

Feasibility Study of the Wylde Property

Fall 2010

Alison Agnew, JJ Augenbraun, and Nick Williams
Williams College Environmental Planning



Table of Contents

List of Figures	4
List of Tables	4
Acknowledgements	5
1. Introduction.....	6
1.1. Problem Identification and Scoping.....	6
1.1.1. Client Goals	6
1.1.2. Project Scope	6
1.1.3. Project Objectives	7
1.2. Physical Site Description	8
1.2.1. Overview	8
1.2.2. Virtual Tour of Property	12
1.2.3. Summary	17
1.3. Site History	18
1.4. Community Profile.....	20
1.4.1. Recreation and Open Space	20
1.4.2. Income Distribution and Housing.....	22
1.4.3. Elderly and Disabled.....	23
2. Law and Policy	24
2.1. Community Preservation Act.....	24
2.2. Wetlands Protection Act	27
2.3. Chapter 40B, Massachusetts General Laws.....	29
2.4. Williamstown Zoning Bylaws	30
3. Technical Criteria.....	31
3.1. Handicap Accessible Trails.....	31
3.2. Accessible Ramps and Benches	32
3.3. Picnic Area.....	33
3.4. Flyover Boardwalk.....	33
4. Economic Issues.....	34
4.1. Potential Costs	34
4.2. Sources of Financial Support	36
5. Survey Results	38
5.1. Overview	38
5.2. Recreational Facility	39

5.3. Affordable Housing	44
5.4. Summary	46
6. Potential Plans for Site.....	47
6.1. Affordable Housing	47
6.2. Recreational Facilities.....	49
6.3. Combination Development	52
7. Analysis of Purchasing and Potential Plans for Site.....	53
7.1. Purchasing the Site.....	53
7.2. Potential Plans for Site.....	55
8. Recommendations for Action	56
9. Works Cited	58
10. Appendices.....	61
10.1. Appendix A: List of Plant and Animal Species Noted on Wylde Property.....	61
10.2. Appendix B: Survey.....	63
10.3. Appendix C: Summary of Survey Data	66
10.4. Appendix D: Media Coverage of Public Presentation to Conservation Commission	70

List of Figures

Figure 1. Overview of the location of the Wylde Property.....	8
Figure 2. Diagram of the Wylde Property boundaries and adjacent properties.....	9
Figure 3. Aerial shot of the Wylde Property showing minimal clearing of the property.	10
Figure 4. Williamstown Conservation Commission Wetlands Protection Map.....	11
Figure 5. Annotated site map.....	12
Figure 6. A view looking southeast toward the R.K. Miles lumberyard.	13
Figure 7. Looking northeast toward intersection of Henderson and North Hoosac Roads.	13
Figure 8. View to the northwest along the mowed trail.....	14
Figure 9. Looking to the northeast along the right-of-way to North Hoosac Road.	14
Figure 10. View to the northwest illustrating thick undergrowth along the trail.....	15
Figure 11. Bridges Pond located to the northwest of the Wylde Property.	15
Figure 12. The interior of the property.	16
Figure 13. The wetlands located adjacent to the site’s southwestern boundary.	16
Figure 14. The old Williamstown Railroad Station built in 1898.....	19
Figure 15. Satisfaction with recreational areas in the Berkshire region, 2006.	21
Figure 16. One of the LEED certified affordable houses in Wayland, MA.	25
Figure 17. Use of current recreational facilities in town.	39
Figure 18. Satisfaction with current recreational facilities in Williamstown..	40
Figure 19. Importance of more recreational facilities near town center.	41
Figure 20. Desire for different types of amenities.	41
Figure 21. Importance of making new recreational facilities handicap accessible	42
Figure 22. Importance of developing a new recreational facility near Bridges Pond.....	43
Figure 23. The importance of building more affordable housing units in Williamstown	44
Figure 24. The importance of an affordable housing development near Bridges Pond.	45
Figure 25. Affordable Housing Option 1.....	47
Figure 26. Affordable Housing Option 2.....	48
Figure 27. Recreational Facilities Option 1.	49
Figure 28. Recreational Facilities Option 2.	50
Figure 29. Ideal Recreational Facility Option.....	51
Figure 30. Ideal Combination Development Option.....	52

List of Tables

Table 1. Open space and recreation acreage by planning region, 2006.....	20
Table 2. A list of the various factors influencing the decision to recommend the purchase of the Wylde Property.	53
Table 3. A list of the various factors associated with the different development options for the Wylde property..	55

Acknowledgements

Firstly, we would like to thank Leslie Reed-Evans of the Williamstown Rural Lands Foundation. Leslie helped us establish valuable contacts for this project and assisted us throughout the process. We would also like to thank Sarah Gardner, our professor and associate director of the Williams College Center for Environmental Studies, for her help throughout the project. Sarah's feedback, comments, advice, and suggestions were greatly appreciated and this report would not have been possible without her.

In addition, we would like to thank Russell Wylde, the property owner, for providing us with a history of the site and allowing us access to his property. Thanks is also due to his realtor, Gintare Everett of the Alton and Westall Agency for her willingness to show us the site multiple times. We would also like to thank Andrew Groff, the Williamstown Town Planner, for meeting with us and explaining some of the regulations relevant to our project.

Moreover, we want to thank the town's Conservation Commission for agreeing to serve as the main sponsor for the submission of a grant application recommending the town purchase the Wylde Property using funds from the Community Preservation Fund. Finally, thank you to all our classmates in Environmental Studies 302: Environmental Planning for listening to our practice presentations and for providing useful feedback.

1. Introduction

1.1. Problem Identification and Scoping

1.1.1. Client Goals

Our primary clients are the Williamstown Conservation Committee and the Affordable Housing Committee. Leslie Reed-Evans will serve as these committees' representative and coordinate our efforts to meet the needs of these groups. These groups would like our team to assess the viability of purchasing and developing a site in north Williamstown near Bridges Pond, owned by Mr. Wylde. In particular, this report will explore the potential for a variety of recreational, affordable housing, and a combination of recreational and affordable housing options for the site. In our meetings with Ms. Reed-Evans, we have collectively established the scope of this feasibility study for the development of an affordable housing complex and/or a recreational area at the Wylde property.

1.1.2. Project Scope

Our project addresses the physical conditions of the site, such as: soil conditions, wetlands encroachment, previous use, and access. In addressing the physical conditions, we hope to formulate an idea of what can be developed on the site. We also find it necessary to assess the public opinion with regard to recreation and affordable housing by surveying at predetermined points throughout the town. When the data from the survey are compiled and considerable statistical analysis is performed, we will have a platform on which to appeal to the Community Preservation Committee regarding a proposal to develop this site. Such a proposal, however, will implicitly urge the town to purchase the land so as to reap the benefits of monies provided under the Community Preservation Act. Additionally, our group is working in close association with the Williamstown Rural Lands Foundation, whose mission statement includes a commitment to development planning and affordable housing projects ("About Us"). When the

Williamstown Master Plan was created in 2002, two of the major goals were to maximize recreational space and provide a higher percentage of affordable housing (Master Plan Steering Committee). As a part of our scope, we will seek to improve Williamstown's affordable housing percentage in order to receive further funding from the state.

1.1.3. Project Objectives

The objectives of this project are as follows:

1. Determine if the quality of land allotted is appropriate for purchase and development.
2. Review relevant laws, policies, technical criteria, and economic issues.
3. Collect and analyze the public's opinion of either affordable housing or recreational facilities development occurring at the site.
4. Assess the viability of either type of development after receiving the public's opinion.
5. Produce plans, feasibility studies, and recommendations for site.
6. Receive approval of recommendations from professor and client.
7. Present recommendations to the Conservation Commission.
8. Recommend the town's purchase of the land to the Community Preservation Committee.
9. Prompt the town to receive funding for the project via the Community Preservation Act.

1.2. Physical Site Description

1.2.1. Overview

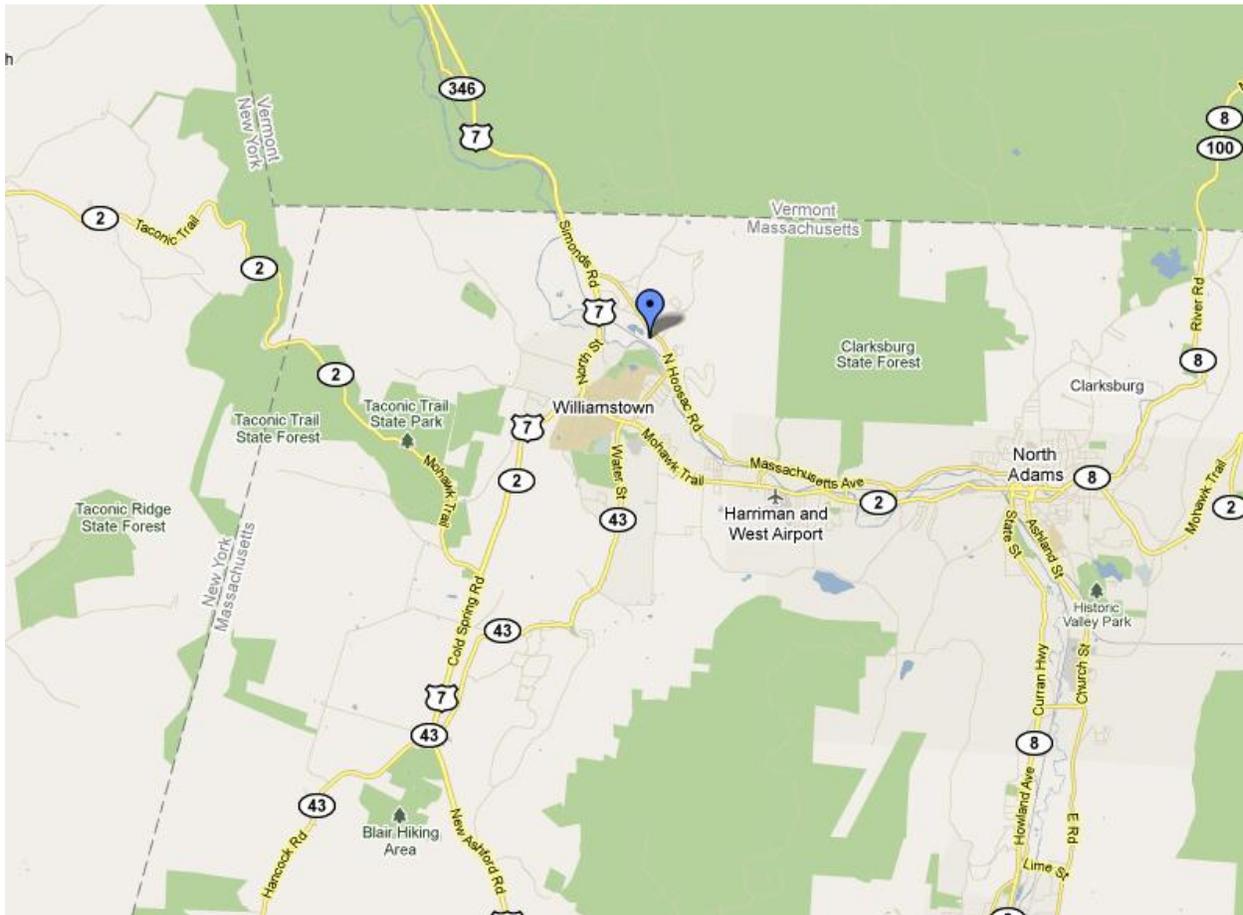


Figure 1. Overview of the location of the Wylde Property (blue marker).

The Wylde Property consists of 6.26 acres of land located in north central Williamstown (Figure 1). The property is adjacent to three different groups of properties. To the west and south, the Wylde Property is adjacent to the 25 acre town-owned Bridges Pond property. The Bridges Pond property includes a seven acre pond formed by Henderson Brook (Hancock, Robinson, and Ware 15). To the north and northeast, there are ten private residences with property that immediately abuts the Wylde Property. Finally, to the southeast, the Wylde Property is adjacent to the R.K. Miles lumberyard (Figure 2).

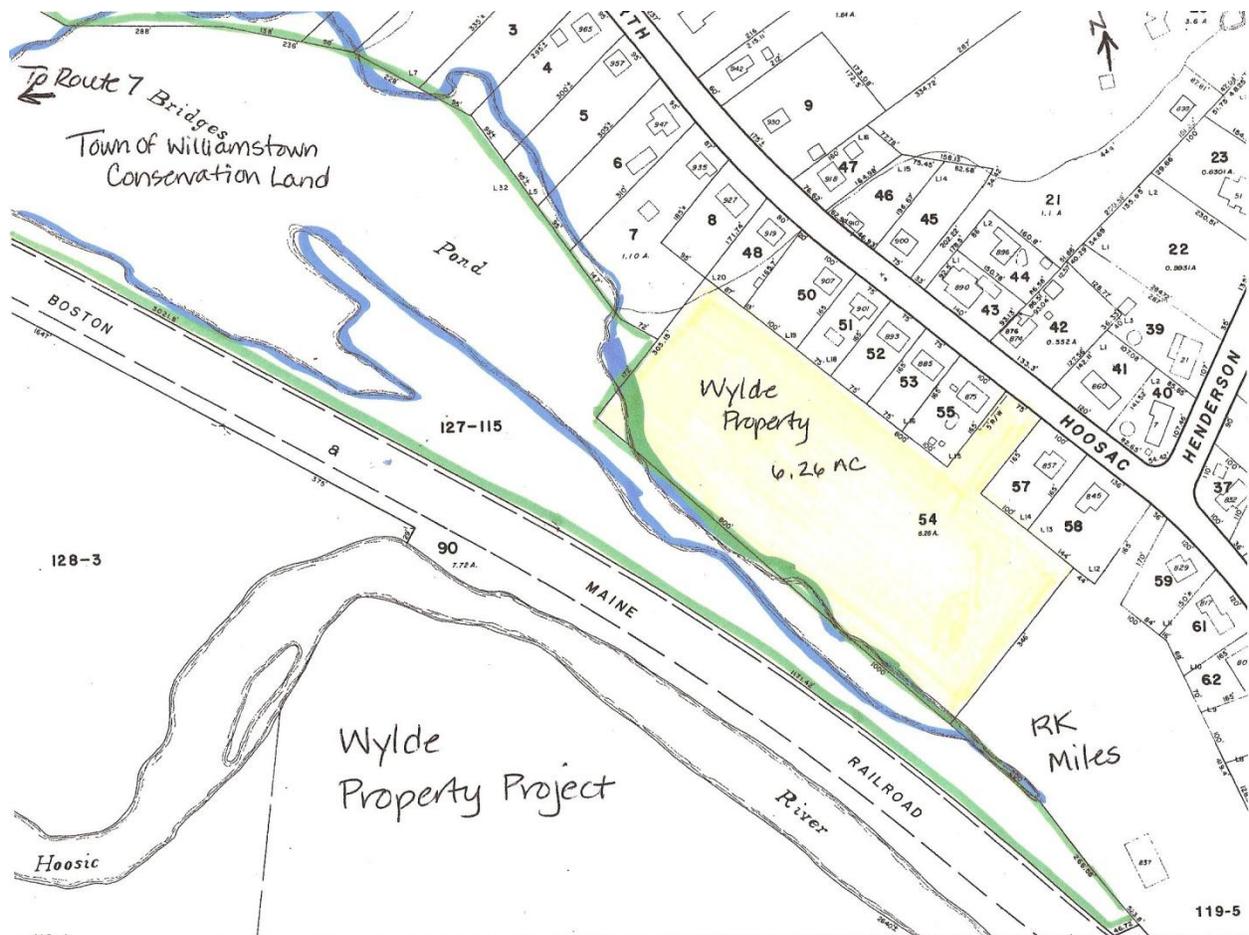


Figure 2. Diagram of the Wylde Property boundaries and adjacent properties. The yellow shaded area is the Wylde Property, the blue boundary represents Bridges Pond, and the green boundary represents the town-owned Bridges Pond property.

The property is a rectangle with a narrow right-of-way connecting it to North Hoosac Road near the intersection of Henderson Road and North Hoosac Road. The plot is approximately 800 feet long and ranges from 305 to 346 feet wide. The only current legal access to the site is by walking in through the unpaved right-of-way. In addition, the site can be reached through crossing the R.K Miles lumberyard with permission from the company. The site can also be accessed illegally from the west by traveling along the railroad right-of-way or by crossing several private properties in order to reach the town-owned property of Bridges Pond and from

there proceed to the Wylde Property (personal communication with Leslie Reed-Evans, October 29, 2010).

The site is a relatively flat, densely vegetated parcel. The current owner, Russell Wylde, has maintained a mowed trail loop in order to facilitate evaluation of the site. In addition, Mr. Wylde has kept the right-of-way access as well as access to the R.K Miles lumberyard relatively clear of vegetation. As seen from an aerial shot, the site has minimal clearings (Figure 3).



Figure 3. Aerial shot of the Wylde Property (indicated by red boundary) showing minimal clearing of the property.

Most of the live vegetation consists of maples (*Acer spp.*), paper birch (*Betula papyrifera*), sumac (*Rhus spp.*), alder (*Alnus spp.*), and quaking aspen (*Populus tremuloides*) spread

throughout the site¹ (Hancock, Robinson, and Ware 16). In addition, there is a significant amount of dead branches and trees scattered throughout the site. Furthermore, given the property's close proximity to Bridges Pond and the Hoosic River, some of the property's southern boundary encloses wetlands areas (Figure 4).

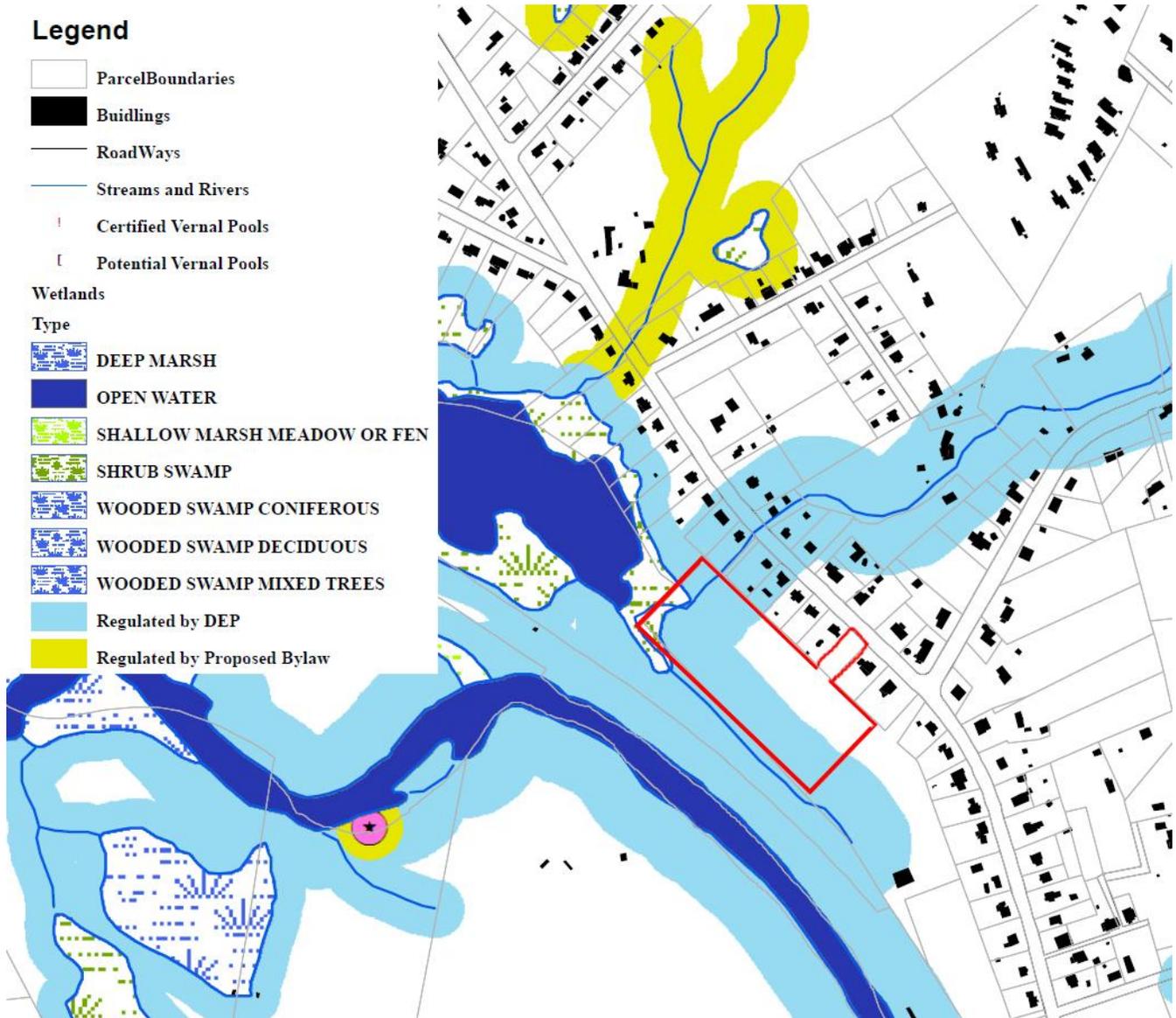


Figure 4. Williamstown Conservation Commission Wetlands Protection Map (Schlesinger). The Wylde Property is marked with a red boundary and includes wetlands protected by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection.

¹ A complete list of animal and plant species can be found in Appendix A.

1.2.2. Virtual Tour of Property

A virtual tour of the mowed trail loop and the site is presented through the following series of photographs (Figure 5). A photograph taken from Position 1 shows the semi-cleared



Figure 5. Annotated site map showing location and direction of photographs included in the virtual site tour.

trail leading to the R.K. Miles lumberyard (Figure 6). This is not actually part of the Wylde Property but could serve as a potential access point to the site if the R.K. Miles management



Figure 6. A view looking southeast toward the R.K. Miles lumberyard.

agrees. A photograph from Position 2 illustrates another potential access spot to the Wylde Property. Again, the land pictured is actually part of R.K. Miles property (Figure 7).



Figure 7. The view looking northeast toward intersection of Henderson Road and North Hoosac Road.

Position 3 shows a view looking to the northwest along the mowed trail loop (Figure 8). The vegetation shown in this photograph is representative of the type found throughout the site.



Figure 8. View to the northwest along the mowed trail.

Further into the property, Position 4 depicts the right-of-way leading to North Hoosac Road (Figure 9). This right-of-way is approximately 75 feet wide and in the absence of an agreement with R.K. Miles would serve as the main access point to the Wylde Property.

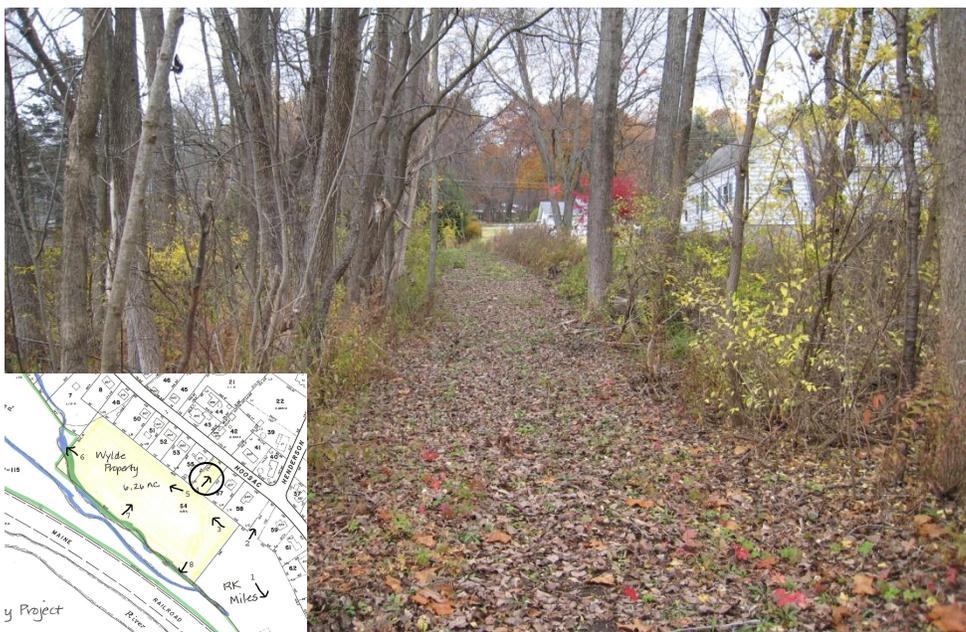


Figure 9. Looking to the northeast along the right-of-way to North Hoosac Road.

A photograph taken from Position 5 illustrates the current state of the trail and some of the dead vegetation found throughout the site (Figure 10). This dead brush could easily be cleared.



Figure 10. View to the northwest illustrating thick undergrowth along the trail.

Position 6, located at the extreme northwestern part of the site, provides a view of Bridges Pond and the shrub swamp found along this border of the Wylde Property (Figure 11).



Figure 11. Bridges Pond located to the northwest of the Wylde Property.

Along the southwestern edge of the site, a photograph taken at Position 7 depicts the interior of the site (Figure 12) and a picture taken at Position 8 illustrates the adjacent wetlands (Figure 13).



Figure 12. The interior of the property. Notice the dead trees and thick undergrowth.



Figure 13. The wetlands located adjacent to the site's southwestern boundary.

1.2.3. Summary

As this series of photographs illustrates, the Wylde Property is mostly flat and the interior is covered with understory growth and dead branches and trees. Furthermore, the site is surrounded on two sides by water or wetlands, and it is surrounded by private residences and a lumberyard on the other two sides. Of primary concern is the limited access via the narrow right-of-way that leads to the relatively busy North Hoosac Road which has no dedicated parking spaces in the immediate vicinity of the right-of-way. Despite this problem, the site has beautiful views across Bridges Pond and would provide access to this currently inaccessible town property. There are no major flaws with respect to the physical aspects of the Wylde Property that would preclude its development as a town recreational facility.

1.3. Site History

The history of the Wylde property begins in the 19th century. Beginning in the 1800s, the Boston and Maine Corporation (now Pan Am Railways) owned the Wylde property, along with other land surrounding the railway. Subsequently, H.D. Moore acquired the large swath of land adjacent to the railroad track. In 1968, the land was split into two properties, the Wylde property and the site of R.K. Miles. Moore was a contractor and a developer in western Massachusetts, and he used the property as a landfill and a dump (personal communication with Russell Wylde, 4 November 2010).

In 1968, the Wylde family purchased the property in the hopes of building a mechanical shop on the lot given the site's industrial zoning. Since the property had been used as a landfill, the Wylde family performed tests on the soil to ensure that the soil was not contaminated. Six test holes were dug down to the water table (approximately 12 feet deep) and the soil was clean. The town supervisor at the time agreed that "nothing bad" had been left in the landfill. Even though development was eventually permitted on the property, the Wylde family decided not to develop the land due to various regulations and restrictions. Since 1970, the property has been placed on the real estate market several times, but has never been sold. It has largely remained unused since 1970 (personal communication with Russell Wylde, 4 November 2010).

Adjacent to the Wylde property on the western end is Bridges Pond. In the 1800s, Bridges Pond was part of a family farm, and it was then sold to the Boston and Maine Corporation, which owns the railroad (now part of Pan Am Railways). While under the ownership of the railroad, Bridges Pond provided water for use in the steam engines. During the early 1900s, a steam-powered sawmill was also located on the pond. The pond was then abandoned and only used recreationally. In 1969, the Williamstown Conservation Commission purchased Bridges Pond from the Boston and Maine Corporation. Research conducted since the

1970s shows that the pond has become increasingly polluted, and the water is unsafe to swim in or drink. Furthermore, there is no legal access to the pond because of the railroad (Hancock, Robinson, and Ware 16).

Also adjacent to the property on the southern side is a section of the Pan Am Southbound Patriot Corridor railway, which lies on the opposite side of the wetland. Currently owned by Pan Am Railways, the tracks used to be owned by the Boston and Maine Corporation (also known as the Guilford Company). Prior to 1958, a passenger service ran from New York City to Troy, New York through Williamstown (Figure 14, Karr). Currently, all traffic along the railroad consists of freight trains.



Figure 14. The old Williamstown Railroad Station built in 1898.

1.4. Community Profile

Williamstown, Massachusetts, located in the northwest corner of Berkshire County, is the fourth largest town in the county. A small, rural town, Williamstown has a population of 8,738 residents, including approximately 2,000 students from Williams College. Located on 46.9 square miles of land, the population density is approximately 180 people per square mile, with higher population densities on the Williams College campus and in northern Williamstown (“Williamstown, MA”). Williamstown boasts many cultural activities and art museums, including the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Museum and the Williamstown Theater Festival. The town also has a small business district and offers several recreational areas (“Williamstown: About Us”).

1.4.1. Recreation and Open Space

In general, Massachusetts has greatly valued protection of land for open space and recreation. Among both private and public land, recreation and protected conservation resources in Massachusetts account for over 20% of the total land area of the state. Within Berkshire County, approximately 193,192 acres are used for recreation, which represents 30% of the land area of the county and contributes 16.2% to the total open space in the state (Table 1, Bowles).

Table 1. Open space and recreation acreage by planning region, 2006 (Bowles).

Planning Region	Population 2000 Census	Regional Land Area	Open Space/ Recreation Acres	% Regional Land Area in OS/Recreation	Contribution to State Open Space Total	% Total MA Land Area
Berkshire	143,418	597,043	193,192	32.4%	16.2%	3.9%
Connecticut Valley	703,502	1,185,741	277,863	23.4%	23.3%	5.5%
Central	834,160	962,131	214,369	22.3%	18.0%	4.3%
Northeastern	1,471,391	762,829	164,707	21.6%	13.8%	3.3%
Metropolitan Boston	2,074,516	239,795	66,053	27.5%	5.5%	1.3%
Southeastern	1,278,500	915,981	161,163	17.6%	13.5%	3.2%
Cape Cod & Islands	253,196	353,235	113,793	32.2%	9.6%	2.3%
Statewide	6,758,683	5,016,755	1,191,140	23.7%		23.7%

Based on surveys conducted in 2006, Berkshire County residents favor lakes and ponds, mountains, rivers and streams, and forests over other types of recreational areas. The survey also found that Berkshire County residents were least satisfied with the existing facilities at lakes and ponds (Figure 15, Bowles). By combining Bridges Pond and the Wylde property, Williamstown could satisfy some of this demand.

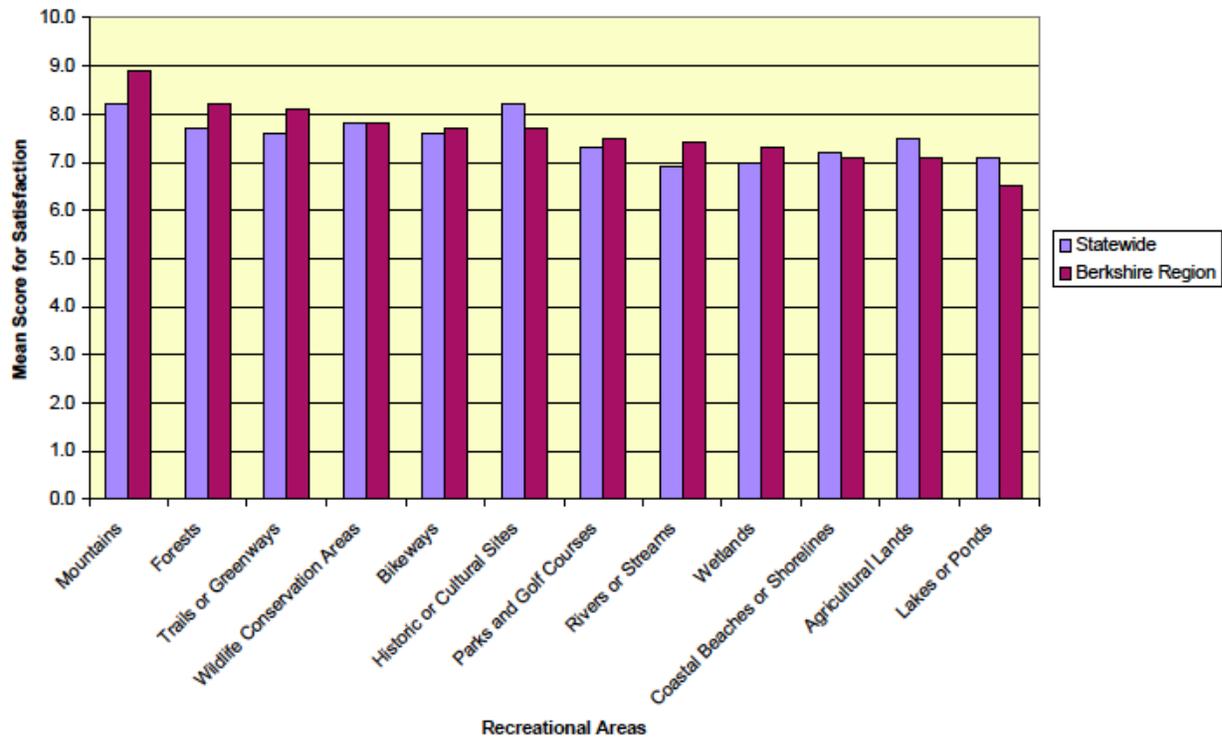


Figure 15. Satisfaction with recreational areas in the Berkshire region, 2006 (Bowles).

More specifically, Williamstown offers many recreational areas of various types, including Linear Park, Mt. Greylock, Hopkins Memorial Forest, and Stone Hill. Most of these facilities are considered trails, parks, and forests. However, while Williamstown offers several recreational areas, they are largely inadequate. Based on surveys conducted in 2000 in connection with the Master Plan, existing open spaces “do not invite gathering or lingering and are hard to travel to and between by foot or bike” (Master Plan Steering Committee 14). The

Master Plan also discusses how there are very few recreational areas near Spring Street. Moreover, respondents to the survey indicated that biking and running paths were among the town's clearest recreational needs, in addition to playgrounds and picnic areas. Furthermore, even though Williamstown is located at the confluence of the Green and Hoosic Rivers, there are very few recreational areas near these rivers.

1.4.2. Income Distribution and Housing

As of 2000², the median household income of Williamstown residents is \$51,503, which is above the national average. However, 5.4% of Williamstown residents are below the poverty line, 6.8% of the population over the age of 65 is below the poverty line, and 3.5% of residents are unemployed. Furthermore, approximately 26% of the population has a household income below \$25,000 ("Williamstown, MA"). As of 2001, based on the state's definition of low, moderate, and middle-income households, approximately 38% of Williamstown's households should be considered low to moderate income (Master Plan Steering Committee).

In 1999, Williamstown had 45 public housing units and 99 housing units that received rental assistance from either state or federal funds ("DHCD Community Profiles"). In 2001, Williamstown was 164 units short of the 292 subsidized units necessary to satisfy the 10% goal established by Chapter 40B. In order to reach the goal of having 10% of Williamstown's housing affordable, the town set a goal to create 100 new affordable housing units by 2010. It should be noted that, according to the Executive Office of Housing and Development, an "affordable" sale price is "determined based on low and moderate income households spending no more than 30% of their income on housing costs" ("Sale Prices and Rents"). In the past ten years, the number of affordable housing units has increased, especially with the recent conversion of St. Raphael's

² This is the most recent available data. These numbers have likely shifted somewhat with inflation and the changing economic situation.

church into several affordable housing units. However, the current number of units is far from the 10% goal. By developing affordable housing units on the Wylde property, the town could potentially address this shortfall.

1.4.3. Elderly and Disabled

Currently, about 16% of Williamstown's residents are over the age of 70, and as of 2000, 38.4% of Williamstown's residents over the age of 65 have some sort of disability. Furthermore, 15% of the population over the age of 5 has some sort of disability (U.S. Census Bureau). Despite the significant number of residents who are elderly or have a disability, many of Williamstown's recreational areas are not fully wheelchair accessible. As discussed in the Master Plan, handicapped access to existing recreational facilities and natural areas is wholly inadequate and access to recreational areas should be improved (Master Plan Steering Committee 14).

2. Law and Policy

2.1. Community Preservation Act³

The Community Preservation Act (CPA) was established in 2000 by Governor Cellucci as a way for towns to raise money for open space protection, historic preservation, recreational land, and affordable housing. The CPA is adopted at the local level and allows towns to establish a surcharge of up to 3% on property tax. Williamstown adopted the CPA in 2002 and is now one of more than 140 communities across Massachusetts with a CPA fund. In addition to the money raised through the surcharge, participating towns receive matching funds from the state. In the early 2000s, this match was equal to the amount raised through surcharges, but in recent years the state has not been able to match the entire amount because of declining state revenues and increasing town participation rates.

Of the money collected under the CPA each year, the town has to allocate at least 10% to current or future projects in each of the following three categories: open space protection, historic preservation, and affordable housing. The remaining 70% can either be left unallocated or divided up as the Community Preservation Committee sees fit. Williamstown currently has approximately \$233,000 in its unallocated fund, with \$129,000 earmarked for open space projects and another \$53,000 allocated to affordable housing projects. Any of these three categories could be applicable to the purchase and improvement of the Wylde Property. It is important to purchase the Wylde property with CPA funds because CPA funds can only be used to improve properties that were originally acquired with CPA funds. The only exception to this rule is the category of historic preservation, for which CPA money can be used even if the property was not purchased with CPA funds. However, this provision does not apply to the Wylde property.

³ All information in this section comes from a public presentation made by Stuart Saginor to the Community Preservation Committee on October 19, 2010. Mr. Saginor is the Executive Director of the Community Preservation Coalition and one of the leading experts on the CPA.

The CPA has been used successfully throughout Massachusetts. Some examples of projects include an equine therapy center in North Andover, the restoration of the historic Needham Town Hall (which also was the largest CPA project ever undertaken in the state), and Newton's creation of a community-supported agriculture organization. In addition, the town of Wayland used CPA funds to construct sixteen affordable homes that were Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certified on a former military installation (Figure 16). Numerous towns across the state have also used the money to establish cycling rail trails and to purchase land for farming purposes.



Figure 16. One of the LEED certified affordable houses in Wayland, MA.

In Williamstown, CPA funds have been used for a variety of historical preservation projects. For example, the Little Red Schoolhouse Building in southern Williamstown was renovated and restored using money from the CPA fund. CPA money was also used to relocate, restore, and preserve two barns and a silo at the Sheep Hill Farm of the Williamstown Rural Lands Foundation. Money has also been spent on preserving historic gravestones in the

Southlawn Cemetery. A few projects have also fallen under the recreation category of the CPA, including the preservation of a town baseball field and improvements at Linear Park. With regard to the affordable housing category, Williamstown has allocated approximately \$1.5 million from the CPA over the next twenty years to the Cable Mill project. In addition, the town has spent money on the conversion of a church on Cole Avenue into affordable housing (MassGIS). The CPA has clearly proven to be a very effective tool for promoting community preservation and improvement. The CPA could lead to another success story in the purchase and improvement of the Wylde property.

2.2. Wetlands Protection Act

The Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act (WPA) has the primary goal of preserving wetland plant and animal species by implementing regulations on areas bordering and/or containing wetlands. The major regulations set forth by the act, in collaboration with the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), are wetland buffer zones. These buffer zones include a 100 foot buffer from the water body and then an additional 100 foot buffer beyond that. In general, the buffer is defined as 200 feet from the water's edge (on each side) *if it is determined to contain a significant concentration of wetland fauna*. This 200 foot buffer zone is recorded under the Rivers Protection Act (“Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act Regulations”).

The WPA, and more specifically the Rivers Protection Act (RPA), apply directly to the Wylde property because the DEP has defined a 200 foot buffer zone on either side of Bridges Pond. This buffer extends roughly 200 feet into the Wylde property on the southern and western sides of the site as previously discussed in Section 1.2.1 and illustrated in Figure 4 of that section. Under the regulations of the WPA, applicants wishing to develop in a waterfront area must demonstrate: “...that there are no significant adverse impacts on the riverfront area to protect public and private water supplies, wildlife habitat, fisheries, shellfish, groundwater, and to prevent flooding, storm damage and pollution and there are no practicable and substantially equivalent economic alternatives to the proposed work with less adverse effects on these public interests” (“Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act Regulations” 12). Thus, in order to build any permanent structures within the 200 foot buffer zone, this project would require an Order of Conditions permit from the DEP and would subsequently require an appeal to the Williamstown Conservation Commission in order to prove such development does not have an adverse impact on the wetland.

While trail development does not fall under the auspices of the WPA, a boardwalk likely would because of the need to set pylons and supports in a foundation underground. Creating a structure that entails permanent foundational work set into the soil on the site would require the developers to demonstrate that there is no “practicable and substantially equivalent economic alternative...” which is defined as “...an available and feasible alternative which will accomplish the project's purpose, taking into account costs, logistics, the proposed use, and technology” (“Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act Regulations” 13). Because there are a considerable number of alternatives to a boardwalk on the site, such as paved pathways, gravel trails, wood-chip trails, or simple trails created by clearing, it may be difficult to successfully appeal to the DEP and Conservation Commission. As for other structures such as a gazebo and/or pavilion, as long as they are less than 120 square feet in area they are not subject to local zoning regulations, but they may still have to receive a permit from the DEP (“Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act Regulations”). If the structure must be larger than 120 square feet, it can be placed outside of the buffer zone.

Overall, development must be minimized in wetland buffer zones. If the applicants wish to ensure full compliance with WPA and RPA regulations, it would be best to not build within the buffer; however, if development in the buffer is considered to be crucial to the Bridges Pond access scheme, a well-reasoned mitigation plan should be produced and submitted for appeal. The WPA regulations greatly limit permanent development options for most of the Wylde site, but the site still has excellent potential for providing access to Bridges Pond and increasing the recreational options available in Williamstown.

2.3. Chapter 40B, Massachusetts General Laws

Chapter 40B of the Massachusetts General Laws and the Comprehensive Permit Statute were adopted in Massachusetts to address the shortage of low and moderate income housing and to reduce the regulatory barriers that impede the development of such housing. These acts allow developers whose project will have at least 20% of the units subsidized to apply for a comprehensive permit, which must be approved by the local Board of Appeals (“Comprehensive Permit: 760 CMR 56”).

Since the Wylde property is zoned for light industry, the most feasible way of using the property for affordable housing is to apply for a comprehensive permit under Chapter 40B. This comprehensive permit would allow the project to circumvent certain restrictions imposed by the zoning bylaw that would make a housing project “uneconomic,” which is defined as a condition that makes it “impossible for a public agency or nonprofit organization to proceed in building or operating low or moderate income housing without financial loss” (“Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 40B, §20-23”). A housing development on the Wylde property would be uneconomic because the 150-foot setback from residential properties that is mandated under the industrial zoning significantly restricts the amount of developable land.

In addition to approving affordable housing that is inconsistent with the current zoning district, the Board of Appeals may also permit noncompliance with the development standard requirements and grant other special permits (personal communication with Andrew Groff, 19 November 2010).

2.4. Williamstown Zoning Bylaws

Under the current Zoning Bylaws of Williamstown, the Wylde property is zoned for limited industrial uses, as is the adjacent R.K. Miles property. Under the current zoning, the use of the Wylde property as a park, playground, or picnic area is “allowable on special permit from the Board of Appeals.” However, if the property is used mainly for wildlife conservation, no approval is required (Town of Williamstown §70-3.3). In addition, any major construction would need to follow the standards for development included in the zoning bylaws. However, this excludes structures that are less than 120 square feet (which are not considered buildings) and parking lots with less than ten parking spaces (personal communication with Andrew Groff, 19 November 2010).

Because the property is zoned for limited industry, no residential uses are allowed under the current zoning. In order to build affordable housing units on the Wylde property, a variance in the zoning would be required, as well as approval from the Planning Board, the Town Selectman, and a vote in the town meeting (personal communication with Andrew Groff, 19 November 2010). The previously discussed Chapter 40B would be a more expedient option for developing affordable housing at the Wylde property.

3. Technical Criteria

3.1. Handicap Accessible Trails

To be considered handicap accessible, trails must follow the trail specification guidelines established by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The ADA guidelines dictate specifications for “stable” paving materials, trail grading, width, edging, and signage, all of which are crucial to the proposed handicap accessible paths (U.S. Department of Justice).

Material options for creating a handicap accessible trail include gravel and tar composite (in which the tar acts to stabilize the gravel), asphalt, and packed earth (U.S. Department of Justice). The packed earth option is the least viable due to the instability and water content of the soil at the Wylde site. The expense and the amount of impervious surface coverage resulting from extensive asphalt pathways makes this option impractical both due to cost and wetlands regulations. The permeability and lower cost of a gravel and tar composite makes this option the most feasible material for creating a handicap accessible trail at the Wyle property.

The grade or running slope of the path may vary as per the ADA regulations. The slope can be 5% or less for any distance, 8.33% for up to 200 feet, 10% for up to 30 feet, 12% for up to ten feet, and 14% for five feet when approaching a drainage structure. When the running slope is greater than 8.33%, resting intervals are required every 200 feet along the path and have a specified dimension of five feet in length by the trail width. The prescribed width of accessible paths is to be no less than three feet for one way, with a two-way path requiring six feet in width. Finally, the cross slope (lateral slope) of the path is designated by the ADA to be no more than 5% but up to 10% as needed for drainage (U.S. Department of Justice). Given the relatively flat nature of the Wylde property, none of these slope regulations should be difficult to meet.

In addition, The ADA recommends a vertical edge protection on the trail of three inches in height and suggests that handicapped parking spaced be located at the same elevation as the trail-head. Lastly, required signage includes the following:

- Trail name (if any)
- Trail length
- Typical and maximum trail grade
- Typical and minimum tread width
- Typical and maximum cross slope
- Trail surface (type and firmness)
- Any major height obstacle in the trail tread
- A statement reflecting the condition of the trail when it was constructed or assessed, including the construction or assessment date

3.2. Accessible Ramps and Benches

Ramps and benches must also meet ADA guidelines in order to be considered handicap accessible. Benches are necessary amenities on wheelchair-accessible paths. The seat of the bench is to be 17 to 19 inches above the ground so as to facilitate easy transfer from a walking aid to the bench, and must be a minimum of 42 inches in length and 20 to 24 inches deep. Back support is required to be the same length as the bench seat itself. Additionally, the bench must be rated to handle a stress load of 250 lbs (1112N) at a minimum. An important note for the Wylde site is that in wet areas, the benches must be slip resistant as a safety precaution (U.S. Department of Justice).

As for ramps, the ADA requires that they provide safe access to any structure on a site that strives to be designated as handicap accessible. The specifications are as follows: a maximum slope ratio of 1:8, a minimum width of three feet, ramp landings every 30 feet of ramp, and a handrail mounted 34 inches above the ramp. Ramps could be necessary in the event that access is required to structures on-site (U.S. Department of Justice). However, given the relatively flat nature of the site, these guidelines should be easy to meet.

3.3. Picnic Area

There has been considerable interest in creating a picnic area adjacent to Bridges Pond as part of this project. The specifications for picnic benches are similar to those stated above in the section on trail benches. A picnic area might include a gazebo or small pavilion to provide a destination to the public, to provide shelter in inclement weather, and to provide a warming shelter in the winter if Bridges Pond is opened for ice skating. The town planner, Andrew Groff, explained that any structure less than 120 square feet in area is considered temporary and would not be subject to zoning laws (personal communication with Andrew Groff, 19 November 2010). While a relatively small space, 120 square feet does provide considerable shelter for small groups of people. Moreover, several of these small structures could be constructed throughout the site to provide additional shelter.

3.4. Flyover Boardwalk

A flyover boardwalk, bridging the Wylde site and the town-owned Bridges Pond property has also been discussed. However, such a boardwalk presents issues of wetland disturbance due to the need for supports rooted in the wetland. It is unclear at this time whether or not this is acceptable within the wetland buffer, and if deemed unacceptable, whether or not the disturbance can be mitigated by wetland beautification/awareness opportunities on the site. Additional research is recommended to assess the impact of a permanent structure on wildlife species in the area. Furthermore, the depth and consolidation of the soil in the area must be measured in order to make an educated decision on the feasibility of a boardwalk at this particular location.

4. Economic Issues

4.1. Potential Costs

The primary cost of the project is the purchase price of the Wylde property, which is appraised at a value of \$80,500 (personal communication with Leslie Reed-Evans, 10 November 2010). Additional initial costs may include preliminary engineering, the conducting of soil tests, and basic clearing of the vegetation.

One of the primary goals of the project is to provide public access to Bridges Pond and therefore paths and trails will be built to provide access to the pond or to create a recreational facility. At the most basic level, a basic trail of cleared vegetation and mowed grass (similar to what is already maintained at the site) would have a minimal cost, especially if volunteer labor is used. A basic gravel or woodchip path would also be inexpensive, especially if woodchips were made from cleared trees and vegetation. A gravel path would cost about 50 cents to two dollars per square foot (Costhelper).

A higher quality path might consist of slightly elevated boardwalks that would also serve as a wheelchair-accessible path. Boardwalks and bridges may also be constructed to provide access to the wetland areas on either side of Bridges Pond. The costs of a boardwalk will depend on the materials used, the width and height of the path, and if any seating or railings are used, as well as whether professional or volunteer labor is used. With volunteer labor, a simple four-foot wide boardwalk costs around \$20 per linear foot. A six-foot wide boardwalk with more advanced construction materials and techniques may cost \$100 per linear foot or more (Kusler 5-6).

Another option is concrete path, which would be wheelchair-accessible and could be incorporated into a bike path. A concrete path costs about \$3-\$10 per square foot (Costhelper).

To provide access to the pond from North Hoosac Road, a driveway and parking area would also be necessary. A gravel road and parking lot would be relatively inexpensive, at about

\$2 per square foot. If a more permanent access route were desired, especially in the winter months, a black asphalt road could be constructed for about \$1-\$5 per square foot (Costhelper).

Additional amenities that may be added to enhance the site and to create a park atmosphere may include picnic tables, a playground, a pavilion or gazebo, and a skating shelter and fire pit. A basic picnic table ranges from \$88 for a rectangular wooden table to around \$900 for heavy-duty metal tables (“Picnic Tables”). There are also several designs that meet American Disability Association standards for accessibility, ranging in price from \$300 to \$775, depending on the materials used (“Commercial Picnic Tables”).

If Bridges Pond were to be used for skating during the winter months, a fire pit may be desired. A fire pit could be constructed at minimal cost using rocks found in the surrounding area or could be purchased for under \$100 from stores such as Lowes or Walmart. A larger gazebo or pavilion may also be added to the site for larger gatherings. Although they may be constructed with volunteer labor and basic materials, it is likely that professional installation would be necessary. Pavilions and gazebos cost upwards of \$10,000 (Williams).

In an effort to use the site for environmental education and wildlife conservation, signage could be used to educate visitors on the existing native species and wildlife. The costs of signs vary depending on how large the signs are and the installation methods. A small sign that could label trees costs about \$22, whereas larger signs can cost \$100 or more (Arthur).

4.2. Sources of Financial Support⁴

The primary source of funding comes from the town fund established by the Community Preservation Act. In conjunction with this report, a grant proposal will be filed with the Williamstown Community Preservation Committee to request that Community Preservation Act funds be used to purchase the Wylde property. The amount requested consists of the assessed value of the property and some additional funding for initial basic engineering and construction.

In addition to the funding received from the Community Preservation Committee, there are several grant programs that could provide additional financial support for further construction, conservation, and maintenance. The Lake and Pond Grant Program, carried out under the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, provides grants for the protection, preservation, and enhancement of public lakes and ponds. The program provides grants of up to \$25,000 with a 50/50 cost-sharing basis, and the program also helps to provide technical assistance and educational materials to the public (“Grant Programs”).

The Recreational Trails Grants Program, funded through the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century, is a national program that provides funding for the development and maintenance of recreational trails. In addition, the Student Conservation Association Massachusetts Parks AmeriCorps commit volunteers to five to ten months of full-time conservation work. The program assists in trail construction and maintenance, habitat restoration, invasive species removal, and environmental education (“Grant Programs”). Additional statewide and national grants may be available for environmental education, wildlife conservation, and for the encouragement of active lifestyles.

In addition to the various grants available, there is the possibility of cooperation with R.K. Miles and other local businesses to provide basic construction materials. There is also an

⁴ There may be additional sources of funding available beyond those outlined in this section.

opportunity to cooperate with local public schools and the Williams College Outing Club to help with trail construction, as well as maintenance and upkeep of the property in the future. It is also possible that basic upkeep could be performed with the help of the Williamstown Rural Lands Foundation and the Williamstown Department of Cemeteries and Parks.

5. Survey Results

5.1. Overview

Sixty people (twenty-nine males and thirty-one females) participated in a survey regarding recreational facilities and affordable housing in Williamstown (Appendix B). Of these participants, forty-five were Williamstown residents, thirteen were Williams College students, and two were both residents and students. Seventeen participants were less than 25 years old, seven were 26-35, eight were 36-45, eleven were 46-55, seven were 56-65, and ten were older than 65. These three demographic measures show a close resemblance to the actual gender, age, and town/college affiliations of the residents of Williamstown. As a result, the data from this survey serve as a good representation of the Williamstown community. To further ensure a valid sampling of the community, we collected surveys at a variety of locations around town, including: Spring Street, the public library, the Log, the Williamstown Rural Lands Foundation, and the Williams College campus. Overall, we are confident in the results of this survey and its ability to serve as a barometer of the community's feelings toward recreational facilities and affordable housing in Williamstown.

5.2. Recreational Facility⁵

Of the sixty people surveyed, fifty-four said that they use some form of recreational facilities in town. Of these people, almost all indicated they use trails in town and almost two-thirds said they use town parks; however, only about 38% use picnic areas (Figure 17).

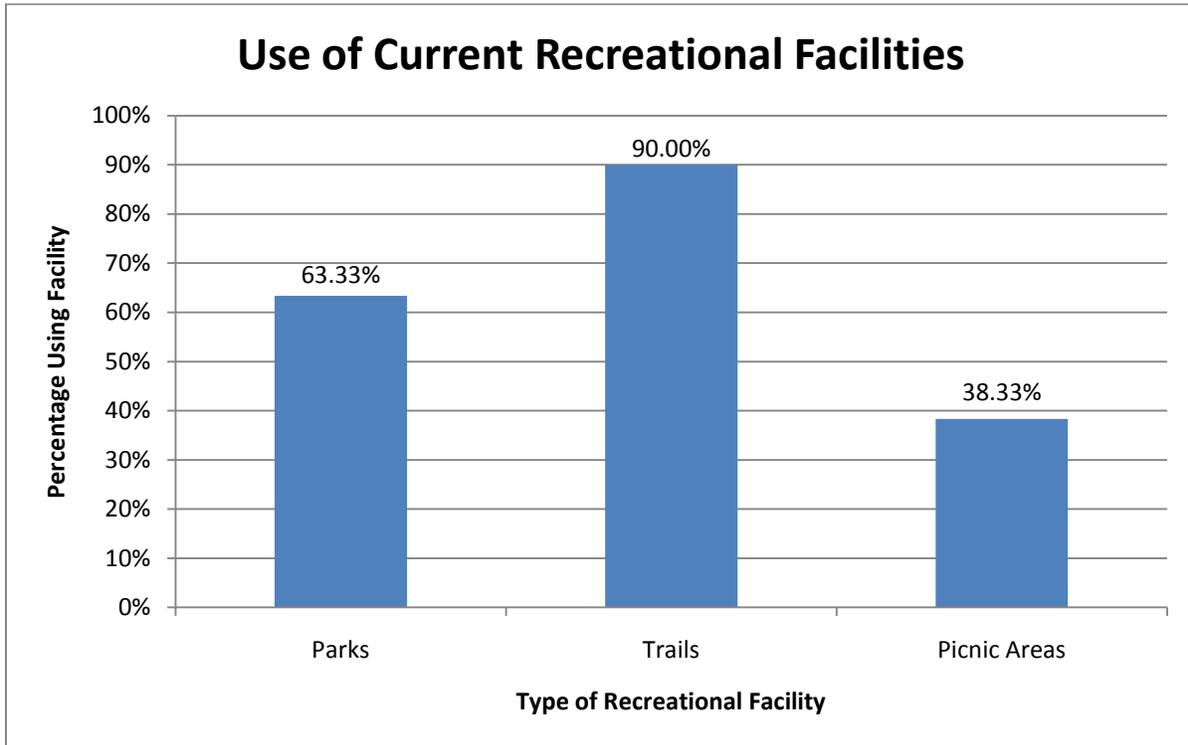


Figure 17. Use of current recreational facilities in town (n = 54).

While most people could easily think of trails and parks in town, only some could think of picnic areas. This indicates that there might be a need for more visible and memorable picnic areas in town. The Wylde property can address this need by including picnic areas. In follow-up to the question about current use of recreational facilities, the survey asked the participant to rate how satisfied he or she was with the current public recreational areas in Williamstown (Figure 18). Despite the high current use of recreational facilities in town, the average response was a 2.64 on a scale of 1 (unsatisfied) to 5 (satisfied). This average indicates a lower than neutral satisfaction with town recreational facilities, and only three people gave a rating of 5 which

⁵ A summary of the raw data for this and the following section are available in Appendix C.

means very few people are fully satisfied with recreational facilities in town. Thus, there is obviously a need to improve public recreational options in Williamstown, and the acquisition of the Wylde property can help achieve this goal.

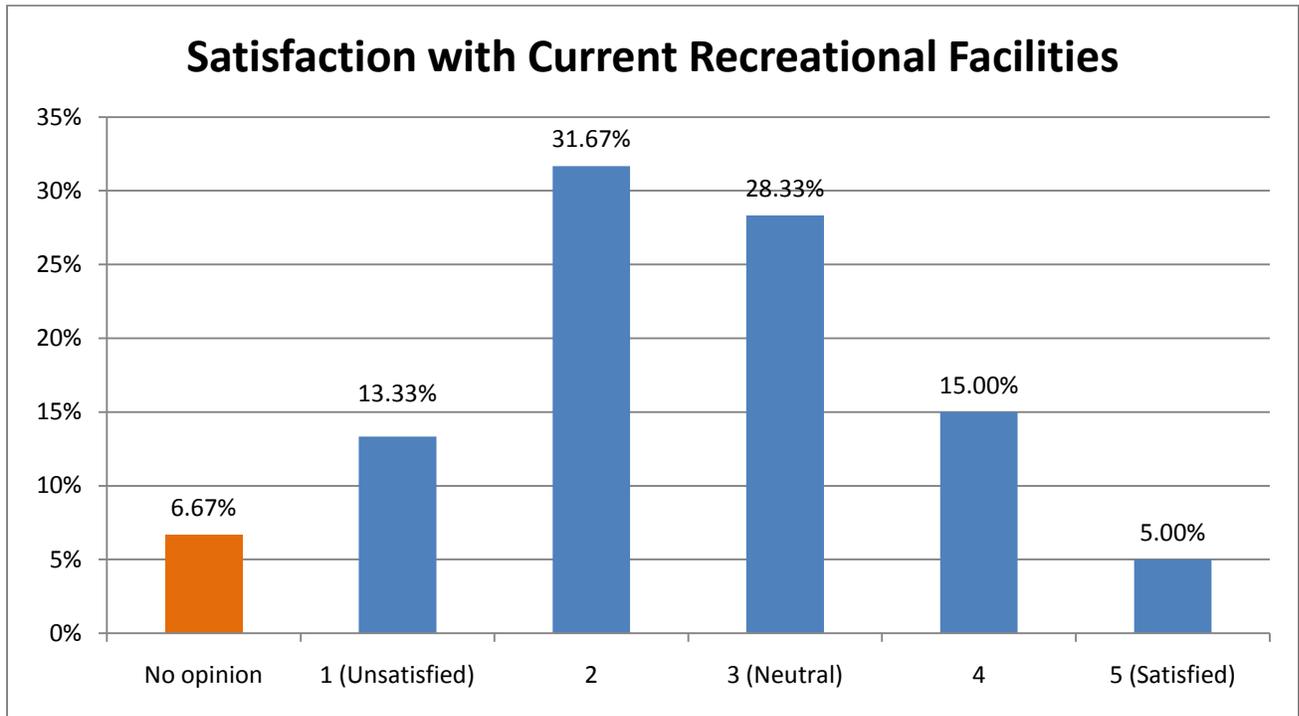


Figure 18. Satisfaction with current recreational facilities in Williamstown. A 1 indicates fully unsatisfied and a 5 indicates fully satisfied (n = 60).

The next question asked participants to indicate how important they thought it was to have more recreational facilities near town center (Spring Street). The average response to this question was 3.73 on a scale of 1 (unimportant) to 5 (important) which indicates people generally think it is important to locate new recreational facilities near the town center (Figure 19). Only three people responded with a 1. In contrast, twenty people responded with a 5, demonstrating the importance of having any new recreational facility located near Spring Street. Given that the Wylde property is only approximately 1.6 miles from Spring Street, the development of this site as a recreational facility could help address this desire for more centrally located recreational areas in Williamstown.

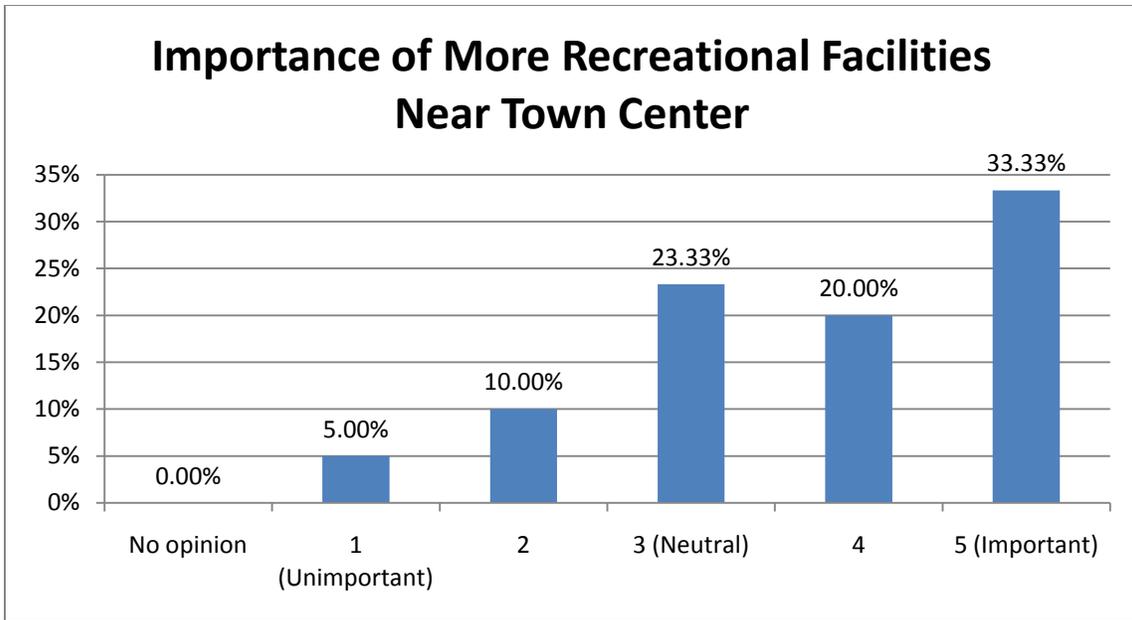


Figure 19. Importance of more recreational facilities near town center (n = 60).

The next question dealt with what type of amenities people would like to see in a new recreational facility. The most popular response was a bike path followed by trails and then outdoor skating (Figure 20).

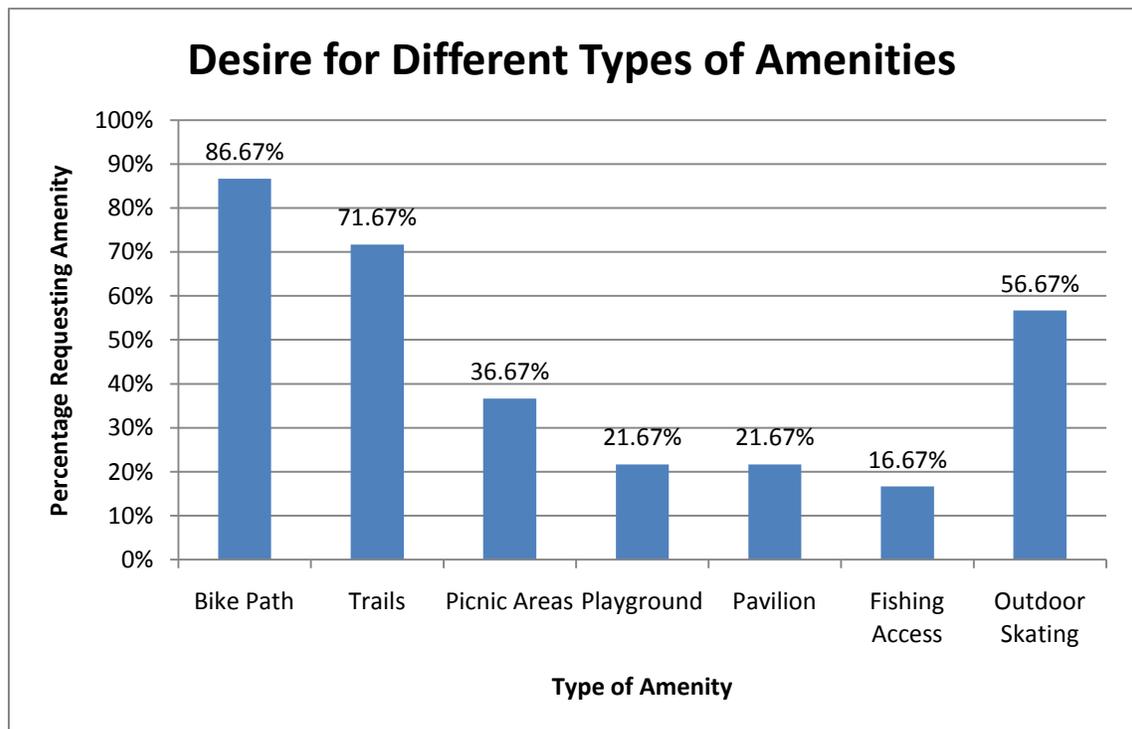


Figure 20. Desire for different types of amenities (n = 60).

The Wylde property could provide access to outdoor skating by opening up Bridges Pond to the public. In addition, the site lends itself well to the development of nature trails and some short bike paths for children. The lower desire for picnic areas, playgrounds, pavilions, and fishing access indicates that these amenities might not be required for the success of a new recreational facility. Thus, priority should be given to developing the trails, bike paths, and outdoor skating at the Wylde site.

The next part of the survey dealt with the importance of any new facility being handicap accessible. The responses definitely indicated the importance of making new facilities handicap accessible with an average response of 4.07 (Figure 21). Given the relatively flat nature of the site, it can easily be made handicap accessible.

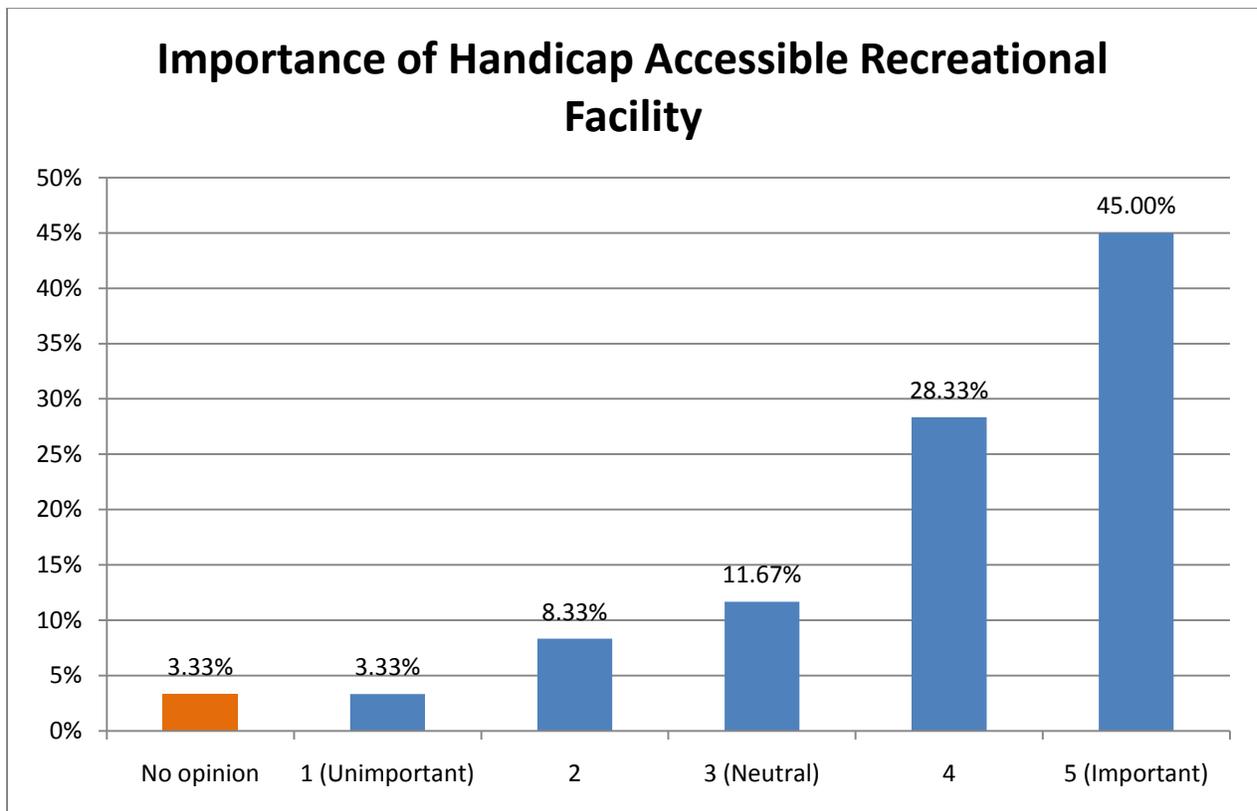


Figure 21. Importance of making new recreational facilities handicap accessible (n = 60).

The final question with regard to the recreational facilities aspect of the survey, asked respondents how important it was to have a new recreational facility near Bridges Pond. Most people rated this as important (5) or somewhat important (4) with an average response of 3.92 (Figure 22). Thus, if the town wants to develop a new recreational facility in the near future, it would be wise to do so near Bridges Pond.

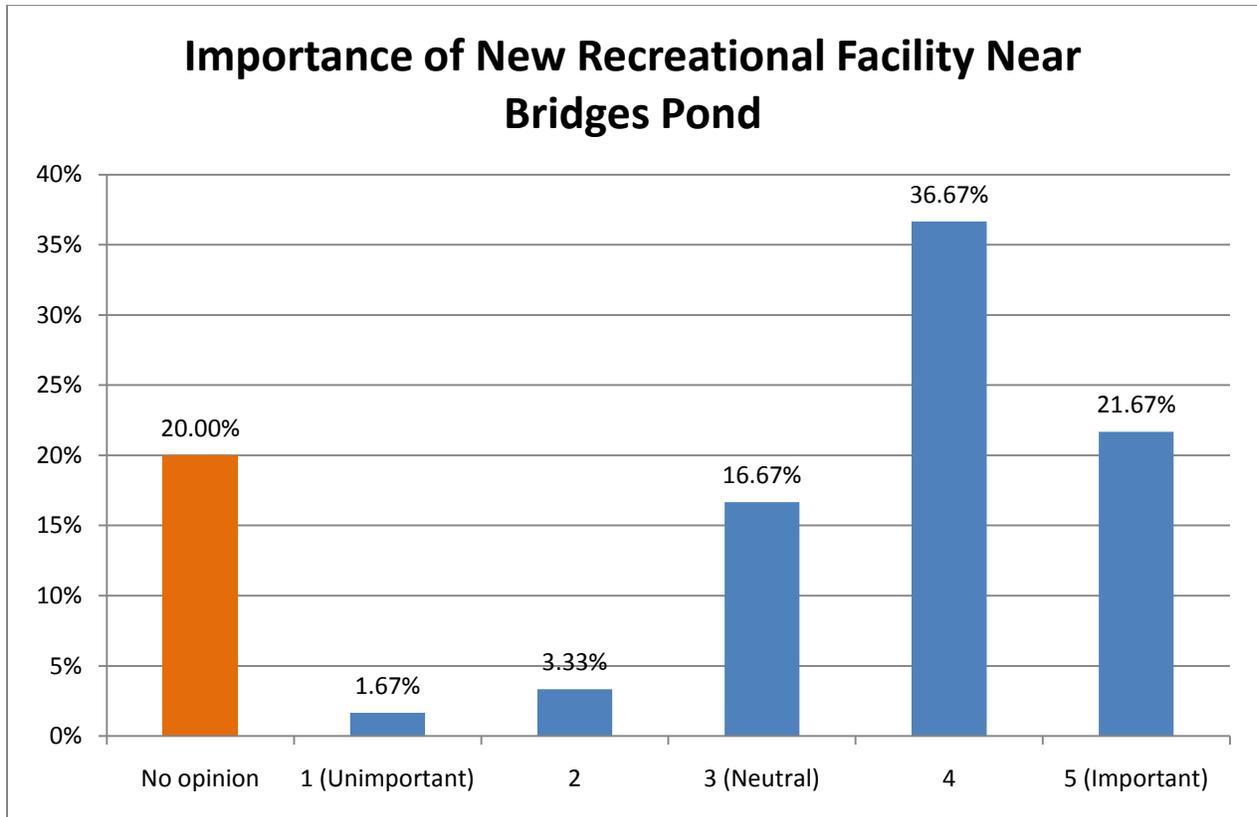


Figure 22. Importance of developing a new recreational facility near Bridges Pond (n = 60).

5.3. Affordable Housing

The next section of the survey asked questions about affordable housing in Williamstown. The first question of this section asked people if they thought there was enough affordable housing in Williamstown. Only one person answered “yes.” Everyone else answered “no” (36) or “I don’t know” (23). Clearly, people do not think there is enough affordable housing in Williamstown. This question was followed by one asking how important people thought it was to have more affordable housing in Williamstown. Again, the response showed the support of residents for more affordable housing with an average response of 4.06 and only three people who gave a response below a 3 (neutral) rating (Figure 23). The Wylde property can potentially be used to develop a few affordable housing units which can help meet the need for more affordable housing in Williamstown.

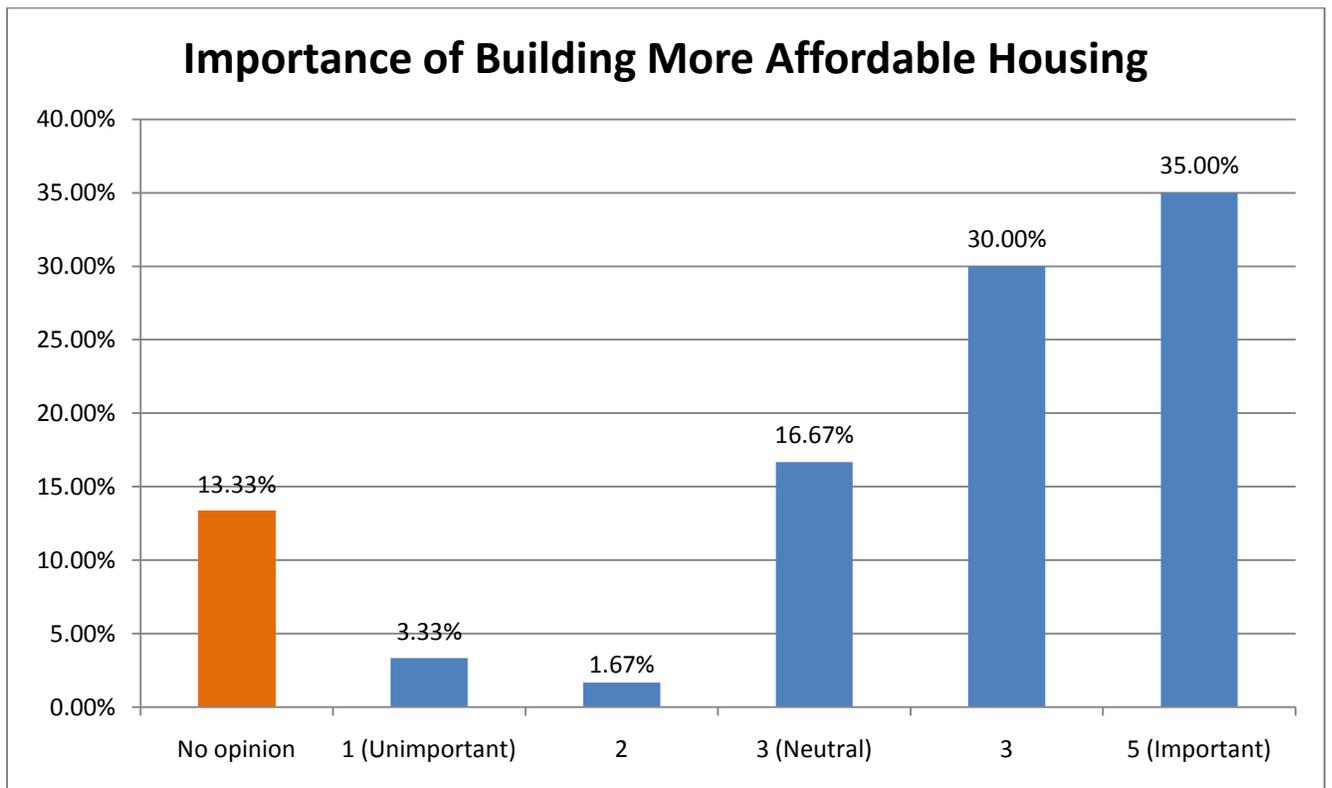


Figure 23. The importance of building more affordable housing units in Williamstown (n = 60).

When asked how important it was for a new affordable housing facility to be developed near Bridges Pond, the response was decidedly mixed. The average response was 2.96 meaning most people were neutral about putting an affordable housing development near Bridges Pond (Figure 24). Even though Williamstown should clearly have more affordable housing, siting a new development near Bridges Pond might not be the best solution for addressing the town's shortage of affordable housing options.

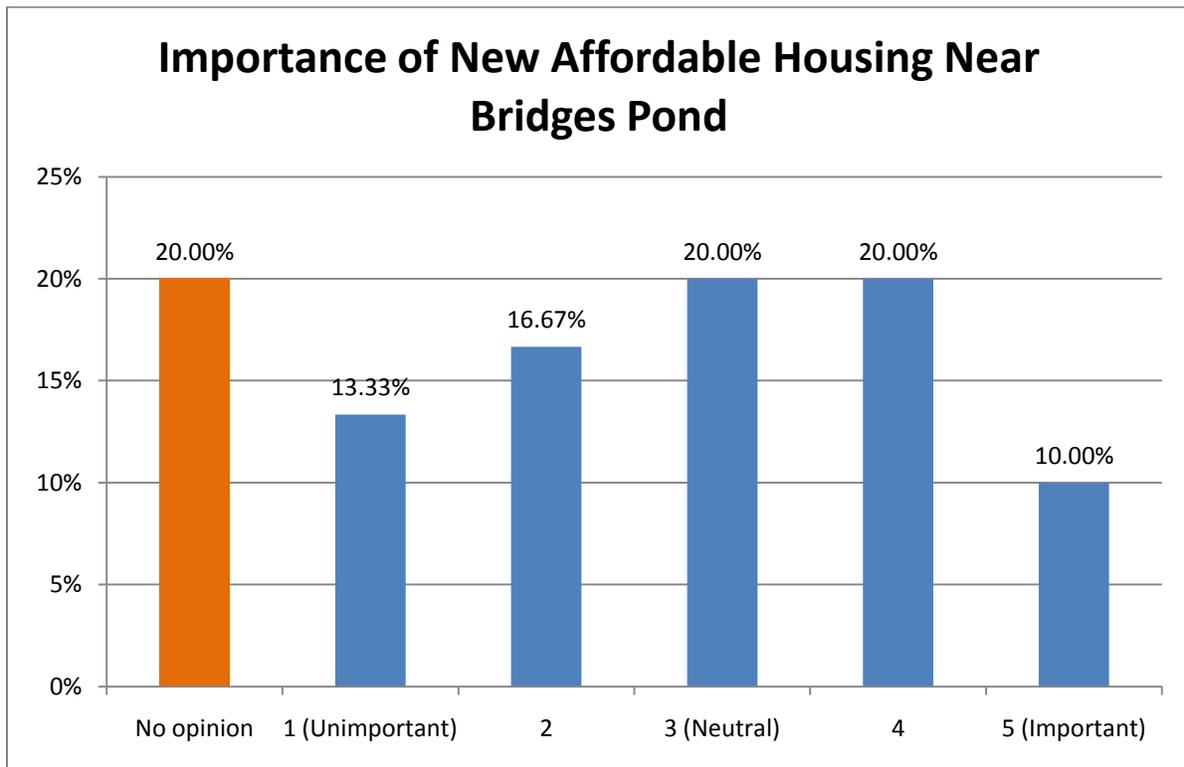


Figure 24. The importance of an affordable housing development near Bridges Pond (n = 60).

5.4. Summary

In conclusion, this survey illustrated the need for additional recreational facilities and affordable housing options in Williamstown. It also showed that any new recreational facility should be handicap accessible. Furthermore, it illustrated the need for more bike trails and walking paths in town as well as the desire for outdoor skating options in Williamstown. Moreover, the survey demonstrated that people⁶ would be responsive and accepting of a new recreational facility developed at the Wylde property as it would provide a recreational facility near the center of town that also would open access to another currently inaccessible recreational destination: Bridge's Pond.

At the same time, this survey found a strong need for more affordable housing in Williamstown, but a lack of importance assigned to placing a new affordable housing development near Bridges Pond. At a minimum, the purchase of the Wylde property with CPA funds would go a long way toward meeting some of the needs identified by this survey. As a result, the rest of this report will explore three possibilities for development at the Wylde property that would all serve to address issues related to improving recreation and affordable housing options in town. These possibilities include the development of the site for purely recreational purposes, for purely affordable housing purposes, and for a mix of both recreational and affordable housing purposes.

⁶ Our survey likely did not include any of the neighbors of the Wylde Property although one person did respond that they live on North Hoosac Road. As such, a follow-up survey targeted at the site's nearest neighbors may be warranted.

6. Potential Plans for Site

6.1. Affordable Housing

AH 1. Affordable Housing Option 1.

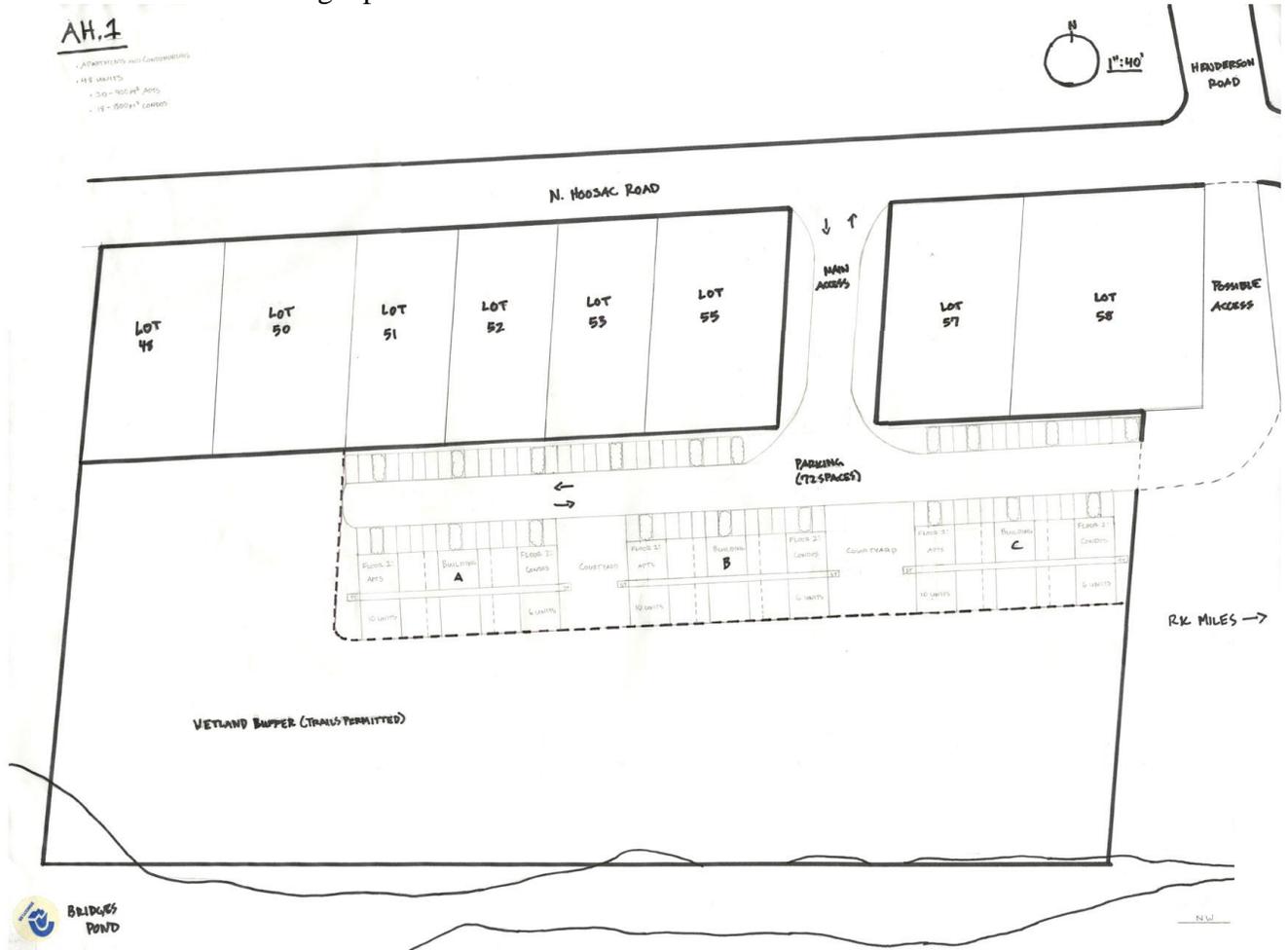


Figure 25. Affordable Housing Option 1.

- Most efficient land use plan
- 3 buildings, 2 floors each
- 30, 900 sq. ft. apartments (10/building) on 1st floor
- 18, 1500 sq. ft. condominiums (6/building) on 2nd floor
- 1 parking space/unit + 8 visitor parking spaces/building (72 total)
- 35' wide, paved access road (suitable for emergency vehicles)

AH 2. Affordable Housing Option 2.

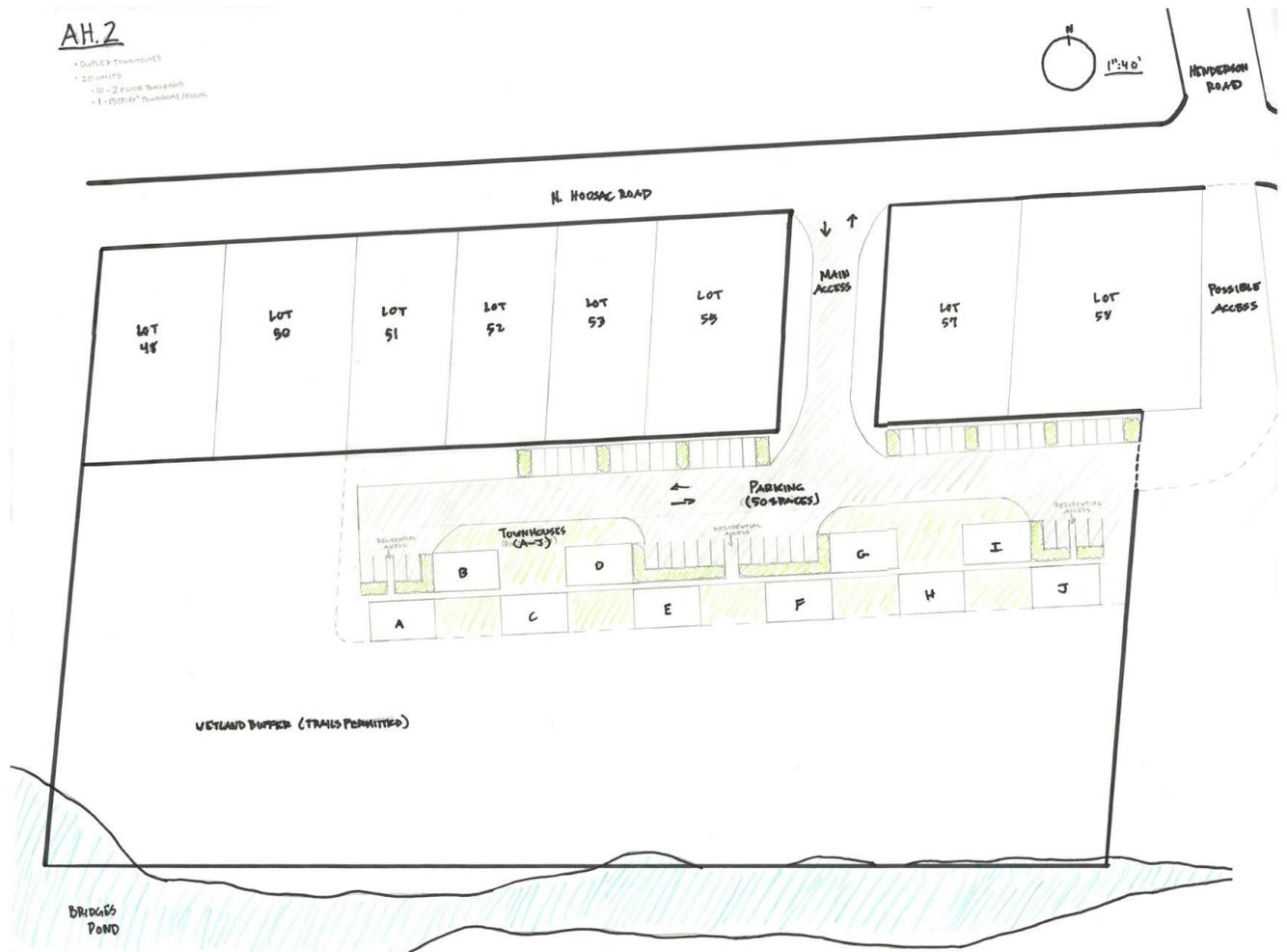


Figure 26. Affordable Housing Option 2.

- Less developed; more space and buffer between surrounding lots
- 10 buildings, 2 floors each
- 20, 1500 sq. ft. duplex townhouses (2/building stacked)
- 1 parking space/unit + 1 visitor space/building (50 total)
- 35' wide, paved access road

6.2. Recreational Facilities

RF 1. Recreational Facilities Option 1.

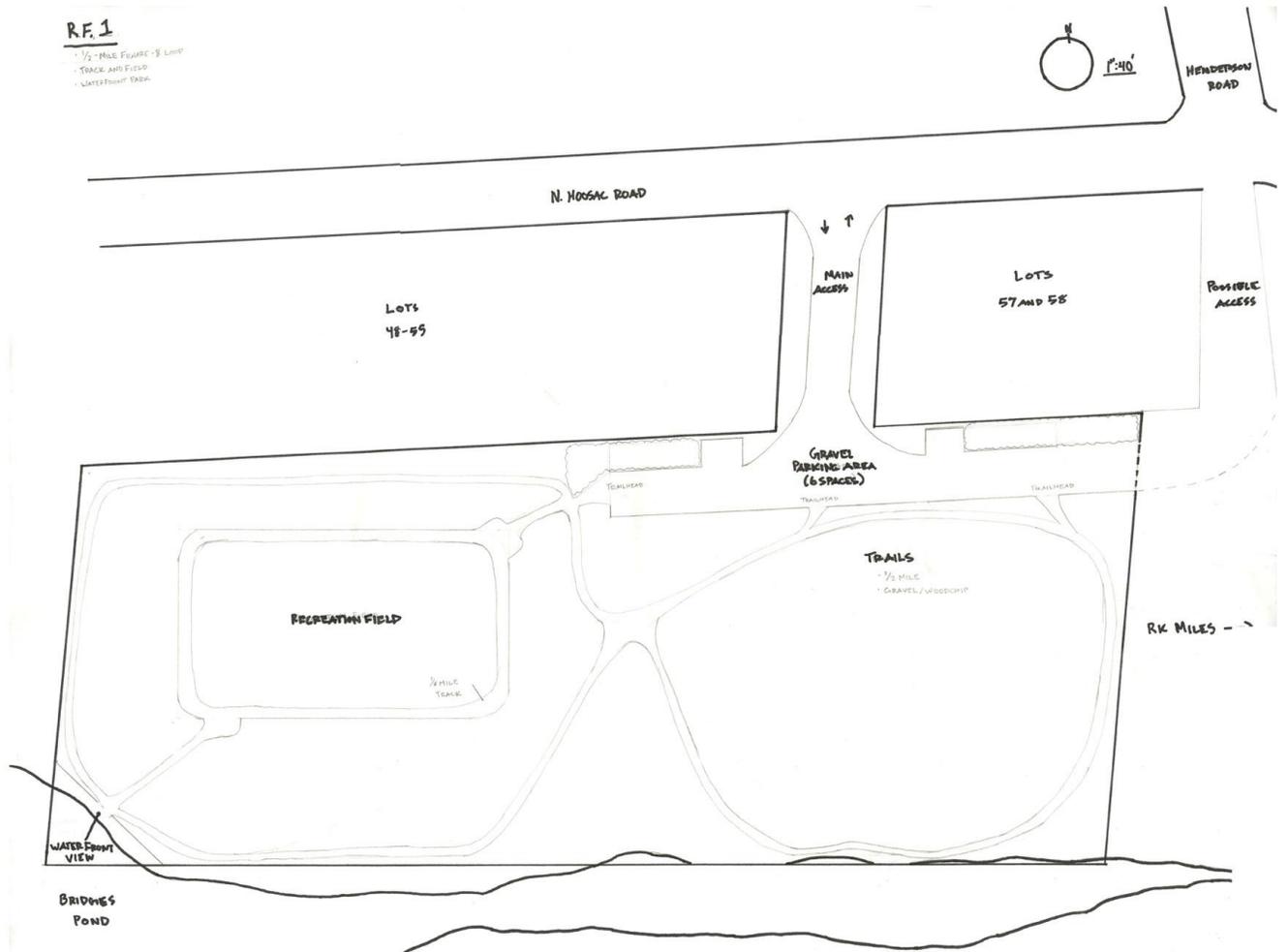


Figure 27. Recreational Facilities Option 1.

- Most cost-efficient
- 1/2 mile in 5' wide trails, gravel or woodchip (Figure-8 loop)
- Jogger and walker friendly
- 1/8 mile track surrounding recreation field
- Waterfront park
- 6 parking spaces, gravel
- 35' wide, gravel access road

RF2. Recreational Facilities Option 2.

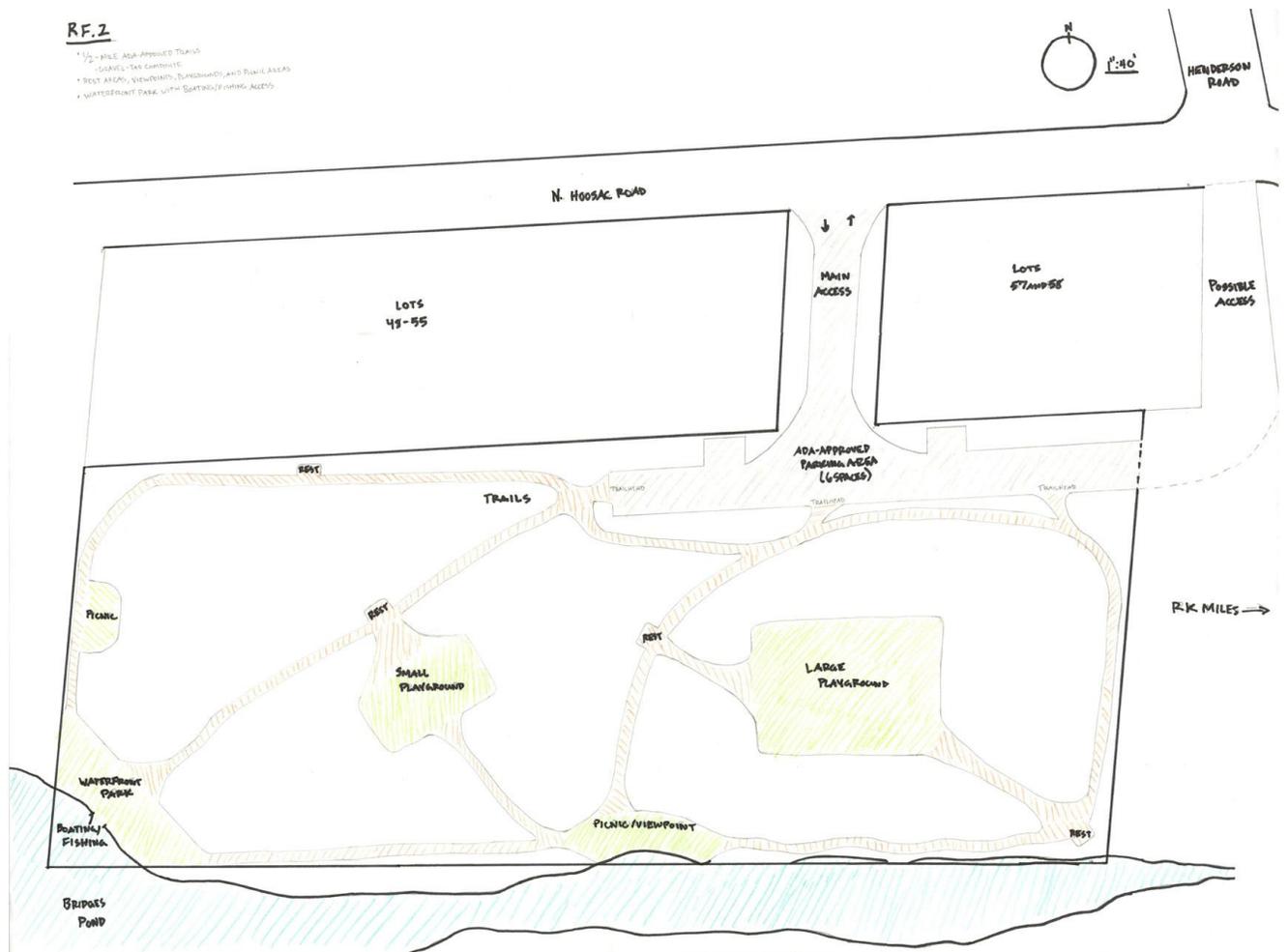


Figure 28. Recreational Facilities Option 2.

- 1/2 mile (subject to change – as much as possible) in 6' wide trails, ADA approved trail material (likely tar-gravel composite)
- Biker, jogger, and walker friendly
- Picnic, playground, and rest areas.
- Open waterfront access for fishing, boating, or skating
- 6 parking spaces, in same ADA approved material
- 35' wide, paved access road

RF Master Plan. Ideal Recreational Facility Option.

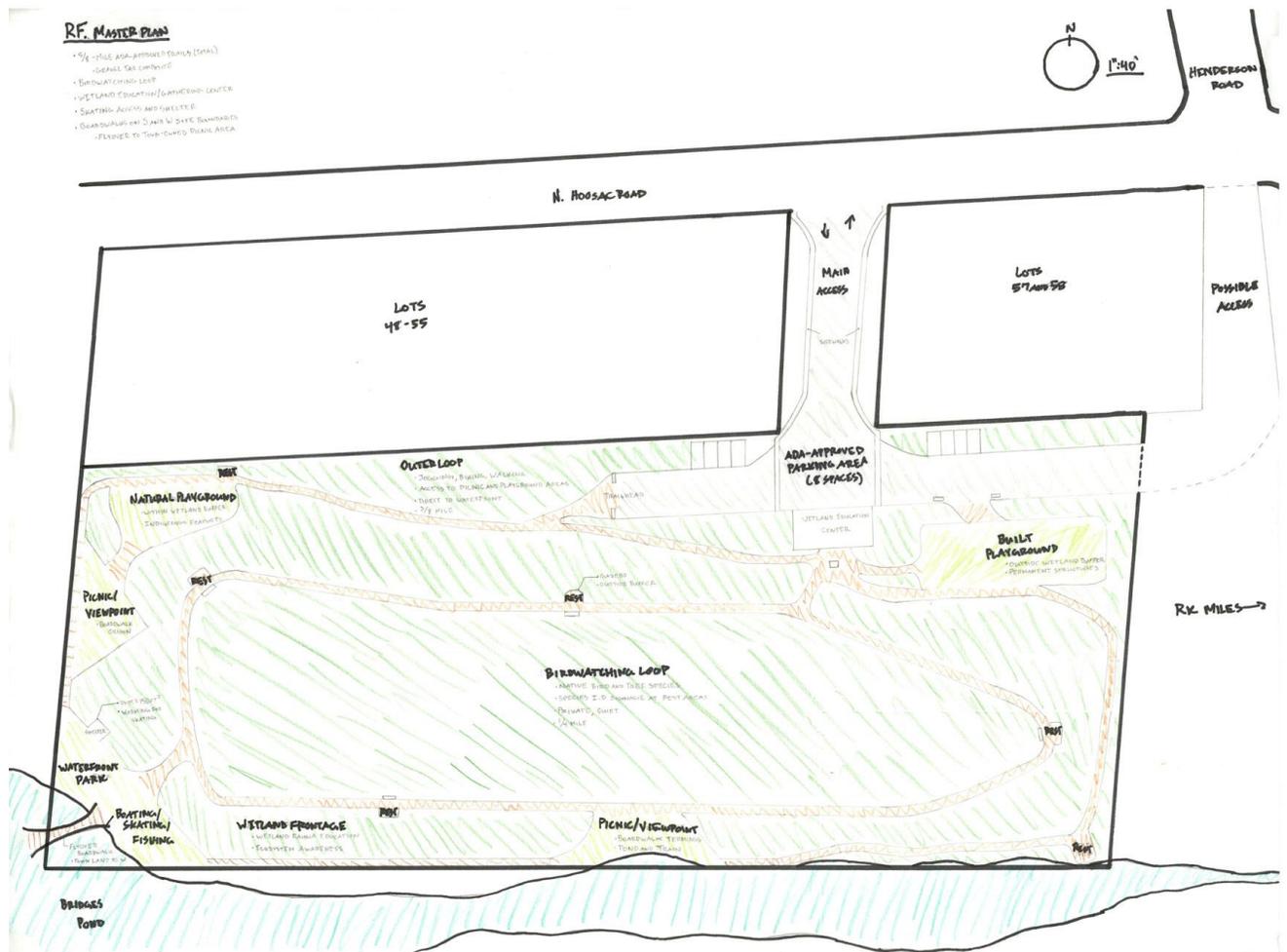


Figure 29. Ideal Recreational Facility Option.

- The most likely and feasible option
- ½ mile (subject to change – as much as possible) in 6' wide trails, ADA approved trail material (likely tar-gravel composite)
- Biker, jogger, and walker friendly
- Picnic, playground, birdwatching, and rest areas (possible gazebos).
- Waterfront boardwalks on S and W sides of site (if possible)
- Open waterfront access for fishing, boating, or skating
- Flyover boardwalk to town-owned picnic area (if possible)
- Indoor/outdoor wetland education pavilion located outside wetland buffer
- Wetland education and species I.D. signage
- Warming shelter near waterfront if skating
- 6-8 parking spaces, in same ADA approved material
- 35' wide, paved access road

6.3. Combination Development

CD Master Plan. Ideal Combination Development Option.

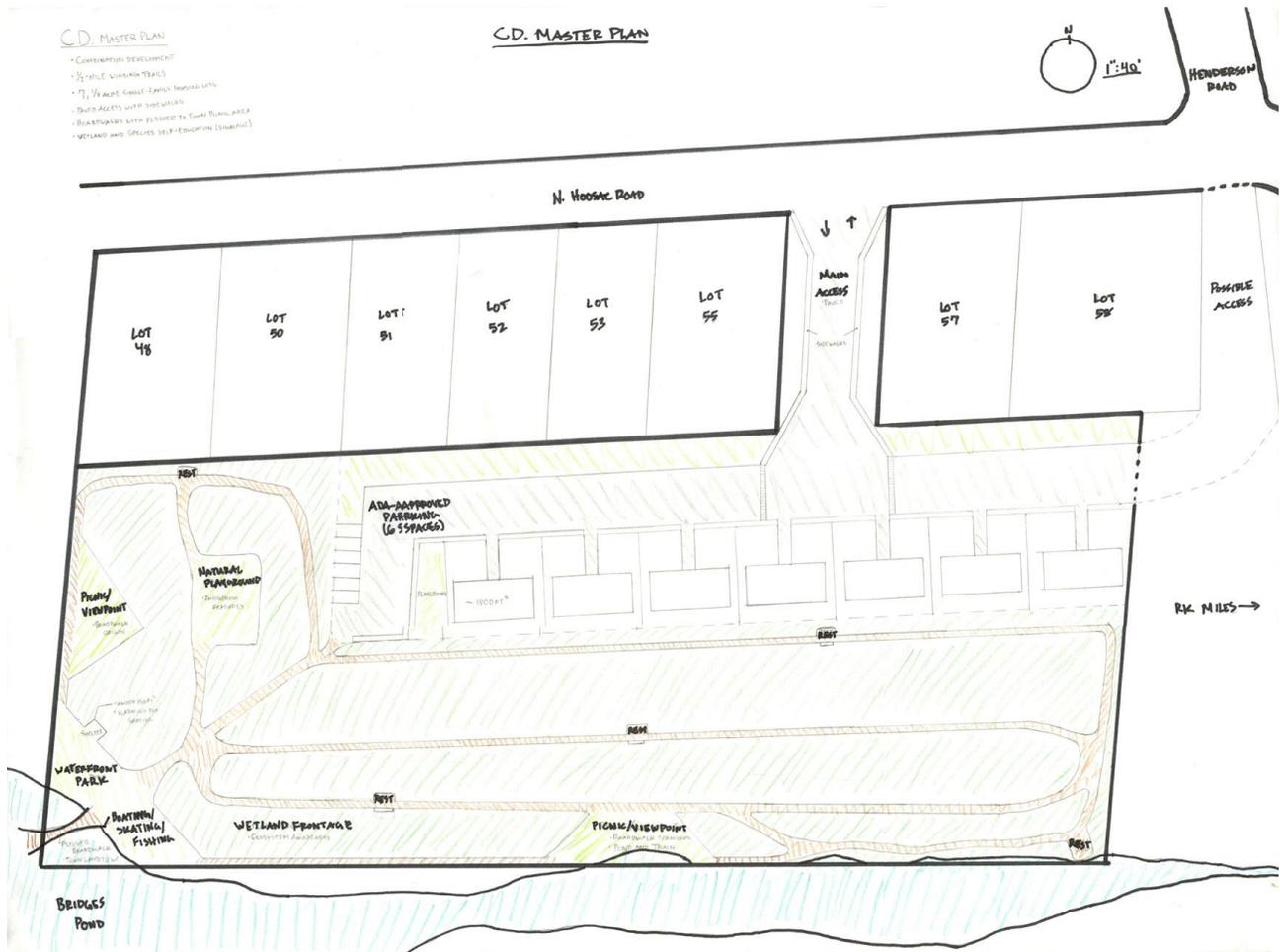


Figure 30. Ideal Combination Development Option.

- The less likely, but most beneficial option
- 7, Single family home lots; each 1/8 acre
- Likely 1800-2200 sq. ft. homes
- 12' wide, paved driveways for resident parking
- ½ mile in 6' wide trails, ADA approved
- Biker, jogger, and walker friendly
- Picnic, playground, and rest areas
- Waterfront boardwalks (if possible)
- Waterfront access for fishing, boating, or skating
- Flyover boardwalk to town-owned picnic area
- Wetland education and species I.D. Signage
- Warming shelter near waterfront if skating
- 6-8 parking spaces, in same ADA approved material
- 35' wide, paved access road

7. Analysis of Purchasing and Potential Plans for Site

7.1. Purchasing the Site

The previous section presented a variety of potential development plans for the site. All of these assume that the town decides to purchase the Wylde property. Before moving on to an analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of each type of development, we will first examine the justification for purchasing the property. There are a range of both positive and negative factors affecting this decision, but the benefits of purchasing the site outweigh the costs of not purchasing the site (Table 2). While we tried to summarize all of the possible factors, there are possible angles that we did not consider. However, we are confident that we have evaluated the most important aspects of this decision.

Table 2. A list of the various factors influencing the decision to recommend the purchase of the Wylde Property. Green represents a positive, yellow represents a potential negative, and red represents a definite negative.

Factor	Not purchasing the property	Purchasing the property
Monetary cost	None	\$80,000 - \$90,000
Decrease in total property tax collected by the town	None	Small
Nuisance to direct neighbors	None	Possible
Nuisance to railroad company	None	Possible
Addition to town's land portfolio	None	6.26 acres
Legal access to Bridges Pond	None	Yes
Potential for developing a recreational area	None	Yes
Potential for developing an affordable housing project	None	Yes
Potential for developing a combined recreational and affordable housing project	None	Yes
Reinforcing Williamstown's dedication to preserving habitats and the environment	No	Yes
Positive publicity for a wise use of CPA funds	No	Yes

By far, the biggest negative of the proposed purchase is the monetary cost. However, the money for purchasing the site would come from the CPA fund which has ample money saved from previous years' collections so no additional funds would need to be raised by the town. In addition, this potential negative is clearly outweighed by all the positive aspects of purchasing the site. A second negative outcome of purchasing the property is the lost property tax, but this amount of lost revenue is insignificant compared to the immense benefits gained by providing viable access to Bridges Pond. Moreover, there are only two other factors, nuisance to direct neighbors and nuisance to the railroad company, that could even potentially be considered as a negative outcome of purchasing the property. Because this analysis is simply looking at the decision of whether or not the town should purchase the site, the neighbors and railroad company are unlikely to be inconvenienced in any way by a simple transfer of property from Mr. Wylde to the town of Williamstown.

7.2. Potential Plans for Site

After purchasing the property, the town will have several different options for developing the site, if it chooses to do so. These include the six options⁷ discussed in Section 6 of this report.

Of course, these are just a sample of the possible plans for the site, but they are meant to be indicative of the general categories of potential development options for the site. There are a range of advantages and disadvantages to each plan, and through our assessment of these we have determined that the Combination Development Option is most beneficial (Table 3).

Table 3. A list of the various factors associated with the different development options for the Wylde property. Green represents a positive, yellow represents a potential negative, and red represents a definite negative.

Factor	Affordable Housing Option 1	Affordable Housing Option 2	Recreational Facility Option 1	Recreational Facility Option 2	Ideal Recreational Facility Option	Combination Development
Monetary Cost	High	Very high	Very low	Low-medium	Low-medium	Very high
Nuisance to direct neighbors	Possible	Possible	Possible	Possible	Possible	Possible
Nuisance to railroad company	Unlikely	Unlikely	Possible	Possible	Possible	Possible
Most efficient use of land	No	No	No	No	No	Yes
Addresses demand for more affordable housing	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
Addresses demand for more recreational areas	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Provides access to Bridges Pond	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Provides handicap accessible recreational area	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Draws in visitors from other towns	No	No	Possible	Possible	Yes	Yes
Traffic	High	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low
Overall feasibility	Low	Low	High	High	High	Low
Total Positives	2	3	5	5	6	7

⁷ We did not include the seventh option of an ideal affordable housing plan because a recreational aspect providing a short loop trail and access to Bridges Pond could easily be added to any affordable housing development at the site.

8. Recommendations for Action

Based on the previous examination of the various alternatives, we recommend that the Community Preservation Committee support the purchase of the Wylde property on behalf of the Town of Williamstown using CPA funds. The Wylde property provides important legal access to the valuable, yet underused town-owned Bridges Pond, which could be enjoyed by residents year round. In addition, the Wylde property itself is a beautiful, wooded natural area that has not been used to its full advantage, and if added as a property of the town, could provide many benefits to the community. Most importantly, if CPA funds are used to purchase the property, they can also be used to preserve, rehabilitate, and restore the property in the future.

We further recommend based on our analysis that the Wylde property be used for the Combination Development Option with affordable housing units and a recreational area (Figure 30). Such a development would provide seven single-family home lots, each 1/8 of an acre with paved driveways, and a 35-foot wide paved access road. In addition, the recreational facility would have a half mile of handicap accessible trails, picnic areas, a playground, and a warming area near the waterfront for the winter months. Waterfront boardwalks and a bridge to the opposite side of the pond would provide year-round access to Bridges Pond.

This combination development is the best use of the land and would satisfy the need for more affordable housing and recreation options in Williamstown. However, this development may cause a disturbance to residents along North Hoosac Road and the adjacent R.K. Miles lumber yard. It would also present a considerable cost over several years. Further, development on the Wylde property is constrained by the current zoning bylaws and by regulations under Chapter 40B and the Wetlands Protection Act.

Given the aforementioned limitations on development, we have found that the most feasible use of the Wylde property is the Ideal Recreational Facility Option that is handicap

accessible and provides access to Bridges Pond (Figure 29). The facility would include a half mile of 6-foot wide trails, built in accordance with the American Disability Association's trail specifications, which could accommodate wheelchairs, bikers, and joggers and be connected to a future bike path. This facility would also include picnic tables, a playground, and an area for bird watching. The recreational area also provides an important opportunity for wetlands and native species education, and an education pavilion could be constructed on the property. In addition, the facility would include waterfront boardwalks along the wetlands and a flyover boardwalk or bridge to connect to the forested area on the edge of Bridges Pond. In the winter, Bridges Pond could be used for skating and a warming shelter could be constructed near the Pond.

We feel that a new recreational facility at the Wylde property would fulfill some of the needs of the community that are currently underprovided for: it would allow access to Bridges Pond; it would provide a new recreational area near the center of Williamstown; and it would make nature and recreation available to the entire population of Williamstown. Furthermore, the Wylde property has the potential to be more than just a recreational facility—it is an area that can bring together members of the community of all ages and from all parts of town. In conclusion, we strongly recommend the purchase of the Wylde property as an excellent investment for the town's property portfolio regardless of future development plans for the site.

After presenting our findings and recommendations to the Williamstown Conservation Commission, the Commission agreed to endorse and submit a grant application to the Community Preservation Committee in support of our proposal for the town to purchase the land using CPA funds (Appendix D). In January of 2011, the Community Preservation Commission will decide whether or not to recommend the purchase of the Wylde property with CPA funds.

9. Works Cited

- “About Us.” *Williamstown Rural Lands Foundation*. Williamstown Rural Lands Foundation. October 2010. Web. 8 November 2010. <<http://www.wrlf.org/>>.
- Arthur, David. “Interpretative Signs and Markers.” *Environmental Center Markers*. 4 September 2010. Web. 30 November 2010. <<http://www.environmentalcentermarkers.com/>>
- Bowles, Ian. “Massachusetts Outdoors 2006: Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan.” *Energy and Environmental Affairs*. Commonwealth of Massachusetts. 2006. Web. November 15 2010. <<http://www.mass.gov/Eoeea/docs/eea/dcs/massoutdoor2006.pdf>>.
- “Commercial Picnic Tables.” *Online Commerce Group*. 2010. Web. 29 November 2010. <<http://www.picnictableoutlet.com/>>.
- “Comprehensive Permit: 760 CMR 56.” *Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development*. Commonwealth of Massachusetts. 2010. Web. 1 December 2010. <http://www.mass.gov/?pageID=eheadterminal&L=6&L0=Home&L1=Economic+Analysis&L2=Executive+Office+of+Housing+and+Economic+Development&L3=Department+of+Housing+and+Community+Development&L4=DHCD+Legal+Resources&L5=DHCD+Regulations&sid=Ehed&b=terminalcontent&f=dhcd_legal_760cmr56&csid=Ehed>.
- Costhelper. “Driveway Cost.” *Costhelper*. 2007. Web. 29 November 2010. <<http://www.costhelper.com/cost/home-garden/driveway.html>>.
- “DHCD Community Profiles.” *Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development*. Commonwealth of Massachusetts. 2010. Web. 15 November 2010. <<http://www.mass.gov/Ehed/docs/dhcd/profiles/341.doc>>.
- “Grant Programs.” *Department of Conservation and Recreation*. Commonwealth of Massachusetts. 2010. Web. 1 December 2010. <<http://www.mass.gov/dcr/grants.htm>>.
- Groff, Andrew. Personal Interview. 19 November 2010.
- Hancock, Jillian, Sophie Robinson, and Tyler Ware. “How to Manage Williamstown’s Public Lands.” *Williams College CES*. Williams College. December 2009. Web. 5 November 2010. <http://ces.williams.edu/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/con_com_fall_09.pdf>.
- Karr, Ronald. *The Rail Lines of Southern New England: A Handbook of Railroad History*. Pepperell, Massachusetts: Branch Line Press, 1995.
- Kusler, Jon. “Common Questions: Constructing Wetland Boardwalks and Trails.” *Association of State Wetland Managers, Inc.* 2006. Web. 1 December 2010. <www.aswm.org/brochure/boardwalks.pdf>.
- “Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 40B, §20-23.” *The 186th General Court of the*

- Commonwealth of Massachusetts*. Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Web. 1 December 2010. <<http://www.malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleVII/Chapter40B/Section20>>.
- “Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act Regulations.” *Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection*. Commonwealth of Massachusetts. 2009. Web. 1 December 2010. <<http://www.mass.gov/dep/service/regulations/310cmr10b.pdf>>.
- MassGIS. “MassGIS ArcSDE Geodatabase Report.” *MassGIS*. Commonwealth of Massachusetts. 2010. Web. 8 December 2010. <http://maps.massgis.state.ma.us/cpa_proj_view/sort_cpa.jsp?town=0>.
- Master Plan Steering Committee. “Williamstown Master Plan.” *Planning Board of Williamstown*. Williamstown. December 2002. Web. 7 November 2010. <<http://s230494718.onlinehome.us/wp-content/uploads/2008/03/masterplanfinalreport.pdf>>.
- “Picnic Tables.” *Site Furnishing Network*. 2010. Web. 29 November 2010. <<http://www.picnictables.com/index.cfm>>.
- Reed-Evans, Leslie. Personal Interviews. Fall 2010.
- Saginor, Stuart. Public Presentation. 19 October 2010.
- “Sale Prices and Rent.” *Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development*. Commonwealth of Massachusetts. 2010. Web. 15 November 2010. <http://www.mass.gov/?pageID=ehedterminal&L=3&L0=Home&L1=Community+Development&L2=Chapter+40B+Planning&sid=Ehed&b=terminalcontent&f=dhcd_cd_ch40b_saleprices&csid=Ehed>.
- Schlesinger, Richard. “Williamstown Conservation Commission Wetlands Protection Map.” *Town of Williamstown*. Williamstown. February 2008. Web. 7 November 2010. <http://williamstown.ws/?page_id=21>.
- Town of Williamstown. “Chapter 70 Zoning Bylaw.” *Code of Williamstown*. Williamstown. 19 May 1998. Web. 30 November 2010. <<http://williamstown.ws/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/chapter70zoning.pdf>>.
- U.S. Census Bureau. “Williamstown, Berkshire County, Massachusetts.” *American Fact Finder*. United States of America. 2000. Web. 15 November 2010. <http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html?_lang=en>.
- U.S. Department of Justice. “Americans with Disabilities Act.” *Americans with Disabilities Act*. United States of America. 2010. Web. 1 December 2010. <http://www.ada.gov/regs2010/2010ADASTandards/2010ADASTandards_prt.pdf>.
- Williams, David. “Parks and Recreation Equipment.” *David Williams & Associates*. 2010. Web.

29 November 2010. <<http://www.davidwilliamsassociates.com/>>.

“Williamstown: About Us.” *Town of Williamstown*. Williamstown. Web. 16 November 2010.
< http://williamstown.ws/?page_id=66>.

“Williamstown, MA.” *ZIPskinny: Demographic Information*. Web. 16 November 2010.
< <http://zipskinny.com/index.php?zip=01267>>.

Wylde, Russell. Personal Interview. 4 November 2010.

10. Appendices

10.1. Appendix A: List of Plant and Animal Species Noted on Wylde Property

This list of plant and animal species was provided by Leslie Reed-Evans based on her observations during site visits and on her extensive knowledge of the flora and fauna of the Williamstown area.

Birds:

Rock Pigeon
Mourning Dove
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker
Downy Woodpecker
Red-bellied Woodpecker
Blue Jay
American Crow
Black-capped Chickadee
Tufted Titmouse
White-breasted Nuthatch
Brown Creeper
Carolina Wren
American Robin
Gray Catbird
Song Sparrow
House Finch
American Goldfinch
House Sparrow

At Bridges Pond and seen from property:

Canada Goose
Mallard
Ring-necked Duck
Great Blue Heron
Belted Kingfisher

Mammals:

Beaver (through sign)
Gray Squirrel
Coyote (through scat)

Trees:

Cottonwood,
Sycamore
Box elder,
Red maple
Black cherry
Ash

Herbaceous plants:

New England Aster
Aster sp.
Goldenrod sp.
Dame's Rocket
Ground Ivy
Sensitive Fern
Tansy

Invasive species:

Honeysuckle sp.
Garlic mustard
Multiflora rose
Japanese knotweed
Buckthorn

10.2. Appendix B: Survey

Recreational Facilities and Affordable Housing Survey

We are conducting a feasibility study for a Community Preservation project grant. The following questions are intended to measure the demand for recreational facilities and affordable housing in Williamstown. We appreciate your time and willingness to complete this survey! Thanks!

--JJ, Nick, and Alison, Environmental Planning students

PUBLIC RECREATION:

1. Do you use any public recreational areas in Williamstown?

YES

NO

If yes, what kinds of public recreational areas do you use? (Circle all that apply)

PARKS

WALKING/HIKING TRAILS

PICNIC AREAS

OTHER: _____

2. How satisfied are you with the public recreational areas in Williamstown?

No Opinion

1

2

3

4

5

Unsatisfied

Satisfied

3. How important is it to you to have more public recreational areas near the center of Williamstown?

No Opinion

1

2

3

4

5

Unimportant

Important

4. What amenities would you like to see if a new recreational area was created in town? (Circle all that apply)

a) Bike path

b) Walking/hiking trails

c) Picnic areas

d) Playground

e) Pavilion

f) Fishing access

g) Outdoor skating

h) Other: _____

5. How important is it to you to make a new recreational facility wheelchair accessible?

Under 25 26-35 36-45 46-55 56-65 Over 65

16. How many people live in your household?

Not Applicable 1 2 3 4 5 6 or more

17. Are you a Williams College Student?

YES NO

18. Are you a resident of Williamstown?

YES NO

If yes, what street do you live on:

_____ (optional)

10.3. Appendix C: Summary of Survey Data

Total Number of Responses:	60		Males:	29
				0.48
			Females:	31
				0.52
<i>Public Recreation Questions</i>			Percentage	
Use public recreational areas?	Yes	54	0.90	
	No	6	0.10	
If yes, what kinds?	Parks	38	0.63	
	Trails	54	0.90	
	Picnic Areas	23	0.38	
			Average	Percentage
Satisfaction with public rec areas?	No opinion	4	2.64	0.07
	1 (Unsatisfied)	8		0.13
	2	19		0.32
	3 (Neutral)	17		0.28
	4	9		0.15
	5 (Satisfied)	3		0.05
			Average	Percentage
Importance of rec areas near town center?	No opinion	0	3.73	0.00
	1 (Unimportant)	3		0.05
	2	6		0.10
	3 (Neutral)	14		0.23
	4	12		0.20
	5 (Important)	20		0.33
			Percentage	
What amenities?	Bike Path	52	0.87	
	Trails	43	0.72	
	Picnic Areas	22	0.37	
	Playground	13	0.22	
	Pavilion	13	0.22	
	Fishing Access	10	0.17	
	Outdoor Skating	34	0.57	
	Other	9	0.15	

			Average	Percentage
Importance of wheelchair accessibility?	No opinion	2	4.07	0.03
	1 (Unimportant)	2		0.03
	2	5		0.08
	3 (Neutral)	7		0.12
	4	17		0.28
	5 (Important)	27		0.45
			Percentage	
Know someone who would benefit from accessibility?	Yes	32	53.33	
	No	28	46.67	
<i>Affordable Housing Questions:</i>				
			Percentage	
Enough affordable housing in Williamstown?	Yes	1	1.67	
	No	36	60.00	
	Don't know	23	38.33	
			Average	Percentage
Importance of more affordable housing in W'town?	No opinion	8	4.06	0.13
	1 (Unimportant)	2		0.03
	2	1		0.02
	3 (Neutral)	10		0.17
	3	18		0.30
	5 (Important)	21		0.35
			Percentage	
Know someone who would benefit from affordable housing?	Yes	36	60.00	
	No	24	40.00	
<i>Additional Questions:</i>				
			Percentage	
Familiar with Bridges Pond (BP)?	Yes	39	65.00	
	No	21	35.00	

			Percentage	
Ever been to BP?	Yes	21	35.00	
	No	39	65.00	
			Average	Percentage
Importance of new recreational facility near BP?	No opinion	12	3.92	0.20
	1 (Unimportant)	1		0.02
	2	2		0.03
	3 (Neutral)	10		0.17
	4	22		0.37
	5 (Important)	13		0.22
			Average	Percentage
Importance of new affordable housing near BP?	No opinion	12	2.96	0.20
	1 (Unimportant)	8		0.13
	2	10		0.17
	3 (Neutral)	12		0.20
	4	12		0.20
	5 (Important)	6		0.10
			Percentage	
Age Group	Under 25	17	0.28	
	26-35	7	0.12	
	36-45	8	0.13	
	46-55	11	0.18	
	56-65	7	0.12	
	Over 65	10	0.17	
			Percentage	
How many people in household?	Not applicable	15	25.00	
	1	7	11.67	
	2	16	26.67	
	3	7	11.67	
	4	12	20.00	
	5	2	3.33	
	6 or more	1	1.67	
			Percentage	

Are you a Williams College student?	Yes	15	0.25	
	No	45	0.75	
			Percentage	
Are you a resident of Williamstown?	College Student	13	0.22	
	Resident	45	0.75	
	Both	2	0.03	

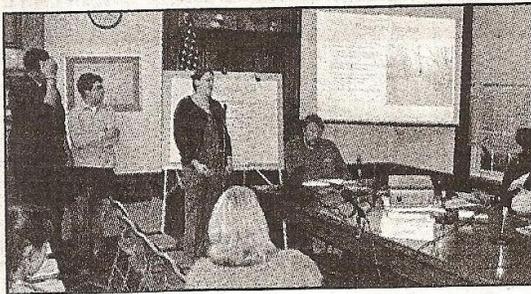
North Adams Transcript

om

Tuesday, December 14, 2010 • Fifty cents

A MediaNew

Students suggest land purchase



Gillian Jones/North Adams Transcript

Williams College students, from left, Nicholas Williams, JJ Augenbraun and Alison Agnew give a presentation Monday to the Williamstown Conservation Commission.

Recreational use is recommended

By Meghan Foley
North Adams Transcript

WILLIAMSTOWN — Three Williams College students are recommending the town purchase a piece of property off North Hoosac Road to transform into an outdoor recreation area and possibly affordable housing.

They're also recommend the town purchase it with Community Preservation Act funds, as the value of the property is assessed at \$80,500.

"There is so much future potential for this site. We think this is worthwhile," senior JJ Augenbraun, 22, of Wilton, Conn., said Monday.

He said the land can provide access to the town-owned Bridges Pond property and help meet the town's need for affordable housing.

Agnew added trails that were handicapped-accessible could also be built.

Commission will debate applying for funding at an upcoming meeting

PROPERTY from A1

The 6.26-acre site is located on the south side of North Hoosac Road behind private residences. Besides those homes, it abuts the railroad tracks, the R.K. Miles lumber yard and Bridges Pond.

It's currently owned by the estate of the late Edward Wyld, and prior to 1968, it was owned by the Boston and Maine Corporation and H.D. Moore.

Augenbraun and his classmates, Alison Agnew, 21, of Vienna, Va., and Nicholas Williams, 21, of Seattle, Wash., presented their research and findings to the Conservation Commission Monday evening.

The commission will discuss Thursday if it will submit an application to the town's Community Preservation Act Committee asking for funds to purchase the property.

Applications for projects seeking funding from the Community Preservation Act are due Friday. The Community Preservation Act

allows communities to fund projects that involve the acquisition, preservation, rehabilitation and restoration of historic resources; acquisition, creation and preservation of open space; creation, preservation and support of affordable housing, and the acquisition of land for recreation and preservation of recreational resources.

Augenbraun said Williamstown currently has \$200,000 of unallocated Community Preservation Act funds, with \$129,000 allocated for open space, and \$53,000 allocated for affordable housing that could be used toward purchasing the property.

In addition, he said if the town didn't use Community Preservation Act funds to purchase the property, and then wanted to apply for those funds to make improvements to the site, it couldn't.

"If it's bought with Community Preservation Act funds, the Community Preservation Act funds can be used toward future improvements of the site," he said.

Agnew's, Augenbraun's and Williams' presentation was done as part of an environmental planning course taught by Sarah Gardner, associate director of the Center for Environmental Studies at Williams. Gardner is also a member of the Conservation Commission.

Three additional projects will be presented by students this week.

"Developing New Markets for Farmers — The Berkshire Community Development Corp. Plan for a Commercial Kitchen and Value-Added Processing Facility" will be presented at 4 p.m. on Tuesday in Williams College's Griffin Hall, room six; "A Trail Plan for Downtown Williamstown's Christmas Brook Area" will be presented at 4 p.m. on Wednesday in Griffin Hall, room five; and "Berkshire County Foodshed Analysis," will be presented at 7 p.m. on Wednesday at 1 Fenn St., Suite 201, in Pittsfield.

Agnew, Augenbraun and Williams said while a combination recreation area and affordable

housing site would be the most efficient use of the Wyld property, the most feasible for the town would be a recreation area.

"The major problem with the combination development is the monetary cost is very high," Williams said.

Agnew said if the town went in the direction of opening the land to recreation, she and her classmates would recommend an incremental approach to building the necessary amenities including trails, benches and a shelter such as a gazebo.

"This is a great opportunity for community involvement and environmental improvement," she said.

To reach Meghan Foley,
e-mail mfoley@thetranscript.com.

0001466305-01

Family
FOOTWEAR
center

Visit any of our 4 locations!

120 Northside Drive Bennington, VT • 802-442-6042
444 Pittsfield/Lenox Rd. Lenox, MA • 413-342-8330
1500 State Rt. 9, Lake George, NY • 518-798-9658
740 Hoosick Road, Troy, NY • 518-271-0149