

TOWN OF YARMOUTH OPEN SPACE PLAN 2019



**Prepared by the
Yarmouth Open Space Task Force**

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Executive Summary

Purpose of Open Space Plan

Yarmouth residents strongly and consistently support the preservation of Open Spaces, large and small, as evidenced by a long history of reports, questionnaires, public comments, and workshops. There is heavy use of our coastal access and a need for more; there is a growing use of our parks and desire for more options for boating, walking, biking, and for safe pathways connecting all parts of town. This plan reiterates those often-cited values that make Yarmouth attractive, vibrant and healthy. It also identifies key places that can efficiently support our growing town, while leaving spaces for recreation, water protection, scenic views, and wildlife habitat, increasing safe access, and connecting in-town and regional destinations and Open Space.

This plan is overdue and is undertaken to implement the 2010 Comprehensive Plan. The planning timeframe of this Open Space Plan is for the next 3-5 years, so that further recommendations and implementation strategies can be considered in the context of a Comprehensive Plan update.

In addition to the three overarching goals and the strategies suggested to meet these goals, this plan is designed to emphasize two important themes. The first is that by working with partners – including local landowners, non-profits, and surrounding communities – much progress can be made. The future of land conservation and park development in Yarmouth should not rely solely on the municipal budget. The Town should be thinking about its role related to the work of acquiring and improving Open Space as part of a team. Second, Yarmouth is part of a greater region, and Yarmouth Open Spaces fit into a network of regional Open Space assets. Thinking beyond town lines and Open Space ownership adds value to Yarmouth’s parks and other Open Spaces.

Summary of Recommendations

Recommendations are grouped within three overarching goals. Under each goal are a number of strategies the Town should consider implementing within the next 3-5 years. This is a relatively short timeframe for a plan of this scale, but the recommendations are specific and appropriate for a 3-5 year period.

Goal 1 - Maintain and enhance current Town-owned lands.

- A. Increase attention on maintenance and amenities, especially for Open Space in the Village and Neighborhood properties, to make this network of Open Spaces reflect the best of Yarmouth’s values and character.

- B. Update the Royal River Corridor Plan (2009) with a focus on actionable, high impact changes.
- C. Draft and adopt management plans for all municipally owned Open Spaces that clarify appropriate uses for each property in its current state, as well as a vision for potential uses in the future.

Goal 2 - Prioritize new acquisitions around the following Open Space Values that have stood the test of time.

- A. Increase public access to the Royal River, Cousins River, and Casco Bay.
- B. Expand linked trail systems and connect open spaces.
- C. Protect significant natural views.
- D. In more rural settings, prioritize the acquisition of properties close to existing Yarmouth or regional Open Spaces, those located in unfragmented habitat blocks, and those that protect areas of high ecological value.
- E. In the Village and Neighborhood areas, prioritize the provision of smaller Open Spaces and connections to and between Open Spaces.

Goal 3 - Update Town Ordinances and Policies

- A. Update subdivision and site plan ordinance requirements to provide for the creation of public spaces and connections as development occurs.
- B. Inventory and map the existing Open Spaces created within subdivisions and incorporate these into the overall Open Space network.
- C. Extend protections for existing Open Spaces, shoreland areas, and other sensitive lands.
- D. Adopt a municipal Open Space Acquisition Policy to guide future decision making for town staff and the Town Council when opportunities arise to acquire land or development rights.
- E. Incentivize preservation of privately owned lands.
- F. Explore local options for creating and leveraging additional funds for land acquisition.

Introduction

Open Space in Yarmouth

The term Open Space can mean different things to different people. For this planning effort, Open Space includes:

- The larger undeveloped natural areas preserved and managed to maintain natural, scenic, ecological, agricultural, recreational and cultural properties;
- Places to access the rivers and Casco Bay, as well as community and neighborhood parks; and
- The network of trails, paths, and sidewalks that connect neighborhoods and businesses to these spaces and to other regionally important Open Spaces.

Yarmouth's place in the Region

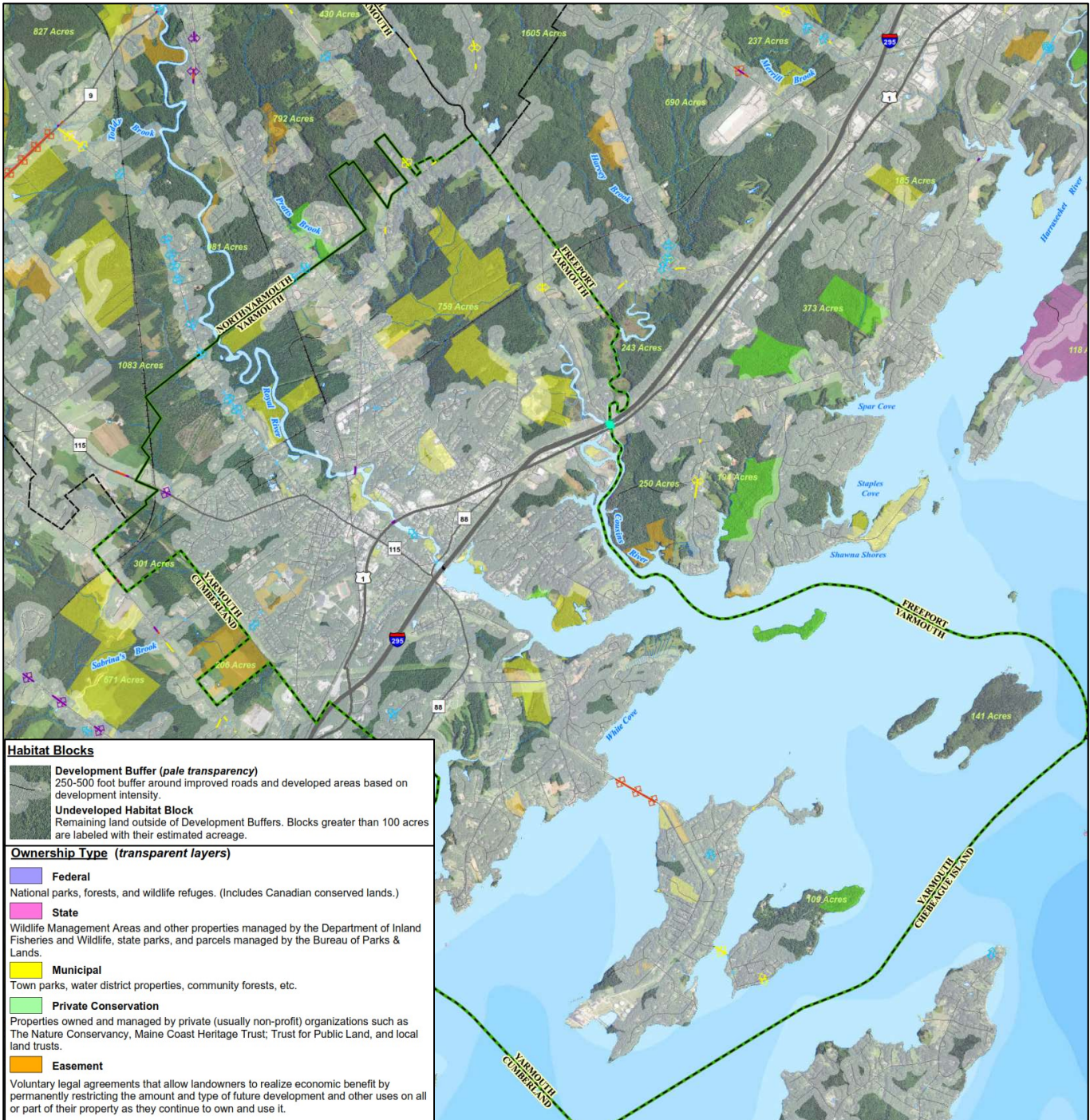
Geographically, Yarmouth is the smallest town in Cumberland County, but in many ways, Yarmouth stands out regionally.

Despite its small geographic area (23 square miles), Yarmouth ranks 11th in population out of 28 municipalities in Cumberland County, with a population of 8,349 people in 2010. This means that Yarmouth is a densely settled community. In fact, population density data from the 2010 Census shows that Yarmouth ranks behind only Portland, South Portland and Westbrook, with about 625 people per square mile.

Yarmouth's natural systems have shaped the community for ages & make Yarmouth unique in the region.

Yarmouth is situated on the shores of Casco Bay at the confluence of the Royal and Cousins Rivers. Because of its coastal location, these two regionally notable river systems, and the lands that they pass through, Yarmouth enjoys a great diversity of geographical, geological, and biological features within its boundaries. These natural systems supported millennia of Native American activity in the area and shaped the early European and American economy and settlement patterns of the town.

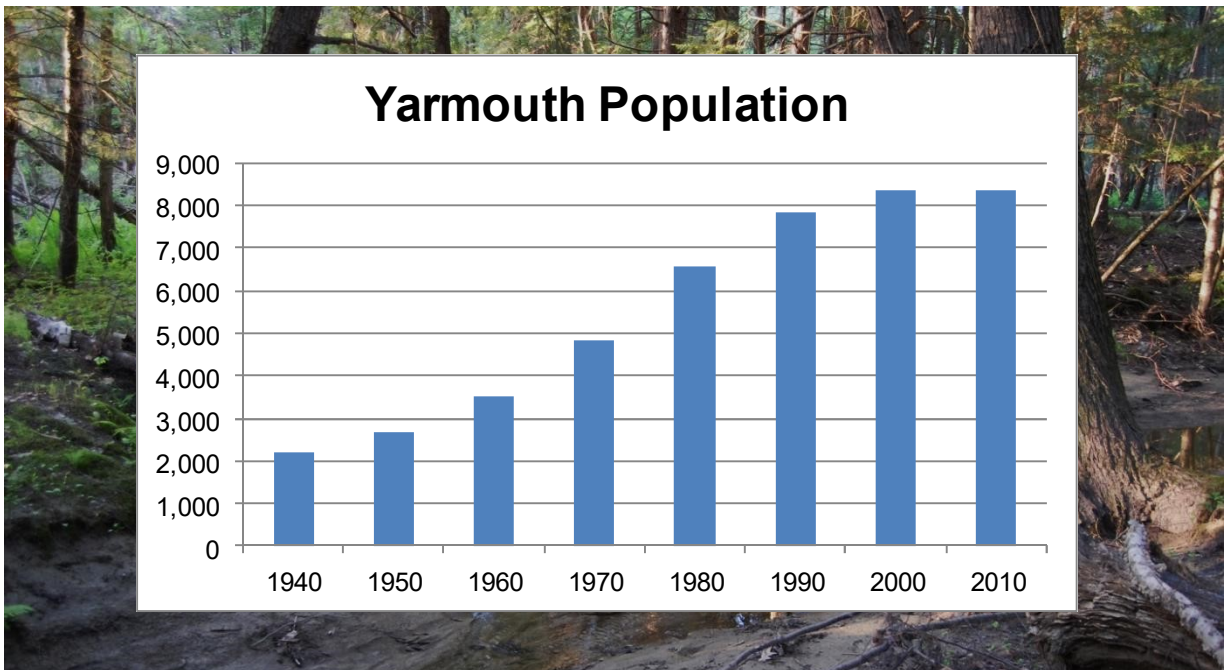
This map shows buffers around roads and developed areas, calling attention to both areas of development and blocks of undeveloped natural areas.



Map 1 - Regional Blocks of Habitat, Beginning with Habitat (2018)

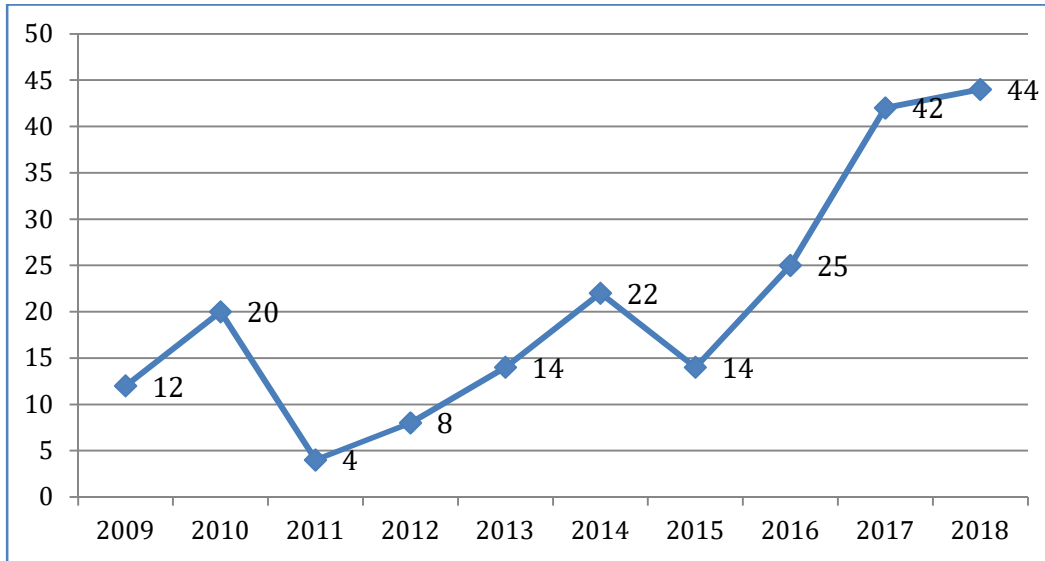
This favorable position at a natural crossroads has shaped the Town's current built environment and transportation systems. US Route 1 and Interstate 295 connect Yarmouth to the region and beyond. Main Street continues inland as state Route 115. Two rail lines traverse the town carrying regional freight and passenger services. Yarmouth is served by the regional METRO transit service.

These connections and regional access, combined with Portland's large center of gravity, in regard to regional housing and labor markets, have enhanced Yarmouth's natural appeal as a place to live and work. As such, Yarmouth has experienced consistently high levels of development pressure over recent decades. This growth and development has reduced the number of acres of natural areas and working farms over the years.



Note that the steady population growth seen in Yarmouth since the 1940s leveled off in the 2000s. This is likely associated with the drop in demand for housing regionally, due to the Great Recession in the middle part of that decade. Even though population growth leveled off between 2000 and 2010, Yarmouth still added over 100 dwelling units in that period, reflecting the downward trend in average household size, from 2.41 to 2.34 people per household.

Another sign of growth comes from looking at building permits issued in the last 10 years. Permits for new dwelling units have trended up with an improving economy and housing market since a bottom in 2011.



Open Space and Community Character

Yarmouth is characterized by its scenic and accessible coastal resources, its walkable and attractive Village area centered on the Royal River, and the rural attributes of the surrounding inland areas. The trails, parks, and preserves in each of these parts of town make Yarmouth a special place to live and work.

From launching kayaks and canoes in the heart of the Village to skiing and snowshoeing in quiet forested preserves, access to a diverse range of outdoor spaces and activities is a big part of Yarmouth's unique identity and its quality, small town feel.

Access to a diverse Open Space network is a strong part of Yarmouth's identity as a community.



Andy Smith-Petersen: Royal River, Yarmouth, ME

High Value Places, High Value Views

Wide open fields, large forested tracts of land, the Casco Bay Islands, and long views down salt marshes, river corridors, and the ocean are defining characteristics of Yarmouth's Open Spaces. These views and places give a rural character to much of the town, despite its dense development.

The Village parks and green spaces enhance the experience of living and working in Yarmouth, and are a key ingredient in the thriving downtown. These places provide spaces to gather and relax and add character to the Village.



Little John Island Preserve, Yarmouth, ME

Recreational Opportunities & Water Access

Yarmouth is an active community. Members of the community value Yarmouth’s Open Spaces for unstructured recreation, walking, trail running, biking, skiing, and skating. Access to the Royal River, Cousins River, and Casco Bay ensure that residents can take advantage of the outstanding paddling, boating, fishing, and birdwatching opportunities in the area. Regional trail connections like those provided by the West Side Trail and the Beth Condon Pathway connect important community destinations and provide recreational opportunities that span town lines.

Personal Health & Wellness

Various medical journals and studies have been published linking time spent in Open Spaces and the natural environment with many health and wellness benefits. Although spending time in the natural environment often correlates with recreation and active lifestyles, research has shown that simply sitting or walking near flowing water or green space can benefit your overall physical and mental health. The health impacts vary from lowered blood pressure and improved cognition to improved sleep and an increased ability to focus. Within minutes of being surrounded by trees, blood pressure drops and heart rate slows.



Spear Farm Preserve, Yarmouth, ME

Ecological Benefits

Riparian buffers, the vegetated areas around streams and rivers, provide wildlife habitat and natural corridors for birds, mammals, and reptiles to move through watersheds. These buffers also act as filters, reducing the amount of sediments, chemicals, and pollution reaching surface waters, resulting in healthier estuaries and rivers.

Trees, both large areas of forest and smaller stands in the Village and Neighborhoods, are important community assets benefiting both human and environmental health. Tree canopies filter dust and absorb pollutants from the air. They provide

shade and reduce noise. Trees absorb carbon dioxide; they reduce wind

speeds and cool the air. Trees help prevent flooding and soil erosion, absorbing storm water. Trees host complex micro-habitats, providing essential nesting and food to birds and insects.

Salt marshes along the Royal and Cousins Rivers provide both shoreline protection and also habitat for diversity of wading birds and migratory waterfowl, and for finned fish and shellfish and the microorganisms that serve as food for larger species.

Economic & Community Benefits

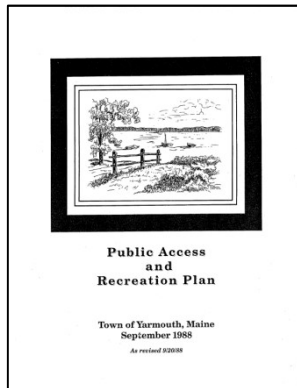
Great parks and Open Spaces can attract people to downtown and village areas. On their own, these spaces are great places to meet friends, bump into fellow community members or have lunch outside, but these places also provide the space for successful community scale events like the annual Hike with Santa and Summer Arts Series. The Clam Festival takes advantage of the Open Space represented by Main Street itself as well as all of its' ancillary Open Spaces, public and private: the churches, NYA Campus, the library, Town Hall (Memorial Green), the ball field at Rowe School, and now our new under-bridge space. These parks and Open Spaces strengthen community connections, bring activity and social interaction to the center of the community, and increase opportunities for commerce year-round.

Open Space increases the value of surrounding properties and does not add additional pressure on the municipal budget. This plan recognizes the benefit of purposeful economic development both as a means of expanding the tax base and enhancing the character of Yarmouth. The 2016 Market Analysis and Action Plan Matrix, initiated by Yarmouth’s Economic Development Advisory Board (EDAB), found that Yarmouth citizens highly value access to restaurants, arts, retail shops, and outdoor recreation. The Open Space Task Force has worked closely with EDAB to look at areas that are appropriate for economic development and for open space and how these respective uses can work together synergistically to enhance Yarmouth’s character and quality of life.

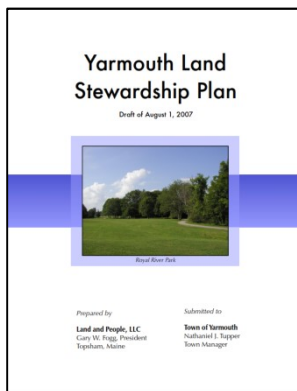


Bridge Celebration on Main Street, Yarmouth, ME

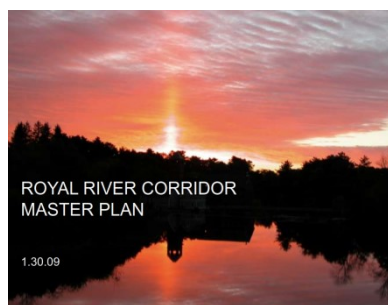
Previous Relevant Planning Efforts



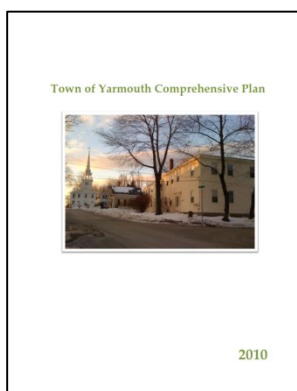
The Public Access and Recreation Plan (1988) is also known as the PARC Plan. This plan is important because it articulated the first comprehensive vision for protection of Open Space in Yarmouth and provided guiding principles for the round of proactive municipal property acquisition in the 1990s and early 2000s. Although this plan is now over 30 years old, the conservation values it established remain as the foundation of current Open Space planning.



The Yarmouth Land Stewardship Plan (2007) was authored following a period of relatively major Open Space acquisitions. The plan looks at Open Space through an organizational and capacity lens, with recommendations aimed to allow the Town of Yarmouth to manage and maintain municipal Open Spaces. Recommendations focus on the structure of committees and staff roles and general guidance for future acquisitions. The general philosophy is to take care of land the Town owns with good guidance for acquisition of future public Open Spaces.



The Royal River Corridor Master Plan (2009) focuses on the areas on either side of the Royal River from Yarmouth Harbor upstream to East Elm Street. Royal River Park and the trails to and through this community Open Space are key assets to the Town and the region. Recommendations focus on Natural Resources, Interconnectedness, Planning and Development, and coordinated Corridor-wide Improvements.



The Yarmouth Comprehensive Plan (2010) featured five key topics facing Yarmouth, one of which was Rural Character and Open Space. The Plan suggests policies for the design of residential development outside of the Village, including natural and green spaces as part of the Town's infrastructure, for selective acquisition of additional Open Space, and for maintaining and enhancing existing public spaces.

TOWN OF YARMOUTH OPEN SPACE TIMELINE

.6 ACRES

Larrabee's Landing

1940s

1950s

1960s

37.4 ACRES

Tinker Preserve
Royal River Park

1970s

Land Acquisition Reserve Fund

4.5 ACRES

Grist Mill Lane
Grist Mill Park
Latchstring Park

1980s

1980 Comprehensive Plan
1984 Long Range Plan
1985 Harbor & Water Study
1985 Cluster Development Open Space Requirement
1988 Public Access & Recreation Plan

253 ACRES

Pratt's Brook Park
Sweetsir Farm
Littlejohn Island Preserve

1990s

242 ACRES

Barker Preserve
Frank Knight Forest
Pratt's Brook Park
Fels' Grove Farm Preserve
Spear Farm Estuary Preserve
Camp SOCI

2000s

2005 Property Policy
2007 Land Stewardship Plan
2009 Royal River Corridor Master Plan

46.7 ACRES

Spear Farm
McKearney Village Open Space
Gravel Pit/Sligo Road/Village Run
Frank Knight Forest Extension

2010s

2010 Comprehensive Plan

Current Open Spaces

Village & Neighborhood Areas

Open Space in the Village and neighborhoods is generally scaled to serve people who live and work within those areas, typified by smaller scale spaces like Latchstring Park, Village Green Park, Memorial Green, and Grist Mill Park. These types of spaces are integrated into the village fabric and provide refreshing texture and enhancement of the built environment, as well as places to gather, rest, and enjoy village life with other members of the community.

They can also be destinations in their own right, like Royal River Park. This Park is a regional asset in the heart of the Village and draws people from surrounding communities, whether it is to access the Royal River from the East Elm Street boat launch, to walk or jog along the paved paths beside the river, or to simply fly a kite or play catch in the open mowed areas. This park is a venue for many activities, including concerts and film showings. Through signage and observation of artifacts, the park serves the important function of educating the community on the fascinating history of Yarmouth, illustrating the changing roles the Town has played, from fishing and shipbuilding, to small mills and manufacturing, to a mill town with a large paper mill spanning the river, to today's suburban community that has maintained its unique identity and sense of place by maintaining its Main Street and preserving key lands from development.

The Beth Condon Pathway is a major Open Space feature within the Village and Neighborhood area. This off-road, protected, pedestrian trail is paved and lit for the use of walkers and cyclists. It is used for recreation and fitness but also provides safe access to many important destinations in the community along busy Route One.

Open Spaces in the Village and neighborhoods offer a diversity of spaces, experiences and options for users. A focus on programming to activate these spaces and give residents many reasons to visit is particularly evident at Royal River Park. Open Spaces of all sizes, including public and private spaces, are a part of the fabric of the Village life and experience.



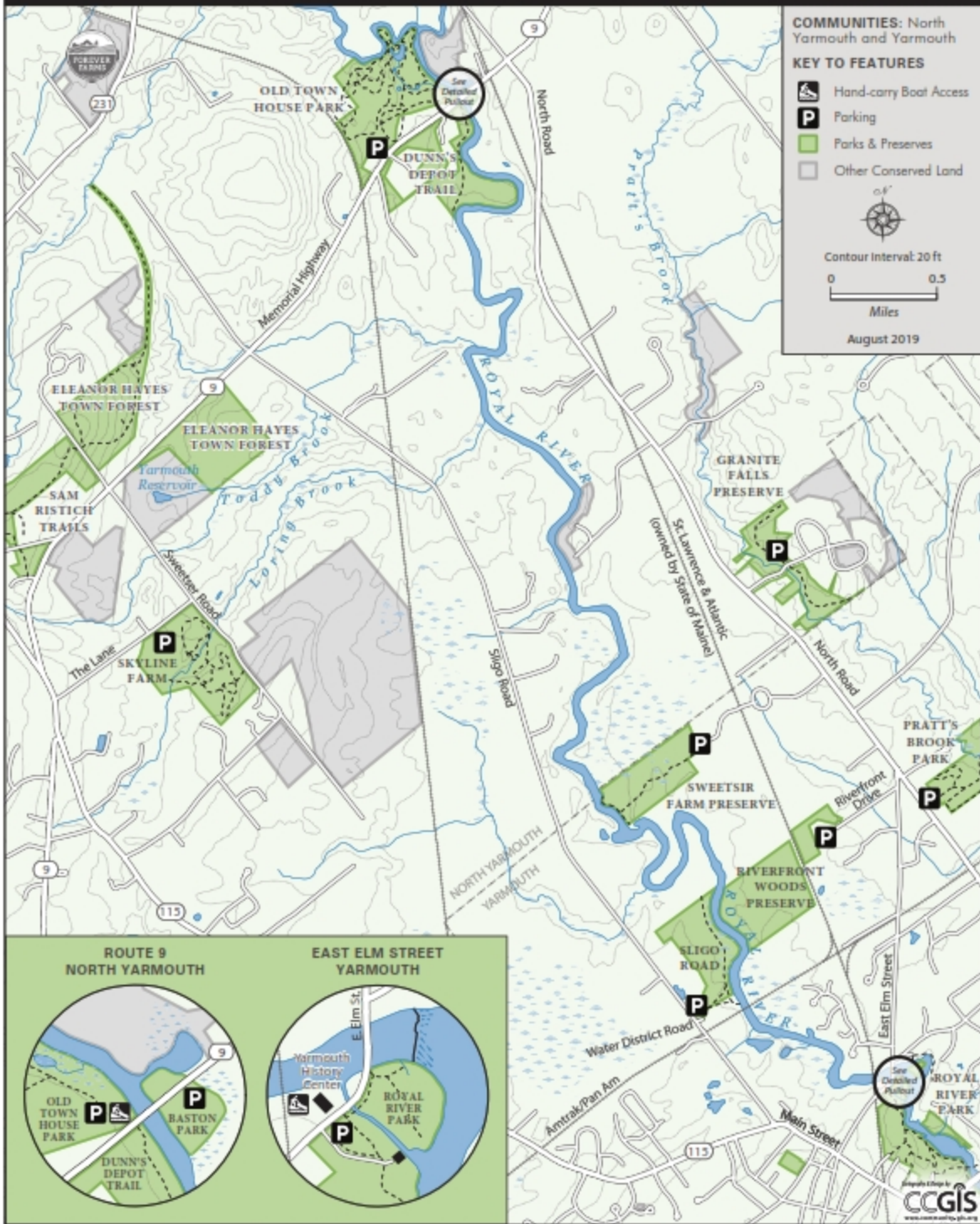
Andy Smith-Petersen: Casco Bay, Yarmouth, ME

Rural Areas & Regional Connections

Open Spaces in rural areas of Yarmouth tend to be scaled to serve rural functions of habitat protection and preservation of natural systems. These areas often provide the long scenic vistas that are so important to maintaining a rural character. A core function of these Open Spaces is the conservation and quiet enjoyment of natural landscapes, such as those offered at the Spear Farm Preserve and Fels-Groves Farm Preserve. Other properties offer more diverse activities and community programming. Examples include the Community Garden at Frank Knight Forest and the popular swimming area and hand carry boat launch at Sandy Point on Cousins Island for access to Casco Bay.

These areas tend to be less formal than the Open Spaces in the Village and Neighborhood Areas. Because of a focus on preservation and conservation, users can expect fewer of the amenities likely to be found in a Village setting, such as lighting, benches, or landscaped gardens. However, these spaces offer great experiences with nature, moments of quiet and peace, and walking and other recreational activities close to home.

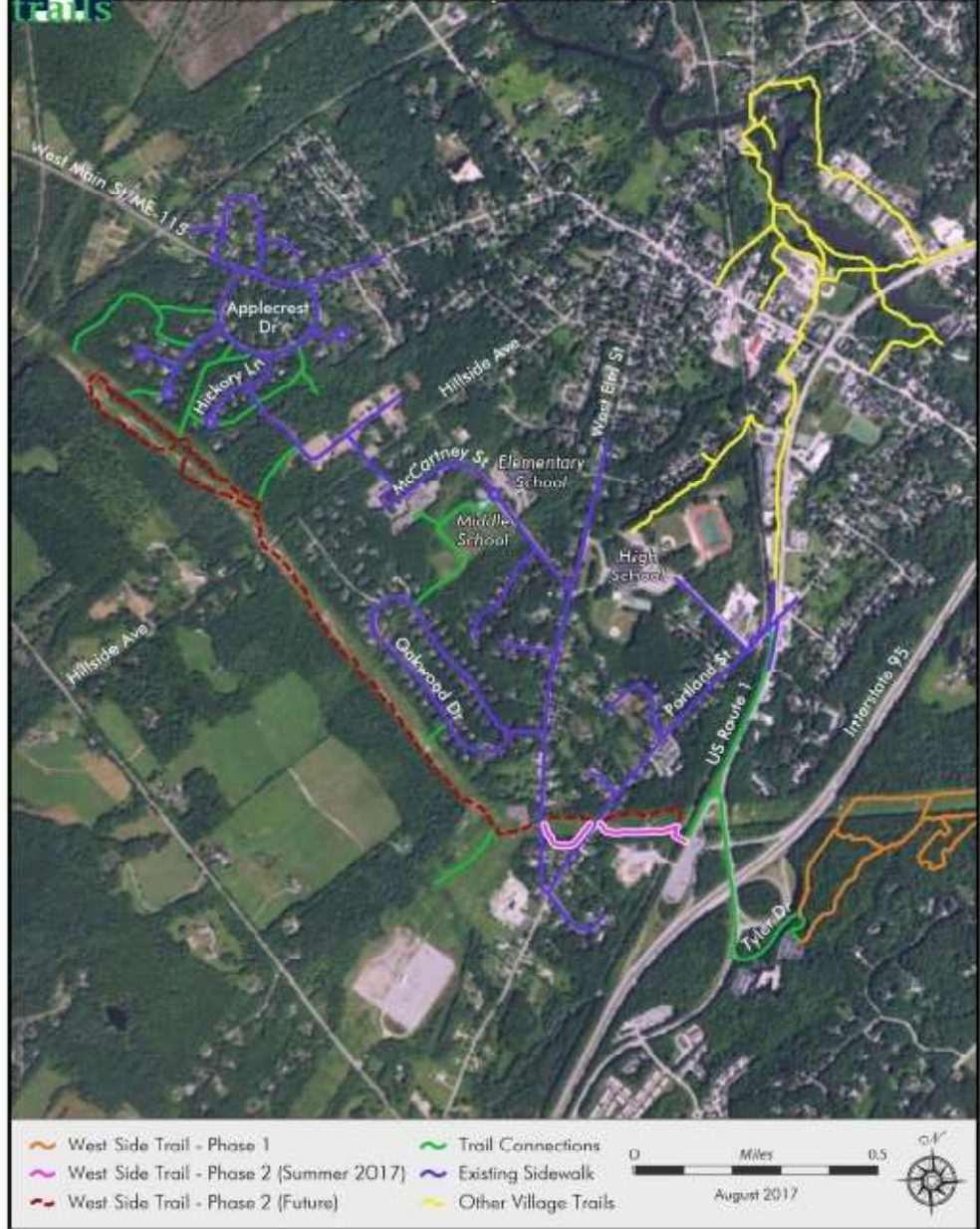
Yarmouth & Region Map 3: Royal & Pratt's (Freshwater)





Town of
Yarmouth

West Side Trail Phase 2



Map 6: Yarmouth Village



Environmental Analysis

Local Environmental Analysis

[This mapping is being prepared to coordinate with maps in previous section]

Open Space Recommendations

Goal 1 - Maintain and enhance current Town-owned lands.

Yarmouth's diverse portfolio of conservation lands and Village parks is incredibly valuable to residents and visitors alike. As a critical public asset, this network of properties must be protected and maintained over time.

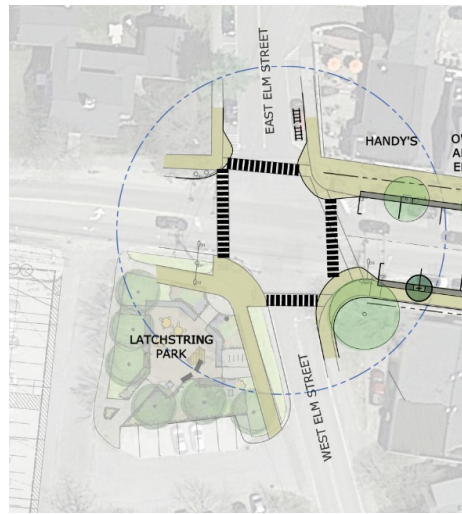
A. Increase attention to maintenance and amenities, especially for Open Space in the Village and Neighborhood properties, to make this network of Open Spaces reflect the best of Yarmouth's values and character.

Yarmouth's diverse portfolio of parks, open spaces, and trails has the potential to be even more of an asset for the community. In particular, Royal River Park is a rare downtown resource enjoyed by only a few communities in the state. As detailed in the Royal River Corridor Master Plan (2009), increased maintenance and landscaping will further enhance Royal River Park and other Village and Neighborhood Open Spaces.

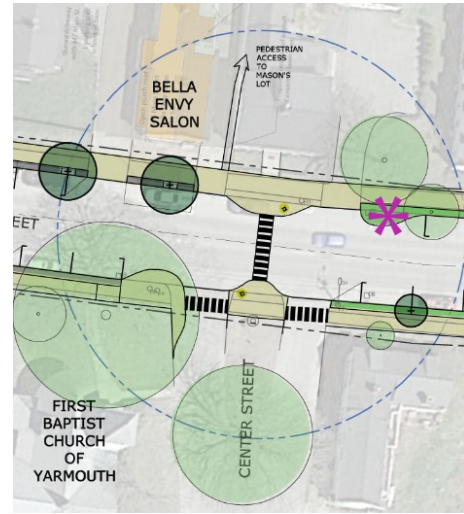
Because properties like Latchstring Park and Village Green Park, along with Memorial Green in front of the Town Offices and the green area around Merrill Memorial Library all front on Main Street, they are an integral part of the Village streetscape. These places are small; therefore even modest improvements will have outsized impacts on the quality of the Village.

1. Yarmouth should consider in-town Open Space improvements (upgraded signage, benches, landscaping, public art) that continue to improve the streetscape and street life on Main Street in order to attract people to Main Street and enhance the public experience in Yarmouth Village.
 - a. The new Route One bridge over Main Street serves as an inspiring example and focal point for such improvements.

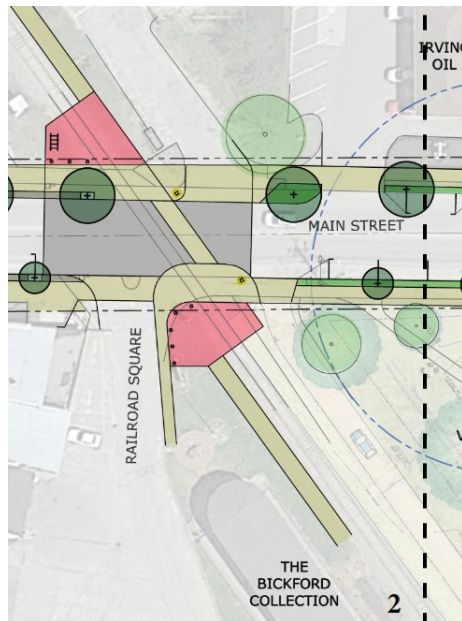
b. Recommendations from the Main Street Streetscape Plan (2019) include:



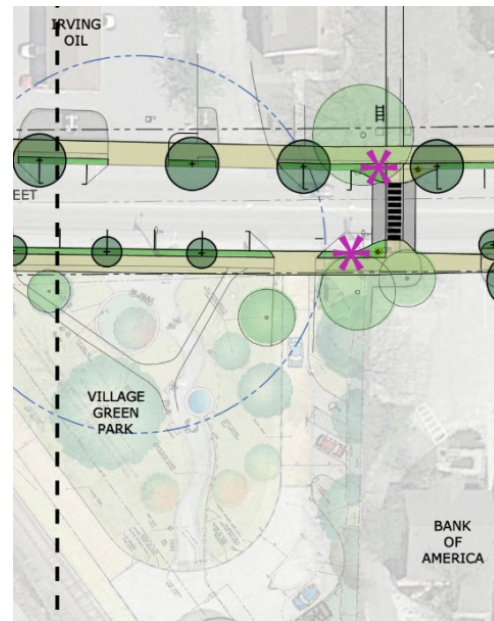
Latchstring Park



Center Street Island Park



Railroad Square/Yarmouth Crossing



Village Green

B. Update the Royal River Corridor Plan (2009) with a focus on amendments to:

1. Focus attention on the Royal River Corridor Master Plan (2009) to complete and update high priority recommendations, such as:
 - a. Maintain and enhance wooded buffers along the river and adjacent to trails,
 - b. Initiate a vegetation management program, which includes removing invasive species, additional plantings of native species, and adding visual interest to the Park/corridor,
 - c. Maintain, enhance, and create new trails and paths to improve access to Main Street and surrounding neighborhoods,
 - d. Coordinate the design of benches, lighting, signage, and other improvements for a common aesthetic for development both within and surrounding the corridor.
2. Extend the study area from the Harbor to the town line with North Yarmouth.

C. Draft and adopt Management Plans for all municipally owned Open Spaces that clarify appropriate uses for property in its current state, as well as a vision for potential uses in the future.

Management Plans do not need to be overly complex or lengthy documents, but they are critical in assisting the Town in maintaining properties as attractive assets in the community and in balancing user group needs.

1. Management Plans should list any deed restrictions or conservation easements on Open Space properties, identify management approaches and each property, and identify strategies for activity, natural resource management, maintenance, and development. Include user counts and user surveys as part of management plans to account for user needs and desires.
 - a. Review Management Plans on a regular basis, perhaps every 10 years, and update them to reflect changing community needs.
 - b. Current Management Plans, with year completed:
 - Fels-Groves Farm Preserve (2015)
 - Spear Farm Preserve (2016)
 - Tinker Preserve (2017)

- Pratts Brook (2017)
 - Riverfront Woods Interim (2019)
2. Establish a new standing committee or task an existing committee with drafting and reviewing management plans to work with Town staff in order to expedite the plan drafting process.



Andy Smith-Petersen: Yarmouth, ME

Goal 2 - Prioritize new acquisitions around values that have stood the test of time.

There are several recommendations for adding to Yarmouth's portfolio of public Open Spaces that appear again and again through all of Yarmouth's planning documents going back to the 1988 Public Access and Recreation Plan. These recommendations reoccur because they have maintained broad public support over time.

The Town should be prepared to react when opportunities for expanding the current portfolio when properties become available, as long as the values meet one or more of the following criteria.

A. Increase public access to the Royal River, Cousins River, and Casco Bay.

Access to these waters should include:

1. Additional hand carry boat launches,
2. New trail network development,
3. Visual access and passive enjoyment of these resources.



Josh Royte: Fels-Groves Work Day

B. Expand trail systems to connect open spaces.

This includes building out local and neighborhood connections to nearby Yarmouth Open Spaces in addition to working with towns in the region to provide greater opportunities for regional bike and multi-use trails. When connecting Open Spaces, give consideration to wildlife corridors and habitat blocks.

1. Local connections. Connecting neighborhoods to Open Space and Open Spaces to each other are important steps to improve Open Space access. This will also continue the transition from a collection of valued Open Spaces to an Open Space network that is integrated into the character of the community and the lives of Yarmouth residents.

- a. *Open Space access and recreation.* On-street connections as well as trails on easements or public land can create more opportunities for users to access spaces. New links to explore include connecting:
 - Brookside Drive and Bluff Road neighborhoods to the Yarmouth Community Garden and Frank Knight Forest.
 - Smith Street neighborhood through Riverside Cemetery and along the Royal River, to Whitecombs Creek, and across to Fels-Groves Farm Preserve.
 - St. Lawrence and Atlantic Rail Trail from Cleaves Street to Main Street, or extending from Cleaves Street to the Royal River/Yarmouth History Center on East Elm Street.

- b. *Access to businesses, services and other destinations.* The opportunity exists to create bike and pedestrian connections that would reduce the need to make car trips for day-to-day activities. Examples of these types of connections include connecting:
 - The Rogers Road/Rebecca Lane neighborhood to Forest Falls Drive and the Hannaford Plaza.
 - Extending the Beth Condon Pathway south from its current terminus to the Exit 15 Park and Ride.
 - Providing for either on-street or off-street connections from Princes Point to Yarmouth Village.

2. Regional connections. Connections to trails and Open Space beyond Yarmouth's town lines add to the environmental and recreational value of Yarmouth's Open Spaces and trails. Examples of these types of connections include:
 - a. Extending the Beth Condon Pathway north into Freeport, and the Casco Bay Regional YMCA.
 - b. Connecting the Beth Condon Pathway to the West Side Trail.
 - c. Continuing the West Side Trail work into Cumberland and North Yarmouth.
 - d. Creating a St. Lawrence and Atlantic Rail Trail from Yarmouth to Portland.

Protect significant natural views.

The 1988 PARC plan identified 26 places where there were important views, either of those places or from those places. In general, places where long views (1/4 mile or more) are available should be identified, and to the extent possible, prioritized.

1. Update the list of places with scenic values from the PARC Plan to reflect vistas compromised by development and to add new places with unique perspectives. Priority should be placed on:
 - a. Protecting views of fields, salt marshes, river corridors, Casco Bay, or other scenic resources from existing public properties and protecting new viewpoints where long or expansive views are accessible.

C. In more rural settings, prioritize the acquisition of properties close to existing Yarmouth or regional Open Spaces and those located in relatively unfragmented habitat blocks, and those that protect ecological systems of high value to the Town.

1. Open Spaces in the rural open space areas could benefit by expansion through adding adjacent land when it is available. Properties with a focus on conservation and preservation of rural landscapes and systems could benefit the most from acquisitions based on adjacency to enhance and preserve unfragmented blocks of natural lands.

D. In the Village and Neighborhood areas, prioritize the provision of smaller Open Spaces and connections to and between Open Spaces.

1. New or larger Open Space within walkable distances of homes and businesses will be most valuable in the Village and Neighborhood areas. These areas may enlarge existing Open Spaces or be stand alone “pocket parks” that serve an individual neighborhood.
2. Prioritize new trails and paths that connect neighborhoods and Open Spaces.

Goal 3 - Update Town Ordinances and Policies

A. Update subdivision and site plan ordinances to require the creation of public Open Spaces and connections as development occurs.

1. Conservation subdivisions: Prioritize preservation of a property’s most valuable natural features and including up to 50% of gross parcel area should be required in Rural Residential zoning districts.

2. Major Site Plans: Require the provision of public places, like pocket parks, small public sittings areas, and quasi-public entry areas/plazas, where appropriate. For example, this could mean a requirement to provide seating or other public amenities within a front setback that connects to a sidewalk in the Village.
3. Subdivision Ordinance: Require pedestrian connections to community facilities, abutting properties, and bicycle and pedestrian destinations that go beyond the existing wording, which states that “All developments shall be designed so as to be consistent with applicable master plans and facilities plans and, if and as applicable, to connect with off premises infrastructure including but not limited to public water, sewer and stormwater, street networks, trails, pedestrian and bicycle network, environmental management or other public facilities” (Section 601.Article 1.E.6, emphasis added).
 - a. Sidewalks, pedestrian ways, or paths should be required to connect to neighboring properties and any pedestrian destinations within a certain distance, even if they are not directly abutting properties, or to close gaps in connectivity. Such wording should be considered for the Site Plan Review Ordinance, as well.
4. Designate tree clearance or removal activities exceeding certain area thresholds as minor or major site plans, with standards for maintaining wooded buffers along property lines and maintaining wooded views from public streets, facilities, and Open Spaces.

B. Inventory and map the existing Open Spaces within subdivisions and incorporate these into the overall Open Space network.

1. Inventory all Open Space created or set aside through the development process with copies of easements or deed restrictions.
2. Track and add new Open Space to the inventory as development occurs.

C. Extend protections for existing Open Spaces, shoreland areas, and other sensitive lands.

1. Create a new Park/Open Space Zone or amend property deeds to add restrictions on use so today's Open Space properties remain as public Open Spaces that cannot be sold as surplus public property or used for other municipal purposes.
2. Update existing Shoreland Overlay, Resource Protection and Stream Protection districts to protect water quality and natural systems. This should include increased limits on tree removal and development options in these areas.



Kids and Dad Fishing, Yarmouth, ME

D. Adopt a municipal Open Space Acquisition Policy to guide future decision making for town staff and the Town Council when opportunities arise to acquire land or development rights.

1. This policy should be based in large part on the four values that have stood the test of time, listed above. It might also include guidance on the authority level required for properties of various sizes or values, so it is clear which types of acquisitions can happen at the discretion of the Town Council and which are subject to larger town processes or votes.

E. Incentivize preservation of privately owned lands.

1. Expand the use and awareness of Current Use Tax programs that provide property tax reductions for landowners who choose to enroll. These state programs require that land enrolled in these Open Space, Farmlands, and Tree Growth programs are maintained in their current state. The property tax reductions are sometimes enough to help landowners preserve their property from development.
2. A local property tax program for active agricultural operations is the Voluntary Municipal Farm Support Program (VMFSP). This program allows towns to reduce or rebate property taxes to as low as 0% in exchange for 20-year conservation easements on working agricultural

lands. This allows towns to gain medium-term protections on working lands without using their acquisition fund to buy development rights or to buy properties outright.

3. Yarmouth should consider an active program for the purchase of development rights, especially in partnership with 3rd party conservation organizations. This program might be funded through annual appropriations, occasional municipal borrowing, or through an impact fee on new development specifically for Open Space acquisition or a combination of these methods. Purchase of development rights costs less than purchase of the land and keeps the property in private ownership and use.

F. Explore local options for creating and leveraging additional funds for land acquisition. Options include:

1. Communicating with landowners regarding options for donating property and development rights in high-priority locations.
2. Annually funding a standing capital budget line item for Open Space acquisition, to be used for either through the purchase of property or the purchase of development rights, or in combination with other partner funding sources.
3. Developing an Open Space impact fee on new residential development. Impact fees can be used for capital costs associated with the provisioning of additional services required as a result of the new development.
4. Borrowing funds through local bonding authority. A local land acquisition bond was issued by the town in the 1990s as one of the implementation items from the 1988 PARC Plan.

Appendix A – Comprehensive Plan and Royal River Corridor Policies & Strategies

These two Plans were based on extensive public participation, including community forums and a survey of residents and business owners. The survey showed strong support for:

- Acquiring more Open Space and shorefront access and managing and improving the Open Space and conservation lands that the Town already has,
- Providing trails, sidewalks, and other connections in the Village between neighborhoods and Open Spaces in the Village, and
- Requiring developers to preserve portions of future developments as Open Space and stricter requirements for protecting wildlife habitats.

The survey also showed support for:

- Prioritizing managing and improving existing Open Space and lands over acquiring new Open Space,
- Improving parking and shorefront access at Town owned mooring sites and beaches,
- Protecting land along the Royal River north of East Elm Street, and
- Stricter requirements for protecting wetland areas.

Based on the public input, the Comprehensive Plan suggests four specific policies related to Open Space in Yarmouth, along with strategies for implementing those policies. The policies include:

- Rural Character and Open Space Policy G.1. New residential development in areas outside of the Village should be required to be designed and developed in a manner that preserves the remaining rural character to the extent practical.
- Rural Character and Open Space Policy G.2. Consider all elements of the Town's "green infrastructure" holistically.
- Rural Character and Open Space Policy G.3. Continue to selectively acquire additional land for public Open Space and conservation purposes.
- Rural Character and Open Space Policy G.4. Maintain and enhance the land that the Town currently owns for public Open Space and conservation purposes.

Appendix B – Current Open Space Inventory

Rural Areas and Regional Connections Town & Land Trust Properties

Open Space/Property Name	Year Acquired	Acres	Management or Ownership
Camp SOCI	2005	6	Town
Girl Scouts of Kennebec Council	2005		
Fels–Groves Farm Preserve*	2002	55	Town*
Maine Coast Heritage Trust to Town	2002	55	
Frank Knight Forest and Community Garden		86	Town
Evelyn M. Parks	2001	75	
David and Brenda Klenda	2018	11	
Lanes Island	2013	28.2	MCHT
Larrabee’s Landing		0.6	Town
Esther Alden Corson	1941		
Littlejohn Island Overlook		0.4	Town
Littlejohn Island Preserve	2006	26	RRCT
Littlejohn Town Dock		0.5	Town
Madeleine Point		0.1	Town
North Road Back Woods	2002	15	Town
Old Town Landing		0.5	Town
Pratt’s Brook Park		235.2	Town
Hamill	1991	41	
Whittemore #1	1991	34.5	
Apex Richards	1991	94	
Whittemore #2	1999	30.5	
Kelly	2000	29.3	
Gunnoe	2003	5.85	
Riverfront Woods Preserve*		47.6	Town*
Hilda L. Barker	2001	22.9	
Riverboat LLC	2019	26.7	
Royal River Town Landing		8	Town
Sandy Point Beach		3	Town
Sunset Point Overlook		0.2	Town

Sligo Road	2001	35	Town
Spear Farm Estuary Preserve*		50.87	Town*
From Trust for Public Land (Phase 1)*	2004	35	
Geoffrey R. Spear (Phase 2)*	2005	13	
Cattell (Phase 3)	2011	2.87	
Bayview Marsh	2004	9	RRCT
Sweetsir Farm Preserve		30	Town
Moulton/Oldfield Road Subdivision	1999		
Tinker Preserve*		15.4	Town*
Katherine P. Tinker / The Nature Conservancy	1970		
Transfer Station Salt Marshes		40	Town

*Town Properties with conservation easements. See inventory of Conservation Easements below for more information.

Village and Neighborhoods Town Properties

Open Space/Property Name	Year Acquired	Acres
Beth Condon Butterfly Garden		0.5
Gendall Memorial		0.1
Gravel Pit/Village Run		6.9
Sligo Road Associates LLC	2017	
Grist Mill Lane Field	1981	4
N.E. Construction, Inc.	1984	
Grist Mill Park		0.5
F.M. Beck, Inc.	1986	
Latchstring Park		0.08
Malar, Inc.	1989	
McKearney Village Open Spaces		
	2013	
Memorial Green/Town Office		1
Merrill Memorial Library Lawn Area		0.3
Royal River Park		22
Village Green/Railroad Park		1.2

Regional Trails and Water Trails

Trail Name	Length	Oversight
Beth Condon Pathway	1.7 Miles	Town
Maine Island Trail	375 Miles	Maine Island Trail Association (MITA)
Royal River Water Trail	26 Miles	RRCT
West Side Trail	9 Miles	Town

Inventory of Conservation Easements

Protected Space Name	Date	Acres	Owner	Easement Holder	Public Access
Fels-Groves Farm Preserve	2002	54	Town	RRCT	YES
Fels-Groves Private Land	2002	9	Private	RRCT	NO
Gooch Island	2007	1	Town	RRCT	YES
Greely Road #77		61	Private	RRCT	NO
Phase 1	1995	54			
Phase 2	2004	7			
McCartney Street Wetlands	1991	27	Town	RRCT	YES
Morton Road #35	2002	1	Private	RRCT	NO
Old Town Landing Adjacency	2002	10	Private	RRCT	NO
Riverfront Woods		48	Town	RRCT	YES
Barker Parcel	2010	22			
Dugas Parcel	2019	19			
Open Space Lot	2019	7			
Spear Farm Estuary Preserve			Town	RRCT	YES
Phase 1	2004	30			
Phase 2	2005	13			
Wyman Station Wetlands	1991	3			
Tinker Preserve	1997 0	15.4			

Appendix C – Open Space Partners and Resources

Stakeholders and Community Partners

Maine Land Trust Network
Royal River Conservation Trust
Maine Coast Heritage
Gulf of Maine Climate Network
The Nature Conservancy
Beginning with Habitat

Funding Resources

Maine Land Trust Network
<https://www.mltm.org/resources/funding/>

Royal River Conservation Trust
<https://rrct.org/donate/saving-land/>

General Resources and Continued Reading

Maine Coast Heritage - First Year Management Plan Guide <https://mltn.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/appendix-c-1st-yr-management-plan.doc>

Criteria and Public Benefits Checklist <https://www.mltm.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/mcht-guiding-principles-and-land-protection-criteria-2016-10-30.pdf>

Master Project Checklist for conservation projects
<https://www.mltm.org/resources/publications/master-project-checklist/>

Gulf of Maine Climate Network
<http://www.gulfofmaine.org/2/climate-network-community-toolkit/>

The Nature Conservancy Data & Tools <https://www.nature.org/en-us/what-we-do/our-insights/data-and-tools/>

Maine Coast Heritage Trust
<https://mcht.org/conservation-work/land-trust-program>

Beginning with Habitat
https://www.beginningwithhabitat.org/toolbox/about_toolbox.html