

SECTION 7 - ANALYSIS OF NEEDS

- 7.1 SUMMARY OF RESOURCE PROTECTION NEEDS
- 7.2 SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY NEEDS
- 7.3 SUMMARY OF MANAGEMENT NEEDS

This Section presents resource protection needs, community needs and management needs of the town. The “Analysis of Needs” provides a systematic examination of what is needed in Northbridge to achieve the vision presented in **Section 6 -Community Vision**. Includes analysis of the environmental inventory discussed in **Section 4 -Environmental Inventory & Analysis** and **Section 5 -Inventory of Lands of Conservation & Recreation Interest**. The town’s open space and recreation needs were developed based on public input, data collected via surveys and public forums sponsored by the Town (Open Space & Recreation Plan Update Committee).

Conservation and recreation needs may overlap in some situations, but there are distinct differences. Conservation needs relate to resource protection and recreation needs relate to the community’s active and passive needs which may shift over time.

7.1 SUMMARY OF RESOURCE PROTECTION NEEDS

Resource protection is based upon the need to preserve natural and cultural resources that are finite and once lost cannot be replaced or easily replicated. These resources include wetlands, rivers, streams, ponds, aquifers, forested upland, open fields, historic sites, and farmlands.

The Northbridge Conservation Commission is the responsible municipal entity to oversee and facilitate resource protection needs for the Town.

Northbridge’s landscape contains many valuable natural resources in need of protection. Landscapes such as waterways, watersheds, open fields, and forested lands not only provide opportunities for recreation and habitat for many varieties of flora and fauna, but also help safeguard drinking water supply and reduce the risk of flooding and erosion.

Northbridge, in cooperation with neighboring towns of Grafton and Millbury, MA became an MVP community in 2018. The state’s MVP -Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program provides technical and financial support for municipalities to identify climate hazards, assess vulnerabilities and develop action plans to improve resiliency to climate change.

Through public engagement and stakeholder meetings a steering committee worked with a consultant to identify and prioritize green infrastructure Best Management Practices (BMPs) aimed to improve resiliency to future climate conditions. The project(s) considered measures to improve water quality within the watershed and aquifer area of the Carpenter Reservoir. Reference is made Northbridge’s 2018 MVP Action Plan and the Carpenter Reservoir Green Infrastructure Study Report prepared by Fuss & O’Neil completed in June 2022. [See Map XX for MVP Priority Projects.](#)

Over the years, Northbridge has partnered with local and regional advocates in support of preserving and protecting its natural resources within the Blackstone River Valley. These groups include the Blackstone River Watershed Association, the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor, the Blackstone River Coalition, the Blackstone



River & Canal Commission, and more recently the Metacomet Land Trust, Blackstone River Collaborative, and the National Park Service. The Town of Northbridge shall look to continue and build upon these relationships as the Town addresses action items identified in this 2023-2030 Open Space & Recreation Plan.

The public survey(s) completed, asked residents to think about the Town's open space, local resources and recreational opportunities. The results of the questionnaire helped shape and define this Section, as well as help establish goals identified in **Section 8 -Goals & Objectives** and help establish action items in **Section 9 -Seven Year Action Plan**.

86% of respondents to the survey expressed an interest in the Town preserving environmentally sensitive, natural habitat and water supply areas; with almost 90% indicating support of the Town spending funds to cleanup and improve access to rivers, lakes and ponds. Of those responding to the public survey almost 70% indicated they utilize open space at least once a month; where over 20% frequent open space areas in town 2 to 3 times a week.

Of those responding to the public survey, only 9.2% indicate they were satisfied with the amount of open space protected in Town; where 82% of those responding also indicated they were unfamiliar with the open space and conservation lands in Northbridge. As part of public outreach, identified as Action Item #XXXX, under XXXXX (Section XXXX), information on town-owned open space and conservation land shall be made more readily available to the public.

Preserving natural habitats, conservation land, passive recreation, natural resources, and scenic vistas rated important to survey respondents. 243 respondents or 85% of those completing the survey indicated support of utilizing municipal funds to acquire additional open space for conservation land and recreation.

Nearly 90% of respondents indicated support for allocating local funding to cleanup and improve rivers, lakes, and ponds in Town; with 66% specifying support in utilizing town funds for ecologically important resource areas.

As noted in **Section 3 -Community Setting**, Northbridge shares its public water supply with neighboring Sutton, MA. Water is provided by Whitinsville Water Company, a private public utility regulated by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP). The public drinking water supply originates from two (2) groundwater sources: the Whittin Wellfield (Carr Street, Northbridge) and the Sutton Wellfield (Mendon Road, Sutton). The Whitinsville Water Company owns a series of five (5) reservoirs that are used to recharge the groundwater from where the wells withdraw water from the ground. These reservoirs are generally protected as the water company owns most of the properties directly adjacent to these waterbodies. An Aquifer Protection District (Zone I & Zone II) adopted by Northbridge, includes provisions to safeguard and protect the area from contamination of the ground and surface water resources providing public water supply. Northbridge's drinking water is provided from two (2) groundwater sources: the Whittin Wellfield (MassDEP ID# 2216000-01G), located at Carr Street in Northbridge and the Sutton Wellfield (MassDEP ID# 2216000-02G), located at Mendon Road in Sutton, MA.

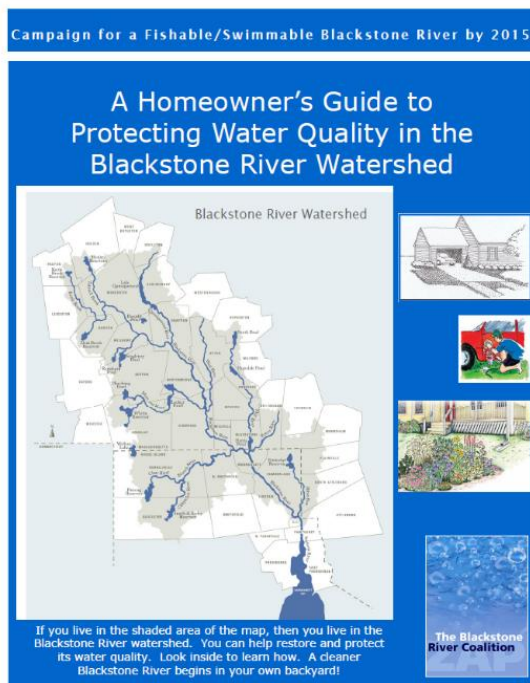
As described in **Section 5 -Inventory of Lands of Conservation & Recreation Interest**, invasive aquatic plant species, such as Water Chestnut have been introduced into Northbridge's waterways. Unfortunately, the Water Chestnut is a highly competitive plant that is capable of rapid growth and spread. The presence of Water Chestnuts may displace native species, significantly alter aquatic habitats, and reduce biodiversity by clogging ponds and waterways. Actions to address Water Chestnut and other aquatic invasive plant species is identified as Action Item #XXXX, under XXXXX (**Section 9 -Seven Year Action Plan**).

Northbridge has retained much of its rural character despite continued residential growth. The Town is fortunate to have five (5) local farmlands: Foppema, Kroll, Szerlag, West End, and Castle Hill. In addition to being utilized farmland, each landscape provides a timeless scenic vistas adding to the quality of life in Northbridge. Efforts to support local farming must become more of a priority and be recognized at the local and state levels. Municipal

leaders should talk with their legislative delegates to secure long-term funding for local farms throughout the Commonwealth; to help ensure the working farms prosper and remain.

In 2017, Northbridge voters approved the Community Preservation Act, adopting a local 1% surcharge on all real estate property tax bills. Proceeds from the Community Preservation Act are collected and deposited into special municipal accounts identified for Community Housing, Historic Preservation, and Open Space & Recreation.

In action taken at the 2022 Fall Annual Town Meeting, voters approved utilization of the town's Community Preservation Funds to purchase a ±97-acre portion of the historic Castle Hill Farm within the village of Whitinsville. The Conservation Commission shall manage the land, where a Conservation Restriction will be placed on the property in perpetuity. The site abuts the town's Fletcher Street Conservation Land and Riley Pond, as well as the Town of Uxbridge 100-acre Lot and the Whitinsville Golf Club. The preserved open space will provide habitat connectivity and may include trails for hiking, walking, birding, and other passive recreation.



The Blackstone River Watershed Association, in partnership with the Blackstone River Coalition prepared a series of brochures on Non-Point Source Pollution for Property Owners, Horse Owners, and for Small Farm Owners. As part of public outreach, identified as **Action Item #XXXX, under XXXXX (Section 9 -Seven Year Action Plan)**, the BRWA stormwater brochures and other informational PSAs shall be made more readily available to the public.

Stormwater is rain or melting snow that flows over ground. In urbanized areas, like the built environment of Northbridge, stormwater may travel over pavement (roadways, driveways, and parking lots) picking up oil and other pollutants before flowing into catch basins or nearby rivers, streams, and habitat areas. In the natural environment (forested lands, open space, and wetland areas) stormwater may be soaked directly into the ground or held in water bodies. Impervious surfaces such as roads and building roofs can significantly alter natural river flow patterns and the recharge of our underground water supply areas, where the stormwater cannot soak into the ground through these surfaces.

As a result, impervious surfaces may also increase the amount of stormwater entering our rivers and waterways, resulting in an increase in the severity and frequency of flooding, loss of habitat for fish and other species.

Conventional infrastructure treats and directs stormwater into storm drains and pipes with outlets to receiving waters; often at different locations from where the stormwater originated. This stormwater management design may result in loss of groundwater recharge, reduced base flows in rivers and streams, increased flooding, and diminished water quality. Instead of channeling stormwater into pipes and drains, a more natural method of water management is the employment of Low Impact Development techniques, commonly referred to as LIDs. Where stormwater management uses soil and vegetation to filter out pollutants and allowing for more direct recharge within the site.

Northbridge's Best Development Practices Guidebook, prepared under the direction of the Planning Board (December 2009) assists developers, designers, and reviewers of development plans to improve the quality of site planning through sustainable design. The guidebook offers examples of Low Impact Development techniques for stormwater management and other BMPs (Best Management Practices) that supports the Town's goals to preserve and restore its natural resources.

Stormwater management in Massachusetts is governed by sections of the Wetlands Regulations, 310 CMR 10.00, and the Water Quality Regulations, 314 CMR 9.00.



In 2020, Northbridge accepted as a public way Hannah Drive (Carpenter Estates), a single access, 18-lot residential subdivision roadway, where over 44-acres of open space was permanently protected and conveyed to the Town (Conservation Commission). The subdivision development employed Low Impact Development (LID) techniques for stormwater management of the roadway. Stormwater is collected from the road and directed into a series of vegetative swales and rain gardens, rather than a conventional pipe to drainage basin system. Low Impact Development (LID) is an approach to environmentally friendly land use development. It includes landscaping and design techniques that attempt to mimic

and maintain the natural, pre-development ability of a site to manage and clean stormwater. In simple terms, LID techniques capture water on site, filter it through vegetation, and infiltrate back into the ground.

As climate change concerns continue, it becomes increasingly important to incorporate resource protection initiatives to help manage and build resiliency for varying weather events which may affect both the natural and built environments.

Monitoring biodiversity is an important component of natural resource protection as it is a way of determining the health of a specific environment. Biodiversity refers to the number of plant and animal species in a given area. Climate change, pollution, development, and invasive species present a threat to the diversity of natural habitats. It is important for the public to understand and appreciate the role of biodiversity in Northbridge's natural habitats. The Massachusetts BioMap identifies areas that are considered important to the long-range viability of the most significant elements of biodiversity in the Commonwealth.

Northbridge is shown to have an area of core habitat along the eastern side of town along the Blackstone River. Core habitat contains species necessary to the well-being of an ecosystem. [Reference is made to BioMap2 report for Northbridge \(2012\). MAP??](#)

Federal and state-level efforts to reduce dependency on fossil fuels and lessen carbon emissions has promoted renewable and alternative energy options, including solar.

While the use of solar and other alternative energy is as a good thing, large-scale solar photovoltaic facilities have left their imprints in Northbridge. Where just after a period of 6-years (2016-2022), the Town has lost over 350-acres of forested lands to large-scale solar photovoltaic installations: Puddon Street (± 138 acres); Providence Road (± 57 acres); Church Street (± 95 acres); and McQuade's Lane (± 60 acres).



Solar may be considered a clean and renewable energy option, but it comes with ecological impacts to the environment, in terms of habitat loss and increased erosion. Boards, Commissions, and municipal departments should work with solar companies to ensure projects are appropriately selected and sites are properly revegetated to promote new habitat growth for wildlife, pollinators, and erosion controls.

7.2 SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY NEEDS

The Northbridge Conservation Commission and the Northbridge Playground & Recreation Committee are the responsible municipal entities to oversee passive and active recreational needs in Town. While the Conservation Commission oversees resource protection and manages the town's open space; the Playground & Recreation Committee is charged with ensuring all residents have equal opportunity to enjoy the social, mental, and physical experiences of a clean, safe and varied recreation.

The Town's open space Conservation Lands include Arcade Pond, Bennet's Pasture, Elsa Whitin Mason Conservation Land (& Community Gardens), Fletcher Street Conservation Land, Mumford Riverwalk, Riley Pond, and Shining Rock (Richard T Larkin Conservation Area). These properties not only provide habitat for a variety of flora and fauna, but also offer passive recreation opportunities in the form of hiking, walking, and birding.

Arcade Pond -located off Main Street, Lake Street & Crescent Street is located within the village of Whitinsville (Environmental Justice Population neighborhood); Arcade Pond is a man-made pond with currently limited user access, absent signage and Bennet's Pasture -a landlock property consisting of Elsa Whitin Mason Conservation Land (& Community Gardens) -..... Fletcher Street Conservation Land -..... Mumford Riverwalk -Riley Pond -..... Shining Rock (Richard T Larkin Conservation Area) – [general descriptions may be more appropriate for other Section of OSRP]

In addition to those owned by the Town, Northbridge has a considerable amount of protected public lands within its boundaries ($\pm 2,130$ acres), this includes the Blackstone River & Canal Heritage State Park, the E. Kent Swift Wildlife Management Area, and Upton State Forest.



The Blackstone River & Canal Heritage State Park extends along the Blackstone River from Plummers Landing (Church Street) south into Uxbridge, MA. The Blackstone River & Canal Heritage State Park is a part of the state park system managed by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). The park includes off-street parking and offers a picnic area with public access for fishing, boating (canoeing/kayaking) and other outdoor activities such as mountain biking, hiking, walking and equestrian trails along the Blackstone River and historic Blackstone Canal.

E. Kent Swift Wildlife Management Area extends along Quaker Street and Mendon Road. The property, managed by the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife, consists of mountain laurel, greenbrier, and Japanese bayberry sections throughout. A white pine stand is also located on the property. Due to the dense, thorny understory, hunting, wildlife viewing, and other opportunities may be limited. The habitat provides excellent cover for white-tailed deer and small game species such as gray squirrel and eastern cottontail, as well as terrestrial furbearers like eastern coyote, bobcat, fox, and fisher.

The Upton State Forest lands extends into town along Moon Hill Road and upper portion of Upton Street adjacent to the Shining Rock Golf Course. The Planning Board and Conservation Commission, in working with a Developer of an adjacent residential subdivision (Moon Hill Estates) recently obtained public access to Upton State Forest property and secured an additional ± 7.73 -acres of open space adjacent to a Town-owned parcel on Moon Hill Road. A trailhead with parking area shall be prepared by the Developer and conveyed to Northbridge (Conservation Commission), where new hiking and walking trails will be created. The parking area and trailhead(s) will provide direct public access to over 200 acres of undisturbed public lands.

83.9% of those responding to the public survey identified trail hiking and walking as their top recreational need, followed by bike trails (76.6%), community park (72.4%), and playgrounds (62.9%). Canoeing/kayaking, picnic areas, multi-use fields, children play areas, conservation land, and public access to swimming were also identified as top 10 recreational needs.

The Town's recreational facilities includes the Linwood Playground, Northbridge Center Field, Plummer Park Playground, Riverdale Memorial Field (Goulet Playground), and the Rockdale Playground (Oliver Ashton Memorial Field). The Playground & Recreation Committee, in coordination with the public schools also organize the use of the High School upper fields, the Middle School fields and recently upgraded Elementary School fields.

Linwood Playground -located off Providence Road consists of two (2) basketball courts, baseball and softball fields and an undefined grass field used for soccer and other activities. Funding to upgrade the basketball courts have recently been secured. Overall, the fields are in need of maintenance and improvements. The facility does not include any playground equipment and is not ADA compliant. The playground equipment was removed some years ago and never replaced. Efforts to upgrade the basketball courts and provide improved access are underway, with local funding secured at the 2022 Spring Annual Town Meeting.

Northbridge Center Field -located off Fowler Road is an abandoned recreational facility that consists of remnants to a basketball court and disassembled play structures. Access to this property is limited for active recreation, where more passive recreational options such as hiking may be more appropriate.

Plummer Park Playground -consists of an undersized and underutilized ballfield and skate park in need of attention and updates. This facility does not include any playground equipment, lacks off-street parking, and is located directly off Church Street, a local main connector road. Due to limited parking and relatively small size of the property, other options shall be considered for the ballfield area, such as a playground and or community park.

Riverdale Memorial Park (Goulet Playground) -located off Providence Road was recently closed and redevelopment for the new Northbridge Fire Station Headquarters (to be completed in 2023). Portions of the site may still be accessible to the public and utilized for passive recreation such as hiking and walking trails.

Rockdale Playground (Oliver Ashton Memorial Field) -located off Church Avenue consists of baseball fields, softball fields and several swings. Like most facilities in Town, the ballfields and play areas are in need of maintenance and improvements.[similar to note above, general descriptions may be more appropriate for other Section of OSRP]

Over 75% of respondents to the survey rated Northbridge's playground and recreational facilities as fair to bad; with less than 10% indicating they were satisfied with recreational opportunities in Town.

Respondents felt the Town has an adequate number of ballfields however, expressed concern with the condition and maintenance upkeep of the various town managed fields.

Like many towns, formal ballfields and playground facilities are in high demand in Northbridge. The Town's current recreation inventory however does not meet community needs. Overuse and lack of proactive maintenance of the existing fields and playgrounds is a growing concern of residents. Only 35% of those responding to the survey indicated they were satisfied with the recreational opportunities offered in Northbridge. Over 65% ranked the town's existing recreational facilities as poor to fair condition.

68% of survey respondents indicated they would support future allocation of town funds to enhance and maintain existing recreational facilities. Of those providing a response 63% desired to have more playgrounds, picnic areas, community park, and children play areas in town. Only 42% ranked dog park in their "Top 10" recreational needs. 61% identified public access for swimming as a top priority.

Respondents felt the Town had sufficient ballfields and expressed a need for more town parks, playgrounds, and walking, biking and hiking trails. The Town has three (3) dedicated playgrounds for younger children; the Cross Street Tot-Lot and two (2) neighborhood playgrounds, one located at the end of Beech Street and the other on Jessica Way. All three of these facilities are in need upgrades and improvements.

Northbridge does not have sufficient area to qualify as a community park. Rockdale Legion Field, Plummers Playground, Linwood Playground, Vail Field, Lasell Field can all be considered neighborhood parks and have a combined area of approximately ± 43 acres. The minimum recommendation for neighborhood parks/playgrounds is one to two acres per 1,000 people, or a total of between 13 and 26 acres for Northbridge, which the town would satisfy when including the school fields: Vail Field, Lasell Field and the upper fields at the High School. These fields are not necessarily open to the public, creating a greater need for parks and playgrounds in Town.

The National Recreation & Park Association (NRPA) defines a community park as an *“area of diverse environmental quality; may include areas suited for intense recreational facilities, such as athletic complexes, large swimming pools; may be an area of natural quality for outdoor recreation such as walking, viewing, sitting, picnicking; may be any combination of the above, depending upon site suitability and community need”*. The NRPA recommends that a community park be more than 25 acres.

An undeveloped town-owned parcel of land on Providence Road (AP 14-17), consisting of ± 25 acres has been identified as a possible community park, offering walking and hiking trails, playground, child play areas, and picnic areas. The wooded lot is directly accessible off Providence Road (Rt 122) and is viewed as an ideal location for a large community park. Of those responding to the public survey 72.4% identified a need for a community park. The National Recreation & Park Association (NRPA) recommends that a total of between 6.25 and 10.5 acres per 1,000 people should be devoted to recreation. Northbridge exceeds the minimum of ± 98 total acres but it lacks the recommended acreage designated as part of the mini-park category.

Some neighborhoods are critically underserved, specifically the New Village neighborhood in Whitinsville (Environmental Justice Population) and downtown village of Rockdale. Residents occupy historic mill housing, where there is a higher land-use density and minimal public open space. There may be opportunities to create and improve access to open space within the New Village neighborhood, with trail enhancements to Elsa Whitin Mason Conservation Land and potential securing additional properties along Arcade Pond. With a community garden-park planned for downtown Rockdale. The Rockdale Pocket Park is to consist of raised planting beds, shade trees and benches. Design plans are currently underway with construction anticipated for Spring 2023.

7.3 SUMMARY OF MANAGEMENT NEEDS

86% of respondents to the survey expressed an interest in the Town preserving environmentally sensitive, natural habitat and water supply areas; with almost 90% indicating support of the Town spending funds to cleanup and improve access to rivers, lakes and ponds. Of those responding to the public survey almost 70% indicated they utilize open space at least once a month; where over 20% frequent open space areas in town 2 to 3 times a week.

The Whitinsville Water Company is a major landholder of forested land within watershed areas of Northbridge and surrounding Sutton. None of this land may be permanently protected (via Covenant or Conservation Restriction). Forested land is vital to filtering and recharging the town's water supply areas, as well as absorbing carbon dioxide emissions. Taking proactive steps to further protect our public water supply is identified as Action Item #XXXX, under XXXX (Section 9 -Seven Year Action Plan).

The Town must begin to plan for the acquisition of lands available under Chapter 61 in order to purchase contiguous open space for conservation corridors and recreational opportunities. Our land inventory indicates 846 acres of

land that are Chapter 61 properties. Under the provisions of this law, Northbridge has the right of first refusal when a property is sold. The town does not have a strategy to deal with acquisition of these properties. Respondents overwhelmingly supported a budget that includes funding for preservation, conservation, and maintenance of current properties and the acquisition of available open space.

Preservation of these lands was rated by residents as very important or important to aid in safeguarding wildlife habitats and natural resources. We need better strategies to prepare the town to purchase lands under Chapter 61A when opportunities arise.

Work with DCR to enhance trails and improve/restore historic Blackstone Canal is identified as Action Item #XXXXX, under XXXXX (Section 9 -Seven Year Action Plan).

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[speak to/mention current & ongoing initiatives.....Linwood Basketball Court, Mumford Riverwalk, Rockdale Pocket Park, Shining Rock Trail (& maps)....]

The Department of Public Works maintains the town's ballfields and playground facilities. Seasonal maintenance includes grass mowing, general cleanup, and repair/replacement of equipment as may be needed. The Playground & Recreation Committee shall, on an annual basis convene a meeting(s) with the Department of Public Works (Director of Public Works) to review existing conditions of all town ballfields and playgrounds for the purpose of identifying needed and anticipated improvements, as well as future expansion and new facilities.

In coordination with the Northbridge Disability Commission, the Playground & Recreation Committee shall review the Northbridge Self-Evaluation & Transition Plan (June 2022), to prioritize and look to secure funding necessary for required ADA improvements to the various town ballfields and playground facilities. Additionally, the Playground & Recreation shall work with the Disability Commission and Department of Public Works on identifying potential locations for ADA compliant playground facilities. Needed and anticipated improvements, including ADA compliance to ballfields and playground facilities shall be included in the town's Capital Improvement Plan (5-Year Plan) as may be recommend and submitted by the Department of Public Works.

The Conservation Commission oversees the town's open space, including Shining Rock Trail, Elsa Whitin Mason Conservation Land, and Fletcher Street. The Conservation Commission shall establish and oversee a Trail Stewardship Program, charged with ongoing maintenance of town-owned open space. The Conservation Commission shall establish a forest Management Plan for Fletcher Street Conservation Land, the 33-acre pine forest.

The Planning Board shall work with Developers to identify opportunities for open space connectivity as part of subdivision development review/approval. The Planning Board shall review and consider amending the town's Zoning Bylaw to allow Flexible Development by-right, where currently only allowed by special permit. As part of amending the bylaw, provisions shall be added to clearly specify design and layout process, including identifying potential viewsheds, resource areas, and proposed open space areas for connectivity and resource protection.

The Inspector of Buildings (/Zoning Enforcement Officer) and applicable boards and commissions shall continue to oversee and enforce the town's Aquifer Protection Districts provisions (Article XIII) and the Floodway & Floodplain Overlay District (Section 173-18) of the Northbridge Zoning Bylaw. The Building Department shall promptly notify property owners in violation of the town's Aquifer Protection District and or Floodplain & Floodway zoning provisions; where unpermitted activity may negatively impact resource protection areas and alter flood storage areas.

The Board of Selectmen, with assistance from the Conservation Commission and other applicable boards and municipal departments shall work with the Whitinsville Water Company to seek permanent protection of water company lands around the public water supply areas. Protections may be in the form of Conservation Restrictions, etc.

The Board of Selectmen, with the assistance of the Conservation Commission and applicable municipal departments shall oversee improvements to the Mumford Riverwalk, a public amenity along Linwood Avenue fronting Mumford River/Linwood Pond. Said improvement to include an elevated boardwalk and other riverwalk enhancements. The Conservation Agent/Trail Stewards shall assist the Department of Public Works in preparing a maintenance plan filing with the Conservation Commission.

The Board of Selectmen, with the assistance of municipal departments shall contact DCR to establish a restoration and improvement plan for the historic Blackstone River Canal at Plummers Landing, where after years of deferred and continued lack of maintenance may result in losing this historic feature and alter habitat areas.

The town shall seek funding to (re)establish Recreation Director to assist Playground & Recreation Commission.

Establish and fund a revolving account for the purchase of Chapter 61 lands which would allow for the prompt acquisition of lands accessible via our first right of refusal when a Ch.61 property is available. The Town should not depend upon the use of CPA funds, solely, for acquiring such properties. Educating residents and property owners on the use of CPA funds and the conservation and preservation of properties is critical.

Support local farms via property tax reduction/forgiveness; provide incentives for land use protections via Transfer Development Rights and other means to help maintain active farms remain a valued local resource of the Northbridge.

Develop a fiscally responsible, progressive budget that supports recreational and open space maintenance, repair, and staffing. Management of existing recreation sites is the most important component of providing adequate recreational opportunities for the citizens. Access to some facilities is poor or non-existent. Many of the sites show signs of neglect and age.

Restore a footbridge that once traversed the Mumford River, linking the Mumford Riverwalk along Linwood Avenue with the Fletcher Street Conservation Land and Castle Hill Farm.

Work with the State and Federal agencies to re-establish public access to West Hill Dam Recreational Land via West Hill Dam Road in Northbridge.

Clean up of our rivers and ponds must take place to maximize opportunities for recreational use. There is a need for improvement of access points to waterways, along with well-marked signs and interpretive maps.

Continue an expansion of the Blackstone Valley Bikeway which will ultimately run along the Blackstone River from Worcester, Massachusetts to Providence, Rhode Island. The Board of Selectmen shall establish an ad-hoc committee of town residents charged with facilitating & securing necessary funding for the bike greenway

Pursue bringing all recreational and athletic facilities into compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). See 504 Self-Evaluation (Appendix 1).

Adopt a mindset that embraces and practices coordination and collaboration between town boards, agencies, and organizations is essential in developing a well-defined, comprehensive Master Plan and in implementing the Open Space and Recreation Plan. It is essential that the OSRP goals and action plan be considered in the development of the new Master Plan.

Inform and educate Town officials of the need to take responsibility for informing and educating the public in regard to town resources. This includes the development of an enhanced website, with stakeholder input from its residents and town affiliated boards. This website should serve as a means to celebrate and engage all residents and as a vehicle to communicate happenings, provide resources and garner support for town-wide initiatives.

Relocate Department of Public Works facility out of the floodplain/floodway of the Mumford River; clean and redevelop the site as a linear Community Park, (re)connecting downtown Whitinsville with the river, providing passive and active recreation such as walking trails, open green space and direct access to the Mumford River.

Acquire/create open space within Environmental Justice neighborhood.

Create informal and educational walking/hiking trails within the Castle Hill Farm Conservation Land.

Partner with elementary, middle and high schools (public & private) to foster a greater understanding and appreciation of Northbridge's local environmental resources and promote active stewardship initiatives.

Support the Town's Complete Streets program initiatives.