

Regional Towns' Open Space Programs 2024

Town	Policy/Program
Killingly	Town has \$230,000 in an Open Space account and an Open Space Acquisition Commission to process applications. Annual funding occurs at the end of the budget year when Town Depts/Boards/Commissions can request to transfer unused funds to the account. Funding also occurs through P & Z via fee in lieu.
Plainfield	Town has \$300,000 in an Open Space account. There was \$450,000 until a recent purchase of 162 acres (132 acres of State property granted to the Town with 30 acres of private land) on Kate Downing Rd. Annual budget funding suspended due to the remaining balance in the account. The First Selectman's office administers the program in collaboration with the Conservation Commission.
Putnam	Town's Open Space program is solely funded through P & Z via fee in lieu.
Thompson	Town's Open Space Program is solely funded through P & Z via fee in lieu.
Brooklyn	Town has \$216,196.86 in Open Space fund with annual funding of \$1.00 per resident (\$8488 in 2023-2024 budget). P & Z fee in lieu is also a funding source.
Woodstock	Town has @ \$400,000 in Open Space account. Allocations vary by year - \$30,000 in 2021-22, \$27,000 in 2022-23 and \$10,000 in 2023-24. There are 17 protected farms, 5 of which Conservation partnered with Fed/State programs. 10% of the town area is protected. The Conservation Commission has member representation from BOS, P & Z, Recreation, Agriculture, and four at large members.
Lebanon	Town presently has @ \$200,000 in an open space account that has been as high as \$500,000 in the past as well as town staff available to actively promote and assist with the program. The Town tries to maintain funding in the account at \$300,000. There is Town staff to help applicants process applications as well as to assist with applications for possible area land trusts and grant programs. 26% of the Town's area is protected. 13% of the Town's farmland (6000 acres) is protected. Conservation and Agriculture Commissions are combined.
Wilmington	Town has \$95,000 in an Open Space account. The program is funded through Capitol Improvement with past and present allocations of @ \$30,000 a year along with P & Z fee in lieu. Conservation Commission members administer the program without the help of Town Staff.
Canterbury	Town's Open Space Program is solely funded through P & Z via fee in lieu.
Pomfret	Town bonded \$5.1 million in 2013 to purchase land for open space. An outside group was hired to administer the program. There is presently \$180,000 left in the fund. The Town also employs P & Z fee in lieu. @ 25% of the town's area is protected through Open Space, which includes Natchaug Forest and Mashamoquet State Park. There is not any annual budget funding.
Ashford	Town has \$2,000 in an Open Space account -- does not have annual funding. The Conservation Commission is looking to have an annual Yale Forest donation to the town (\$8,000) allocated to the open space account by BOF. The Commission has made this request for the past several years without success.

Chaplin	Town has @ \$10,000 as a line item in the Board of Selectmen's budget but it does not have annual funding. The town has a POCD plan, but it is not an active program. Conservation and Inland Wetlands commissions are combined. P & Z fee in lieu is also not an active resource for the fund. There is activity to protect land via Joshua's Tract Conservation and Historic Trust as well as protected land from Natchaug and James Goodwin's State Forests.
Lisbon	Town contact will get back about details of their program.
Hampton	Town does not have any aggressive Open Space program due to sparse population, sparse development, and significant percentage of State Forest land (James Goodwin, Natchaug) within the town.
Eastford	Town contact will get back with details of their program. Town does have an Open Space fund and they requested \$20,000 in 2023-24. There is significant protected land from Natchaug State Forest and Yale Forest. Town has a three acres minimum to qualify for Open Space designation.
Scotland	Was not able to speak with anyone.

All towns can request additional funding through BOS/Town Council with subsequent referral to Town Meeting/Referendum.

These 2,070 committed open space acres account for 9% of the town's total land area (22,500 acres). Most of this land consists of mature forests and contributes to drinking water protection, wildlife habitat and passive recreation. There is very little committed open space in town that currently contributes to agricultural or historical resource preservation.

Willington's Plan of Conservation and Development [Willington, 2006] states that between 15% and 24% of the town's total land area, or 3,375 to 5,400 acres, should be committed open space. Given that currently protected land includes many small, scattered parcels, it would be desirable to acquire additional acreage adjacent to land already protected or of sufficient size to provide wildlife habitat and natural resource protection values.

The environmental well-being and character of Willington is and will be greatly affected by the ecological and aesthetic attitudes of all landowners, large and small. A third of Willington's land area, exclusive of roads, consists of approximately 2,100 parcels less than 15 acres, most of which are less than ten acres. These may offer specific habitat protection or be vital links connecting larger conserved areas.

OPEN SPACE CONSERVATION GOALS

Conserve and connect open space areas, giving priority to areas that hold the greatest number of natural and cultural resources.

METHODOLOGY

In order to set priorities for open space protection, the Conservation Commission used geographic informational system (GIS) mapping techniques to layer resource inventory maps over the town's digitized property line base map. With this strategy, we were able to identify the remaining large, undeveloped areas in town that contain multiple resources as well as to consider their proximity to existing open space.

To begin this process, undeveloped parcels in town (25 acres or larger) were assigned a resource score based on totaling the points given for each of the following criteria below:

- Parcel between 25 – 50 acres in size (0.5 points)
- Parcel larger than 50 acres (1 point)
- Contains 10 acres or more of prime agricultural soils (1 point)
- Contains 25 acres or more of productive forest soils (1 point)
- Contains any wetland soils (1 point)
- Contains or is adjacent to a watercourse or water body (1 point)
- Overlies an aquifer protection area (1 point)
- Identified as an historic property (1 point)
- Adjacent to an area with endangered species from NDDB (1 point)
- Adjacent to existing open space (1 point)
- Adjacent to large (100+ acres) existing open space (additional 0.5 points)

Total scores ranged from 0.5 to 7.5 points for individual parcels. A total score of 5 points or more was considered to indicate the parcel had a high resource value. Using this cutoff score, the Commission then identified generalized clusters of these parcels with high resource value and mapped them as conservation priority areas. The Conservation Priority Areas Map # 16 depicts these areas which contain the highest resource value in town.