



ASHLAND OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION COMMITTEE CONCEPT SCOPE FOR DLTA

March 7, 2014

PROJECT OVERVIEW, EXPECTED PRODUCT AND TIMELINE:

The Ashland Open Space and Recreation Committee (OSRC) is submitting this request for \$25,000 for assistance in completing an update of the town's current, state-approved Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) which expires on November 30, 2014.

PROJECT NEED AND CONNECTION TO LOCAL, REGIONAL AND STATE GOALS:

The OSRP is an opportunity to protect open space, manage future land use, preserve the unique and historical character of the community, and manage aspects of growth and development that can profoundly affect the environment. The importance of the OSRP to the town cannot be overstated. The OSRP will:

- Help the town manage growth and economic development, while preserving, protecting and enhancing the environment.
- Make recommendations regarding land use, the environment, historic preservation and development.
- Serve as a public statement of the town's goals and as a blueprint to guide future policies and community efforts.
- Provide an opportunity for the Town to receive state grant monies to assist with land acquisitions.
- Help the town avoid costly development mistakes.
- Assist the town in making land use decisions that keep the town affordable, do not stress the infrastructure and town services, and provide a direct fiscal benefit to the town by controlling property taxes.

The OSRP identifies the opportunities and challenges that Ashland faces in trying to meet its growing needs while outlining the goals, objectives and actions necessary to protect and enhance the town's open spaces and recreational amenities.

The relevant goals of the current plan are to:

- Preserve, protect, connect and enhance Ashland's conservation and natural land resources.
- Provide, maintain and improve diverse recreation opportunities that meet the needs of Ashland's growing population.
- Preserve and improve the quality, character, and health of Ashland's community and environmental resources by remediating degraded lands, protecting common resources, and preserving the cultural heritage.

Technically, the OSRP is a way for the Town of Ashland to accomplish all of these local goals. However, the OSRP is much more – it's a proactive way for the residents to safeguard those aspects of Ashland that are important to them.

Further, an update of the OSRP addresses the goal of the MetroWest Regional Open Space Connectivity Plan, a collaborative effort among the MetroWest Regional Collaborative, the Metropolitan Area Planning Council and nine member communities, to link open space and trails among the member communities. An updated plan will identify open space parcels, greenway networks and corridors that can be linked to those in contiguous communities as well as identify potential opportunities to develop multi-use trails which appeal to the business community and residents alike.

**Ashland
Open Space
Committee**
Roberta Soolman,
Chairperson
William Child
Mark Juitt
Martin Ring
Beth Rosenblum
Judith Sallet
Cindy Shields
Jeanne Walker
Greg Wands



Finally, the update addresses several of the state's goals identified in MetroFuture, specifically:

- A globally-competitive economy driven by positioning Ashland as a “recreation and tourism destination” through enhanced open space and recreation opportunities.
- Growth in the region guided by informed, inclusive and pro-active planning that will enhance the region's character and livability.
- Preservation of the uniqueness of the community, quality of life and historic resources.
- Providing commuters and others an opportunity to walk or bike.

LOCAL PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN PLANNING PROCESS:

Throughout the planning process, the OSRC went to extraordinary efforts to engage and inform the residents of Ashland, elected officials, appointed committees and commissions and town staff, and plans to do so again in preparing the update.

- Use of the committee's own website (www.ashlandopenspace.org) to keep the public informed about the planning process, invite input and post all activities, including monthly meetings, public forums and surveys.
- Multiple public forums to solicit input from the public as the plan is updated.
- A town-wide, online Open Space and Recreation Survey, including a special survey to school youth.
- Formal presentations to local officials, community groups, businesses, schools, senior center, and housing authority residents.
- Participation in town-wide events such as Ashland Day and Green-Up Ashland Day.
- Display of documents, maps and drafts at the public library to collect public comment.
- Media articles and use of cable TV.
- Email updates to the OSRC mailing list.

MUNICIPAL COMMITMENT:

The public and public officials were truly and enthusiastically involved in the creation of the current OSRP. As an officially appointed town committee, the 9-member OSRC is fully committed to begin immediately and dedicate all the necessary volunteer hours to complete the project on time. The OSRC estimates an average of 5 hours per week per member for an estimated 32 weeks, totaling approximately 1,280 hours of volunteer time. This figure does not include volunteer hours contributed to the project by other town committees or town staff. The Town Manager has reviewed and supports this DLTA request and will provide any assistance requested.

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CONCLUSION:

In the absence of planning, what is uniquely Ashland, the character of the town, the lifestyle of the residents, the quality of life and precious natural resources could be unintentionally or unknowingly altered or irreparably damaged in a short period of time, changing the future for the residents, their children and those who come after them.

We, the residents of Ashland, are responsible for protecting all the assets of the town. Our stewardship, while we live in town, will ultimately determine whether or not we collectively make Ashland a better place to live and leave it a better place for future generations. The OSRP will be our touchstone.