

Burlington Conservation Board

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To: City Council
From: Scott Gustin, Senior Planner
Date: March 11, 2013
Re: Open Space Protection Plan Update

Introduction

The process to update the City's Open Space Protection Plan is well under way. At this point, outreach meetings have been held with each one of the City's Neighborhood Planning Assemblies, Planning Commission, Parks & Recreation Commission, Conservation Board, and local environmental groups. A dedicated online public input tool has also been created and has provided a venue for a myriad of comments on the Plan update. This communication to the City Council is informative only; no action is requested or required. If the Council would like a future presentation on our preliminary findings, we would be happy to provide one.

Purpose

The city's present Open Space Protection Plan was adopted in October 2000. The purpose of this effort is to bring the Plan up to date. The update will reflect changes in land use, land development, conservation, regulations, and planning policies that have occurred since 2000. It will also set forth new goals and objectives in pursuit of future open space protection in the city. This process is a joint effort between the Departments of Planning & Zoning and Parks & Recreation.

Scope of Update Work

The update of the Open Space Protection Plan will not be a wholesale replacement of the current Plan. Rather, it will build upon the foundation of the existing plan to bring goals and objectives up to date and to incorporate new goals and objectives reflecting current and potential uses of open space. Specific items include the following:

- Update of open space lands map (analysis of 2000 vs. current aerial imagery)
- Delineation of existing pocket parks and opportunities for additional ones
- Delineation of formal and informal trails
- Delineation of lands conserved with Conservation Legacy Fund
- Delineation of existing and potential urban agricultural sites & community gardens
- Delineation of wildlife corridors
- Incorporation of low impact development guidelines for stormwater management
- Assessment of public access to the City's natural areas

Preliminary Input Received

Through the various forums provided thus far, public input has generally fallen into several main categories. About half of the comments received so far have related to management of existing public lands. Suggestions for acquisition of additional parklands have been popular as have comments related to public access to the waterfront and bike path improvements. A few comments have been received on wildlife corridors, rain gardens, green roofs, and public views.

Next Steps

The open space inventory will be updated to reflect changes that have taken place since the original inventory was developed in 2000. With the first round of public outreach completed, input received will be distilled into specific findings to use as the basis for updated goals and objectives to be articulated within the updated Open Space Protection Plan. These preliminary findings will be presented to the public, City boards and commissions, and other stakeholders in the spring of 2013. Comments received will be used to further improve these findings prior to putting together the final draft of the updated Plan. Final findings will be presented to the Council in June 2013. Adoption of the updated Open Space Protection Plan is anticipated in July 2013.