

SECTION 9 -SEVEN YEAR ACTION PLAN

The 7-Year Action Plan details the actions that should be taken over the next seven (7) year period to successfully advance and realize the Goals and Objectives of Northbridge's 2023 Open Space & Recreation Plan. These action items include specific recommendations and strategies to further demonstrate the goals and objectives formulated in **Section 8 -Goals & Objectives**.

The designation of responsible parties (boards/committees/departments/etc.) is essential to ensuring a successful implementation of the 2022 Plan. With that, an Implementation Committee shall be established as the first official act, upon adoption of the Plan. The Implementation Committee shall champion and facilitate recommended responsibilities, follow-up with responsible parties, and keep the Town informed of progress in accomplishing the goals of the Plan.

Northbridge has undertaken a number of initiatives since adoption of the 2002 Open Space & Recreation Plan, including: the establishment of the Whitinsville Downtown Crossroads Historic District (goal 1-d); local adoption of the Community Preservation Act (goal 2-a); and acquisition/preservation of Castle Hill Farm property (goal 1-c). The 2022 Plan looks to build upon these accomplishments and others.

The 7-Year Action Plan lists a wide range of actions; some of these actions may be underway, planned, or new initiatives. The table identifies specific action(s) to be taken; each action item is organized by goals and objectives (the objectives are generally listed in order of priority), responsible parties; timeline; and potential funding source(s). Acronyms for responsible parties are as follows:

BCC -Blackstone River & Canal Commission	NPS -National Park Service
BOH -(Northbridge) Board of Health	OSIC -Open Space Implementation Committee
BOS -Board of Selectmen	PB -Planning Board
ConCom -Conservation Commission	PR -Playground & Recreation Commission
CPC -Community Preservation Committee	PS -Public Schools
DPW -Department of Public Works	TM -Town Meeting (Vote)
HC -Historic Commission	USAC -US Army Corps of Engineers
MassDOT -MassHighway	WWC -Whitinsville Water Company
NDC -Disability Commission	

The 7-Year Action Plan is intended to guide actions across multiple boards, committees, and others in Town. The Plan does not belong to or place responsibility on any one party. The goals and actions are associated with a responsible party. Given the nature of the goals, the responsibility may be spread across multiple parties. It is hoped that each responsible party will use the Plan to guide future decisions and actions.

The Action Plan is arranged sequentially beginning with the first goal and the associated objectives and actions to facilitate the achievement of the goal. For each action, a timeframe for when the proposed action may be taken is also listed. Short-term recommendations fall within the 2023-25 timeframe, mid-term recommendations within 2026-28, and long-term recommendations fall within the 2029-30 timeframe. Recommendations marked as ongoing are marked as such.

Acronyms for potential funding sources listed in the 7-Year Action Plan are as follows:

Town -Municipal Funds	RTP -Recreational Trails Program
CPA -Community Preservation Act Funds	TBD -To Be Determined
LAND -Local Acquisition for Natural Diversity	
LWCF -Land & Water Conservation Fund	

Goal #1: Protect and enhance the Town of Northbridge's water resources and public water supply.

Objective/Actions	Responsible Parties	Timeframe	Potential Funding Source(s)
Objective 1.1 Assess the current status of water resources and public water supply in Northbridge.			
Action 1.1.1 Inventory and certified vernal pools, particularly on town-owned land and land threatened by future development.			
Action 1.1.2 Establish a committee to oversee efforts to improve water quality in nutrient-sensitive lakes and ponds.			
Objective 1.2 Improve the water quality in the Town of Northbridge.			
Action 1.2.1 Adopt and implement a Stormwater Management and Erosion and Sedimentation Control bylaw to regulate activities and development exempt from Conservation and Planning review. The bylaw could be administered by Conservation or Planning departments and promote the use of Low Impact Development/Green Infrastructure controls that treat nutrients.			
Action 1.2.2 Continue to support regional efforts to improve and maintain the quality of the Blackstone River and its watershed to maximize its use.			
Action 1.2.3 Collaborate with the Whitinsville Water Company.			
Objective 1.3 Establish funding to Implement Goal 1			
Action 1.3.1 Secure funding to periodically control or eradicate dense stands of invasive plants in public spaces and along roadways.			
Action 1.3.2 Secure funding to periodically control or eradicate invasive aquatic plants along waterways, lakes, and ponds.			
Action 1.3.3 Secure funding for a town-wide nutrient loading assessment of sources contributing to the degradation of Northbridge's water bodies to identify and prioritize quality. These include stormwater management, stormwater regulations, public education, and extending municipal sewer service.			
Action 1.3.4 Identify the interconnected network of conservation lands within Northbridge and adjacent communities.			

Goal #2: Protect and acquire lands for open spaces, wildlife, and natural habitats.

Objective/Actions	Responsible Parties	Timeframe	Potential Funding Source(s)
Objective 2.1 Assess the current status of open spaces in Northbridge utilizing OSRP Sections 4, 5			
Action 2.1.1 Develop an inventory of private and vacant land to guide the future acquisition of land for conservation and resource protection.			
Action 2.1.2 Collaborate with the Northbridge Community Preservation Committee to identify and prioritize land acquisition for open space protection and recreation opportunities.			
Objective 2.2 Protect open spaces			
Action 2.2.1 Work toward permanently protecting town-owned open space and priority habitat areas that are not presently protected.			
Action 2.2.2 Protect environmentally sensitive areas through acquisition or conversation restrictions.			
Action 2.2.3 Develop an educational program to inform landowners about land preservation techniques.			
Objective 2.3 Acquire open spaces.			
Action 2.3.1 Acquire conservation easements from the privately owned property to provide access between town-owned open space.			
Action 2.3.2 Prioritize land acquisitions to protect ecologically sensitive lands and establish a wildlife corridor.			
Objective 2.4 Establish funding to implement Goal 2			
Action 2.4.1 Establish and fund a revolving account that would allow for the prompt acquisition of Chapter 61 land and other parcels worth protecting.			
Action 2.4.2 Secure funding through annual town meeting budget appropriations to fund goals of the OSRP.			

Goal #3: Expand & improve active and passive recreation facilities.

Objective/Actions	Responsible Parties	Timeframe	Potential Funding Source(s)
Objective 3.1 Provide clean, safe and accessible recreational facilities for all residents			
Action 3.1.1 Review current conditions of all town recreational spaces and develop a needs list for improvements			
Action 3.1.2 Provide funding within the annual budget to maintain all recreational facilities and open space land.			
Action 3.1.3 Provide access and parking for town open space areas suitable for passive recreation.			
Action 3.1.4 Rehabilitate and improve existing playgrounds and ballfields.			
Action 3.1.5 Ensure that all town-wide recreational facilities comply with ADA accessibility regulations.			
Objective 3.2 Maintain and enhance the trail system.			
Action 3.2.1 Support the completion of the Blackstone River Valley Bikeway/Greenway initiative, a 48-mile multimodal trail connecting Worcester, MA, to Providence, RI (including approx. 5 miles in Northbridge).			
Action 3.2.2 Layout and formalize a town-wide hiking trail system with connectivity to regional trail networks.			
Action 3.2.3 Seek funding for routine trail maintenance.			
Objective 3.3 Maintain and enhance the use of waterways for recreation.			
Action 3.3.1 Provide clean and accessible waterways for recreational activities for all residents, including Environmental Justice neighborhoods.			
Action 3.3.1. Clean up waterways to provide a swimming area and opportunities for kayaking, paddle boarding, canoeing, etc.			
Objective 3.4 Establish funding for the expansion of the current recreational facilities.			
Action 3.4.1 Create a town park with walking trails, open fields, play structures, picnic areas.			
Action 3.4.2 Establish funding for the expansion of existing facilities.			
Action 3.4.3 Restore the footbridge that once traversed the Mumford River to link the Riverwalk and Fletcher Street Conservation Area.			
Action 3.4.4 Establish funding for a new playground.			

Goal #4: Promote stewardship of town-owned open space and conservation facilities.

Objective/Actions	Responsible Parties	Timeframe	Potential Funding Source(s)
Objective 4.1 Coordinate OSRP Goals with the Conservation Commission.			
Action 4.4.1 Establish a Land and Trail Stewardship Committee to assist the Conservation Commission with maintaining, improving, and developing town open space and trails.			
Action 4.4.2 Consider formalizing and implementing an Adopt a Street clean-up initiative to clean up litter periodically.			
Action 4.4.3 Support fundraising efforts for the already established Conservation Fund, which provides funds for Conservation Commission stewardship activities.			
Action 4.4.4 Proactively monitor and audit existing conservation lands to prevent encroachment and ensure adherence to Conservation restrictions.			

Goal #5: Engage the community in protecting, preserving, and enhancing open space and recreation.

Objective/Actions	Responsible Parties	Timeframe	Potential Funding Source(s)
Objective 5.6 Actively engage in community outreach.			
Action 5.5.1 Promote town-wide environmental events.			
Action 5.5.2 Provide information and education about public open spaces and recreation opportunities utilizing available media and communication platforms such as directories, brochures, websites, social media, maps, and signage.			
Action 5.5.3 Encourage schools to utilize town-wide accessible open spaces for educational purposes.			

Goal #6: Develop plans for improved coordination among town departments, committees, and local organizations working toward common goals for open space, recreation, and related projects.

Objective/Actions	Responsible Parties	Timeframe	Potential Funding Source(s)
Objective 6.6 Enhance communication and collaboration.			
Action 6.6.1 Establish a committee to work on community outreach and communications to keep residents informed and up to date about town resources, events, and activities.			
Action 6.6.2 Implement a GIS System.			
Action 6.6.3 Establish an implementation committee to monitor and facilitate the process of meeting the goals of the Open Space and Recreation Plan.			
Action 6.6.4 Ensure that the Open Space and Recreation Plan are incorporated into developing the Master Plan.			
Action 6.6.5 Review current Zoning and Planning bylaws to identify alignment with the Open Space and Recreation Plan.			