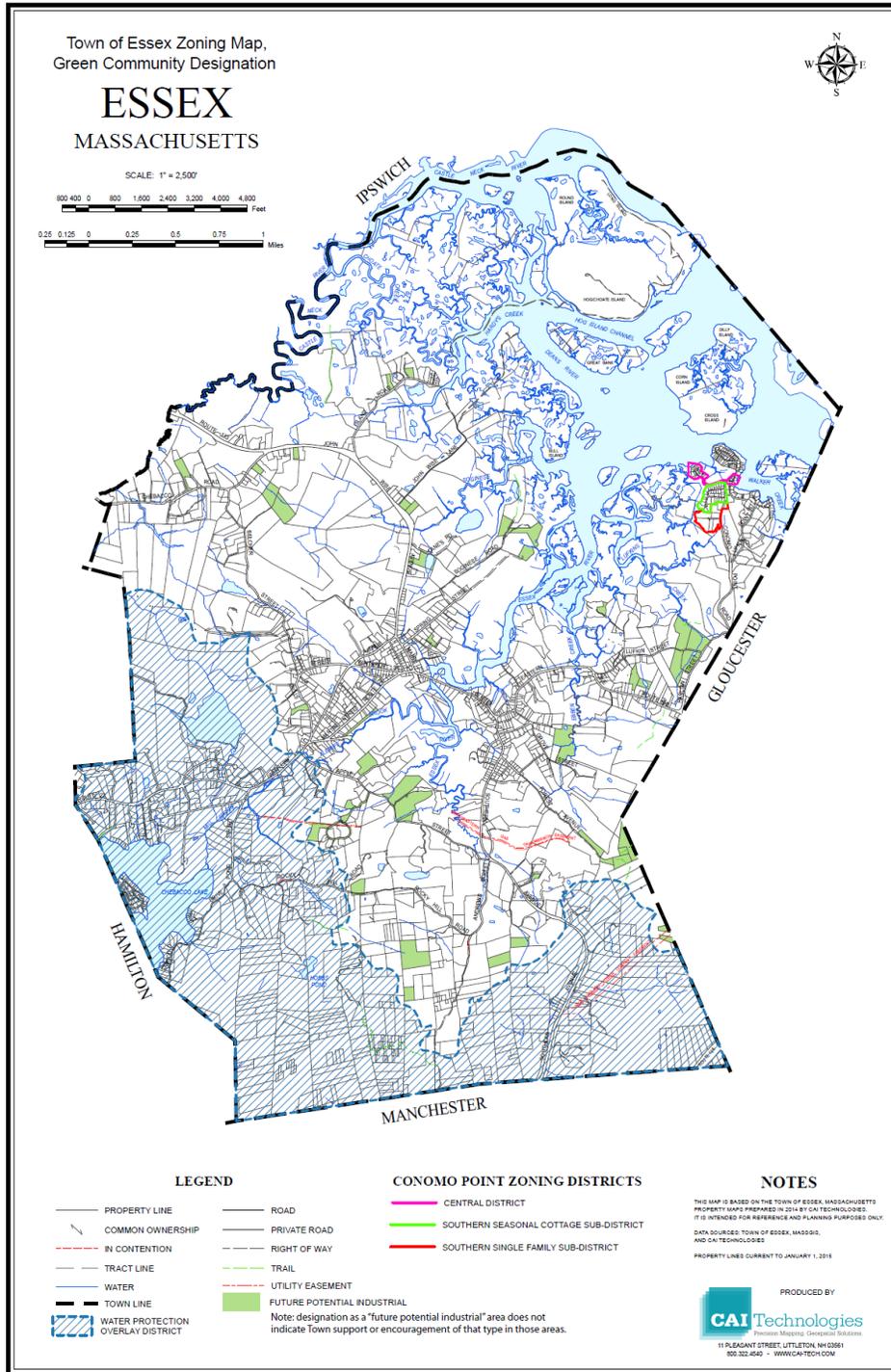
Large lot zoning and sewer restrictions combine to create pressure to develop large, traditionally open tracts of land, such as family farms and horse farms. Essex County farms have not traditionally been protected by agricultural conservation restrictions because the default soil quality standards in federal and state programs are difficult for local farms to meet in a rocky, coastal location like Essex.

New homes on large lots cost well above the median price of a single-family house in downtown Essex and do not relieve competition for the more affordable homes near Essex center. People who are locally employed or below the median income will ultimately find fewer affordable dwellings. In a town with a long history of local

²¹ Source, Essex Planning Board, November 2015

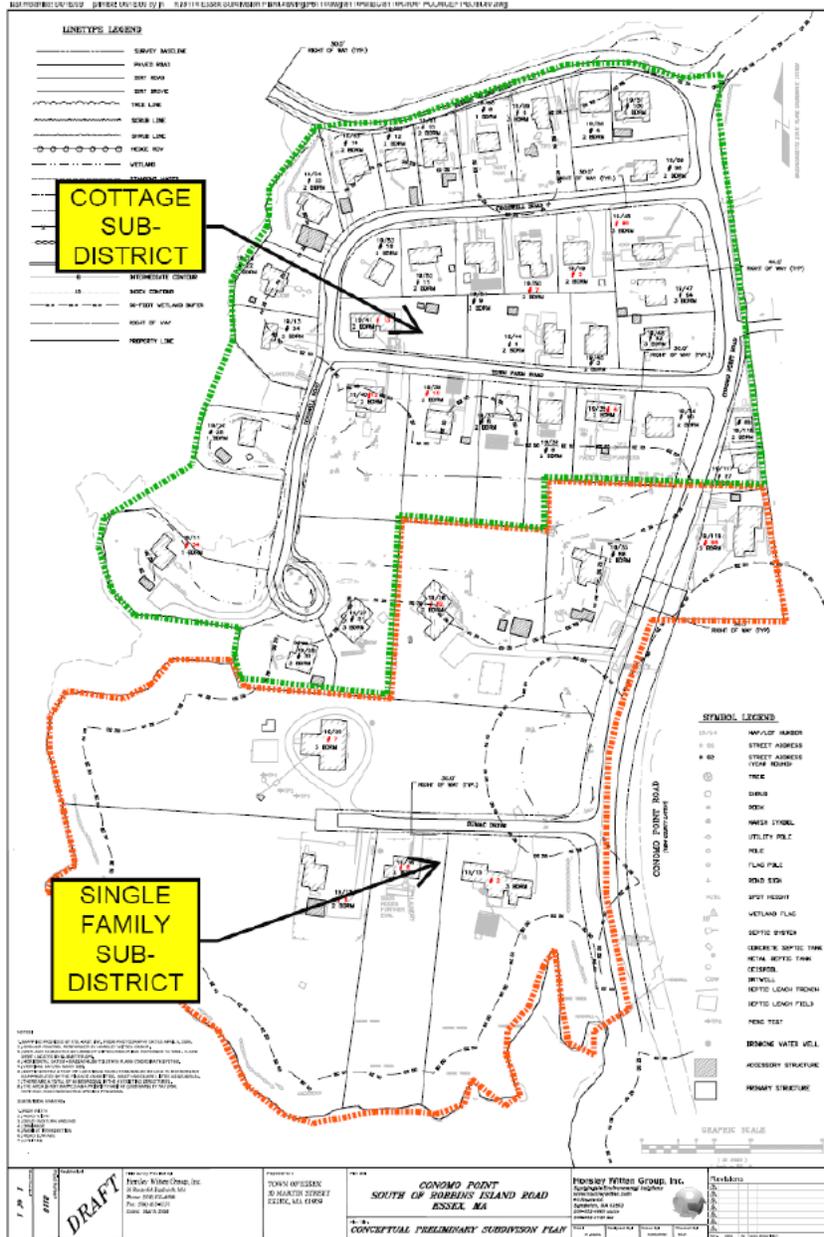
employment and hands-on trades, it would be unfortunate if the current economic and land-use realities were to force out the very elements that have shaped Essex for so long.

Map 4 Town of Essex Zoning Districts and Potential Development Areas



MAP 4B

SOUTHERN CONOMO POINT - ZONING MAP



Source: Town of Essex Bylaws

MAP 4C

Zoning Map – Central Conomo Point



Source: Town of Essex Bylaws

Note: Town of Essex retains ownership of Northern Conomo Point (area to the upper right of Map 4C). The Town also retains ownership of some properties in the southern area (below the area shown on Map 4C) and on Beach Circle (right lobe of area outlined in red on Map 4C) that were not sold to former tenants, and to the entirety of Robbins Island (left lobe of the area outlined in red on Map 4C), which may be sold by the Town in 2016.

SECTION 4: ENVIRONMENTAL INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

A. Geology, Soils and Topography

Understanding our landscape is key to prioritizing and preserving open spaces, and in fact geology, soils and topography have all played a major role in Essex's historic patterns of development (*refer to Map 5: Soils and Surface Geology at the end of Section 4.A.*). Much of the unique character of this area is a result of the rolling topography formed by ancient glacial and coastal processes. The soils in this area have also helped determine development and farming patterns, based on their drainage, mineral, and matrix properties. They continue to influence building patterns and real estate development in modern Essex; however, it is important to note that soils and geology alone cannot and will not prevent development of important open spaces.

1. Bedrock

Bedrock forms the foundation of land. In Essex it also contributes to the external feature of the landscape, outcropping regularly throughout the topography. Most of Essex's bedrock is granitic, with many different types underlying Essex as a result of differing base components. There are also pockets or intrusions of other igneous rock such as basalt, which originates in marine environments, as well as formations of metamorphic and coastal sedimentary bedrocks.²²

2. Topography

The landscape of Essex, like most of Massachusetts, was shaped by glacial and coastal geologic processes, which gave the Town its characteristic rolling topography. The coastline in this area has dramatically shifted with changes in sea level over time, resulting in fluctuations of almost 200 miles. As glaciers advanced and receded over this area over the last 250,000 years, many unique landforms were developed. During this period, this region was inundated by 300 feet of water and was called the Champlain Sea of Subsidence. As storms on this regional sea produced wave energy, the recently glaciated landscape was shaped at lower elevations into well-defined ridges of beach sands and gravels.

One of Essex's most important resources, the salt marsh, was born out of the sweeping geologic changes brought on by the Laurentide Glacier, which receded from this area more than 10,000 years ago. These marshes "were formed on land scraped bare by the ice or on new land created by the piles of debris left by retreating ice".²³ The geology of the marshes has evolved distinctly from the upland areas of Essex, with vastly different soils and topography.

²² Flint, Richard Foster. *Glacial and Quaternary Geology*. John Wiley and Sons, Inc., New York, NY, 1971.

²³ Teal, John, and Mildred Teal. *Life and Death of the Salt Marsh*, 1969, p. 58.

Glaciated forms dot the Essex landscape. Drumlins, or glacial hummocks, are hills probably best known and easily recognized by their elongated shape and north-south orientation. They were shaped and streamlined into oval humps by the glacial ice sheets riding up and over hills of more resistant rock or till. Hog or Choate Island is the best-known drumlin in Essex, but there are other smaller examples including Sagamore, Franklin, Mears, and Prospect Hills. All of these drumlins are less than 200 feet high.

Another representative feature of glaciated topography is the kettle-hole pond or lake. The melting of ice blocks left from retreating glaciers formed these water resources. Although there are 80 such depressions in the greater Cape Ann region, Essex has only one of any significant size, Chebacco Lake, which is about 150 acres, shallow, and is technically defined as a Great Pond.

3. Soils²⁴

The recent glacial episodes produced the base for the mineral soils that are now found in Essex. These shallow, predominantly mineral-based soils are known as Inceptisols, and occur throughout New England. In well-drained, undisturbed sites this topsoil averages between 2.5 and eight inches deep. Due to their glacial origin, these soils also contain high densities of boulders and rocks throughout their matrices. This has made farming in Essex an arduous enterprise over the years, and contributed to the importance of the shipbuilding and fishing industries over farming in the local historical economy.

In addition to the Inceptisols, other soils exist in Essex. There are coastal salt marsh expanses that are underlain with an organic base that formed since sea level declined and consists primarily of decomposed salt marsh grasses. Other soils in the area have been created in freshwater kettle-hole systems extending into surrounding zones that are poorly drained. Under these conditions, there is an accumulation of organic matter resulting from the lack of aerobic decomposition throughout the growing season. Over time these deposits increase, producing thick, mucky soil with a variable percentage of identifiable plant material.

Starting landward from Essex Bay, heading southwest, the salt marsh (*marked in purple on Map 5*) is comprised of soil termed the Ipswich-Westbrook-Udipsamments Association. The Ipswich and Westbrook soils are poorly drained organics, subject to tidal flooding, and with soil depths between 16 and 51 inches. The Udipsamments are well drained, wind-deposited sand, partly stabilized by vegetation, but extremely susceptible to wind erosion.

In the vicinity of the Ipswich and Gloucester lines, there are sand and gravel based outwash plains. This soil unit is known as the Merrimac Hinckley-Urban land association. Over the gravel base are loamy to sandy soils, depending on the particular topography. Historically functioning as a forest base, farmland, or swampland in low-

²⁴ Soil Conservation Service. *Soils and Their Interpretations for Various Land Uses: Town of Essex, Massachusetts*. U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1973.

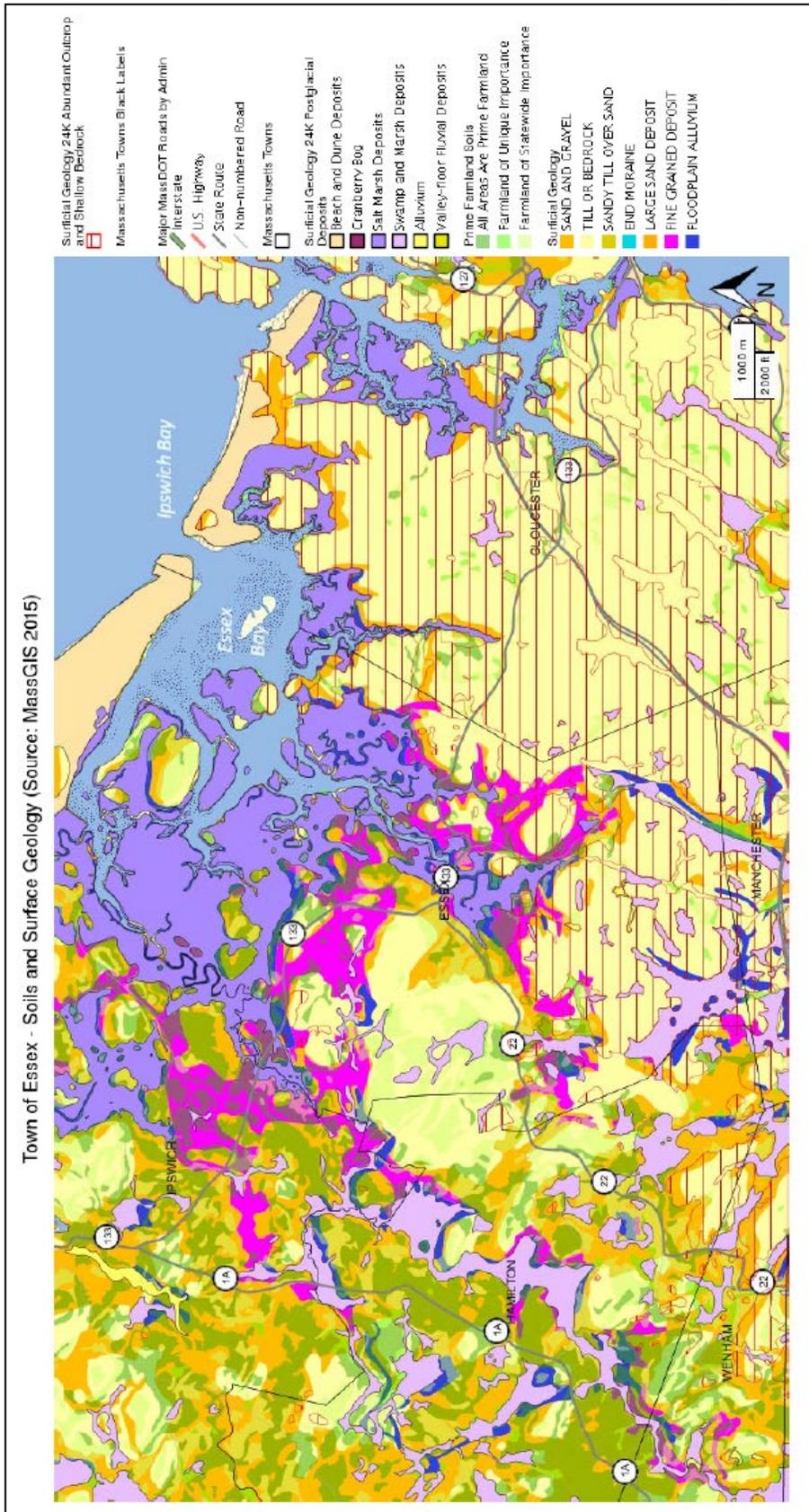
lying areas, these regions are presently mostly used for housing (*marked in yellow & light green on Map 5*).

The greater part of the Essex land surface consists of low irregular hills, ridges and plains. There are commonly bedrock exposures with small depressions of very poorly drained organic soils. The tops and sides of the low hills are comprised of well-drained Chatfield and shallow Hollis soils. The majority of this soil association in Essex remains woodland (*marked with yellow with red hatching on Map 5*). The areas of rock outcrop, the shallow depth to bedrock, and the slope hampered residential development in the past. Many of these woodlands have been preserved by the Manchester Essex Conservation Trust or have reverted to the Town through tax-title. For the parcels still held privately, many of the physical constraints that once inhibited development can now be alleviated with advanced, Title V compliant septic technologies, sewerage, and building methods that have become economically feasible as property values have increased.

A small part of Essex, located at the junction of Routes 22 and 133 is a separate soil association. This Canton-Woodbridge-Freetown Association has bedrock exposed hills and loamy soils formed in glacial till. The Woodbridge soils are loamy, while the Freetown soils are organic to a depth of more than 51 feet. The distinguishing feature of this association is a seasonal (or longer) high water table; however, building has not historically been severely limited in this area as it is located in the village center.

As much as soils, topography and geology have influenced development and open space patterns in Essex in the past, they cannot be counted on to do so in the future. Innovations in building techniques, skyrocketing property values, and advancements in wastewater technologies could allow areas to be developed in the near future that were considered all but impossible to develop in the recent past. Therefore, it is imperative to plan proactively and target designated spaces for development, open space, and conservation.

MAP 5 – Town of Essex – Soils and Surface Geology



B. Landscape Character

The coastal, forested, and agricultural landscapes of Essex lend this town a signature beauty which has contributed greatly to its popularity as a tourist destination and scenic byway. From the granite outcrops that have often prevented development, to the Essex River, which housed a long-time shipbuilding industry, these unique landscapes have shaped the history of Essex, and have been shaped in turn by the economic activities of its inhabitants: mainly in agriculture, fishing, boat building and tourism.

The agricultural vistas along John Wise Avenue (Route 133), and Southern Avenue are renowned, and have been designated as Heritage Landscapes by the Commonwealth. The defining views of the Great Marsh sweep the downtown, and are protected through its designation as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). The forests and rocky outcrops of the Manchester-Essex woods provide a backdrop for hikers, mountain bikers, and bird watchers. Coupled with historic properties, like the Essex Shipbuilding Museum and Cogswell's Grant, these landscapes are an invaluable part of Essex's character.

The scenic resources and unique environments of Essex are discussed further in Section F., including heritage landscapes, the ACEC, and scenic protected environments.

Scenic Roads: Belcher, Choate, Apple, Story.

C. Water Resources

1. Watersheds

All of Essex lies within the North Coastal Watershed that drains to the Essex Bay through the Essex River, and to Manchester Harbor (*see Map 6: Water Resources at the end of Section 6.C.*). Essex has one Great Pond²⁵, Chebacco Lake, which feeds into the Essex River via Alewife Brook. According to the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs' North Coastal Watershed Action Plan²⁶, the priorities for the watershed are:

- Work to reduce contaminated stormwater emanating from street drainage systems along highways and local roads
- Implement sustainable growth management techniques and innovative land use planning, specifically in the Town of Essex, by addressing wastewater management
- Conserve and protect open space
- Prevent the introduction of invasive plant species and reduce the loss of productive shellfish habitat

²⁵ A great pond is defined by Massachusetts Law as "a pond or lake that contained more than 10 acres in its natural state." MA General Law Chapter 91 Section 35. The public has the right to navigate great ponds and the Commonwealth regulates private development under MA General Law Chapter 91.

²⁶ Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs website (<http://www.mass.gov/eea/docs/eea/water/wap-north-coastal-2004.pdf>). (Link active in December 2016).

- Determine the impacts of growth on drinking water supplies and work to maintain adequate base flows in rivers and streams

This Open Space Plan also recognizes the need to protect and restore Alewife breeding habitats as a watershed priority.

2. Surface Water

a. Essex River and Estuary

The Essex River and its estuary are connected to the Great Marsh, and Essex's salt marshes comprise 13 percent of the 25,500 acre Parker River/Essex Bay Area of Critical Environmental Concern, as designated by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs. The Essex River together with its tributary, Alewife Brook, and Chebacco Lake, is one of the last waterways on the North Shore, which provide suitable breeding grounds for Alewife herring populations. Alewife Brook provides passage to Chebacco Lake, where river herring return annually to spawn. The Essex River and Essex Bay are designated as a Class SA tidal estuary by the MA DEP.

The Essex River and its estuary provide a rich combination of vital habitat for fish and wildlife, recreational opportunities, tourist revenue, and shell fishing. However, water quality problems exist, particularly in respect to bacteria loading from septic systems and stormwater runoff from roads, which has caused the river to be closed to shell fishing and swimming in the past. The Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries has listed the shellfish beds in the River from the Route 133 causeway and for a mile downstream in the Prohibited class, while the MA DEP includes this section of the river on the Integrated Waters List (303d), requiring a total maximum daily load (TMDL) for pathogens.

Much is being done to address these water quality issues. As discussed in Section 3, under Wastewater Infrastructure, Essex constructed a new sewer system connected to the Gloucester wastewater treatment plant in 2006. Monitoring conducted through 2007 indicated that the new sewer infrastructure successfully improved water quality to the point where MA DEP allowed the Town to stop its quarterly monitoring program.

Stormwater drainage management reduces negative impacts to water quality that can adversely affect critical resources protected within the town's wetland district. The Planning Board considers stormwater management during its review of all subdivision plans under MGL Chapter 81 guidelines. The Planning Board may informally consider stormwater drainage during site plan review of commercial and multi-family developments but does not do so for single family developments.

Recreational access is provided to the river via several points. The public boat launch is located off of the Route 133 causeway, on the western side of the river, and is used as both a canoe/kayak launch and a powerboat launch. Essex has a small harbor with three marinas for recreational boats and several private docks. The shallowness and complexity of the river make it unsuitable for regular use by commercial fishing and

lobster vessels; therefore, the Coastal Zone Management Agency has not designated the river and marinas as a working port subject to Designated Port Area regulations. .

Conomo Beach on the eastern side of the River provides recreational swimming access, and the causeway bridge itself is used as a swimming entry point. Sandy tidal flats that extend into Essex from the southerly tip of Crane Beach are accessible by boat or, at low tide, via the Trustees of Reservations' entry in Ipswich.

b. Chebacco Lake:

Chebacco Lake is a 209-acre Great Pond located in Essex and Hamilton. Its watershed comprises 3,756 acres of the two towns, and it is part of the watershed of the Essex River. The lake serves as a significant recreational resource to the Town. A beach at Centennial Grove in Essex draws swimmers and allows kayakers and canoers to put in and come ashore. Boating, fishing, and other activities are also popular, making Chebacco a vital recreational resource within the Town. The public boat launch is located on the Hamilton side of the Lake.

As mentioned previously, the Lake is also a spawning ground for Alewife river herring, which make their way from the ocean and swim up the Essex River to Chebacco, where they spawn in the spring²⁷. Chebacco Lake is particularly important, because it is the last remaining Alewife spawning lake on the North Shore that has not been converted to a water supply source and made impassable to the herring.²⁸

A citizens' group, the Chebacco Lake Watershed Association, engages in activities such as monitoring beaver activity, checking the water level at Alewife Brook (the lake's outlet to the Essex River) to ensure that spawning Alewife can make it upstream, and educating Lake residents about the importance of taking care of the lake and its watershed. They maintain a website (www.chebaccolake.org) which provides information regarding wildlife around the lake, phosphorous-free dishwashing detergents, upcoming events sponsored by the Association, and photographs (current and historic) of the wildlife and homes on the lake.

The key problems in and around the lake as identified by regional and local officials include: eutrophication, water quality deterioration, invasive aquatic weed growth, gradual reduction of depth due to sediment buildup, and reduction of recreational opportunities due to alien weed infestation. In its 1996 *Draft Chebacco Lake Restoration Reconnaissance Report*, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management (now Department of Conservation and Recreation) made the following recommendations:

- Develop an in-lake management program
- Develop a lake watershed management program
- Develop a waste disposal management plan for all homes around the lake, with an emphasis on phosphorus-reducing alternative septic systems

²⁷ U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Central New England Fishery Resources Office website (www.fws.gov/r5cneafp/herring/htm), September 2002.

²⁸ Phippen, Peter. *Annual Herring Count Report, 2005*. Eight Towns and the Bay, 2005.

- Begin studies to determine the advisability and best management practices for the use of herbicides and dredging

Measures to preserve open space around the lake – through zoning restrictions, more stringent septic regulations, and a campaign to acquire parcels for preservation - could help slow eutrophication and allow for passive water quality improvement.

3. Aquifer Recharge Areas

The MA DEP Town of Essex Source Water Protection Program Report (SWAP Report) was last updated in 2002²⁹. The 2002 SWAP Report details the contamination threats and management recommendations for protection of the wells' zones of contribution. Also known as Zone II's, these zones of contribution are delineated on Map 6. Rainfall infiltration and induced stream water infiltration from Alewife Brook, Chebacco Lake, and the surrounding wetlands are the major sources of recharge to the Town's three wells, which draw from an unconfined aquifer.³⁰ This aquifer is the remnant of glacial stream deposition, and its configuration appears to represent an interconnected series of relatively narrow stream valleys, separated by exposed bedrock and glacial till. This mainly occurs over a large area of bedrock in the Chebacco Lake wetlands area, making the 1996 Chebacco Lake Management Plan and the work by MECT and ECGA to protect the Manchester-Essex Woods all the more important. The MA DEP SWAP Report considers all three wells to be susceptible to contamination since there is not a geologic barrier between the aquifer and surface water recharge.

The Town of Essex has worked with the MA DEP to implement the recommendations of the SWAP Report, and to educate residents regarding source water protection.³¹ The Town has delineated protection areas for all public ground and surface water sources where potentially hazardous activity should be closely monitored. These areas have been inventoried to ensure the prohibited activities for the Zone II area are not occurring. By assessing the activities that occur in the Zone I and II areas, and through laboratory testing, the Water Department can proactively manage contamination threats and protect source water.³²

The Town of Essex is currently not divided into residential, commercial, and industrial zoning districts. While concerns remain that instituting such districts would actually increase the rate of development due to the added security it would allow developers, as well as increase nonconforming uses, thoughtfully defining such districts may better define suitable locations for residential, commercial, and industrial development and better guide future growth management in the town, leading to better protection of water resources. For the purposes of open space preservation, this plan does not take a position

²⁹ Appendix B of the 2007 Essex Open Space Plan also at MA Department of Environmental Protection Website (<http://www.mass.gov/eea/docs/dep/water/drinking/swap/nero/3092000.pdf>) December 2015

³⁰ Paul Goodwin, personal communication, April 2006.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

on this issue, but does support further exploration of land use planning and zoning bylaw approaches as soon as possible.

The Open Space Residential Design bylaw, drafted with the help of the Massachusetts Audubon Society, was adopted in 2007. This bylaw gives the Town and developers the flexibility to preserve large, contiguous acreages of open space by clustering housing units more densely than is allowed under current subdivision regulations. It also outlines low impact development (LID) principles for developers that may be economically attractive as well as result in decreased environmental impacts. These LID principles include landscape management practices that reduce water consumption and encourage active conservation, progressive stormwater mitigation approaches, and techniques for minimizing impervious surface coverage.

According to the Office of Coastal Zone Management, there is concern that “a provision within the water resource protection district of the [Essex] zoning bylaw...allows more impervious surface coverage for commercial development. The zoning district standards specifically prohibit residential development on lots less than 40,000 square feet or that renders impervious area more than 15% of the lot area. On the other hand, commercial developments are permitted by special permit if more than 15% of lot area or 2,500 square feet is made impervious provided that a system for artificial recharge of stormwater is incorporated into the plan. This provision, combined with the lack of zoning districts, leads to the potential for more commercial development with overall increased impervious surface coverage throughout the town.”³³

4. Flood Management

The FEMA zones A and V are depicted on Map 6. Substantial flooding occurs regularly in Essex due to tidal inundation of the Route 133 causeway, and periodic flooding of Alewife Brook and the Essex River also occur during and after major storm events. Some limited flooding of residences around Chebacco Lake also occurs due to beaver activity, although measures are being taken to mitigate this using “Beaver Deceivers” to lower water levels. It is important to note that the substantial saltwater and freshwater wetland acreage within the Town provides vital buffer from flooding due to the immense water storage capacity of these ecosystems. Coupled with the relatively low impervious surface coverage in Essex, which allows more natural rates of water infiltration, flooding is currently less of a problem in Essex than it may be under future, more developed conditions.

5. Wetlands

Essex has extensive areas of freshwater, brackish, and saltwater wetlands, including 3,435 acres of the Great Marsh ACEC, a designated Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). An excellent source of information regarding the environmental issues

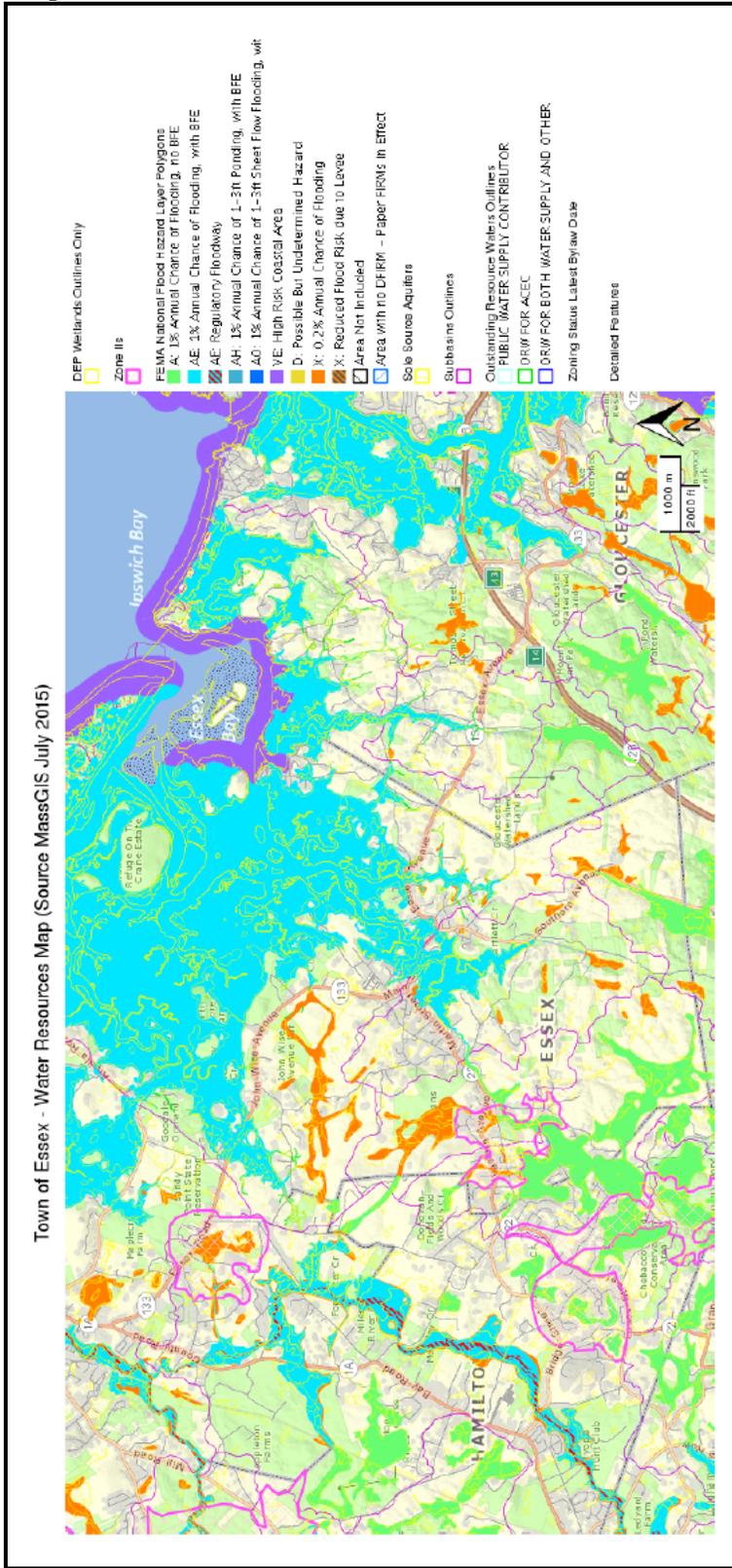
³³ Rickards, et. al., An Assessment of Resource Management Strategies in the Parker River/Essex Bay Area of Critical Environmental Concern, Winter 2002, p 18. [2015 Note: There have been no changes in this provision, Memo from Mary Ellen Feener, Planning Board Administrator November 4, 2015].

facing the ACEC and resource strategies for managing it is the Office of Coastal Zone Management's publication *An Assessment of Resource Management Strategies in the Parker River/Essex Bay Area of Critical Environmental Concern*³⁴. The wetlands and salt marshes of Essex are also discussed further in Section 4.D. Vegetation.

While it does have a Water Resources Protection Overlay District, the Town of Essex currently does not have a wetlands bylaw, relying instead on the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act and the Rivers Protection Act to adequately protect these resource areas. Currently, a wetland district defined within the zoning bylaw acts as an overlay district. This district, which primarily addresses water quantity rather than quality, is defined to serve the purposes of flood protection, water table preservation, and conservation of natural resources for education, recreation, and general public welfare. The planning board is the entity acting as the special permit granting authority for exceptions to restricted uses. However, missing from the wetland district are performance standards addressing water quality, open space, and wetland habitat particularly within buffer zones to resource areas.

³⁴*Ibid.*

Map 6 – Town of Essex Water Resources



D. Vegetation

1. General Inventory

Essex is characterized by a mixture of saltwater and freshwater wetlands, woodlands, granite ridges, open meadows, and glacial drumlins. Recreational opportunities such as hunting, nature photography, bird watching, and wildlife tracking are dependent upon the diversity of these vegetation zones. Historical development and clearing have significantly shaped the vegetation communities seen in Essex today. However, it is important to note that not all of Essex's forests were cleared for agriculture, due to their wetness and granitic outcrops, leaving portions of undisturbed soils and old growth forests so vital to rare and endangered plant species.

2. Forests

The forested portions of town include areas of upland and forested wetlands. Although specific acreages of each have not been defined, MECT has calculated the Manchester-Essex Woods as roughly 3,400 acres of contiguous woodlands³⁵. The forestlands are a mixture of hardwoods such as hickory, beech, birch, chokecherry, white and red oak, together with softwoods such as white pine, hemlock, and red cedars. Understory vegetation includes shrubs such as viburnum, witch hazel, blueberry, and mountain laurel. Forested wetlands or "swamps" include such species as swamp white oak, Pepperidge tree, red maple, blueberry, clethra, benzoin, and a few remaining Atlantic white cedars.

According to the Nature Conservancy, "the plant communities of the Manchester-Essex Woods, together with the natural landscape that supports them, are among the best of their type remaining on the entire north Atlantic coast." The Manchester-Essex Conservation Trust (MECT) states the following in their 2005 report, *Save Our Woods*:

"The Woods are especially precious because they are a rare remnant of a landscape that was common in our state's pre-colonial era. Because the area was never used for growing crops, its soils are largely undisturbed. Specialists tell us that this condition, as well as the area's relative isolation, large size, and diverse terrain (rugged hills, steep slopes, many granite outcrops, isolated and fragmented wetlands, perennial and seasonal streams, vernal pools, ponds, and two large floodplain swamps), suggest the presence of significant populations of plants and animals that have become rare or endangered in Massachusetts. The Woods lie at the southern edge of the range for northern species and the northern edge of the range for southern species; this adds to biodiversity."^{36 37}

³⁵ Helen Bethell, MECT Executive Director, personal communication, January 21, 2007.

³⁶ Manchester-Essex Conservation Trust. *Save Our Woods: The Campaign for the Wilderness Conservation Area in Manchester and Essex, Massachusetts*. June 2005, p. 5.

³⁷ Note: Manchester-Essex Conservation Trust prepared a Wilderness Conservation Area Management Plan in July 2013 see <http://www.mect.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/WCA-Management-Plan-7.13.pdf>

The Town of Essex holds land in the Manchester Essex Woods and other forested areas of the Town; however, the Town does not have any designated forest lands and does not actively manage those forest lands.

3. Public Shade Trees

The Town of Essex does not have an active public shade tree program. The Town does not have any inventory of public shade trees. The Department of Public Works director acts as the Tree Warden by default.

4. Meadows

As is the case throughout Massachusetts, most of the open meadow environments in Essex were created through historical clearing and farming, and as such represent largely transitional landscapes with the associated vegetation. Meadow species include sumac, juniper, elderberry, silky dogwood, shadbush, poison ivy (located through upland environments as well), and bayberry. As transitional environments, these vegetation patterns are crucial for “border” species, or wildlife that depend on the intersection of forested cover and open spaces for their habitat. However, the tendency of most of these meadows, without human intervention and clearing, is to revert to forested growth.

5. Wetland Vegetation

With large surficial water bodies such as Chebacco Lake, Alewife Brook, and the Essex River and its estuary, Essex has substantial wetland resources. Most of these forested wetlands or “swamps” include such species as red maple, blueberry, clethra, winterberry, willows, alders, benzoin, and a few remaining Atlantic white cedars. They also provide habitat for several threatened and endangered species including the Blandings Turtle.

The Town of Essex is also a coastal community and as such boasts thousands of acres of spectacular salt marsh. Rising above these salt marshes are the coastal islands in the Essex River, including Choate (Hog), Long, and Round Islands. Although these islands are primarily vegetated with forests consisting of oak, cedar, red and Scotch pine, spruce, and abandoned and mown pastures, their margins blend with the surrounding salt marsh.

Saltmarsh estuaries support great species diversity in Massachusetts. Essex’s marshes, as part of the Parker River/Essex Bay Area of Critical Environmental Concern ACEC, must therefore be a priority for conservation. Essex contains 3,435 acres of the ACEC, or 13 percent of the 25,500 acre ACEC.

The marshes are defined by the kinds of plants growing within them. According to *Life and Death of the Salt Marsh*³⁸, “Out of the thousands of species of land plants in North America, only two species of grass, *Spartina alterniflora* and *Spartina patens*, thrive on this rigorous salty regime and dominate the marshes of the East Coast.” This pattern

³⁸ Teal, John, and Mildred Teal. *Life and Death of the Salt Marsh*, 1969.

remains true in Essex where the spartina species are joined by salicornia and limonium. According the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs' State of Our Environment Report, "acre for acre, there is more life...in a coastal salt marsh than in any other environment found in Massachusetts." This means that Essex is rich in one of the most unique and important vegetative ecosystems possible, a resource which must be appropriately valued and protected. It also serves as a breeding ground for species vital to commercial fisheries, and as such is an important economic resource as well.

6. Threatened and Endangered Species

The Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program lists only one vascular plant species of special concern, American Sea-blite, which was observed in 1953. It most often occurs near the upper intertidal limit and has been found both in salt marshes and along sandy or gravelly shores. However, a survey conducted by Erica Sonder, M.S., for the Manchester-Essex Conservation Trust, found the following rare vascular plants, which were reported to the Natural Heritage Program: *Bartonia paniculata*, *Bartonia virginica*, *Rhexia virginica*, *Polygala polygama*, *Picea mariana*, *Drosera rotundifolia*, *Hottonia inflata*, *Isotria medeoloides*, *Cornus Canadensis*, *Pyrola elliptica*, *Chimaphila maculata*, and *Goodyera pubescens*.³⁹

7. Threats To Vegetation

Invasive species pose one of the greatest threats to native vegetation in Essex. Areas of salt marsh, cutoff by roads and inadequate culverts, have been invaded by phragmites, otherwise known as the common reed. Phragmites choke out other species' and due to the density of their root mass, significantly alters wildlife habitat. It is also very difficult to eradicate, although preliminary research shows that restoring tidal flushing to these areas will largely reverse the expanse of phragmites.

Other plant invaders of uplands and freshwater wetlands include Japanese barberry, oriental bittersweet, buckthorn, garlic mustard, purple loosestrife, and Norway maple. Japanese knotweed stands have been observed adjacent to Apple Street in Essex as well. Spread of these invasive species is facilitated by human actions such as site disturbance, accidental introduction from domestic landscapes, and gathering of invasives for decorative purposes (such as bittersweet wreaths), which distributes their seeds. Invasives take advantage of degraded environments such as those where erosion has taken place, and squeeze out native species. Once they obtain a foothold, they can completely take over large areas, wiping out important habitat and food provided by native plants.

Other threats to vegetation in Essex include boat wakes in unauthorized areas and illegal disposal of boat wastes, which affect the salt marshes through erosion and nutrient inputs, unplanned recreational trails for mountain biking and motorized vehicles which facilitate

³⁹ Sonder, Erika. *Vascular Plant Survey of the Manchester-Essex Woods (Wilderness Conservation Area)*. June 2005.

erosion, illegal dumping of wastes and trash, and of course site clearance and encroachment for development.

E. Fisheries and Wildlife

1. Wildlife Inventory

Essex benefits from large areas of as-yet undeveloped forested upland, saltmarsh, and freshwater wetlands, allowing for a diversity of wildlife species. Unfortunately, much of this land is vulnerable to habitat destruction due to the lack of zoning protections and the increasing value of real estate, which combined may make financially attractive development of previously infeasible ledge and wet soils.

A list of observed mammal, reptile, and amphibian species is contained in Table E. Essex is home to a rich diversity of bird populations, with important migratory nesting habitat. Appendix C of the 2007 Essex Open Space and Recreation Plan contains a copy of Mass Audubon's birding checklist as completed by local ornithology expert Jim Berry in 2003⁴⁰. Although not listed here, Alewife Brook and its tributaries, the Essex River, and the Great Marsh are home to many economically and ecologically vital fish and shellfish species including the Alewife herring, which showed significantly increased population numbers during the 2005 spring counts on Alewife Brook at Apple Street, but have otherwise dramatically declined in number.⁴¹

It is also worth noting that Essex has in place a hunting bylaw, and that hunting and fishing are popular recreational activities in Essex. Hunting is also important for controlling the burgeoning deer population that currently threatens other natural resources by wiping out the forest understory (this affects nesting birds and rare plant species such as Ladyslippers). Responsible hunting should therefore be encouraged and supported. However, our current bylaw is very vague, and could improve safety and encourage hunting by requiring hunters to register at Town Hall, state where they will be hunting, and receive a permit that is dated, applies only to one named individual, and identifies the land to be hunted. Manchester and Ipswich have such bylaws, which could be used as examples.

⁴⁰ The Essex County Ornithological Club's most recent inventory of birds of Essex County is from 2002. (Source: <http://www.massbird.org/ecoc/ECOCChecklist.htm>) December 2015.

⁴¹ Phippen, Peter. *Annual Herring Count Report, 2005*. Eight Towns and the Bay, 2005.

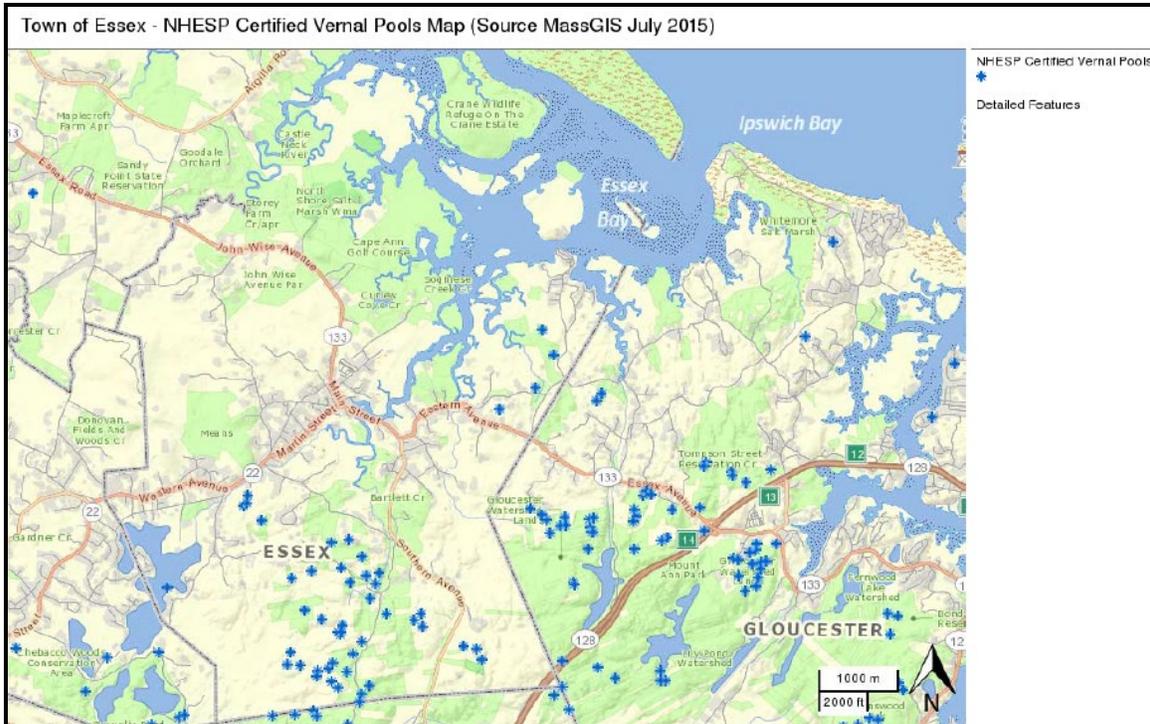
Table 4-1. Wildlife Inventory

	Species
<i>Mammals</i>	Coyote
	Red fox
	White Tailed deer
	Striped skunk
	Eastern chipmunk
	Muskrat
	Grey squirrel
	Red squirrel
	Northern Flying squirrel
	Southern Flying squirrel
	Eastern pipisterelle
	Brown bat
	Masked shrew
	Northern short-tailed shrew
	Star-nosed mole
	Meadow vole
	Pine vole
	Red-backed vole
	White Footed mouse
	House mouse
	Norway rat
Beaver	
Fisher	
Otter	
Mink	
Virginia opossum	
Long Tailed weasel	
Short Tailed weasel	
<i>Reptiles</i>	Spotted Turtle
	Blanding's turtle
	Painted turtle
	Snapping turtle
	Stinkpot turtle
	Eastern garter snake
	Milk snake
	Northern ring necked snake
	Smooth green snake
	Eastern ribbon snake
	Black racer snake
Northern water snake	
<i>Amphibians</i>	Red-spotted newt
	Spotted salamander
	Red-backed salamander
	Two-lined salamander
	Blue spotted salamander
	Tremblay's salamander
	Jefferson salamander
	Northern spring peeper
	Grey tree frog
	Wood frog
	Pickerel frog
	Leopard frog
	Green frog
Bull frog	
American toad	

2. Vernal Pools

As of 2015, according to the Natural Heritage website, Essex has 41 certified vernal pools. This constitutes a major increase from the two that had been certified by 2006 and represents an important achievement of goal A of the 2007 Open Space and Recreation Plan. The certified vernal pools have primarily been identified within the Manchester / Essex Woods area. (*See Map 7*)

Map 7 – Town of Essex, Certified Vernal Pools (Source MassGIS 2015)



3. Wildlife Corridors

The Essex River and its tributaries including Alewife Brook are major wildlife corridors and provide the only continuous, protected corridors in Essex (they are protected under the Massachusetts Rivers Protection Act as rivers and perennial streams). For this reason, providing corridors between existing parcels of protected open space is a priority recommended by this report. It is also important to note that the River provides the only access to Chebacco Lake for migrating Alewife herring. The Lake is the last remaining Alewife breeding ground on the North Shore.

4. Rare and Endangered Species

The Natural Heritage Inventory identifies six wildlife species in Essex that are threatened or of special concern (Table 4-2.) Detailed information on these species can be found in Appendix D of the 2007 Essex Open Space and Recreation Plan.

Table 4-2. Species and Status

Taxonomic Group	Scientific Name	Common Name	State Rank	Federal Rank	Most Recent Observation
Amphibian	<i>Ambystoma jeffersonianum</i>	Jefferson Salamander	Special Concern		1916
Reptile	<i>Emydoidea blandingii</i>	Blanding's Turtle	Threatened		2004
Bird	<i>Accipiter striatus</i>	Sharp-Shinned Hawk	Special Concern	Protected Species	2000
Bird	<i>Parula americana</i>	Northern Parula	Threatened		1983
Crustacean	<i>Crangonyx aberrans</i>	Mystic Valley Amphipod	Special Concern		1986

5. Open Space Priorities for Wildlife Habitat

Acre for acre, saltmarsh estuaries support the greatest species diversity in Massachusetts. Therefore, Essex's marshes, as part of the Parker River/Essex Bay Area of Critical Environmental Concern ACEC, must be a priority for conservation of wildlife habitat. Essex contains 3,435 acres of the ACEC, or 13 percent.

Outside of the saltmarsh, all of which is designated as core habitat on the NHESP's BioMap, most of southern Essex including the Manchester-Essex Woods, Maple Swamp, and the forested uplands and wetlands on either side of Southern Avenue and south of Apple Street, are identified as core habitat on the NHESP's BioMap. This acreage corresponds to the Blanding's Turtle habitat discussed below. Also identified as core habitat on the BioMap is the entirety of the saltmarsh and barrier beach system contained within the town's boundaries. Finally, with the exception of the farmland and densely developed parcels adjacent to major roadways such as Route 22, Route 133, and Southern Avenue, most of the rest of Essex is identified by the BioMap as supporting natural landscapes (*Map 8: NHESP Habitats at the end of Section 4.E.*).

When determining open space preservation priorities, the following factors should be considered to ensure that viable wildlife corridors and habitat varieties are conserved.⁴² The targeted open space should help to:

- Provide habitat for game and non-game, including threatened, endangered, and special concern animals
- Maintain biological diversity
- Maintain connectivity
- Contribute to groundwater recharge and improved water quality
- Represent high to outstanding examples of native plant communities, or contain populations of state-listed rare plants, rare animals and/or animal aggregations

The following principles should inform parcel prioritization:

- Size of a patch is important (bigger is better)
- Shape of a patch is important (rounder is better)
- Connectivity is important
- Adjacent land uses are important (the more compatible the surrounding land uses, the better the chances for persistence)
- Higher native species diversity contributes to higher productivity and resiliency

Because of the variability of habitat needs of different species and interdependent species sets, target species are often used to act as indicators of necessary habitat characteristics such as acreage, vegetation, food availability, ecosystem quality, and corridor viability when determining priorities for land preservation.

For the purposes of determining current open space constraints on wildlife habitat in Essex and priority preservation status for open space parcels, this report uses the Blanding's turtle (*E. blandingii*), a state-designated threatened species, as the target or indicator species for non-tidal habitats. The Blanding's Turtle requires near pristine habitat conditions and extensive buffer acreage to survive and thrive. It was most recently observed in Essex in 2004, and is extremely rare, with highly vulnerable population levels. Because of the extensive, high quality habitat requirements of the species, it is an excellent benchmark species for determining optimal habitat needs for other species. In particular, it has very similar habitat requirements to other freshwater turtle species and most present amphibian species: two of the most threatened wildlife sets in Massachusetts.

The Blanding's turtle spends a great deal of time on land, traveling among various wetlands in search of food. An individual Blanding's turtle may travel several miles over the course of the summer, visiting marshes, beaver ponds, slow-moving streams, and other sites where it can find food. They depend on aquatic habitat for much of their lives, but they also require undeveloped uplands for traveling safely. As these areas are converted to residential and commercial developments, Blanding's turtle habitat is

⁴² Minnesota Department of Natural Resources website (<http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/nr/index.html>), Fall 2005 [2016 Note: referenced quote no longer posted at that website].

destroyed and remaining areas of undeveloped lands are becoming increasingly isolated from one another by roads. Roads present major barriers for turtles and other small, slow-moving wildlife.

Therefore, in order to ensure the continued survival of Blanding's populations in Essex, enough contiguous acreage must be preserved to allow for turtle migration patterns without forcing them to encounter more roads than at present. It is also imperative to provide adequate buffer between development and the freshwater wetlands that provide the primary habitat for these turtles, in order to ensure that water quality degradation, siltation, and invasive plant and animal species do not threaten populations. A summary of the research findings regarding Blandings' habitat needs is contained in the report *Wetland Buffer Zones and Beyond* (Boyd 2001), which is excerpted in Appendix E. Such research suggests that Blandings need a minimum buffer zone of 900 linear feet, and up to 3,300 linear feet to preserve breeding and feeding grounds. Contrast these requirements with the 100 and 200-foot buffer zones provided by the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act and Rivers Protection Act respectively, and it is clear that Essex must work to provide adequate open space buffers to prime wetland habitats to ensure that important reptile and amphibian species are preserved.

6. Recommendations for Open Space Preservation Based on Wildlife Habitat

Together with the marshlands making up the Area of Critical Environmental Concern, the Manchester-Essex Woods are the priorities for open space conservation for wildlife habitat. These environments are hydraulically and ecologically connected, forming important wildlife corridors and habitat. Based on the findings of the previous sections, it is this report's recommendation that the following areas be given priority for open space preservation:

1. Parcels providing adjacent and connective land to the Manchester-Essex Conservation Trust and Essex County Greenbelt properties in southern and western Essex.
2. Parcels providing upland buffer around large freshwater wetlands (20 acres+) such as those found off of Apple Street, Atwater Avenue, and near Chebacco Lake.
3. Parcels containing certifiable vernal pools and adequate (1500 linear feet) buffer zone.
4. Parcels adjacent to the saltwater marsh system that provide meaningful water quality protection buffer, as defined in the prior section.

Together with the important agricultural, recreational, and historic resources discussed later in this Plan, these open spaces supporting vital natural resources are the top priorities for preservation in the Town of Essex.

F. Scenic, Historic and Cultural Resources, and Unique Environments

The agricultural, coastal and forested landscapes of Essex lend this town a signature beauty which has contributed greatly to its popularity as a tourist destination and scenic byway. From the granite outcrops that have often prevented development, to the Essex River, which housed a long-time shipbuilding industry, these unique landscapes have shaped the history of Essex, and have been shaped in turn by the economic exploits of its inhabitants: mainly agriculture, fishing and boat building, and tourism.

1. Scenic Resources

A major component of Essex's scenic resources and unique environments are the heritage landscapes throughout the town. A heritage landscape is a place created by people's interactions with the natural environment.⁴³ As part of the Massachusetts Heritage Landscape Inventory program, a reconnaissance report was put together for the town of Essex. The following is an excerpt from that report, identifying the major heritage landscapes in Essex:⁴⁴

“The Essex Heritage Landscape Identification meeting, attended by about seven residents, some representing town boards and local non-profit organizations, was held on June 18, 2004. During the meeting residents identified a lengthy list of Essex's heritage landscapes...Once the comprehensive list was created, attendees were asked to articulate the value of each landscape and the issues relating to its preservation. Based on the information gathered, community members identified a group of high priority heritage landscapes to be visited by the consulting team during the fieldwork.

Each of the priority landscapes is highly valued, contributes to community character and is not permanently protected or preserved. The following text describes the priority heritage landscapes that are the focus of the reconnaissance work in Essex. In most instances intensive survey work will be needed to fully document the physical characteristics and the historical development of the landscape.”

A. Rural Scenes

The agricultural vistas along John Wise Avenue (Route 133) and Southern Avenue are renowned, as are the views of the saltmarsh from many areas including Main Street. The forests and rocky outcrops of the Manchester-Essex Conservation Trust and Essex County Greenbelt properties provide a backdrop for hikers, mountain bikers, and bird watchers. Coupled with historic properties like the Essex Shipbuilding Yard and Cogswell's Grant, these landscapes are an invaluable part of Essex's character.

⁴³. Massachusetts Heritage Landscape Inventory Program website (<http://www.mass.gov/eea/docs/dcr/stewardship/histland/recon-reports/essex-with-map.pdf>) May 2006..

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

John Wise Avenue Farms

Some of the most scenic farmland is in the western part of town along John Wise Avenue (Rt. 133). The scenic views of rolling fields and broad meadows along this curving road are cherished by residents and visitors alike. The land has been farmed for centuries and some farms are reminiscent of these past eras with some extant First Period and Second Period farmsteads. Some properties retain large barns and the distinctive poultry barns, a property type not seen elsewhere in Essex.



(picture courtesy of MA DCR)

Scenic Roads

Nearly all of Essex's roads reflect the character of the community with views of forests, agricultural, or marine landscapes across the vast estuary. Like John Wise Avenue, Southern Avenue includes spectacular agricultural views. Another of the more scenic roads is Apple Street, which links Western Avenue to Southern Avenue. On its western end it crosses Alewife Brook where there are remnants of the granite walls in a raceway of an early mill. This hilly, windy road has views of agricultural fields and some farmstead settings with houses and barns. Belcher Street is a winding narrow north-south road that leads from Choate Street south to Story Street, also scenic roads. The road is lined with stone walls and heavily wooded areas. Most dwellings are set back with buffers between the road and structures. Some narrow roads lead from main routes to the water's edge with fine scenic views of the salt marsh and tidal flats. Examples are Island Road and John Wise Road, both off of Route 133 (John Wise Avenue), and Lufkin Street and Conomo Point Road in the northeastern part of town".

Although not mentioned in this excerpt from the MA DCR document, Apple, Choate, Belcher and Story streets have been designated as scenic roads by the Town of Essex under M.G.L. Chapter 40A Section 15C (Scenic Road Law). The Planning Board must hold a public hearing before removal of trees and stonewalls on designated scenic roads. The Scenic Road law currently does not allow a town to designate a

numbered route or state-controlled highway as a scenic road unless the road is entirely within the town and is owned and operated by the town⁴⁵.

Essex Coastal Scenic Byway

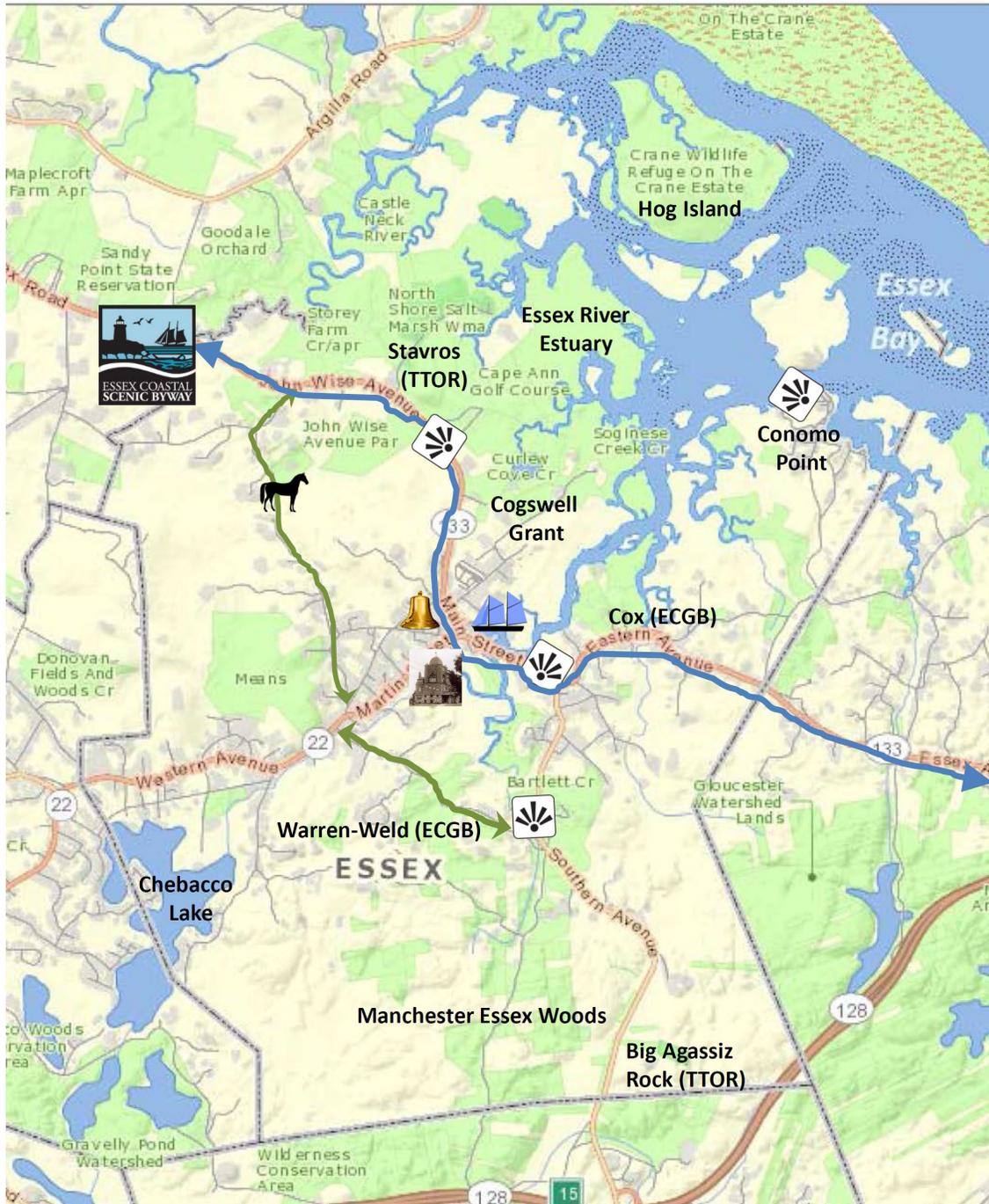
Route 133 was designated by the state as a Scenic Byway in 2003 and was incorporated into the Essex Coastal Scenic Byway in 2011. However those designations do not provide any regulatory protections.

Figure 4-1 Essex Coastal Scenic Byway



⁴⁵ Comment provided by Mary Ellen Feener, Essex Planning Board Administrator November 4, 2015

Map 9 – Essex Scenic, Historic and Unique Features



-  Scenic View
-  Shipbuilding Museum & Landing
-  Revere Bell
-  Town Hall and Library
-  Equestrian Center
-  Scenic Road

B. Coastal Scenic Resources

Conomo Point

Conomo Point is a small peninsula that juts out into the Essex River near its confluence with Essex Bay and the Atlantic Ocean beyond. Together these two points – Robbins Island and Conomo Point - form a tidal flats inlet. Cross Island is north of Conomo Point.



The Conomo Point neighborhood is approached by Harlow Street to Conomo Point Road, which forms a loop out on the Point. Cottages are arranged along the inland side of the loop road on the north side, the water side on the south side and along the south side of Middle Road, which bisects the loop of Conomo Point Road. The openness of Conomo Point, the nearby islands and peninsulas in the Essex River and Essex Bay, and the views of the River and the Bay make this neighborhood an important heritage landscape with a high degree of scenic quality. On the north side of Conomo Point Road is a small park-like greensward with benches, some shade trees and marsh land sloping to the water. The property on Robbins Island and the northern tip of Conomo Point is owned by the Town of Essex with most of the area being leased to cottage owners while most of the southern and Beach Circle lots have been sold (see Pages 22 and 23).

While the vast majority of the land bordering the water is public (town owned), there are two points of obvious public access to the water; a small public beach, which faces east and fronts on tidal flats, and a public landing at the northwestern end of the Conomo Point Road opposite Cross Island. Most of the houses on Conomo Point are modest late 19th and early 20th century summer cottages with some architectural elaboration. Shingled weathered sheathing covers many of the

one and one-half and two story dwellings built on small lots and sited with picturesque views.

Essex River Estuary and the Great Marsh

Essex boasts one of the most interesting, picturesque and sensitive estuaries along the North Shore. The estuary comprises the river, creeks and coves, salt marsh, and tidal mud flats, beaches and landings. The Essex Salt Marsh, which is part of the Great Marsh, consists of over 1,500 acres in the town of Essex. The Great Marsh extends from Cape Ann into New Hampshire, encompassing 17,000 acres in total. An interpretive sign at Ebben's Creek on Eastern Avenue tells of the vitality of this Great Marsh. Essex salt marsh acreage is along the Essex River, Ebben Creek, Lufkin Creek and the many coves in Essex Bay. Clam flats are found throughout the coastal waters of Essex and are a vital part of this immense ecological system, besides providing economic vitality to the fishermen of the area. In addition to its environmental importance, the estuary embodies the community character of Essex with some of the most beautiful and complex vistas from many vantage points in town.



(Essex River and Hog Island)

Cox Reservation (Essex County Greenbelt)

The ECGA’s Cox Reservation is 31 acres, protects important buffer habitat adjacent to the Essex River Estuary, and provides a scenic backdrop for artists, birdwatchers, and the annual and very popular Art in the Barn fundraiser for ECGA. According to ECGA’s website, “The Cox Reservation consists of two parcels: a four-acre woodlot on nearby Lufkin Street and the 27 acres of upland, salt marsh, farmland with house and barn, and river frontage on Eastern Avenue. The views from the larger parcel east toward the salt marsh, the Essex River, the back of Crane Beach, and Castle Hill and Choate/Hog Island are magnificent. The Greenbelt headquarters and staff offices are located at the Cox Reservation, as well as many Greenbelt events throughout the year.”⁴⁶



Hog Island from the Cox Reservation

Hog Island / Crane Wildlife Refuge (The Trustees of Reservations)

The Trustees of Reservations has two properties partially or wholly in Essex. The first is the Crane Wildlife Refuge, which was once part of the vast early 20th century summer estate of Chicago industrialist Richard T. Crane, Jr. The Refuge is a patchwork of coastal and island habitats that includes a portion of Castle Neck and seven islands in the Essex River Estuary (Choate, Long, Dean, Dilly, Pine, Patterson and Round).



The largest of the Refuge's islands, the 135-acre Choate/Hog Island supports myriad birds and mammals including deer, fisher, coyote, and otter. The spruce forest planted in the early 20th century attracts golden crown kinglets and sharp-shinned hawks, while Choate/Hog Island's grasslands provide critical habitat for bobolinks and Savannah sparrows. Gulls, sanderlings, and sandpipers feed along the Island's shore.

⁴⁶ Essex County Greenbelt Association website (www.ecga.org), December 2015

Stavros Reservation (The Trustees of Reservations)

The second TTOR property is the Stavros Reservation. This property protects more than fifty acres of salt marsh, and contains White's Hill, a coastal drumlin that offers panoramic views of Crane Beach, the Crane Wildlife Refuge (Choate/Hog Island), and Halibut Point.

Town Landings

The Open Space and Recreation Plan records 17 documented landings in Essex. They appear on the assessor's maps and are all public landings. However, many are somewhat obscure — at the end of narrow lanes and only wide enough for pedestrian traffic. Some terminate at a small beach, others have a landing built into the water for launching a boat. Several landings are obstructed or not usable due to encroachment of adjacent private property users. The town landing at the western end of the Causeway is the most prominent and best known of the public landings. It is adjacent to the Essex Shipbuilding Museum and has public parking for town residents. A paved ramp is used to drive boat-trailers into the Essex River. A narrow mud and shell path leads to the water at the end of Island Road off John Wise Avenue. At the end of Water Street there is a board fence with an opening which provides public access down a rocky hillside to the Essex River. Private property signs are on both sides of this narrow public landing. The landing on Conomo Point comprises a stone wharf and a beach.”⁴⁷



(Picture courtesy of MADCR)

⁴⁷ Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation and The Essex National Heritage Commission. *Essex Reconnaissance Report: Essex County Landscape Inventory*. May 2005, pp. 4-6.

C. Forest Lands

Manchester Essex Woods

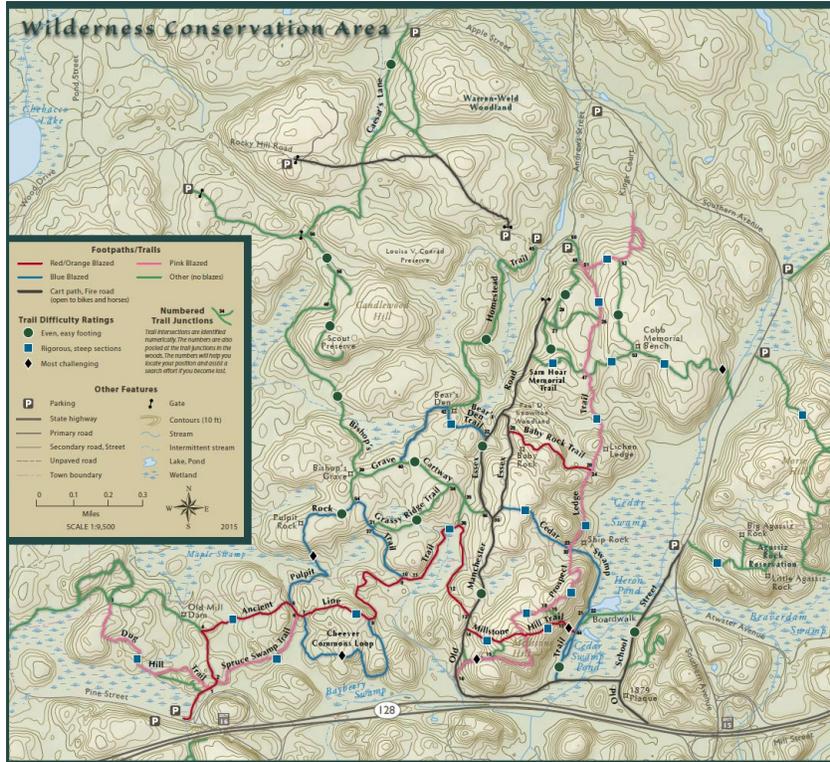
The Manchester-Essex Conservation Trust (MECT) is a private non-profit, mostly-volunteer land trust, funded primarily by its membership. Due to generous donations from landowners MECT has taken the lead in preserving over 1,400 acres of open space in Essex and Manchester, beginning in the 1960's and continuing today. MECT's efforts have always been strengthened by cooperation between the two municipalities and with other non-profits, especially Essex County Greenbelt and Trustees of Reservations.

MECT remains committed to protecting the mostly-wooded uplands and wetlands in Essex that support biodiversity, alleviate flooding by slowing storm-water run-off, protect drinking water supply and help maintain water quality by filtering pollutants. A substantial, healthy woodland also helps to alleviate the effects of climate change by absorbing carbon-dioxide and providing cooling shade and breezes in the summer. The Essex Woods area also a popular recreational area used in all seasons by town residents and visitors. Any efforts and/or resources the town of Essex can provide to help MECT protect additional critical woodland parcels stand to benefit the economy, ecology and character of this important region of the town.

It is important to note that around 1,000 acres of the Essex portion of the Manchester-Essex Woods remain unprotected, including 325 acres east of Southern Avenue. Given that the Nature Conservancy has stated that, "the plant communities of the Manchester-Essex Woods, together with the natural landscape that supports them, are among the best of their type remaining on the entire north Atlantic coast",^[1] such vulnerability is troubling. As discussed in the Vegetation and Wildlife Sections of this report, the Woods were never farmed, and so provide rare undisturbed soils and associated habitat that provide for some of the most threatened and rare species in Massachusetts. Therefore, the unprotected parcels adjacent to the MECT and ECGA lands are of the highest priority for protection.

A map of the trail system published by MECT (*see Map 10*).

Map 10. The Manchester-Essex Woods’ Trail System



Courtesy of the Manchester Essex Conservation Trust

Warren-Weld Woodland (Essex County Greenbelt)

The ECGA’s Warren-Weld Woodland adjacent to the MECT Wilderness Conservation Area, is 106 acres and is described by Greenbelt as “part of the larger Manchester-Essex Woods. The property protects the headwaters of the Essex River, which is a mere trickle at this location, and is part of a wildlife corridor that runs south from the salt marshes of Essex into the Manchester-Essex Woods. There are several natural communities on this property, the predominant of which is an oak forest. Depending on the amount of moisture in the soil, white, red, scarlet and black oaks are interspersed with black birch, red maple, beech, hemlock, white pine, and shagbark and pignut hickories. The slope of the land is generally to the north creating a slightly cooler climate preferred by beech and hemlock.”

2. Historic Resources

Essex Shipbuilding Museum

The Essex Shipbuilding Museum tells the extraordinary story of a small New England village that built more two-masted woodenfishing schooners than any other place in the world.



Managed by the Essex Historical Society and Shipbuilding Museum, Inc., a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt, nonprofit Massachusetts corporation founded in 1937, the Museum was established in 1976 as part of the town's observation of the American Revolutionary Bicentennial. Preserving the history of the wooden shipbuilding industry, an integral part of the economy and culture in New England and the United States since the 1630s, the Museum maintains one of the best maritime collections in the region⁴⁸.

National Register of Historic Places:

Cogswell Grant (Historic New England) A mecca for lovers of American folk art, Cogswell's Grant was the summer home of renowned collectors Bertram K. and Nina Fletcher Little. The colonial-era farmhouse is a rich backdrop for their celebrated collection, assembled over nearly sixty years. Though known for their research, the Littles decorated with an eye for visual delight rather than historic accuracy. Their home is rich in atmosphere and full of strong, even quirky character⁴⁹.

David Burnham House is a historic First Period house on Pond Street in Essex, Massachusetts. The two story five bay wood frame colonial is said to have been built c. 1684 by David Burnham, son of Thomas Burnham, an early settler of the Essex area. The house remained in the Burnham family for almost 150 years. It was the subject of restoration work in the early 20th century by the Essex Institute under the auspices of George Francis Dow. At this time its kitchen fireplace, said to be the largest known in Essex County was uncovered. Modern facilities were added to the house in the 1960s.^[2]

The Essex Town Hall and TOHP Burnham Library is an exuberant Shingle Style building at 30 Martin Street in Essex, Massachusetts in the United States. Containing town offices, a public library and an auditorium, it was built in 1893-94, and its architect was Frank W. Weston, of Boston and Malden, Massachusetts.

The George Giddings House and Barn is a historic First Period farm at 66 Choate Street in Essex, Massachusetts. Both the house and the barn are estimated to have been built in the 1690s, and contain construction details unique in Essex County First Period buildings.

⁴⁸ Essex Shipbuilding Website September 2016

⁴⁹ Historic New England Website September 2016

Paul Revere Bell

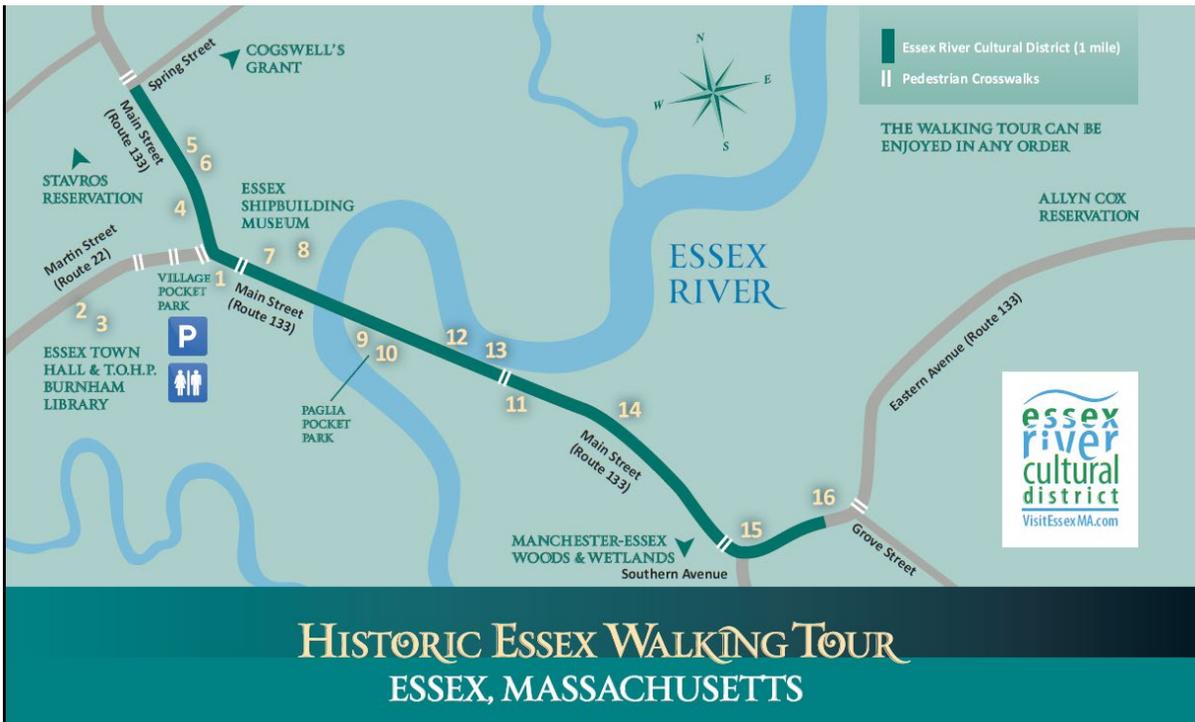
The First Congregational Church of Essex has a Paul Revere Bell that was cast in 1797.

3. Cultural Resources

Essex River Cultural District and Walking Tour

A substantial number of antique shops and restaurants now dot the causeway that once hosted most of the shipyards. The town has become a magnet for visitors who come for recreation on the river (in the form of boating, kayaking, hunting, and fishing), dining experiences with beautiful river vistas, and the rural New England town atmosphere that still exists here. The Massachusetts Cultural Council designated the Essex River Cultural District in 2012 and a walking map and website have been created to highlight the history of this area.

Figure 4-1 – Essex River Cultural District and Walking Tour



Antique Dealers

The diversity of antiques and antiques services in Essex makes it an important antique center. Essex has 25 dealers who feature antiques, fine art and mixed media works by local artists and handcrafted items by New England artisans including toys and home accessories⁵⁰.

⁵⁰ Essex Merchants Group 2016

Community and Recreational Resources

Various community and recreational resources contribute to the cultural of Essex including:

- The Essex Farmer’s Market which happens every Saturday at Memorial Park during the growing season;
- The Grant Family Farm Community Supported Agriculture program;
- Castle Neck Farm Equestrian Center on Choate Street;
- Cape Ann Paddle Board, Essex River Basin Adventures and Essex River Cruises which provide active or passive tours of the Essex River; and
- One World Coffeehouse which presents folk music at the First Universalist Church of Essex.

Annual Festivals

Major annual festivals in Essex include:

- Cape Ann Winter Birding Weekend (Regional, late-February)
- Essex River Day (June)
- Essex Heritage Trails and Sails Week (Regional, September)
- Essex Clamfest (October)

4. Unique Environments and Unusual Geologic Features

Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC)

Of the 25,500-acre Parker River/Essex Bay Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), thirteen percent lies within the Town of Essex. The Office of Coastal Zone Management (CZM) determined that water quality, wetlands, and open space and growth management were the priority natural resource issues in Essex that might affect the ACEC.⁵¹ This resource provides perhaps the largest tourist draw to Essex, upon which much of the local economy depends including antique stores, restaurants, and recreational businesses. The ACEC is, acre for acre, the most biologically productive habitat in Massachusetts.⁵² The ACEC is also closely linked to the Manchester-Essex Woods and large agricultural parcels in the Town, as all are hydrologically linked within the watershed.

Glacial Erratics – Big Agassiz Rock (The Trustees of Reservations)

Big and Little Agassiz Rocks are dramatic examples of giant boulders plucked from bedrock and carried far away by the last glacier. A short loop trail leads you up Beaverdam Hill where Little Agassiz Rock emerges as a giant granite monolith silhouetted against the sky. A short distance away, other boulders lie perched on the edge

⁵¹ Rickards, et. al. *An Assessment of Resource Management Strategies in the Parker River/Essex Bay Area of Critical Environmental Concern*, Winter 2002.

⁵² *Ibid.*

of this glaciated upland. Below, in a small shrub swamp, rests 30-foot-tall Big Agassiz Rock. No one knows how far below the ground it is buried⁵³.

Glacial Drumlin – White’s Hill, Stavros Reservation (Trustees of Reservations)

White's Hill, a glacial drumlin offers panoramic views of Crane Beach, the Crane Wildlife Refuge (Choate/Hog Island), and Halibut Point. A half-mile loop trail leads through an open field and enters the woods at the base of White's Hill. It climbs gradually to a field at the crest of the hill and then loops back down the hill through a thicket of Devil's walking stick, broken only by a small hillside clearing that offers views over the salt marshes to Castle Hill.

G. Environmental Challenges

Essex is currently at a crossroads in terms of its approach to current and future development trends, and faces a myriad of environmental challenges as a result. Fortunately, much of the groundwork in terms of planning and research has been put in place, and there is still time for the Town to plan strategically and proactively to meet these challenges and prevent many of them from escalating.

1. Public Education Regarding Natural Resource Values

Essex is a small community with a strong sense of history and a connection to its past. This has often translated into a public constituency that is well informed and actively involved in town issues of substance. In the case of the outstanding natural resources that Essex possesses, additional public education is warranted.

The surveys conducted for the Open Space Plan found that most of Essex’s citizens focus on the protection of the open spaces and natural resources that they see and use every day, namely the scenic landscapes along major roadways, and the Essex River and the salt marshes that are ubiquitous along the Town’s coastline. The support for preservation of these areas is strong.

However, in terms of biodiversity, rare habitat, and presence of threatened and endangered species, the woodland areas bounded by Southern Avenue, Apple Street, Route 22, and Pond Street are of highest priority for preservation, yet few Essex residents recognize them as needing such protection. This is partially attributable to the mistaken notion that all of these woods are protected by the Manchester-Essex Conservation Trust, which owns limited parcels within the woods and is attempting to raise the capital to buy more. Another reason for the lack of recognition of the Essex Woods’ importance and vulnerability is the fact that it is less visibly prominent than other scenic resources. Also, the unique value placed upon its old growth sections is largely unknown by the public, and it is not used as much for recreation as the river and estuary.

⁵³ The Trustees of Reservations Website 2016. Note: The reservation entrance for Agassiz Rocks is in Manchester by the Sea while Big Agassiz Rock sits in Essex.

2. Stormwater and General Water Quality Issues

The habitat of the Essex River is currently being impacted by the failing septic systems in the Town of Essex. To address this problem the town has installed an extensive sewer system, which was completed in 2006. Water quality testing ended soon after the completion of the sewer project, additional possible pollutant sources to the estuarine portion of the river have yet to be investigated. For instance, stormwater discharge does enter the river from several points, including the Essex Causeway, a section of State Route 133, which follows and crosses over the river. The confined, narrow causeway section of the roadway is significantly developed as a commercial area of Essex and includes several restaurants, marinas, parking lots, retail stores, and residences. Stormwater runoff discharges into the Essex River at several outfall pipes from shallow-sumped catch-basins or directly through stormwater grates. Runoff is suspected to include high levels of bacteria and sediment from the roadway and unpaved parking areas servicing the commercial district.

The Massachusetts Division of Marine Fisheries has listed the shellfish beds in the river at the causeway and for a mile downstream in the Prohibited class. The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection includes this section of the river on the Integrated Waters List (303d), requiring a total maximum daily load (TMDL) to be established for pathogens (see hatched read area on *Map 10*). Despite this, in the vicinity of the road crossing, the river provides contact recreation in the form of an unofficial swimming area for local residents. The river also serves as the passageway for anadromous fish to the Alewife Brook and the spawning grounds of Chebacco Lake, one of the last natural anadromous fish runs on the North Shore. The Essex River is also used for power boating, sailing, and kayak/canoeing and supports several small marinas along the causeway.

For these reasons, the 2004 North Coastal Watershed Five Year Action Plan recommended that non-point source contamination be assessed, particularly contaminated stormwater emanating from street drainage systems along highways and local roads. After such an assessment, stormwater best management practices should be implemented to protect the River and the marsh from further degradation.

3. Lack of Protection for Critical Land Parcels

The relatively slow and piecemeal development of critical, vulnerable parcels of woodland in Essex has led to a misguided sense that most of the woods are already protected by one or more of the local land preservation organizations such as Manchester-Essex Conservation Trust, Essex County Greenbelt, and The Trustees of Reservations. In fact, the majority of the Essex Woods remains in private hands, and without conservation restrictions. Furthermore, since Essex has no zoning above state minimum requirements, there are no special regulations guiding the development that does occur in these areas. This is despite the fact that the Nature Conservancy has stated, “the plant communities of the Manchester-Essex Woods, together with the natural landscape that supports them, are among the best of their type remaining on the entire north Atlantic coast.”⁵⁴

It should be noted that the Town of Essex took the important step of voting more than 100 acres of Town-owned tax-title salt marsh under conservation in 2005. The Town could do the same for some 120 acres of woodlots in the Manchester-Essex Woods, and this Plan recommends doing so as soon as possible.

4. Chebacco Lake Water Quality

The key problems in and around the lake as identified by regional and local officials include: water quality deterioration, invasive aquatic weed growth, gradual reduction of depth due to sediment buildup, and reduction of recreational opportunities due to alien weed infestation. Most of these problems are attributable to the poor functioning of septic systems of homes surrounding the lake. In a draft report, “Chebacco Lake Restoration Reconnaissance Report,” released by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Management (now part of the Department of Conservation and Recreation) in 1996, the following recommendations were made:

- Develop an in-lake management program
- Develop a lake watershed management program
- Develop a waste disposal management plan for all homes around the lake, with an emphasis on phosphorus-reducing alternative septic systems
- Begin studies to determine the advisability and best management practices for the use of herbicides and dredging

⁵⁴ MECT, 2005. Manchester-Essex Conservation Trust. *Save Our Woods: The Campaign for the Wilderness Conservation Area in Manchester and Essex, Massachusetts*. June 2005, p. 5.

Currently, Mass Audubon and the Watershed Association are finalizing a Management Plan to address these and other issues. Also of note, in recent years, beavers have constructed dams, which block the flow of water to Alewife Brook and may prevent the migration of alewives upstream for spawning in the lake. The Association is working on a long-term plan for maintaining the water level of the lake and managing the beaver problem. The Essex DPW has been working to keep Alewife Brook clear to encourage the upstream migration of alewives⁵⁵.

5. Management of Development

Essex is continuing to grow, and trends in surrounding towns indicate that growth will continue to increase more rapidly in coming years. Studies and community feedback sessions with the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) have repeatedly noted Essex's vulnerability to unplanned, unchecked development that may affect the character of the Town while also not providing much-needed affordable housing. Due to a lack of zoning bylaws and a zoning master plan, the Town is not able to use the full array of tools at its disposal to manage and plan for growth.

6. Landfills and Hazardous Waste Cleanup Sites

The Town of Essex operates a transfer station, having closed its landfill. The Massachusetts Department of Environment Protection (DEP) lists 25 sites of hazardous waste or oil spills in Essex. Most of these have been cleaned up and are fully resolved, however, several remain under DEP's jurisdiction. Two Tier 1D sites, one on Southern Avenue and one on Martin Street, and one Tier 1B (the former Liberty Research Facility on Essex Park Road) site remain in cleanup phases, as do two Tier 2 sites on Main Street. In addition, historical contamination probably exists at many sites along the Essex River, where shipbuilding operations utilized heavy metals and lead extensively.

7. Environmental Equity

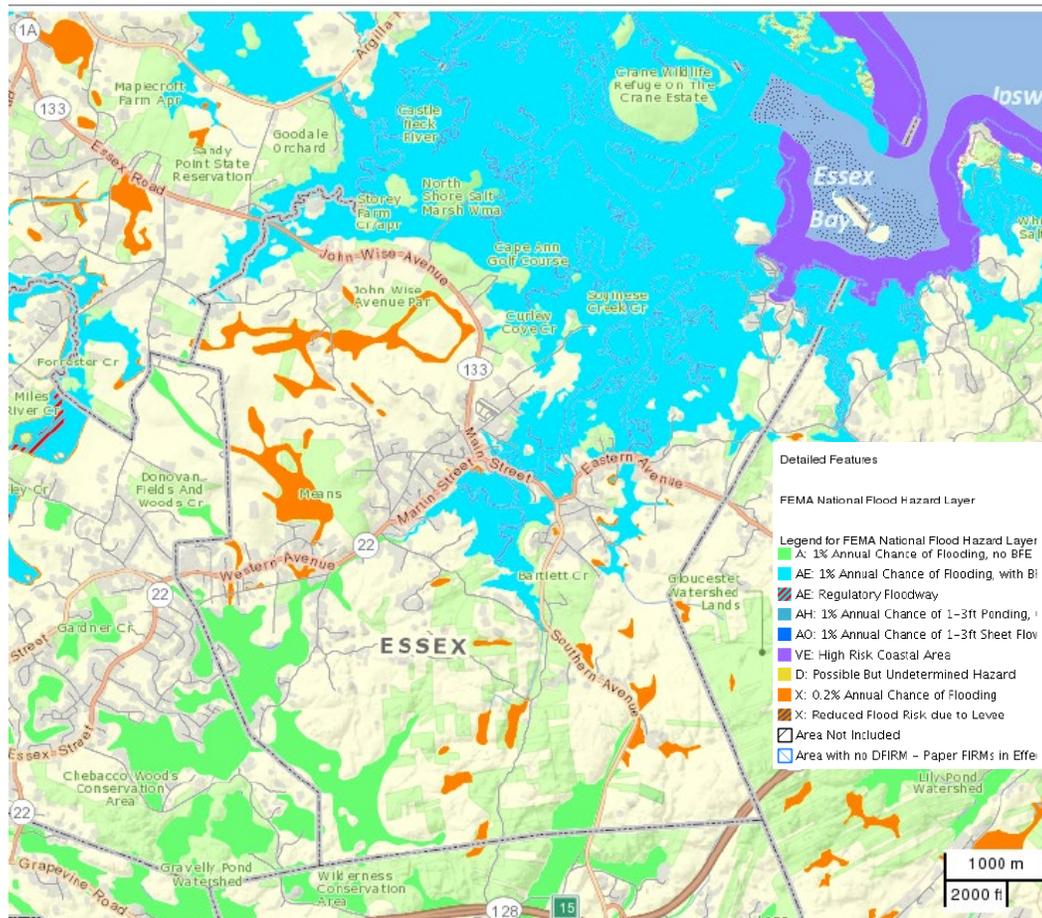
The Town has not identified any particular neighborhood or at-risk population that warrants specific action to address environmental inequity. Essex does not have significant concentrations of particular environmental justice or at-risk populations such as non-English speakers, low-income, racial or ethnic minorities. With a low population density, Essex has concentrated most of its recreational and other public facilities near Town Hall and the Library to maximize convenience for the majority of its residence.

⁵⁵ Essex Long-Term Planning Committee,

8. Flooding, Climate Change and Sea Level Rise

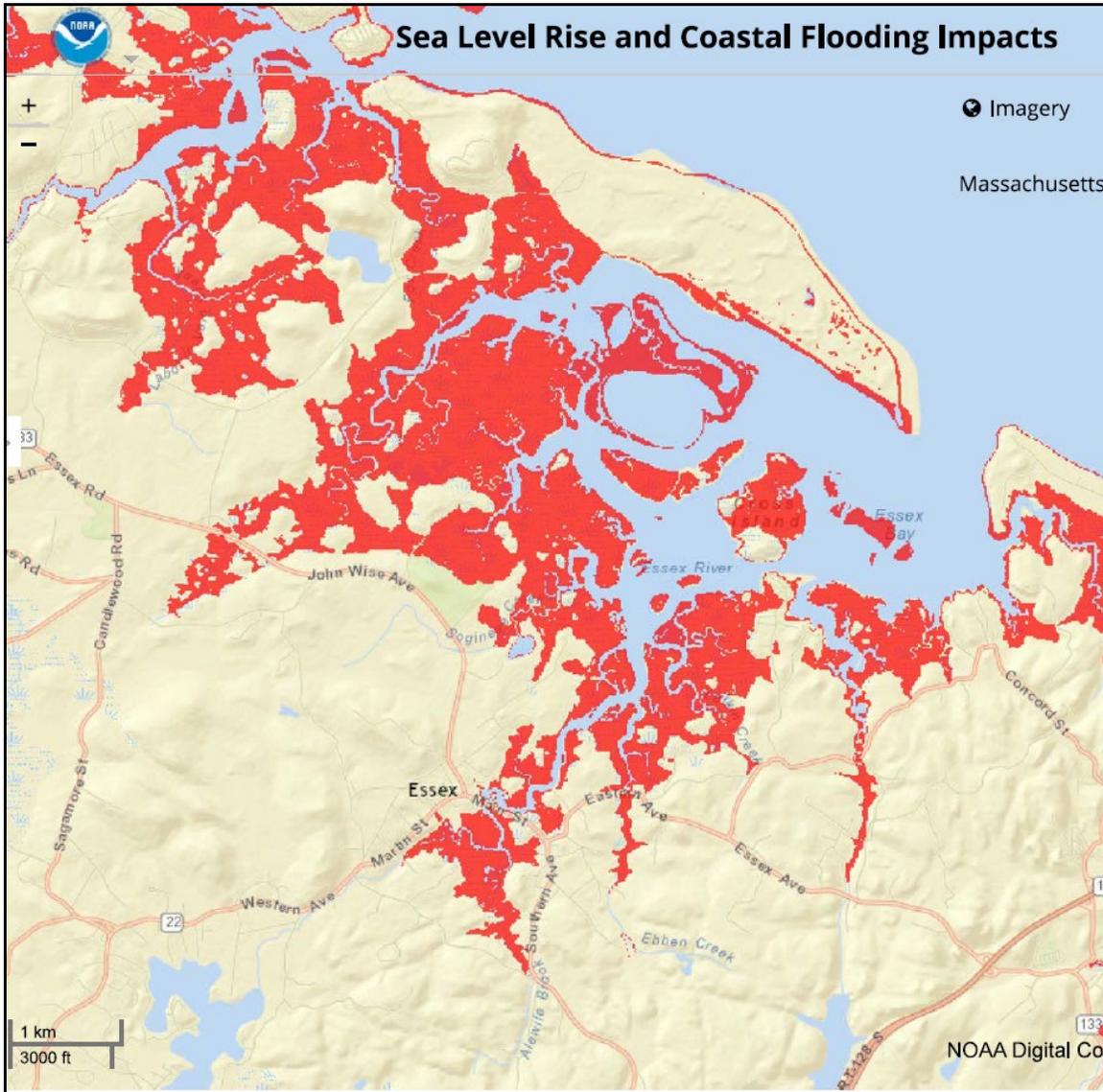
The 2013 State Hazard Mitigation Plan notes that Essex County has had more declared flood disasters since 1954 than any other county in the Commonwealth. The Town of Essex’s 2012 Hazard Mitigation Plan notes that: “Substantial flooding occurs regularly in [the Town of] Essex due to tidal inundation of the Route 133 Causeway, and periodic flooding of Alewife Brook and the Essex River also occur during and after major storm events. Some limited flooding of residences around Chebacco Lake also occurs due to beaver activity.” The Town’s substantial saltwater and freshwater wetland acreage provide vital buffer from flooding to built areas due to the immense water storage capacity in those ecosystems. Coupled with relatively low impervious surface coverage in the Town, which allows more natural rates of water infiltration, flooding is less of a problem in the Town than other communities in Essex County. In fact, the Town had only three properties on the list for repetitive flood losses its 2013 Hazard Mitigation Plan. The Town’s 2013 Hazard Mitigation Plan notes several locations where enlarging culverts could help mitigate flooding issues near Landing Road, Apple Street and Gregory Island Road. Several culverts along Route 133 were improved during recent road reconstruction by MA DOT.

MAP 12 – Town of Essex – Essex FEMA Flood Hazard Map 2016



Essex, as a low-lying coastal community, will be significantly affected by even moderate changes in sea level. As ocean levels rise and coastal storms occur more frequently and intensively areas subject to flooding now, will be flooded more frequently. **Map 13** shows in red the parts of Essex most vulnerable to flooding. Those areas are nearly identical to the key shell fishing areas shown in **Map 11**.

MAP 13 – Town of Essex – Areas Subject to More Frequent Coastal Flooding



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⁵⁶ NOAA Sea Level Rise and Coastal Flooding Impact mapping site, <http://coast.noaa.gov/slr/> August 2015)

The most significant threats to the shell fishing industry are degradation of the flats and declining shellfish populations. The health of the clam population is closely tied to the weather, and cyclical shellfish populations continue to decrease with the warming of the ocean. In years ahead sea level rise may well deny access to many flats now exposed at low tide, a problem for the shellfish and those who harvest them. There is disagreement about whether clam flats can move inland with sea level rise, but the one sure thing is the inevitability of change. Acidification of ocean water may also impact shellfish harvests⁵⁷.

Essex will participate in the Great Marsh Coastal Community Resiliency & Adaptation Project, a community partnership of the National Wildlife Federation, the Ipswich Watershed Association and the six shorefront municipalities located in the Great Marsh (Essex, Ipswich, Rowley, Newbury, Newburyport and Salisbury). The goal of the Great Marsh Project is to identify and prioritize high-value municipal assets that are at risk from storms, sea level rise, erosion, flooding and other associated hazards. The municipal assets include both natural and human-built infrastructure. A final Coastal Adaptation Plan is expected to be completed by December 2016.⁵⁸

9. Invasive Species

The burgeoning invasive green crab population poses another threat. Green crabs consume several times their weight in clams each day and have no natural predators in local waters. Shell fishermen have begun to harvest the crabs simply to remove them from the flats. Culinary experiments have begun exploring the commercial possibilities of this resource. Changing ocean temperatures continue to improve conditions for the crabs, which will likely continue to be a worsening threat to the clam flats and those who rely on this resource to earn a living⁵⁹.

For Chebacco Lake the cabomba weed infestation has been exacerbated by phosphate fertilizer and septic system runoff from abutting properties but has improved since a 1998 Management Plan was developed by Salem State⁶⁰.

10. Erosion

The Town of Essex is not listed as a coastal erosion “hot spot” in 2015 Report of the Commonwealth’s Coastal Erosion Commission. The wakes of motor boats along the Essex River can impact the soft river and marsh banks. Citizens rated erosion of river and lake banks as the 8th biggest threat to the Town’s resources as surveyed by the Town’s Long Term Planning Committee. One proposal would be to dredge the river channel and place the spoils on the bank to help stabilize them.

⁵⁷ The Challenge of Ocean Acidification, White House Report, June 2014.

https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/microsites/ostp/the_challenge_of_ocean_acidification_june-2014.pdf

⁵⁸ Letter from National Wildlife Foundation and Ipswich Watershed Association to Essex Board of Selectmen dated March 26, 2015.

⁵⁹ Essex Long Term Planning Committee, “Plan to Preserve the Best of Essex” 2015. p 31

⁶⁰ *Chebacco Lake Diagnostic Study*, Salem State University J.M. Sablock Editor (1998) and

Friends of Chebacco Lake Newsletter (<http://www.chebaccolake.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/CLWA201106-ForWeb.pdf>) June 2011.

SECTION 5: INVENTORY OF LANDS OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION INTEREST

Overview

The term “open space” includes landscapes that have little if any development, and which have important ecological, natural resource, or cultural functions. Areas such as forests, farmlands, marshes, islands, recreational areas, cemeteries, historic sites and uninhabited tracts of land over 5 acres are considered open space for the purposes of this plan. The town of Essex is endowed with a wide variety of the types of land mentioned above. Essex residents cherish vistas across the Essex River Estuary to islands and the sea, views of farm fields along John Wise Avenue, hikes through the Manchester- Essex Woods and swimming in Chebacco Lake. It is integral that we, as a town, understand the value of such land and work to creatively protect it before it is developed in ways that could irreparably damage its important functions and the qualities that make Essex such a special place. Open Space preservation also ensures farmland, ecosystems and bioregions remain intact in a manner they are the most ecologically valuable.

The 2016-2023 update of Essex’s Open Space and Recreation Plan contains the Town’s first parcel-by-parcel mapping of the open space character of land¹. The Essex Open Space Map (Map 14) reveals key aspects of the make-up of open space in Essex.

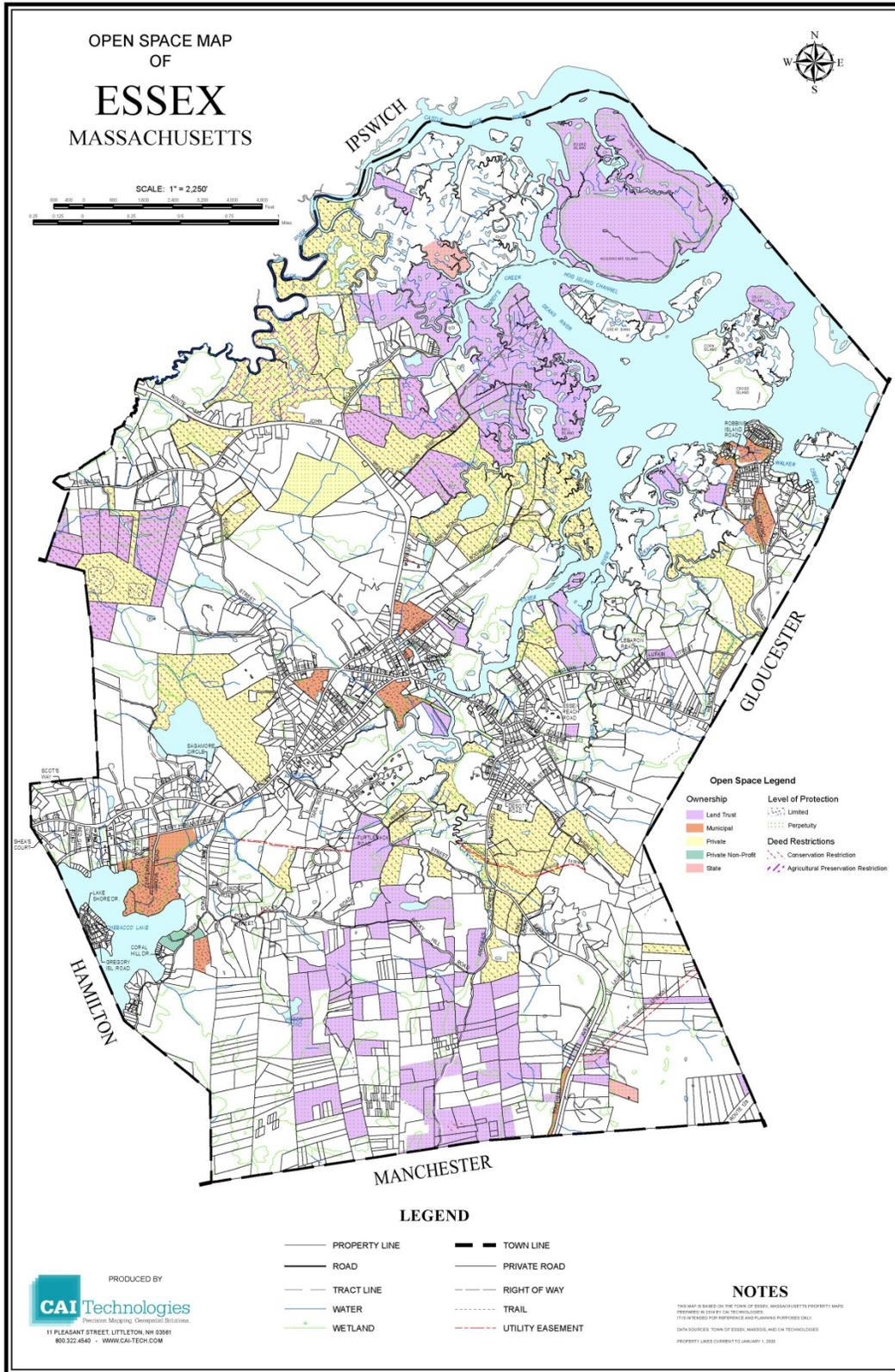
The Essex River Estuary contains tidal marshes, open water and unoccupied islands that comprise the majority of the northeast quadrant of Essex. Those lands have been protected both by conservation restrictions and wetland regulations that make significant development unlikely.

The Manchester / Essex woods lie along Essex’s southern border, below Rocky Hill Road. Significant tracts of these woods have been protected by the Manchester / Essex Conservation Trust, the Essex Conservation Commission and others. Although the lack of roads and the presence of wetlands have limited development of many unprotected parcels, many large parcels in the Manchester / Essex Woods remain to be protected.

In the west-central section of Essex, John Wise Avenue runs through farm fields. Many of the northeast tracts have conservation restrictions while many southwest tracts have no protection.

¹ Note: the Open Space Map identifies the dominant open space character of each parcel although parcels may have multiple characteristics.

MAP 14 – OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION MAP



Inventory

In this section we will consider all valuable open land in Essex and identify those parcels that are permanently protected and those that are vulnerable and may be adversely developed in the future. The protected land parcels are addressed in two sections: first Private Parcels (unoccupied, over 5 acres); then Public and Nonprofit Parcels. In addition, the data is presented in matrix form, separated into privately-held parcels (Matrix A) and public and nonprofit parcels (Matrix B).

Private lands can be protected in perpetuity through deed restrictions or conservation easements/restrictions (though some easements/restrictions only run for a specified number of years and therefore those lands are not permanently protected open space). Special taxation programs such as Chapter 61, 61A or 61B afford protection to land, but it is not permanent since land can become developable if the owner chooses to sell the land for development. Lands acquired for watershed and aquifer protection, and public recreation and conservation lands receive varying degrees of protection. In addition, a variety of private, public and non-profit conservation and recreation land is protected under Article 97 of the Articles of Amendment to the State Constitution.²

A. Parcels Protected by Conservation Restrictions or Land Trusts.

1. Conservation Restrictions

Description: Essex has 1,115.6 acres that are permanently protected under Chapter 184 of the Massachusetts General Laws, an increase of over 250 acres since 2007³.

Current Use: These parcels are currently used as farms, wooded lots or open space. Many of these parcels have great recreation potential for activities including hiking, horseback riding, bird watching, cross country skiing and biking.

Public Access: These properties are privately owned and generally available to the public only by invitation.

Degree of Protection: These properties have documented conservation restrictions.

- Bothways Farm, Southern Ave. near Apple St (110 acre CR held by The Trustees of Reservations, “TTOR”)
- Castle Neck River Property, along the Ipswich border (88 acre CR held by TTOR)
- Davis Property, 21-23 Andrews St (16.8 acre partial CR held by the Essex County Greenbelt Association, “ECGA”)

² Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs. *Open Space Planner’s Workbook*, Section 5.

³ Note, the total acreage of land under conservation restriction increased only by ~200 acres. The 250+ acre increase in land protected by CR’s does not include a reduction to account for the shift in status of 48 acres of the Cape Ann Golf Course previously protected by a conservation restriction to ownership by TTOR. An additional portion of the Cape Ann Golf Course is protected under Chapter 61B restriction (38 acres).

- Ellsworth Property, Belcher St. (14.3 + 10.6 acre CRs held by ECGA)
- Harris Property, Choate St. (26.1 acre CR held by ECGA)
- Hodges Property, Apple St. (8.7 acre CR held by ECGA)
- Hodges Property, Apple St. (22.4 acre CR held by ECGA)
- Lane Property, 59 John Wise Ave, (68.8 acre CR held by ECGA)
- Lunken Property, Eastern Ave. (15 acre CR held by ECGA)
- Means Property, Western Ave.. (171 acre CR held by ECGA)
- Phillips Property, Eastern Ave. . (15 acre CR held by ECGA)
- Ridge Property, 54 Spring Street (87 acre CR held by Greenbelt)
- Storey Property , 143 John Wise Ave. (136 acre CR/APR held by the Commonwealth)
- Thornhill Farm (Richardson Property), Island Rd. (57.8 acre CR held by TTOR and two parcels of 93 acres)
- Tyler Property, off Addison St. (43 acre CR held by ECGA)
- Van Wyck Property, Pond St near Turtleback Lane (10 acre CR held by the Town Conservation Commission)
- Warren Property, Harlow St. (21.1 acre CR held by ECGA)
- Wilson Property, 37 Choate St, (4 acre CR held by ECGA)
- The Manchester-Essex Conservation Trust holds approximately four acres of CRs located at access points to the Essex Woods. (Note: the rest of their holdings are “in fee”)

Matrix A provides further details on these properties and their public accessibility.

[Committee Note September 2016: The Essex County Greenbelt Association is in the process of acquiring the Sagamore Hill property on the Essex / Hamilton line. That property has not been listed in the matrix or calculations for protected open space in this update of the plan nor shown as protected on Map 14]

MATRIX A: INVENTORY OF PRIVATELY HELD, PROTECTED PARCELS (CONSERVATION RESTRICTIONS)

Property Name/Ownership/Location	Map & Block (2015)	Acres	Managing Agency	Current Use	Public Access	Protection Status	Restrictions	Grants Used to Purchase or Improve Property	Recreation Potential
Bothways Farm, Southern Ave.		110 acres	The Trustees of Reservations, (TTOR)	Farm	Privately-owned; access by invitation only	Permanently protected	Conservation Restriction (CR)	None	May provide access to riding trails on an individual, permission required basis?
Castle Neck River Property		88 acres	TTOR		Privately-owned; access by invitation only	Permanently protected	CR	None	
Cape Ann Golf Course, 99 John Wise Ave.		99 acres	TTOR		Privately-owned; access by invitation only	Permanently protected	CR	None	Used for golf, open to the public for fee
Ellsworth Property, Belcher St.		17 acres	Essex County Greenbelt Association (ECGA)		Privately-owned; access by invitation only	Permanently protected	CR	None	
Harris Property, Choate St.		25 acres	ECGA		Privately-owned; access by invitation only	Permanently protected	CR	None	
Hodges Property, Apple St.		12 acres	ECGA		Privately-owned; access by invitation only	Permanently protected	CR	None	
Hodges Property, Apple St.		20 acres	ECGA		Privately-owned; access by invitation only	Permanently protected	CR	None	
Lunken Property, Eastern Ave.		13 acres	ECGA		Privately-owned; access by invitation only	Permanently protected	CR	None	
Means Property, Belcher St.		168 acres	ECGA		Privately-owned; access by invitation only	Permanently protected	CR	None	
Phillips Property, 23 John Wise Ave.		11 acres	ECGA		Privately-owned; access by invitation only	Permanently protected	CR	None	
Stavros Property, John Wise Ave		67 acres	TTOR ²	Agriculture in perpetuity	Privately-owned; access by invitation only	Permanently protected	CR/Agricultural Preservation Restriction ("APR")	None	Adjacent public access to White's Hill
Stoney Property, 143 John Wise Ave. (CR/APR)		130 acres	CR/APR held by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts	Agriculture in perpetuity	Privately-owned; access by invitation only	Permanently protected	CR/APR	None	
Thornhill Farm (Richardson)		55 acres plus	TTOR		Privately-owned; access	Permanently protected	CR	None	

¹ Does not include nonprofit ownership, which is contained in Matrix B.

² ECGA also holds a CR on 19 acres of this property.

MATRIX A: INVENTORY OF PRIVATELY HELD, PROTECTED PARCELS (CONSERVATION RESTRICTIONS)

Property Name/Ownership/ Location	Map & Block (2015)	Acreage	Managing Agency	Current Use	Public Access	Protection Status	Restrictions	Grants Used to Purchase or Improve Property	Recreation Potential
Property), Island Rd.		two parcels of 93 acres			by invitation only	protected			
Tyler Property, off Addison St.		30 acres	ECGA		Privately-owned; access by invitation only	Permanently protected	CR	None	
Warren Property, Harlow St.		67 acres	ECGA		Privately-owned; access by invitation only	Permanently protected	CR	None	
Essex Woods Access		4 acres	Manchester-Essex Conservation Trust (MECT)		Privately-owned; access by invitation only	Permanently protected	CR	None	

2. Agricultural and Historic Preservation Restrictions

Description/Condition: Essex has 189 acres that are permanently protected under chapter 184 of the Massachusetts General Laws. These are permanent deed restrictions held by the Commonwealth's Department of Agricultural Resources, which preclude any use of the property that will have a negative impact on its agricultural viability. The Commonwealth has the option to purchase the land at agricultural value.

Current Use: These parcels, listed below, are in agriculture in perpetuity.

- Stavros Property, John Wise Ave., 53 acre APR held by TTOR
- Storey Property, 143 John Wise Ave., 136 acre APR/CR held by the Commonwealth.

Historic New England acquired Cogswell's Grant on Spring Street, a 132-acre farm property and buildings protected by an historic preservation restriction.

Recreation Potential: These parcels have great recreation potential for activities including hiking, horseback riding, cross country skiing and bird watching, but any such use must be consistent with their primary agricultural purpose.

Public Access: These properties are privately owned and generally available to the public only by invitation.

Degree of Protection: These properties are permanently protected

As can be seen by Map 12, several large private parcels of significant acreage, particularly those adjacent to and connecting conservation lands off of Southern Avenue, Apple Street and John Wise Avenue lack permanent open space protection. They are pivotal to ensuring the protection of whole, healthy ecosystems and habitats, and efforts to educate landowners as to the importance of their parcels could play a prominent role in any decisions to permanently protect the land.

3. Parcels Owned by Nonprofit Groups or Conservation Agencies

The following government and nonprofit groups own protected parcels in Essex:

- Essex County Greenbelt Association
- The Trustees of Reservations
- Manchester-Essex Conservation Trust
- Historic New England
- Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Division of Fisheries and Wildlife

A description of these parcels is below.

Essex County Greenbelt Association

Greenbelt, a not-for-profit land trust, owns 33 parcels totaling 293 acres of open space in town, including the following:

- Allyn Cox Reservation, Eastern Avenue, three parcels (31 acres)
- Choate Marshes, two parcels (17 acres)
- Corbett Property adjacent to Cox (26 acres)
- Cox Woodland (5 acres)
- Fessenden Saltmarsh (5 acres)
- Hall / Heap of Rock Lots (5 acres)
- Essex Marsh (17.5 acres)
- Hopkins Saltmarsh (5 acres)
- Kelleher Saltmarsh (5 acres)
- Reinert Reservation, John Wise Avenue (36 acres)
- Samuel & Helen Warren Memorial Reservation, Andrews Street (12 acres)
- Warren-Weld Woodland⁴, Apple Street/Rocky Hill Rd. (106 acres)

Description: Open fields, wooded lots and marshland.

Current Use: These parcels are used for hiking and wildlife observation.

Recreation Potential: See current use.

Public Access: Open to the public, with some off street parking

Degree of Protection: Permanently protected

⁴ For the most current list of Greenbelt properties see: http://www.ecga.org/explore_our_properties/property_list

The Trustees of Reservations

TTOR, another not-for-profit land trust, owns 17 parcels protecting 640.6 acres of open space in town, including:

- **Stavros Reservation (68 acres)**

Description: The Stavros Reservation protects more than fifty acres of salt marsh and White's Hill, a coastal drumlin offering panoramic views of Crane Beach, the Crane Wildlife Refuge (Choate/Hog Island) and Halibut Point. Also known as Lamont's Hill, the 19-acre White's Hill is owned by the Trustees, but is a ECGA C.R (conservation restriction).

Current Use: Hiking and wildlife observation.

Recreation Potential: Bird watching, hiking, nature study, picnicking, and scenic vistas.

Public Access: Open year-round, daily, sunrise to sunset. There is limited roadside parking only on Island Road adjacent to the reservation.

Degree of Protection: Permanently protected.

- **Crane Wildlife Refuge (approximately 650 acres -- comprising Choate (Hog), Dean, Low and Dilly Islands)**

Description: The Refuge is a patchwork of coastal and island habitats that includes a portion of Castle Neck (in Ipswich) and several islands in the Essex River Estuary. Surrounding the Crane Wildlife Refuge is the Great Marsh, the largest contiguous salt marsh in New England, covering more than 25,000 acres from Hampton Harbor, NH to Gloucester. The largest of the Refuge's islands is the 135-acre Choate/Hog Island, supporting wildlife and containing historically interesting buildings: the c.1778 Proctor Barn, the c.1725-40 Choate family homestead and a more recent cottage.

Current Use: Hiking, bird watching and tours.

Recreation Potential: Bird watching, boating/sailing, canoeing/kayaking, fishing, hiking, historic buildings, nature study, picnicking, scenic vistas, and tours.

Public Access: Open year-round, daily, 8 am to 4 pm. Access is by private boat/sea kayak or on guided tours offered seasonally by TTOR. Boat dock on Long Island offers limited public access; private boats may not tie up on the front side of the dock as TTOR's tour boat docks there.

Degree of Protection: Permanently protected.

Manchester-Essex Conservation Trust

MECT, a not-for-profit land trust, protects 121⁵ separate parcels totaling 597 acres of open space in town.

Description/Condition: Primarily wooded lots.

Current Use: Hiking, nature study

Recreation Potential: See current use.

Public Access: Foot trails available to the public.

Degree of Protection: Permanently protected.

Historic New England

Description/Condition: Cogswell's Grant, 60 Spring Street (Two properties, 132 acres)

Current Use: Farm, with house displaying the Little family's American Decorative Arts Collection

Recreation Potential: Hiking, bird-watching, tours.

Public Access: Open to the public seasonally.

Degree of Protection: Historic preservation only.

⁵ 23 Parcels could not be located in the 2014 Assessor's Inventory. The 2007 Open Space and Recreation Plan indicated that MECT owned 213 parcels consisting of 586 acres.

B. Public Parcels

Parcels Owned by the Town

The town of Essex owns 169 parcels (41 of which are under one acre in size) totaling approximately 498 acres^{6 7}. Some of the larger parcels contain buildings and/or recreational land as well as open space in the form of marshes, forested land or beaches. Town-owned parcels include:

- Town Landings
- Town Hall
- Memorial Park/Ball fields
- Transfer Station
- Centennial Grove/Field of Dreams
- Chebacco Lake
- Conomo Point
- Coolidge Trust
- Essex Elementary & Middle School
- Land managed by the Water Department
- Tax-title Parcels

1. Town-owned Open Space

a. Centennial Grove/Field of Dreams

Description/Condition: Centennial Grove is a 41-acre recreational area on Chebacco Lake, which includes the Town's only fresh water beach. It also includes two baseball diamonds and soccer fields, two recreational structures and a nature trail.

Managing Agency: Board of Selectmen

Current Use: Heavy use for seasonal baseball and soccer, as well as the Essex Youth Commission's summer day camp. Boat landing adjacent to beach allows limited boat access.

Recreation Potential: Great recreation potential for activities including hiking, bird watching and nature study.

Public Access/Access for People with Disabilities: No special access. Stairs to beach/steep hill limit accessibility.

⁶ This does not include the acreage of public roadways.

⁷ An additional 67 parcels of unknown size or location have been listed as Town-owned in the 2014 parcel inventory used to create the Assessor's GIS base map and the Essex Open Space & Recreation Map.

b. Chebacco Lake

Description/Condition: 209 acre Great Pond shared by the Towns of Essex and Hamilton.

Managing Agency: Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Current Use: Swimming, canoeing, water-skiing, kayaking, fishing, picnicking and boating. Two town landings

Recreation Potential: Bird watching; Hiking; Nature study; Scenic Vistas

Public Access/Access for People with Disabilities: No special access.

Degree of Protection: This is a watershed and part of the recharge area for the town's three wells (two permanent and one seasonal). Jet Skis are currently prohibited. A wellhead protection bylaw restricts development around the wells. The lake is also one of the most productive North Shore Alewife habitats and is considered by the Department of Marine Fisheries to be in good condition. Current beaver damming problems may affect capacity of alewives to reach the lake and are being monitored by Chebacco Lake Watershed Association and the state.

c. Conomo Point

Description/Condition: There are two beaches on Conomo Point, a privately owned dock, a town landing, panoramic vistas and offshore anchorage. This land area was sold to the town by John Proctor in the 1800s for \$4,600. The town has since leased parcels to individuals who have built houses on the leased property.

Managing Agency: The Board of Selectmen, in their role as the Conomo Point Commissioners.

Current Use: Since most of the land is currently leased, its use is presently limited to the leaseholders, with the exception of two rocky beaches with limited parking accessible only to those with town resident stickers. Several marshland parcels are held by the Town Conservation Commission. A town-owned, undeveloped, 11-acre lot sits along Conomo Point road (Map 110 Lot 60).

Since 2007, the southernmost portion of Conomo Point (the area south of Robbins Island Road) has been sold to individual former tenants of that area. Also, most of the Beach Circle neighborhood was sold in a similar fashion. The Town will likely sell Robbins Island to the current tenants of that area in the near future, leaving just the northernmost portion of Conomo Point in future Town ownership.

For the future, the Town will likely continue to lease large sections of Conomo Point to the current tenants of that area via long term leases. This concept was supported by a sense of the Town Meeting vote in May of 2015, along with

support for improving open space and recreation opportunities at four waterfront areas surrounding the leased properties (which include a portion of Beach Circle). A complete description of the future plan for the northern area can be found in the Master Plan for the area produced by Copley Wolff in April of 2015. (see Town of Essex Web page)

Recreation Potential: Bird watching, hiking, nature study, scenic vistas, water sports.

Public Access/Access for people with Disabilities: no special access

Degree of Protection: Beaches and 11-acre lot currently unprotected. Conomo Point's natural beauty and recreation potential make it an important area for the town to focus on in its planning efforts, so that options for both preservation and access can be explored.

d. Memorial Park

Description/Condition: Memorial Park is located on a 17-acre multiple-use town parcel, which also houses Essex Town Hall, the Police & Fire Station, and a public parking facility. Dedicated in 1949 in memory of Herbert S. Goodhue, a young Essex man killed in World War II, this park features two tennis courts, three baseball diamonds, basketball facilities, a playground re-constructed in 2003 and a hill popular for sledding.

Current Use: The playground and playing fields are widely used by the public. Public parking was expanded in 2003. The Park is the site of numerous town-wide events, such as the Easter Egg Hunt, Clamfest, Essex Pride Week, the Chowder Festival, the Essex Farmers' Market in the summer and fall and the Holiday Parade in winter.

The Friends of Memorial Park and a Town committee have initiated an effort to improve Memorial Park. Priorities include:

1. Performing an accurate survey of existing conditions including spot locations of monuments and trees,
2. Making ADA improvements
3. Adding pathways and benches especially along the Marsh,
4. Restoring the tennis courts, and
5. Adding and updating memorials for soldiers.

It should also be noted that the fields and courts are located in the salt marsh buffer zone, making it imperative that the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides be prohibited or strictly limited, and that runoff from the courts be properly directed to appropriate drainage areas. Additionally, it is important to note that the Town Hall, a historic building, has been undergoing repair and renovation.

Recreation Potential: Organized and recreational sports, walking and free play. A former rail bed lies to the east of the Park. An informal walking trail exists from the park across parcels relinquished to abutters and a portion of right-of-way which remains under MBTA ownership up to Landing Road. Park planning should consider and incorporate elements to support the farmer's market and annual festivals.

Public Access/Access for People with Disabilities: The site has handicapped parking, and the new playground features some equipment for children with disabilities. The slopes leading to the ballfields could be improved.

Degree of Protection: The land is on the marsh and has some wetland restrictions due to its location in the salt marsh buffer zone. The pump station is also located there.

e. Town Landings

Description/Condition: Assessors' maps show 17 town landings on the Essex River, and two on Chebacco Lake. However, narrow roads, lack of parking facilities and river landings that were established when people still walked their dories on dollies to the river render many of them unsuitable for modern use.

The Harbormaster collects mooring and launch fees that provide funds to maintain harbor services and moorings. Currently the Harbormaster maintains a waiting list for permanent moorings.

Managing Agency: The Town Harbormaster oversees the use of the Town Landings and enforces parking regulations.

Current Use: The principal 0.7-acre town landing on the causeway sees heavy summer use from recreational boaters and year-round use from local clambers. Swimming is not permitted at the site. The other landings see use consistent with their accessibility.

Recreation Potential: Primarily for summer water sports.

Public Access/Access for People with Disabilities: A resident sticker is needed to park at the landings. The main town landing site has handicapped parking. A parking lot constructed in 2003 behind the Police/Fire Station on Martin Street provides additional parking for residents and non-residents wishing to use the main town landing site. Most of the other town-landings have limited access and parking.

Please refer to the chart below regarding problems with Town Landings.

TABLE F. PROBLEMS WITH TOWN LANDINGS AS THEY APPEAR ON ASSESSORS’ MAPS OR ARE OTHERWISE DOCUMENTED

	<i>Narrow</i>	<i>Access Blocked</i>	<i>Marsh</i>	<i>Certain Tides Only</i>
<i>TOWN LANDINGS</i>				
Apple Street Bridge	X			
Mill/Apple Street	X	X		
Landing Road			X	
Behind Town Hall			X	X
Behind Ballpark		X	X	
West of Bridge			X	X
“Shipbuilding Acre”				
“Woodman’s Beach”				
Water Street	X			
Billy’s Point	X			
Boyd’s Landing	X	X		
Island Road	X		X	
Robbins Island	X	X	X	X
Robbins Island (II?)	X		X	X
Conomo Lane	X		X	X
Clammer’s Beach			X	
Front Beach				
<i>CHEBACCO LAKE LANDINGS</i>				
Red Gate Road	X	X		
Centennial Grove				

f. Water Department Parcels (Wellfields/Water Tank/Filtration Plant)

Description/Condition: The Water Department manages three wellfields in town (one is seasonal only), the water tank on Craft Hill and the filtration plant.

Recreation Potential: No recreation activities are recommended for these sites, which are in the Water Resource District and subject to DPW regulations. Building allowed through special permit process only.

Public Access/Access for People with Disabilities: To protect the Town’s water supply, public access to the well fields is discouraged.

g. Miscellaneous Town-owned Parcels

Protected town parcels include the:

- 8-acre Coolidge Trust land off Southern Ave., to be held forever as a public forest or woods park. This land was preserved well ahead of public recognition of the value of conservation lands. It consists of eight acres in two strips, one on each side of Southern Avenue.
- 10-acre Van Wyck tract near Turtleback Lane,
- Two cemeteries: the 12-acre Spring Street Cemetery and the Old Burial Grounds on Main Street.
- 40 acres within the Woods, and
- 100 acres of tax-title salt marsh that was voted into conservation in 2005.

2. Unprotected Town Parcels:

All other town-owned land is unprotected and could be developed.

Essex Elementary

Description/Condition: The school occupies ten acres off Story Street. It includes the Eagle's Nest (an extensive playground built in 1987), a retaining pond, playing fields and outdoor basketball hoops.

Managing Agency: The Manchester-Essex Regional School Committee manages the school building and the surrounding grounds. The Essex PTO maintains the playground.

Current Use: Within the school are an indoor gymnasium and a cafeteria. The school grounds have a playground area and basketball courts. These facilities are used by the school during school hours and are available to the public after hours. The school building is used for town boards meetings, youth basketball, adult basketball, volleyball, karate, and adult exercise classes.

Recreation Potential: Use of the gymnasium and cafeteria for sports and classes. The Eagle's Nest playground, designed by noted playground architect Robert Leathers and constructed entirely by town residents, includes creative play areas constructed of natural materials. The playground can be used by the public outside of school hours. This playground has climbing structures, a maze of walkways, a jumping area, a boat that moves back and forth, swings and slides. There are tables for snacks and picnics, as well as a small pond nearby where children look for frogs. It is highly regarded throughout the region and is frequently used by residents and non-residents alike.

Public Access/Access for People with Disabilities: The school provides adequate public parking and handicapped access.

Future Plans: In the next seven years, the Manchester Essex School District may evaluate options to replace Essex Elementary (built in 1958) and Manchester Memorial Elementary (built in 1967). Any school building replacement options should be reviewed for their potential impact on open space and recreational use of this site.

Town Hall

Description/Condition: Built in 1894 out of stone and wood in the Queen Anne style of architecture. The Town is in the process of rehabilitating Town Hall and making ADA access improvements including an elevator.

Managing Agency: The Board of Selectmen.

Current Use: Town offices/meeting rooms and the town library (which is also used for community classes and gatherings).

Recreation Potential: Limited to use of the library.

Deed Restrictions: The T.O.H.P. Burnham Trust, which funds repairs to the building, specifies that it will house town offices and a library.

Public Access/Access for People with Disabilities: The building has a handicapped-access ramp, as well as handicapped parking.

Transfer Station

Description/Condition: A 21-acre parcel located off of Martin Street, this multi-use site houses DPW barns, as well as a transfer and recycling station. A significant portion of the acreage is marshland, including an active stream.

Current Use: The transfer station is equipped for the disposal of trash and various recyclable items, including glass, metal, plastic, paper, clothing (via donation boxes). Scrap metal and large appliances, such as refrigerators, stoves, and computers, are also recyclable here.

Recreation Potential: No recreational uses are applicable to this site.

Public Access/Access for People with Disabilities: Essex residents who pay a yearly fee of \$170 (\$85 for senior citizens over age 65) are eligible to use the transfer station for their trash and recyclable materials. The trash compactor has drive-up access and an operator is available to assist people with disabilities, but the recycling stations are not readily handicapped-accessible (some stairs, etc.) and staffing is limited.

Degree of Protection: None

3. Miscellaneous Wood and Salt Marsh Lots

Description/Condition: The town owns additional miscellaneous, scattered parcels that range from forest on the south side of Town to open marshland on the east side of Town. In the early days of Essex, landowners were deeded woodlots to supply them with firewood and marsh lots to supply them with hay. Over the years, subsequent generations of family members ceased to use many of these lots and knowledge of their existence, much less the necessity to pay taxes on them, subsided. The Town has since claimed some of these parcels as tax title land. Since a number of these parcels are less than one acre and some see compound usage, they have proven difficult to completely quantify in town records. According to research conducted by the Manchester-Essex Conservation Trust, over 300+ acres of tax-title land is owned by the Town within the Woods, and have been voted into conservation at any time.⁸

C. Parcels Owned by the State

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts owns five parcels totaling 61 acres, 40 of which are marsh, the others of which abut state roadways. The MBTA owns 2 acres of former rail right-of-way to the rear of Martin Street.

D. Restricted Private Parcels: Chapter 61, 61A and 61B Lands

Description: Essex has approximately 1398 acres within 57 parcels that are offered some protection under Chapter 61, 61A, and 61B of the Massachusetts General Laws. These laws provide tax relief for certain lands held as forested, agricultural, or recreational. Chapter 61 land, which is forested, represents 181 acres (11 parcels) in Essex. Chapter 61A lands are agricultural, and represent 1080 acres (42 parcels) in Essex. Chapter 61B lands are recreational, and comprise 137 acres (four parcels) in the town. Under these laws, the Town has a right of first refusal to purchase such lands before they can be sold for unrestricted use.

Current Use: These parcels are currently used as farms and forested lands.

Recreation Potential: Many of these parcels have great recreation potential for activities including hiking, horseback riding, bird watching, and biking.

Public Access: These properties are privately-held and are only available to the public by invitation.

Degree of Protection: Reduced tax status gives owners an incentive to maintain these parcels as farms, woodlands and open space.

⁸ Helen Bethell, Executive Director, MECT, personal communication, January 21, 2007.

Although the town has right of first refusal to purchase Chapter 61, 61A and 61B lands if the property is up for sale for conversion to another use, no money is currently set aside to purchase such lands. As a result, Chapter 61 lands are subject to be sold to developers. The Town has the ability to assign its right to a non-profit group within 120 days, with both MECT and ECGA having offered their services in such cases.

E. Unrestricted Parcels (Large, Privately Held Parcels)

Description: There are 189 privately-owned over five acres that are not under the Chapter 61 program or otherwise protected. These parcels total 2664 acres. As per state open space planning guidelines, those parcels are not listed here.

Degree of Protection: These parcels are not protected in any way.

Table G. Summary of Open Space and Other Parcels of Conservation Interest

Type of Parcel	Number of Parcels	Total Acreage 2015	Total Acreage 2007*
Private Land with Conservation Restriction (CR)	19	1116	849
Private Land with Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR)	2	53	40
Essex County Greenbelt Association	33	293	255.5
Manchester-Essex Conservation Trust	121	597	586
The Trustees of Reservations	17	641	578
Town of Essex, Protected Open Space	4	254	8
Town of Essex, Other Open or Recreation Space	3	267	254
Subtotal Protected Open Space (35.0% of land area)	199	3221	2570.5
Private – Chapter 61 (forestry)	11	181	214
Private – Chapter 61A (agriculture)	42	1080	680
Private – Chapter 61B (recreation)	4	137	137
Town of Essex Tax-Title Land	29	114	220
Historic New England	2	132	126
Subtotal Open Space with Restrictions (17.9%)	88	1644	1377
Private, identified at-risk, no designation (5+ acres) (29.0%)	189	2664	at least 950
Total Protected Open Space & Private, Non-Profit and Public Parcels of Potential Conservation Interest (81.9% of total land area)	476	7529	4897.5
Town of Essex – Facilities (School and transfer station) ⁹	2	31	31
Roads	n/a	173	
Other land not associated with individual parcels	n/a	272	
Total Estimated Land Area of Essex	~2400	9200 ¹⁰	

* Note: since 2007 the Town of Essex has undertaken a significant effort to update and digitize its parcel information database which may explain in part the decrease in the number of parcels while the number of acres conserved has stayed the same or increased.

Matrix B contains more information for each non-profit and publicly-owned parcel summarized in Table G.

⁹ Police / Fire / Library / Town Hall sit on 16-acre site with Memorial Park. Public Works located at Water Treatment facility within 209-acre Chebacco Lake / Centennial Grove properties

¹⁰ Communication from Therese Smith of CAI Technologies to Stephen Winslow January 14, 2016

MATRIX B: INVENTORY OF PUBLIC AND NONPROFIT PARCELS

Property Name/Ownership/ Location	Acreage	Managing Agency	Current Use	Condition (town-owned land only)	Public Access	Access for People with Disabilities	Zoning	Protection Status	Restrictions	Grants Used to Purchase or Improve Property	Recreation Potential
PUBLIC PARCELS											
Centennial Grove/Field of Dreams	38 acres	Town of Essex Board of Selectmen	Freshwater beach on Chebacco Lake; 2 baseball diamonds/ soccer fields and 2 recreational structures. Site of YMCA summer day camp. Nature trail, other hiking trails & bird watching/ nature study.	Generally Good Condition. Trail signs need to be re-done. Cosmetic repairs needed on picnic pavilion	Some parking limited to residents; other areas available for public parking. Beach open to public; fields used by permit only. Full access limited during YMCA camp hours	No special access	None	Unknown	None	Essex County National Heritage grant for nature trail installation	Great – provides playing fields and space for summer camps and festivals
Chebacco Lake	209 acre Great Pond shared by towns of Essex and Hamilton.	Commonwealth of Massachusetts	Swimming, canoeing, water-skiing, kayaking, fishing, picnicking, bird watching, nature study.	Good. One of the most productive North Shore alewife habitats; considered by the Department of Marine Fisheries to be in good condition. Current beaver damming problems may affect capacity of alewives to reach the lake, and are being monitored by Chebacco Lake Watershed Association and the state.		No special access	This is a watershed and part of the recharge area for the town’s three wells (2 permanent and 1 seasonal).	A wellhead protection bylaw restricts development around the wells.	None	DEM Lakes and Ponds grant used to develop management plan in 1998. Consider reviewing 1998 goals and updating plan if necessary.	Great – currently used by motorized and non-motorized boats, swimmers, fishermen, and summer camps

MATRIX B: INVENTORY OF PUBLIC AND NONPROFIT PARCELS

Property Name/Ownership/Location	Acreage	Managing Agency	Current Use	Condition (town-owned land only)	Public Access	Access for People with Disabilities	Zoning	Protection Status	Restrictions	Grants Used to Purchase or Improve Property	Recreation Potential
Conomo Point		Town of Essex Board of Selectmen	Since most of the land is currently leased, its use is presently limited to the leaseholders, with the exception of two rocky beaches with limited parking accessible only to those with town resident stickers. Several marshland parcels are held by the Town Conservation Commission. Houses a town landing, 2 beaches and a privately-owned dock.	Excellent to Good. Small to mid-size summer only residents. Recent improvements include a new floats and a kayak launch, public parking.	Limited parking for Essex residents; public access to boat landing	No special access.	Conomo Point Overlay	Currently unprotected.	None	None	Fair, but limited parking. The Town will continue to lease the northernmost portion of Conomo Point to current tenants via long term leases. This concept was supported by a sense of the Town Meeting vote in May of 2015, along with support for improving open space and recreation opportunities at 4 waterfront areas surrounding the leased properties (which include a portion of Beach Circle). A complete description of the future plan for the northern area can be found in the Master Plan for the area produced by Copley Wolff in April of 2015.

MATRIX B: INVENTORY OF PUBLIC AND NONPROFIT PARCELS

Property Name/Ownership/ Location	Acreage	Managing Agency	Current Use	Condition (town-owned land only)	Public Access	Access for People with Disabilities	Zoning	Protection Status	Restrictions	Grants Used to Purchase or Improve Property	Recreation Potential
Essex Elementary School	10 acres	Manchester-Essex Regional School Committee (school building & grounds); Essex PTO (playground)	Indoor gymnasium, cafeteria, playground and basketball courts used by school during school hours; used for meetings of town boards, sports, and other activities after hours.	Fair. Built in 1957. MERSD studying replacement options. Building is 58 years old and has maintenance needs.	All facilities available to public after school hours.	Adequate parking and handicapped access are available.	None	None, MERSD expected to study elementary school facility updates in the next few years. This could include closing the Essex Elementary School and housing all students in Manchester	None	None, but many private donations to fund playground improvements	Good
Memorial Park	Part of 16-acre multi-use parcel housing Town Hall, Police and Fire Station, and public parking lot.	Town of Essex Board of Selectmen	Recreational activities (2 Tennis courts, 3 baseball diamonds, basketball facilities, playground) and town-wide events (festivals, etc.)	Good. Recently renovated playground and ball fields, and expanded parking lot. Pump station for town sewer system installed in 2005. Town Hall being repaired. Memorial Park Committee has received CPA grant to develop plans for Park re-vamp.	Open to the public	Parking lot has handicapped spaces; playground has equipment for children with disabilities.	None	Some wetland restrictions due to its location in the Essex River salt marsh buffer zone. Site also houses a pump station for the town sewer system.	None	None	Great

MATRIX B: INVENTORY OF PUBLIC AND NONPROFIT PARCELS

Property Name/Ownership/ Location	Acreage	Managing Agency	Current Use	Condition (town-owned land only)	Public Access	Access for People with Disabilities	Zoning	Protection Status	Restrictions	Grants Used to Purchase or Improve Property	Recreation Potential
State-Owned Parcels 5 parcels	61 acres	Commonwealth of Massachusetts	40 acres are marshland; remaining land abuts state roadways.		Unknown	No	Watershed Overlay	Right of first refusal	None	Unknown	Passive Recreation, Open Space and Trails
Town-Owned Parcels: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cemeteries (Spring Street and Old Burial Ground) Coolidge Trust Woodlot & Saltmarsh Parcels 	12+ acres 8 acres 220+ acres total	Town of Essex Board of Selectmen Town of Essex Board of Selectmen Town of Essex Board of Selectmen /Conservation Commission	Burial plots Public forest/park Varied	Good. Maintained by DPW Fair. Not maintained	Open to public Open to public	Limited	None	None	None	None	Walking only Limited access
Town Hall	Part of 16-acre multi-use parcel also housing Memorial Park, Police and Fire Station, and public parking lot.	Town of Essex Board of Selectmen, as Conomo Point Commission.	Town offices/meetings and town library (also used for community classes and gatherings).	Excellent. Built in 1894. Major renovation completed in 2016-17. The parking area was re-paved in summer 2006.	Town offices open to Essex residents for town business; library open to public and for classes/meetings.	Handicapped-access ramp to library, as well as handicapped parking. No handicapped access beyond the first floor of the building.	None	None	T.O.H.P. Burnham Trust, which funds repairs to the building, specifies that it will house town offices and a library.	Emergency grants from state for roof repairs. Green Communities Grant to fund new boiler and energy efficiency measures.	N/A

MATRIX B: INVENTORY OF PUBLIC AND NONPROFIT PARCELS

Property Name/Ownership/ Location	Acreage	Managing Agency	Current Use	Condition (town-owned land only)	Public Access	Access for People with Disabilities	Zoning	Protection Status	Restrictions	Grants Used to Purchase or Improve Property	Recreation Potential
Town Landings	Varying	Town of Essex Harbormaster	Primarily used year-round by clammers and in summer by recreational boaters .	Fair	Resident sticker parking required (parking often limited due to narrow roads).	Limited due to narrow roads; parking for people with disabilities is available at main town landing.	None	Unprotected open space	Chapter 91	None	Varies – only main town landing extensively used.
Transfer Station	21 acres	Town of Essex Department of Public Works (“DPW”)	Equipped for disposal of trash and recyclable items including glass, metal, plastic, paper, clothing, scrap metal and large appliances.	Good. Recently-built DPW barn(s) store equipment and vehicles; site houses former landfill.	Limited to Essex residents with transfer station sticker on vehicle (permit is \$100/year or \$50 for ages 65+)	Drive-up access to trash compactor available; operator present to assist with trash removal from vehicle. Recycling stations not readily handicapped accessible (some stairs, etc.) and staffing is limited.	None	A significant portion of the acreage is marshland, including an active stream	None	None	None
Water Department Parcels (Wellfields/Water Tank/Filtration Plant)		Town of Essex Water Department	Water supply/storage/ treatment.	God. Woodland / Habitat	Restricted to protect water supply	No	Watershed Overlay	Watershed	Watershed	None	None

MATRIX B: INVENTORY OF PUBLIC AND NONPROFIT PARCELS

Property Name/Ownership/ Location	Acreage	Managing Agency	Current Use	Condition (town-owned land only)	Public Access	Access for People with Disabilities	Zoning	Protection Status	Restrictions	Grants Used to Purchase or Improve Property	Recreation Potential
NONPROFIT PARCELS											
Essex County Greenbelt ¹	227 acres	Essex County Greenbelt	Hiking and wildlife observation		Open to the public	Limited	None	Permanently protected	Limited conservation restriction (CR)	None	Great for passive recreation
Manchester-Essex Conservation Trust wooded lots	586 acres	Manchester-Essex Conservation Trust	Hiking, nature study		Foot trails available to the public	Limited	Some Watershed Overlay	Permanently protected	Limited CR	Not Known	Great for passive recreation
Cogswell’s Grant, Spring Street	126 acres	The Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities	Hiking, bird watching, tours		Open to the public seasonally	Limited	None	Historical designation ONLY	Historic Only	None	Great for passive recreation
Trustees of Reservations (Stavros Property and Crane Wildlife Refuge including Choate Island)	718 acres	The Trustees of Reservations	Hiking and wildlife observation		Open to the public (Stavros)/ Access by private boat/sea kayak or on guided tours offered seasonally by TTOR (Wildlife Refuge)	Limited	None	Permanently protected	TTOR Bylaws	None	Great for passive recreation

¹ MECT also owns a CR on 23 acres of ECGA property in the Woods. ECGA also owns a CR on 5 acres of MECT property in the Woods

MATRIX B: INVENTORY OF PUBLIC AND NONPROFIT PARCELS

Property Name/Ownership/Location	Acreage	Managing Agency	Current Use	Condition (town-owned land only)	Public Access	Access for People with Disabilities	Zoning	Protection Status	Restrictions	Grants Used to Purchase or Improve Property	Recreation Potential
OTHER PARCELS											
Chapter 61, 61A and 61B Lands (65 parcels)	973 acres (620 are agricultural)	Varied; some town-owned, some privately-owned	Agricultural, forested, or recreational land		Privately held	No	None	Some protection under Chapter 61, 61A and 61B of the Massachusetts General Laws	Time-limited Municipal Right of First Refusal	None	Possible but not desired
Other Privately Held parcels	Unknown	Largely privately owned	“sensitive” (ecologically important) parcels that are not under the Chapter 61 program and not protected in any way		Privately held	No	None	Unprotected	No	None	Limited

SECTION 6: COMMUNITY VISION

A. *Description of Process*

The Town of Essex Long Term Planning Committee (“LTP”) completed its “Plan to Preserve the Town of Essex¹.” in July 2015. The project included several community-wide surveys to identify Essex’s community defining resources including an extensive one in 2010². The LTP committee distributed the survey online via the Town of Essex website, provided copies at the Town Hall, Library and Senior Center and also conducted surveys in the field in May and June 2010. A total of 220 survey responses were received, 192 on-line and 28 on paper. Thirty-nine percent of respondents had children under 18 in their household. Forty-eight percent were 55 years of age or older. The survey did not survey the ethnic, racial or income status of residents.

The 2010 town survey identified open space and environment as residents’ number one priority. Three-quarters of survey respondents agreed that there should be an “increased focus on environmental protection and the preservation of natural resources”. Priorities related to open space and recreation include:

- The Great Marsh and Essex River (Ranked #1 out of 18 resources)
- The Town’s Water Resource District (#2)
- Scenic byways (#8)
- Water access and recreational opportunities (#10)
- Clamming and fishing (#13)
- Woods (#14)
- Agriculture (#16)
- Chebacco Lake (#17)

The scenic resources of the town are clearly central to the character of Essex. For the Great Marsh, Essex River, Watershed Protection District and Scenic byways the greatest threats include invasive species, inappropriate commercial & residential development and erosion.

Development also ranks as a high risk to agriculture. “Of the pasture, hayfields, and woods along the south side of John Wise Avenue, only 70 acres of Alprilla farm is under agricultural restriction. The Hardy farm, 95 acres of Alprilla farm, and the Storey farm remain unprotected.”

Water pollution scored a great risk to water recreation, clamming and fishing. Surveys of residents have reinforced the desire to continue and strengthen the shell fishing industry here in Essex. The most important way to ensure this is to maintain and improve the

¹ Town of Essex Long Term Planning Committee, July 2015 Report to the Board of Selectmen “Planning to Preserve the Best of Essex”.

² The survey results and questions are provided in Appendix D

health of the shellfish beds. Invasive species ranked high risks for the Essex Woods and Chebacco Lake as well.

B. Statement of Open Space and Recreation Goals

The residents of Essex – be they humans, animals, or plants – will derive the greatest benefit from living here in the future if the town’s unique landscape and history is preserved while, at the same time, enough contiguous open space remains to create valuable habitats that can protect and preserve its flora and fauna.

Essex’s rich shipbuilding past and the small-scale, independent agricultural endeavors of many of its residents have shaped its landscape in numerous ways. Since people have largely moved away from these pursuits and Essex’s scenic landscapes and sweeping marsh vistas have become a tourist destination, it is vital that our overall vision both provides for the recreational needs of our citizens and visitors *and* protects the many truly unique and vulnerable ecosystems of Essex’s forests, wetlands, streams, river and lake.

The geography of Essex encompasses the confluence of river systems, watersheds and wetlands, and contains a remarkably as-yet undisturbed forest that provides crucial habitat for many species, including some that are rare and endangered. The marsh and forest each serve as a filter and a nursery for the young of many species, and Chebacco Lake is the only remaining natural anadromous fish run in the state. These features make Essex a keystone for the health of a large percentage of the North Shore’s habitats, and emphasize the importance of the good stewardship our town can provide.

Such rich resources also draw many people to enjoy and explore their beauty, and a robust system of trails, facilities, security, and other amenities would serve to increase this type of activity, while boosting economic activity in the town’s shops and restaurants.

An ideal open space system for Essex would preserve as much contiguous, high-quality, and undeveloped habitat as possible, in order to provide buffer zones between areas of human activity and the town’s natural settings that are so often fragile and vulnerable to disturbances. It would also provide for the many recreational activities that our town’s natural resources afford, many of which take place in the very same fragile areas mentioned above. The combination of contiguous habitat and accessible recreational features would allow the town to enjoy the economic benefits of well-attended recreational areas while protecting the assets that make Essex so attractive.

There is a difference between habitat protection and scenic resource protection, yet an ideal system would address both of these distinct needs in Essex. There are landscapes in Essex that simply cannot be replaced, should they be slated for development. Some of these, such as the fields and farms along John Wise Avenue, can be described as scenic resources, while others, such as the Essex Woods, are more appropriately deemed habitats for important species of plants and animals.

An ideal system also has built-in flexibility for town officials and boards to choose from a pool of prioritized sites depending upon the funding sources available (e.g., matching grants, public support, private/nonprofit funding, etc.). To have such a pool of sites with varying characteristics and features allows those in positions of authority to select or approve site(s) for specific projects that have been “pre-qualified,” which can significantly reduce last-minute efforts when grants or proposals are due.

SECTION 7: ANALYSIS OF NEEDS

A. Summary of Resource Protection Needs

As detailed in Section 4, Essex is fortunate enough to contain within its boundaries some of the most valuable plant and wildlife habitat yet identified in Massachusetts, as defined by the Nature Conservancy. Essex's portions of the Great Marsh and the Manchester-Essex Woods provide some of the last remaining habitat on the north shore for several rare and endangered species such as the Blanding's Turtle. Less fortunately, much of this habitat remains in private hands without protection restrictions such as conservation easements. Chebacco Lake's watershed is also a major target for preservation, as it is the last remaining alewife breeding ground on the North Shore, and perhaps on the entire eastern shore of Massachusetts.

For this reason, from an environmental standpoint, the following areas have been prioritized for protection:

1. Parcels providing adjacent and connective land to the Manchester-Essex Conservation Trust and Essex County Greenbelt properties in southern and western Essex.
2. Parcels providing upland buffer around large freshwater wetlands (20 acres+) such as those found off of Apple Street and near Chebacco Lake.
3. Parcels containing certifiable vernal pools and adequate (1500 linear feet) buffer zones.
4. Parcels adjacent to the saltwater marsh system that provide meaningful water quality protection buffer, as defined in the Section 4 of this report.

In terms of biodiversity, rare habitat, and presence of threatened and endangered species, the Essex portion of the Manchester-Essex Woods is of highest priority for preservation

By prioritizing parcels providing adjacent and connective land to the Manchester-Essex Conservation Trust and Essex County Greenbelt properties in southern and western Essex, this open space protection strategy aims work towards protecting large core habitat areas, linked via riparian and upland corridors that will maintain and restore Essex's ecological network. The success of such a strategy is evidenced by the ACEC designation and subsequent protection of the Great Marsh, which stretches beyond Essex all the way to Rockport to the east, and Salisbury to the northwest.

From a scenic context, priorities for open space preservation (mainly through conservation easements and facilitation of private nonprofit acquisitions) include the preservation of the large agricultural parcels along Southern Avenue and John Wise Avenue, as overwhelmingly supported by the Open Space survey results.

B. Summary of Community's Needs**1. MetroFuture Regional Plan**

In 2008, the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) completed the MetroFuture Regional Plan that includes 65 goals for creating better the lives of the people who live and work in Metropolitan Boston between now and 2030. Several of those goals directly relate to open space and recreation needs:

- # 4 In suburban municipalities, most new growth will occur near town and village centers.
- #7 Cities, towns, and neighborhoods will retain their sense of uniqueness and community character.
- #9 The region's landscape will retain its distinctive green spaces and working farms.
- #11 The region to be prepared for and resilient to natural disasters and climate change.
- #23 All neighborhoods will have access to safe and well-maintained parks, community gardens, and appropriate play spaces for children and youth. Along with ballfields and playgrounds, they'll find tot lots, greenways, riverwalks, green alleys, urban orchards, and community gardens.
- #32 Seniors will remain active members of their communities.
- #42 The region's agricultural economy will grow through a focus on sustainable farming and by bringing more locally produced foods to the market.
- #47 Most people will choose to walk or bike for short trips.
- #61 Water resources will be carefully budgeted and sustainably managed so that clean water is available for appropriate uses and development. Alteration of local hydrology by water withdrawals will be slowed or reversed.

MAPC's projection³ of the town's population for 2030 predicts increases in the 25-39 and 65+ age brackets, accompanied by marked drops in the population of those aged 0-24 and 40-64. Essex's actual population differed in the past decade from MAPC's 2003 projection for population decline; Essex's population actually grew slowly, at about ½ percent, over the past decade. The 2010 census numbers indicated that more late-age parents with children moved to Essex than predicted, perhaps to take advantage of high quality schools and the small town setting to raise their kids.

This Open Space and Recreation Plan considers MAPC's projects and the goals of the MetroFuture Regional Plan in the following ways:

Prioritize improving existing recreational facilities and programs for youth and teens (rather than creating new facilities or programs):

MAPC's population statistics indicate that while the town should not expect to need more active recreational facilities, such as soccer and baseball fields, since the population of 0-14 year olds could decrease, past experience indicates that maintaining and updating current assets should be a goal.

Many teens in Essex go to Manchester – Essex Regional High School which provides many sports and recreational facilities for that age group. The Town of Essex does recognize the need to serve high school age children when they are in Essex, for instance the Town Library has a teen group.

In the past decade, the Ipswich YMCA took over the Town run summer recreation program at Chebacco Lake including a cabin used as a youth recreation center. The Town is now looking to make improvements to the building and program offerings for youth at that location.

Provide better access for seniors and the disabled to existing facilities:

To meet the projection of an increase in residents 65+, a two-pronged approach should be taken to meeting the increasing needs of seniors and the disabled, including creating more passive and trail-based recreational opportunities, such as hiking and bird watching, and the increasing the availability of affordable senior housing. Both of these approaches require a focus on accommodating the needs of people with disabilities, improved for ADA-accessible trails with bathroom facilities if practicable.

Protect existing open space by focusing development in the Town center.

Siting senior housing (affordable and otherwise) in areas that are walkable to the downtown and the school, and already serviced by the town's infrastructure of roads, water/sewer lines, and sidewalks would ensure that the infrastructure needs for such housing could be more easily met than in more outlying areas. This would also mesh well with the local economy's focus on river-related activities, such as tourism, boating, clamming, and shopping or dining along the scenic causeway, especially since the lack of

³ published in January 2014

readily available public transportation in the town could be a factor for an aging population and/or people with disabilities if housing were not centrally located.

Preserving agricultural lands and farming

Essex's farmlands and marshes form the rural, coastal landscape so unique to our town. Preserving these lands maintains our community character, protects our water supply and fishing resources and helps preserve the natural resiliency to disaster these lands provide.

2. Statewide Open Space Plan

In the Statewide Comprehensive Open Space and Recreation Plan (SCORP) published in 2012, survey respondents at a state level most frequently mentioned that they would like to see more beach and hiking facilities; women preferred beaches twice as often as men. Youth indicated a desire to explore new opportunities for kayaking, rafting, tubing and camping as well as team sports. Popular current activities include gardening, road biking and hiking. Swimming in pools, ponds or the sea were also popular. Youth preferred swimming, kayaking and winter sports while adults preferred golf and bird/wildlife viewing as popular. Nearly $\frac{3}{4}$ of those surveyed spent at least one day along the Massachusetts coast in the past year. Residents of Eastern Massachusetts tend to use local facilities over state facilities as compared to residents of Central and Western Massachusetts, perhaps due to the larger number of state facilities in those areas of Massachusetts.

The SCORP highlights the Mass in Motion program that encourages residents to be more active and eat healthier. Essex is part of Mass in Motion – Cape Ann, along with Gloucester, Manchester-by-the-Sea and Rockport. Mass in Motion – Cape Ann plans to work with local trail groups to develop a Cape Ann Trails base map that will seek to create a set of regionally-linked trails.

Farmers' markets are mentioned as a growing trend helping to bolster local farm products. Many farmers' markets take place on public space such as Essex Farmer's Market in Memorial Park or the Cape Ann Farmer's Market at Stage Fort Park in Gloucester.

The top three values residents see beyond recreation in their outdoor areas include protecting wildlife habitat, improving water quality and protecting drinking water supplies.

C. Management Needs, Potential Change of Use

When speaking of "management" in the town of Essex, it's important to remember that we refer to a *very* small, dedicated professional staff, assisted by a number of volunteer community members who together coordinate and oversee the town's business. Communication between twenty-some departments, commissions and committees is a challenge under the best of circumstances; we recognize that a successful two-way dialog with all these entities, about the objectives, benefits and concerns of this Open Space Plan

are essential and will require an ongoing commitment of time and energy from Open Space Committee members.

On the plus side, Essex is truly fortunate to have an abundance of exemplary non-profit organizations in our literal and figurative backyard. Essex County Greenbelt, TTOR, and MECT not only have significant interests in the town's natural assets, but also lend their own scarce manpower/human resources to help manage those properties. As has been noted elsewhere, citizens of the town have ranked these properties at or near the top of the list of Essex's most important attributes, as well as providing free or inexpensive recreation for residents and attracting tourism.

However, improved communication among and between the various town committees to achieve an understanding of how each one affects, and is affected by growth and development in and around our community is very important. In all these matters, it would be greatly helpful to have the services of a conservation agent available to the town to educate all of us and help us prioritize our open space assets

This Open Space Plan affords the town with an excellent lens through which to view and evaluate the competing interests of such diverse projects as the state highway, community preservation act, development, and the like.

SECTION 8: GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The uniting theme of the Town of Essex’s open space preservation goals and objectives is the ideal of maintaining and increasing residents’ connection with, investment in, and understanding of its invaluable natural resources and history. The best way to achieve this is through an action plan with built in flexibility, based on established science and public input, and implemented with substantial public participation.

With this in mind, the following list contains the specific goals and objectives envisioned by this Open Space Plan. Obviously some goals are overlapping. For example, Goal C: Improving Public Awareness, certainly contributes to Goal A: Protect and Preserve Open Space. However, this breakdown of goals and objectives most clearly delineates the distinct areas that need to be addressed for successful implementation of the Open Space Plan.

Goal A. Protect and Preserve Essex’s Open Spaces, particularly the Essex Woods and the scenic vistas of the Route 133 Scenic Byway

Objectives:

A-1: Preserve and protect the singular and threatened habitats of Essex, in particular:

- a. The critical habitats contained within the Essex Woods, including prioritizing preservation of parcels adjacent or connective to land in that area currently preserved by the Manchester-Essex Conservation Trust, Essex County Greenbelt and the Essex Conservation Commission
- b. Chebacco Lake, the last anadromous fish breeding lake on the North Shore of Massachusetts, including preserving additional upland buffer near the lake
- c. The Great Marsh/A.C.E.C. including preserving adjacent parcels that provide a meaningful water quality protection buffer.
- d. Large freshwater wetlands (20+ acres) such as those found off Apple Street and Atwater Avenue
- e. Certified vernal pools including surround land (1500 linear feet) to create buffer zones.

A-2: Preserve and protect the unique scenic open spaces of Essex, particularly the agricultural parcels adjacent to Scenic Roads, using tools such as Chapter 61A

A-3: Preserve and protect the unique scenic open spaces of Essex, by enacting a scenic agricultural, residential zoning overlay district to preserve woodlands, agricultural land and other scenic land along John Wise and Southern Avenues

A-4: Work to create a wildlife corridor, or “emerald necklace” of contiguous parcels that protect or provide buffer for the major habitat types represented in Essex (saltmarsh, freshwater wetlands and vernal pools, old growth forest, meadows, transition environments, woods, streams and lakes), and which

provides enhanced recreational access to protected parcels throughout Essex and in adjacent towns

A-5: Support the acquisition of Sagamore Hill on the Essex / Hamilton line and adjoining parcels that will create a continuous open space corridor along the Essex / Hamilton town line from Western Avenue to Choate Street

A-6: Preserve, protect, and enhance Essex's parks, playgrounds, and other recreational spaces

A-7: Work to improve the Town's capacity to preserve and protect open space strategically and proactively (see Goal D)

A-7: Support implementation of recommendations related to open space proposed by the Great Marsh Coastal Adaptation Plan, expected to be completed by December 2016

Goal B. Support and Improve Recreational Opportunities and Access to Open Spaces for All Essex Citizens

Objectives:

B-1: Improve non-vehicular access to recreational opportunities and open spaces through bike, canoe/kayak, and walking trail improvements

B-2: Improve recreational opportunities and access for all demographic groups in Essex, including the elderly, low-income, and the disabled

B-3: Continue to improve and expand the two town playgrounds and playing fields as needed, including support to create and implement a Master Plan for Memorial Park

B-4: Improve recreation bicycle connections through Essex including adding bicycle lanes where feasible on roads such as Southern Avenue heading towards Manchester

B-5: Support plans for the Essex River Walkway along Main Street and research the feasibility of extending the Essex River Walkway from Main Street to Landing Road along the former Essex Rail Right-of-Way

B-6: Participate with Mass in Motion – Cape Ann in the development of a regional hiking trails map.

B-7: Improve the nature trail along the side of Conomo Point Road

Goal C. Improve Public Education and Awareness of the Unique Nature of Essex's Natural Resources and Challenges to Preservation***Objectives:***

C-1: Update and promote the brochure guide to the open spaces of Essex that effectively educates the public regarding the truly unique resources of the Town

C-2: Use creative outlets, such as town festivals, to disseminate information of challenges and opportunities to protect Essex's character and natural resources

C-3: Work with the Manchester-Essex Public Schools to re-establish and strengthen environmental education based on Essex's open spaces, including the Manchester-Essex Regional High School Green Team

C-4: Participate in the Great Marsh Coastal Community Resiliency & Adaptation Project occurring in 2015-2016.

Goal D. Strengthen the Town of Essex's capacity for preserving and protecting open space strategically and proactively***Objectives:***

D-1: Improve communication among and education of Town Boards regarding open space issues and goals in Essex

D-2: Obtain training for Open Space Committee members on topics such as vernal pool certification, land conservation techniques, and grant writing

D-3: Work towards the adoption and use of the regulatory and legal tools available to aid open space preservation including supporting the increase of the Community Preservation Act surcharge from 0.5% to 1.5%

D-4: Identify grant opportunities and apply for funding to purchase parcels, development rights, or conservation easements

D-5: Continue to foster strong relationships with the superb local land conservation NGO's including Essex County Greenbelt, Trustees of Reservations, and the Manchester-Essex Conservation Trust

D-6: Evaluate and update the Town's Open Space Plan in a timely and efficient manner to ensure effective guidance of the open space protection process

D-7: Recruit and train enthusiastic Open Space Committee members to create as robust and effective a committee as possible.

SECTION 9: SEVEN YEAR ACTION PLAN

All actions contained in the seven-year plan will be initiated and led by the Open Space Committee unless otherwise noted.

Goal A. Protect and Preserve Essex's Open Spaces**Objective A-1. Preserve and protect the singular and threatened habitats of Essex**

<i>Action</i>	<i>Schedule</i>	<i>Funding Source</i>
Meet with MECT representatives to gain clear understanding of the current Essex Woods conservation campaign and what the Town's role should be	Spring of 2016	N/A
Meet with the Chebacco Lake Watershed Association and identify opportunities for buffer preservation	Spring of 2016 and ongoing	N/A
Research ownership, co-ordinate with MCET and negotiate gift, sale or deed restrictions for Woods parcels lacking frontage.	Ongoing	CPA
Educate the public and bring to town vote a proposal to conserve the 114+ acres of Town-owned tax-title woodlots within the Woods.	2016	N/A

Objective A-2. Preserve and protect scenic open spaces

<i>Action</i>	<i>Schedule</i>	<i>Funding Source</i>
Meet with Selectmen, NGO representatives, and Planning Board to review properties under Chapter 61, 61A and 61B protection, discuss prioritized lands as determined by this Plan, and plan strategy in case of chapter program refusal	Spring-Fall of 2016	N/A
Continue to ensure Open Space & Recreation are priorities for implementation of the Strategic Plan	2016	N/A
Designate Lufkin and Island Roads to the Scenic Road By-law	2016	N/A
Request Special Legislation to allow Town regulation of John Wise Avenue as a Scenic Road	2016	N/A

Objective A-3. Work to Create Scenic Zoning Overlay Districts along John Wise and Southern Avenues.

<i>Action</i>	<i>Schedule</i>	<i>Funding Source</i>
Work with the Strategic Planning Committee to ensure successful adoption of proposed new zoning overlay districts to protect scenic vistas	By Fall 2016	N/A

Objective A-4. Work to create a an “emerald necklace” of contiguous parcels that protect or provide buffer for the major habitat types represented in Essex, and which provides enhanced recreational access to protected parcels

<i>Action</i>	<i>Schedule</i>	<i>Funding Source</i>
Work with Essex County Greenbelt, Trustees of Reservation and Manchester – Essex Conservation Trust to identify “necklace” corridors	Produce plan by Spring of 2017	N/A
Implement strategic plan to create and enhance the necklace	2017-ongoing	Apply for CPA and EOEAA Open Space grant funding

Objective A-5. Support Acquisition of Sagamore Hill

<i>Action</i>	<i>Schedule</i>	<i>Funding Source</i>
Support Essex County Greenbelt Association’s funding applications for purchase of Sagamore Hill	2016	CPA, other
Support acquisition of adjoining parcels as opportunities arise	Ongoing	CPA, other

Objective A-6. Preserve, protect, and enhance Essex’s recreational spaces

<i>Action</i>	<i>Schedule</i>	<i>Funding Source</i>
Work with the Strategic Planning Committee to ensure the ongoing implementation of mutual objectives to preserve, protect and enhance open space	Fall of 2016	N/A
Work with Manchester Essex High Green Team and Cape Ann Trail Stewards to maintain and improve the Chebacco Lake Nature Trail	2016 -2017	Apply to Essex County National Heritage Program for trails maintenance grant and CPA funds

Objective A-7. Work to improve the Town’s capacity to preserve and protect open space strategically and proactively – please see the five-year action plan for Goal D.

Goal B. Support and Improve Recreational Opportunities and Access to Open Spaces for All Essex Citizens

Objective B-1. Improve non-vehicular access to recreational opportunities and open spaces through bike, canoe/kayak, and walking trail improvements

<i>Action</i>	<i>Schedule</i>	<i>Funding Source</i>
Work with Mass in Motion – Cape Ann, MECT and Cape Ann Trail Stewards to create accurate trail maps of the Essex, using GPS technology	2016	N/A
Identify grant sources for trail mapping, expansion and improvements and apply as appropriate	Ongoing	

Objective B-2. Improve recreational opportunities and access for all demographic groups in Essex

<i>Action</i>	<i>Schedule</i>	<i>Funding Source</i>
Meet with representatives from the Essex Council on Aging to identify opportunities for improving elderly access to open space and recreation areas in Essex	2016	N/A
Form and subcommittee to develop a plan for improving and promoting passive, water-based recreation as recommended in the SCORP	2016	N/A

Objective B-3. Continue to improve and expand the two town playgrounds and playing fields as needed

<i>Action</i>	<i>Schedule</i>	<i>Funding Source</i>
Ask the Memorial Park Committee for an update on the development of a park master plan.	2016	N/A
Apply for grants to implement the Master Plan	By July 2016	CPA, PARCs small community program

Objective B-4. Implement Bicycle Lanes

<i>Action</i>	<i>Schedule</i>	<i>Funding Source</i>
Work with DPW, Mass in Motion – Cape Ann and MassBike to determine the feasibility of implementing bicycle lanes on Southern Avenue and other location in Essex	2016	N/A
Implement re-striping plan	When scheduled by DPW	Regular maintenance and/or Complete Streets Grant

Objective B-5. Support the Creation of the Essex River Walkway

<i>Action</i>	<i>Schedule</i>	<i>Funding Source</i>
Support Town efforts to fund design, permitting and construction of the Main Street section of the River Walkway	Ongoing	Complete Streets Grants, CPA or other
Determine Feasibility of extending the River Walkway from Main Street to Landing Road	2016	MiM – Cape Ann and Memorial Park Master Plan

Objective B-6. Continue to improve and expand the two town playgrounds and playing fields as needed

<i>Action</i>	<i>Schedule</i>	<i>Funding Source</i>
See B-1		

Objective B-7. Improve the nature trail along the side of Conomo Point Road

<i>Action</i>	<i>Schedule</i>	<i>Funding Source</i>
Do a field survey / walk of existing conditions	2017	
Establish feasibility of improvements	2018	CPA

Goal C. Improve Public Education and Awareness of the Unique Nature of Essex’s Natural Resources and Challenges to Preservation

Objective C-1. Publish and promote a brochure guide to the open spaces of Essex

<i>Action</i>	<i>Schedule</i>	<i>Funding Source</i>
Identify funding sources and obtain printing moneys	2016	N/A
Draft brochure and circulate among Town Boards and interested individuals	Fall of 2016 – Spring of 2017	N/A
Publish, publicize and distribute brochures	Spring of 2017	Open Space Committee Budget and apply for grants (to be identified)

Objective C-2 and C-3 Use creative outlets to disseminate information of challenges and opportunities to protect Essex’s character and natural resources

<i>Action</i>	<i>Schedule</i>	<i>Funding Source</i>
Brainstorm and list events and forums	Spring 2016	N/A
Recruit volunteers and set event schedule	2016 and ongoing	N/A
Work with public schools to conduct environmental education around Essex’s unique open spaces and rare and endangered species	Begin in Fall of 2016 and ongoing	Apply for grants if needed

Objective C-4. Public Forum on Climate Change

Action	Schedule	Funding Source
Work with Conservation Commission to create forum planning committee	Spring 2016	N/A
Develop forum agenda	Spring/ Summer 2016	N/A
Hold forum	Fall 2016	N/A

Goal D. Strengthen the Town of Essex's capacity for preserving and protecting open space strategically and proactively**Objective D-1. Improve communication among and education of Town Boards regarding open space issues and goals in Essex**

Action	Schedule	Funding Source
Meet with Selectmen, Conservation Commission, and Planning Board to discuss moving forward with OSP objectives and strategies to improve communication	Spring 2016	N/A
Publish quarterly updates and send to other town boards via email, memo and social media	Ongoing	N/A

Objective D-2. Obtain training for Open Space Committee members

<i>Action</i>	<i>Schedule</i>	<i>Funding Source</i>
Set schedule and obtain member commitments to attend trainings at the Putnam Institute, annual MACC conference, and other trainings as they are identified	Ongoing	N/A
Create a subcommittee for member training and recruitment	Ongoing	N/A
Continue to earmark money for training of OSC members	Ongoing	Open Space Committee Budget

Objective D-3. Adopt and use the regulatory and legal tools available to aid open space preservation

<i>Action</i>	<i>Schedule</i>	<i>Funding Source</i>
Designate a member to work with the Selectmen to facilitate amendment of the CPA	Ongoing	N/A

Objective D-4. Identify grant opportunities and apply for funding to purchase parcels, development rights, or conservation easements

<i>Action</i>	<i>Schedule</i>	<i>Funding Source</i>
Attend Land Conservation Grant and grant writing workshops at Putnam Institute	Spring 2016	Open Space Committee Budget
Designate member to research grants and make recommendations	2016	N/A
Work with local NGO's to write successful grant applications	Ongoing	N/A

Objective D-5. Continue to foster strong relationships with the superb local land conservation NGO's including Essex County Greenbelt, Trustees of Reservations, and the Manchester-Essex Conservation Trust

<i>Action</i>	<i>Schedule</i>	<i>Funding Source</i>
Meet with representatives from local NGO's to discuss final OSP goals, objectives and action items, and set process for regular communication with Essex Boards	Ongoing	N/A

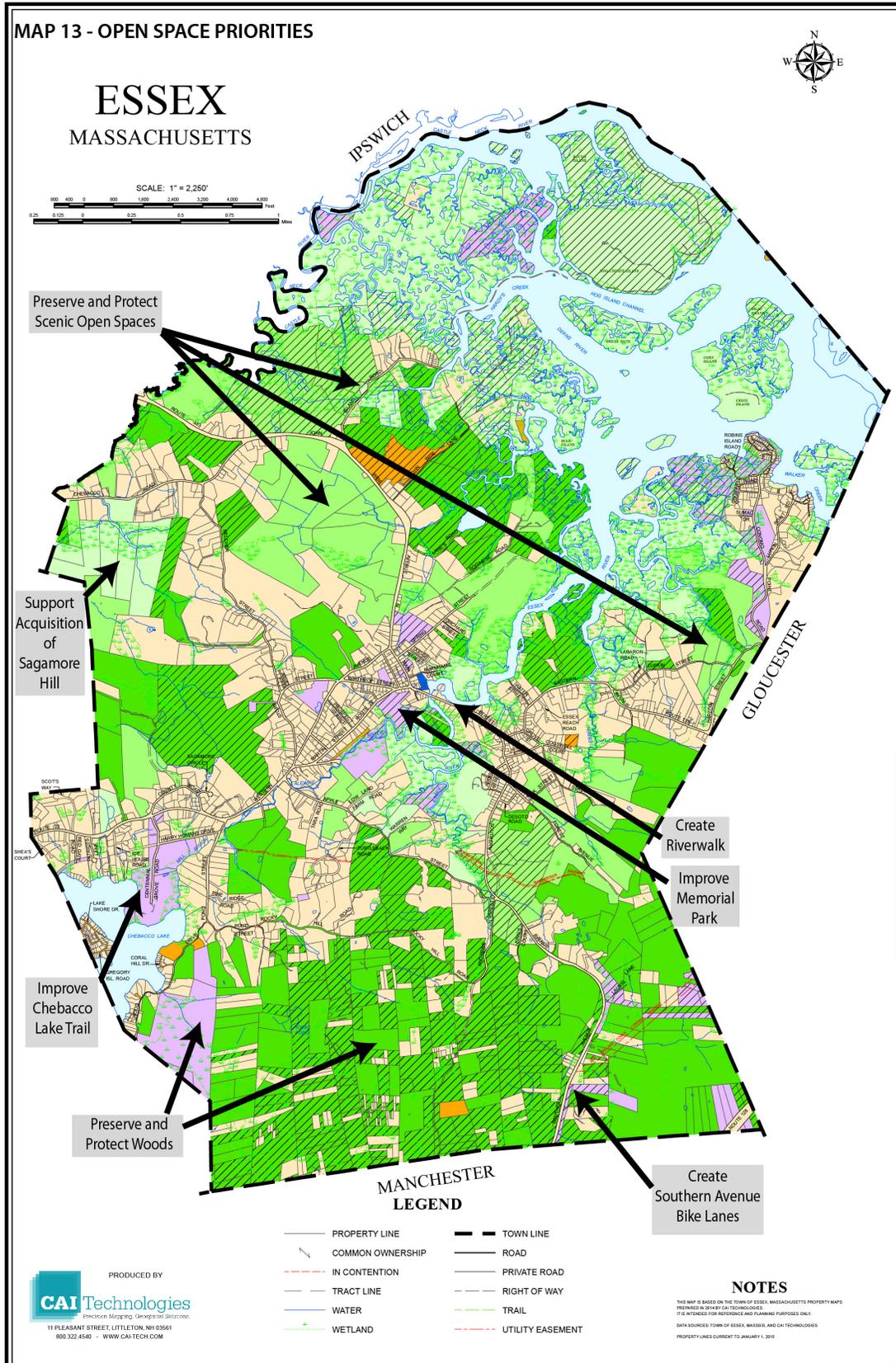
Objective D-6. Evaluate and update the Town’s Open Space Plan in a timely and efficient manner to ensure effective guidance of the open space protection process

<i>Action</i>	<i>Schedule</i>	<i>Funding Source</i>
Create a subcommittee to manage the evaluation and update process, including oversight of submissions to EOEA	Ongoing	N/A

Objective D-7. Recruit and train enthusiastic Open Space Committee members to create as robust and effective a committee as possible

<i>Action</i>	<i>Schedule</i>	<i>Funding Source</i>
Brainstorm a list of potential members	2016	N/A
Create a subcommittee for member training and recruitment. Recruit representatives from community groups such as Memorial Park Committee, ECB, MECT, Cape Ann Trail Stewards, youth sports	2016	N/A

MAP 15 – OPEN SPACE ACTION PLAN MAP



SECTION 10: PUBLIC COMMENTS

Public Outreach

The Essex Board of Selectmen and the Essex Open Space and Recreation Committee held a joint public hearing on the draft 2016 – 2023 Open Space and Recreation Plan on Monday November 30, 2015 and the Essex Senior Center. The meeting had been publicized through out Essex and surrounding communities via: (1) a press release to the Gloucester Daily Times, (2) a posting in the Good Morning Gloucester blog which is seen by 30,000+ people each day (3) a public meeting notice on the Town’s website and (4) direct e-mail to various Town boards, commissions, key staff and community organizations. Approximately 20 people were in attendance at the meeting including the three members of the Board of Selectmen, Town Administrator Brendhan Zubricki, former members of the Long Range Planning Committee, Shellfish Advisory Board and Open Space and Recreation Committee with the balance being members of the public.

Lead authors, Julie Scofield, Chair of the Open Space & Recreation Committee and Stephen Winslow, Mass in Motion – Cape Ann Project Manager, made a presentation on the key findings and recommendations contained in the draft plan. After the presentation members of the Board of Selectmen and public asked questions and provide comments as follows:

- Essex / Gloucester Border: One member of the public asked how the plan would address the use of an area along the Essex / Gloucester border along a natural gas pipeline easement. This person noted that the “Mass Mudders” a local 4-wheel drive off-road vehicle group had been using the area along the pipeline. Damage to vegetation and vernal pools appears to be happening as a result. Would there be an effort to have the pipeline company monitor use and access gates?

Mr. Winslow noted that a similar question arose at a recent meeting held by the Gloucester Department of Public Works regarding trail access in West Gloucester. He also noted that on the draft Essex Open Space and Recreation Resources Map the area along the pipeline to Southern Avenue was unprotected woodlands that neither the Town nor any local conservation group had targeted for preservation.

An audience member commented that there were many owner unknown parcels in that area.

- Co-ordination with Strategic Planning Committee: One person noted that the Essex Strategic Planning Committee had been completed its report and included definitive proposals for new zoning overlay districts to protect scenic vistas. He suggested the implementation of those zoning overlays should be added as an action item.

- Zoning and Article 61A lands: One person asked how zoning overlays would affect land already subject to Article 61A agriculture protections and whether those owners would have input on the development of the zoning overlays.

Ms. Scofield noted that the action plan was only a recommendation. Property owners and the public would have additional opportunity to comment on any zoning overlays when Town Meeting considers them.

- Memorial Park: A question arose as to what committees had been asked to review the plan, particularly those that may be informal committees rather than official committees of the Town such as the Memorial Park Committee.

Town Administrator Zubricki noted that the Memorial Park Committee was not an officially designated Town Committee. That Committee had initiated a survey of the Park with CPA funds but had not done any planning for the park rehabilitation. The Community Preservation Committee is expected to reconsider whether to continue to dedicate further CPA funds towards future planning for the Park.

- Future Development: One member of the public asked whether the plan was intended to stop all future development in the Town.

Ms. Scofield responded that an Open Space and Recreation Plan seeks to identify and priority areas for preservation to help ensure that economic development will occur in an intelligent way that preserves the character of the community .

- Great Marsh ACEC: An attendee commented that drafting and implementing a resource management plan for the Great Marsh with adjoining communities should be an action item. Without a resource management plan any development activity within the ACEC is restricted even those which could potentially benefit the resource such as the placement of a wharf where people now drag boats across a marsh

The public comment period remained open until the Open Space and Recreation Committee's February 18, 2016 meeting. Comment and support letters were received from:

Nancy Dudley of the Shipbuilding Museum commented that the nature trail that goes along the side of Conomo Point Road should be improved to better allow kids on bikes and people with strollers better access to this area without having to walk along a sometimes dangerous street.

Hello –

The following are the comments from MAPC regarding the draft Essex OSRP. Some are from MAPC's perspective as it relates to the letter we will write that will be included in the final plan. Other comments are based on my experience in writing and reviewing OSRP's, as well as a from a recent meeting I had with Melissa Cryan at DCS. These comments are meant to assist you in completing the plan so that it includes the information that Melissa is looking for when she reviews the plan for approval.

MAPC-related comments:

- On page 6, at the end of section 3A of the plan, regional open space priorities should be identified. You should reference the MAPC MetroFuture Regional Plan here. The plan includes goals and objectives as well as 13 detailed implementation strategies for accomplishing these goals. We encourage all communities to become familiar with the plan by visiting the web site at <http://www.mapc.org/metrofuture>.
- It may be worthwhile to highlight key recommendations from the plans of adjacent communities as they relate to regional resources and the efforts to protect them.
- Mass-in-Motion is mentioned several times, but it would be helpful to have a brief description of the program as it relates to Cape Ann.
- In the Section 9 Action Plan, show where the goals and objectives are consistent with MAPC's MetroFuture.

General comments flagged for DCS review:

- You may get some comments from DCS on the inventory. For municipally-owned parcels, there are a number of columns that are left blank for particular parcels. DCS has told me that they would still like to see something entered on the matrix, even if the information is not known or not applicable.
- DCS will probably want to see the Chapter 61, 61A and 61B lands listed in more detail than a single row.
- Sec. 9 – aside from the schedule, if the action items have been prioritized, you should indicate that.
- Appendix – DCS will ask that you include the ADA required documents and assessment.

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the Essex OSRP. It is a document that is very thorough and it should serve the town well as it continues its efforts to preserve open space and provide for the recreational needs of its residents.

I hope this is helpful, but let me know if you have any questions.

Ralph

Ralph R. Willmer, FAICP
Principal Planner
Metropolitan Area Planning Council
60 Temple Place
Boston, MA 02111
617.933.0734
617.894.7598 (cell)
rwillmer@mapc.org

SECTION 11: REFERENCES***Websites:***

Essex County Greenbelt Association website (www.ecga.org), Spring 2015.

Essex Shipbuilding Museum website (<http://www.essexshipbuildingmuseum.org>). 2015.

Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs website (www.mass.gov/envir). 2015.

Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, Division of Conservation Services website (<http://www.state.ma.us/envir/dcs/openspace/default.htm>). 2015.

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Massachusetts Heritage Landscape Inventory Program website (<http://www.essexheritage.org/heritagelandscapes/essex.pdf>). May 2006.

Publications:

Flint, Richard Foster. *Glacial and Quaternary Geology*. John Wiley and Sons, Inc., New York, NY, 1971.

Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation and The Essex National Heritage Commission. *Essex Reconnaissance Report: Essex County Landscape Inventory*. May 2005.

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SCORP, *2012 Regional Perspective*, Northeastern Region Section.

Soil Conservation Service. *Soils and Their Interpretations for Various Land Uses: Town of Essex, Massachusetts*. U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1973.

Sonder, Erika. *Vascular Plant Survey of the Manchester-Essex Woods (Wilderness Conservation Area)*. June 2005

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Town of Essex Annual Town Reports, 1997 to 2014.

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Wells, Daniel. *2005 Rare Species and Vernal Pool Survey: Wilderness Conservation Area, Essex and Manchester, MA*. January, 2006.

APPENDIX A

ACCOMPLISHMENTS SINCE 2001-2007 PLAN

2007 Plan Results

The following Table provides a summary of efforts to achieve the goals of the 2007 Essex Open Space and Recreation Plan.

Goal A. Protect and Preserve Essex’s Open Spaces

Objective A-1. Preserve and protect the singular and threatened habitats of Essex

<i>Proposed Action</i>	<i>Actual Result</i>	<i>Follow-up Needed?</i>
Meet with MECT representatives to gain clear understanding of the current Essex Woods conservation campaign and what the Town’s role should be		N/A
Work to identify and certify vernal pools on privately held parcels	41 Vernal Pools Certified	Confirm source information
Meet with the Chebacco Lake Watershed Association and identify opportunities for buffer preservation	Planning Board update Water Resource Protection District Bylaw	N/A
Research ownership and negotiate deed restrictions for Woods parcels lacking frontage. Educate the public and bring to town vote a proposal to conserve the 120 acres of Town-owned tax-title woodlots within the Woods.		N/A

Objective A-2. Preserve and protect scenic open spaces

<i>Proposed Action</i>	<i>Actual Result</i>	<i>Follow-up Needed?</i>
Meet with Selectmen, NGO representatives, and Planning Board to review properties under Chapter 61, 61A and 61B protection, discuss prioritized lands as determined by this Plan, and plan strategy in case of chapter program refusal		N/A
Work with the Essex Long-term Planning Committee to incorporate Open Space and Recreation Plan goals and objectives into the Essex’s strategic planning activities		N/A

Objective A-3. Work to create an “emerald necklace” of contiguous parcels that protect or provide buffer for the major habitat types represented in Essex, and which provides enhanced recreational access to protected parcels

<i>Proposed Action</i>	<i>Actual Result</i>	<i>Follow-up Needed?</i>
Using the maps developed by MAPC for the Essex Community Development Plan, identify the ownership of privately held parcels within the proposed “necklace” and formulate a strategic plan for protection	Readily done doing updated GIS information	N/A
Implement strategic plan		Apply for EOEI Open Space grant funding

Objective A-4. Preserve, protect, and enhance Essex’s recreational spaces

<i>Proposed Action</i>	<i>Actual Result</i>	<i>Follow-up Needed?</i>
Contact Essex Enhancement Committee and discuss enhancement needs and opportunities for cooperation with the Open Space Committee	Enhancement Committee Defunct Now Working with Strategic Planning Committee	N/A
Work with the Watershed Association to create a Management Plan for the Chebacco Lake Nature Trail	Trail Update in 2007.	Further update trail with assistance from Manchester-Essex Regional High and Cape Ann Trail Stewards (CATS)

Objective A-5. Work to improve the Town’s capacity to preserve and protect open space strategically and proactively – please see the five-year action plan for Goal D.

Goal B. Support and Improve Recreational Opportunities and Access to Open Spaces for All Essex Citizens

Objective B-1. Improve non-vehicular access to recreational opportunities and open spaces through bike, canoe/kayak, and walking trail improvements

<i>Proposed Action</i>	<i>Actual Result</i>	<i>Follow-up Needed?</i>
Work with MECT to create accurate trail maps of the Essex Woods, using GPS technology		N/A
Work with MassHighway on the upcoming causeway improvement project to ensure safe bicycle and walking access to open spaces	Done	Look at bicycle lanes on Southern Ave
Identify grant sources for trail mapping, expansion and improvements and apply as appropriate		Work with CATS and Mass in Motion on Update

Objective B-2. Improve recreational opportunities and access for all demographic groups in Essex

<i>Proposed Action</i>	<i>Actual Result</i>	<i>Follow-up Needed?</i>
Meet with representatives from the Essex Council on Aging to identify opportunities for improving elderly access to open space and recreation areas in Essex		N/A
Form and subcommittee to develop a plan for improving and promoting passive, water-based recreation as recommended in the SCORP		N/A

Objective B-3. Continue to improve and expand the two town playgrounds and playing fields as needed

<i>Proposed Action</i>	<i>Actual Result</i>	<i>Follow-up Needed?</i>
Contact Essex Beautification Committee and discuss enhancement needs and opportunities for cooperation with the Open Space Committee	Three pocket parks created	N/A

Goal C. Improve Public Education and Awareness of the Unique Nature of Essex's Natural Resources and Challenges to Preservation**Objective C-1. Publish and promote a brochure guide to the open spaces of Essex**

<i>Proposed Action</i>	<i>Actual Result</i>	<i>Follow-up Needed?</i>
Identify funding sources and obtain printing moneys	Done	
Draft brochure and circulate among Town Boards and interested individuals	Done	
Publish, publicize and distribute brochures	Done	Update and Republish

Objective C-2. Use creative outlets to disseminate information of challenges and opportunities to protect Essex's character and natural resources

<i>Proposed Action</i>	<i>Actual Result</i>	<i>Follow-up Needed?</i>
Brainstorm and list events and forums	Done	
Recruit volunteers and set event schedule	Done	
Work with public schools to conduct environmental education around Essex's unique open spaces and rare and endangered species	Went to events such as Clamfest etc.	Apply for grants if needed

Goal D. Strengthen the Town of Essex’s capacity for preserving and protecting open space strategically and proactively

Objective D-1. Improve communication among and education of Town Boards regarding open space issues and goals in Essex

<i>Proposed Action</i>	<i>Actual Result</i>	<i>Follow-up Needed?</i>
Meet with Selectmen, Conservation Commission, and Planning Board to discuss moving forward with OSP objectives and strategies to improve communication	Done	Meet on November 20, 2015
Publish quarterly updates and send to other town boards via email and memo		N/A

2007 Plan Results

Objective D-2. Obtain training for Open Space Committee members

<i>Proposed Action</i>	<i>Actual Result</i>	<i>Follow-up Needed?</i>
Set schedule and obtain member commitments to attend vernal pool certification and other trainings at the Putnam Institute, annual MACC conference, and other trainings as they are identified		N/A
Create a subcommittee for member training and recruitment		N/A
Continue to earmark money for training of OSC members		Open Space Committee Budget

Objective D-3. Adopt and use the regulatory and legal tools available to aid open space preservation

<i>Proposed Action</i>	<i>Actual Result</i>	<i>Follow-up Needed?</i>
Designate a member to work with the Planning Board to facilitate passage of the draft OSRD bylaw currently under consideration	Done	
Designate a member to work with the Selectmen to facilitate passage of the CPA and if adopted in 2007, help shape the public CPA project recommendation process	Done	Seeking increase to 1.5%

Objective D-4. Identify grant opportunities and apply for funding to purchase parcels, development rights, or conservation easements

<i>Proposed Action</i>	<i>Actual Result</i>	<i>Follow-up Needed?</i>
Attend Land Conservation Grant and grant writing workshops at Putnam Institute		Open Space Committee Budget
Designate member to research grants and make recommendations		N/A
Work with local NGO's to write successful grant applications	Worked with ECGA or TTOR	Support the latest acquisition plans

Objective D-5. Continue to foster strong relationships with the superb local land conservation NGO's including Essex County Greenbelt, Trustees of Reservations, and the Manchester-Essex Conservation Trust

<i>Proposed Action</i>	<i>Actual Result</i>	<i>Follow-up Needed?</i>
Meet with representatives from local NGO's to discuss final OSP goals, objectives and action items, and set process for regular communication with Essex Boards	Done	N/A

Objective D-6. Evaluate and update the Town's Open Space Plan in a timely and efficient manner to ensure effective guidance of the open space protection process

<i>Proposed Action</i>	<i>Actual Result</i>	<i>Follow-up Needed?</i>
Create a subcommittee to manage the evaluation and update process, including oversight of submissions to EOEА		N/A

Objective D-7. Recruit and train enthusiastic Open Space Committee members to create as robust and effective a committee as possible

<i>Proposed Action</i>	<i>Actual Result</i>	<i>Follow-up Needed?</i>
Brainstorm a list of potential members		N/A
Create a subcommittee for member training and recruitment	No Members added since 2007....	N/A

2007 Plan Results

APPENDIX B

LETTERS OF REVIEW



ESSEX BOARD OF SELECTMEN

TOWN HALL • MARTIN STREET • ESSEX, MASSACHUSETTS 01929-1219

Telephone (978) 768-6531

MEMORANDUM

TOPIC: Approval of 2016-2023 Open Space and Recreation Plan
Designation of William Sanborn as ADA Coordinator
For Purposes of Access to Open Space and Recreational Facilities

Confirmation that Personnel Practices conform to the Americans with Disabilities Act

DATE: June 21, 2016

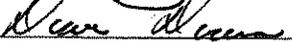
The Town of Essex Board of Selectmen hereby approve the Town's 2016-2023 Open Space and Recreation Plan developed by the Town's Open Space and Recreation Advisory Committee as recommended at their March 17, 2016 meeting.

We hereby designate William Sanborn, Building Inspector, as the American with Disabilities Act Coordinator for the purposes of ensuring equal access to open space and recreation facilities and activities for the Town of Essex. Mr. Sanborn shall be the person designated to receive and consider inquiries and grievances from the General Public under the Town's "Grievance Policy Regarding Equal Access to Open Space and Recreational Facilities and Activities"

After consultation with Town Administrator, we hereby confirm that the employment practices of the Town of Essex conform with the Americans with Disabilities Act and that appropriate notices related to compliance with the ADA and ADA grievance procedures for Town personnel have been appropriately publicized and posted.

signed





Town of Essex Board of Selectmen



Stephen Winslow <swinslow@gloucester-ma.gov>

Fw: Open Space Committee report comments

Brendhan Zubricki <bzubricki@essexma.org>

Mon, Sep 12, 2016 at 4:39 PM

To: Stephen Winslow <SWinslow@gloucester-ma.gov>

Cc: Julie Scofield <jscofield@thesbanecenter.org>

Comments from Planning Board on draft final OSRP.

BZ

From: [Wes Burnham](#)

Sent: Monday, September 12, 2016 3:52 PM

To: 'Brendhan Zubricki'

Cc: 'Essex Planning Board'

Subject: Open Space Committee report comments

Brendhan, please forward the attached comments as I have lost the email requesting them

Thanks

Wes

 **open space comments.docx**
17K



Stephen Winslow <swinslow@gloucester-ma.gov>

Re: Town of Essex - Draft Open Space & Recreation Plan available for comment - Public Presentation Monday November 30th

Willmer, Ralph <RWillmer@mapc.org>

Thu, Dec 17, 2015 at 5:51 PM

To: Stephen Winslow <SWinslow@gloucester-ma.gov>

Hello –

The following are the comments from MAPC regarding the draft Essex OSRP. Some are from MAPC's perspective as it relates to the letter we will write that will be included in the final plan. Other comments are based on my experience in writing and reviewing OSRP's, as well as a from a recent meeting I had with Melissa Cryan at DCS. These comments are meant to assist you in completing the plan so that it includes the information that Melissa is looking for when she reviews the plan for approval.

MAPC-related comments:

- On page 6, at the end of section 3A of the plan, regional open space priorities should be identified. You should reference the MAPC MetroFuture Regional Plan here. The plan includes goals and objectives as well as 13 detailed implementation strategies for accomplishing these goals. We encourage all communities to become familiar with the plan by visiting the web site at <http://www.mapc.org/metrofuture>.
- It may be worthwhile to highlight key recommendations from the plans of adjacent communities as they relate to regional resources and the efforts to protect them.
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Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the Essex OSRP. It is a document that is very thorough and it should serve the town well as it continues its efforts to preserve open space and provide for the recreational needs of its residents.

I hope this is helpful, but let me know if you have any questions.

Ralph

Ralph R. Willmer, FAICP

Principal Planner

Metropolitan Area Planning Council

60 Temple Place

Boston, MA 02111

617.933.0734

617.894.7598 (cell)

rwillmer@mapc.org

From: Stephen Winslow [<mailto:SWinslow@gloucester-ma.gov>]

Sent: Monday, November 23, 2015 2:36 PM

To: conservation@essexma.org; Erin Kirchner; Kimberly Drake (drakekr@cdmsmith.com); Matt Coogan;

kcrockett@essexma.org; specwood@gmail.com; planningboard@essexma.org; pgoodwin@essexma.org

Cc: eob@ecga.org; Chris LaPointe; conserve@mect.org; calloyd@comcast.net; Nick Holland; Julie Scofield; Willmer, Ralph; Brendhan Zubricki (bzubricki@essexma.org); David Santomenna (dsantomenna@ttor.org); dave@davelash.com; jim@skunkhollow.net; Abby Hardy-Moss (abby@ecga.org)

[Quoted text hidden]

[Quoted text hidden]

The Essex Planning Board reviewed and discussed the Open Space Committee's draft report. Several topics were discussed and are considered differences of opinion. The following is some items we consider factually inaccurate.

Page 15 in part 1:

Essex does not have formal zoning beyond the state minimum requirements, although it does have a water resources overlay district and Conomo Point overlay districts (See Map 4 on Page 20) and an Open Space Residential Design Bylaw. The Office of Coastal Zone Management has recommended that formal zoning bylaws be enacted to protect the estuary¹⁴; however, much resistance remains due to the belief that a formal zoning bylaw will facilitate development by giving developers a defined process, and that numerous problems would arise from current nonconforming uses.

Essex does have extensive zoning requirements, we do not have districts similar to other cities and towns, except for Conomo Point where two specific districts, Southern and Central (not overlay) have been created to facilitate the sale of properties. We also have a Wetlands Overlay district and a Flood Zone overlay district.

A 2001 full build-out analysis indicated that Essex's population could theoretically quintuple to nearly 17,000 if all potentially developed land was densely developed

15. While it is generally agreed upon that the build-out is a worst case scenario, it is both undesirable and unlikely to occur; however, the sheer magnitude of the numbers relative to current conditions lends gravity to the mission of protecting remaining open spaces and preserving the community's character. It should also be noted that the lack of affordable housing in Essex has led to the phenomenon of "land rich/cash poor" landowners splitting off parcels as a means of generating income or providing housing lots for family members. Therefore, an increase in well-planned affordable housing units may well reduce the amount of unplanned development of open spaces; however, the septic constraints on multi-unit housing will likely discourage this for the time being and no continued action is currently occurring under Essex's Community Development plan at this time.

Since the 2001 buildout analysis was completed a large portion of the theoretical buildout property has been placed under various conservation control by GreenBelt, Trustees of Reservations, Manchester Essex Conservation Trust, and individual land owners utilizing Chapter 61 provisions. Therefore, the 17,000 figure is currently very inaccurate. We also changed the definition of Lot Area to exclude all wetlands from area requirement calculations for minimum lot area requirements. Believe we are still the only Town with this strict a requirement in Massachusetts.

The Planning Board is actively working on two zoning amendments related to housing, Mixed use bylaw and a downtown district to better utilize the downtown area. Both are part of the Town's Strategic Planning committee's recommendations.

3. Long-Term Development Patterns Historically, residential and commercial zoning districts have not been created by the Town of Essex.

Most of the Town has been one **mixed-use** (Should be termed "General zoning district) zoning district where each lot can have residential or commercial uses. Lots must be 30,000 square feet or greater if they are located on a road established by 1972, or 40,000 square feet or greater if they exist on a road created after 1972. The only exception to this is in the Water Resource Protection District, where a 40,000 square foot minimum lot size is required for **each dwelling unit regardless** of when the road was created. Business uses in this district are exempted however, and as a result, business use continues to grow along Route 22 in the Water Resource Protection District (see Map 4). The Town also has Wetlands and Floodplain Overlay districts that help protect those resources from damaging development. The Floodplain Overlay district is based on the latest FEMA Flood Plain maps

The Planning Board is actively working on two zoning amendments related to housing, Mixed use bylaw and a downtown district to better utilize the downtown area. Both are part of the Town's Strategic Planning committee's recommendations. The Planning Board has been discussing updating the Water Resource Protection District to allow better utilization of currently developed properties.

Much is being done to address these water quality issues. As discussed in Section 3, under Wastewater Infrastructure, Essex constructed a new sewer system connected to the Gloucester wastewater treatment plant in 2006. Monitoring conducted through 2007 indicated that the new sewer infrastructure successfully improved water quality to the point where MA DEP allowed the Town to stop its quarterly monitoring program. Until the year 2000, Essex did not have any mechanism within its zoning bylaw for enforcing stormwater standards. **To address this concern, the town approved an amendment to the site plan review bylaw that includes drainage management review for commercial and multi-family projects.** This action was a major step in reducing water quality impacts to critical resources protected within the town's wetland district, the flood plain district, and the water resources protection district. However, stormwater from residential development is not covered under the site plan/special permit change because these sections only cover commercial and multi-family rather than single family and subdivision development. **It seems only logical to extend the amendment to include these forms of development, as they too stand to impact protected resource**

Stormwater management is considered and reviewed as part of all Subdivision reviews submitted under MGL Chp 81 guidelines. Site Plan Review process does not require formal stormwater review in its current requirements.

Recreational access is provided to the River via several points. The public boat launch is located off of the Route 133 causeway, on the western side of the River, and is used as both a canoe/kayak launch and a powerboat launch. Although Essex has a small harbor with **two marinas**, (should be 3 Marinas, Essex, Pike, and Perkins, and several private docks) and used to be the site of a thriving boat building industry in the 1800's, the shallowness and complexity of the River limits harbor access to small recreational boats today. Therefore, it is not a working harbor covered under the Office of Coastal Zone Management's Harbor Planning program. Conomo Beach on the eastern side of the River provides recreational swimming access, and the causeway bridge itself is used as a swimming entry point. The **Essex portion of Crane's Beach** (no portion of Crane's beach is in Essex) is accessible by boat or via the Trustees of Reservations' entry in Ipswich.

The Harbormaster collects mooring and launch fees that provide funds to maintain harbor services and moorings. Currently the Harbormaster maintains a waiting list for permanent moorings.

Managing Agency: The Town Harbormaster oversees the use of the Town Landings and enforces parking regulations.

Current Use: **The principal seven-acre town landing on the causeway** (Town landing is no where near 7 acres, might be ¾ acre total) sees heavy summer use from recreational boaters and year-round use from local clammers. Swimming is not permitted at the site. The other landings see use consistent with their accessibility.

Recreation Potential: Primarily for summer water sports.

Public Access/Access for People with Disabilities: A resident sticker is needed to park at the landings. The main town landing site has handicapped parking. A parking lot constructed in 2003 behind the Police/Fire Station on Martin Street provides additional parking for residents **and non-residents** wishing to use the main town landing site. Most of the other town-landings have limited access and parking.

Designate Lufkin and Island Roads to the Scenic Road

Request Special Legislation to allow Town regulation of John Wise Avenue as a Scenic Road

"After a road has been designated as a scenic road any repair, maintenance, reconstruction, or paving work done with respect thereto shall not involve or include the cutting or removal of trees, or the tearing down or destruction of stone walls, or portions thereof, except with the prior written consent of the planning board, "

Does not protect or provide any jurisdiction beyond the Public / private property line..... Ref: Scenic Road MGL chp 40 sect 15C

APPENDIX C

ADA SELF-EVALUATION



ESSEX BOARD OF SELECTMEN

TOWN HALL • MARTIN STREET • ESSEX, MASSACHUSETTS 01929-1219

Telephone (978) 768-6531

MEMORANDUM

TOPIC: Approval of 2016-2023 Open Space and Recreation Plan
Designation of William Sanborn as ADA Coordinator
For Purposes of Access to Open Space and Recreational Facilities

Confirmation that Personnel Practices conform to the Americans with Disabilities Act

DATE: June 21, 2016

The Town of Essex Board of Selectmen hereby approve the Town's 2016-2023 Open Space and Recreation Plan developed by the Town's Open Space and Recreation Advisory Committee as recommended at their March 17, 2016 meeting.

We hereby designate William Sanborn, Building Inspector, as the American with Disabilities Act Coordinator for the purposes of ensuring equal access to open space and recreation facilities and activities for the Town of Essex. Mr. Sanborn shall be the person designated to receive and consider inquiries and grievances from the General Public under the Town's "Grievance Policy Regarding Equal Access to Open Space and Recreational Facilities and Activities"

After consultation with Town Administrator, we hereby confirm that the employment practices of the Town of Essex conform with the Americans with Disabilities Act and that appropriate notices related to compliance with the ADA and ADA grievance procedures for Town personnel have been appropriately publicized and posted.

signed _____

Town of Essex Board of Selectmen



ESSEX BOARD OF SELECTMEN

TOWN HALL • MARTIN STREET • ESSEX, MASSACHUSETTS 01929-1219

Telephone (978) 768-6531

NOTICE OF COMPLIANCE WITH THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (28 CFR 35.106)

In accordance with the requirements of Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, The Town of Essex does not discriminate on the basis of disability in the admission, access, or operations of its programs, services, activities or facilities. In accordance with Title II of the (ADA), when viewed in their entirety, Town of Essex government programs, services, activities and facilities are readily accessible to and usable by qualified individuals with disabilities.

Employment: The Town does not discriminate on the basis of disability in its hiring or employment practices and complies with all regulations promulgated by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission under Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Effective Communication: The Town will generally, upon request, provide appropriate aids and services leading to effective communication for qualified individuals with disabilities so they can participate equally in the Town's programs, services, and activities, including qualified sign language interpreters, documents in Braille, and other ways of making information and communications accessible to individuals with speech, hearing, or vision impairments.

Modifications to Policies and Procedures: The Town will make reasonable modifications to its policies, practices and programs to ensure that individuals with disabilities have an equal opportunity to enjoy all Town programs, services, and activities. For example, individuals with service animals are welcomed in Town offices, even where pets are generally prohibited.

The Town will not place a surcharge on a particular individual with a disability or any group of individuals with disabilities to cover the cost of providing auxiliary aids and services or reasonable modifications of policy, such as retrieving items from locations that are open to the public but are not accessible to persons who use Wheelchairs.

The ADA does not require the Town to take any action that would fundamentally alter the nature of its programs or services, or impose an undue financial or administrative burden.

The Town's Building Inspector has been designated to ensure the coordination of Town's compliance with the ADA, including the investigation of any complaint alleging Title II discrimination. The Town has adopted an internal grievance procedure providing for prompt and equitable resolution of complaints alleging discrimination on the basis of disability in violation of the U.S. Department of Justice regulations implementing Title II of the ADA. This Procedure has been developed to comply with 28 CFR 35.107 (b)

Complaints that a County program, service, activity or facility is not accessible to individuals with disabilities should be directed to the Town's ADA Administrator as listed in the grievance procedure.

TOWN OF ESSEX - AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

I. ADA Coordinator Information

William Sanborn, Building Inspector

Town of Essex

Phone: (978) 768-2514

E-mail: wsanborn@essexma.org

II. Grievance Procedure – Town of Essex – for Citizens and Employees

STEP 1:

The Building Inspector will be available to meet with citizens and employees during his/her weekly business hours.

When a complaint, grievance, request for program interpretation or clarification is received either in writing or through a meeting or telephone call, every effort will be made to create a record regarding the name, home address, telephone number and e-mail address of the person making the complaint, grievance, program policy interpretation or clarification. If the person desires to remain anonymous, he or she may.

A complaint, grievance, request for program policy interpretation or clarification will be responded to within ten working days (if the person making the complaint is identified) in a format that is sensitive the needs of the recipient (i.e. verbally, enlarged type face etc.).

Copies of the complaint, grievance, request for program policy interpretation or clarification and response will be forwarded to the appropriate town agency (i.e. department of public works, conservation commission etc.). If the grievance is not resolved at this level it will be progressed to the next level.

STEP 2:

A written grievance will be submitted to the Town Administrator. Assistance in writing the grievance will be available to all individuals. All written grievances will be responded to within ten working days by the Town Administrator. If the grievance is not resolved at this level it will progress to the next level.

STEP 3:

If the grievance is not satisfactorily resolved by the Town Administrator, the written grievance will be forwarded to the Board of Selectmen for resolution, with whom local authority for final grievance resolution lies.

APPENDIX G: ADA Self-Evaluation Report of Outdoor Recreational Facilities

Part 1 – Administrative Requirements

I. ADA Coordinator Information

a. Name and Contact Information

William Sanborn
Building Inspector
Town of Essex
30 Martin Street
Essex MA 01929

Phone: (978) 768-2514

E-mail: wsanborn@essexma.org

b. Appointed by the Essex Board of Selectmen

II. Grievance Procedure – Town of Essex – for Citizens and Employees

EQUAL ACCESS TO OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION FACILITIES AND ACTIVITIES

TOWN OF ESSEX - AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

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Copies of the complaint, grievance, request for program policy interpretation or clarification and response will be forwarded to the appropriate town agency (i.e. department of public works, conservation commission etc.). If the grievance is not resolved at this level it will be progressed to the next level.

STEP 2:

A written grievance will be submitted to the Town Administrator. Assistance in writing the grievance will be available to all individuals. All written grievances will be responded to

APPENDIX G: ADA Self-Evaluation Report of Outdoor Recreational Facilities

within ten working days by the Town Administrator. If the grievance is not resolved at this level it will progress to the next level.

STEP 3:

If the grievance is not satisfactorily resolved by the Town Administrator, the written grievance will be forwarded to the Board of Selectmen for resolution, with whom local authority for final grievance resolution lies.

III. Public Notice of Non-Discrimination

See attached copy of Notice published at Town Hall as of June 22, 2016.

Part 2 – Program Accessibility

Objective

ADA requirements seek to create or adapt sites, buildings and facilities so that they can be approached, entered, and used by persons with disabilities. This includes recreational facilities. The Massachusetts Architectural Access Board oversees the implementation of ADA requirements in Massachusetts and has adopted regulation that specifically describe how to provide access.

The ADA requirements for recreational facilities in Massachusetts are set forth at 521 CMR 19.00 **RECREATIONAL FACILITIES.**

19.1 GENERAL

Recreational facilities shall comply with 521 CMR, except as specified or modified in 521 CMR 19.00. Recreational facilities shall include but not be limited to courts, rinks, swimming pools, gymnasiums, stadiums, health and sports clubs, radio control facilities, whirlpools, jacuzzis, gyms, weightlifting areas, playgrounds, zoos, fairgrounds, beaches, piers, docks, bandstands, gazebos, parks, bowling alleys, picnic areas, video arcades and campsites. All areas open to and used by the public, including but not limited to locker rooms, shower facilities, saunas, steam rooms, sun-tanning rooms, weight rooms, aerobics and dance rooms, tennis.

The Division of Conservation Service's Open Space and Recreation Plan Workbook provides additional guidance to communities regarding ADA access for recreational facilities. The Workbook emphasizes that the objective is to provide an accessible system of recreational facilities rather than to have every individual facility be accessible.

I. Facility Inventory

a. Overview

The Town of Essex owns and maintains three major outdoor recreation facilities: 1) the Centennial Grove off of Centennial Grove Road, 2) Memorial Park off of Shepard Memorial Drive, and 3) Clammers' and Front Beaches off of Conomo Point Road. All areas have some degree of ADA accessibility.

APPENDIX G: ADA Self-Evaluation Report of Outdoor Recreational Facilities

b. Table of Results / Physical Obstacles Identified

- i. Water Facilities: the Town does not own or operate outdoor water facilities covered by 521 CMR 19.00 such as swimming pools and Jacuzzis
- ii. Bowling Alleys: Not Applicable
- iii. Locker Rooms: No public locker rooms exist at the Town's outdoor recreational facilities
- iv. Campsite: Essex does not operate public campsites.
- v. Picnic Areas: An extensive picnic area is provided at the Centennial Grove and picnicking is available at the other sites as well.
 1. Centennial Grove: the picnic facilities at Centennial Grove include some tables with unobstructed ends. These tables are located in level, grassed areas that provide access from the accessible parking spaces nearby.
 2. Beaches: Clammers' Beach has accessible parking immediately adjacent to the beach and features a gradual drop from the parking area, across beach sand, and into the tidal flat. A picnic table is available with open ends. Front Beach includes a vehicular ramp that may be used to drive down onto the beach itself. No tables are available at Front Beach.
 3. Neighborhood Parks: Memorial Park allows for convenient ADA access on paved roads and sidewalks. The park is primarily used for sporting events and no picnic tables are available. The park also includes a fully-accessible public restroom facility.
- vi. Playgrounds
 1. Memorial Park: the park includes a separate playground that features an accessible path to the play area pit. The pit has wood chips that allow a wheelchair to roll to the play equipment and the equipment itself has some accessible features. The playground is conveniently located near accessible parking and the accessible restroom facility. The DPW maintains the facility, including refreshment of wood chips and maintenance of the equipment.
 2. School Playgrounds:
 - a. Essex Elementary School: This property does include a playground. However, the facility is not under the care of the Town. Rather, since Essex is part of the Manchester Essex Regional School District, the District operates and maintains the playground. Convenient accessible parking is available and some playground elements are accessible over appropriate wood chips.

APPENDIX G: ADA Self-Evaluation Report of Outdoor Recreational Facilities

vii. Public Bathroom Facilities

1. Memorial Park: Fully accessible men's and women's restrooms are located conveniently on paved paths near accessible parking within the park.
2. Centennial Grove: Standard portable toilets.
3. Clammers' Beach: Standard portable toilet.

viii. Marine facilities and ramps

The Town oversees four major landings that provide public access to the water. All of these landings were established in Colonial times so they pre-date the enactment of the Americans with Disabilities Act. The Town is aware of ADA/AAB requirements for these facilities and plans to apply them to new potential facilities such as a public Board walk along the Essex River that may be built adjacent to Main Street and a public park with a ramp and floats that will likely be built at Conomo Point.

ix. Spectator Access

1. Ball fields at both Memorial Park and the Centennial Grove have accessible routes to the prime viewing areas and ADA parking spaces near the fields.

c. Narrative of results

The open space and recreation facilities and activities as a comprehensive system substantially comply with the American with Disabilities Act. The Town plans to make access improvements to increase the number of facilities that are accessible and to meet new ADA access standards as facilities are upgraded.

d. New Techniques / Standards to consider

New standards adopted since the 2007 Open Space and Recreation Plan include:

521 CMR 19.00: **RECREATIONAL FACILITIES** (adopted 1/27/2006)

ADA and ABA Accessibility Guidelines for Buildings and Facilities: Chapter 10: Recreation Facilities. *Published in the Federal Register July 23, 2004 and amended August 5, 2005.*

e. ID Physical Obstacles to Address

See table that follows for a description of necessary changes, a schedule for implementation of the changes and the identification of the person responsible individual to implement changes.

II. Employment Practices

- a. See Section 4.10 of the Town of Essex Personnel Rules and Regulations at the Town website (www.essexma.org – use the Town Policies link on the home page).

APPENDIX G: ADA Self-Evaluation Report of Outdoor Recreational Facilities

List of Proposed Improvements and Schedule

Location	Improvement	Responsible Staff	Timeframe
Centennial Grove	Complete Renovation or Replacement of Folsom Pavilion (structure is somewhat accessible presently but renovation/replacement will feature full compliance for structure and environs)	Board of Selectmen and Town Administrator	Spring 2017 (contingent upon funding by Town Meeting in November of 2016)
Essex Causeway	Accessible Boardwalk Along Essex River (Route 133 underwent full ADA upgrade recently – which will be complemented by the boardwalk, if constructed)	Board of Selectmen and Town Administrator	2017-2018 (contingent upon Governor’s Office releasing funds earmarked within a recent Transportation Bond Bill)
Conomo Point	Construction of Waterfront Park with Ramp and Floats (this new facility will meet all ADA requirements)	Board of Selectmen and Town Administrator	Project is funded and is in design stage. Completion is estimated at Memorial Day, 2017.

APPENDIX G: ADA Self-Evaluation Report of Outdoor Recreational Facilities

NOTICE OF COMPLIANCE WITH THE AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (28 CFR 35.106)

In accordance with the requirements of Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, The Town of Essex does not discriminate on the basis of disability in the admission, access, or operations of its programs, services, activities or facilities. In accordance with Title II of the (ADA), when viewed in their entirety, Town of Essex government programs, services, activities and facilities are readily accessible to and usable by qualified individuals with disabilities.

Employment: The Town does not discriminate on the basis of disability in its hiring or employment practices and complies with all regulations promulgated by the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission under Title I of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Effective Communication: The Town will generally, upon request, provide appropriate aids and services leading to effective communication for qualified individuals with disabilities so they can participate equally in the Town's programs, services, and activities, including qualified sign language interpreters, documents in Braille, and other ways of making information and communications accessible to individuals with speech, hearing, or vision impairments.

Modifications to Policies and Procedures: The Town will make reasonable modifications to its policies, practices and programs to ensure that individuals with disabilities have an equal opportunity to enjoy all Town programs, services, and activities. For example, individuals with service animals are welcomed in Town offices, even where pets are generally prohibited.

The Town will not place a surcharge on a particular individual with a disability or any group of individuals with disabilities to cover the cost of providing auxiliary aids and services or reasonable modifications of policy, such as retrieving items from locations that are open to the public but are not accessible to persons who use Wheelchairs.

The ADA does not require the Town to take any action that would fundamentally alter the nature of its programs or services, or impose an undue financial or administrative burden.

The Town's Building Inspector has been designated to ensure the coordination of Town's compliance with the ADA, including the investigation of any complaint alleging Title II discrimination. The Town has adopted an internal grievance procedure providing for prompt and equitable resolution of complaints alleging discrimination on the basis of disability in violation of the U.S. Department of Justice regulations implementing Title II of the ADA. This Procedure has been developed to comply with 28 CFR 35.107 (b). Complaints that a County program, service, activity or facility is not accessible to individuals with disabilities should be directed to the Town's ADA Administrator as listed in the grievance procedure.

APPENDIX D

2010 LONG TERM PLANNING COMMITTEE SURVEY AND RESULTS



Town of Essex Long-Term Planning Survey

June 2010

2010 LTPC Survey - Highlights

- The unique/natural beauty of Essex is viewed as the most important attribute contributing to the character of the town. In line with this, ‘increased focus on environmental protection and preservation of natural resources’ is viewed as *highly* important. More than three-quarters of respondents ranked ‘management of natural, historic and recreational resources’ in their top three priorities for the town.
- Overall familiarity with town planning programs is fairly low, and as a result, satisfaction with these programs is moderate at best. A quarter of respondents indicate they are not familiar enough with programs to rate their satisfaction with them. While getting residents engaged in planning programs can be challenging, there is clearly an opportunity to increase awareness of the programs underway/being proposed.
- Not surprisingly, resolving the Conomo Point issue is also rated as highly important. Despite mixed viewpoints about whether the town should retain, lease or sell the land, there was vast agreement that *Resident* access to the river/waterfront should be improved. This viewpoint was also expressed in numerous verbatim comments.
- While nearly all of the projects presented as part of the ‘Essex Village Initiative’ elicited strong interest, the coordinated design plan, a walking path/bike path and the creation of a causeway dock & boardwalk were of most interest. There were also several comments submitted related to how an improved causeway area will increase pride in the town, help draw more tourism and lead to increased revenue for town businesses.

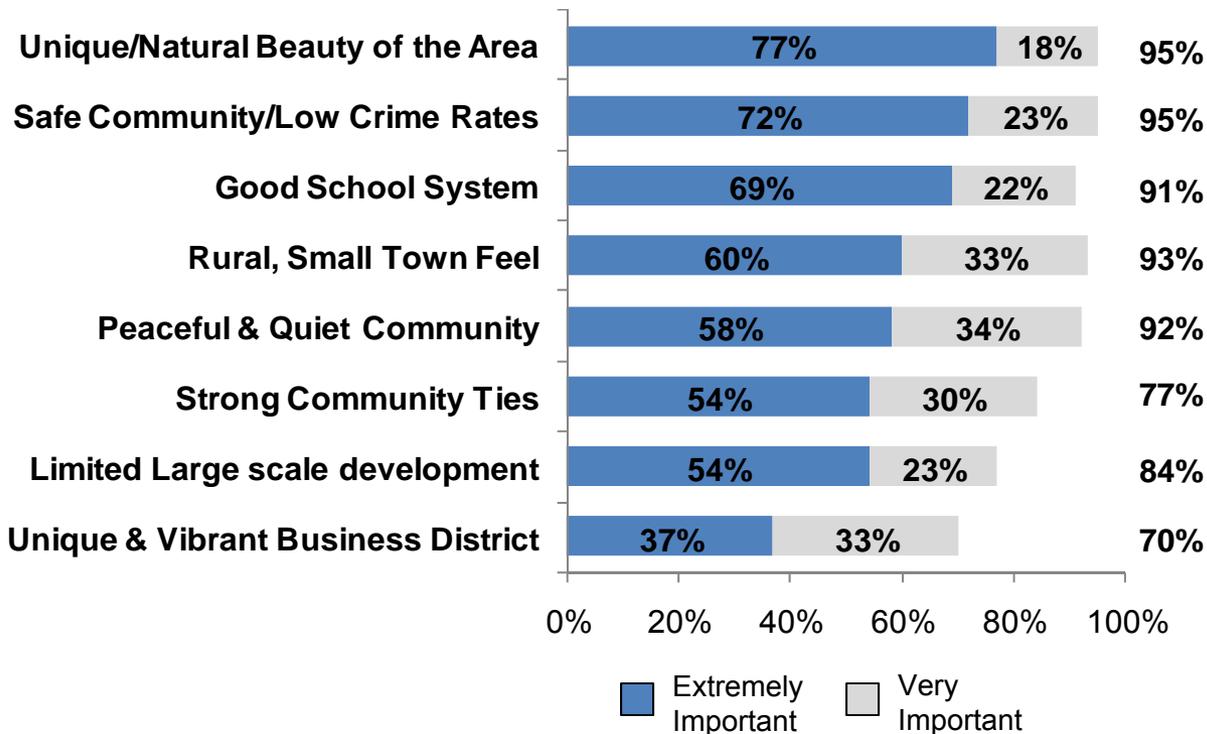
Most Important Long Term Planning Issues

Natural , Historic & Recreational Resources	Town Facilities	Town Housing	Community Services	Economic Development	Transportation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Increased focus on environmental protection and open space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Improving roads, sidewalk, crosswalks •Improving public safety facilities (fire/police station) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Availability of Elderly housing •Availability & access to affordable housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •School system •Public safety services (fire, police) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Improving the down town business district •Promoting patronage of local businesses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Pedestrian safety •Public parking

Town Character

The natural beauty of the area and low crime rates are viewed as the most important town characteristics. Other important elements include the town's shipbuilding history and the diversity of people living here.

Importance of Town Characteristics



Additional Elements that Contribute to Character

"Shipbuilding, Schooner history"

"We moved to Essex because it has a terrific feel about it and a natural beauty which is free of the hustle & bustle of other Cape Ann towns."

"Diversity of people"

"The historical buildings really add to the "Old New England" feel of the town and I believe we should have a historical district that preserves this aspect of the town."

"Essex is one big neighborhood, residents take care of each other."

"Hassle free nature of town"

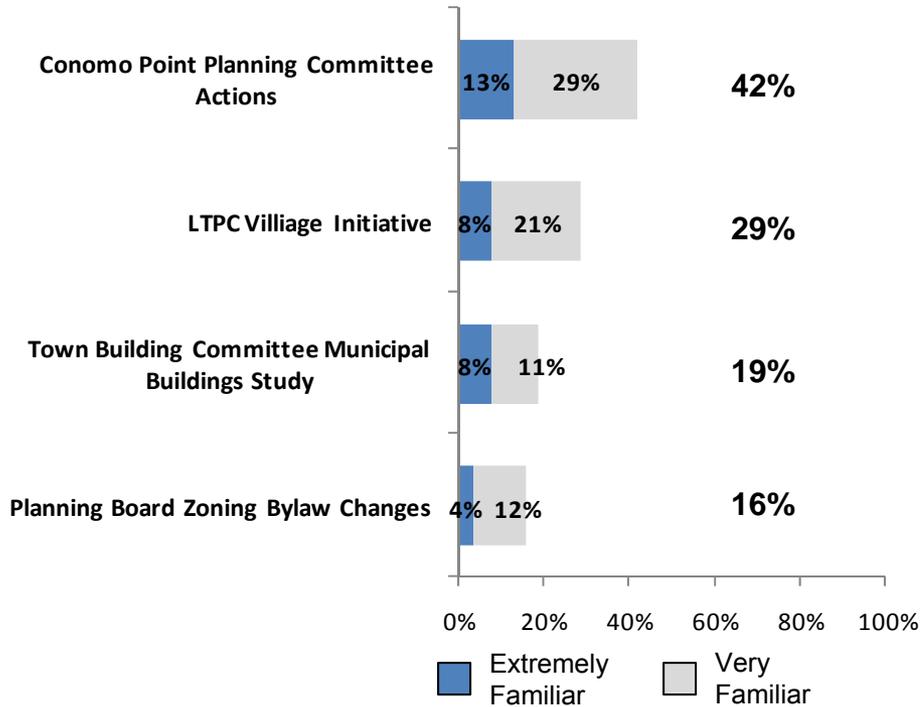
"Traditional New England seacoast community"

"Destination for antiques, dining"

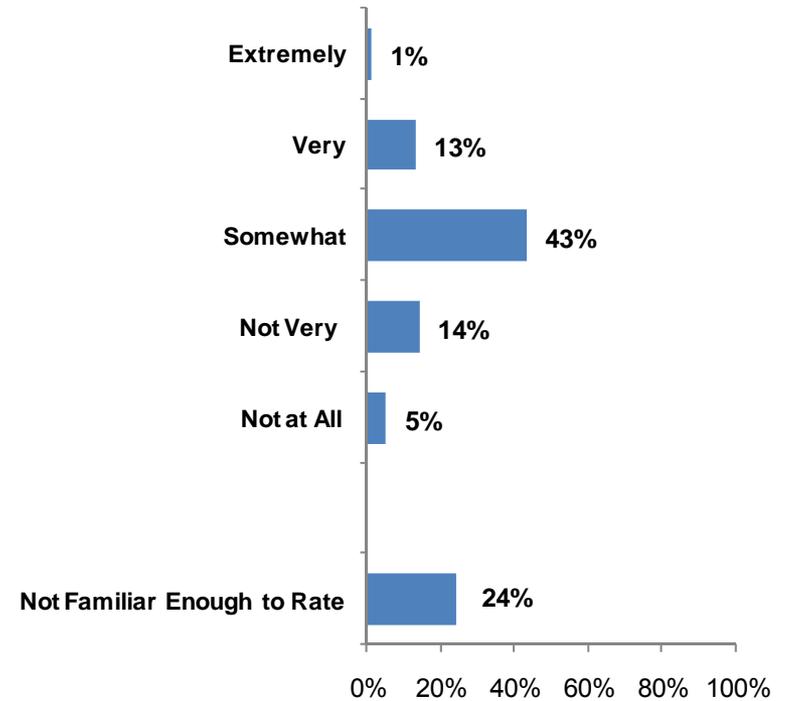
Familiarity & Satisfaction with Planning Programs

Familiarity with town planning programs is low. As a result most express moderate to low satisfaction with these programs.

Familiarity with Town Planning Programs



Satisfaction with Town Planning Programs



Ranking of Planning & Development Issues

Managing our natural, historic and recreational resources is deemed most important. The majority of respondents had this in their top three planning and development priorities.

Importance of Planning & Development Issues (Ranking with 1 = Most Important & 7 = Least Important)

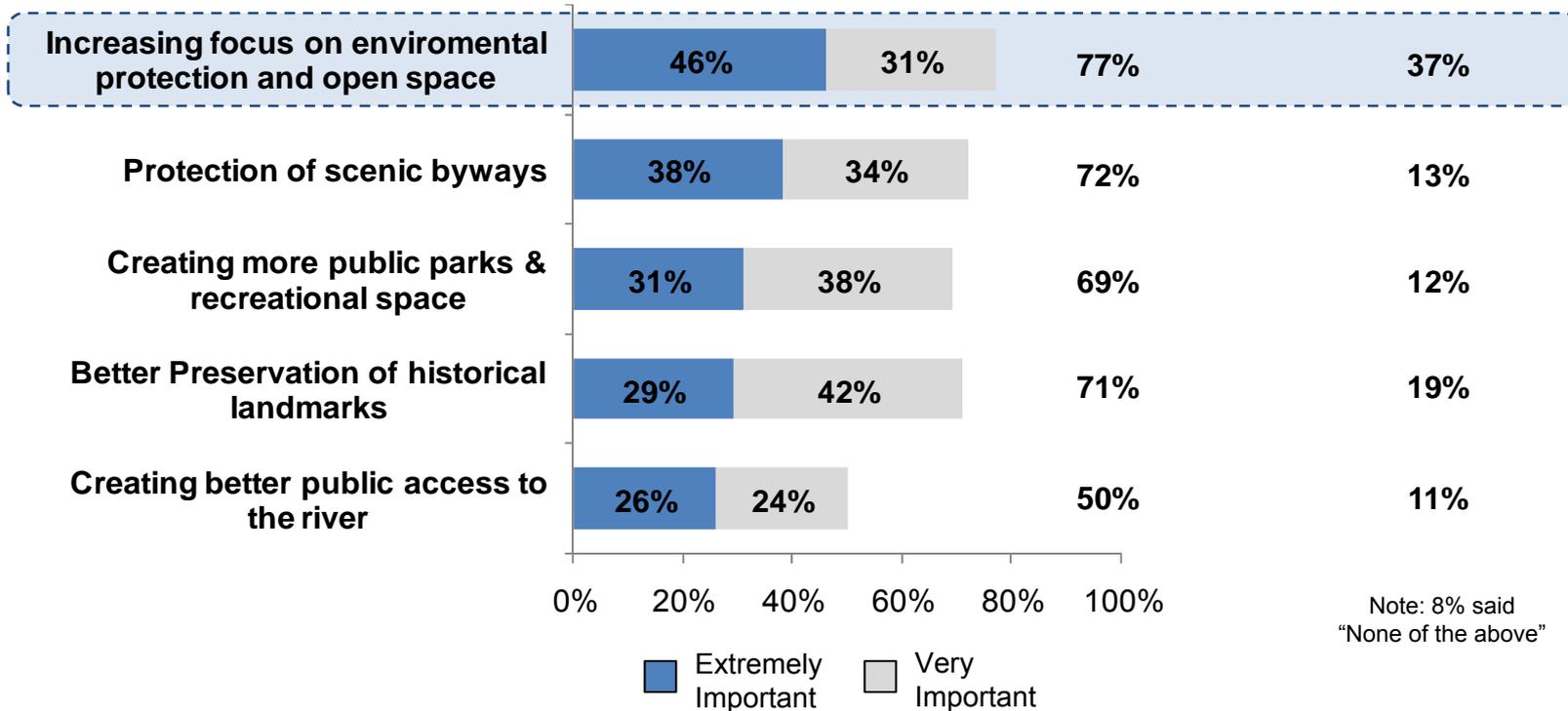
	Average Score	Percent Ranked "1, 2 or 3"
Management of Essex's natural, historic, and recreational resources	2.37	77%
Resolution of Conomo Point Planning	2.91	69%
Community Services (library, senior services, school system)	2.98	66%
Encouragement of economic development (tourism, business district)	3.81	43%
Development of the town's facilities (roads, buildings)	3.77	45%
Development of transportation options (public transport, pedestrian access, parking)	5.11	20%
Availability of mixed stock, affordable, and multi-use housing	5.28	22%

Natural, Historic & Recreational Resources

The natural beauty of the area and low crime rates are viewed as the most important town characteristics. Other important elements include the town’s shipbuilding history and the diversity of people living here.

Importance of Natural, Historic & Recreational Resources

Most Important

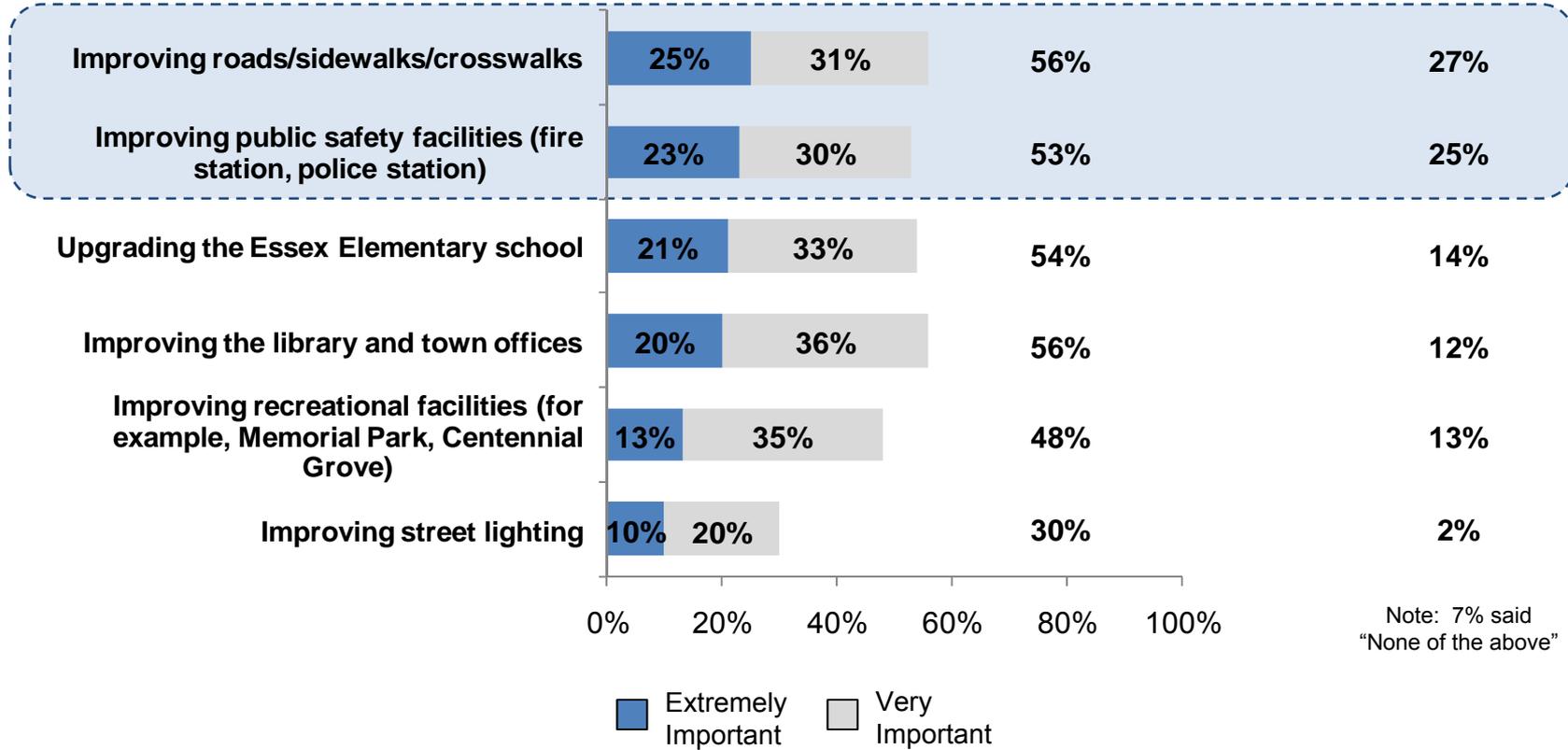


Town Facilities

Making upgrades to nearly all the town facility components listed is considered important. However, when forced to choose, improvements to roads/sidewalks/crosswalks as well as public safety facilities were rated most important.

Importance of Town Facilities

Most Important

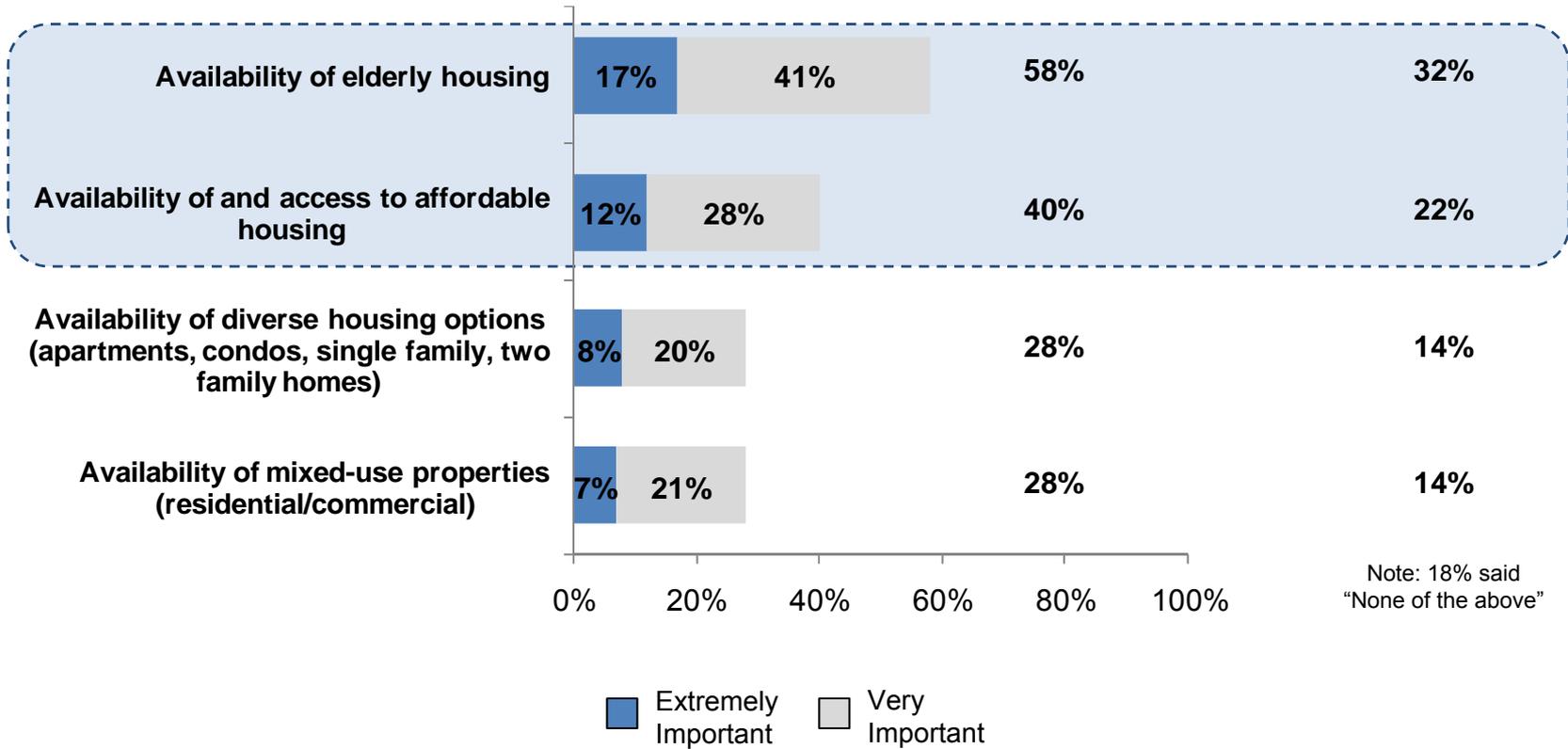


Town Housing

Availability of elderly housing is viewed as most important, but access to affordable housing was a close second.

Importance of Town's Housing

Most Important

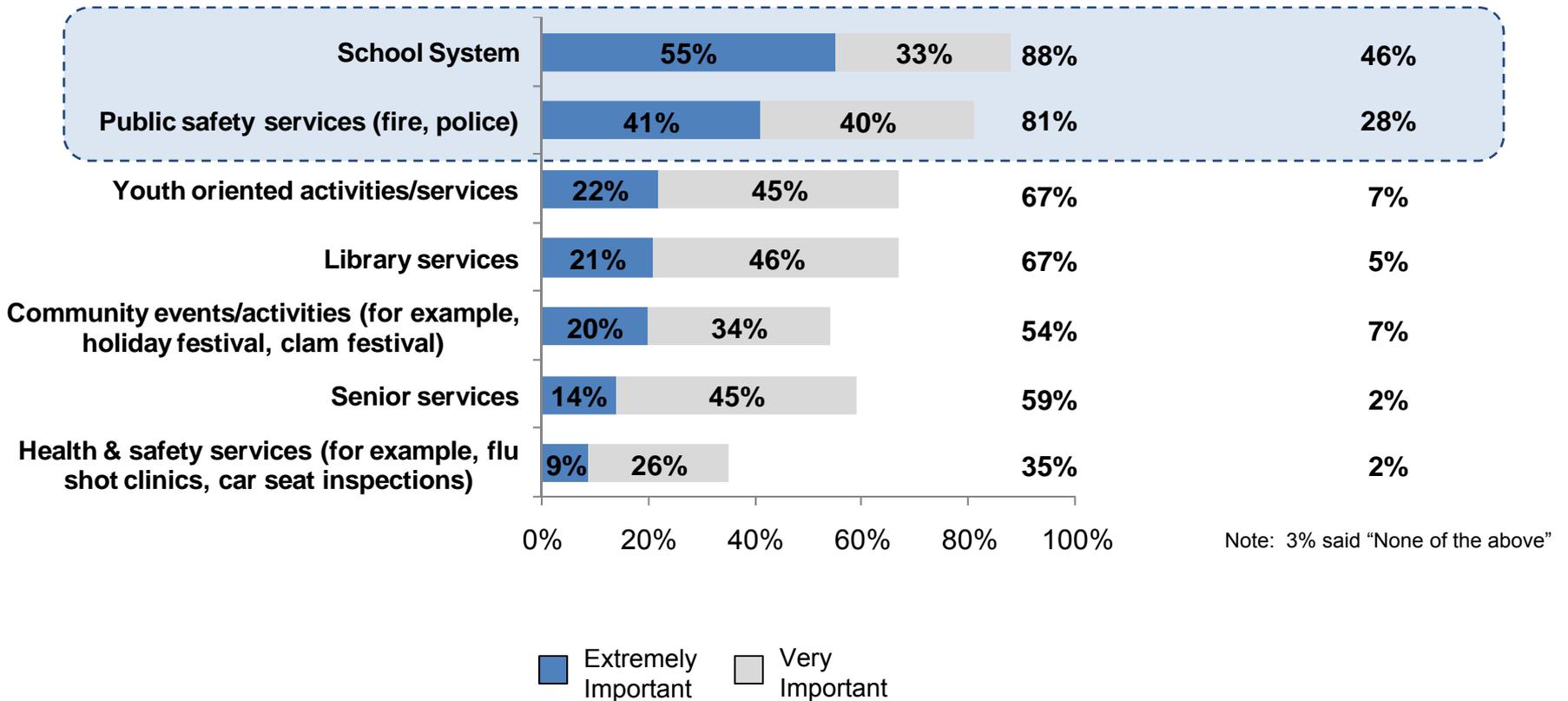


Community Services

The school system was viewed as the most important 'community service', with nearly half of respondents rating it so. Just over a quarter believe public safety services are most important.

Importance of Community Services

Most Important

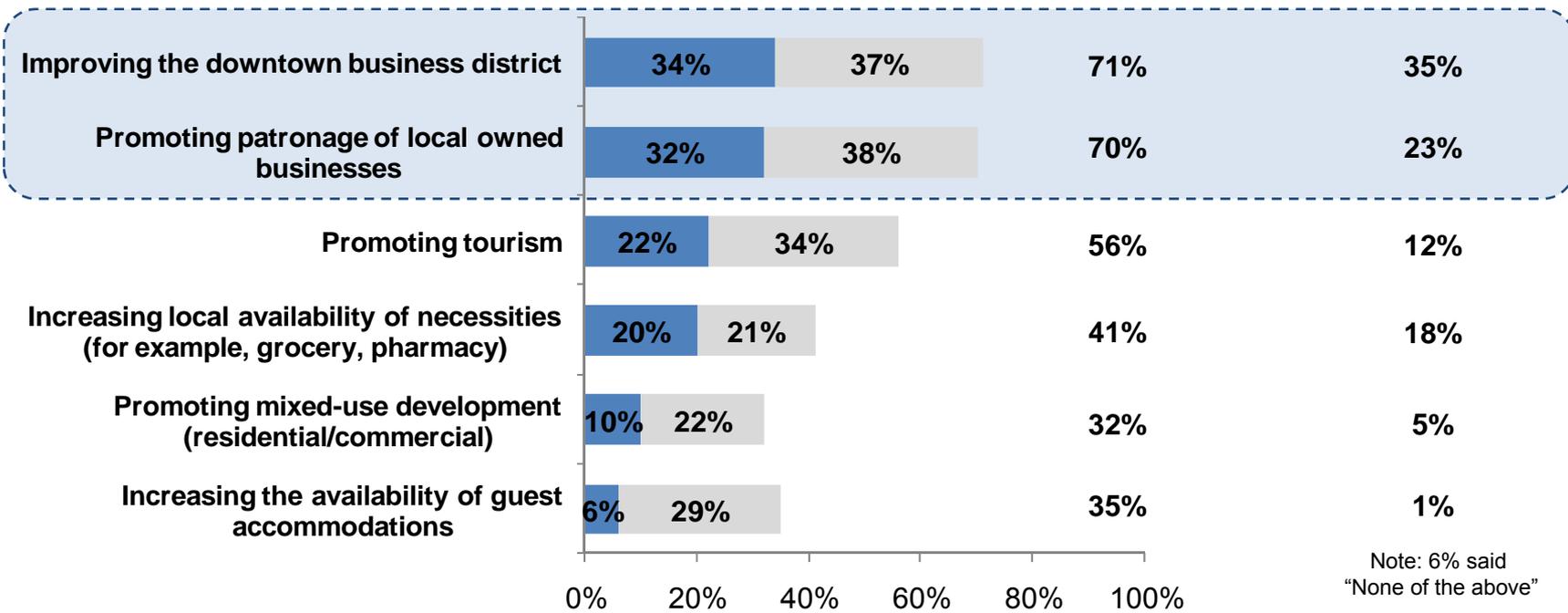


Economic Development

Improving the village business district and promoting patronage of local business were clear winners. There were mixed feelings about promoting tourism. Several comments alluded to concerns over increased tourism resulting in more traffic/congestion/crime, particularly during the summer season.

Importance of Economic Development

Most Important



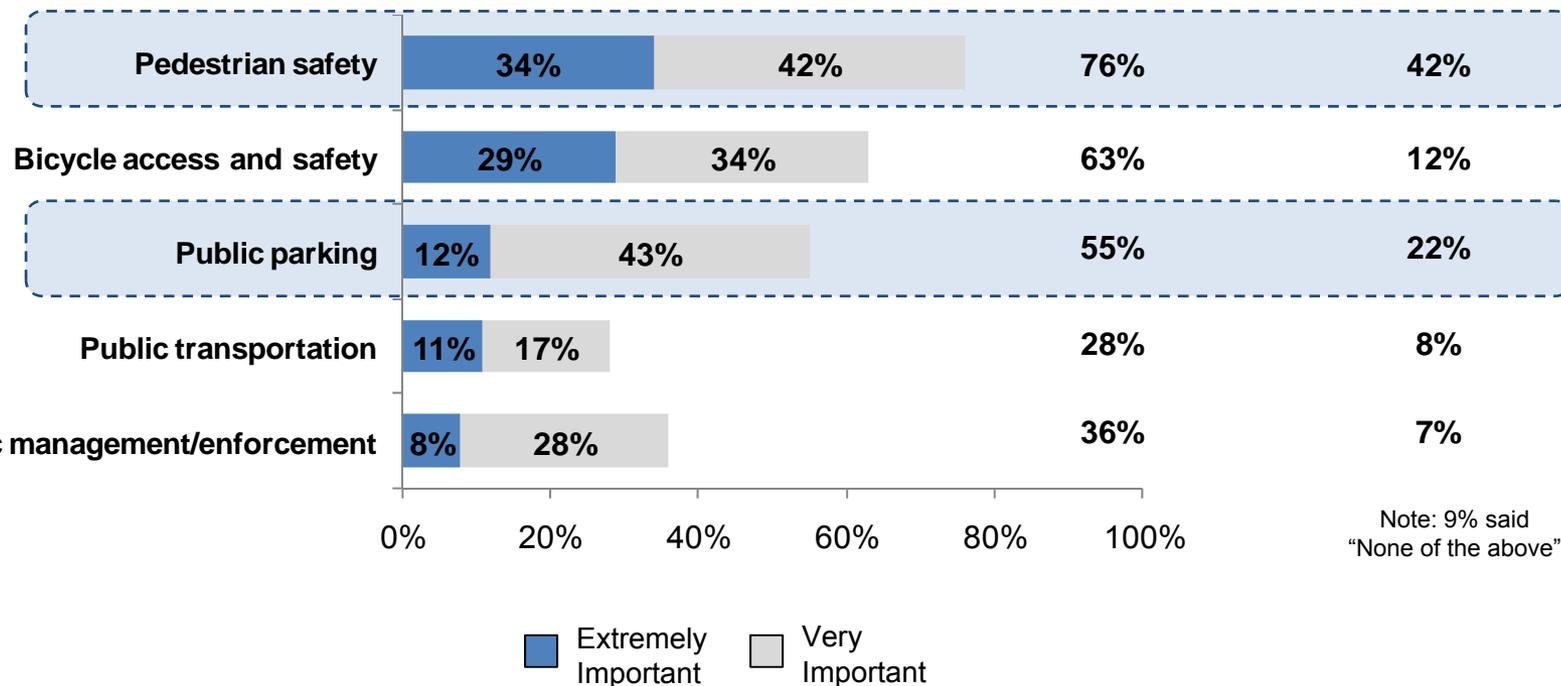
■ Extremely Important
 ■ Very Important

Transportation

Pedestrian safety and public parking were the most important components among the transportation issues.

Importance of Transportation

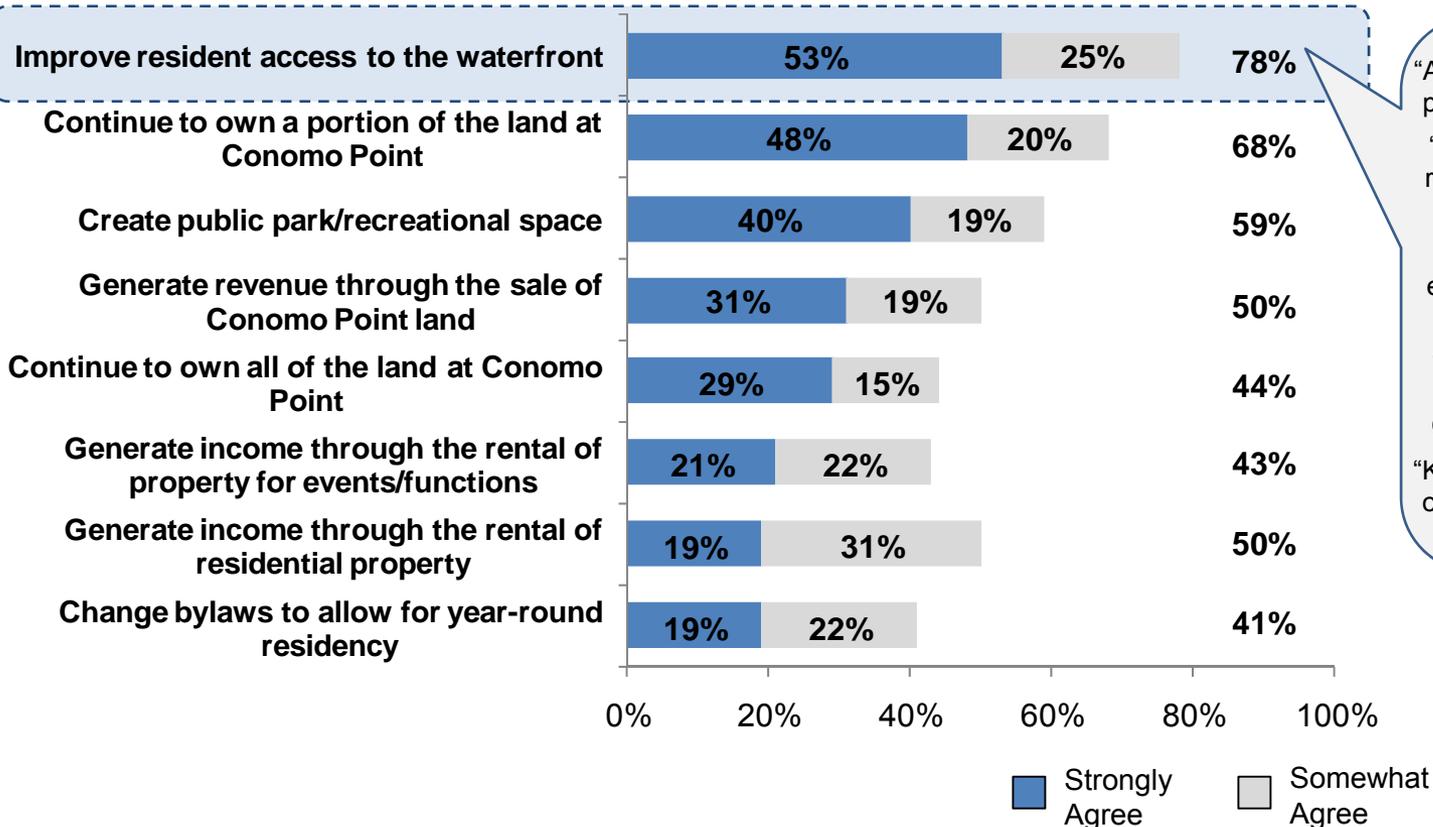
Most Important



Conomo Point Options

While viewpoints on the future of Conomo Point continue to be mixed, the majority agree that there should be improved access to the river for Essex residents.

Agreement with Conomo Point Options



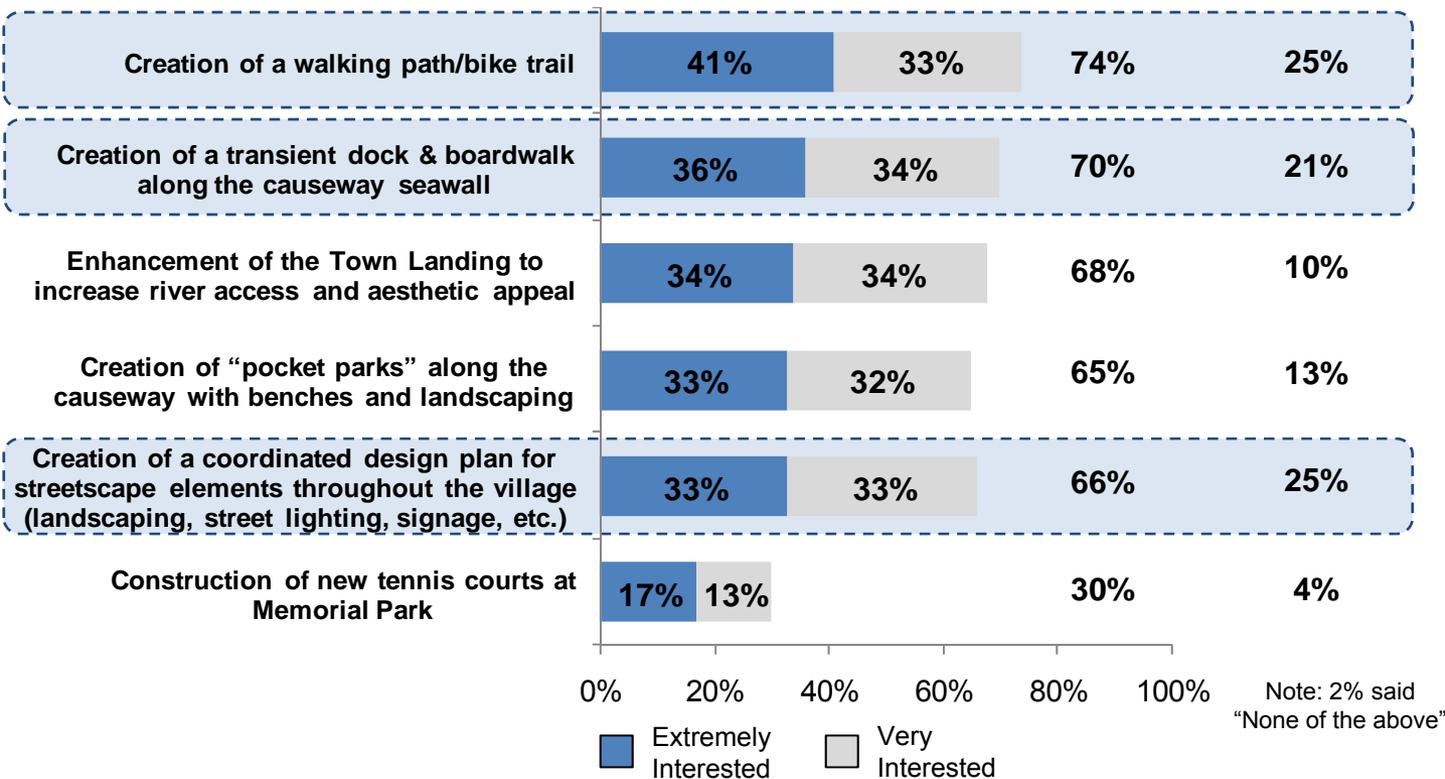
“A public area at the end of Conomo point would be great for residents.”
 “It is a town resource that all town residents should be able to enjoy.”
 “Efforts should be made with the Point’s residences to work out expanded access for townspeople to the waterfront.”
 “Create public boat ramp access, boat slips/docks, and beach at Conomo point with more parking”
 “Keep Conomo pt. for the enjoyment of the town. It is the most beautiful place that the town owns.”

LTPC Essex Village Initiative

Most of the projects proposed for the Village Initiative garnered strong interest, particularly the coordinated design plan, walking/bike path and the creation of a causeway dock & boardwalk.

Interest in Essex Village Initiative Projects

Most Interest



"A bike path between Essex and Manchester would promote a safe environment for children, road races, and access to the Manchester/Essex woods."

"Transient slips would enable boaters from all over to come and stay awhile"

"The causeway always looks like the back side of a boat yard, spruce it up and fix Town Hall, it's a disgrace"

"I think Essex is a beautiful town but the downtown area doesn't showcase that at all."

"The combination of proper sidewalks, parking, and landscaping in the downtown area would greatly increase tourism and thereby benefit local businesses."

**Two topics of interest mentioned in verbatim comments that may be considered for future planning activities include:
Retaining/maintaining the Grove cottage & Planning for the upcoming bicentennial**

Respondent Profile

	Percent
Age:	
18-24	3%
25-34	3%
35-44	22%
45-54	24%
55-64	26%
65+	22%
Residency:	
Year round	83%
Seasonal	13%
Non-resident	5%
Length of Residency:	
Less than 2 years	2%
2-5 years	6%
6-10 years	14%
11-25 years	35%
25 years +	43%
Have Children under 18 in household	39%
Essex Business Owner	27%

Appendix: Methodology

Objectives:

- Gather feedback about the issues deemed most important for the future planning programs for the town
- Insights will be used to drive the strategy and vision for the future needs and development Essex

Methodology:

- Online survey posted on the Essex town website
- Paper copies provided at the Town Hall/Library/Sr. Center
- Survey fielded from May 3rd – June 15th 2010
- Received 220 completed surveys (192 online & 28 paper)

Appendix – Additional Comments about Town Character (Q.2)

- Small , diverse town feel with many citizens feeling a commitment to be involved with town government.
- Hasn't been too gentrified yet
- Maritime link/river connection
- Historic, shelling fishing
- Ties to the ocean
- Nature
- River and marshes
- More public access to water beaches
- Open space
- Water Access
- Socio-economic diversity
- Shipbuilding. Schooner history. Connection to history. And the future: we need real families growing up in town on a going fwd basis, with good schools (Essex schools have been inadequate for generations!) and jobs and careers here, rather than becoming a bedroom community for commuters, retirement home, and antique merchants.
- Access to boating, beaches etc.
- Transportation network: maintain good roadway surfaces, incorporate bike lanes, keep town roads stoplight-free. Conomo Point: maintain town-control of the natural treasure that is The Point.
- Mixed business uses
- One more thing: (survey submitted yesterday) as much as I appreciate the "marine" theme, the use of mooring blocks (at least that is what I think they are) at the major intersections around town (e.g. rte. 133 and southern/main streets as well as Winthrop and Western) seem a little unimaginative and brutish. Intersections at either end on Western Ave. could use some help too! How about replacing these with some combination of Cape Ann granite blocks and flower box arrangements?
- Diversity of people
- Protecting environment
- Sub-standard roads, few street lights and few sidewalks on secondary roads
- Maritime history
- Open space for recreation
- Not a suburb of Boston
- Waterfront
- All of the above attracted us to Essex. Although it took over ten years we are now starting to see some improvements.
- We moved to Essex because it has a terrific feel about it and a natural beauty which is free of the hustle and bustle of other Cape Ann towns

Appendix – Additional Comments about Town Character (Q.2)

- With so many small businesses that have been in town I feel it is important to limit the ability to do so. I believe that has made up the unique character of Essex. I believe that when people can live and work where they live is important.
- Any aspect of its architecture that adds to the historic and significant character of the Town
- Strong historical elements - shipbuilding and supporting industries, etc.
- Historical elements - shipbuilding and supporting industries, etc. More easy access to river for residents
- Lots of undeveloped open space
- Play up the Lake Area
- Unique individuals
- Protect the river, out of town boaters are ruining it
- Exclusion of the Conomo Point planning process to owners of cottage at the Point.
- Traditional New England seacoast community
- Historic preservation
- Focus on Marine history
- The historical buildings really add to the "Old New England" feel of the town and I believe we should have a historical district that preserves this aspect of the town. I also believe we should use our waterfront more effectively.
- Essex is one big neighborhood, residents take care of each other.
- Hassle free nature of town
- Friendly, helpful town employees and residents
- Good police and fire and town employees
- Adequate open space for wildlife
- Historical boat building, clamming, etc.
- Having a 'down town' would be nice
- Historical communities
- River, heritage
- Quality recreational facilities for children and adults
- The people (locals); Essex is unique. It is one big neighborhood.
- Viable, real business so that Essex isn't just a tourist/bedroom community

Appendix – Additional Comments about Town Character (Q.2)

- Active Town Support of the Museum, public tennis courts, other public spaces.
- Rural beautification. Public plantings. Making the causeway a causeway and not a throughway.
- Letting people have their home occupations
- Destination for antiques, dining
- Varied opportunities for civic engagement
- Retail diversity
- Economic diversity
- I think it would be nice to develop the town center more into an area that is a destination point...shops, restaurants, etc. It would also be nice if the town area were spruced up with nice sidewalks, lighting, etc. Manchester has a defined town center. Essex doesn't really have that. I don't think we need to compete with Manchester but having some sort of focal point on the town would be nice. If the police / fire were moved away from their current position and the strip was cleaned up / developed a little more I think that would be a good start.
- The diverse mix of people , the commitment to the town shared by same
- Community events/social opportunities
- Economic diversity...not a bedroom community
- Local jobs for local residents
- Conomo Point
- The business district is unique, but far from what it used to be years ago!
- More user friendly - out of town boater can tie up for a walk, dinner, etc. Baseball bathrooms open full time Apr 1 - Nov 1
- Preservation of historical landmarks
- Historical homes, historical businesses
- Swap Shop! Bldg town hall/library; Chebacco Lake; seafood restaurants, The Grove
- Well maintained streets (especially Main Street)
- Excellent Senior citizen club
- Don't Sell Conomo Pt
- Eliminate the junk people have in their yards
- Protection of its scenic beauty and country roads and open places. Keep Conomo pt. for the enjoyment of the town. It is the most beautiful place that the town owns.
- Essex is unique, it is one big neighborhood! People know & care about each other. Volunteer fire & ambulance are gifts!

Appendix: Additional Comments about Long Term Planning(Q.21)

- While all these ideas are worthwhile, and I applaud the effort that has been put forth, my concerns are the costs involved in these projects. We need to put an equal amount of time and effort in pursuing avenues that will increase revenues to the town.
- Create a mixed use at Conomo Pt that expands recreation, parking, open space and eliminates the domination of that space by tenants. New leases should restrict rentals or occupancy to 4 months to eliminate the voters from CP ruining town politics with single issue 'block' voting. Essex need not change lets leave it alone for the most part just make CP a resource for all of us.
- Make Conomo Point accessible for all and anyone who is year round needs to have that stopped. That was a mistake needing correction. If any sales, limit to 20 - 30 homes, seasonal only.
- Creation of a zoning district or overlay that provides different criteria for parking, uses, dimensional regulations, street trees, etc. from the remainder of the town zoning requirements.
- Come together as a friendly community
- DO NOT SELL THE GROVE HOUSE....
- The problem with increasing Essex's visibility by increasing tourism is it may decrease our safety and break ins. We need a balance.
- Lumping roads and buildings into one category is misleading. We can't afford to construct new buildings now, Also, lumping public safety buildings in with the need for actual public safety is also misleading. Yes to public safety and the people who provide it. NO to constructing new buildings now to house these departments.
- No one has a clue as what Essex will look like in 25 years. The revenue from renting at Conomo has a stabilizing effect on the town finances.
- We need less tourist and business promotion so that the worsening traffic and congestion situation can be addressed. We moved here because we loved the river and marshes and quiet and now feel like we are in the middle of North Conway on weekends, especially in the summer. We hate the traffic, loud motorcycles and loud boats in the river. We need noise enforcement - maybe new bylaw - but certainly some effort by police. We need to stop letting merchants have people park on Rt 133 - get rid of all the parking spaces between the Village and the bridge and between Dunkin Donuts and Southern Ave. I am tired of dodging vehicles coming at me on the wrong side of the road due to parked cars.
- It would be good to make Essex's downtown village area a place that people want to stay a bit longer instead of driving by perhaps they can walk and take in the river and shops. Overnight guest accommodations will allow for more people to visit and shop in Essex creating a revenue stream that has been redirected from potential revenue loss project considerations that have been discussed. Creating office park environments that can have a symbiotic relation with nature and the community can be done if planned well. Note where the old Mullen office complex is in Wenham. Hard to see from Route 22 even in the winter. Give more options for people to work and live in the same location allows for a sustainable lifestyle in conjunction with a sustainable environment. Keep agricultural activities alive and vibrant showing that capitalistic gains can be had from growing food. Population is increasing and we need to take every opportunity to feed them. Always maintain the look & feel that Essex has and complement it with development.
- Please consider the role of the town's bicentennial in your planning
- Aesthetics would be enjoyed all year and encourage thru traffic to stop.
- The town is so disjointed. There are too many committees doing the same thing. Too much interest in "the bottom line" overlooking what is good for the town.

Appendix: Additional Comments about Long Term Planning(Q.21)

- Historical Markers and signage showing importance of causeway and shipbuilding.
- I think walking/bike path, as well as creating a 'boardwalk' and more pedestrian friendly causeway would bring a lot of positive tourism to Essex.
- Long Term planning... (1) Re the Village concept: we do not live in Bearskin Neck or Epcot. Coordinated design? Good grief.
(2) How about doing something about the ridiculously loud motorcycles roaring down 133 all summer nights... have YOU tried sleeping with the windows open listening to fat drunks on Harleys a mile away? (3) We should not be in the business of subsidizing exclusive waterfront housing at Conomo. Look at Little Neck Ipswich or Annisquam for examples of attractive year-round waterfront housing of similar density. Sell the land at market rates, no sweetheart deals, no grandfather giveaways. Collect the revenue, fix up the schools, village center and town waterfront, and watch tourism revenue and tax base improve going fwd. This is not rocket science.
- Once the land at Conomo Point is sold it is gone forever. This is only a one-time gain that will not protect the town for long from fiscal problems. The Robbins Rd land is remote and could easily be sold but to sell the land at Conomo Point itself is foolish. It is a town resource that all town residents should be able to enjoy. Also, there are real issues re: sewage. The congestion of homes and the number of year-round residents has really made that a huge issue. People who bought homes there in the last few years have deep pockets and are trying to influence the town citizens to let them keep their homes.
- Improve aesthetics with better signage regulation; enforcement of numbers of unregistered/inoperable autos allowed to be stored on residential lots (e.g. belcher street); minimum acreage requirements for housing horses. Consider development of kayak launch, along with restored tennis courts, behind memorial park; replacement of baseball scoreboard (as well as backstop) with similar-sized, ad-free, scoreboard that will blend with setting and not detract from marsh view. Bike trail should be designed connect communities: how about a beach-to-beach trail (singing beach -through Essex- to cranes beach).
- Overrides always seem to be about schools & public safety. Why not put together an override for the causeway and river enhancement.
- I believe we should settle the Conomo Point issue. Sell the lots to the home owners and continue to assure all residents of access to clammer's beach etc. I feel very welcome there and use it constantly although I don't live on the point.
- I am less interested in making Essex accessible to non-residents, and more supportive of measures to improve public safety...new fire & police depts., better library & town offices being built. River access is great, but not for non-Essex residents!
- There are many things from which the town could benefit. Sometimes it's tough to choose just one.
- While I answered it would be beneficial to have local availability of necessities, I would want it in small stores in town, not allow a large chain supermarket or CVS, etc. to be built on 133. I think we should maintain our small town quality of life while adding some much needed improvements.
- Tax/fee burden has risen sharply in recent years. this has been a necessary adjustment as we address critical problems. However, budget growth must be checked where possible and as feasible to continue essential services.
- Tear down those houses on Conomo point per order of two town meeting votes and two superior court decisions. This matter was settled in 1991. Carry out that agreement.
- Restore the town hall and do not build a new one!
- Pedestrian safety is lacking in this town! Traffic is too fast and the volume of heavy trucks passing throughout to other towns on Cape Ann present a danger to the general public. Police should be more focused on public safety by slowing traffic down.

Appendix: Additional Comments about Long Term Planning(Q.21)

- First of all thank you for putting this survey together. Long overdue. I feel that Essex has great potential to offer both residents and visitors a special experience. Things I would like to see happen are.... Bury the utilities on the causeway. No matter how beautiful we make it those ugly poles will be a black eye on an otherwise great improvement. A bike path between Essex and Manchester would promote a safe environment for children, road races, and access to the Manchester/Essex woods. Transient Slips would enable boaters from all over to come and stay awhile . I can't tell you how many times people have asked if there was a place to tie up their boat for lunch. Conomo point should be sold and developed. A public area at the end of Conomo point would great for residents. Concerts, weddings etc. Think of Tucks point in Manchester. Finally I would love to see more businesses and different businesses in town. Needing to drive to Manchester for some basic things is not always convenient.
- I think Essex hasn't changed as much as other communities because of present by laws. It is EXTREMELY important not to violate the rights of present LAND owners.
- The Town is in dire need of revenues. It frightens me that we may be getting in over our heads. Let's consider well the potential for loss of revenues and look toward preservation of revenue sources.
- For years the town has very short on looking at the over all picture and planning for the future, often resulting in doing too little too late at excessive cost to the tax payers. I would be nice if for once the town leaders would try to do some far sighted planning on several fronts.
- I do not like a lot of development - it will change the feel of the town. I'd like to sell Conomo Point land to the homeowners and keep the house at Centennial Grove.
- Think outside the box
- How can the Town raise more revenue? We need more businesses that generate tax dollars. Too many antique shops, not enough diverse businesses to attract many different people.
- Require non-residents using the boat ramp to pay for access. Every other town requires this, why not Essex. This could generate some revenue to help maintain the parks, etc.
- Responsible financial planning
- How to slow down traffic entering from Ipswich.
- Making Essex part of the bike trail from Newburyport to Boston would encourage year around bike tourists.
- Sale of the Conomo Point land to those families who own houses located at the point would raise capital development funds for many other town priority development projects.
- I have concern for the fate of Conomo Pt. and Robbins Is. As a place of special historic architectural significance it should be preserved, with the income it generates from rental of the land or its sale going to the town. Efforts should be made with the Point's residences to work out expanded access for townspeople to the waterfront. When a house comes up for sale there, the town should consider purchasing it for use by the townspeople, something like a rec center. The "Point" community might even be willing to help maintain the building in exchange for the town's willingness to let the residents buy the land under their buildings (or continue to rent it.)
- ADDITION OF A WALKING/BIKE PATH FROM ESSEX TO MANCHESTER
- The combination of proper sidewalks, parking, and landscaping in the downtown area would greatly increase tourism and thereby benefit local businesses .

Appendix: Additional Comments about Long Term Planning(Q.21)

- Development of enhancements for historical assets in Essex—including Conomo Point—with tight restrictions on properties should the leases extend and an eye to restore the area and possibly make a link with Grant money for Historical districts. This may lead to a small revenue stream on top of rents and taxes.
- RE Conomo Point - Town residents should be informed that Essex owns 100+ acres of land. Only 20% of it is leased for private use. Town could enhance public benefits of its C.Pt. property by improving non-leased land, in addition to its current efforts to resolve town/tenant relations. Better maintenance of non-leased waterfront at C.Pt. could also improve Essex residents' access & enhance their overall experiences at Conomo Pt.
- Sidewalks around town are not listed here specifically, but they are such an important upgrade to allow for shopping and walking.
- Solid presentation of ideas, good team work from the committees! Essex demographics are varied and presentations should be explicit about the impact on the tax rate per household. Many residents are still without employment.
- Essex should stop emphasizing antique stores and restaurants. The town's future is not linked to those services. Develop a plan that will attract a major industry with good paying jobs. The children get a good education but must commute a distance to get suitable jobs. Attract a foundation or university that wants water access and have them mix use Conomo Point with town citizens. Essex is only town on North Shore without decent access to water and without decent jobs.
- Preserving the character, history, and landscape of Essex as well as much needed maintenance and improvement to public safety are of the utmost importance.
- There is a strong need for public parking for the village area as well as along the street (Rte. 133) for the local business & restaurants.
- Thank you for the opportunity to submit my thoughts.
- I recently moved into Essex, I do think the TD Bank, Pickering/Martin Street is a mess. The newly erected No Parking signs need to be enforced.
- Away from the highways with tree cover, a pharmacy and/or a grocery store are needed!
- Essex is an integral part of the North Shore mountain and road biking network. Pursuing development that allows for safer cycling through Essex would help to put it on the map as a national cycling destination (e.g. Moab Utah).
- Maintain the town owned building (cottage), at Centennial Grove for the citizens of Essex, EYC, etc., etc. Do not entertain selling it for the small sum of cash and lose it forever to private ownership. This includes all the town owned lands, buildings, etc. Be it Conomo Point, or other town holdings. As a homeowner in this town. I would rather pay more taxes, than to see the town sell off the very "Gems" that make Essex the wonderful town that it is.
- Skate board park/tennis/basketball--Can we seek out an other Hollywood Hit to build it!
- It would be great to have boat access the river from Conomo Pt ... parking, etc.
- The tennis courts which are in place are rarely used because of the shape they are in. Resurfacing them would serve the town better than creating entirely new courts.
- Essex will be defined by developers and others moving into town. Conservation of land and restriction of development should be a main focus - otherwise outsiders will take advantage of the lack of zoning in town. Create a downtown development zone and much more restrictive zoning outside of downtown. Look at Choate Street to see what unbridled development does to a rural community – almost all the farms have been developed or are in the process of being developed. What be the largest travesty is the development of the 133 corridor into more commercial prospects – perhaps the proceeds from the sale of a portion of the land at Conomo can be applied to conserving more land?

Appendix: Additional Comments about Long Term Planning(Q.21)

- Think Essex is a beautiful town but the downtown area doesn't showcase that at all. Making our downtown more like Manchester by the Sea with nice sidewalks, street lamps, landscaping, etc would increase the value of all Essex homes. In addition the town and local businesses would do better since more tourists would stay in the area and spend money. Doing these things is long overdue and my top priority for the town.
- Clarify and unify the zoning regulations so property values can be maintained. Keep taxes under control, encourage more to live here. If families can't be somewhat guaranteed that their homes will maintain their value, and if taxes can't be kept under control, they will choose Manchester over Essex to live. Lower taxes, same good school. Secondly: try to avoid these glacial-paced scenarios like the endless stalemate over Conomo Point, the eyesore empty lot next to the Village Market (that used to be an eyesore house), Bill Allen's property, etc.
- Please, please bury the wires going through the downtown area and consider spraying for mosquitoes.
- We need to finish Memorial Park by creating basketball, tennis and parking. We are extremely under-served by the town's existing recreational facilities for these sports. Finishing the work on Memorial Park would not only serve the youth and sportspeople of town but would also create a significant civic focal point and place of pride for townspeople.
- This town needs zones so that storefronts with residences above, home businesses, and really capitalizing on the historical value of this Village - there should be a historic district, for instance - we have such great 19 and 18th century homes.
- I know it is too late but those damn utility lines should be put underground at any cost and the whole causeway planted and landscaped for walking.
- Many years ago a family member asked the Town for help in dividing his land. They came up with a plan for several lots and a "park" in the middle. Years later when he went to give these lots to his grandchildren - the town said "sorry they are too small you can't use this plan. I don't feel the town should be able to restrict what you want to do on your own property if it falls within the law. As for Conomo Point. Instead of the selectman and groups like you talking about the loss of rent why not be honest and tell people about the money we have loss in taxes. We as a town have carried the area of town for many years. If we were allowed to tax these home as water front properties we would face greater loss of income. They have been living in one of the most beautiful areas of town and paying peanuts for taxes. The towns people should have better public access to the point.
- Create public boat ramp access, town-own boat slips/docks, and beach at Conomo point with more parking
- All of the above items would be nice, but I would say we need to focus on what is attainable and affordable. Priorities to our biggest responsibilities must come first.
- Better zoning laws to better control location of commercial development.
- I like the coordinated flower efforts, Halloween decorating etc... so all in town can participate in enhancing the look of the town.
- With respect to Conomo Pt, sell enough lots to avoid the DEP constraints on more than 10,000 gal/day sewage on Town owned land. Retain & lease remainder by gradation, short leases for waterfront lots, longer leases for second tier lots & 10 year leases for lots further away from water. Shift to seasonal only leases, but letting tenants in their only residence have year round life tenancy if septic and cistern systems approved. The gradation will allow enough time for appropriate due diligence in deciding ultimate use of Town owned lots.
- As an Essex taxpayer, I think it is morally wrong to force someone to abandon his/her home (re: Conomo issue).
- I feel the town needs to concentrate on fixing and maintaining what already exists.
- Small town charm is what brought us here, please preserve it. Bigger is not always better.

Appendix: Additional Comments about Long Term Planning(Q.21)

- The causeway always looks like the back side of a boat yard, spruce it up and fix Town Hall, it's a disgrace
- The cottage at the grove should be preserved and utilized = not sold! recommend leash law & animal officer - do something special with the abandoned Riverview/riverside restaurant causeway
- The town should capitalize on its location and character. A combination of the items in #19 should be seriously considered; make the town attractive, thereby generating income and building pride.
- Sell the land at Conomo so we can have better schools, police and fire offices and city hall and library. And maybe our taxes will not sky rocket.
- Don't sell Conomo Point; once gone, it's gone forever. Don't be so short-sighted
- Please do not sell the north section of Conomo pt. If we do sell it, we will never be able to buy even a portion of it. We will still have the money from selling the south side to help with the towns expenses and projects.
- Small town charm is what brought us here, please preserve it. Bigger is not always better.
- Small town charm, don't take it away. Upgrade the fire station and police if you want to but do (IMPORTANT) it as aesthetically correct as you can.
- I feel its very important that we take responsibility for the Town Hall - It is a disgrace- and fire/police station. And maintain the Elementary school so we don't end up with a huge bill.

APPENDIX E

2018 OPEN SPACE SURVEY RESULTS

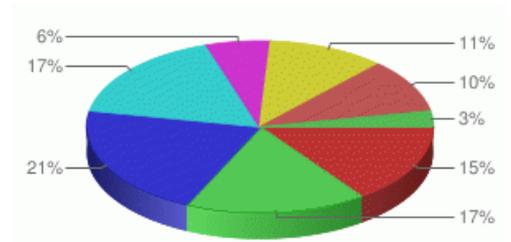
2018 Essex Open Space and Recreation Plan Survey

Responses: 108

1. Which woodland/nature areas do you or members of your household visit?

Answered: 108 Skipped: 0

- Agassiz Rock (62)
- Cogswell Grant (72)
- Cox Reservation (89)
- Manchester Essex Woods (70)
- Sagamore Hill (25)
- Stavros Reservation (44)
- Sally Soucy Nature Trail (Chebacco Lake) (42)
- Other (12)



2. If you selected 'Other', please specify:

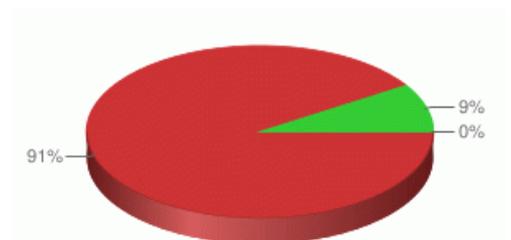
Answered: 16 Skipped: 92

- Centennial Beach, Chebacco Lake
- Essex River, River Basin
- ravens wood
- Paynter Farm, Lufkin St.
- Chebacco woods
- Warren Weld Reservation
- Greenbelt
- Conomo Point
- Ravenswood
- MECT trails
- How is the river & marsh not listed as part of the nature areas?
- Entire river and marshes
- MECT conservation areas
- Greenbelt property on Apple Street
- Green belt on Apple st
- Green belt, esp off of Apple st

3. How satisfied are you with the quality of your experience in the woods and other natural areas of Essex?

Answered: 107 Skipped: 1

- Satisfied (97)
- Neutral (10)
- Dissatisfied (0)



4. Comments:

Answered: 8 Skipped: 100

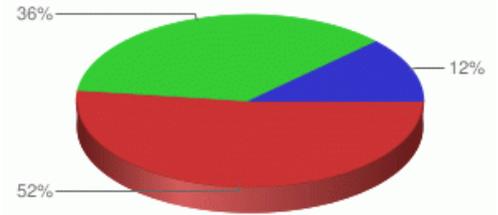
- I would love more trails! And anything that was more stroller friendly would be great!
- We may not use them all equally but we value the fact that we have them available.
- Better dog bag pick up if you leave it pick it up
- beautiful, diverse areas
- I want bathrooms down at Conomo to improve the beach & paddling experience
- Centennial Grove is in need of an 5 year plan from parking, signage, raking and carry in/carry out notification
- The only thing that is a bother is people who do not have voice control over their offleash dogs, who then approach our dogs aggressively (we are dog trainers with a background in aggression rehab, so we know what we are seeing).

The Sally Soucy Nature trail needs some clean up. the trail has had some tree's down and the signs are not as readable as they once were

5. Which neighborhood playgrounds do members of your household visit?

Answered: 74 Skipped: 34

- Essex Elementary playground (59)
- Memorial Park playground (41)
- Other (14)



6. If you selected 'Other', please specify:

Answered: 15 Skipped: 93

None.No attractive activities available. Tennis if updated and repaired.
 stage fort park
 Several in surrounding towns
 No children living at home to use the playgrounds but when thwy were young we used both.
 patton park
 masconomo park
 We would use the play area by town hall if tennis courts were in appropriate shape...basketball was available.
 The Grove camp dory
 Chebacco Lake and the river!
 Patton Park in Hamilton. So great!
 We currently do not have children, however, these will both be of use to us in the future!
 town hall
 Hamilton playground near Patton Park
 N/A I don't have kids.
 also patton park in Hamilton
 Kids are to old for playgrounds but they need space to do sports on their own, tennis, basketball, skate park, rink..places to ride their bikes to that are safe well and well lit. If there was a Central Park area it would also be easier to patrol and maintain.. the trash is always overflowing at chebacco and it looks like no one ever maintains it..it would be nice to see some plantings /landscaping more up to date use of space..

7. How often do members of your household visit Essex's playgrounds?

Answered: 103 Skipped: 5

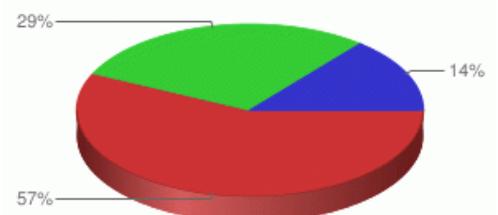
- Daily (9)
- Weekly (19)
- Monthly (12)
- A few times a year (32)
- Never (31)



8. How satisfied are you with the quality of your experience with Essex's playgrounds?

Answered: 83 Skipped: 25

- Satisfied (47)
- Neutral (24)
- Dissatisfied (12)



9. Comments:

Answered: 20 Skipped: 88

The Eagle's Nest is our favorite playground anywhere!
 The Eagles nest is fun, but the structure is dated and falling apart. :- (My parents helped build it when i was in 2nd

grade, my daughter will be in 2nd in 2 years... just saying, circle of life!

I would like to see the tennis courts at the memorial playground rehabilitated and made safe for Essex children.

I go to memorial park almost daily and it's great- I do wish there was some shade there for part of the playground because in the summer it's not pleasant there in the sun especially on the slides.

I wish we had a better playground to use during school hours

We need to address the poison ivy at the Eagle's Nest!

Eagle's nest is ready for repair/update

The town hall area is essentially the heart of Essex. The tennis courts need to be in better shape... Chebacco lake area has so much potential and looks like a dump..

For very sunny days, a buffer of shade would be useful for the Memorial Park playground. In addition, the water fountain is frequently out of service at that park.

The aging tennis courts would be a PERFECT location for a kid's splash pad, as it is rarely used for tennis. Let's make Essex more friendly to the new generation within it.

Needs to be an updated one at memorial park

no reason to visit

Eagles nest has been great with kids & cousins. Many thanks to the team that keeps this going.

Memorial Park playground is a great small playground. No complaint there. The Eagles Nest is a disaster. Splinters are a major issue, and the structure itself is prime nesting ground for stinging insects. In the winter, slipping is a problem. It needs to be seriously overhauled or perhaps replaced. It has outlived its usefulness.

Memorial Park could use some shade trees or awnings and weeding around the wc

O. K. - mostly Memorial Park and for events

My kids are older now but we always needed to go to Hamilton, we ham or Beverly playgrounds and tennis courts. We have money to Essex tennis courts many years ago and nothing happened. Hope town acts now on better rec space my kids are too old/big for the playgrounds now but loved them when they were younger

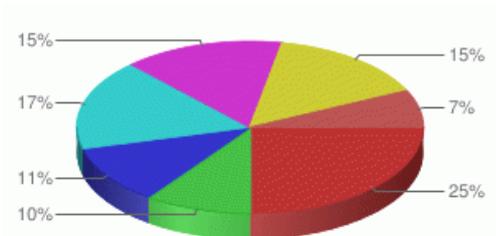
We now have tweens and a teen..they liked the eagles nest but that was it..now they need areas like tennis courts basketball courts that are safe and playable unlike what is available now in Essex

My son is now 26! When he was young, I took him to the Eagle's Nest Playground regularly.

10. Which playing fields, tennis or basketball courts do members of your household use?

Answered: 63 Skipped: 45

- Baseball/ soccer/ football fields at Memorial Park (38)
- Basketball Court at Centennial Grove (15)
- Basketball court at Essex Elementary School (17)
- Fields at Essex Elementary School (26)
- Field of Dreams (baseball/ softball) at Centennial Grove (23)
- Tennis court at Memorial Park (23)
- Other (10)



11. If you selected 'Other', please specify:

Answered: 16 Skipped: 92

Play tennis in Manchester as Essex court at Memorial Park is in such poor condition

Field of Dreams only to watch my grandkids play baseball

Used to play tennis at Memorial Park. Courts are no longer playable.

We would love to see a chip path (i.e. sidewalk) put in on Apple Street for walkers, runners and kids on bikes. There is an increased amount of traffic and it is dangerous to have more cars/trucks, pedestrian and bikers. It's a recipe for disaster!

manchester

We also go to Paton park. Again, what we have in Essex looks like some TLC is needed.

The aging tennis courts would be a PERFECT location for a kid's splash pad, as it is rarely used for tennis. Let's make

Essex more friendly to the new generation within it.

Not any more but we value their existence and support these areas with our taxes.

Not currently playing organized sports. Use "field of dreams" for frisbee

none

The tennis court at Memorial Park is unusable

I would use the tennis courts if they were brought up to spec & maintained

I'd love to see the tennis courts improved.

We used to use the Essex tennis courts, but they are in bad shape, so now go to other towns.

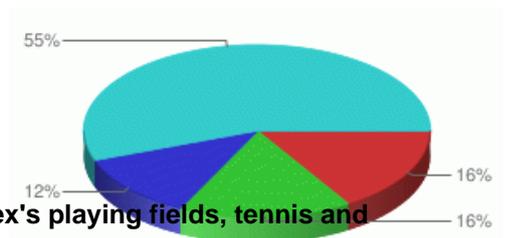
We use endicott, Gordon college courts mainly. Would love to use courts closer to home

Then tennis court are in terrible condition and you can't really play on them. It's sad that we have to drive to other towns to play..same with Basketball..kids don't want to play on them they are in such poor shape in this town.

12. How often do members of your household use Essex's playing fields, tennis and basketball courts or other active recreation areas?

Answered: 73 Skipped: 35

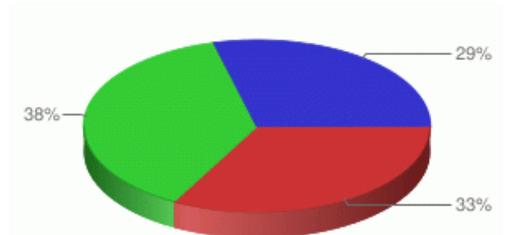
- Daily (12)
- Weekly (12)
- Monthly (9)
- A few times a year (40)



13. How satisfied are you with the quality of your experience with Essex's playing fields, tennis and basketball courts or other active recreation areas?

Answered: 82 Skipped: 26

- Satisfied (27)
- Neutral (31)
- Dissatisfied (24)



14. Comments:

Answered: 28 Skipped: 80

Generally satisfied, except the tennis courts are in disrepair and should either be improved or decommissioned, in my opinion.

We are particularly dissatisfied with the tennis courts at Memorial Park they are in terrible shape. The other fields and courts are in a better condition.

Tennis courts need help!

Memorial park baseball fields and football fields are nice but all else is very lacking. Tennis courts are a very poor and the playing fields at the school are either constantly wet and or the grass is very long.

Dissatisfied with tennis courts. Embarrassment to town and insult to tennis players.

The tennis court at memorial could use a facelift

Would like to see a backboard at tennis courts and fixed up

The grass at the elementary school is often overgrown and the field condition is poor

see 11 above

The condition of the town tennis courts is deplorable. It is nearly impossible to play there because of all the cracks and roots. Also, the baseball field at Field of Dreams is in dire need of a scoreboard. We spend hours and days at FoD during baseball season and the condition of the fields is not great either.

Would love new bathrooms at Centennial Grove!

The tennis courts are unplayable and dangerous. Need resurfacing and new fencing

We used to go more...again, horrible quality

The aging tennis courts would be a PERFECT location for a kid's splash pad, as it is rarely used for tennis. Let's make Essex more friendly to the new generation within it.

Some areas appear to be lacking in maintenance or monitoring.

Put basket ball with tennis and have it all at memorial park. Make memorial park a destination.

no reason to visit

Rough surfaces, poor upkeep. Could the space be shared with a court for Pickleball? (Senior Center could organize this!)

Memorial Park tennis court needs work

There are no appropriate public tennis courts in this town. The basketball courts are terrible too. Nothing has been maintained and now they are falling apart.

The elementary field and b-ball courts could use some attention, but most importantly the tennis courts need to be completely renovated.

I have no complaint about the fields at Memorial Park or the Field of Dreams. The EES field is atrocious. We attended two recent events that used the EES field, one week apart, and were horrified by the state of the fields. They clearly had not been mowed in ages. At the first event, the smell of rotting clippings was overwhelming, and the kids using the field actually came home smelling awful. I was completely disgusted by the lack of maintenance. The second experience didn't stink as bad but the grass was still unreasonably long, especially considering the kids were running in it. Lots of tripping and falling. Tick hazard. Not impressed.

The tennis courts at Memorial Park are in rough shape! They absolutely need to be renovated.

Courts are not properly maintained

tennis courts need help

Would love to see the tennis courts redone. We used to use them alot but now go to Manchester or Hamilton.

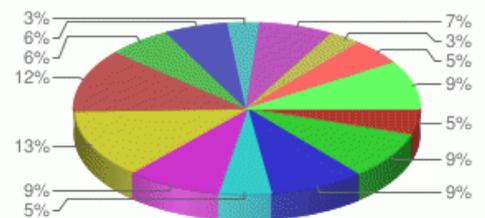
We would use them if we had them because we spend our time driving to other towns to play tennis or basketball or to meet up with friends in the non beach seasons and it is really frustrating when we have the space here but it isnt maintained or safe.

I never use them. Again, when my son was growing up, he used them regularly and was mostly satisfied with them.

15. Which scenic overlooks/areas do members of your household visit to walk or sightsee?

Answered: 105 Skipped: 3

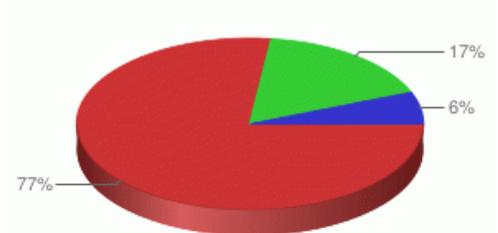
- Ancient Burial Ground (31)
- Causeway (Paglia Park; Bench at Shea's) (62)
- Centennial Grove/ Chebacco Lake (62)
- Choate Island (32)
- Cogswell's Grant (58)
- Conomo Point (84)
- Cox Reservation (79)
- JT Farnham's (39)
- Island Road Landing (42)
- John Wise Avenue (17)
- Memorial Park (47)
- Spring Street Cemetery (17)
- Stavros Reservation (35)
- Town Landing (58)



16. How satisfied are you with the quality of your experience with scenic areas in Essex?

Answered: 104 Skipped: 4

- Satisfied (80)
- Neutral (18)
- Dissatisfied (6)



17. Comments:

Answered: 15 Skipped: 93

It is unfortunate that Centennial Grove is not available to all like Crane's Beach or Gloucester Beaches. It is underused. Charge for parking if needed but we should share this resource with others. It feels wrong to have kids attend Camp Dory during the but then are unable to show their parents the beach on Saturday or Sunday.

Up keep is generally sub par across the board.

Many of the scenic areas could be better kept up

Glad the park at Conomo Point was finally weeded. I hope upkeep is on the agenda in the future.

I love the walk to the river at the Cox Reservation. It's a spring ritual every year.

It would be nice to have a small boardwalk over the marsh, from behind Woodman's to Paglia Park (set back from Main Street).

Lack of parking, signage, and upkeep at certain areas. Wish the small town parks could be made bigger. Like a town green with fountains, gardens, etc... prettier

One bench for viewing is not good. Need more spots to view marsh

good walks/views

Lovely - unspoiled (not much litter, no garish signs) and working well.

I believe the lack of use zoning puts scenic areas of Essex at risk of development that could destroy the scenic beauty of the area and the value of the land for property owners and Essex residents in general.

Standard issues, especially parking at Conomo Point and along 133 at JT Farnhams, but you can't beat the views in Essex. I am concerned about the sidewalk near JT Farnhams. There are actual holes in it where it goes over the river.

We tried to walk it recently and won't do so again.

Conomo point needs care

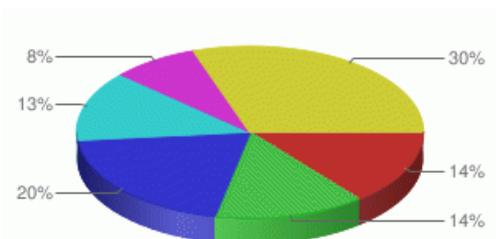
Bathrooms at Conomo point would be a huge improvement

Would love to see more use of the the space where you could cook out, have picnic or family gatherings..

18. Do you or household members use any of the following landings for watercraft access?

Answered: 70 Skipped: 38

- Chebacco Lake/ Centennial Grove (21)
- Clammer's Beach (22)
- Conomo Point Landing (31)
- Island Road landing (20)
- New Conomo Point public access (12)
- Town Landing (46)



19. Have you found any obstacles that prevent you or a household member from accessing or using and enjoying any of Essex's open space and recreation areas?

Answered: 88 Skipped: 20

- Yes (23)
- No (65)



20. If Yes, please identify the location and type of obstacle you or a household member encounter

Answered: 24 Skipped: 84

Visiting relatives or guests are sometimes challenged by police at Centennial Beach.

limited kayak storage at Conomo point. Would be very nice to have a rack to store boat (even for a fee)

tennis courts are cracked and unsafe to play on. I havent been there in a while but the fence was falling in on the courts

the last time I was there.

parking and restroom facilities

The clam boat trailer often prevent us from enjoying Conomo Point and Camp Dory prevents us from using Centennial Grove

Too many people from out of town using our landing, and ruining our river. They have no respect for conserving our most valuable asset.

not being able to use Centennial Grove in the summer due to the YMCA is a bummer

Lack of bathrooms at Centennial Grove.

Boat launch areas are very crowded. The town mooring fields at Conomo are very difficult to access because there is not enough public space for dinghy storage in the area. We have to cartop a kayak to Conomo just to get to our mooring, and if there is only one adult present, our kids have to wait for us unattended. We own a dinghy for this purpose but there is no space to keep it at Conomo. The dock is full of dinghies from association members with a long waitlist. The racks at clammers are also full.

As you say, the sidewalks are often narrow, rough - or nonexistent (west, beyond Apple Street!)

Camp Dory. Also, it's always trashed after camp.

At times, over crowded.

As mentioned, lack of a bathroom affects how I think about visiting and bringing kids.

Shipbuilding museum blocking the area to allow maneuvering trailers efficiently to the Town Ramp

Parking at Conomo Point.

The stone pier at front beach scared me at the start of the 2018 summer season with all of the cracks.

Not enough room at town landing to properly maneuver with going onto private property

town landing should only be town residents. If not then launching and parking trailers should be more than a day at the beach. \$25/launch, \$25 park

Excessive weekend traffic at the town landing blocks ready access to the landing and the Essex Shipbuilding Museum. Again, offleash dogs who are not under voice control. We want to be able to hike our own dogs, and client dogs, in a safe place, but that is hard to find, and I understand difficult to control in a town sans leash law.

Parking on the point

Tennis courts are unusable

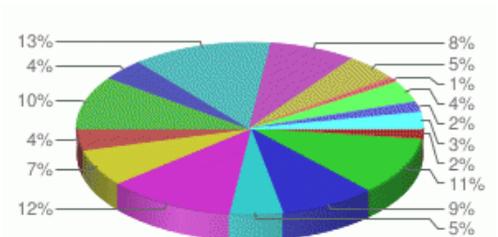
the Sally Soucy Nature trail trees and branches down, making it not very usable for Sally Soucy who still walks everyday

Tennis courts are unsafe/ terrible, can't play on them they have so many cracks, poor nets..basketball courts are rundown, lined space why is chebacco so run down? Why don't we utilize the house area, fields and nature paths more there? Tennis courts/paddle courts? Lights for playing at night? Looks like Chebacvo was forgotten...nonresident a come and leave their trash and it looks rundown..

21. Additional Facilities – Which of the following conservation and recreational facilities do you think Essex should create or increase in number?

Answered: 97 Skipped: 11

- Baseball/Softball fields (6)
- Bike Lanes (41)
- Bike Trails (36)
- Bird/Wildlife viewing areas (20)
- Coastal Resiliency and Adaptation Measures (47)
- Community Gardens (26)
- Dog Park (17)
- Hiking Trails (37)
- Neighborhood/Pocket Parks (16)
- Open Space Protection (49)
- Outdoor ice skating rink (31)
- Picnic/Group event areas (18)
-



- Skate parks (5)
- Sledding Hills (15)
- Soccer fields (6)
- Other (13)

22. If you selected 'Other', please specify:

Answered: 22 Skipped: 86

Improve tennis courts

Bike lanes should be a high priority. Biking on public streets is dangerous.

Improve Paglia park

Add kayak rack at Conomo Point

Tennis courts

tennis courts

I would love a playground near a beach at conomo point. I just feel like Conomo point isn't a great spot for kids. I wish we had something like tucks point that was more accessible for kids and families.

kayak storage at conomo point

wider shoulder on southern ave.

tennis courts

soccer/flag football fields

I think Essex should stop putting every little desire or goal in front of the need to reduce taxes and get more control over spending.

The aging tennis courts would be a PERFECT location for a kid's splash pad, as it is rarely used for tennis. Let's make Essex more friendly to the new generation within it.

More access to the town mooring field at Conomo point- either a series of dinghy moorings in the mud, more racks for dinghy storage (possibly with community dollies for transporting dinghies), or more dock space for them that is not monopolized by the Conomo point association.

all that Causeway, and nobody fishing from it?

None, we need to fix our infrastructure first before taking any more tax paying property off the books!

Any of those would be nice, but my main priority would be sidewalks.

USABLE TENNIS COURTS. Safe bike path to and around Conomo Point along Harlow and Conomo Point Rd.

A trail sidewalk on Apple st would safely lead walkers to the green belt trail there and keep runners and walkers off of the already narrow road

Also,

Picnic areas at Conomo point with grilling options and use of the house down there would be an improvement.

the "more" added, more needs to be maintained

I find most of the above can be found anyway.

Tennis

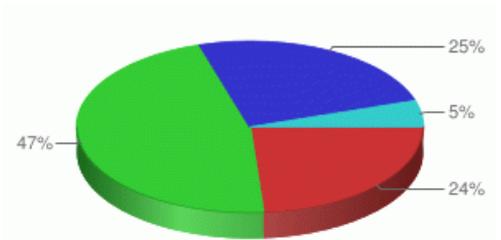
Tennis courts and paddle courts

I would love to see a boardwalk that had various outpost that went through the marsh from behind Bill Allens property (assuming that it becomes something of value add to essex over to the small landing by the bridge (normally the wagon is there).

23. Open Land Protection Priorities: Essex should concentrate on efforts to:

Answered: 105 Skipped: 3

- Significantly increase the number of acres of protected woods and other conservation land. (25)
- Maintain existing protected lands while obtaining land needed to improve access to those lands. (49)
- Maintain currently protected woods and conservation land rather than obtain new protected land. (26)
- Option 4 (5)



24. If you selected 'Option 4', please specify:

Answered: 7 Skipped: 101

Maintain existing while adding available significant pieces both the top two

Enforcing the no wake zone in the river, otherwise you will not be able to use it in 20 years.

For question 23 and 26, I think the Town does a remarkable job to keep up the many spaces it has within their budget. But we shouldn't add to the list of areas to be maintained. I would rather stay with what we have and know it can be maintained than to see areas become less attractive because they can't be maintained.

i don't know.

Maintain what we have and add to conomo point access

I don't know what option 4 is

25. Do you know of any sensitive environmental areas or areas of historical significance in Essex that are not protected but should be? If yes, explain

Answered: 15 Skipped: 93

Former Bill Allen property on Southern Ave.

There are business areas which should be encouraged to find alternatives to adding impervious surfaces.

THE RIVER...Half the time I see the harbor master down by cranes beach, which isn't even in Essex. How about enforcing the no wake zones.

The land at the end of Forest Ave.

Removing more land from property tax rolls doesn't address the need to reduce taxes. Having single issue questionnaires like this one is also unproductive. It perpetuates the refusal of the town to look at its needs and desires in a larger context that attempts to assess the relative popularity of one need over another.

Bothways Farm

Paynter Farm

etc

The lands along John Wise Avenue should be protected from over-development. It would be a shame to see any further commercial ventures on land parcels that represent the abundant natural beauty of Essex. They are a true defining point of the town.

Banks of Essex River and Walker Creek - speed of water traffic not controlled sufficiently

More attention to river bank erosion from natural causes and boats going faster than allowed. Clay Point (Water Street) should have signage and path for access. Better signage at Essex Landing and Conomo regarding history and current preservation efforts" including "rules for responsible usage".

John Wise, Southern Ave,

Let's keep the character of Essex.

Yes, marshlands around the Causeway - marshlands protect against storms and rising tides, these buffer zones need to increase, not be cut back or restrained by roads and sea walls.

Please contact local expert Liz Duff, of Gloucester, for more info.

John Wise Avenue corridor is vulnerable to mixed use develop, endangering the scenic and historical value of the area.

no

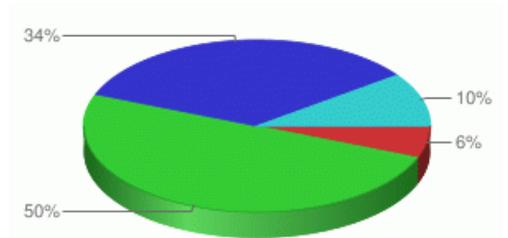
More of John Wise Ave

The farmlands on John wise ave?

26. Recreation Priorities: Essex should:

Answered: 100 Skipped: 8

- Increase the number of playgrounds, fields and courts (6)
- Maintain existing playgrounds, fields and courts (50)
- Add bike lanes to main roads (Manchester/Ipswich/Hamilton) (34)
- Introduce new types of recreational facilities (10)



27. Comments:

Answered: 22 Skipped: 86

I hope the Eagle's Nest playground can be maintained for years to come--it is a truly remarkable and unique playground!

Would love to have bike trails

Trails with exercise circuits.

see 22 above

Add a bike/jogging path

rebuild tennis courts and put in a basketball court. There are already plans!

Please make more sidewalks and crosswalks with lights for kids to cross streets. These are fast roads

I clicked on #4 above by mistake and couldn't unclick it. I don't think the town should spend money on any of those options. Please make sure you do not count my choice in the final numbers.

I do think bike lanes are critical with all the year-round cycling that occurs in Essex. I also think having a playground area at Conomo Point would be a wonderful asset for residents and visitors alike.

Southern Avenue to School Street needs a bike lane.

The aging tennis courts would be a PERFECT location for a kid's splash pad, as it is rarely used for tennis. Let's make Essex more friendly to the new generation within it.

Increase access to the water for all residents- Conomo point and chebacco lake could have community boat houses, better access points (with docks or community launches), even community paddle boards or kayaks

Either fix the tennis courts or expand the playground. The playground is kinda sad and needs new & better equipment.

We need to encourage cyclists in whatever way we can.

We do need to recognize the historic and aesthetic value of the Memorial Park, probably designed by Fredrick Law Olmsted's student, and quite breathtaking in its beauty.

Continue the work in progress to enhance opportunities at Conomo

The tennis courts at Memorial Park desperately need to be completely renovated. We must have the money to do this!!

This should be a top priority â€” it looks terrible and the courts are almost unusable. It's unacceptable.

Update the EES playground and please, please start to maintain the EES field.

We specifically need safe biking to Conomo Point. And improved courts.

Bike lanes would be good as well

Improve current spaces

I would say maintain but those courts are in such bad shape you probably need to start over.

28. Your Name (Optional)

Answered: 38 Skipped: 70

Joseph D Brain

Michelle Dyer

MARGARET SEYMOURIAN

Sara C Richards

Dolan Roby

Nicholas Ellis

Stephen Bixby

John Bediz
christine a woodman
Jessica Webb
Amanda Beausoleil
Maria F Benotti
kristen m bixby
Carla Christensen
Monica C Grant
Judy Brain
Christopher Wolf
David Tory
Matthew Casey
Jacob Bannon
Jake Foster
Kate Koch-Sundquist
Richard Grant JR
diana Hughes
Hannah Barker
Genevieve Duff
Ashley Brooks
Alan Budreau
Betsy McKeen
Natasha Taylor
Deborah French
Helen Tory
John R Androsavich
Alison M Falk
Carol L Soucy
Nathan M Mineo
Hunter Jay
Lisa O'Donnell

29. Your Email Address (Optional)

Answered: 31 Skipped: 77

brain@hsph.harvard.edu

mseymourian@gmail.com

nickellis14@gmail.com

Essex

christine.a.woodman@gmail.com

Jesshammon@gmail.com

afinocch@gmail.com

edensedge18@gmail.com

sfobrien@gmail.com

kristenbixby@yahoo.com

cc_christensen@yahoo.com

monica2grant@gmail.com

Essex

essexwolf@gmail.com

Essex

Essex

jbannon@me.com
 Ksundquist@gmail.com
 Trees2sav@yahoo.com
 dianahughes07@gmail.com
 hannahgillbarker@gmail.com
 Ashley.has.brooks@gmail.com
 Alan.budreau@gmail.com
 Betsy.mckeen@gmail.com
 Taylorshouseemail@gmail.com
 Essex
 johnandrosavich@gmail.com
 alison.falk@gmail.com
 flsoucy1ce@comcast.net
 ecologicnate3@gmail.com
 lisatheengineer@comcast.net

30. Would you be interested in becoming more involved in Open Space and Recreation Planning in Essex?

Answered: 84 Skipped: 24

- Yes (20)
- No (64)

31. Do you live in Essex?

Answered: 103 Skipped: 5

- Yes (100)
- No (3)

32. Do you work in Essex?

Answered: 103 Skipped: 5

- Yes (40)
- No (63)

33. Do you have children under the age of 18?

Answered: 103 Skipped: 5

- Yes (50)
- No (53)

34. Do you own or operate a business in Essex?

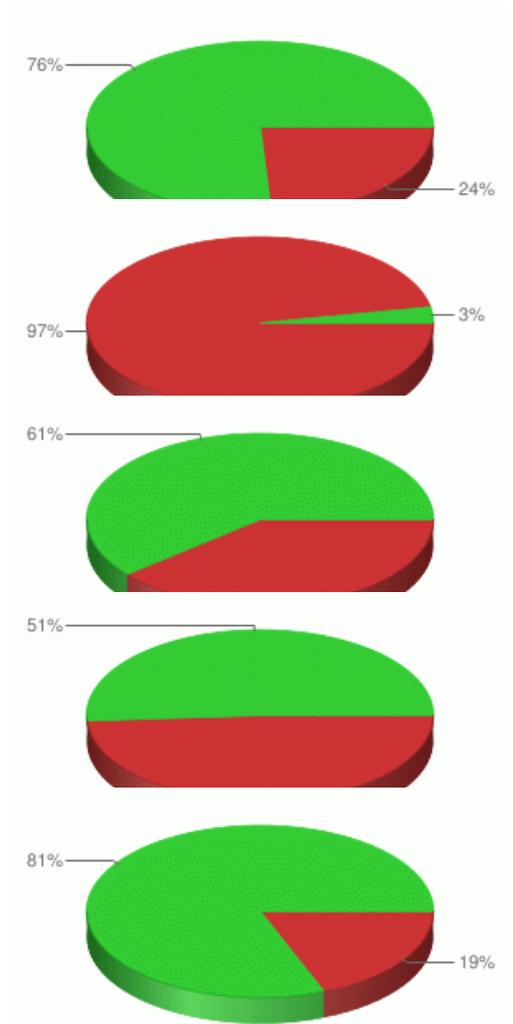
Answered: 102 Skipped: 6

- Yes (19)
- No (83)

35. How long have you lived in Essex?

Answered: 101 Skipped: 7

- 12 years
- 10 years
- 30 years
- 2 yrs
- 3 years
- 1 year



22 years

33

3

3 years (but grew up in W. Gloucester)

9 years

35 yrs.

8 years

8 Years

43 Years

10 years

8 years

8 years

35 years

24 years

40 years

5 years

23 years

16 years

18 years

30 years

39 years

8 years

14 years

3 years

1 year

3 years

45 yrs

12 years

grew up here and retired here for 6 years

51

8 years

35 years

9 yrs

4 years

15 years

life

5 years

13.5 years

14 years

2 years

25 years

5 years

19 years

3 years

14 years

68 years

12 years

3 years

40 years

about 25 yrs

14 years
8 years
4 years
40 years
3 years
25 years
25 Years
19
1 year
50+
all my life
3 years
12 years
8 years
60 (him) 25 (her)
40yrs
10 years
3.5 years
56 years
15yrs
35 years
38 years
7-20
40 years
42 years
14 yrs
34 years, on and off
43 years
6 months
53 years
30 years
13 years
35 years
5 years
15 years
23 years then 9 years (moved to florida for a bit)
7 years
45 years
56 years
48 years
6 years
25 years
3 years, own summer home in Essex
11+ years
35 years