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## Chapter 4: Open Space And Natural Resources

### Introduction

The preservation and stewardship of open space and natural resources are among the most important elements of the community vision expressed by residents of Southampton. The town's landscape varies from rolling hills to open farmlands and forests. Residents say they feel a strong bond with this land, and they value highly the rural and agrarian character that it gives their town. Residents also appreciate Southampton's agricultural history, and they value the town's remaining farmlands.

During the Southampton 2030 Visioning Workshops for the master plan process, residents said they appreciate the town's clean air and water, as well as its abundant woods, wildlife, streams, conservation areas, trails and opportunities for outdoor activities. When asked to name their concerns about the future, many residents said new residential development and the loss of active farms are among the greatest threats to Southampton's current character. Additional concerns cited were the protection of wildlife, aquifers and other natural resources.

Residents said that in the coming years they would like Southampton to remain a rural town with woods and farms with additional opportunities for passive recreation. Residents also voiced a strong desire for more ways to engage in and support local agriculture; this could include community gardens, food buying cooperatives, and farmer's markets. For many, the master plan development and implementation process is an important opportunity to pursue community growth that is better planned and makes the most of opportunities to protect land, support local farms, and develop passive recreational opportunities.

Prior to the Visioning Workshops, the importance of open space to the Southampton community was already evident in the results of a Community Survey that was also conducted for the master plan process. More than 82% of respondents<sup>1</sup> said they either "agree" or "strongly agree" that Southampton should work to preserve open space resources, and more than 84%<sup>2</sup> agreed that the town should help preserve and promote active use of remaining farmland. The concept of linking open spaces in town also received widespread support, with 69% of respondents<sup>3</sup> saying that Southampton should develop bicycle paths and greenways to link open spaces and neighborhoods.



Tighe-Carmody Reservoir Photo: Anne Wellington

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<sup>1</sup> 235 out of 286 question respondents (survey respondents were given the option to skip questions)

<sup>2</sup> 243 out of 388 question respondents

<sup>3</sup> 200 out of 288 question respondents

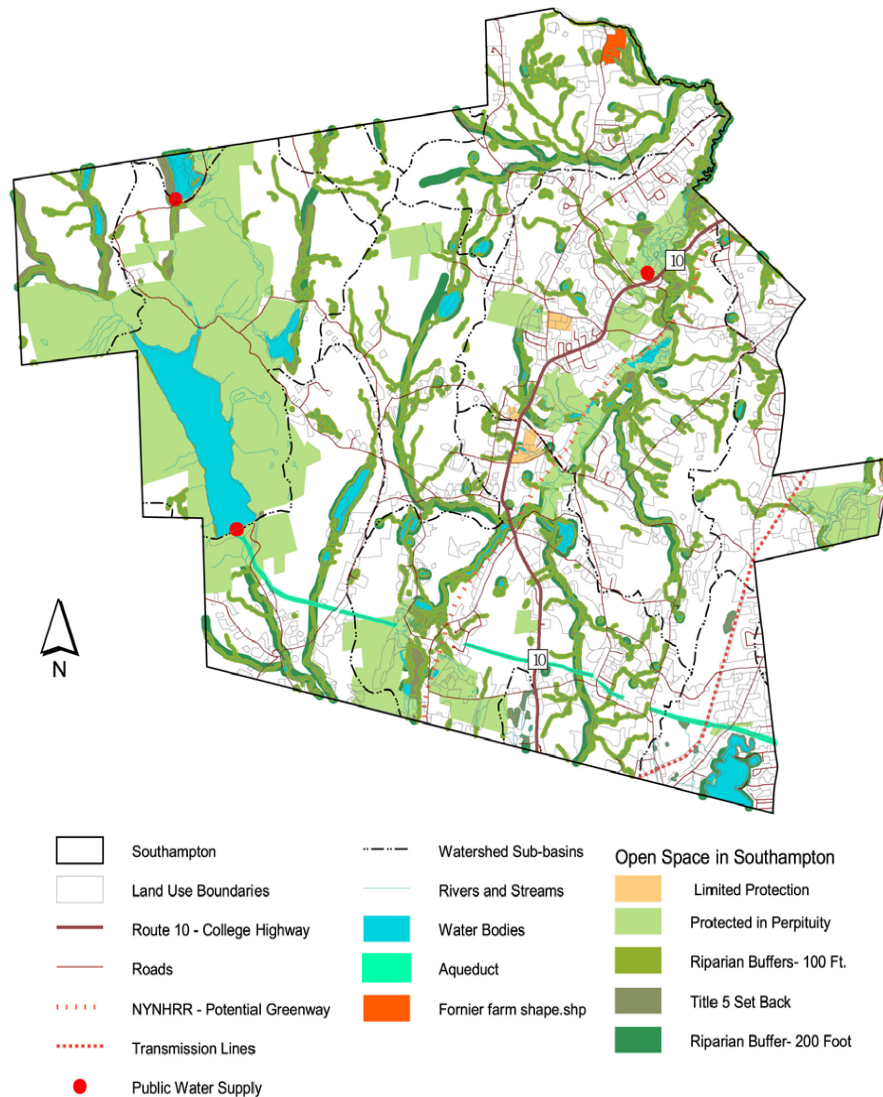
## 4.1 Trends and Data

### 4.1.1 Prior Planning Efforts

#### **2012 Open Space and Recreation Plan**

Southampton's 2012 Open Space and Recreation Plan was developed with significant public input, and provides a detailed inventory of environmental assets, protected lands and scenic resources in Southampton. This chapter of the Southampton Master Plan draws from the 2012 Open Space and Recreation Plan, which includes updates and new input to complement the town's 2008 Open Space and Recreation Plan.

**Figure 4-1: Southampton Protected Open Space (2012 Open Space and Recreation Plan)**



#### **2007 Local Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan**

Local Natural Hazard Mitigation Plans are plans required by the Federal Emergency Management Agency that identify specific natural hazards that are common to the community and the locations in town that

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are vulnerable to these hazards, and establish a mitigation strategy to reduce the risks associated with these hazards. Southampton's plan was completed in 2008, and identified specific land development and protection strategies to address the largest natural hazard for the town: the threat of flooding.

### **2004 Community Development Plan**

The 2004 Community Development Plan articulates a number of key open space issues for the community, such as the effects of dispersed, low density development and loss of rural character, contamination of the Barnes Aquifer, loss of agricultural land, limited recreational opportunities and open space lands in town, and effects of development on water supply wells. Goals identified in the plan included: the preservation of rural character, protection of the drinking water supply, maintenance of wildlife corridors, control low density development patterns, better management of town-owned open space, and opportunities for biking and other passive recreation. Identified in this plan include This plan incorporated public input from previous surveys by the Conservation Commission (1979), as well as the Rural Land Management Survey (1991).

### **1999 Buildout Analysis**

To support future planning decisions, the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs funded a buildout study of all 351 cities and towns in the Commonwealth. The buildout project allows every community to see its current and potential future development, and determine whether or not it is near buildout or growth pressures are scarce. Another intent of the project is to inspire communities to work together across borders to address issues such as shared water supplies that pay no attention to political borders.

A buildout consists of a series of GIS maps that visually show a community its development patterns and future growth projections based upon existing local zoning. The maps act as storyboards that unfold a picture of land use decisions the community has made to date and what these decisions may mean for the community in the future. These buildout maps project the default scenario for growth by graphically illustrating what the community may look like if all remaining developable lands were developed, to their maximum potential, based on existing zoning. Thus, the buildout provides a basis for decisions about future development and potential impacts on the community.

In Southampton, the buildout study determined that the town had 11,690 additional developable acres. Based on the town's land use zoning, this translates to 6,979 housing units or lots, 20,240 additional residents, and 2,171 additional school children. The study also estimated additional water demand, municipal solid waste and roadways at buildout. Based on an average of 40.4 building permits per year (the town issued 404 building permits over the ten years between 2000 and 2009), and using the 6,979 remaining buildable lots based on the buildout study, buildout of Southampton would occur in the year 2172.

## **4.1.2 Inventory of Protected Open Space**

Of the approximately 18,500 total acres of land in the town of Southampton, 87% of the community remains in a natural, undeveloped state. Of these undeveloped acres, about 22%, or about 4,100 acres, is designated as open space or recreational lands. Based on 2009 Protected and Recreational Open Space data from MassGIS, "open space" is defined to include conservation lands, public and private recreation lands, town forests, conservation buffers along roads, agricultural lands protected under the state's Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) program, aquifer and watershed protection lands, cemeteries, and forest land designated as a Forest Legacy area.

Of the 4,100 “open space” acres, about 91% of the open space is permanently protected against future development, while 1% has limited protections and 8% is not protected from development (Table 4-1). Land is considered to be permanently protected if it is either private land with a permanent conservation restriction (CR) or if it is publicly owned conservation land. For private lands, conservation restrictions (CRs) and agricultural preservation restrictions (APRs) are critical permanent preservation tools. A CR is a legally binding agreement between a landowner and the CR holder, usually a public agency or a private land trust, whereby the landowner agrees not to develop the land in order to protect certain conservation values. The conservation restriction is recorded at the applicable Registry of Deeds, and the land is considered permanently protected if the CR runs in perpetuity. For actively farmed lands, the Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) Program provides funding to purchase the development rights of prime farmland in order to keep it in permanent agricultural use. Land shown in Table 1 as protected “in perpetuity” includes land with Conservation Restrictions and Agricultural Preservation Restrictions. Land shown in Table 4-1 as not protected (“none”) includes parcels owned fee simple by the municipality or other entity.

**Table 4-1: Protected and Recreational Open Space, 2010**

		Acres	% of Total
<b>In Perpetuity</b>	Legally protected in perpetuity and recorded as such in a deed or other official document	3,735	91%
<b>Limited</b>	Protected by legal mechanisms other than those above (e.g. cemetery)	50	1%
<b>None</b>	Totally unprotected by any legal or functional means (e.g. golf course)	307	8%

*Source: MassGIS 2010*

Southampton’s largest contiguous area of protected open space surrounds the Tighe-Carmody Reservoir, and is located in western section of the community. Over 2,000 acres surrounding the reservoir are owned by the City of Holyoke as watershed protection lands. This is over half of the total permanently protected open space in the community. These lands are currently not open to the public for recreation purposes, despite wide interest from residents to have access to this area. Town officials have noted that attempts have been made to work with the city of Holyoke to make these lands open to the public, but the city is not interested in doing so.

The remaining permanently protected parcels range in size and are scattered throughout town, with a number of parcels located along or in close proximity to College Highway (Route 10). Over 800 acres are permanently protected under the Agricultural Protection Restriction (APR) program and ensure these lands remain in an agricultural use (Table 5). The remaining 700 acres are lands that are owned by the town, the state, or non-profit organizations for conservation, recreation, and water supply purposes.



**Table 4-2: Open Space Ownership**

	Acres	% of Total
<b>Municipal (Southampton and Holyoke)</b>	3,501	77%
<b>State Owned</b>	127	3%
<b>Nonprofit Owned</b>	31	<1%
<b>Other Privately Owned</b>	884	19%
<b>Other</b>	3	<1%

*Source: MassGIS 2010*

With a large amount of acreage permanently protected in the western portion of the community, Southampton has an opportunity to develop a greenway network connecting the Tighe-Carmody Reservoir lands to APR lands on the Westfield town line, as well as to the proposed Rail Trail and other greenway network along Route 10. In particular, the proposed Rail Trail will give many residents non-motorized access to a series of linked open spaces. Within the priority protection area identified in the Proposed Future Land Use Map there are some very large parcels that are currently assessed as vacant developable lands that could complete and connect a larger greenway network.

The Town of Southampton owns approximately 700 acres of land, of which 630 acres are permanently protected (Table 4-3). Many of these lands have been purchased using Community Preservation Act dollars. Lands that enjoy Limited Protection status include the William Norris Elementary School and former Larrabee School.

**Table 4-3: Protected Lands owned by the Town of Southampton**

	Conservation Lands Pamphlet
Fog Hollow	44
Former Johnson Property	83
Hazel Young Conservation Area	39
Lyman Conservation Area	20
Nancy Whittimore Conservation Area	39
Old Canal Property	20
Pequot Well	9
Pomeroy Mountain	50
Water Supply Protection	65
Manhan Meadow Sanctuary	25
Alder Pond Meadow	
Alice Brown Conservation Area	
Anne Bussler Environmental Center	
Freeborn Conservation Area	
Mt. Springs Waterworks	
New Cemetery and Town Open Space	82
Szczypta Farm Conservation Area	
Old Canal Conservation Area	
Parsons Memorial Forest	39
Riverdale Road Conservation Area	
Conant Park	10
Other	
<b>Total</b>	<b>459</b>

Source: Southampton 2012 Open Space and Recreation Plan

**Table 4-4: Protected Lands Owned by the Town of Southampton**

	Acres
Fog Hollow	44
Former Johnson Property	83
Hazel Young Conservation Area	39
Lyman Conservation Area	19
Nancy Whittimore Conservation Area	39
Old Canal Property	20
Pequot Well	9
Pomeroy Mountain	98
Water Supply Protection	227
Other	52
<b>Total</b>	<b>630</b>

*Source: MassGIS 2010*

As noted previously, Southampton also has more than 800 acres permanently protected under the state's Agricultural Protection Restriction (APR) program. The state's APR program is a voluntary program to farmers and owners of "prime" and "statewide important" agricultural lands that compensates the farmer for development rights in exchange for a permanent deed restriction which precludes the land from being used for non-agricultural use. APR lands in Southampton have steadily increased since 1980, with the largest jump occurring between the years 1990 and 1995 (Table 5).

**Table 4-5: APR Acres, Town of Southampton, 1980-2010**

Year	Acres
<b>1980</b>	0
<b>1985</b>	304
<b>1990</b>	433
<b>1995</b>	701
<b>2000</b>	701
<b>2005</b>	813
<b>2010*</b>	813

*\*As of September 2010*

*Source: MA Department of Agricultural Resources*

### 4.1.3 Natural Resources

Southampton is rich in natural resources, from the abundance of prime and significant farm soils, to the significant water resources, vast forests and diversity of wildlife. Scenic views can be seen throughout the community, whether across Southampton's many rolling farm fields, to Mount Tom, or from Pomeroy Mountain or Little Mountain. These natural resources create the rural landscape that is so important to many Southampton residents. Despite the continued conversion undeveloped lands to residential development, the majority of Southampton's land area remains in forested use. In total, forested, agricultural, open space lands and water comprise over 16,000 acres, or 87%, of the town's total area (Table 4-6).

**Table 4-6: Forested, Agricultural, and Open Space Lands**

Land Use Type	Acres
Active Agriculture	1,285
Pasture	854
Woody Perennial, Orchards, Nurseries	55
Forest	12,124
Open Land, Power Lines	182
Participation and Water Recreation	129
Urban Open, Parks, Cemeteries	59
Water	491
<b>Total</b>	<b>16,379</b>

Source: MassGIS, 2005 Land Use Data

### **Watersheds and Water Resources**

The vast majority Southamptown's land area drains to the Connecticut River Watershed via the Manhan River. A small portion of land in the southeast corner of town (957 acres) is within the Westfield River Watershed. Southamptown has abundant water resources and some of the cleanest and best tasting drinking water in all of the United States in 2009.



Moose Brook

Photos Courtesy Robert Floyd

The Tighe-Carmody Reservoir is designated as an "Outstanding Water Resource" by the state and is the largest lake within the Connecticut River Watershed. Part of the Holyoke Water Works systems, the Reservoir yields about 11 to 14 million gallons per day for the city of Holyoke. This reservoir and the White Reservoir in northwestern Southamptown are fed by the Manhan River, the town's largest river.

According to the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP), the Manhan River supports several different floodplain forest communities and provides "Core Habitat" to rare and endangered species. Locally, the Manhan is fed by numerous tributaries, such as Moose Brook and Alder Meadow Brook.

Aside from the town reservoirs, the only freshwater bodies are two mill ponds and Pequot Pond. Pequot Pond is the largest water body of a group of ponds known as Hampton Ponds which are located in southeastern corner of Southamptown into Westfield. The Hampton Ponds are heavily used for recreational purposes and are within the Westfield River Watershed. In recent years, the ponds have been the subject of environmental mitigation projects seeking to address water quality problems caused by failing septic systems, a growing goose population, pet wastes, and agricultural activities. Public

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access to the Hampton Ponds is provided through the City of Westfield; there is no public access to the ponds in Southampton.

In addition to the town's surface waters, a significant portion of the Barnes Aquifer is within Southampton, supplying public water to Easthampton, Holyoke, Southampton and Westfield. The Barnes Aquifer is a 12-mile long underground water source captured in a gravel layer that was formed during the last ice age some 14,000 years ago. Much of the community is also located within a Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection Approved Wellhead Protection Area (Zone II). Zone II includes areas of an aquifer that provide public drinking water, as identified based on hydro-geologic conditions.

Southampton's public water supply system relies on two sources and serves approximately 67% of town residents (the remainder have private wells). Since 2002, the newly rebuilt Town Well located near the intersection of Glendale Road and College Highway, has been the town's primary source of water. Approximately 185 acres of permanently protected lands owned by the Town of Southampton surround the Town Well.

To protect these valuable water resources, Southampton adopted an overlay Water Supply Protection District that limits development within the primary recharge areas of groundwater aquifers and the watershed area of the Manhan Reservoir. This resource protection overlay district encompasses 9,465 acres, or 51% of the total land area in Southampton. In addition to protecting its aquifers through zoning regulations, Southampton also participates in the Barnes Aquifer Protection Advisory Committee (BAPAC), a coalition that educates various groups about how to protect the aquifer. Beyond the Barnes Aquifer, the Broad Brook Basin at the eastern boundary of the town is another significant aquifer and wildlife habitat area in Southampton.

## **Wetlands**

Southampton has 300 acres of wetlands, which are less than 2% of the town's total land area (MassGIS 2005). Many of these wetlands are located in small patches. There are also larger wetland areas located along the Manhan River corridor, as well as along Blue Meadow Brook and at the Hackmatack Swamp. The Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act of 1972 protects Southampton's numerous wetlands<sup>4</sup> by establishing a buffer of 100 feet that ensures protection of a wetland and its immediately surrounding area. The term wetland means "those areas that are inundated or saturated by surface or groundwater at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that under normal circumstances do support, a prevalence of vegetation typically adapted for life in saturated soil conditions." Sodom Swamp, Blue Meadow Swamp, and Hackmatack Swamp are a few of the town's unique wetlands areas, and to date three certified vernal pools exist in Southampton.

The Wetlands Protection Act is enforced by local Conservation Commissions. In addition, some communities have adopted local wetlands ordinances, which usually increase the size of the wetland buffer (or the setback distance). The Southampton Conservation Commission is currently working on a local bylaw that does not include a larger wetland buffer, but it is being written to help improve enforcement by establishing a fee structure.

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<sup>4</sup> Includes freshwater wetlands, marshes, wet meadows, bogs, swamps, lakes, ponds, rivers, streams, creeks, banks, beaches, vernal pools, large isolated wetlands, lands under water bodies, lands subject to flooding or inundation by groundwater or surface waters, riverfront areas as stated in Wetlands Protection Act M.G.L. Chapter 131, Section 40 and in Regulations 310 CMR 10.58 (2)

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## **Forests and Wildlife**

Forests occupy around 13,000 acres (72%) of total land area in Southampton. These areas provide many ecological and recreational opportunities, such as habitat for special populations of flora and fauna, recreational opportunities, improved water quality, and flood prevention. The town's forests contain numerous tree species, including oak, maple, ash and tulip trees, as well as a wide variety of understory vegetation, including mountain laurel, witch hazel, low-bush blueberry, huckleberry and wintergreen. Southampton's forests, especially those along riparian corridors, provide food, nesting areas and seasonal shelter to a variety of wildlife, including birds, reptiles, amphibians and insects. Mammals that have been sighted in Southampton include moose, black bears, beavers, coyotes, deer, bobcats, raccoons, foxes, porcupines, opossum, squirrels, chipmunks, skunks, bats, mice, shrews, voles, ermines, weasels and moles. Birds sighted in Southampton include woodpeckers, scarlet tanagers, evening grosbeaks, wood thrush, turkey vultures and barred owls. Meanwhile, Southampton's waters host numerous aquatic species, including large mouth bass, pike and trout, among others.

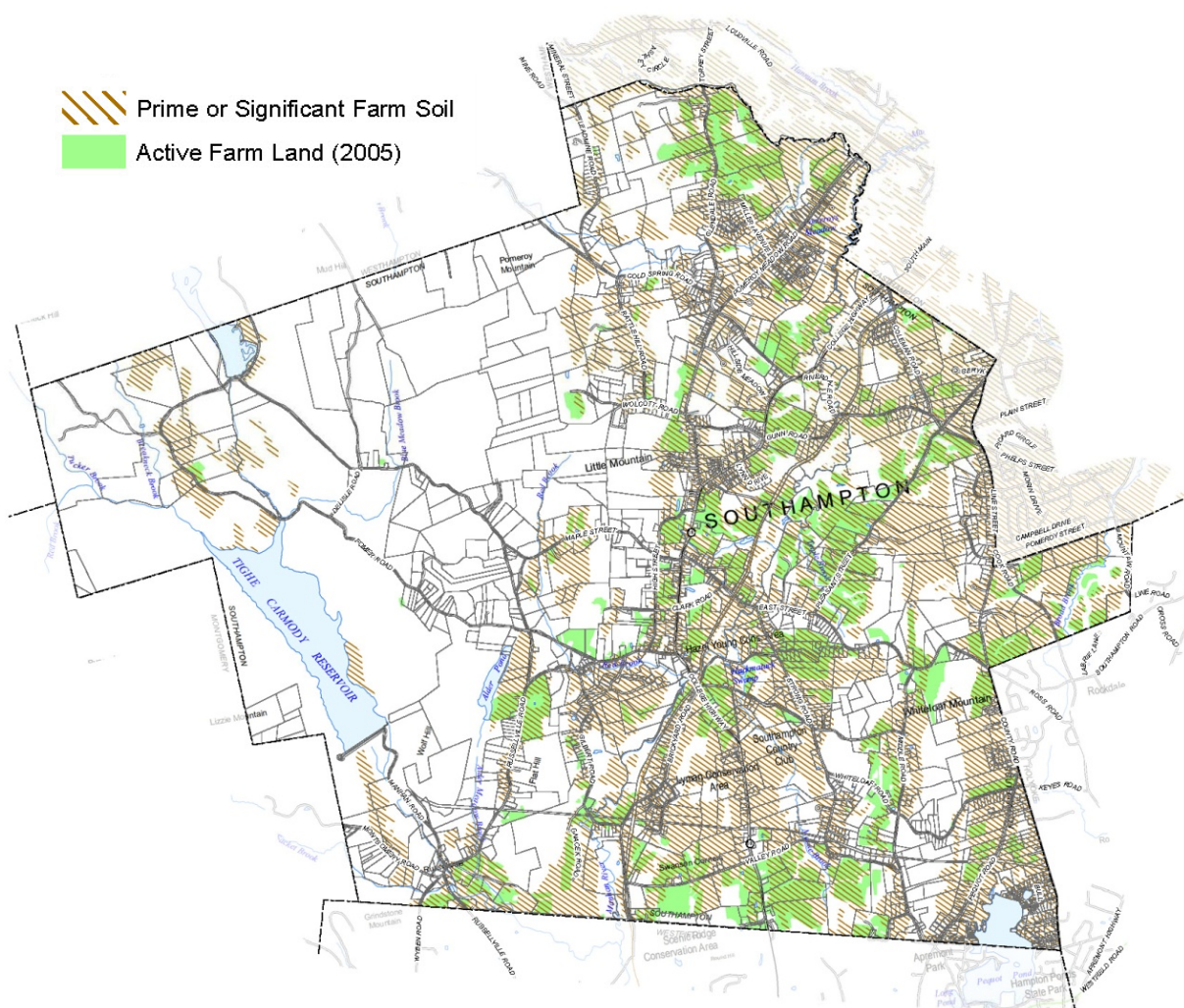
Southampton's forests are also used for numerous recreational pursuits, including hiking, bird watching, biking, snowmobiling, horseback riding, skiing and hunting. The 2008 Open Space and Recreation Plan reports that the town has a large network of over 131 miles unofficial trails and old roads that provide recreation opportunities in Southampton's woods. While hunting is an important recreational activity, community input from previous planning efforts indicated that some residents would like to see more access to woodlands during hunting seasons. Town's residents also expressed a wish to identify and map the existing trail network.

## **Agricultural Lands**

Agriculture played a significant role in Southampton's early development, and, with numerous large farmsteads remaining, the agricultural landscape continues to be a defining feature in Southampton. As shown in the Prime Farm Soils and Active Agriculture Map (Map 2), Southampton has extensive farmland soils, including 3,200 acres of prime farmland soils and 5,300 acres of state and locally important farmland soils. Most of these agricultural soils are located in the eastern section of the community where active agricultural activity still exists.



**Figure 4-2: Southampton Prime Farm Soils and Active Agriculture (Open Space and Recreation Plan update 2010)**



Soils classified as important farmland soils are an important natural resource that is lost once development occurs on the lands. Prime farmland is a federal designation that defines land that has the best combination of physical and chemical characteristics for producing food, feed, forage, fiber, and oilseed crops, and is also available for these uses. On the other hand, state and locally important farmland soils include land other than prime farmland that is used for the production of specific high value food and fiber crops, as well as land that is of statewide importance for the production of food, feed, fiber, forage, and oil seed crops. Generally, farmland of statewide importance includes lands that are nearly prime farmland and that economically produce high yields of crops when treated and managed according to acceptable farming methods.

**Table 4-7: Changes in Crop and Pasture Lands, 1971-2005**

	Acres	Acres Lost	% Change
<b>1971</b>	2,910	-----	-----
<b>1999</b>	2,400	510	-17%
<b>2005</b>	2,139	261	-9%
<b>Total Change</b>	-----	<b>771</b>	<b>-26%</b>

*Source: MassGIS Land Use, 1971 and 2005*

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Like many communities in the Pioneer Valley region, Southampton has seen a conversion of active agricultural lands to development. Since 1971, Southampton has lost approximately 26% of its active crop and pasture lands to higher intensity uses (Table 7). In 1983, Southampton's Farmland Advisory Committee recorded 20 farms in town, including 13 dairy farms, one orchard, two vegetable farms, and two poultry and livestock operations. At least 35 people were employed full-time and 40 people part-time in farming. As of 2007 U.S. Census of Agriculture, there were a total of 43 farms in Southampton, with 28 full time farming operations. The majority of these farms report commodity sales of less than \$50,000 and one farm reporting more than \$250,000. Seventeen of these farms are less than 50 acres in size. The census data shows that while the number of farms has increased since 1983, most of these operations are small family farms with moderate incomes. In fact, only 28 operators consider farming their primary occupation, while the remaining operators are working off the farm over 200 days a year for additional income.

The Southampton Agricultural Commission, which has not been active for several years but is reestablishing itself, reports the following farms in operation (as of 2010): two dairy farms, several beef operations, several Christmas tree farms, several landscape nurseries and greenhouses, some mixed-livestock operations (e.g. with sheep and goats), and a small but growing contingent of farms that market directly to local customers. Significantly, many of these farms represent agricultural tourism opportunities. The direct marketing and agricultural tourism farms include a number of roadside stands, as well as a corn maize. Meanwhile, nearly all of Southampton's farms are diversifying their operations, for example adding small vegetable and fruit operations, as well as beehives and other specialty agricultural goods. In addition to agricultural and livestock farms, the Board of Health reports that as of 2004, there were about 30 horse farms in Southampton. Southampton residents greatly appreciate the town's farms, and would like to have more ways to support local agriculture, including a local farmer's market.

#### **4.1.4 Recreation**

The 2004 Community Development Plan found that Southampton had limited recreational ball fields and suggested that the need to expand active recreational resources was one of the key open space issues facing the town. More recently, in a 2005 open space survey, residents' main concerns were: a bicycle path, sidewalks and pedestrian safety; mapped multi-use trails; marked access points to conservation areas and trails; a need for town-owned playing fields; recreational access to the Tighe-Carmody Reservoir; and facilities at Conant Park that are in need of repair. Many of these concerns were echoed at the Southampton 2030 Visioning Workshops for this master plan. In addition, there was support for a rail trail bike path, as well as a "riverwalk" along the Manhan River. The key goals raised by workshop participants were:

- Think beyond active recreation to increase the variety of parks and open space
- Protect and enhance Conant Memorial Park (e.g. with a concert pavilion)
- Secure access to use the Tighe-Carmody Reservoir area
- Secure access to launch boats at state-owned property at Hampton Ponds
- Establish volunteer trail maintenance
- Connect existing open space areas



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In the Community Survey conducted prior to the Visioning Workshops, 69% of respondents<sup>5</sup> indicated that the Town of Southampton should develop bicycle paths and greenways that link open spaces and neighborhoods. A total 47% of respondents<sup>6</sup> thought that the town should create new active recreational resources such as snowmobile, ATV and horseback riding trails, places for hunting and fishing, etc.

Recent enhancements at Conant Park include improved parking, new playground equipment, accessible restrooms, tennis and basketball courts improvements, and improvements to make the pavilion accessible. However, the Town needs to regrade and improve drainage to existing playing fields.

The Southampton Youth Athletic Association, a non-profit organization organizes and oversees boys and girls team sports. Children from Southampton and Westhampton can sign up to play on soccer, baseball, and basketball teams. Teams play at Conant Park in the center of Town and at the Norris School on Pomeroy Meadow Road.

The Council on Aging (COA) offers seniors recreational opportunities, including yoga, Tai Chi, line dancing, osteoporosis exercise classes, and men's night. The COA is located in the old Larrabee School and the COA remain a tenant after the adaptive reuse of the building. The site has semi-protected open space and future use and landscape changes should fit in with the existing visual character of the village town center.

According to T. L. Hendrick, former curator of the Southampton Historical Society, there are more than 31 miles of abandoned roads and trails in town. This network of unofficial trails and old roads offer hikers, mountain bikers, skier, horseback rider, hunters, birdwatchers, and recreational vehicle access to the Southampton woods. Southampton's forests and streams are remarkable for hunting and fishing. While hunting is an important recreational activity, some residents would like more access to woodlands during hunting seasons. Also, residents have expressed the wish to identify and map these trails.

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<sup>5</sup> 200 out of 288 question respondents

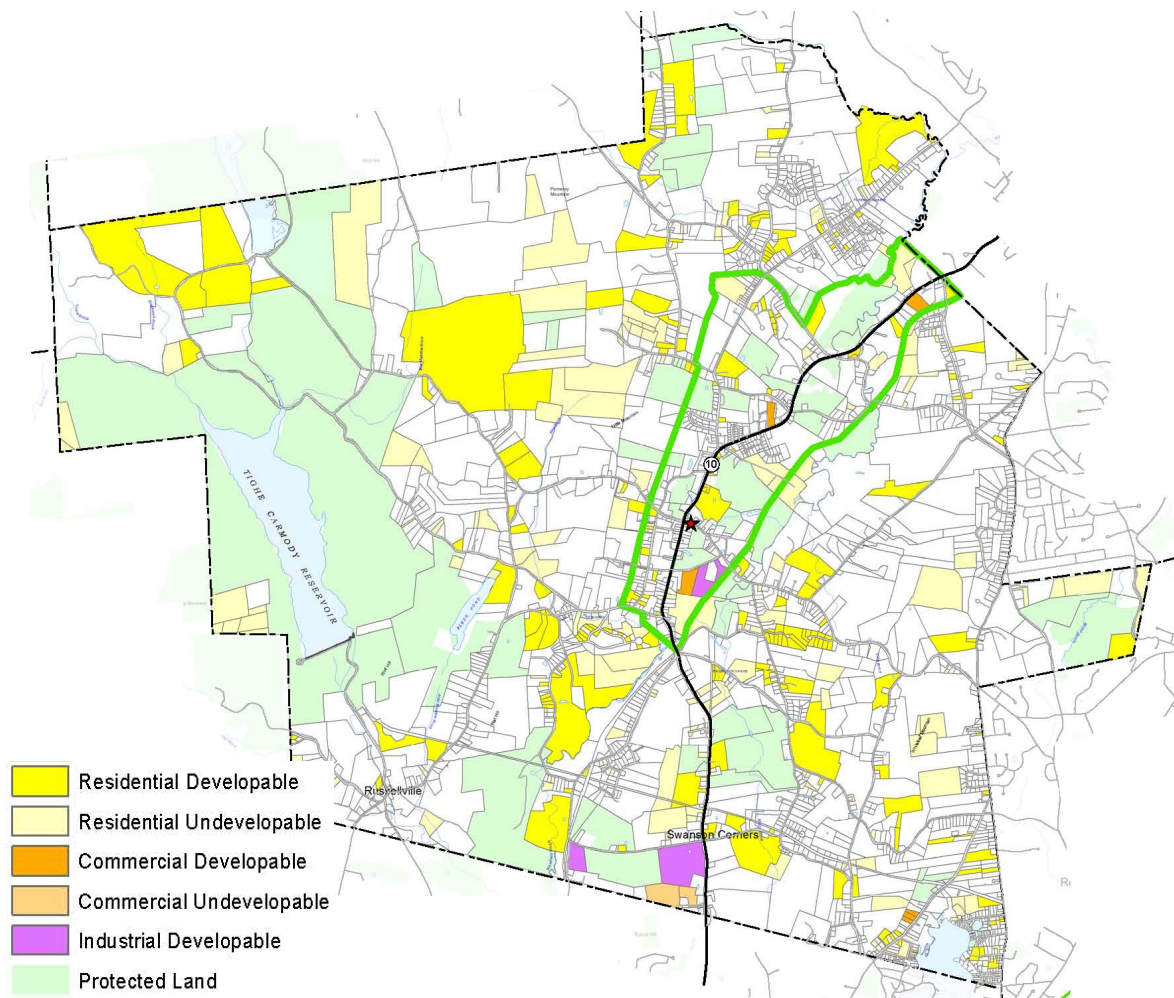
<sup>6</sup> 133 out of 285 question respondents

## 4.2 Opportunities and Challenges

Throughout the public engagement process for this master plan, protection of natural resources and the rural character of Southampton has been cited as a leading priority for many residents. As residential development continues to encroach on natural areas, the town is becoming more suburbanized. However, Southampton has an opportunity to achieve the widely held goal of natural resource protection through the implementation new zoning and environmental regulations that are designed to minimize the impacts of low-density residential development, and at the same time encourage connections between areas of protected green space for increased ecological and recreational value.

According to the Southampton Assessor's records, parcels that are assessed as "vacant developable" lands are scattered throughout the community. Ranging in size, many of these parcels, if protected, could connect areas of already protected open space together into a town-wide greenway network. Adjacent to the Tighe-Carmody Reservoir area, several large vacant parcels if protected would connect the Reservoir to Little Mountain, the Town of Westhampton, and APR lands along the Westfield town line. These parcels were identified in the 2004 Community Development Plan as priority parcels for Open Space Protection.

**Figure 4-3: Vacant and Undevelopable Land in Southampton**



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The master plan also identified two locations in the community as Agricultural Protection Priority areas: the northern most point of the community off of Glendale Road, and Middle Road area. Agricultural preservation efforts are already happening along Glendale Road, with several large parcels protected under the APR program. The 2004 Community Development plan identified eight parcels in this location as Priority Sites for Open Space Connections—at this time three of those parcels are under protection. The plan also identified several parcels along Middle Road.

The challenge for the community will be balancing the tax implications of protecting land for open space versus the income that can be generated from development. However, the community should also consider the cost of town services that are needed for residential, commercial and industrial development, versus the cost of limited to no services needed for lands protected for recreational, ecological, cultural value. Given the significant support for open space protection in the community (70% of survey respondents supported the strategy to “purchase and protect as much open space as possible from development”), using Community Preservation funds or other town monies for purchasing land for permanent protection should not be as large of a challenge as for other communities in the region who place economic development as the main priority.

The community should also prioritize lands currently enrolled in Chapter 61/61A/61B status and determine if there are priority parcels the community should purchase if and when these lands are removed from the program. As stated earlier, once landowner withdraws their land from the program, the town has the Right of First Refusal to purchase the property. The town should prioritize parcels based on location and connection into a town-wide greenway network, as well as protection of lands with statewide or locally important agricultural soils. A list of parcel should be developed by the community, and outreach should be made to landowners of these identified priority lands.

Southampton’s greatest threat to open space protection is the rapid rate of residential growth that the community has experienced in the past, and continues to experience even in this economic recession. The town should consider regulatory tools that will allow growth to continue but in such a way that fits in with the rural community character of Southampton. The challenge will be to generate public support to adopt these tools at Town Meeting.

In the Community Survey, 75% of respondents supported zoning some areas of town for agricultural and very low density residential development, such as minimum lot sizes of 5 acres or more, and 54% also supported a more general policy for minimum residential lot sizes of 2 acres or more. The goal of such larger residential lots would be to help preserve rural character and limit residential growth. However, it should be emphasized that this type of “large lot” zoning is generally most effective when advanced as part of a balanced package of zoning reforms. Counter balance to the large lots in outlying areas can be achieved by also allowing more compact residential development on smaller lots in appropriate areas that are already near existing stores, services and infrastructure. This balanced “smart growth” approach is critical to achieving the twin goals of protecting priority natural areas and providing a variety of housing options for all ages and incomes.

More compact residential development can be achieved through what is often known as “cluster” development. This is a regulatory approach that can be effective, depending on market conditions, in encouraging open space and farmland preservation. In a cluster development, often known as an Open Space Residential Development (OSRD), homes are typically located closer together on lots that are smaller than typically allowed by existing zoning—as long as a significant proportion of the total

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development parcel (typically 50% or more) is permanently preserved in an undeveloped state with contiguous natural areas. At the Southampton 2030 Visioning Workshops, many residents supported this approach to residential development. Respondents to the Community survey were mixed on this issue, with 40% saying they support having a cluster development residential option and 43% saying they do not.

Significantly, in 1990, Southampton adopted an Agricultural Preservation District bylaw that includes cluster development standards. However, few residents and officials are aware that this bylaw is on Southampton's books, and the Planning Board has not actively encouraged developers to use it to promote better subdivision development. In light of Southampton's relatively rapid residential growth during the past two decades, the town's existing cluster bylaw could be an important tool for protecting open space and farmland while still allowing attractive residential development.

A new type of bylaw that the town could consider adopting encourages open space protection through Approval Not Required (ANR) developments is known as a Conservation Development bylaw or Flexible Development bylaw. This bylaw would permit small residential development along existing public ways to be built with a common driveway (which is already permitted in town), as would permit flexible lot sizes and flexible frontage requirements. These developments also require a certain percentage of the parcel to be permanently protected as open space. These bylaws also can address additional development standards such as Low Impact Development standards (in addition to the town's existing Erosion and Sediment Control for Stormwater Management Bylaw standards), as well as trails access and renewable energy.

Town residents have expressed a priority for continued support of agricultural activity in the community. There are numerous regulatory and non-regulatory tools available to advance this, including greater encouragement of use of the Massachusetts Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) program for key farming parcels in the community. APRs could be especially effective in the identified Agricultural Priority Protection Areas along Glendale Road and Middle Road. Nearly 75% of survey respondents felt that Southampton should educate landowners about options for permanently protecting land.

Southampton can also encourage and establish regulatory mechanisms and local markets that support farming as an economic activity. At master plan workshops, some residents expressed a desire for the Agricultural Commission to take a more active role in protecting remaining farmlands and promoting farming, and residents expressed support for promoting agricultural tourism and for the idea of developing an agricultural tourism corridor and an agricultural gateway at the south end of town. Residents also expressed a desire for a local farmers market and community gardens, both excellent strategies for engaging the community in local agriculture.

Recently, as part of the Valley Ideas Design Competition, the "Bet of the Farm" submission for Southampton's Village Center won second place in the juried competition and was voted for the "People's Choice" award by the residents of Southampton. The Bet on the Farm design concept proposal uses the Old Town Hall to house a new center for food and agriculture and use town land to create a learning farm and greenhouse.

In addition to its land resources, Southampton should continue to protect its excellent water resources. While this part of the region is blessed with ample and clean public water supply, increased development can harm groundwater supply. New development can deteriorate water quality by increasing erosion, releasing sediment into surface waters, and reducing aquifer recharge. Southampton has participated in the Barnes Aquifer Protection Advisory Committee (BAPAC) with the towns of

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Easthampton, Westfield, and Holyoke since 1988. BAPAC educates and advises local governments, citizen groups, and small businesses about groundwater protection and effects on the aquifer. The committee reviews Developments of Regional Impact within the aquifer and provides comments to approval authorities. Southampton should continue to be an active participant in this committee.

Locally, the town can augment its existing Erosion and Sediment Control for Stormwater Management Bylaw with additional regulations that encourage Low Impact Development (LID), a land-planning and engineering design approach to managing stormwater runoff that emphasizes use of on-site natural features to protect water quality. Other potential threats to water resources include failing septic systems, pet wastes, and nutrient pollution from agricultural activities and lawns. The Hampton Ponds area, which is heavily used for recreational purposes, is an area of particular concern. In addition to strategies that focus on improving the quality of stormwater runoff, regulatory strategies that augment protection of river buffers, wetlands and floodplains can protect and improve water quality as well.

Another challenge for land protection is providing capacity for continued management of these parcels. Residents expressed through the public engagement process that they would like the town to be more proactive about managing town-owned lands and promoting public use of open space. Ideas include developing maps of trails and open space, and establishing a volunteer trail maintenance program.

Finally, there is significant support for developing bicycle paths and greenways that connect the town's open spaces—in particular, to develop a rail trail along the old rail bed. The rail trail, as proposed, will connect to the Easthampton Rail Trail at the town boundary and run parallel to College Highway until its intersection with this main thoroughfare at Moose Brook Road. The trail may be extended further south to the Westfield town line, providing a critical link in a regional rail trail system that may someday connect Farmington, Connecticut with Northampton. In addition to the proposed Rail Trail, there is some support for the development a riverwalk along the Manhan River wildlife corridor.

Together, the Rail Trail, combined with new open space purchases, has the potential to create a comprehensive network of linked protected green spaces in town, and to the growing greenway networks in neighboring communities. This greenway network should also connect to areas of concentrated development to allow residents to not only recreate and enjoy the outdoors, but also encourage alternative forms of transportation. Open space is only one element in the greater smart growth picture, but in order to create a balance and sustainable community, and much needed, and much supported, element for the residents of Southampton.

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## 4.3 Goals and Strategies

Target Dates for Completion are organized into four categories: Short-term (1-5 years); Mid-term (6-10 years); Long-term (11-15 years); and Ongoing.

### **Goal 4-1: Promote land use policies that protect the town's natural lands and rural community character**

Strategy 4-1A: Hold a series of public presentations about the benefits of smart growth policies that concentrate development in some places and discourage it in others. Present zoning strategies to preserve rural character within the context of a comprehensive smart growth zoning strategy.

Responsible Party: Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Select Board, Local Cable Access Channel, School Department

Resources Needed: Staff Time, Volunteer Time, Consultant

Target Date for Completion: Short-term (1-5 yrs)

Strategy 4-1B: Hold a series of public presentations about the benefits of cluster development, or the building of homes closer together so that the remaining land on a site can be protected as open space or farmland.

Responsible Party: Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Select Board, Local Cable Access Channel, School Department

Resources Needed: Staff Time, Volunteer Time, Consultant

Target Date for Completion: Short-term (1-5 yrs)

Strategy 4-1C: Review the zoning bylaws and update regulations to better protect priority natural resources and farmland.

Zoning bylaw examples could include: Open Space Residential Development, Green Development Performance Standards, and Resource Protection Overlay Districts, or Transfer of Development Rights.

Responsible Party: Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Recreation Commission, Agricultural Commission, Select Board, Local Cable Access Channel

Resources Needed: Consultant, Staff Time

Target Date for Completion: Mid-term (6-10 yrs)

Strategy 4-1D: Promote the use of Southampton's Agricultural Preservation District.

Responsible Party: Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Agricultural Commission

Resources Needed: None

Target Date for Completion: Ongoing

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Strategy 4-1E: Reconsider the draft Open Space Residential Development bylaw drafted in 2006 by the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission under a Smart Growth Technical Assistance grant.

Responsible Party: Planning Board, Select Board, Conservation Commission

Resources Needed: Volunteer Time

Target Date for Completion: Short-term (1-5 yrs)

Strategy 4-1F: Assess the likely impacts of proposed sewer and water infrastructure extensions on open space.

Responsible Party: Town Administrator, Select Board, Conservation Commission, Water Commission, Highway Department, Board of Health

Resources Needed: Consultant, Staff Time, Volunteer Time

Target Date for Completion: Mid-term (6-10 yrs)

**Goal 4-2: Identify and preserve important parcels for ecological, recreational, cultural and historical value to create a town-wide green network.**

Strategy 4-2A: Develop a prioritized list of key open space parcels for acquisition based on available developable vacant lands, key natural resource areas, critical habitat areas, priority agricultural lands and soils, recreational lands, and expansion and connection to town-wide green network.

Responsible Party: Conservation Commission, Agricultural Commission, Planning Board, Recreational Needs Committee, Community Preservation Committee

Resources Needed: Volunteer Time

Target Date for Completion: Ongoing

Strategy 4-2B: Establish and develop a relationship with existing land trusts in the region.

Responsible Party: Planning Board, Town Administrator, Select Board, Conservation Commission, Community Preservation Committee

Resources Needed: Volunteer Time

Target Date for Completion: Ongoing

Strategy 4-2C: Continue to update the town's Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) every five years in order to qualify for state and federal grants.

The state Local Acquisitions for Natural Diversity (LAND) grant and federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) grants provide funding to communities for acquisition of open space, but the town must have an updated OSRP in order to qualify

Responsible Party: Conservation Commission, Planning Board, Town Administrator

Resources Needed: Volunteer Time, Staff Time, Consultants

Target Date for Completion: Ongoing



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### **Goal 4-3: Protect and enhance the scenic vistas through the town.**

Strategy 4-3A: Establish priority areas and parcels for scenic preservation.

Responsible Party: Planning Board, Conservation Commission

Resources Needed: Staff Time, Volunteer Time, Consultant

Target Date for Completion: Short-term (1-5 yrs)

Strategy 4-3B: Review and expand the town list of designated scenic roads.

Responsible Party: Highway Department, Planning Board, Tree Warden,  
Historical Commission

Resources Needed: Staff Time, Volunteer Time, Consultant

Target Date for Completion: Ongoing

Strategy 4-3C: Adopt overlay zoning districts that protect scenic vistas, for example, along the southern portion of College Highway (Route 10), which include buffers and design standards for developments.

Responsible Party: Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Historical Commission

Resources Needed: Staff Time, Volunteer Time, Consultant

Target Date for Completion: Long-term (11-15 yrs)

### **Goal 4-4: Protect Southampton's remaining agricultural lands, promote local farming, and create opportunities for residents to become involved in local agriculture.**

Strategy 4-4A: Compile an inventory of farmlands with ownership information, protection status, vulnerability, etc., and meet with owners to explain their importance to the community and available preservation options. Coordinate these efforts with the community's prioritized list of key open space parcels for acquisition, (as listed under Goal 1, Strategy 1).

Responsible Party: Agricultural Commission, Board of Assessors, Community  
Preservation Committee, School Committee

Resources Needed: Volunteer Time, Staff Time

Target Date for Completion: Short-term (1-5 yrs)

Strategy 4-4B: Work with farmers and develop marketing materials to promote agriculture in Southampton.

Responsible Party: Agricultural Commission

Resources Needed: Volunteer Time, Consultant

Target Date for Completion: Short-term (1-5 yrs)

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Strategy 4-4C: Develop educational materials and hold public meetings to stimulate consciousness about agriculture and the tools available to protect it.

Responsible Party: Agricultural Commission, School Department

Resources Needed: Volunteer Time

Target Date for Completion: Short-term (1-5 yrs)

Strategy 4-4D: Establish a weekly Farmer's Market in an appropriate location in the community

Resources available at Federation of Massachusetts Farmers Markets ([massfarmersmarkets.org](http://massfarmersmarkets.org)) or MA Department of Agricultural Resources ([mass.gov/agr](http://mass.gov/agr))

Responsible Party: Agricultural Commission

Resources Needed: Volunteer Time

Target Date for Completion: Short-term (1-5 yrs)

Strategy 4-4E: Identify appropriate locations and parcels to be used as a town owned community garden

Responsible Party: Agricultural Commission, Select Board, Conservation Commission

Resources Needed: Volunteer Time

Target Date for Completion: Short-term (1-5 yrs)

#### **Goal 4-5: Protect Southampton's water resources.**

Strategy 4-5A: Conduct a water quality education campaign that targets the landowners in town.

Educate landowners about septic system failures, fertilizer use on lawns and agricultural properties, pet wastes, and other homeowner actions that deteriorate the quality of water.

Responsible Party: Board of Health, Highway Department, Conservation Commission, Barnes Aquifer Protection Advisory Committee, Water Department

Resources Needed: Staff Time, Volunteer Time

Target Date for Completion: Ongoing

Strategy 4-5B: Adopt Low Impact Development (LID) standards for stormwater management in the zoning, subdivision, and stormwater regulations.

Low Impact Developments are designed to reflect natural hydrology, minimize impervious surfaces, treat stormwater in small decentralized structures, preserve portions of the site in natural conditions, and use natural topography for drainageways and storage.

Responsible Party: Planning Board, Highway Department, Conservation Commission

Resources Needed: Staff Time, Volunteer Time, Consultant

Target Date for Completion: Mid-term (6-10 yrs)

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Strategy 4-5C: Consider adopting a River Protection Overlay District that minimizes development impacts in sensitive river buffer areas.

This Overlay District can increase community control over activities on riverfront areas not regulated by the Massachusetts Rivers Protection Act. The district designates a portion of the riverbank from the shoreline landward up to an established distance from each bank. It provides restrictions on uses and structures that will damage the environmental integrity of the river. Uses permitted as a matter of right should be limited to those consistent with the scenic qualities of the river, such as agricultural production, recreational uses, reasonable emergency procedures, conservation measures, and residential development on lots with frontage on an existing way.

Responsible Party: Planning Board, Conservation Commission

Resources Needed: Volunteer Time, Consultant

Target Date for Completion: Mid-term (6-10 yrs)

Strategy 4-5D: Consider developing a larger local buffer zone requirement than the existing state-mandated 100' protection buffer in order to better protect the town's significant wetland resources.

Responsible Party: Conservation Commission

Resources Needed: Staff Time, Volunteer Time

Target Date for Completion: Mid-term (6-10 yrs)

Strategy 4-5E: Adopted a Reduced Road Salt Policy that minimizes salt application and storage near environmentally sensitive areas adjacent to highways and roads in order to protect aquifers, private wells and surface waters.

Responsible Party: Highway Department, Conservation Commission, Water Department

Resources Needed: Staff Time, Volunteer Time

Target Date for Completion: Short-term (1-5 yrs)

Strategy 4-5F: Actively participate in the Barnes Aquifer Protection Advisory Committee (BAPAC), and allow BAPAC to comment on development proposals of regional impact.

Responsible Party: Planning Board

Resources Needed: Volunteer Time

Target Date for Completion: Ongoing

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**Goal 4-6: Increase capacity for management of town-owned open space lands and promote public use of existing open space network.**

Strategy 4-6A: Maintain a current environmental inventory and develop a management plan for conservation areas.

Responsible Party: Conservation Commission, Planning Board, Parks Commission

Resources Needed: Consultant, Staff Time, Volunteer Time

Target Date for Completion: Short-term (1-5 yrs)

Strategy 4-6B: Develop a comprehensive outreach and education campaign to inform the community about existing open space resources, to improve and maintain trail networks, and to improve signage and access to open space resources. Develop trail maps, establish a volunteer trail maintenance program, and educate the public about conservation issues as part of this effort.

Responsible Party: Conservation Commission, Open Space Committee, Parks Commission

Resources Needed: Staff Time, Volunteer Time

Target Date for Completion: Ongoing

Strategy 4-6C: Develop a plan to enhance Conant Memorial Park and to connect it to other town and open space resources.

Responsible Party: Department of Public Works, Recreation Commission

Resources Needed: Staff Time, Volunteer Time, Consultant

Target Date for Completion: Short-term (1-5 yrs)

Strategy 4-6D: Explore the possibility to secure public access to the Tighe-Carmody Reservoir area with the City of Holyoke.

Responsible Party: Select Board, Town Administrator

Resources Needed: Staff Time, Volunteer Time

Target Date for Completion: Long-term (11-15 yrs)

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**Goal 4-7: Connect open space resources to enhance community livability and wildlife habitat, and to encourage walking and biking.**

Strategy 4-7A: Develop a rail trail along the existing rail bed to create a north-south connection between the numerous open space areas along its length. Consider expanding the current plan to extend the Rail Trail south along its entire length to Swanson Corners and the Westfield town line.

Responsible Party: Planning Board, Recreation Commission, Highway Department, Conservation Commission

Resources Needed: Staff Time, Volunteer Time, Consultant, Transportation Improvement Funds, PVPC, MassDOT

Target Date for Completion: Short-term (1-5 yrs)

Strategy 4-7B: Develop a plan for an east-west connection from the Rail Trail to the Tighe-Carmody Reservoir area. Compile a list of parcels that area critical to creating this link and work with town boards, officials, and local / state conservation groups to acquire or gain public access easements to these priority parcels.

Responsible Party: Planning Board, Recreation Commission, Department of Public Works, Conservation Commission

Resources Needed: Staff Time, Volunteer Time, Consultant, Community Preservation Act funds, state LAND grant, federal LWCF grant

Target Date for Completion: Long-term (11-15 yrs)

Strategy 4-7C: Develop a Manhan River Greenway and Wildlife Corridor Management Plan, and develop a list of priority parcels for acquisition or easements to support the development and enhancement of this greenway and wildlife corridor area.

Responsible Party: Conservation Commission, Planning Board, Select Board

Resources Needed: Staff Time, Volunteer Time, CPA funds, state LAND grant, federal Land and Water Conservation Fund grant

Target Date for Completion: Ongoing

