

# TOWN OF WINDSOR, CONNECTICUT

## Special Meeting Notice



**AGENCY:** Town Improvements Committee

**DATE:** February 6, 2019

**TIME:** 6:00 PM

**PLACE:** Town Hall – Ludlow Room

### AGENDA

1. Call to Order
2. Public Comment
3. \*Review of Mill Brook Open Space Report and Land Management Plan
4. Staff Reports
5. Approval of Minutes
  - a) \*January 22, 2019
6. Adjournment


\*Backup materials

Public Act 75-312 requires notice of Special Meetings to be posted in the Town Clerk's Office not less than 24 hours prior to the time of such meeting. No other business shall be considered at this meeting than that listed on this Agenda.

## Agenda Item Summary

Date: January 22, 2018

To: Members of the Town Improvements Committee

Prepared By: Peter Souza, Town Manager 

Subject: Mill Brook Open Space Report and Land Management Plan

### Background

In December the Mill Brook Open Space Report and Land Management Plan was presented to the Town Council. The report and plan was developed over the course of the summer and fall by the volunteer steering committee. The committee held two public open houses, or tours, of the property in addition to conducting an on-line survey to gather input and ideas from the community. The committee met nine times and held a final public information meeting on November 8<sup>th</sup> to review the draft plan.

Attached is the committee's full report, an executive summary, as well as a summary table of the recommended action steps included in the report.

### Discussion/Analysis

The Mill Brook Open Space Steering Committee was charged with developing a recommended land management plan for the Mill Brook open space property. After a robust public input process, the committee developed the following recommended mission, vision, guiding principles and objectives/strategies.

**MISSION:** To preserve and enhance the Mill Brook open space with diverse wildlife habitats, while connecting residents and visitors to nature through passive recreation and education.

**VISION:** The Mill Brook open space will become an open space park that complements existing parks and trails and is readily accessible for passive recreation and environmental education in harmony with the natural environment.

### **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

**Land Management:** Maintain a diverse open space that protects and enhances environmental resources, natural habitats, and features while providing passive recreational opportunities.

**Trails:** Provide a safe, accessible system of trails that offers diverse outdoor experiences within a variety of habitats and landscapes, accessing significant views and features, and connecting to Windsor Center and the surrounding neighborhoods.

**Habitat:** Foster a diversity of habitats composed of wildflower and grass meadows, successional forests, established forests, and wetlands to support a diversity of wildlife.

**Activities:** Provide outdoor educational opportunities and a range of year-round passive recreation activities such as walking, hiking, biking, picnicking, bird/wildlife watching, sledding, and cross-country skiing.

Building Reuse: Priority should be given to uses that are compatible with or enhance the use of the open space while maintaining public access.

The report also includes a number of suggested action steps under each of the guiding principles.

Financial Impact

The town's adopted Capital Improvements Program allocates \$400,000 in FY 19 borrowing for various improvements to the property and buildings. Below are preliminary cost estimates based on the recommended plan:

Trail Renovation and Development	\$ 135,000
Bridge Repairs and Renovation	\$ 95,000
Building Repairs (HVAC, Doors, Windows)	\$ 40,000
Storm Drainage Design and/or Materials	\$ 25,000
Fence and Gateway Improvements	\$ 20,000
Habitat Management Plan and Equipment	\$ 20,000
Contingency and Bond Issuance Cost	\$ 65,000
Preliminary Estimated Total	\$ 400,000

Other Board Action

None at this time.

Recommendations

The plan is presented to the Town Improvements Committee for review and discussion with the goal to report back to the full Town Council for consideration and approval. It is desired that guidance / direction be provided relative to the recommended action steps.

Attachments

- Executive Summary
- Recommended Action Steps
- Mill Brook Open Space Report and Land Management Plan

# Executive Summary

## Mill Brook Open Space Report and Land Management Plan

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The following is a summary of the findings of the Mill Brook Open Space Steering Committee charged with developing a recommended land management plan for the Mill Brook open space property. After numerous public meetings, two open houses and a community survey, the committee developed the following mission, vision, guiding principles and objectives/strategies.

#### MISSION

To preserve and enhance the Mill Brook open space with diverse wildlife habitats, while connecting residents and visitors to nature through passive recreation and education.

#### VISION

The Mill Brook open space will become an open space park that complements existing parks and trails and is readily accessible for passive recreation and environmental education in harmony with the natural environment.

#### GUIDING PRINCIPLES

##### Land Management

Maintain a diverse open space that protects and enhances environmental resources, natural habitats, and features while providing passive recreational opportunities.

- Preserve and enhance significant environmental features including wetlands, woodlands, meadows, and water features that support wildlife.
- Develop buffers to create separation from natural and urban areas.
- Balance the desire for public access with the preservation of environmentally sensitive areas.
- Maintain natural areas and open space for passive recreational opportunities.
- Develop land management programs that are economically feasible, provide access for the community, and are beneficial for wildlife.

##### Trails

Provide a safe, accessible system of trails that offers diverse outdoor experiences within a variety of habitats and landscapes, accessing significant views and features, and connecting to Windsor Center and the surrounding neighborhoods.

- Encourage recreation for all ages and abilities.
- Provide access for a range of passive recreation activities.
- Accommodate multiple uses and varied degrees of difficulty of the trail system.
- Control access to provide privacy and limit trespassing through abutting properties.
- Remove redundant and dead-end trails, creating larger contiguous habitats free from human intrusion.

## Trails (continued)

- Develop trail maintenance programs that are economically feasible.
- Provide a variety of trail surfaces and experiences.
- Provide a pedestrian linkage to Windsor Center.
- Provide maps and way finding signs (if permitted by the conservation easement).
- Provide site furnishings such as benches, bike racks, dog waste stations, and trash containers.

## Habitat

Foster a diversity of habitats composed of wildflower and grass meadows, successional forests, established forests, and wetlands to support a diversity of wildlife.

- Promote connectivity, biodiversity, and conservation of the Mill Brook open space habitats.
- Identify and conserve wildlife habitat including nesting sites, foraging areas, and migration corridors within the open space and the Mill Brook corridor.
- Protect critical areas and control access around the Mill Brook, ponds, and wetlands.
- Develop a system of trails that protect plant and animal habitats and provides large contiguous habitats.
- Foster native plant communities and remove or control the spread of invasive species where necessary.
- Develop annual and long-term maintenance regimes to accommodate breeding/nesting times and maintain the diversity of habitats.

## Activities

Provide outdoor educational opportunities and a range of year-round passive recreation activities such as walking, hiking, biking, picnicking, bird/wildlife watching, sledding, and cross-country skiing.

- Where appropriate promote a variety of uses within the trail system.
- Provide opportunities for four seasons of activity.
- Provide a range of activities for residents and visitors of all ages and abilities.
- Use interpretative materials to educate residents and visitors on features such as native species and habitats.

## Building Reuse

Priority should be given to uses that are compatible with or enhance the use of the open space while maintaining public access.

- Protect access to the open space from both Pigeon Hill Road and Mack Street.
- Building uses should be compatible with or enhance the use of the open space.
- Generate revenue to offset building and open space maintenance costs.
- Explore possible partnerships for non-profit uses that could provide stewardship.

# Recommended Action Steps

## Mill Brook Open Space Report

### RECOMMENDED ACTION STEPS – Dec. 2018

#### Habitat

Action	Lead	Priority
1. Inventory and assess various habitats	Planning / Design Services	High
2. Evaluate the Mill Brook riparian zone and develop a prioritized action plan to stabilize and maintain the brook.	Planning / Design Services / Public Works	Medium

#### Land Management

Action	Lead	Priority
1. Develop multi-year maintenance operation plan.	Public Works	High
2. Develop a prioritized action plan to stabilize and maintain the Mill Brook.	Design Services / Public Works	High
3. Complete analysis of mowing option including town crews versus outsourcing.	Public Works	High

#### Trail System & Access

Action	Lead	Priority
1. Pursue funding to develop 3.2 miles of trails.	Recreation & Leisure	High
2. Fund bridge design and rehabilitation.	Town Council	High
3. Evaluate alternative pedestrian access options at 72 Mack Street.	Planning / Design Services	High
4. Renovate and construct trails	Design Services / Public Works	High
5. Design and reconstruct Pigeon Hill Road Gateway or entrance.	Planning / Design Services / Public Works	Medium

#### Building Facilities

Action	Lead	Priority
1. Fund partial replacement of HVAC system at clubhouse and maintenance garage.	Buildings & Facilities / Town Council	High
2. Fund partial replacement of doors and windows at clubhouse.	Buildings & Facilities / Town Council	High
3. Complete evaluation of options to reutilize the 72 Mack Street house.	Planning / Design Services	High
4. Develop Request for Proposal process for leasing of clubhouse building to compare cost benefit versus a town operated event venue.	Design Services / Buildings & Facilities	High
5. Repave clubhouse parking lot.	Design Services / Public Works	Medium
6. Replace privacy fencing along clubhouse property line.	Buildings & Facilities / Public Works	Medium



Mill Brook Open  
Space Report and  
Land Management  
Plan

## Mill Brook Open Space Report and Land Management Plan

A decade ago, the Windsor Land Trust noted that three large contiguous parcels were for sale on Pigeon Hill Road and approached the town with the concept of creating a Mill Brook Open Space Corridor. Through transfers of development rights and purchases, the town and state acquired those and other parcels in the corridor totaling almost 80 acres of open space, much of it contiguous to the ten-acre Trent Drive Park. When plans to develop a portion of the golf course as condominiums fell through and the course closed with little prospect of reopening, the property was identified as desirable public open space in the 2015 Plan of Conservation and Development, due in part to its proximity to Windsor Center and location in the Mill Brook Corridor.

In 2016, The Trust for Public Land (TPL) was engaged to negotiate the purchase and help secure both funding and public support for the purchase. The town and TPL sought an Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition grant for up to 60 percent of the negotiated \$2.1 million price and was awarded \$1,086,000. A special town meeting was held to purchase the property, with the balance of the funds coming from the Open Space Fund and General Fund Reserve, which was unanimously approved by over 100 residents in attendance.

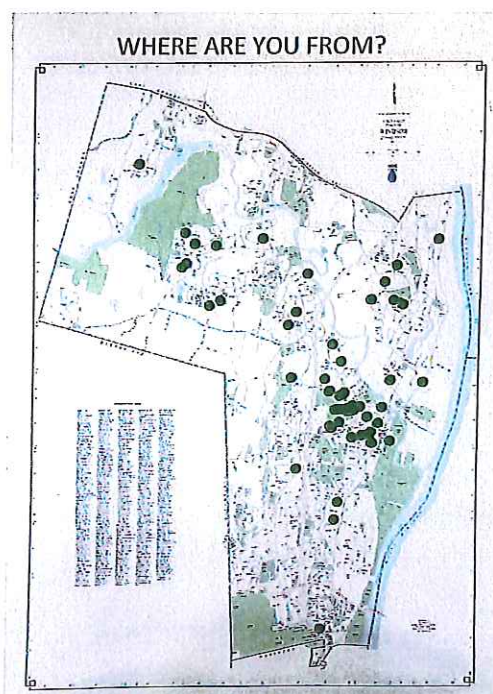
### Public Participation

To guide the planning process following the purchase, the Town Council solicited interested citizens and commission members to serve on the Mill Brook Open Space Steering Committee, appointing Hilary Carpenter (at-large), Steven Fraysier (Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Commission), Margaret Harvey (Town Planning and Zoning Commission), Nigel Pepin (Conservation Commission), and Aaron Szotka (at-large) to serve on the committee. The steering committee held an initial site walk, nine meetings, and invited the public in attendance to participate in their deliberations, which culminated in the presentation of this report. The committee also held a public informational meeting on Nov 8<sup>th</sup> to present the preliminary plan.

### Public Workshops

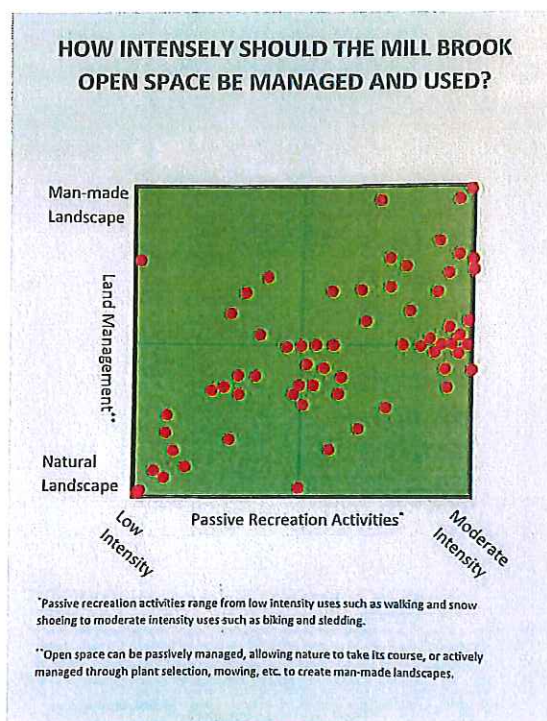
In addition to the committee meetings, the steering committee held two evening open houses at the property, attracting an estimated 90-100 residents to walk the property and participate in several workshop exercises designed to solicit feedback on the potential use and maintenance of the property, as well as the disposition and/or future use of the clubhouse and house at 72 Mack Street. Open house participants were asked to identify where they lived and the results reflected a strong contingent from the surrounding area as well as a number of residents coming from across Windsor, indicating much broader interest.

After explaining limitations on the use of the property and showing them examples of different trails and landscapes, attendees were asked to



simultaneously plot their preferences for the intensity of passive recreation use, ranging from walking and bird watching to sledding and disc golf, and the level of landscape management, ranging from letting nature take its course to a highly managed man-made landscape, on the X and Y-axes of a scatter diagram.

Applying a scale of zero to ten to each axis and calculating the mean and median scores, the collective preference for the level of passive use (a mean of 5.8 and median of 5.9) indicates that residents want a balance of uses beyond simply walking but not as intense as perhaps mountain biking and disc golf. Similarly, the desired level of landscape management (a mean of 4.3 and median of 4.4) indicate that the preferred level of management is a balance between a natural and manmade landscape, leaning towards natural.

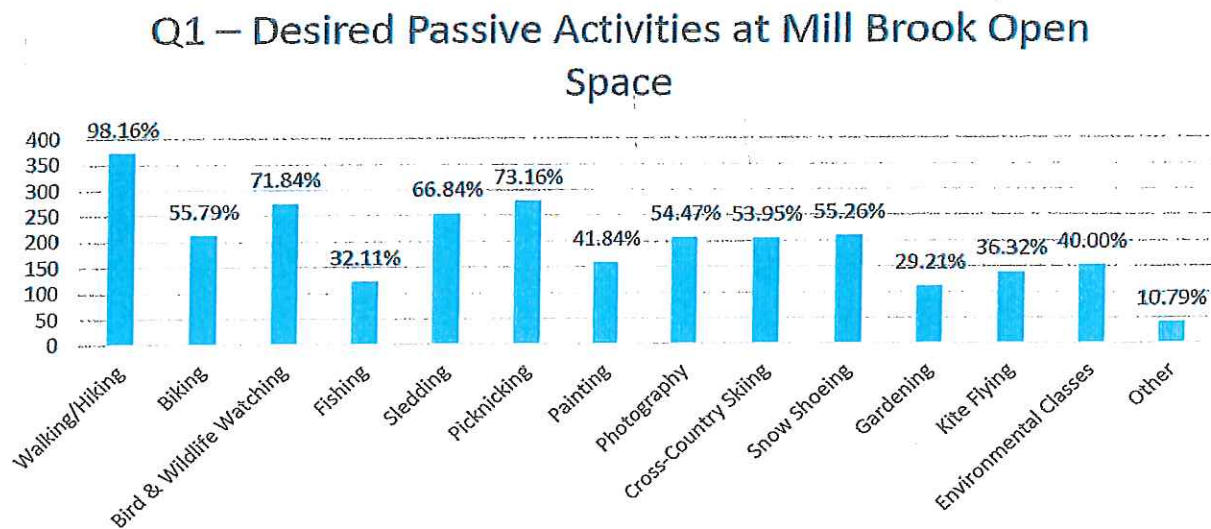


The two remaining exercises presented attendees with the open-ended question, “What do you think?” allowing them to write on a scripting pad or place a post-it note on a map of the property. These comments were combined with similar results from a community survey and presented in the appendix.

#### Public Survey

The steering committee also published an on-line community survey from August 31 to September 20, receiving 417 responses that confirmed many of the findings of the open houses, helping the steering committee focus their efforts. The full survey and its responses are provided in the appendix.

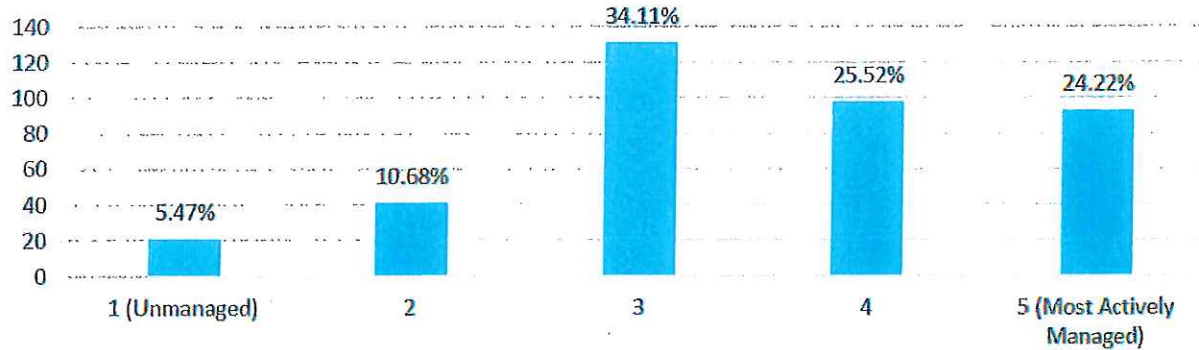
When asked to choose all of the passive uses that they thought were appropriate for the property, survey respondents gave the results illustrated below.



When asked to give their top three priorities, walking/hiking was the overwhelming consensus (77%) over biking (7%) and bird/wildlife watching (5%).

The desired level of landscape management from the survey leaned heavily towards an actively managed or manmade landscape compared to open house attendees, with nearly 50% leaning towards actively managed.

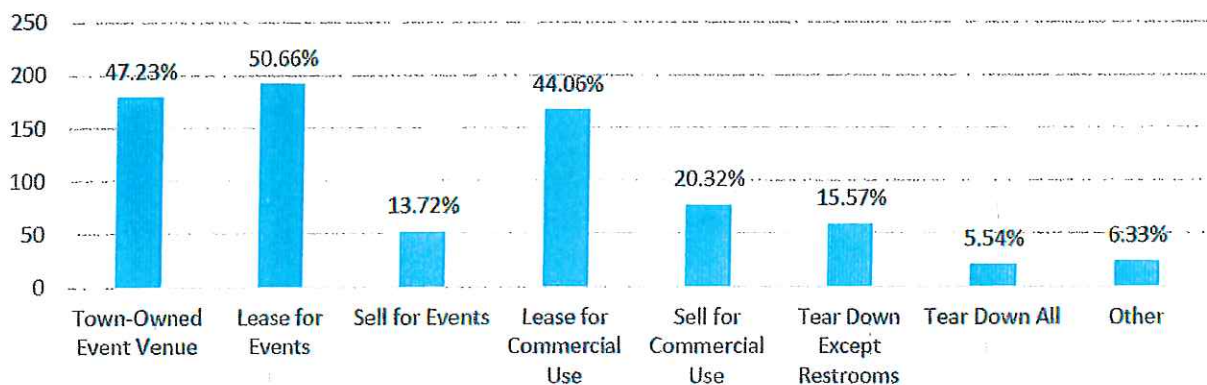
### Q3 – Desired Level of Management



Fifty-seven percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed there should be an area(s) managed as a commons, such as a lawn or green, and there was only mild interest in formal garden(s), such as an arboretum or rose garden.

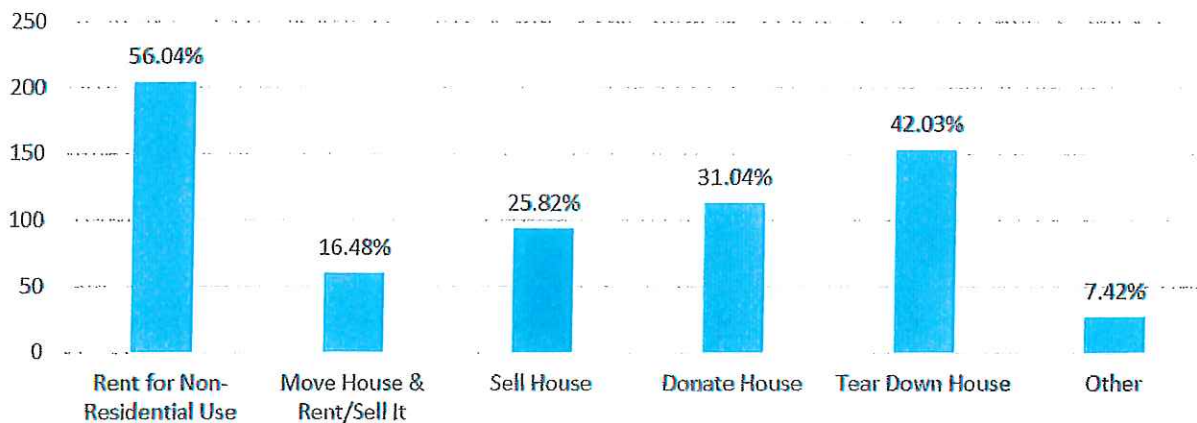
When asked about the disposition/future use of the former golf clubhouse, there was little support for either selling or tearing down the clubhouse as a whole, or in part. A town-owned or leased event venue is the most desirable use, followed by leasing or selling it for commercial use, such as a restaurant or garden center.

### Q6 – Desired Clubhouse Use



The previous owner acquired 72 Mack Street to preserve a secondary road access to the golf course for future residential development. It was included in the open space purchase to provide pedestrian access from Windsor Center but the disposition of the small two-story colonial house and garage remains in question. When asked about the future disposition/use of this house, respondents preferred renting the house for non-residential use, followed by tearing it down or donating it to a charity.

## Q9 – Preferred Mack Rd House Use



### MISSION, VISION & GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The results of these open houses, community survey, and other public input were used to develop an overall mission and vision for the future of the Mill Brook open space and a create a set of guiding principles and action steps for transforming the former golf course.

#### MISSION

To preserve and enhance the Mill Brook open space with diverse wildlife habitats, while connecting residents and visitors to nature through passive recreation and education.

#### VISION

The Mill Brook open space will become an open space park that complements existing parks and trails and is readily accessible for passive recreation and environmental education in harmony with the natural environment.

#### GUIDING PRINCIPLES

##### *Land Management*

Maintain a diverse open space that protects and enhances environmental resources, natural habitats, and features while providing passive recreational opportunities.

- Preserve and enhance significant environmental features including wetlands, woodlands, meadows, and water features that support wildlife.
- Develop buffers to create separation from natural and urban areas.
- Balance the desire for public access with the preservation of environmentally sensitive areas.
- Maintain natural areas and open space for passive recreational opportunities.
- Develop land management programs that are economically feasible, provide access for the community, and are beneficial for wildlife.

Areas of the parcel will be managed to varying degrees to provide diversity in the wildlife habitat and visitor experience, including informal lawns, meadows, succession forest, and perhaps community and/or formal gardens. Land management, trail locations, and wildlife habitat go hand in hand. In order to

balance public access and protecting/enhancing the environment, the steering committee examined a series of maps covering vegetative cover, wetlands, floodplain, topography, and aerial photography to identify trail locations and landscape management areas that best achieve the above objectives.

Areas identified as forest on the Land Management Areas map (see next page) are existing mature forests and adjacent fairways and greens that will be allowed to continue the process of forest succession (described below) that started when the golf course ceased operation and maintenance. They serve to provide habitat for existing forest and succession forest species and buffers against both I-91 and abutting residential neighbors. The committee tried to make these areas as large and contiguous as practical.

The second largest landscape management area is meadow, where the current process of forest succession will be arrested through brush hogging and infrequent mowing to maintain grassland and wildflower meadows. Again, the steering committee attempted to create as large and unbroken meadows as possible while maintaining a reasonable trail network. In several instances, the committee chose meadows as a means of preserving open vistas while avoiding the more intensive maintenance of informal lawn.

Informal lawns make up the third largest land management area, providing open vistas, the sense of an informal commons, and a varied user experience. Unlike meadows, informal lawns will be mowed more frequently, though not to the degree of a manicured lawn, like the town green. (1 x per ~ 21 days) Fertilizers, pesticides and other chemicals will not likely be used, allowing common lawn weeds to flourish between mowing.

Mill Brook areas identified on the Land Management Areas map refer to the riparian zone that includes and buffers the Mill Brook. This management area requires balancing the restoration and protection of bridge crossings and protecting a fragile ecosystem that is host to wetland and wetland dependent species that cannot survive elsewhere. Management will include stabilizing, and where necessary, armoring eroding slopes, by planting wetland and wet footed species to hold the soil in place and stone rip rap for the most impacted slopes. Riparian zones include several ponds as well, which will not receive maintenance beyond possible efforts to maintain public access to limited areas of shoreline and manage algae and invasive species in the most visible ponds.

### Land Management Action Steps

Action	Lead	Priority
1. Develop multi-year maintenance operation plan.	Public Works	High
2. Develop a prioritized action plan to stabilize and maintain the Mill Brook.	Design Services / Public Works	High
3. Complete analysis of mowing option including town crews versus outsourcing.	Public Works	High

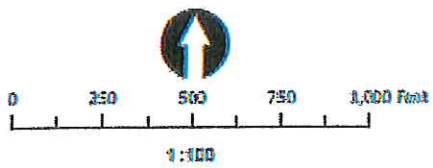
### Habitat

Foster a diversity of habitats composed of wildflower and grass meadows, successional forests, established forests, and wetlands to support a diversity of wildlife.

- Identify and conserve wildlife habitat including nesting sites, foraging areas, and migration corridors within the open space and the Mill Brook corridor.
- Promote connectivity, biodiversity, and conservation of the Mill Brook open space habitats.
- Protect critical areas and control access around the Mill Brook, ponds, and wetlands.

# MILL BROOK OPEN SPACE

## Land Management Areas



Data: 2015 MDC Database



*Habitat (continued)*

- Develop a system of trails that protect plant and animal habitats and provides large contiguous habitats.
- Foster native plant communities and remove or control invasive species where necessary.
- Develop annual and long-term maintenance regimes to accommodate breeding/nesting times and maintain the diversity of habitats.

As a land use, golf courses are environmentally unfriendly, requiring intensive maintenance and application of lawn chemicals to maintain a groomed monoculture of grass lawns. In the eight years since the golf course closed and regular maintenance ceased, nature has begun to reclaim the fairways and greens as meadows and early succession forest with no intervention from man beyond neighbors mowing areas around the perimeter.

Unfortunately, nature has been indiscriminate in the plant species carried by animals, wind, and water to colonize the property and invasive species are present that can take advantage of this young landscape and outcompete native non-invasive species going forward. Bittersweet, Russian Olive, Purple Loosestrife, Japanese Knotweed, Phragmites, several species of Honeysuckle, and other invasive plants outcompete native non-invasive species through prolific seeding, suckering, and growth; as well as their ability to adapt to harsh conditions.

As part of creating and maintaining the meadows, riparian zone, succession forest, and established woodlands described under Land Management, we need to remove these invasive species if feasible or at least contain them over time. In doing so, we ensure that native species can create a diverse and healthy landscape that provides a wide variety of forage and habitat for the amphibians, birds, fish, mammals, reptiles and insect that will inhabit the different land management areas.

The easiest land management areas to manage from a habitat standpoint are the existing woodlands, which are a mature forest of hardwoods requiring minimal maintenance other than removal of fallen debris from trails and potentially hazardous limbs and trees. These will continue to host birds, mammals of all sizes, and various reptiles and amphibians.

Succession forest are areas that are in transition from meadows to mature forest and are typically colonized by pioneer plants, which are fast growing, easily dispersed trees and shrubs that are tolerant of harsh conditions such as poor soils, wet conditions, and full sunlight. Many of the pioneer species are invasive; best suited to cope with the relatively harsh conditions and will need to be managed through their removal or containment to avoid monocultures that serve a limited diversity of other species.



Succession Forest



Mature Forest



Beneficial, native, pioneer species provide the leaf litter, nutrients, and shade necessary to support the germination of larger species, which each in-turn shade and crowd out their predecessors. Succession forests are an important habitat for animal species that prefer neither the relative exposure of a meadow nor the bare forest floor of a mature forest.

Because these species will arrive with the transition from meadow and leave with the transition to mature forest, this habitat must be regenerated from time to time to prevent it from completing its succession to mature forest. Since the complete transition from meadow to mature forest can take many decades, different areas can be regenerated on a cyclical basis if there is to be a deliberate attempt to maintain this habitat. As this is an expensive and disruptive process, it will be up to future generations to decide whether to let nature run its course, and perhaps let some of the adjacent maintained meadows begin their transition to succession forest to accept the displaced wildlife.

Meadows consisting of tall grasses, wildflowers, and small shrubs provide forage and habitat for a wide variety of meadow-dependent animals and insects. If left wild, these meadows would soon begin the transition to succession forest and must be mowed annually to semiannually and reseeded from time to time to prevent monocultures of a particular plant species and the establishment of succession trees and shrubs, such as poplars and sumacs. Different meadow areas can be managed to serve different functions such as general habitat, wildflowers for hummingbirds, butterflies, bees and other pollinators, or grassland bird habitat. The (semi)annual mowing should be scheduled to accommodate mating seasons for the critical species, which we hope to attract and retain.



Wildflower Meadow



Grass Meadow

The riparian zones are the areas bordering the Mill Brook and ponds, and are host to a number of wetland and wetland-dependent species of plants and animals such as wet footed plants and amphibians. Riparian zones not only provide a unique habitat, they also provide several other important environmental services including filtering and storing stormwater and stabilizing stream banks.



Eroded Brook Riparian Zone



Pond Riparian Zone

Areas of the Mill Brook’s riparian zone are compromised by former lawns and erosion due to lack of stabilizing vegetation as well as the increasing volume and frequency of severe storms. Ideally, the most sensitive areas should be stabilized with wetland species seedlings planted into degradable fabric mats that hold the soil in place long enough for deep roots to establish and hold the soil. Water dependent trees above the top of the bank can further stabilize the banks by spreading their roots through the banks like rebar through reinforced concrete. The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) recognizes the value of these unique areas and has previously offered River Restoration Grants to support this type of restoration activity.

Where necessity requires, stone riprap can prevent damage to bridge abutments and severely eroded, sharp stream bends where the stream is being deflected sideways by a directly opposing bank. After removing Common Reeds, Phragmites, Purple Loosestrife and other invasive species and establishing a healthy mix of native riparian species, the water will run clearer and a larger diversity of wildlife will return to the banks of the Mill Brook.

Finally, there was a public interest in maintaining areas of informal lawn, preferably in the low, flat areas of the property south of the Mill Brook adjacent to Warham Street, east of the brook, and surrounding the clubhouse. From a habitat standpoint, there are not many species capable of using this landscape for habitat; but low growing plants such as Dandelion, Plantain, White Clover, and Wood Violets can withstand a more frequent mowing schedule to provide forage to bees and other pollinators between mowing. The insects and rodents inhabiting these lawns in-turn provide food for birds and larger mammals, such as hawks, swallows, bats, and coyotes.



Dormant Winter Informal Lawn



Periodically Mowed Informal Lawn

**Habitat Action Steps**

Action	Lead	Priority
1. Inventory and assess various habitats	Planning / Design Services	High
2. Evaluate the Mill Brook riparian zone and develop a prioritized action plan to stabilize and maintain the brook.	Planning / Design Services / Public Works	Medium

*Trail System and Access*

Provide a safe, accessible system of trails that offers diverse outdoor experiences within a variety of habitats and landscapes, accessing significant views and features, and connecting to Windsor Center and the surrounding neighborhoods.

As a former golf course, bituminous paved cart paths crisscross the property to serve 18 former tee boxes and greens, many of which are parallel and redundant. After years of neglect, the condition of these paths has deteriorated to varying degrees and in one case, has washed out completely due to bank erosion of the Mill Brook. The steering committee carefully considered a number of factors in determining which paths will remain, which will be removed, and where new connections will be added, including:

- providing pedestrian access from Windsor Center,
- preserving large contiguous landscapes and habitat areas,
- providing a variety of trail experiences ranging from relatively level to steep, and from open fields to shaded woods.
- providing physical and visual access to the brook and ponds,
- providing vistas
- eliminating redundant bridge crossings to avoid costly bridge repairs,
- cutting off trail stubs to remote tee boxes and greens,
- keeping trail shoulders clear of poison ivy and other noxious weeds,
- protecting the privacy of neighbors and/or discouraging trespassing through their properties.

The Land Management Areas map illustrates the resulting system of over 17,000 feet or 3.2 miles of existing and proposed trails as well as the removal of up to 8,000 feet of former cart paths.

Although subject to further study and refinement, the preferred method of restoring, removing and building new trails is to reclaim the entire cartway system. Existing cart paths to remain as trails will be milled and compacted in place to create a gravel-like, yet durable surface. Cart paths that are to be removed will be similarly milled and the surface and base materials will be carted to the boxed out locations of new trails, where they will be laid and compacted into trails matching the existing trail treatment. Conversely, the existing topsoil removed from the new boxed out trail locations will be carted to the removed trail locations to (re)establish the preferred landscape treatment (e.g. lawn, meadow, woods). The estimated cost of the above trail program would be approximately \$135,000.

There are currently six bridge crossings over the Mill Brook in various states of repair. Three are considered redundant and are recommended to be abandoned and removed if necessary. Of the remaining three bridges, only one is in usable condition, two will need new decks, and one will need significant repairs to its abutments. The cost of re-decking two of the bridges is \$38,000, and another \$38,000 is needed to repair the abutments. With a 25% contingency cost, the total cost of repairing the two bridges is \$95,000, bringing the total cost of trails and bridges to approximately \$230,000.

There would be two trailheads: one at the existing clubhouse parking lot, for anyone who wishes to drive to the facility and a pedestrian access at 72 Mack Street for residents of Windsor Center to walk in, which depending on the disposition of the house could also provide limited parking for handicap access only.

#### Trail System & Access Action Steps

Action	Lead	Priority
1. Pursue funding to develop 3.2 miles of trails.	Recreation & Leisure	High
2. Fund bridge design and rehabilitation.	Town Council	High
3. Evaluate alternative pedestrian access options at 72 Mack Street.	Planning / Design Services	High
4. Renovate and construct trails	Design Services / Public Works	High
5. Design and reconstruct Pigeon Hill Road Gateway or entrance.	Planning / Design Services / Public Works	Medium

## Activities

Provide outdoor educational opportunities and a range of year-round passive recreation activities such as walking, hiking, biking, picnicking, bird/wildlife watching, sledding, and cross-country skiing.

- Where appropriate promote a variety of uses within the trail system.
- Provide opportunities for four seasons of activity.
- Provide a range of activities for residents and visitors of all ages and abilities.
- Use interpretative materials to educate residents and visitors on features such as native species and habitats.

A range of passive recreation activities, such as walking/hiking, sledding, picnicking, and bird/wildlife watching can be accommodated through varying land management approaches, without significantly compromising the environment.

Excluding 72 Mack Street as well as the former clubhouse, outbuildings, and two acres immediately surrounding them, the Open Space and Watershed Land Acquisition grant that paid almost \$1.1 million of the purchase price of the property comes with land use restrictions on the bulk of the property, A conservation easement will be placed upon the open space guaranteeing that it will forever be open space with nothing more than passive recreation activities and trails, prohibiting active sports facilities and possibly what some might consider passive activities, such as disc golf, if permanent physical improvements are required.

Passive recreation refers to recreational activities that require no physical improvements beyond trails and bridges and have no impact upon the land. The most obvious passive recreation activities are walking, hiking, jogging, bird/wildlife watching, and fishing; but may include biking, landscape photography/painting, and gardening during the warmer months and sledding, snow shoeing, cross country skiing, and ice skating during the winter.

The public input favors most of these activities with a preference for pedestrian activities, biking, and bird/wildlife watching. Given the relatively short 3.2 miles of trails, lack of topographical interest, highly erodible slopes, and potential damage to trails; mountain biking is neither desired nor likely to be popular. The 4-5 foot trail widths that formerly accommodated one-way golf cart traffic combined with the crushed stone surface are unsuitable as true multi-use paths, which are typically 10-12 feet of bituminous pavement. So biking, while permitted, should be limited to hybrid bikes operating on the paved trails in a controlled manner, such as a child on a small bike accompanying walking parents or an adult taking a leisurely tour around the property or commuting to work in the Day Hill Corporate Area.

Picnicking was also a popular suggestion for a possible use, either on the existing patio, in a new pavilion, or perhaps less formally at picnic sites surrounding the clubhouse. The conservation easement would limit physical picnic improvements to the two-acres in the vicinity of the clubhouse and the town would have to maintain the ownership and operation of the clubhouse to facilitate a pavilion that would not conflict with activities in the repurposed clubhouse. Picnicking on informal lawns would be possible, provided that trash is removed when finished.

Sledding, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing can be easily accommodated when snow is present if participants own their own equipment, but ice-skating presents maintenance and safety challenges, due to the remoteness and unknown depth of the ponds. The hill descending from the clubhouse provides a sufficient unobstructed length of steep slope to be attractive for an informal sledding hill, requiring only a late mowing in the fall to clear a path and no physical improvements or supervision.

## Building Reuse

Priority should be given to uses that are compatible with or enhance the use of the open space while maintaining public access.

- Protect access to the open space from both Pigeon Hill Road and Mack Street.
- Building uses should be compatible with or enhance the use of the open space.
- Generate revenue to offset building and open space maintenance costs.
- Explore possible partnerships for non-profit uses that could provide stewardship.

## Clubhouse

The public consensus on the disposition of the clubhouse is to leave it intact in town ownership as a possible source of revenue to pay for the development and maintenance of the open space, which does not preclude other options. Possible approaches for reuse of the clubhouse include:

- town operated venue for various town / community programs,
- lease as event / meeting space,
- lease to a non-profit(s) and
- lease for commercial/restaurant use.

The latter option would likely preclude a picnic pavilion to the rear of the clubhouse to relieve pressure on similar town facilities.

The clubhouse and maintenance buildings are in reasonably good shape and the HVAC system serving half of the clubhouse needs to be replaced at a cost of \$25,000. Select doors and windows need to be replaced at the clubhouse at an estimated cost of \$12,000 to \$15,000.

## 72 Mack Street House

The property at 72 Mack Street provides the opportunity for pedestrian access from surrounding residential areas in and around Windsor Center. The property contains a well maintained, though functionally obsolescent home (only one full bathroom upstairs) as well as a garage and shed.

Potential reuse options include selling or leasing the property for residential use if a land swap or access and maintenance easements can be secured from the adjoining professional offices, allowing the privacy hedge against the west side of the house to remain intact after trail construction. Residential use would preclude the possibility of handicapped parking, which would serve the more gently sloped areas of the open space. A non-residential use, such as a professional office, would not present the same degree of privacy issues, but could preclude handicapped parking.

Another possibility is donating the house to the Windsor Independent Living Association (WILA), who maintains a client residence next door. WILA could use it as office space or move it to the substantial lawn area to the southeast, next to their existing home, allowing the installation of the trail, a new privacy hedge (if necessary), and the use of the exiting driveway and parking spaces for handicapped open space visitors.

Windsor Independent Living Association (WILA) is both a charitable cause and an abutter, making donating and/or relocating the house forward and adjacent to their existing client home a possibility that would not require significant transportation or aboveground utility issues.

When asked about the future disposition/use of this house, respondents preferred renting the house for non-residential use, followed by tearing it down or donating it to a charity.

**Building Facilities Action Steps**

Action	Lead	Priority
1. Fund partial replacement of HVAC system at clubhouse and maintenance garage.	Buildings & Facilities / Town Council	High
2. Fund partial replacement of doors and windows at clubhouse.	Buildings & Facilities / Town Council	High
3. Complete evaluation of options to reutilize the 72 Mack Street house.	Planning / Design Services	High
4. Develop Request for Proposal process for leasing of clubhouse building to compare cost benefit versus a town operated event venue.	Design Services / Buildings & Facilities	High
5. Repave clubhouse parking lot.	Design Services / Public Works	Medium
6. Replace privacy fencing along clubhouse property line.	Buildings & Facilities / Public Works	Medium

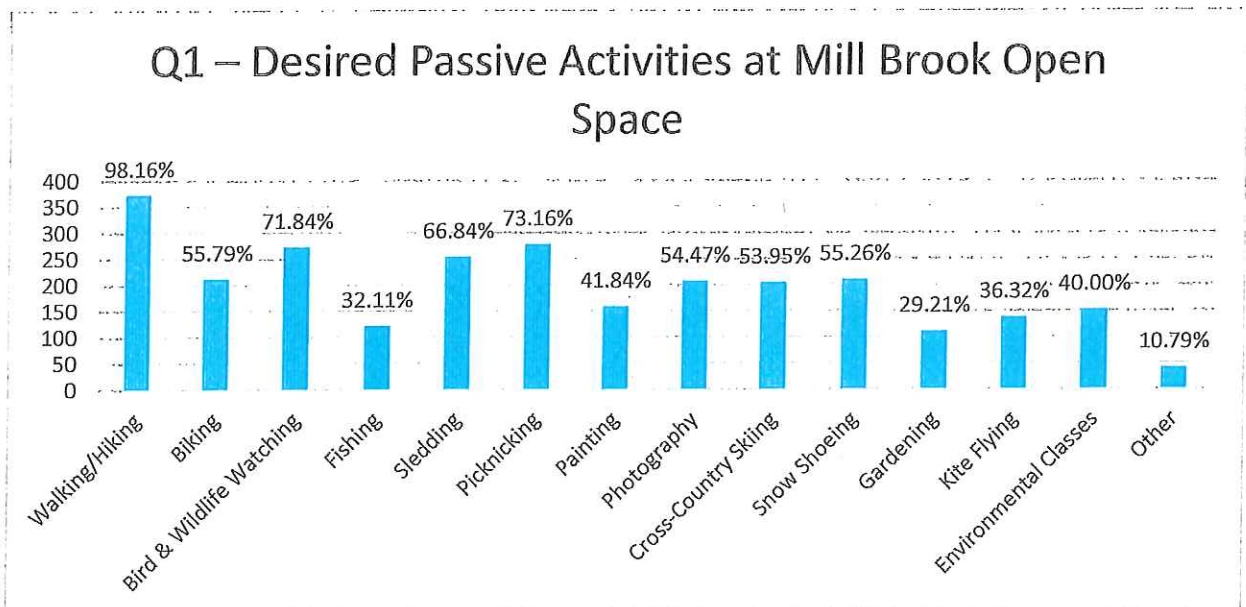
## Appendix

### Community Survey and Open House / Workshop Results

There were 417 total respondents. The margin of error is calculated to be 5% at a 95% confidence interval.

**1. Open space grant restrictions limit the use of the property to passive recreation activities that require minimal physical improvements. Which of the following passive recreational uses would you like to see on the property? (Check all that apply)**

- Walking/Running/Hiking
- Biking
- Bird & Wildlife Watching
- Fishing
- Sledding
- Picnicking
- Painting
- Photography
- Cross-Country Skiing
- Snow Shoeing
- Gardening
- Kite Flying
- Environmental Classes
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

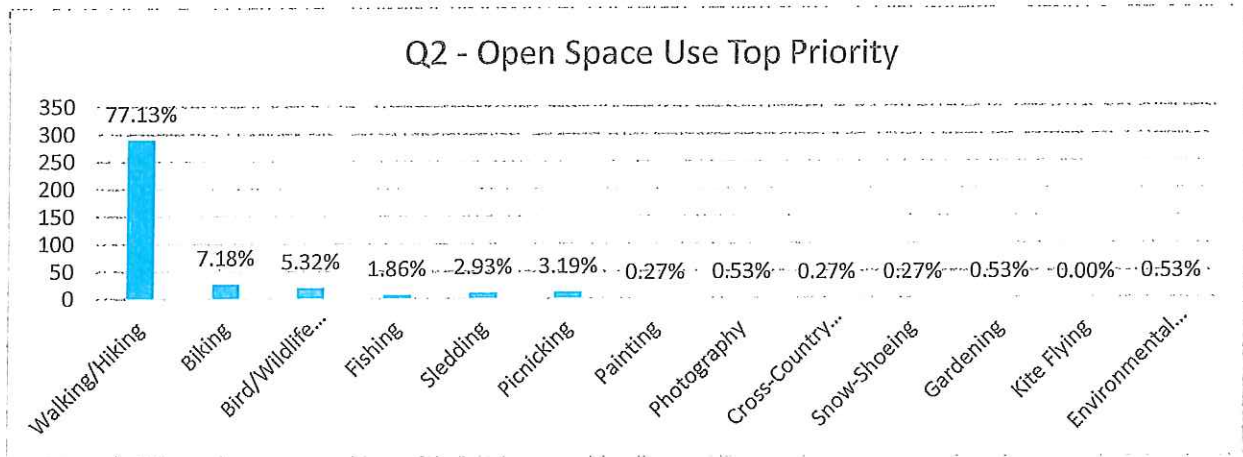


**2. Of the uses selected above, which do you consider to be your three highest priorities?**

Highest Priority: \_\_\_\_\_

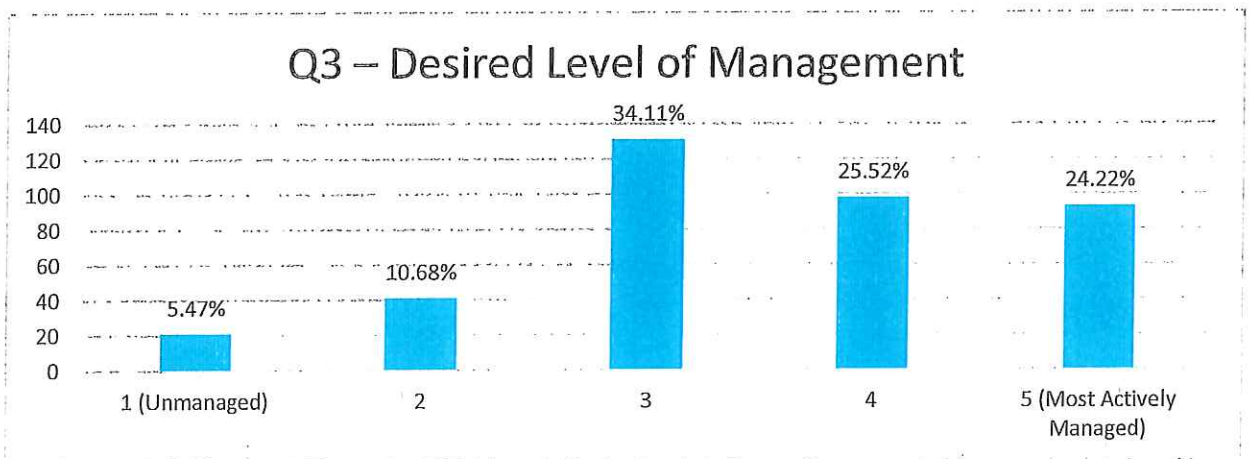
Second Highest: \_\_\_\_\_

Third Highest: \_\_\_\_\_



**3. If left unmanaged except for trails, the former golf course will revert to a wild forest of native and invasive species spread by wind and wild animals. On a scale from 1-5, with 1 being "unmanaged" and 5 being "most actively managed", at what level do you believe the town should manage this space to control invasive species during this transition to forest?**

(Unmanaged) 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 (Most Actively Managed)

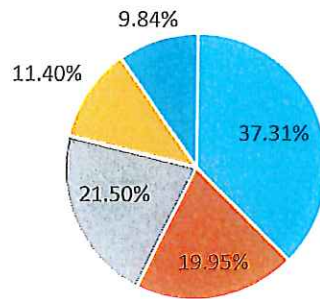


**4. Would you like an area(s) to be managed as common space, such as a lawn or green?**

(Strongly Agree) 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 (Strongly Disagree)



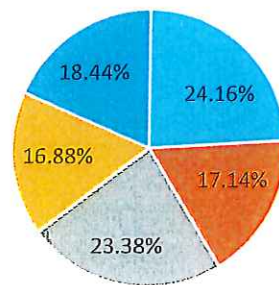
### Q4 – Common Space Desired?



■ 1 (Strongly Agree) ■ 2 ■ 3 ■ 4 ■ 5 (Strongly Disagree)

5. Would you like an area(s) to be managed as formal gardens (e.g., an arboretum, rose garden, etc.)?  
 (Strongly Agree) 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 (Strongly Disagree)

### Q5 – Formal Gardens Desired?

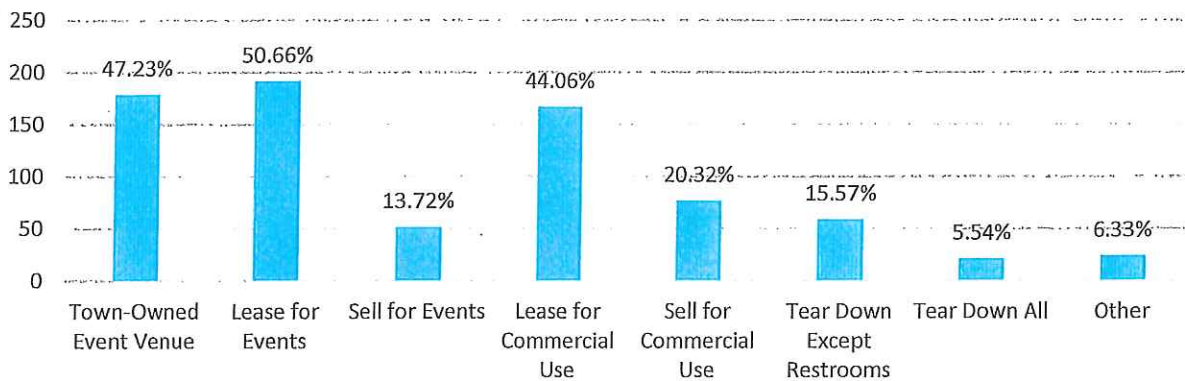


■ 1 (Strongly Agree) ■ 2 ■ 3 ■ 4 ■ 5 (Strongly Disagree)

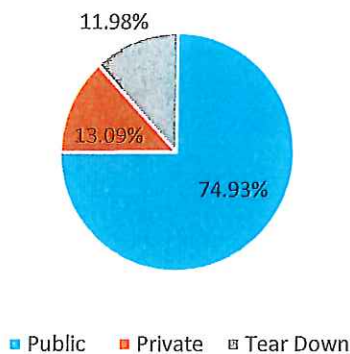
6. The acquisition of the golf course included the former clubhouse, parking lot, maintenance buildings, and about two acres of surrounding land without use restrictions. The building is structurally sound but in need of repairs and upgrades. Which of the following uses/actions for this area would you prefer? *(Check all that apply)*

- A town-owned & operated event venue for meetings, weddings, reunions, etc.
- Lease clubhouse for event venue for meetings, weddings, reunions, etc.
- Sell the clubhouse as a privately-owned event venue for meetings, weddings, reunions, etc.
- Lease the clubhouse as a restaurant or for other light commercial use.
- Sell the clubhouse as privately-owned restaurant.
- Tear down the clubhouse except for public restrooms.
- Tear down the entire clubhouse.
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### Q6 – Desired Clubhouse Use



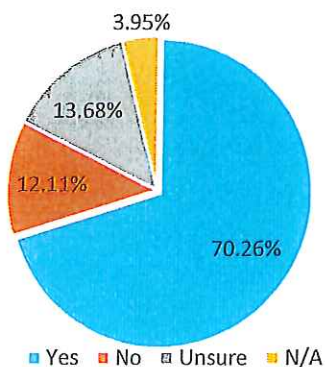
### Q6 - Public vs. Private Ownership of the Clubhouse



7. If the clubhouse was torn down entirely or torn down, except for public restrooms, would you like to have a picnic pavilion constructed on that site to meet growing demand on similar town facilities?

Yes | No | Unsure | Not Applicable

### Q7 - Picnic Pavilion Desired if Clubhouse is Torn Down?

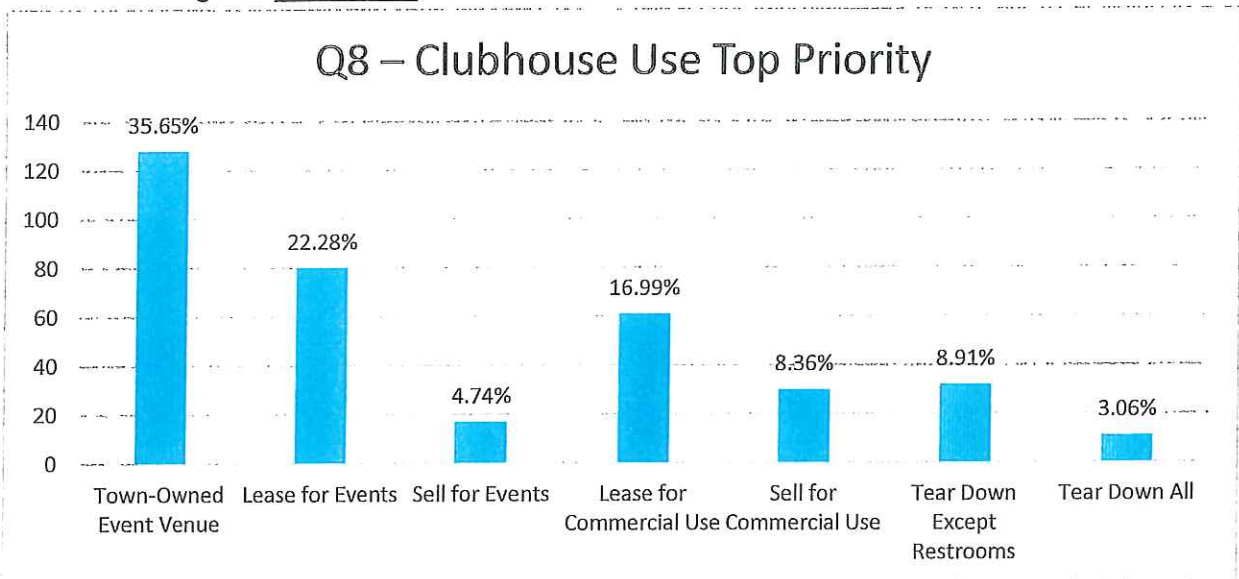


**8. Of the uses you selected in question 6, which do you consider to be your three highest priorities?**

Highest Priority: \_\_\_\_\_

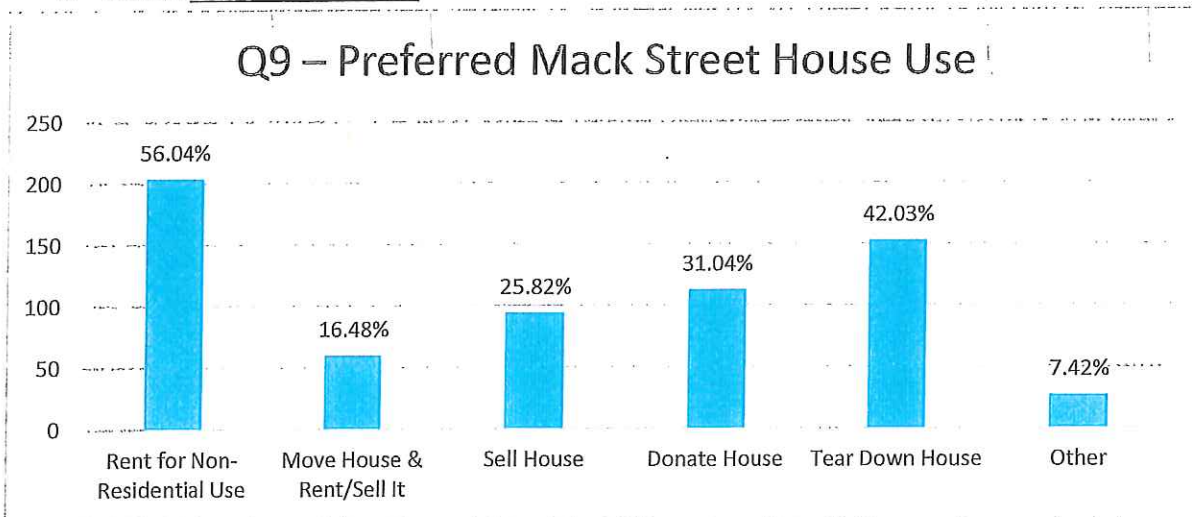
Second Highest: \_\_\_\_\_

Third Highest: \_\_\_\_\_



**9. The acquisition of the golf course included a house and yard at 72 Mack Street, intended for access to the open space from Windsor Center, free of use restrictions. The house is in usable condition but blocks pedestrian access without compromising residential privacy. Which of the following uses/actions for this area would you prefer? (Check all that apply)**

- Construct the public access and rent the house for non-residential uses such as professional offices to offset the cost of maintenance.
- Move the house to another part of the property, construct the public access and privacy screening, and rent or sell the house.
- Construct the public access and sell the house for residential use.
- Donate the house to someone willing to move it to another nearby property and construct the public access.
- Tear down the house and construct the public access.
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

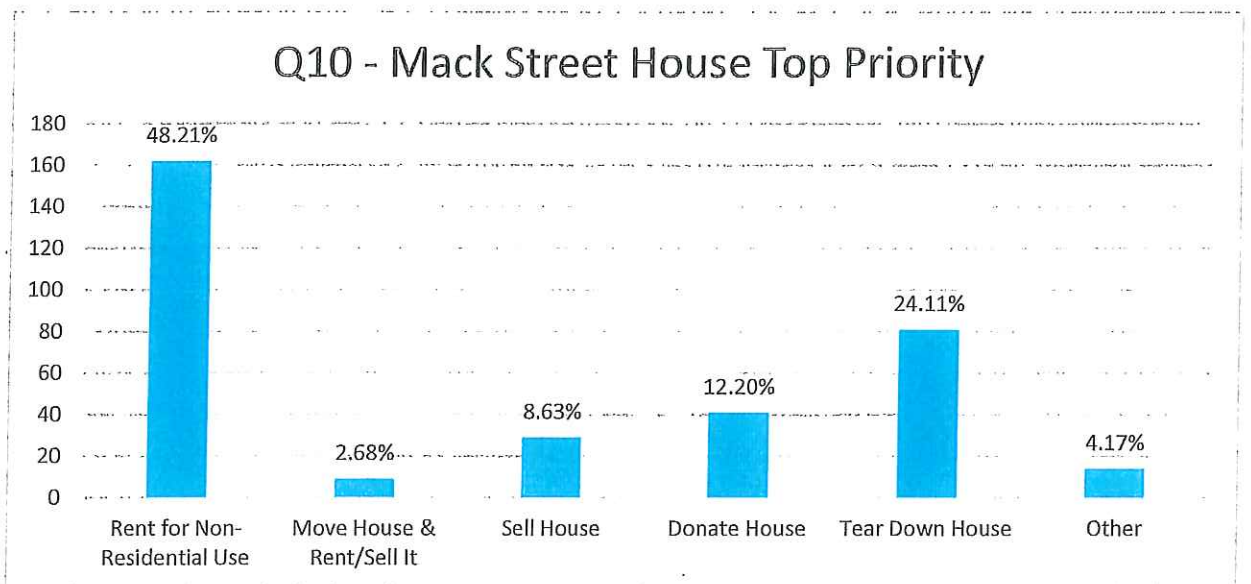


**10. Of the uses you selected above, which do you consider to be your highest three priorities?**

Highest Priority: \_\_\_\_\_

Second Highest: \_\_\_\_\_

Third Highest: \_\_\_\_\_



**11. Do you have any additional comments?**

Responses have been combined with workshop comments, summarized, and categorized.

*Preferred Use of Open Space*

- Hiking/Walking (6)
- Picnicking (5)
- No picnic pavilion

*Preferred Use of Open Space (continued)*

- Sledding/snowboarding (5)
- Disc Golf (4)
- Cross Country skiing (4)
- Occasional outdoor concerts (4)
- Biking/separate bike trails (3)
- No biking/mountain biking (3)
- Bike path connecting Mack Street to Pigeon Hill Road for through bikers (2)
- Ice skating (3)
- No motorized vehicles (3)
- Boy Scout camping/camping (2)
- Keep nine holes of golf (2)
- Dog park (2)
- Open off leash dog area
- Keep dogs on leashes

- Snow shoeing
- Environmental education
- Fireworks
- Library programs
- Pavilion to rent out for private parties (revenue)
- Gazebo
- No hunting
- Impose strict adherence to non impacting uses
- Incorporate art along trails and partner with Windsor Art Center
- Make at least one mountain bike trail
- No community gardens

#### *Maintenance of Open Space*

- Keep invasive, overgrown, and dangerous plants under control (5)
- Clean up/mill existing walkways (4)
- Prefer natural landscape (3)
- Maintain like Northwest Park (2)
- Minimally groomed trails/no pavement (2)
- Add new trails
- Fix bridges (2)
- Leave it natural/open (2)
- Rose Garden (2), plums too
- Mow some sections 6x/year – mow almost all area 1x/year to keep the space open (2)
- Develop brook for trout (2) - catch & release only
- Scout projects to help maintain (2)
- Limit trespassing over abutting properties/fences (2)
- Consider how to make it accessible by all abilities – parking is near hilly section and no parking near flat area
- Make it like Wickham Park (East Hartford)
- Keep mix of meadows and forested areas

#### *Maintenance of Open Space (continued)*

- Trim trees
- Plant more trees
- Maintain vistas through selective mowing/vegetation management
- Bush hog/mow every 2 years – do not remove trees
- Mow grass at end of Warham Street on regular basis
- Level some areas out
- Grassland bird/mammal habitat
- Butterfly garden to attract pollinators
- Overgrown shrubbery abutting Scherer Ridge property
- Minimize maintenance costs
- Protect wildlife, natural environs and water sources
- Pond closest to I-91 should be used as detention pond to filter runoff
- Use volunteers
- Need fish ladders
- Add bluebird houses
- Fix fence along east side of parking lot

## *Use of Buildings*

### Clubhouse

- Restaurant/diner (6)
- Use clubhouse for parties/weddings/events (4)
- No event venue/late night noise (2)
- Never a banquet facility (noise, etc. for neighborhood)
- Brewery / Brew Pub (4)
- Nothing to do with alcohol / no brewery
- Kitchen available for rent
- Community center
- Adjunct senior center
- Youth Center
- Art Center
- Tables/chairs on the deck
- Rent out buildings
- Sell it for commercial use
- Winter farmer's market
- Keep nine holes of golf
- Do not sell
- Do not tear down
- Need consistent revenue stream
- No restaurant use after 10:00
- Ice cream shop
- Rent to Audubon Society

## *Use of Buildings (continued)*

### 72 Mack Street

- Coffee house
- Rent out house for non-residential use (3)
- Tear it down and construct access
- Use for educational purposes related to the open space (2)
- Do not sell
- Donate to charity (2)
- Best location for public access
- Bicycle and emergency access only
- Teen Center
- Non-profit event space
- Sell the property
- Need consistent revenue stream

### *Miscellaneous Comments*

- Will there be a monitoring committee to deal with complaints?
- Be sure the location is widely publicized and the way to get to Mill Brook is known by all - promotion
- Provide maps for all the trails (3)
- Will there be hours of operation?
- No vehicle parking at Warham Street
- Why no access from Warham Street?
- Town-wide contest to name the park
- Allocate sufficient funds to maintain open space
- Move the highway
- Provide scout service projects (3)
- Provide better bicycle access from west side of I-91
- Minimal signs
- Do not duplicate Northwest Park
- Engage organizations to adopt/maintain/use areas of the open space (e.g. garden club) (2)
- Parking and bathrooms needed at both ends

**TOWN IMPROVEMENTS COMMITTEE**  
**Windsor Town Hall**  
**Council Chambers**  
**January 22, 2019**  
**Special Meeting**

**UNAPPROVED MINUTES**

**1) CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman Joseph McAuliffe called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Present were Councilors McAuliffe, O'Reilly, and Wilkos.

Staff: Peter Souza, Town Manager; Bob Jarvis, Director of Public Works/Town Engineer; Paul Norris, Director of Recreation & Family Leisure Services; Eric Barz, Town Planner

**2) PUBLIC COMMENT**

Susan Miller, 10 Ethan Drive, stated she was part of a group of town residents concerned with climate change. They would like to promote the reduction of carbon emissions. Our transportation system and vehicles are one of the largest contributors of carbon emissions. She advocated that the town consider installing public charging stations for electric vehicles as one way to mitigate emissions.

Liz Yetman, 82 Robin Road, stated her support for electric vehicle charging stations for public use and specifically thought the town center would be an appropriate location.

Nathan Marquee, a Granby resident with ties to Windsor, advocated for the town to take additional measures to be environmentally conscious.

Charles Button, 147 Pleasant Street, stated his support for public charging stations as demand will be growing as car manufacturers have plans to produce additional electric vehicles in the coming years. He stated he is also a professor at CCSU and offered to help with placing interns or student research projects.

**3) REVIEW OF MILL BROOK OPEN SPACE REPORT AND LAND MANAGEMENT PLAN**

Town Manager Souza noted that in December, the Mill Brook Open Space Report and Land Management Plan was presented to the Town Council. The report and plan was developed over the course of the summer and fall by the volunteer steering committee. The overall plan includes a recommended mission, vision, guiding principles and objectives/strategies.

Councilor O'Reilly asked several questions regarding the recommended physical improvements including how estimates were arrived at and if there were ways to reduce costs. Staff stated the estimates were based on concept plans and getting preliminary quotes from contractors. Town Manager Souza stated some of the trail work could be phased over time and potentially in-house crews may be able to perform some of the work depending on project prioritization and the workload. The bridge repairs, door and window



replacement and repairs/replacement of the clubhouse HVAC unit were viewed as a priority and likely would need to be done through contractors.

Councilor Wilkos stated he would like to break apart the overall recommended project so that the subprojects could be considered and bid separately. He felt this would allow for work to be prioritized and potentially reduce costs.

In general, committee members expressed support for the overall plan and recommended vision and guiding principles.

Committee members discussed concepts of reusing the former clubhouse building and 72 Mack Street. The recommended plan includes general guidance that the use of the buildings be compatible with or enhance the use of the open space and if possible generate revenue.

Councilor Wilkos expressed his desire to generate income to help cover the cost of operating / maintaining the buildings and ideally some funds towards long-term maintenance of the open space. He also stated he felt the town should look into leasing out the properties and not take on the daily responsibility of managing them.

Discussion of public access from Mack Street was discussed. Town Planner Eric Barz showed the aerial photograph of the 72 Mack Street area. He explained the volunteer committee's recommendation that at minimum pedestrian access should be provided. He also highlighted a few constraints based on the shape of the lot and the placement of the house.

Councilor Wilkos outlined an idea of extending the stormwater culvert that runs under the driveway so that both pedestrian and vehicle access to the rear of the house would be enhanced. A small parking area potentially could be constructed to the rear of the house. Councilors discussed the possible reuse of the house for a smaller, low traffic, professional office.

The committee decided to continue discussion of the recommended plan with a focus on the reuse of the two buildings. A committee meeting will be set up for early to mid February.

#### **4) STAFF REPORTS**

None.

#### **5) APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

a) August 13, 2018

MOVED by Councilor O'Reilly and Councilor Wilkos seconded to approve the minutes of the August 13, 2018 meeting as presented.

Motion Passed 3-0-0

**6) ADJOURNMENT**

MOVED by Councilor O'Reilly and Councilor Wilkos seconded to adjourn the meeting at 7:15 p.m.

Motion Passed 3-0-0

Respectfully Submitted,

Peter Souza, Town Manager