

# OPEN SPACE & RECREATION PLAN

## 2024

**TOWN OF DRACUT**



Prepared by the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments

## Acknowledgements

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## Section 1: Plan Summary

The Dracut Open Space and Recreation Plan is a comprehensive five-year strategy designed to enrich the natural landscapes and recreational facilities across the entire Town of Dracut. This plan is dedicated to enhancing accessibility, safety, and community engagement within the region's diverse conservation areas and recreational spots. Through a comprehensive community engagement process, which included several public meetings, a town-wide survey, and targeted outreach to organizations serving members of traditionally underserved communities, the planning process identified eight key priorities:

- 1. Improved Accessibility:** Facilitate enhanced access to trails, picnic areas, and waterfront locations town-wide for all community members through collaborative development and infrastructure improvements.
- 2. Conservation Efforts:** Preserve existing conservation land through the rigorous enforcement of conservation easements and proactive engagement with private landowners to integrate their parcels into the Town's conservation plan.
- 3. Community Involvement:** Foster community engagement through regular communications, soliciting feedback, and adapting the plan to meet evolving community needs and expectations throughout Dracut.
- 4. Environmental Education:** Establish educational programs and facilities aimed at promoting environmental awareness and outdoor learning opportunities, fostering a deeper understanding of the significance of land preservation and conservation among all residents.
- 5. Environmental Stewardship:** Create a resilient and sustainable community that values its natural heritage, actively engages residents in planning and decision-making processes, and adapts to evolving environmental challenges and community aspirations
- 6. Collaborative Leadership:** Foster greater synergy and collaboration between the open space committee, recreation commission, and conservation commission to ensure effective management of open space and recreation resources.
- 7. Expanding Recreational Opportunities:** Prioritize the development and maintenance of facilities accessible and inclusive to the diverse needs and preferences of the Dracut community.
- 8. Holistic Planning Process:** Engage in community planning processes to reassess road safety in areas providing access to open spaces, ensuring safe and efficient connectivity, and evaluate the needs of the community beyond open space conservation and recreation.

The plan delineates a clear timeline, outlining prioritized tasks for each of the five years. These tasks include trail development, historic preservation, facility improvements, and the development of conservation areas, all aimed at enhancing the overall open space and recreational experience throughout the Town of Dracut.

The successful implementation of the plan relies on the collaborative efforts of various town departments, committees, volunteer groups, and private landowners. By engaging stakeholders such as the Open Space Committee, Recreation Commission, and Conservation Commission, the plan seeks to ensure effective execution and maintenance of the initiatives across Dracut.

## Section 2: Introduction

### Statement of Purpose

The Dracut Open Space and Recreation Plan serves as a vital roadmap for the Town's comprehensive conservation and recreational development efforts. Using the 2009 Open Space and Recreation Plan as a foundation, this updated plan reflects the town's evolving priorities and the need to address contemporary challenges in land preservation and recreational access. Building upon past successes, the current plan aims to further safeguard and enhance Dracut's open space and recreation assets, fostering a sustainable and inclusive environment that promotes community well-being and preserves the town's natural heritage for future generations.

In the years since the 2009 plan, Dracut has made significant strides in preserving its open spaces and expanding recreational opportunities. Efforts have included improved outreach and engagement through Open Space Committee Landowner Seminars, committee sponsored walks and events, and a printed guide to conservation areas and hiking trails in Town. These efforts, combined with the Committee's social media presence, have allowed for increased visibility of the Town's existing open space and passive recreation resources. The establishment of conservation easements, collaborative initiatives with local land trusts and community organizations, and the development of new trails and recreational facilities have led to improved public access. Moreover, the Town has actively engaged in partnerships with neighboring towns to explore trail connections and improve access to hiking and natural areas. The Dracut Public Schools District also saw the construction of new athletic fields, which serve the district's athletic programs and recreational opportunities for the Town.

By recognizing the importance of conserving its natural landscapes and promoting outdoor recreational activities, Dracut continues to uphold its legacy of environmental stewardship and community engagement, laying the groundwork for a sustainable and vibrant future for all its residents.

### Planning Process and Public Participation

The Dracut Open Space and Recreation Plan update involved a series of proactive outreach activities aimed at engaging the community and enhancing open space and recreation services. The process began with a committee visioning session with the Open Space Committee, Conservation Commission, and the Recreation Committee, where NMCOG staff assessed environmental conditions and the community setting and facilitated a discussion on accomplishments and areas needing improvement in open space and recreation management.

During the first public forum, the planning team highlighted the existing plan, shared key findings, and gathered preliminary insights. The community actively contributed input to prioritize open space initiatives and explored potential future engagement opportunities. For outreach to Environmental Justice (EJ) community blocks, the planning team communicated via email and phone with entities such as English and Portuguese speaking churches, food pantries, and housing authorities, and actively sought to participate in dedicated EJ group meetings.

In the second public forum, the planning team unveiled survey results and addressed community needs. Through a parcel mapping exercise, the planning team identified areas for open space protection and recreation implementation. The planning team presented the plan's timeline and outlined upcoming steps, including the development of a five-year action plan. The planning team conducted widespread survey advertising by distributing flyers at parks, trails, the library, Dracut Access Television (DATV), schools, and through social media and newsletters to encourage community involvement. The Senior

Center and Library played pivotal roles in driving outreach and engagement efforts, serving as hubs for survey distribution. Throughout the process, the Open Space Committee, Conservation Commission, and Recreation Committee remained thoughtfully engaged.

## Section 3: Community Setting

### Regional Context

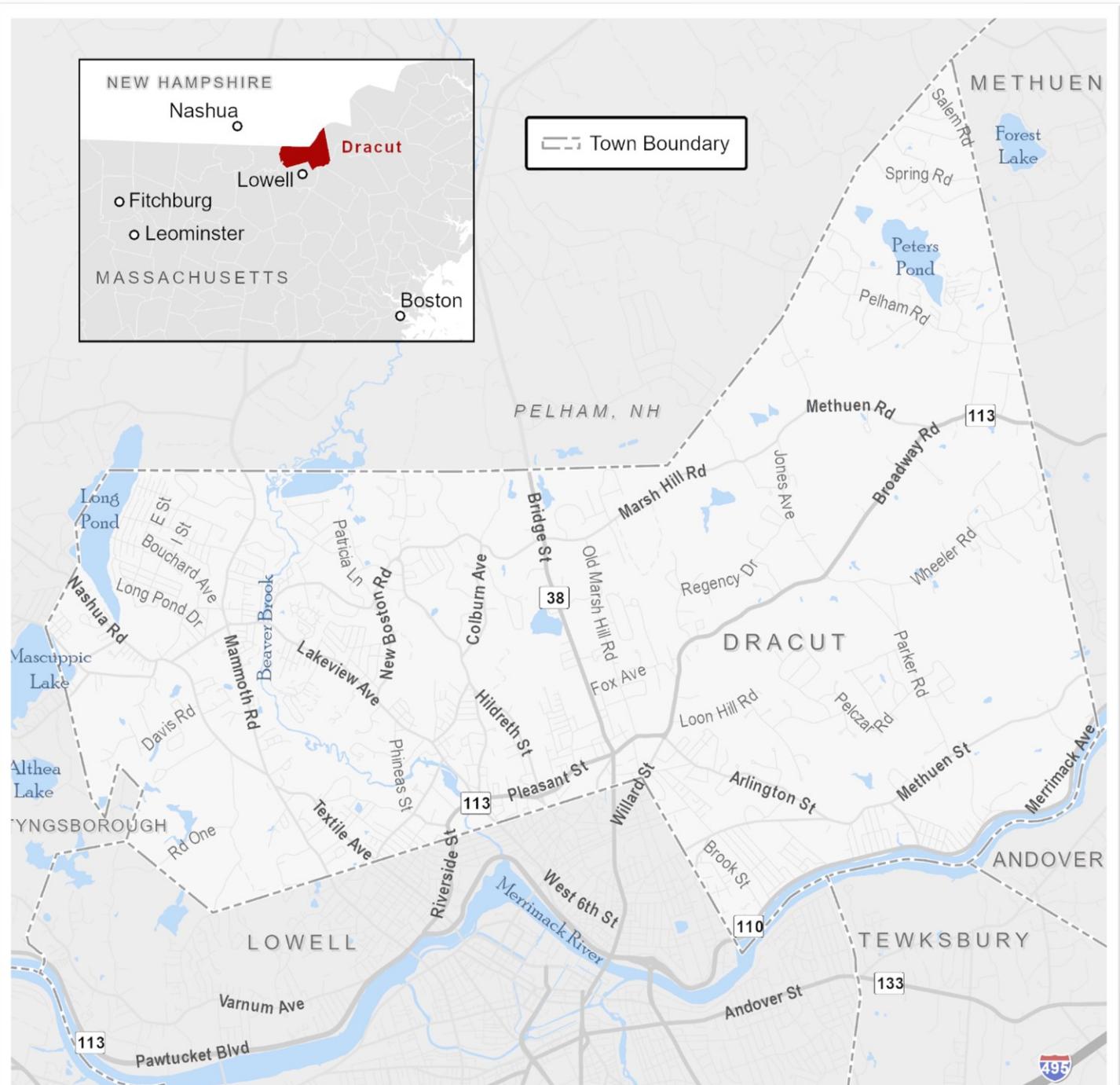
Situated near the bustling Interstate 93 on the New Hampshire border, a mere thirty miles north of Boston, lies the Town of Dracut—a landscape spanning 21.36 square miles, encompassing both land and surface water area. The Town shares its western boundary with the Town of Tyngsborough, and its eastern border with the Town of Methuen (See Map 1). Journeying southward, the urban tapestry extends to the City of Lowell. Bound on the southeastern border by the Merrimack River, which is a natural demarcation between Dracut and the City of Lowell, the Town of Tewksbury, and the Town of Andover. Dracut is entirely within the Merrimack River drainage basin, a geographical embrace that underlines its significance. The river provides critical drinkable water to Dracut and serves as a hub of leisure for the communities along its shores. This river meanders through Dracut, its width fluctuating between 300 feet and 500 feet.

Positioned within the Coastal Hills section of the New England Physiographic Province, Dracut has a diverse geography. However, a prevailing north-northwest alignment can be observed among the hills and tributary streams. Notably, the greatest relief between the Merrimack River and any point in Dracut spans about 340 vertical feet, while the variance between specific valleys and adjacent hills typically remains within a range of 200 feet.

Dracut's rich offerings harmonize with neighboring communities and the broader region, presenting shared treasures. The Merrimack River serves as a vital resource for drinking water for many Dracut residences and for recreation. Furthermore, the charm of Long Pond and the allure of Lake Mascuppic extend their reach beyond Dracut's borders, entwining with Pelham, NH and Tyngsborough respectively. These waterside neighborhoods along with the Peters Pond area, once seasonal retreats, have seamlessly transitioned into year-round havens, bridging heritage with modern-day living.

Spanning 1,040 acres, the Lowell – Dracut -Tyngsborough State Forest falls under the management of the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation. Approximately 527 acres of the Forest lies within Dracut's southwestern corner, adjacent to the City of Lowell and the Town of Tyngsborough. This wooded area offers various recreational activities like walking, hiking, jogging, nature observation, picnicking, horseback riding, bicycling, cross country skiing, snowmobiling, fishing, and hunting. The State Forest plays a vital role in the local ecosystem. It aids in air purification and carbon dioxide reduction. Additionally, it provides essential habitat for wildlife that rely on the forest at different stages of their lives. With urban expansion leading to the fragmentation of forests in the region, the forest's importance has grown significantly.

**Map 1 Town of Dracut Boundaries and Regional Context**



**Sources:**

MassDOT/NMCOG (town boundaries); MassDEP/NMCOG (hydrography); NH GRANIT (roads, political boundaries)

Data provided on this map is not sufficient for either boundary determination or regulatory interpretation.

Produced by NMCOG: 12/8/2023



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## History of the Community

Settled by colonists in the 1660s, "Drawcutt upon Merrimack" marked its permanence, initially being part of Chelmsford until 1701. During the tumultuous days of King Philip's War in 1676, the Mohawk and Wampanoag Peoples stood steadfast, defending their land against European encroachments, but the colonists took their land and these indigenous communities, including the Mohawk, Wampanoag, Pawtucket, and Wamesit, eventually withdrew northward into Canada.

Concurrently and subsequently, European settlers carved out farms and navigated their goods via oxcarts along well-trodden Native paths. River ferries eased passage across the Merrimack, facilitating the exchange of goods to and from the bustling Boston market. The Webb/Colburn Ferry served as the Town's sole link to markets south of the river for a span of 114 years. The loss of almost half its land to New Hampshire and Dunstable in 1741 and 1755 did not impede Dracut's growth. By 1763, the town boasted cloth and paper mills in full operation, adding to its vibrancy. A milestone arrived in 1792 with the construction of the Middlesex Merrimack (Pawtucket) Bridge—a trailblazer among the now five bridges linking Dracut to areas south of the river.

Dracut expanded rapidly due to advancements in transportation during the nineteenth century. The commencement of the Middlesex Canal and the Middlesex Turnpike in the early 1800s forged direct links between Dracut and Boston, catalyzing the growth of mills in Collinsville and the Navy Yard. The Merrimack River enabled strategic ties with neighboring economies through steamboats that embarked on its waters from 1819 onward. A pivotal moment arrived in 1826 with the construction of the Central Bridge, synchronizing access and communication with the burgeoning mill town of Lowell. The ties between Boston and Lowell were further cemented with the inauguration of the Boston and Lowell Railroad in 1835.

The tapestry of Dracut's character and economy experienced a transformation in the mid-1800s, mirroring the ascendancy of Lowell as a thriving industrial center. Within Dracut, the Centralville and Pawtucketville neighborhoods burgeoned into vibrant residential zones for Lowell's industrious mill workers. This proximity led to their eventual annexation by Lowell in 1851 and 1872 (Centralville) and 1879 (Pawtucketville). The early twentieth century witnessed Dracut's rebirth as a resort haven, epitomized by the creation of Lakeview Park in 1908 by Harry Kittredge. For over two decades, the park attracted summer revelers from near and far, casting a festive aura on Lake Mascuppic's shores. While entertaining a tourist economy, small-scale manufacturing persisted in Dracut, breathing life into old mills that had once produced an array of goods. Amidst this, the eastern expanse of Dracut remained dotted with farms, retaining its untouched allure.

Advancements in transportation continued to influence Dracut's evolution, dispersing its working class. The 1960s ushered in major highways—such as I-93, I-495, and Route 3—through neighboring territories, offering access to alternative employment hubs. Dracut, situated north of the river and south of the New Hampshire border, further solidified its role as a residential haven, aligning with employment centers including Nashua, Lowell, the technology corridors of Route 128 and Route 495, and Boston. Today, Dracut predominantly dons a residential mantle, with industrial, commercial, and agricultural endeavors contributing to its identity.

### Population Characteristics

Understanding the details of Dracut's community and how its demographics have evolved over time is crucial for assessing its open space and recreation needs. This section examines specific data points that shed light on the town's characteristics, all of which play a role in Dracut's open space and recreation planning.

As illustrated in Table 1 below, Dracut's population grew from 8,666 in 1950 to 13,674 by 1960, a growth rate of 57.79%. During the 1960s, the Town's population increased to 18,214, a growth rate of 33.2%. Although these growth rates seem high, other communities in the Northern Middlesex region, such as Billerica, also saw their populations more than double during the 1950-1970 period. In the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, population growth slowed to 16.66%, 20.45% and 11.6% respectively. The Town's population growth rate slowed again to 3.13% between 2000 and 2010, before growing to 10.73% between 2010 and 2020, just slightly greater than the Greater Lowell regional growth rate of 2.02% and 8.05%, respectively. Over the seven decades extending from 1960 to 2020, Dracut's population increased by 138.53%, an average of 23.09% per decade. In contrast, the regional population grew by 83% during the same period, from 169,403 to 310,009, an average of 13.83% per decade. With a total area of 21.36 square miles, Dracut's population density was approximately 1,527 persons per square mile in 2020.

**Table 1 - Dracut Population Trends 1950 – 2020**

Year	Population	% Change
<b>1950</b>	8,666	-
<b>1960</b>	13,674	57.79
<b>1970</b>	18,214	33.20
<b>1980</b>	21,249	16.66
<b>1990</b>	25,594	20.45
<b>2000</b>	28,562	11.60
<b>2010</b>	29,457	3.13
<b>2020</b>	32,617	10.73

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau*

Population projections prepared by MassDOT for the Town of Dracut are outlined in Table 2 below and reflect a slightly higher future growth rate for the Town compared to the region as a whole. Between 2010 and 2020, Dracut was expected to experience a growth rate of 8.2%, but the latest Census data showed the population slightly outpaced this projection by 2.53%. The growth rate is anticipated to rise at a slower 1% rate in the 2020s and decrease -0.4% in the 2030s, reaching a total projected population of 32,071 in 2040. The projections estimate that Dracut's population will comprise 10.9% of the Greater Lowell region's total population by 2040, approximately the same as the current proportion.

**Table 2 - Actual and Projected Population 2010 – 2040**

Year	Dracut Population	Dracut Growth Rate	Greater Lowell Region	Regional Growth Rate	Dracut as a Percentage of Region
2010	29,457	3.1%	286,901	2.0%	10.3%
2020	32,617	10.73	310,009	8.05%	10.52%
2020	31,859	8.2%	299,617	4.4%	10.6%
2030	32,190	1.0%	298,889	-0.2%	10.8%
2040	32,071	-0.4%	295,061	-1.3%	10.9%

Source: 2010 & 2020 U.S. Census and 2020, 2030, and 2040 projections by MassDOT with input from NMCOG.

#### Population Age Distribution and Projection

The actual and projected population for Dracut, as well as population trends, are discussed in the Land Use and Zoning section of this document. However, to determine the types of recreational needs in the future, it is important to analyze the age cohorts within Dracut's projected population. As a first step, the age distribution of Dracut residents in 2010 and 2017-2021 are outlined below in Table 3:

**Table 3: Age Distribution of Dracut Residents, 2010 and 2017-2021**

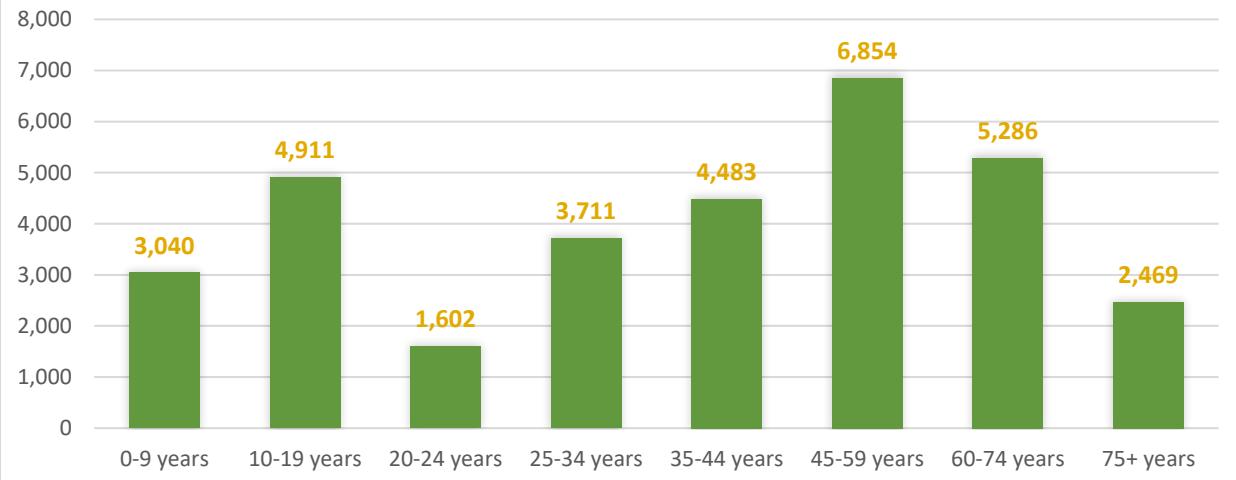
	2010		2017-2021		Percent change 2010-2017/2021
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
<b>0-9 years</b>	3,198	11.0	3,040	9.40	-4.94
<b>10-19 years</b>	3,946	13.6	4,911	15.18	24.46
<b>20-24 years</b>	1,578	5.4	1,602	4.95	1.52
<b>25-34 years</b>	3,883	13.4	3,711	11.47	-4.42
<b>35-44 years</b>	4,210	14.5	4,483	13.85	6.48
<b>45-59 years</b>	6,736	23.3	6,854	21.18	1.75
<b>60-74 years</b>	3,547	12.2	5,286	16.34	49.02
<b>75+ years</b>	1,862	6.4	2,469	7.63	32.60
<b>Total</b>	<b>28,960</b>	<b>99.8</b>	<b>32,356</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>11.73</b>

Source: 2010 U.S. Census and 2017-2021 American Community Survey

Between 2010 and 2017-2021, the overall population increased by 11.73%. However, the percentage change within each age cohort differed significantly. The greatest increase was in the 60-74 age cohort at 49.02%, with the 75+ cohort seeing the second largest increase of 32.60%. The age cohorts 35-44 and 45-59 both also saw slight increases. These figures would seem to indicate an aging population, however the 10-19 age cohort also saw a large 24.46% increase over this period. The age distribution of Dracut residents in 2021 is shown in Figure 1 below.

**Figure 1 - 2017-2021 Age Distribution of Dracut Residents**

## 2017-2021



Source: 2017-2021 American Community Survey

MassDOT, in consultation with NMCOG, prepared projected age distribution figures for 2020, 2030 and 2040. The population projections are outlined in Table 4 below. These population projections suggest that Dracut would increase its population by 10.0% by 2020, which is confirmed by the 2020 Census figures, then would increase 1.0% by 2030, followed by a -0.4% decrease between 2030 and 2040. The projected population in 2040 would be 32,071, which represents a 10.7% increase between 2010 and 2040.

**Table 4: Projected Age Distribution of Dracut Residents (2020-2040)**

Age Groups	2020		2030		2040		Percent Change 2020 - 2040
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
0-9 years	3,449	10.83	3,141	9.76	2,952	9.20	-14.43
10-19 years	3,558	11.17	3,371	10.47	3,155	9.84	-11.32
20-24 years	1,803	5.66	1,484	4.61	1,411	4.40	-21.78
25-39 years	6,056	19.01	5,764	17.91	5,558	17.33	-8.22
40-59 years	9,129	28.66	8,447	26.24	8,476	26.43	-7.16
60-74 years	5,747	18.04	6,729	20.91	6,171	19.24	7.37
75+ years	2,116	6.64	3,253	10.11	4,349	13.56	105.51
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>31,859</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>32,190</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>32,071</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>0.67</b>

Source: Projections developed by MassDOT in consultation with NMCOG

Based upon these projections, the 75+ and 60-74 age cohorts showed the greatest increased in projected population by age group, with all other age groups projected to decline between 2020 and 2040. These increases reflect the aging of the Dracut population and the need to provide accommodating recreational activities and programing.

### Race and Ethnicity

Table 5 breaks down the Town's population by race and ethnicity for 2000, 2010 and 2020. In assessing the racial and ethnic changes in the Town's population, Dracut's population is more diverse than it was in

2020. Although the total population increased by 10.73% or 3,160 between 2010 and 2020, the White alone population decreased by 1,113 and the share of the overall population decreased from 90.3% in 2010 to 78.2%. The Black or African-American alone population increased by 157.9%, while the Asian alone population increased by 68.89% during the same time period. The Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander population increased by 42.86%, while residents of two or more races increased by 125.54%.<sup>1</sup> The Hispanic/Latino population in Dracut increased by 113.84% between 2010 and 2020. The Native American or Native Alaskan heritage decreased by 2.5% from 40 to 39, compared between 2010 and 2020.

**Table 5: Racial and Ethnic Diversity of Residents (2010 and 2020)**

Racial/Ethnic Category	2010		2020		Percent Change 2010-2020
	Population	Percent	Population	Percent	
White alone	26,610	90.3	25,497	78.2	<b>-4.2</b>
Black or African American alone	737	2.5	1,901	5.8	<b>157.9</b>
Native American and Alaska Native alone	40	0.1	39	0.12	<b>-2.5</b>
Asian alone	1,186	4.0	2,003	6.2	<b>68.89</b>
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander alone	7	0.02	4	0.01	<b>-42.86</b>
Two or more Races	877	3.0	1,978	6.1	<b>125.54</b>
Total Population	29,457	100.0	32,617	100.0	<b>10.73</b>
Hispanic or Latino (All races)	1,149	3.90	2,457	7.53	<b>113.84</b>

Source: U.S. Census for 2010 and 2020 - \*Totals may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

#### *Residents with Disabilities*

The total number of residents with disabilities in Dracut according to the 2017-2021 American Community Survey, was 4,123 residents, which represented 12.8% of the total population. As shown in Table 6 below, slightly more than half of the residents with disabilities (51%) were between 18 and 64 years old. The types of disabilities ranged from self-care difficulty (20.1%) or vision difficulty (15.3%), to hearing difficulty (34.2%), to cognitive difficulty (33.3%), independent living difficulty (30.9%), to ambulatory difficulty (39.2%). As noted in the table below on the next page, residents may report more than one disability.

**Table 6: Characteristics of the Community with Disabilities in Dracut: 2017-2021**

Age Group and Disability Status	Total Number	Percent of Residents with Disabilities
Under 5 years old	16	0.38
5-17 years old	132	3.2
18-64 years old	2,104	51.0
65+ years old	1,871	45.4
<b>Total Number of Disabled Residents</b>	<b>4,123</b>	<b>100.0</b>
With a hearing difficulty (all ages)	1,410	34.2
With a vision difficulty (all ages)	629	15.3

<sup>1</sup> US Census changed definition of two or more race definition in the 2020 Decennial Census, resulting in more individuals identifying in this classification.

Age Group and Disability Status	Total Number	Percent of Residents with Disabilities
With a cognitive difficulty (all ages)	1,374	33.3
With an ambulatory difficulty (all ages)	1,615	39.2
With a self-care difficulty (all ages)	855	20.1
With an independent living difficulty (all ages)	1,276	30.9

Source: 2017-2021 American Community Survey. \*Residents may report more than one disability

Residents with disabilities often have unique recreation needs, both in terms of the physical design and accessibility of the site or activity. This Plan should be sensitive to the specific needs of the community with disabilities and incorporate their needs into the goals and strategies for recreation and open space creation to ensure accessibility for all community members whenever possible.

#### *Households and Household Types*

The Dracut community is predominantly comprised of households residing in single family dwelling units. According to the 2017-2021 American Community Survey, there were 12,685 housing units in Dracut, of which 74.6% were single-family homes. As specified in this data, two-family homes accounted for 3.7%, 3-4-unit structures accounted for 3.2%, 5-19-unit structures accounted for 10.4%, and structures with 20 or more units accounted for 8% of the units.

#### *Household Income*

This section examines the median household income in Dracut and compares it with the median household income for Middlesex County, Massachusetts and the United States. By reviewing this data, we can understand how Dracut household incomes compare at the county, state and national levels.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, median household income is calculated based on the income of the householder and all other individuals 15 years old and over in the household. As shown on Table 7 below, the median household income for Dracut increased from \$57,676 in 1999 to \$95,229 in 2017-2021. Dracut experienced lower growth in median household income (65.1%) than Massachusetts (77.5%), the Middlesex County (85.4%), but similar growth of the United States (66.2%) as a whole. The latest 2017-2021 American Community Survey data states the median household income for Dracut (\$95,229) is greater in comparison to Massachusetts (\$89,645) and the US (\$69,717), but lower than Middlesex County (\$112,764).

**Table 7: Median Household Income for Selected Geographies (1999, 2017 – 2021)**

Geographic Area	1999	2017-2021	% Change 1999- 2017-2021
Dracut	57,676	95,229	65.1
Middlesex County	60,821	112,764	85.4
Massachusetts	50,502	89,645	77.5
United States	41,944	69,717	66.2

Source: 2000 U.S. Census and 2017-2021 American Community Survey

#### *Income Distribution*

In analyzing the median household income in Dracut, it is useful to determine how the income is distributed across households. The number of households in the \$100,000+ categories significantly

increased between 1999 and 2017-2021 as shown in Table 8. Adversely, the number of households in nearly all other income categories decreased during the same time period. With the median household income increasing from \$57,676 in 1999 to \$95,229 in 2017-2021, there was a shift upward in the median household income levels for Dracut households.

**Table 8: Income Distribution for Dracut Households in 1999 and 2017-2021**

Household Income	1999		2017-2021		Percent Change 1999 - 2017-2021
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
Less than \$10,000	459	4.4	520	4.2	13.4
\$10,000 - \$14,999	423	4.0	297	2.4	-29.8
\$15,000 - \$24,999	773	7.4	470	3.8	-39.2
\$25,000 - \$34,999	937	9.0	1076	8.7	14.8
\$35,000 - \$49,999	1,657	15.9	903	7.3	-45.5
\$50,000 - \$74,999	2,889	27.6	1,633	13.2	-43.5
\$75,000 - \$99,999	1,593	15.2	1,620	13.1	1.7
\$100,000 - \$149,999	1,272	12.2	2,882	23.3	126.6
\$150,000 - \$199,999	308	2.9	1,633	13.2	430.2
\$200,000 or more	139	1.3	1,324	10.7	852.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,450</b>		<b>12,370</b>		

Source: 2000 U.S. Census and 2017-2021 American Community Survey

#### Residents Living in Poverty

Every year, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the U.S. Census Bureau establish Federal Poverty Guidelines. These income thresholds vary by family size and composition to determine who is living in poverty, as shown in Table 9. If a family's total income is less than the family's threshold, then that family, and every individual in it, is considered to be living in poverty. The official poverty thresholds do not vary geographically, but they are updated for inflation using the Consumer Price Index (CPI). The official poverty definition uses income before taxes and does not include capital gains or noncash benefits (such as public housing, Medicaid, and food stamps).

**Table 9: Federal Poverty Guidelines (2021)**

Number of Persons in Family	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Poverty Guideline	\$12,880	\$17,420	\$21,960	\$26,200	\$31,040	\$35,580	\$40,120	\$44,660

Source: Department of Health and Human Services, <https://aspe.hhs.gov/topics/poverty-economic-mobility/poverty-guidelines/prior-hhs-poverty-guidelines-federal-register-references/2021-poverty-guidelines/2021-poverty-guidelines-computations>

Based upon the 2017-2021 American Community Survey data, 7.86% of Dracut's population, or 2,533 individuals, are living in poverty. Table 10 below compares the poverty data by age and sex illustrating

how poverty impacts every age group and requires a comprehensive effort at the federal, state and local levels to address the problem through various community development initiatives.

**Table 10: Characteristics of the Population Living in poverty in 2017-2021**

	Number Below Poverty Level	Percent of those in poverty
<b>Age</b>		
Under 5 Years	249	9.83
5 to 17 Years	329	12.99
18 to 34 Years	720	28.42
35 to 64 Years	963	38.01
65 Years and Over	272	10.74
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	1,168	46.11
Female	1,365	53.89
<b>Total Individuals Living in Poverty</b>	<b>2,533</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Total Population</b>	<b>32,224</b>	<b>7.86</b>

Source: 2017-2021 American Community Survey

#### *Environmental Justice Areas*

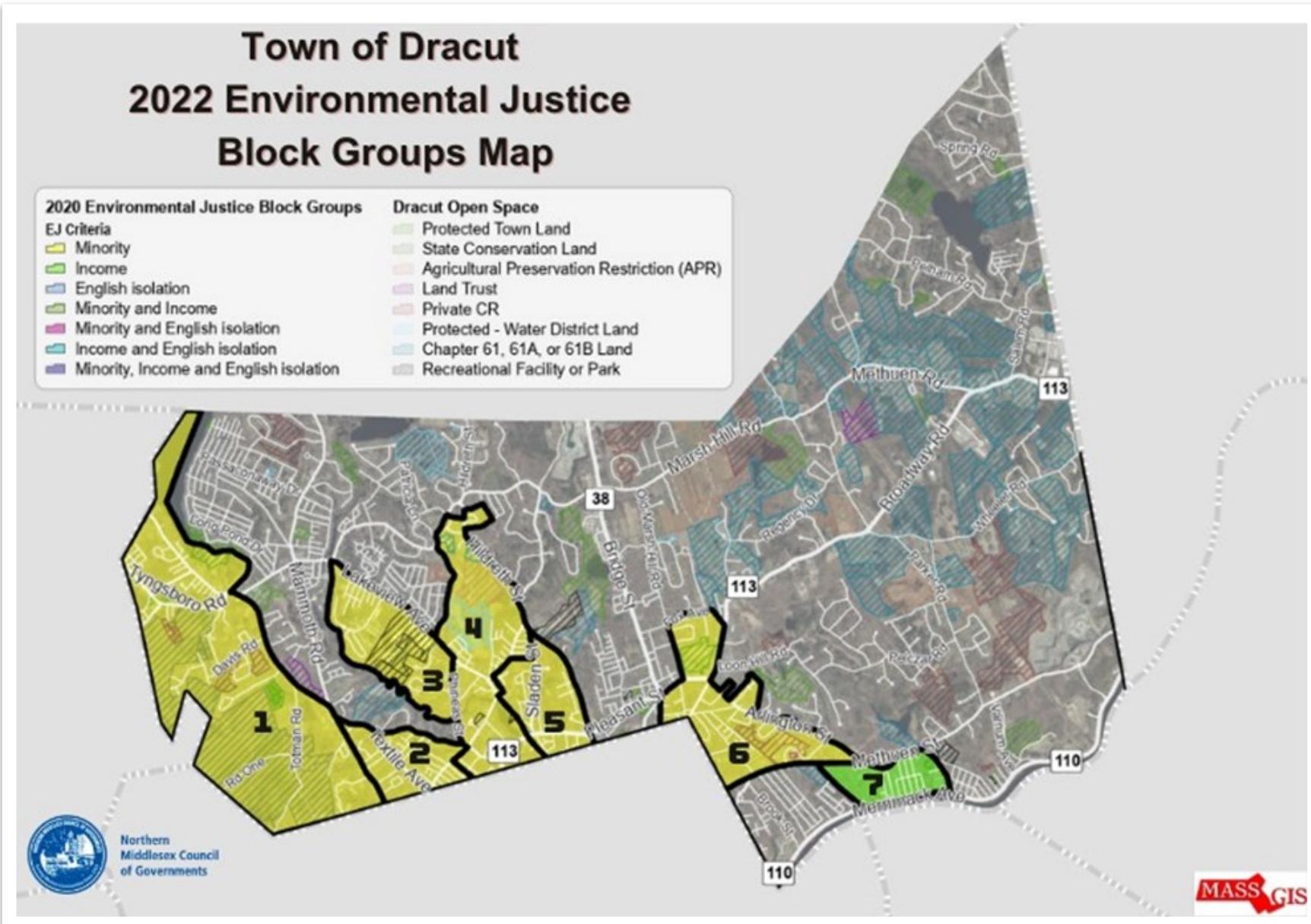
In Massachusetts, an environmental justice population is a neighborhood where one or more of the following criteria are true:

1. The annual median household income is 65 percent or less of the statewide annual median household income;
2. Racial and ethnic minority group members make up 40 percent or more of the population;
3. 25 percent or more of households identify as speaking English less than "very well";
4. Racial and ethnic minority group members make up 25 percent or more of the population and the annual median household income of the municipality in which the neighborhood is located does not exceed 150 percent of the statewide annual median household income;

The Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA) uses data from the 2019 American Community Survey to identify environmental justice population areas in Massachusetts. Policy makers and state agencies can then use this information to communicate more effectively with communities affected by their work. The planning team used this data throughout this process to first identify potentially underserved communities and analyze these community's specific open space and recreation needs.

The Town of Dracut contains six (6) EJ neighborhoods classified as "Minority" and one (1) EJ neighborhood classified as "Income", as shown on the 2022 Environmental Justice Block Groups Map above. This section will identify these neighborhoods and analyze their proximity to open space and recreation amenities. The proximity of amenities is only one aspect of ensuring that residents in environmental justice communities are equitably served by the strategies set forth in this plan. Additional dimensions, including cost of recreational services or activities, should be considered to create open space and recreational resources that are inclusive and equitably serving all members of the Dracut community.

Map 2: Environmental Justice Map



### **#1 Environmental Justice Block Group**

#### **Block Group 3, Census Tract 3141.01, Middlesex County, Massachusetts**

This block group in **Dracut** is an EJ population with the criteria: **Minority**  
EJ characteristics of this block group:

- Minority population: **29%**
- Median household income: **\$86,729**  
This is **103%** of the MA MHHI
- Households with language isolation: **2%**

**OS Amenities:** Contains over 500 Acres of private, state, and town owned conservation lands.

**Recreation Amenities:** None identified.

### **#2 Environmental Justice Block Group**

#### **Block Group 1, Census Tract 3141.02, Middlesex County, Massachusetts**

This block group in **Dracut** is an EJ population with the criteria: **Minority**  
EJ characteristics of this block group:

- Minority population: **33%**
- Median household income: **\$88,295**  
This is **105%** of the MA MHHI
- Households with language isolation: **3%**

**OS Amenities:** None identified.

**Recreation Amenities:** None identified.

### **#3 Environmental Justice Block Group**

#### **Block Group 2, Census Tract 3141.02, Middlesex County, Massachusetts**

This block group in **Dracut** is an EJ population with the criteria: **Minority**  
EJ characteristics of this block group:

- Minority population: **26%**
- Median household income: **\$65,906**  
This is **78%** of the MA MHHI
- Households with language isolation: **0%**

**OS Amenities:** None identified.

**Recreation Amenities:** Large high school and middle school recreation complexes located within boundaries.

### **#4 Environmental Justice Block Group**

#### **Block Group 1, Census Tract 3142, Middlesex County, Massachusetts**

This block group in **Dracut** is an EJ population with the criteria: **Minority**  
EJ characteristics of this block group:

- Minority population: **27%**
- Median household income: **\$58,952**  
This is **70%** of the MA MHHI

- Households with language isolation: **8%**

**OS Amenities:** Over 100 acres of conservation/protected lands comprised of parcels enrolled in Chapter 61A, water district conservation and Shaw Dairy Farm APR.

**Recreation Amenities:** The Boule' Memorial Esplanade and Parker Ave School and Ballfield recreational facilities are located within the boundaries

#### **#5 Environmental Justice Block Group**

##### **Block Group 2, Census Tract 3142, Middlesex County, Massachusetts**

This block group in **Dracut** is an EJ population with the criteria: **Minority**

EJ characteristics of this block group:

- Minority population: **28%**
- Median household income: **\$72,402**  
This is **86%** of the MA MHHI
- Households with language isolation: **0%**

**OS Amenities:** Less than a half-acre of water district protected land.

**Recreation Amenities:** Pleasant Street War Memorial less than a quarter acre park.

#### **#6 Environmental Justice Block Group**

##### **Block Group 5, Census Tract 3143.01, Middlesex County, Massachusetts**

This block group in **Dracut** is an EJ population with the criteria: **Minority**

EJ characteristics of this block group:

- Minority population: **37%**
- Median household income: **\$95,536**  
This is **113%** of the MA MHHI
- Households with language isolation: **4%**

**OS Amenities:** Various private, land trust and town owned parcels including Veterans Memorial Park, Varnum Park, High Fields Meadow CR, and Fox Path II CR comprising approximately 50 acres.

**Recreation Amenities:** None identified.

#### **#7 Environmental Justice Block Group**

##### **Block Group 2, Census Tract 3143.01, Middlesex County, Massachusetts**

This block group in **Dracut** is an EJ population with the criteria: **Income**

EJ characteristics of this block group:

- Minority population: **20%**
- Median household income: **\$38,864**  
This is **46%** of the MA MHHI
- Households with language isolation: **0%**

**OS Amenities:** One town owned parcel in conservation of approximately 2.5 acres.

**Recreation Amenities:** None identified within boundary, but adjacent to Campbell School Recreational Fields.

## Growth and Development Patterns

### *Labor Force*

The labor force is described as those individuals that have a job or are seeking a job, are at least 16 years old and not serving in the military or institutionalized. According to data available from the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD), Dracut had an estimated labor force of 18,199 people in June 2022. This number represents the fourth highest level of Dracut residents actively participating in the labor force since at least 2000, only lower than 2021, 2019 and 2018. Similarly, the employment numbers reached a peak of 18,357 workers in June 2019 before dropping to below 15,000 in June 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As shown in Table 11 on the following page, labor force and employment numbers have fluctuated over the last twenty years, largely due to the impacts of the “dot.com” recession of the early 2000s, the national recession of 2007-2008, and the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.

**Table 11: Labor Force and Unemployment Rate for Dracut, June of 2000-2022**

Year	Labor Force	Employed	Unemployed	Unemployment Rate
<b>2022</b>	18,199	17,554	645	3.5
<b>2021</b>	18,320	17,342	978	5.3
<b>2020</b>	18,085	14,932	3,153	17.4
<b>2019</b>	18,922	18,357	565	3.0
<b>2018</b>	18,786	18,142	644	3.4
<b>2017</b>	18,123	17,495	628	3.5
<b>2016</b>	17,704	17,050	654	3.7
<b>2015</b>	17,458	16,653	805	4.6
<b>2014</b>	17,345	16,335	1,010	5.8
<b>2013</b>	17,091	15,884	1,207	7.1
<b>2012</b>	16,942	15,731	1,211	7.1
<b>2011</b>	16,713	15,424	1,289	7.7
<b>2010</b>	16,934	15,417	1,517	9.0
<b>2009</b>	16,918	15,385	1,533	9.1
<b>2008</b>	16,703	15,804	899	5.4
<b>2007</b>	16,689	15,855	834	5.0
<b>2006</b>	16,624	15,803	821	4.9
<b>2005</b>	16,451	15,638	813	4.9
<b>2004</b>	16,443	15,459	984	6.0
<b>2003</b>	16,598	15,585	1,013	6.1
<b>2002</b>	16,878	15,795	1,083	6.4
<b>2001</b>	16,618	16,037	581	3.5
<b>2000</b>	16,250	15,823	427	2.6

*Source: Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, Labor Force and Unemployment Data*

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the highest June unemployment levels occurred in 2009 and 2010 following the 2007 national recession. At the time, the national recession had the greatest impact on the local labor force and employment numbers since the Depression. From a historical perspective, unemployment rates in Dracut averaged less than 4% at the beginning of 2000. By 2002 unemployment levels began to increase, in part due to the layoffs in the information technology and computer manufacturing fields associated with the “dot.com” recession. Unemployment rates then dropped again during the middle of the decade. With the beginning of the national recession in 2007, unemployment in Dracut began to increase, rising from 5.0% in June 2007 to a June peak of 9.1% in 2009, when 1,579 local

workers were unemployed. Since 2009, unemployment rates had steadily declined to the June 2019 rate of 3.0%, or 0.4% above the June 2000 unemployment levels. However, following the economic slowdown resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, June unemployment rose to 17.4% in 2020 and 3,153 Dracut residents were unemployed. The unemployment rate stabilized and returned to a near pre-pandemic rate of 3.5% by 2022.

Dracut residents work in virtually every industry, from manufacturing and construction to public administration and restaurants. Table 12 below shows the primary employment industries for Dracut residents in 2000 and 2017-2021. This table reflects the changing employment opportunities for Dracut residents since the onset of the national recession and the rebounding economy since the recession. For instance, the number of manufacturing positions decreased from 2,897 in 2000 to 1,953 in 2017-2021, a change of -32.6%. On the other hand, the Education, Health Care and Social Service industry increased the number of positions from 2,967 in 2000 to 4,466 in 2017-2021, or by 50.5%. Other industries that experienced significant growth were Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Accommodation and Food Services (119.6%), Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities (78.9%), Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate (7.3%), and Professional, Scientific, Management, and Administrative and Waste Services (29.4%).

**Table 12: Primary Employment Industries for Dracut Residents in 2000 and 2017-2021**

Industry	2000	2017 - 2021	Percent Change 2000 – 2017/2021
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting, and Mining	68	62	-8.8
Construction	1,106	1,471	33
Manufacturing	2,897	1,953	-32.6
Wholesale Trade	581	405	-30.1
Retail Trade	1,624	1,596	-1.7
Transportation, Warehousing, and Utilities	641	1,147	78.9
Information	612	419	-31.5
Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate (including leasing)	989	1,061	7.3
Professional, Scientific, Management, and Administrative and Waste Services	1,606	2,078	29.4
Educational Services, Health Care, and Social Service	2,967	4,466	50.5
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Accommodation and Food Services	837	1,838	119.6
Other services, except Public Administration	597	434	-27.3
Public Administration	759	781	2.9

*Source: 2000 U.S. Census and 2017-2021 American Community Survey*

Manufacturing remains the second largest employment sector for Dracut residents, despite the 32.6% decline between 2000 and 2017-2021. Decreases in employment have also been experienced in Wholesale Trade (-30.1%), Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting and Mining (-8.8%), and Information (-31.5%) industries.

#### *Major Employers*

The Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development maintains a listing of the largest employers in Dracut and other Massachusetts communities. According to the database, there are four firms in town

that employ 100 or more employees, though when combined the public schools also employ more than 100 employees in total. The Town's major employers are further depicted in Table 13.

**Table 13: Major Employers in Dracut**

Company	Employees	Industry
Brox Industries Inc	100-249	Manufacturing
Lowell General Hospital Corp	100-249	Healthcare
Dakota Systems Inc	100-249	Wholesale Trade
Majilite Corp	100-249	Manufacturing
Brookside Elementary School	50-99	Educational Services
Campbell Elementary	50-99	Educational Services
Dracut Middle School	50-99	Educational Services
Dracut Senior High School	50-99	Educational Services
Englesby Intermediate School	50-99	Educational Services
Joseph A Campbell Elementary	50-99	Educational Services
LAER Realty Partners	50-99	Real Estate Rental and Leasing
Tavern At Lenzi's	50-99	Accommodation and Food Services
Old Dominion Freight Line	50-99	Transportation and Warehousing
Poland Spring Water	50-99	Retail Trade
Richardson Middle School	50-99	Educational Services
Scola's Restaurant	50-99	Accommodation and Food Services
Toupin Rigging Co	50-99	Construction
XPO Logistics	50-99	Transportation and Warehousing

*Source: Department of Economic Research, using data provided by data axle 5/3/2023*

## Land Use Development Patterns and Trends

Land use in Dracut has largely followed the historic patterns laid out prior to the establishment of zoning and land use planning. Dracut residents often refer to areas of town by their traditional village designations: Collinsville, Dracut Center, East Dracut, Kenwood, and the Navy Yard. These historic neighborhoods that define the Town can still be recognized, although in some cases their distinctions are fading over time. The historically denser areas of western and southern Dracut have grown more residential and suburban as the population has expanded, while eastern Dracut has retained more rural character, even though several of the Town's larger industrial and commercial sites are located along Route 113.

Table 14 summarizes the changes in land use from 1971 to 2016. This data was compiled by the University of Massachusetts Amherst through aerial photo interpretation and by NMCOG GIS through interpretation of recent aerial photography. The 2016 land use data is graphically displayed on Map 3, Land Use 2016. This information reflects the amount of land covered by a specific use based on physical attributes and is not parcel specific.

**Table 14: Land Use Development Patterns in Dracut: 1971 to 2016 (in acres)**

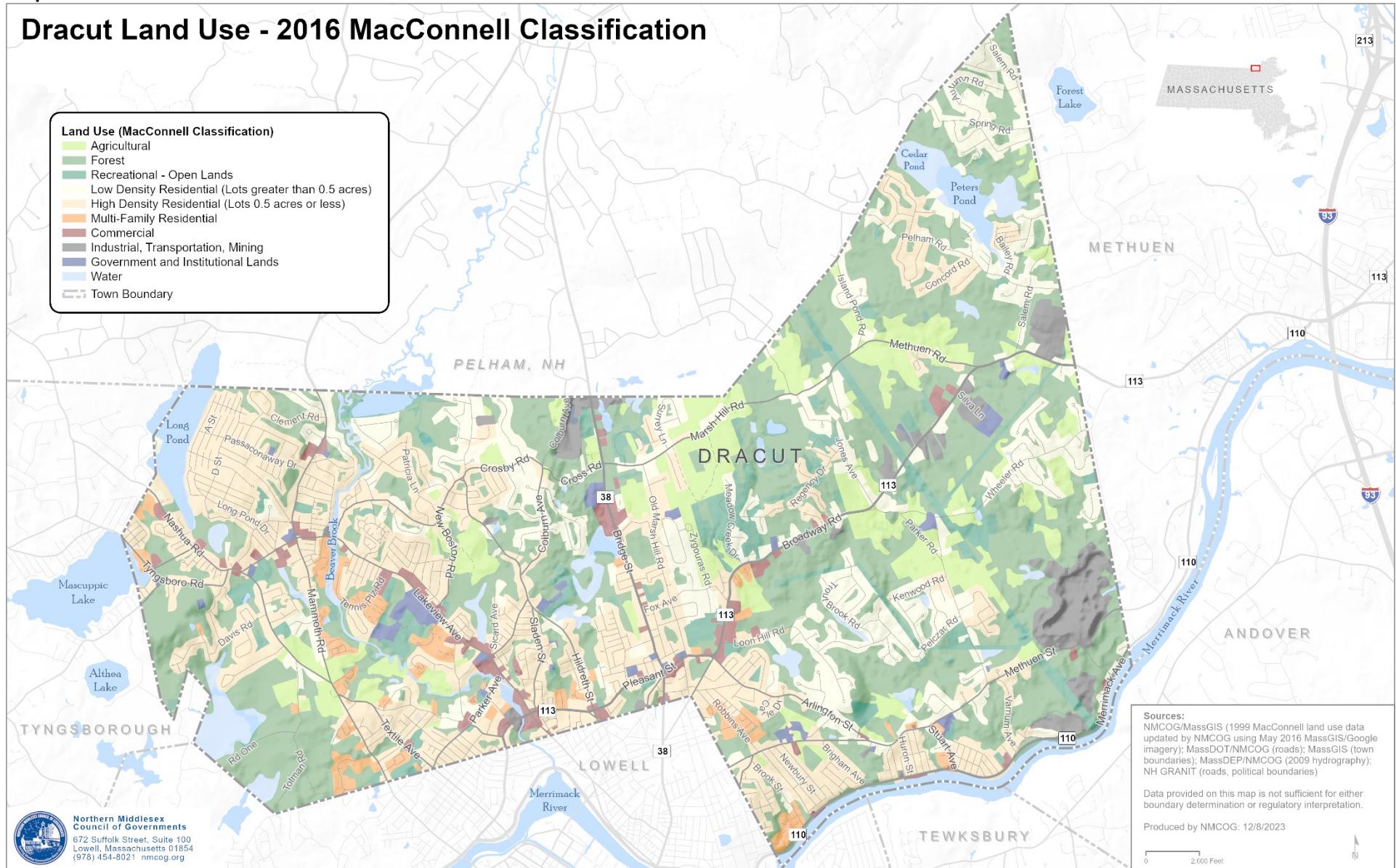
Land Use	1971	1985	1999	2008	2016	Percent Change 1971 - 2016	Percent of Total 2016
Commercial	135.64	188.20	260.39	262.01	279.06	105.74%	2.03%
Industrial	313.31	400.04	461.45	446.56	436.34	39.27%	3.18%
Residential	2,819.48	3,904.69	4,864.27	5,390.06	5,591.89	98.33%	40.78%
Government and Institutional	102.12	210.80	214.03	125.80	149.98	46.86%	1.09%
<b>Developed</b>	<b>3,370.55</b>	<b>4,703.73</b>	<b>5,800.14</b>	<b>6,224.43</b>	<b>6,457.28</b>	<b>91.58%</b>	<b>47.09%</b>
Agricultural	2,433.51	2,141.63	1,614.53	1,402.23	1,277.44	-47.51%	9.32%
Other Undeveloped	7,865.75	6,824.45	6,255.15	6,086.68	5,978.61	-23.99%	43.60%
<b>Undeveloped</b>	<b>10,299.26</b>	<b>8,966.08</b>	<b>7,869.68</b>	<b>7,488.90</b>	<b>7,256.06</b>	<b>-29.55%</b>	<b>52.91%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>13,669.82</b>	<b>13,669.82</b>	<b>13,669.82</b>	<b>13,713.34</b>	<b>13,713.34</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

*Source: University of Massachusetts, MacConnell Land Use Data--2008 and 2016 land use data was updated from 1999 MacConnell land use data, using 2008 and 2016 aerial imagery*

The Town of Dracut contains approximately 13,713 acres, of which 13,280 acres are land and 433 acres are bodies of water. In 2016, developed land comprised 6,457 acres, or 47.1% of the town's total area. Residential development accounted for approximately 86.6% of all developed land, a vast majority being single-family dwellings. Overall, there has been a nearly 92% increase in developed land since 1971, and an 11% increase since 1999. Much of this development has come at the expense of agricultural land, which has decreased approximately 47.5% since 1971 and now accounts for 9.3% of the total land area.

## Map 3 Land Use 2016

## Dracut Land Use - 2016 MacConnell Classification



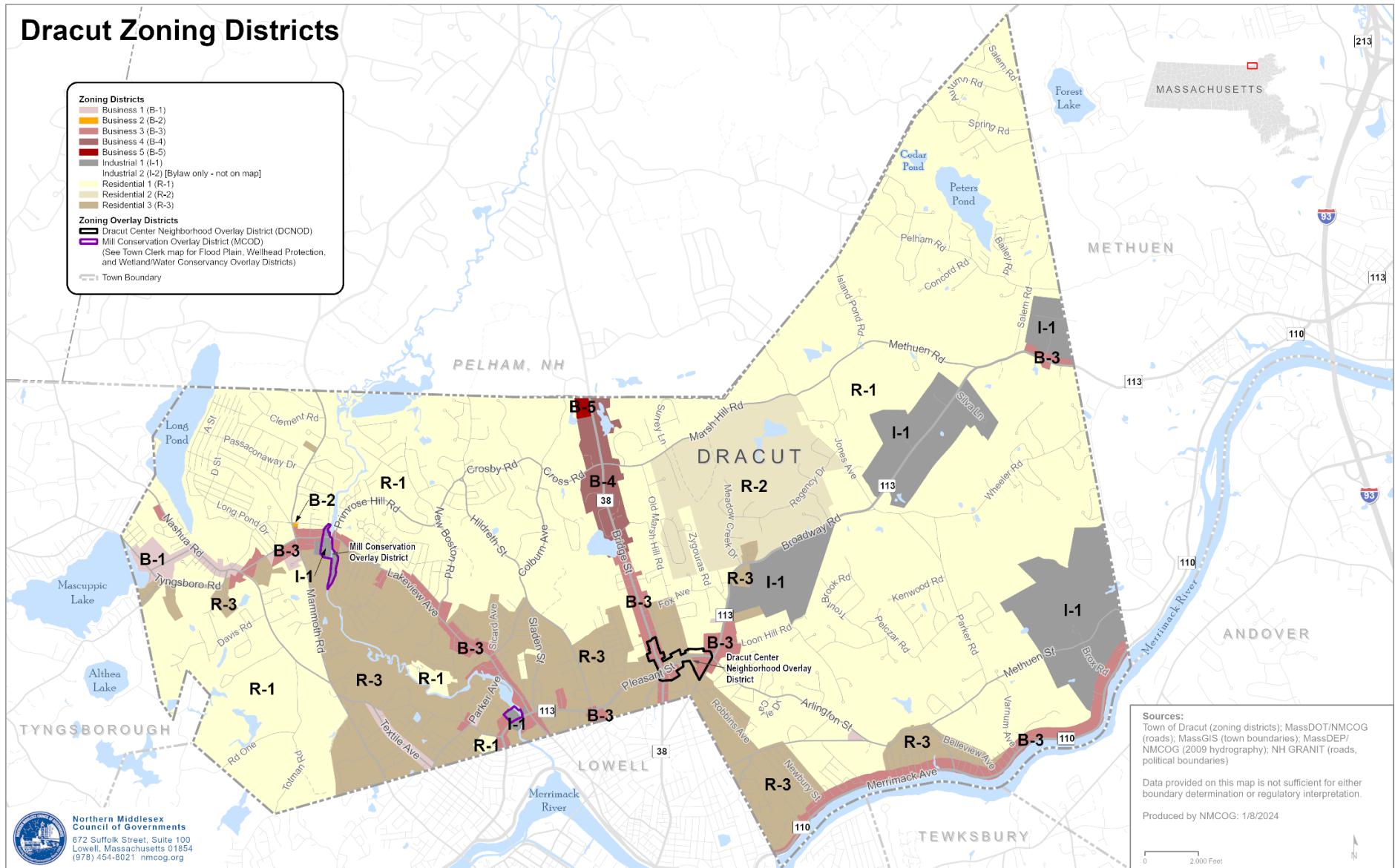
*Zoning*

Dracut regulates development through zoning, subdivision control, Board of Health regulations, and wetlands regulations. Given its role in guiding the development of vacant land and reuse of developed land, zoning has the largest impact on land use among these regulatory tools. The Town's first zoning bylaw and zoning map were adopted by Town Meeting in February 1946, and over seventy-five amendments to the bylaw have been approved by the Attorney General since the 1980s. The Planning Board and the Board of Selectmen serve as the special permit granting authorities within the town's Zoning Bylaw, and the Building Inspector is responsible for enforcement of the bylaw. Zoning districts are shown in Map 4 on the following page.

To encourage open space, preserve historical resources, protect water supplies, and promote efficient provision of municipal services, Dracut's Open Space Residential Development (OSRD) allows for the issuance of a Special Permit for flexible site design with reduced lots sizes and dimensional requirements. To be eligible, parcels must have a minimum of five acres in the R1 district or ten acres in the R2 district. The total number of building lots in an OSRD must be no more than the number of lots that would be allowed under a conventional development plan. If located in the R1 district, the minimum lot size allowed is 20,000 square feet, while lots must be at least 30,000 square feet in the R2 district. The development must also provide an area of common land not less than the total area by which the building lots were reduced below that required for a conventional subdivision.

## Map 4 Zoning Districts

# Dracut Zoning Districts



## Infrastructure

### *Sewer Capacity*

The municipal sewer system services about 95% of Dracut's population. Existing sewered areas include most of Dracut. The remainder of the town is supported by on-site septic systems, primarily located in the vicinity of Jones Avenue, Methuen Road, Island Pond Road and the northern portion of Marsh Hill Road. Discharge from the sewer system is sent to the Greater Lowell Wastewater Utility (GLWWU) and Greater Lawrence Sanitary District (GLSD).

Dracut has a memorandum of agreement for 11% of the GLWWU's capacity, or 3.6 million gallons per day (MGD) of capacity. Of the 3.6 MGD, Dracut must provide Tyngsborough with 1.0 MGD, based on a 1977 inter-municipal agreement (IMA). Currently, Dracut is utilizing about 2.765 MGD of its allocation (0.4 MGD from Tyngsborough), leaving Dracut with 0.235 MGD and Tyngsborough 0.6 MGD of sewage capacity.

The Dracut sewer expansion program has been a model for long-term, sustainable infrastructure development. Over the past 40 years, 32 major sewer construction contracts have been completed, providing sewer service to more than 8,700 residences and businesses in Dracut. These projects have closely followed a phased sewer construction program that was carefully developed as part of a Wastewater Facilities Plan completed in 1982 and a Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan (CWMP) that was completed in 2001 and updated in 2007.

The CWMP, which received final MEPA approval in May 2007, was a plan to sewer most of the Town over approximately twenty years, which has been realized. Currently, the Dracut Sewer Department has completed inspection of approximately 40% of its sewer mains, utilizing closed circuit television video (CCTV) to identify potential Inflow and Infiltration (I&I). The removal of I&I will help the Town to stay within its Inter-municipal agreement with the City of Lowell.

### *Water Supply and Protection*

Dracut obtains public drinking water from four towns organized in two different water supply districts. Private wells are still used in the rural parts of the town. The Dracut Water Supply District covers the town west of Route 38 and a small portion directly east of Route 38. This includes the Collinsville, Navy Yard, and Dracut Center neighborhoods. The District draws its water from a well field in Dracut, a well field in Tyngsborough, and it also purchases water as needed, but not more than 1 MGD, from the City of Lowell. This District supplies approximately 9,000 households, including about 1,000 residents of Tyngsborough. Tests indicate that there is little likelihood of new wells in this water district. The Kenwood Water District distributes water to approximately 1,500 households in East Dracut. Most of the water comes from the Merrimack River and is provided through the City of Lowell. A small part of East Dracut obtains water from the Town of Methuen.

### *Transportation Network*

Dracut is located close to major interstate and state highways, including Routes 3, I-93, and I-495, but there are no major interstate or limited-access highways within the town. However, State Routes 110, 113, and 38 traverse the Town.

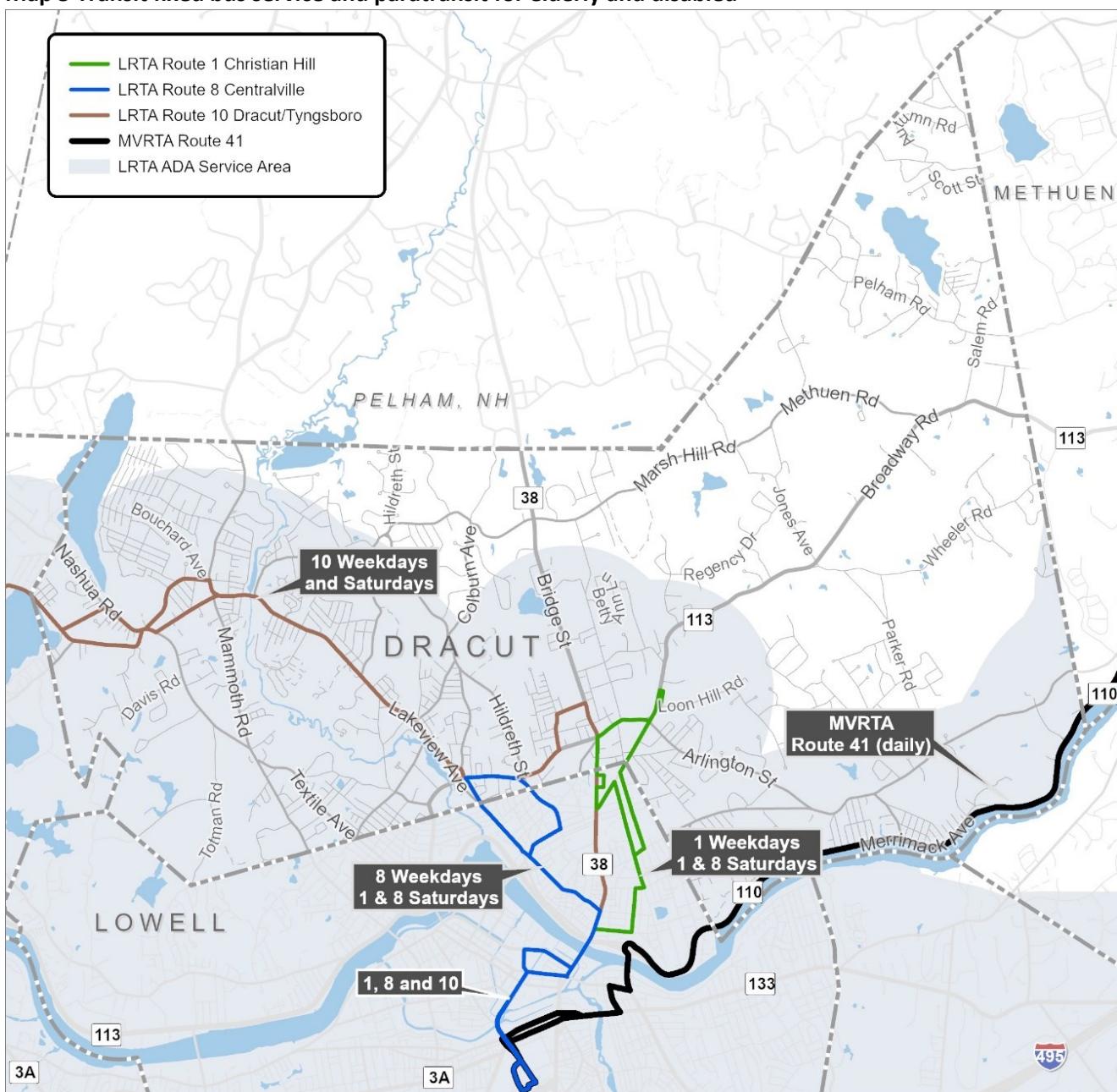
All roadways are classified by both the State and Federal transportation agencies according to the road's function. Principal Arterials carry high volumes of traffic and provide connections to other major roadways and adjoining communities. The interstate highways, Routes I-93 and I-495 provide access to Dracut. Route 38 and Route 110 are classified as Urban Principal Arterials. Route 113 is classified as an Urban

Minor Arterial meaning that its function is secondary to the Principal Arterials, serving primarily as a link between distinct urban geographic and/or economic regions or as a link between two Principal Arterials. Partially as a result of this roadway layout, Dracut has not yet attracted major non-residential development.

The Lowell Regional Transit Authority provides fixed bus service as well as paratransit for the elderly and disabled, as shown on Map 5. Dracut residents can access commuter rail service to Boston at the Lowell Gallagher Terminal Station or the North Billerica station.

The lack of bicycle and hiking paths and trails, along with the lack of sidewalks, has been previously identified as an issue in the prior survey distributed for the Open Space and Recreational Plan.

**Map 5 Transit fixed bus service and paratransit for elderly and disabled**



**Sources:**

NMCOG (LRTA and MVRTA bus routes, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) service area); MassDOT/NMCOG (roads, town boundaries); MassDEP/NMCOG (hydrography); NH GRANIT (roads, political boundaries)  
Data provided on this map is not sufficient for either boundary determination or regulatory interpretation.

Produced by NMCOG: 1/8/2024



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## Section 4: Environmental Inventory and Analysis

### Geology, Soils, and Topography

Dracut's pre-glacial landscape, characterized by pronounced hills and valleys, underwent significant modifications attributed to glacial abrasion and the subsequent deposition of alluvial materials by retreating glaciers during the ice age. This alluvium, referred to as glacial till and comprised of clay, sand, silt, and gravel, now overlays the town's bedrock strata. Noteworthy vestiges of this glacial activity, including kettles, kame terraces, eskers, drumlins, and outwash plains, are most conspicuous in the Kenwood section of Dracut, primarily located in the southeastern quadrant. An illustrative example of a drumlin, emblematic of elongated ridges formed by glacial sedimentation, can be observed at Loon Hill within this locale. The terrain features of Poplar Hill and Burns Hill exemplify drumloid hills, which manifest as rounded, asymmetric landforms marked by clustered occurrence and primarily composed of till and clay. Eskers, resulting from sediment accumulation by subglacial streams, find their presence along the periphery of Peters Pond.

Dracut's water bodies were created by the dissolution of glacial ice, which created substantial depressions that subsequently filled with water. Concurrently, sand and gravel sedimentation—termed alluvium—lines the waterfront of the Merrimack River. This sedimentation has been attributed to historical hydrodynamic processes. While Dracut does not boast exceptional or distinct geological features differentiating it from the encompassing region, its topography reflects the enduring imprints of glacial processes and their geological legacies.

Dracut has three primary soil series. Montauk prevails, particularly in the northeastern and western zones, showcasing a fine sandy, stony loam. Its constraints vary from minor to severe for woodlands, wildlife, and residential, commercial, or industrial uses. Windsor soil, found in East Dracut and surrounding areas, is a loamy sand with slight limitations for residential, commercial, or industrial purposes, yet offering potential as a sand and gravel source. The Scituate series, prominent in the northeastern and western sectors, presents a stony, fine composition, with constraints ranging from slight to severe for specific wildlife, recreational uses, and potential developments.

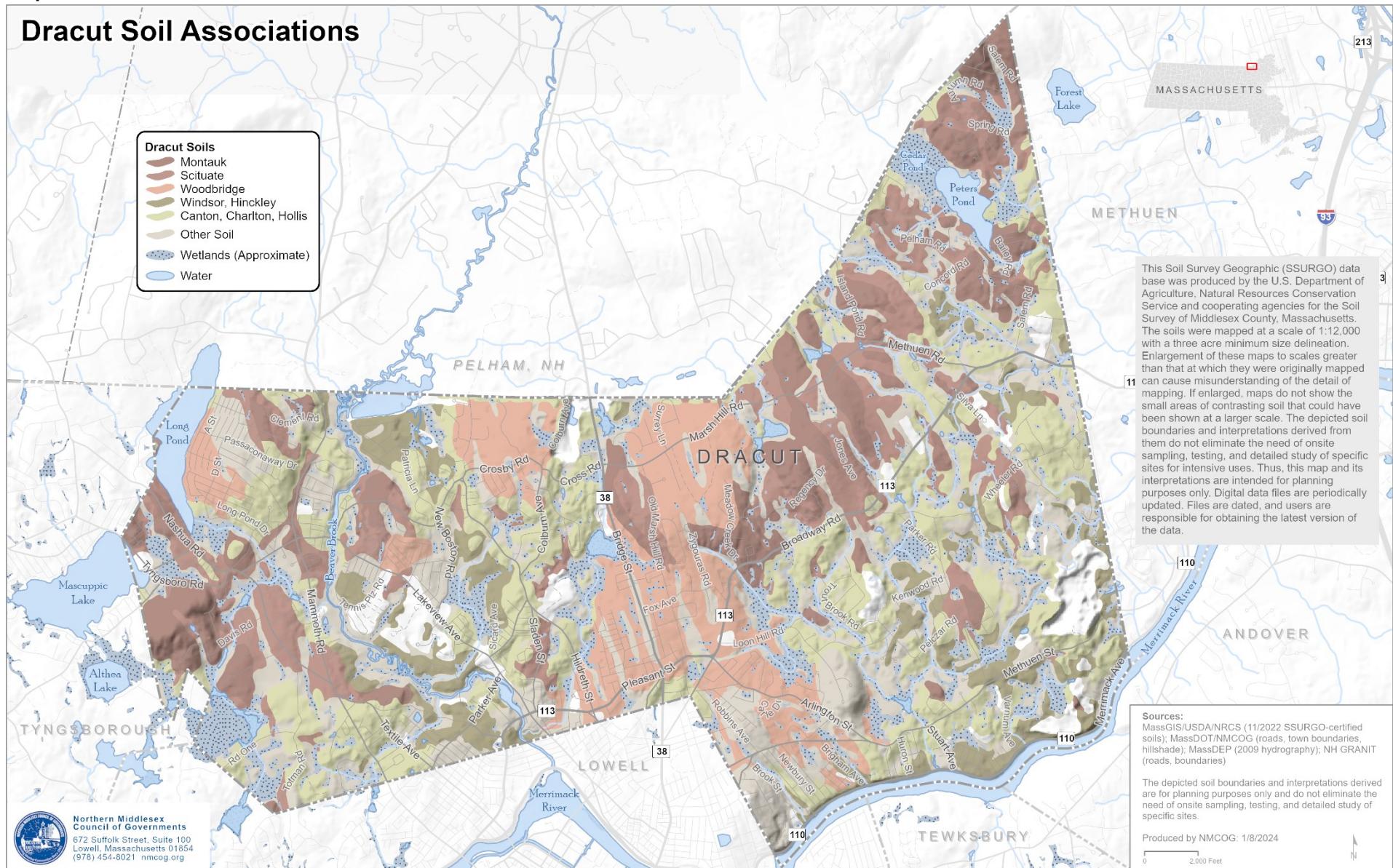
The geological and soil composition of Dracut's terrain has exerted a pivotal influence on the town's development and land utilization patterns. Positioned in the northeastern and western zones of Dracut, the Montauk and Scituate soils, distinguished by their intrinsic hydrological characteristics with slow permeability and stony surface and subsurface features, have resulted in limitations for development. As a result, these areas have experienced moderate development. In East Dracut, the Windsor soils, characterized by their loamy sand composition, have emerged as a fertile substrate, facilitating agricultural activities spanning crop cultivation and pasture management. Concurrently, the eastern sector has emerged as a locale harboring sand and gravel quarries, capitalizing on the gravel and fill materials sourced from the Windsor soils.

Dracut's soil composition poses challenges for on-site sewage systems. As per the 1998 Comprehensive Wastewater Management Plan, over 90% of the Town's soils are generally unsuitable for septic systems, even in areas where such systems are already in place. That said, the entire town is connected to the public separate sewer system, which serves 95% of the population. The Lowell Regional Wastewater Utility manages wastewater in Western and Central Dracut, with a capacity of 3.6 million gallons per day (MGD) conveyed directly through Lowell. Meanwhile, East Dracut relies on the Greater Lawrence Sanitary District, securing a 0.5 MGD sewage capacity conveyed to Lawrence via Methuen.

Leveraging the distinctive geological attributes of Dracut, the Open Space and Recreation Plan aligns with the town's natural landscape. Given the prevalence of the Montauk, Scituate, and Windsor soil series, strategic planning should prioritize areas that accommodate the constraints and opportunities presented by these soil types. Intelligently allocating recreational facilities and green spaces in regions with lesser soil limitations, such as the Windsor soils of East Dracut, could foster vibrant agricultural and recreational landscapes. While areas characterized by the Montauk and Scituate soils may necessitate judicious land use planning, their unique features can potentially offer scenic trails, educational platforms, and wildlife habitat conservation. Integrating these considerations into the town's open space and recreation strategy can harmoniously balance the enhancement of community well-being while respecting the geological underpinnings of Dracut's terrain.

## Map 6 Soils

## Dracut Soil Associations



## Landscape Character

In Dracut's gently rolling terrain, elevations rarely surpass 200 feet. Northeastern heights are represented by Poplar Hill (380 feet), while western prominences like Whortleberry Hill (363 feet) and the Reservoir (322 feet) mark the town's borders. Dracut's landscape encompasses open farmlands, meadows, water bodies, lakes, and woodlands, lending a diverse character to the area. The contrast is evident between East Dracut's rustic expanse—comprising farms and woodlands—and the more developed urban neighborhoods to the south and west, extending from Lowell. The Lowell-Dracut-Tyngsborough State Forest covers 528 acres in the southwest, predominantly featuring forests and wetlands. The Merrimack River defines the southeastern edge of Town, while Beaver Brook's wetland corridor offers vital habitat and recreational space. Long Pond, Peters Pond, and Lake Mascuppic further enrich the Town's natural appeal. Notable viewpoints include Poplar Hill in the northeast, and Whortleberry Hill and the Reservoir to the west, providing panoramic views of Dracut's unique landscape.

## Water Resources

The Town of Dracut is entirely within the Merrimack River drainage basin. Among the various tributaries within Dracut, Beaver Brook holds particular significance. Dracut's landscape is partitioned into distinct watersheds - the Merrimack River local watershed extending over parts of West Dracut and most of East Dracut, while the Beaver Brook sub-watershed predominantly covers western and central sectors. The town features notable ponds and lakes that contribute to its hydrological landscape, covering an area of approximately half a square mile. The Merrimack River, the state's second-largest river, courses through the town, constituting its southern border and warranting protection for fish, aquatic life, wildlife, and recreation. While the river meets Class B Stream requisites during low flow, occasional non-compliance during wet weather and storm conditions stems from combined sewer outflows and nonpoint source pollution.

Several perennial streams intersect Dracut en route to the Merrimack River. Beaver Brook, Trout Brook, Richardson Brook, Bartlett Brook, Peppermint Brook, and Double Brook all fall within the state's classification of low flow waters, precluding pollutant discharges. Beaver Brook, originating in the western part of Dracut and flowing south from New Hampshire, serves as a habitat for fish and wildlife and an agricultural irrigation source. Trout, Richardson, and Beaver Brooks are stocked with trout by the State.

Within western Dracut, Lake Mascuppic (215 acres, with around 6 acres within Dracut) and Long Pond (163 acres, with about 123 acres in Dracut) stand as sizable water bodies with developed shorelines, offering extensive recreational activities including fishing, swimming, and boating. Peters Pond (77 acres), more delicate in nature, primarily serves as a wildlife and fish habitat due to terrain constraints. Cedar Pond (12 acres), situated north of Peters Pond, thrives within a wetland and white cedar forest backdrop, providing excellent wildlife habitat despite limited human accessibility. The Dunlap Sanctuary's Big Pond (10 acres), yet another thriving habitat area, is accessible via a public walking trail.

Public access to Lake Mascuppic is facilitated through a Town-owned beach and State-owned boat launch. Long Pond provides access via a leased beach land administered by the Long Pond Park Improvement Association (LPPA), available to residents for a nominal fee. Peters Pond provides access via a boat ramp off of Eliot Street.

The 2020 Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Plan identified three (3) dams on Beaver Brook, for action. They are known as the Beaver Brook, Collinsville and Victory Lane dams. The Town secured grant funding

from the state's Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs to put toward achieving climate resiliency by substantially repairing or removing the three dams on Beaver Brook.

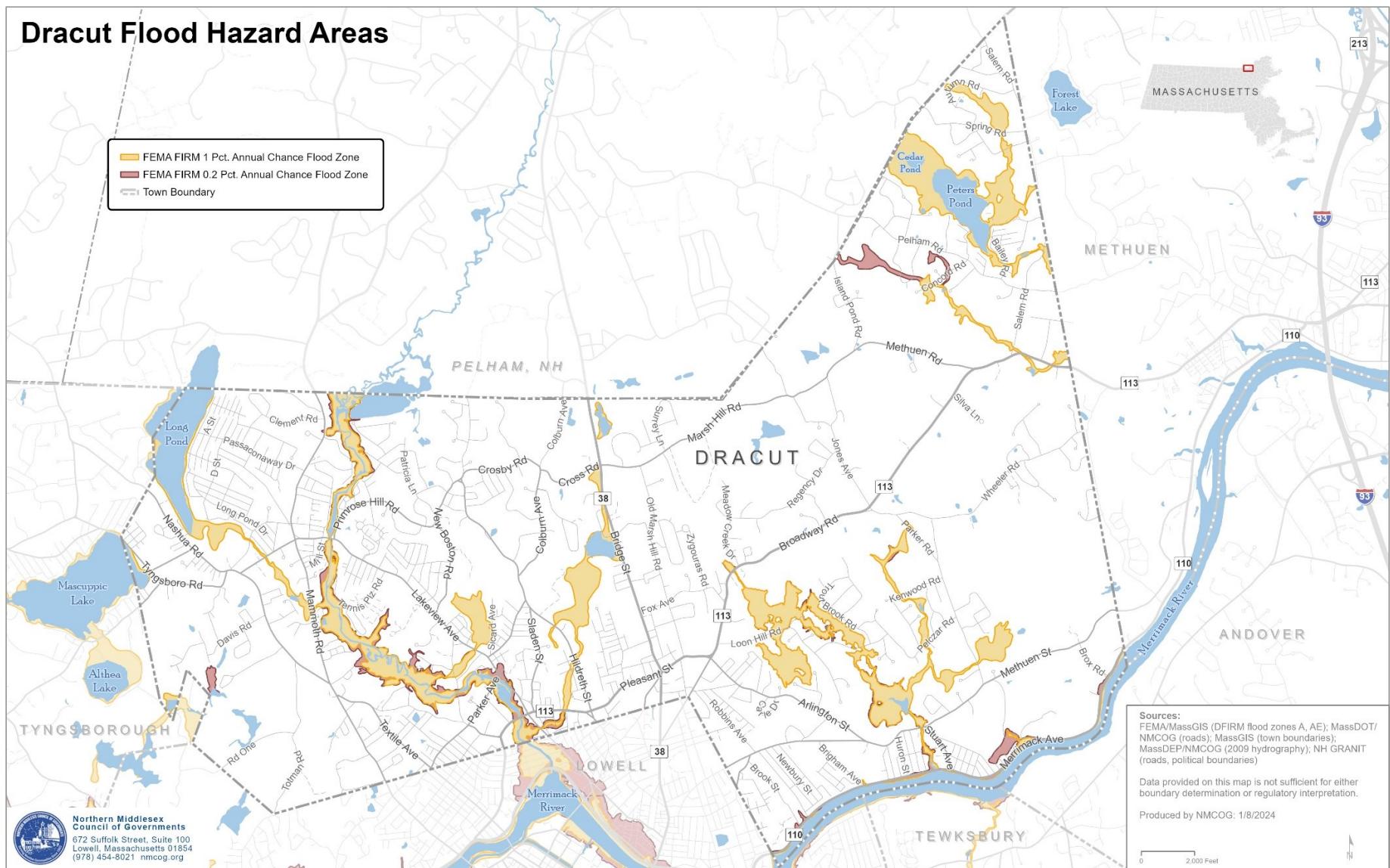
Dracut encompasses an approximate total of 377 acres of wetlands, equivalent to nearly 3% of the Town's overall land area. Over half of these wetlands are non-forested, although substantial stretches of wooded wetlands persist in the eastern sector of the Town. The size of individual wetlands in Dracut range from less than one acre to approximately 125 acres. These wetlands primarily interconnect with various waterways and aquatic features, encompassing notable hydrological elements such as the Merrimack River, Lake Mascuppic, Long Pond, Peters Pond, Cedar Pond, Beaver Brook, Richardson Brook, and Trout Brook.

Approximately ninety percent of Dracut's population is supplied by public water systems, distributed through two separate water districts: Dracut Water Supply District along the Merrimack River in Tyngsborough, and Kenwood Supply District in the town's eastern region. Primary aquifers, located primarily in riparian bottomlands, are concentrated in two zones: the southeastern corner extending to Nickel Mine Hill's wetlands, and the Beaver Brook area and its tributaries, down to the river. Limited in size, these aquifers might necessitate future reliance on Merrimack River for expanded water resources in the future.

Finally, the flood hazard areas susceptible to the 100-year flood risk are distributed across various sections as delineated and shown in Map 7:

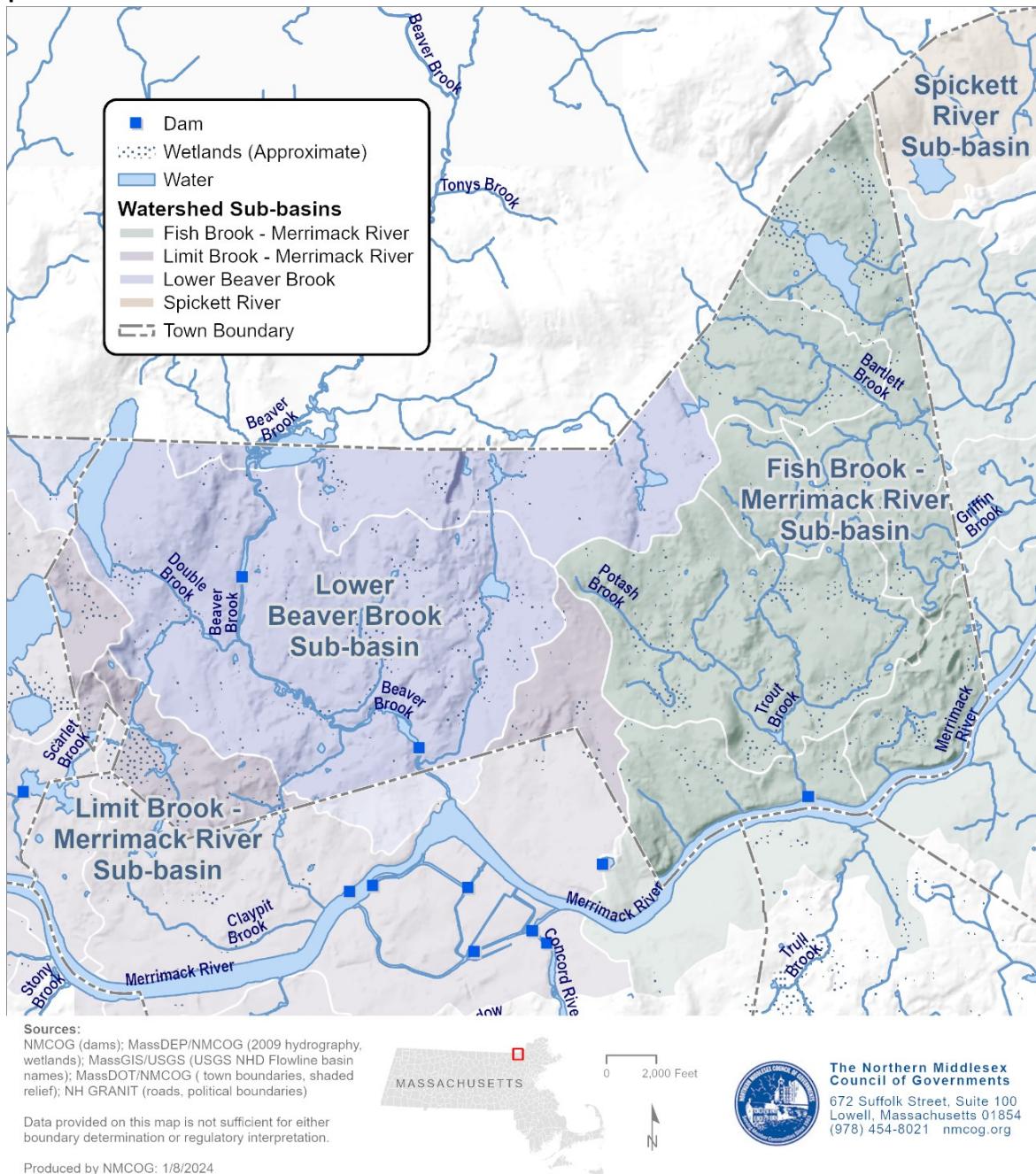
- Kelly Road
- Tennis Plaza
- Nottingham Circle
- Peters Pond and its accompanying wetlands
- Cedar Pond and its linked wetlands
- Bartlett Brook, with particular emphasis on the downstream stretch
- Richardson Brook and its associated wetlands
- Trout Brooks along with their corresponding wetlands and tributaries
- Long Pond
- Double Brook
- Beaver Brook and its tributaries
- Lake Mascuppic

## Map 7 Flood Hazard Areas



Considering Dracut's intricate water resources, a balanced approach to open space and recreation development is vital. Preserving sensitive watershed areas, including aquifer recharge zones and wetlands, is essential for maintaining water quality and ecological diversity. To foster a harmonious relationship between residents and nature, the creation of passive recreational spaces around water bodies, accompanied by well-planned trails and educational signage, is recommended. When designating active recreation areas, prioritizing lower flood hazard zones is advised to ensure community safety and minimize environmental impact. Collaboration with water management authorities and environmental agencies is crucial to ensure sustainable practices and conservation alignment. Integrating open space and recreation development with water resource preservation will create a resilient environment, catering to residents' needs while safeguarding the town's natural water assets for future generations.

#### Map 8 Water Resources



## Vegetation

Dracut's extensive forested areas include the Lowell-Dracut-Tyngsborough State Forest in the southwest, substantial expanses near Peters Pond and Cedar Pond in the northeast, and the unique Atlantic White Cedar Forest near Peters Pond. Additional forested spaces comprise over half of the 100-acre Dunlap Sanctuary.

Dracut's forests host a blend of hardwoods and softwoods, with prevalent species such as white pine and red pine among the softwoods, and oak, beech, maple, elm, birch, aspen, and hickory among the hardwoods. Complementing this mix, the understory includes cherry, honey locust, sumac, shadbush, sassafras, and other species. These forested areas serve as vital protectors of sizeable second growth vegetation, with the Lowell-Dracut-Tyngsboro State Forest serving as a prominent green space within the Town.

The vegetation distribution mirrors the topography and geography of the town, with larger patches prevalent on steep slopes, near wetlands in the east around Richardson and Trout Brooks, and within the Dunlap Sanctuary. Wet areas are central by Peppermint and Beaver Brooks, as well as in the west near Long Pond, Lake Mascuppic, and the State Forest. The diversity of plant communities within the town provides food and habitat for wildlife.

The "urban forest" encompasses smaller patches and individual trees in backyards, between subdivisions, along roads, and in town parks, becoming increasingly significant as larger woodland patches dwindle. Invasive exotic species like multiflora rose, European buckthorn, Oriental bittersweet, and purple loosestrife are widespread, particularly along hedgerows, roadsides, and wetlands. Many of these plant species are cultivated by residents. Although visually attractive, they are non-native and can disrupt the local habitat due to the lack of natural predators. Given the prevalence of yard plantings and vegetable gardens, educating residents about the impact of these invasive species is crucial for preventing their unchecked proliferation. Without management efforts, these invasive species will threaten native species.

The following is a partial list of plants believed to be present within the Town:

**Table 15: Dracut Flora Species List**

<b>Trees:</b>	<b>Shrubs</b>	<b>Herbaceous Plants</b>
Black Oak ( <i>Quercus veluntina</i> )	Mountain laurel ( <i>Kalmia latifolia</i> )	Bracken fern ( <i>Pteridium aquilinum</i> )
Scarlet Oak ( <i>Quercus coccinea</i> )	Buttonbush ( <i>Cephalanthus occidentalis</i> )	Cinnamon fern ( <i>Osmunda cinnamomea</i> )
Red Oak ( <i>Quercus rubrum</i> )	Sweet pepper bush ( <i>Clethra alnifolia</i> )	Ostrich fern ( <i>Matteuccia struthiopteris</i> )
Chestnut Oak ( <i>Quercus prinus</i> )	Spicebush ( <i>Lindera benzoin</i> )	Christmas fern ( <i>Polystichum acrostichoides</i> )
White Oak ( <i>Quercus alba</i> )	Swamp azalea ( <i>Rhododendron viscosum</i> )	Sensitive fern ( <i>Onoclea sensibilis</i> )
Pin Oak ( <i>Quercus palustris</i> )	Swamp candles ( <i>Lysimachia terrestris</i> )	Royal fern ( <i>Osmunda regalis</i> )
Swamp white oak ( <i>Quercus bicolor</i> )	Arrow wood ( <i>Viburnum dentatum</i> var. <i>lucidum</i> )	Pink lady slipper ( <i>Cypripedium acaule</i> )

<b>Trees:</b>	<b>Shrubs</b>	<b>Herbaceous Plants</b>
Scrub Oak ( <i>Quercus ilicifolia</i> )	Black willow ( <i>Salix nigra</i> )	Club mosses ( <i>Lycopodium spp</i> )
Red Maple ( <i>Acer rubrum</i> )	Cottonwood ( <i>Populus deltoids</i> )	False nettle ( <i>Boehmeria cylindrica</i> )
Sugar Maple ( <i>Acer saccharum</i> )	Witch hazel ( <i>Hamamelis virginiana</i> )	Canada mayflower ( <i>Maianthemum canadense</i> )
Silver maple ( <i>Acer saccharinum</i> )	Lowbush blueberries ( <i>Vaccinium angustifolium</i> and <i>V. pallidum</i> )	White wood aster ( <i>Aster divaricatus</i> )
Grey Birch ( <i>Betula populifolia</i> )	Highbush blueberries ( <i>Vaccinium corymbosum</i> )	Indian cucumber ( <i>Medeola virginiana</i> )
White Birch ( <i>Betula papyrifera</i> )	Speckled alder ( <i>Alnus incana</i> spp. <i>rugosa</i> )	Water parsnip ( <i>Sium suave</i> )
Black Birch ( <i>Betula lenta</i> )	Smooth alder ( <i>Alnus serrulata</i> )	Wintergreen ( <i>Gaultheria procumbens</i> )
River Birch ( <i>Betula nigra</i> )	Winterberry ( <i>Ilex verticillata</i> )	Wild sarsaparilla ( <i>Aralia nudicaulis</i> )
Black Cherry ( <i>Prunus serotina</i> )	Nannyberry ( <i>Viburnum lentago</i> )	Poison Ivy ( <i>Toxicodendron radicans</i> )
Black gum ( <i>Nyssa sylvatica</i> )	Huckleberry ( <i>Gaylussacia baccata</i> )	Poison sumac ( <i>Toxicodendron vernix</i> )
White Pine ( <i>Pinus strobus</i> )	Elderberry ( <i>Sambucus Canadensis</i> )	Skunk cabbage ( <i>Symplocarpus foetidus</i> )
Sassafras ( <i>Sassafras albidum</i> )	Partridgeberry ( <i>Mitchella repens</i> )	Marsh marigold ( <i>Caltha palustris</i> )
Flowering Dogwood ( <i>Cornus florida</i> )	Maple-leaved Viburnum ( <i>Viburnum acerifolium</i> )	Meadowsweet ( <i>Spiraea alba</i> var. <i>latifolia</i> )
Silky dogwood ( <i>Cornus amomum</i> )	American Hazelnut ( <i>Corylus American</i> )	Maleberry ( <i>Ilyonia ligustrina</i> )
European buckthorn ( <i>Rhamnus frangula</i> )		Star flower ( <i>Trientalis borealis</i> )
Shadblush ( <i>Amelanchier arborea</i> )		Perfoliate bellwort ( <i>Uvularia perfoliata</i> )
White Ash ( <i>Fraxinus Americana</i> )		False Solomon's Seal ( <i>Maianthemum canadense</i> )
Green Ash ( <i>Fraxinus pennsylvanica</i> )		Early meadow rue ( <i>Thalictrum dioicum</i> )
Aspen ( <i>Populus tremuloides</i> )		False foxgloves ( <i>Aureolaria flava</i> , <i>A. pedicularia</i> , and <i>A. virginica</i> )
Big-toothed Aspen ( <i>Populus grandidentata</i> )		Little blue stem grass ( <i>Schizachyrium scoparium</i> )

<b>Trees:</b>	<b>Shrubs</b>	<b>Herbaceous Plants</b>
Chestnut ( <i>Castanea dentata</i> )		Pennsylvania sedge ( <i>Carex pensylvanica</i> )
Hemlock ( <i>Tsuga canadensis</i> )		Awned sedge ( <i>Carex crinita</i> )
Beech ( <i>Fagus grandifolia</i> )		Awned sedge ( <i>Carex crinita</i> )
Hickory ( <i>Carya ovata</i> , <i>C. tomentosa</i> , <i>C. glabra</i> , and <i>C. ovalis</i> )		Bugleweeds ( <i>lycopus spp.</i> )
		Poverty grass ( <i>Danthonia spicata</i> )
		Goldenrods ( <i>Solidago</i> and <i>Euthamia spp.</i> )
		Milk weeds ( <i>Asclepias spp.</i> and <i>A. tuberosa</i> )

### Fisheries and Wildlife

Dracut is home to extensive woodlands, wetlands, and open fields that support a diverse array of birds, mammals, and other animals. In addition to more common species, recent sightings have included rare animals such as fishers, otters, moose, and black bears. Notably, the town's grassy pastures annually host nesting flocks of bobolinks, a bird species in decline across the state due to the loss of grassland habitat. Snow buntings can occasionally be spotted in these fields during winter. Each year, various wood warblers pass through Dracut's woodlands during their migratory journeys, while occasional bald eagle sightings along the Merrimack River add to the town's natural beauty. The Lowell-Dracut-Tyngsborough State Forest serves as the largest habitat, with the Dunlap Sanctuary and private woodlands in East Dracut also playing significant roles. Despite increasing suburbanization leading to fragmented natural spaces, the resulting edge habitats at the boundaries of woodlands and grassy pastures continue to support a diverse range of animals.

Dracut's aquatic habitats foster a thriving fish population, including bass, pike, perch, sunfish, and trout, with a noteworthy resurgence of salmon in the Merrimack River, thanks to restoration efforts by the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife and the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department. The Town is also home to several vernal pools, with over a dozen under protection, including some certified with the MassWildlife's Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program. This certification played a significant role in negotiations surrounding the approval of the Meadow Creek Golf Course development. In Appendix F, a comprehensive list of amphibians, reptiles, birds, and mammals can be found, providing insight into the vitality of existing habitats and engaging residents with the local wildlife.

### *Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Species*

Dracut has been identified to host a limited number of rare, threatened, or endangered species by the Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP). The purple milkweed (*Asclepias purpurascens*) is one such threatened plant documented in 1884. Although other potentially rare and endangered plants may exist, they have yet to be officially documented. NHESP has also noted the presence of the Blanding's Turtle and six other animal species of special concern. The northern harrier, often spotted hunting over the open fields of East Dracut, has been proposed for state-threatened bird species listing. Additionally, the sharp-shinned hawk, elderberry beetle, and bald eagle have been observed in East Dracut. The likelihood of the blue-spotted salamander occurring in Dracut is high based

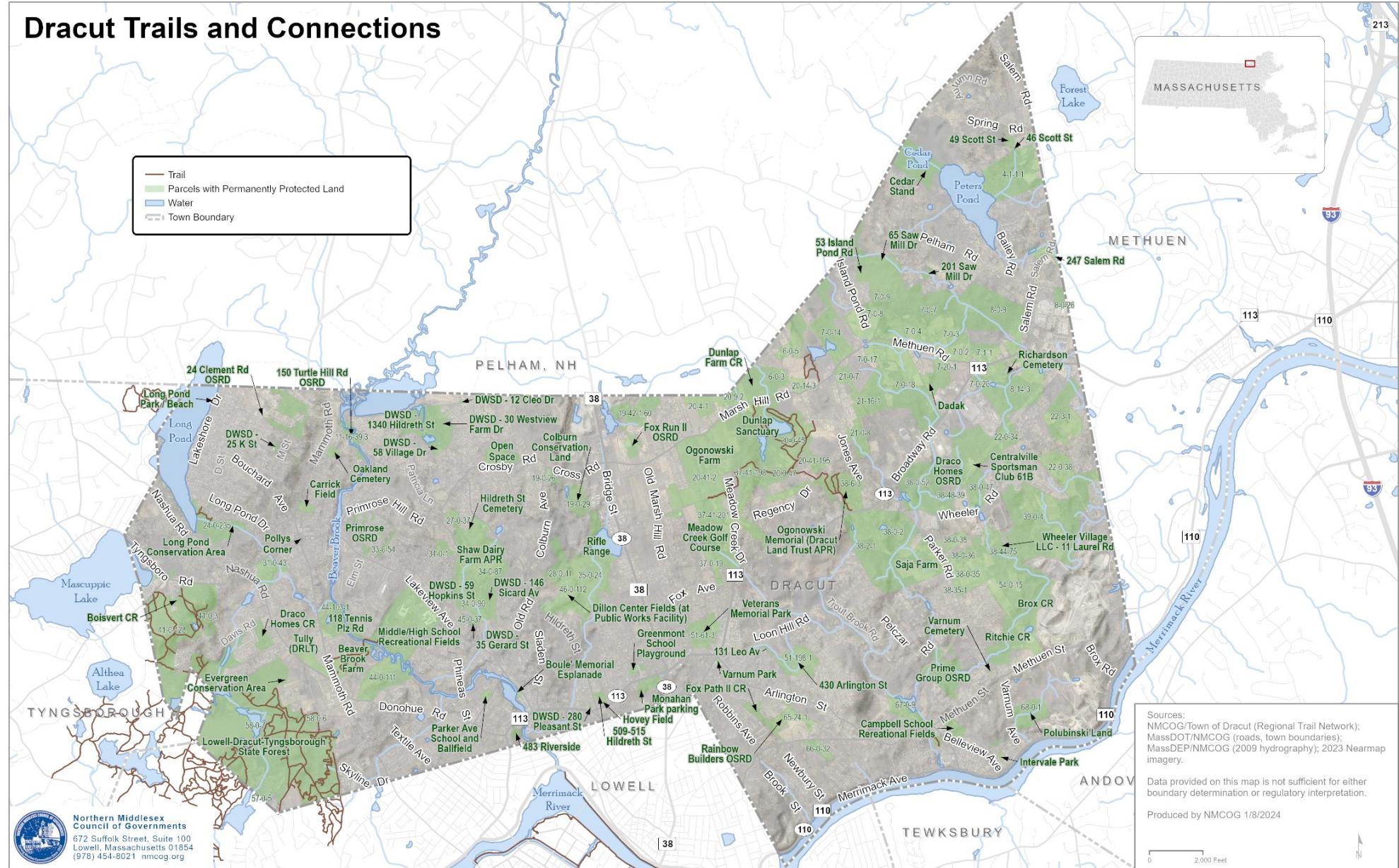
on its range and habitat requirements. Encouraging local surveys of plants in Dracut could facilitate further NHESP listings, as the office largely relies on volunteer-reported sightings of rare and endangered species.

*Wildlife Corridors*

Wildlife corridors, essential for maintaining biodiversity and promoting species movement, are crucial elements of a healthy environment. These connections enable the migration and interbreeding of plants and animals, contributing to the resilience of the landscape amidst climate change. They play a pivotal role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions by storing carbon in native vegetation, thus serving as an invaluable resource for conservation, agriculture, and forestry efforts.

Despite the fragmentation of open spaces in certain areas of Dracut, there remains a strong presence of wetlands, streams, and woodlands to facilitate important wildlife movement. Corridors in parts of Dracut, such as the areas surrounding the Town Landfill and the Peters Pond-Cedar Pond vicinity, offer opportunities for the creation of crucial linkages between fragmented green spaces. Collaborative efforts between Town Officials, the Bay Circuit Alliance, NMCOG, and relevant federal and state agencies are vital in fostering the development of a comprehensive trail network that effectively connects open space areas within Dracut and neighboring towns. Map 9 provides an overview of the current trail system in the Town.

Map 9 Trail Map



## Scenic Resources and Unique Environments

### *Scenic Landscape*

Dracut's scenic resources include the farm and woodland landscapes of East Dracut's rolling hills, the Beaver Brook floodplain, the state forest, and the views of the Merrimack River. Views of the New Hampshire hills to the north, across open fields along Marsh Hill Road, are especially striking, as are the view of the Ogonowski fields near to the corner of Jones and Broadway, and the rolling farm landscapes along Methuen Road. In the western part of town, a signature rural view greets those entering Dracut from the Lowell area along Mammoth Road, in the form of the sweeping fields and buildings of the Cutter and Richardson Farms. The Town's lakes and ponds also provide valuable scenic views, although with limited public access. Access to water resources for passive and active recreation has been identified by Dracut residents as a priority in improving open space and recreational amenities.

### *Unique Environments*

Nickel Mine Hill (elevation 180 feet) was one of the earliest mining ventures in the United States, possibly worked as early as the mid-1600s for iron. Nickel was first mined in 1876 in what is now considered the State Forest. The deposit consists primarily of amphibolite containing nickel in disseminated copper and iron sulfides.

### *Cultural and Historic Areas*

Dracut features 55 entries in the Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information system, highlighting aspects of the Town's historical legacy. Additional historic structures, areas, landmarks, and objects may exist and concerted local efforts to safeguard these remnants are gaining momentum. Regrettably, many of Dracut's cultural and historical assets may be inadequately acknowledged, identified, and/or unshielded against potential redevelopment or demolition.

Despite lacking a formal historic town center, specific locales in Dracut merit preservation and restoration attention. These include the junction of Bridge Street and Arlington Street in Dracut Center, the convergence of Mammoth Road and Nashua Road near the State Forest, and the meeting point of Mammoth Road and Lakeview Avenue in Collinsville. The first area showcases an exceptional late 1800s Italianate farmhouse and a cluster of early and late Colonial Revival public buildings, including a Town Hall, library, and offices. The second area predominantly features residences, including an early 18th-century Cape style house, a late 18th-century vernacular central chimney house, and a vernacular Greek Revival period farmhouse. The third area houses the historic Merrimack Woolen Mills building, Collins Woolen Company structures, and a school.

Additional areas of cultural significance in Dracut encompass Hovey Square, the original town center, the Navy Yard with its mills and dam, millworkers' housing along part of Primrose Hill Road along Beaver Brook, the old schoolhouse, and farms at the corner of Broadway and Jones, along with older houses scattered along original town roads like Colburn Avenue, Sladen Street, Mammoth Road, and Marsh Hill Road.

A Reconnaissance Survey Report may help identify eligible places that may be listed on the National or State Registers of Historic Places. The town's lack of historic plaques or signs contributes to a lack of awareness of cultural and historical resources.

### *Areas of Critical Environmental Concern*

Dracut presently lacks any designated Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) under the ACEC Program. An ACEC designation acknowledges the crucial environmental significance of areas boasting

substantial natural resource systems. This designation signals to regulatory bodies and the public that development activities falling within ACECs must adhere to stringent environmental quality standards. The designation process evaluates not only habitat value but also considers the recreational, scenic, historic, and archaeological attributes of an area.

## Environmental Challenges

### *Forestry Issues*

The issue of non-native invasive species is addressed in the Vegetation section above. The absence of contiguous forested habitat is explored in the Fisheries and Wildlife section above, under the heading of Wildlife Corridors. No further forestry-related concerns or challenges were identified during the planning process.

### *Erosion and Sedimentation Issues*

Erosion and subsequent sedimentation are inherent natural processes, further influenced by factors such as vegetation removal, suboptimal farming practices, and sudden floods. There is a brief discussion on sedimentation in the Water Resources section under Flood Hazard Areas, as well as the Vegetation Section. Dracut incorporates an overlay district – The Wetland and Water Conservancy District – that governs land use in and around wetlands, complementing the Conservation Commission's oversight of the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act and Rivers Protection Act. Within this overlay district, new construction, earth-moving activities, sewage disposal, dumping, and storage of hazardous substances are prohibited.

Except for the Conservation Commission's jurisdiction over wetlands and their buffer zone, the control of erosion and sedimentation is limited. The integration of the state Department of Environmental Protection's Stormwater Management Policies into town regulations, coupled with vigilant monitoring and enforcement, would enhance the safeguarding of water bodies and wetlands.

More stringent regulation of construction on steep slopes is advisable, and the imposition of a minimum percentage of upland in each subdivision lot would augment the wetlands buffer, reducing the likelihood of homeowners inadvertently damaging wetlands through activities like mowing.

### *Chronic Flooding*

Chronic Flooding is comprehensively addressed in the Water Resources section under Flood Hazard Areas. There are no notable developed regions grappling with chronic flooding issues. The Dracut Flood Plain and Floodway District, functioning as an overlay district, governs land use in areas prone to flooding. Within this district, all new construction or earth-moving activities are prohibited, with specific allowances for certain agricultural and conservation uses, repairs to pre-existing structures, and new structures demonstrated by an engineer not to be susceptible to flooding.

### *Hazardous Waste and Brownfield Sites*

As of October 2023, Dracut has 115 spill sites designated as "hazardous waste sites" according to the Massachusetts Contingency Plan, as reported by the Massachusetts Bureau of Waste Site Cleanup. Most of these sites have been closed out with a Response Action Outcome. Dracut's spill site classification includes one Tier 1B site, one Tier 1 site, and two Tier 1D sites, along with three unclassified spills from 2020. Notably, 70 sites are solely contaminated with oil, while only 17 sites were or are contaminated with hazardous materials. An additional 10 sites are listed as contaminated with both oil and hazardous materials, and 18 sites do not specify the contaminant.

#### *Ground and Surface Water Pollution*

Dracut's soils are predominantly unsuitable for septic systems, leading to a higher failure rate. This raises concerns about groundwater pollution in areas where systems have been installed in inappropriate locations. A 1997 court judgment directing new sewer expansion was implemented with the expectation that sewer lines will be required to serve most developed areas in Dracut. Less developed areas could still maintain appropriately managed and monitored septic systems or wastewater treatment package plant systems.

The following are reviews of the various surface water resources in Dracut and the challenges they face. These should be considered to ensure management and use that is consistent with state regulations.

#### *Beaver Brook*

This scenic waterway meanders through the Collinsville and Navy Yard neighborhoods, but past pollution from shoreline development has limited its recreational use. Efforts are underway to reclaim this appealing water resource for both passive and active recreational purposes. Regional discussions have explored the potential role of a Beaver Brook greenway and trail connecting New Hampshire to Merrimack River trails and a trail along the Concord River extending to Great Meadows National Wildlife Refuge.

#### *Lake Mascuppic*

Surrounded by private homes, Lake Mascuppic faced impairment issues in the late 1980s, identified by the state DEP Division of Water Pollution. The extension of the sewer system to homes around the lake has successfully mitigated pollution problems.

#### *Long Pond*

Identified as impaired in the late 1980s, Long Pond received a Small Lakes and Ponds Grant in 1995 for chemical weed control. Dracut has continued this practice, emphasizing cooperation with the Town of Pelham, NH, for effective resource management. A 2017 report found that Long Pond experiences a significant salt load during small storm events, indicating overuse of road salts in the watershed, and that invasive curly-leaf pondweed persists in the pond but does not impair recreational usage. Late-season water clarity has also decreased over time, with greater frequency of algal blooms, likely brought on by the increased salt and phosphorus loads.

#### *Peters Pond*

Limited public access to Peters Pond has not prevented septic systems from causing increasing eutrophication, leading to algal blooms. The town's 1998 Wastewater Management Plan highlights the challenges, particularly due to the pond's shallow nature and limited inlets or outlets. A multi-year aquatic plant management program consisting of herbicide application, hydro-raking, and benthic barrier installations was permitted in early 2023 to combat the spread of invasive curly-leaf pondweed.

#### *Cedar Pond*

Naturally isolated by surrounding wetlands and a dense stand of white cedars, the 12-acre Cedar Pond may be shielded from pollution resulting from nearby development.

#### *Big Pond*

Situated on the Dunlap Sanctuary, Big Pond is a 10-acre water body fed by wetlands and a stream from the Four Oaks Country Club Golf Course. While measures have been implemented to minimize impact, regular monitoring is crucial to prevent potential damage from fertilizers or pesticides.

#### *Merrimack River*

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As the southern border of Dracut, the Merrimack River fails to meet a Class B designation during wet weather conditions. Combined sewage outflows (CSOs) and nonpoint source (NPS) pollution are significant sources of pollutants that need attention.

*Sewer Improvements*

Presently, 95% of the Town's population is serviced by municipal sewer services while 5% are serviced by onsite septic. The Lowell Regional Wastewater Utility (LRWWU) provides service to the western and central parts of Dracut. Of the total allocated capacity at the LRWWU, Dracut is utilizing an average of 2.765 MGD. Like other towns in the region, Dracut has placed a focus on reducing inflow and infiltration as a first means of increasing capacity.

Sewer services in eastern Dracut have become possible through collaborative efforts between the Town of Dracut, the City of Methuen, and the Greater Lawrence Sanitary District (GLSD). Previously, all Dracut wastewater flow was directed to the LRWWU for treatment and disposal. However, due to capacity constraints at the Lowell facility and available reserve capacity at the GLSD facility, Dracut, Methuen, and GLSD developed new inter-municipal agreements (IMAs) that created a new sewer district. These IMAs facilitate the conveyance of wastewater from eastern Dracut to Methuen and to the GLSD facility. This optimizes the use of public assets by aligning wastewater treatment needs with available capacity.

Moreover, shifting east Dracut flow to the GLSD facility allows Dracut to undertake additional projects in central Dracut. These projects, contributing more flow to the Lowell facility, remain within the established flow limits outlined in the IMA between Dracut and Lowell. The collaborative efforts of Dracut, Methuen, and GLSD demonstrate benefits for residents and ratepayers alike.

Since 2014, the completion of Contracts #31 and #32 has addressed sections of eastern and central Dracut. With full access to sewer service, Dracut fulfills its long-term commitment to residents and businesses. This accomplishment underscores the meticulous planning and robust fiscal management characteristic of this significant infrastructure program.

## Section 5: Inventory of Lands of Conservation and Recreation Interest

Open space is defined as land that, for the most part, is free of structures or other impervious surfaces. Whether under public or private ownership, open spaces provide valuable habitat for wildlife; help protect water and air quality; provide flood storage, scenic vistas, and recreational opportunities; preserve historic sites; and enhance the value of abutting properties.

The town is fortunate to retain substantial open space, particularly the farmlands of East Dracut. Approximately 26 percent of the Town's total area of 13,697.8 acres is classified as open space. only 1,390.63 acres of the 3,517.11 acres classified as open space are considered permanently protected by a conservation or other restriction, including areas of town that may be of high value to the community. With Town approval of the Community Preservation Act and the creation of a local land trust, residents have shown their desire to act to preserve open space. In addition, there is an increasing understanding of the need to seek ways to help the handful of remaining farms to survive economically.

The following provides additional information on the various categories of open space and recreation lands in Dracut. The full inventory of lands of interest can be found in Appendix X.

### Permanently Protected Lands

The majority of Dracut's permanently protected open space is owned by public entities. Of Dracut's 1,473.19 acres of permanently protected open space, 972.59 acres are owned by the State, the Town, and the Water District, as outlined in the table below.

**Table 16: Permanently Protected Lands within the Town of Dracut**

Ownership/Protection	Number of Parcels	Total Acreage
Commonwealth of Massachusetts	9	551.27
Town of Dracut	69	305.67
Dracut Land Trust	2	68.80
Agricultural Preservation Restrictions	8	335.31
Conservation Restrictions	27	400.11
Dracut Water Supply District	14	115.65
City of Lowell	2	2.05
<b>Total</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>1,473.19</b>

*Source: Dracut Open Space Inventory as of January 2024*

### Public - Permanently Protected Lands

State Lands. The State owns a total of nine parcels comprising 551.27 permanently protected acres in Dracut, all located in the Lowell-Dracut-Tyngsborough State Forest, except for a small parcel providing access to Lake Mascuppic.

**Table 17: State Owned Permanently Protected Lands within the Town of Dracut**

Map-Block-Lot	Site Name	Location	Acreage
30-0-61	Lake Mascuppic Access	280 TYNGSBORO RD	0.08
41-0-128	Lowell-Dracut-Tyngsborough State Forest	TYNGSBORO RD	138.59
41-0-19	Lowell-Dracut-Tyngsborough State Forest	45 HIGHLAND AV	1.82
41-0-2	Lowell-Dracut-Tyngsborough State Forest	25 HIGHLAND AV	1.27
41-0-20	Lowell-Dracut-Tyngsborough State Forest	42 HIGHLAND AV	1.54
41-0-3	Lowell-Dracut-Tyngsborough State Forest	20 HIGHLAND AV	1.69
57-0-5	Lowell-Dracut-Tyngsborough State Forest	TOTMAN RD	1.19
58-0-6	Lowell-Dracut-Tyngsborough State Forest	55 GUMPUS RD	20.68
58-0-7	Lowell-Dracut-Tyngsborough State Forest	75 GUMPUS RD	384.41
		<b>Total</b>	<b>551.27</b>

Source: Dracut Open Space Inventory as of January 2024

Town Lands. The Town owns 303.65 acres of permanently protected lands including conservation and park land in 69 parcels. The largest protected areas are The Dracut VFW area on Chuck Drive (54.14 acres), also known as the Rifle Range Conservation Area, and 545 Marsh Hill Road (44.64 acres), also known as the East Richardson Preservation Area. Many of the individual protected parcels are very small but have been consolidated with larger parcels to form substantial conservation or recreation areas.

**Table 18: Town Owned Permanently Protected Lands within the Town of Dracut**

Map-Block-Lot	Site Name	Location	Acreage
51-0-90	131 Leo Av	131 LEO AV	1.63
11-16-39.3	150 Turtle Hill Rd OSRD	150 TURTLE HILL RD	12.20
19-32-1	1920 Bridge St	1920 BRIDGE ST	0.59
30-0-68	20 Swan Street	20 SWAN ST	0.79
3-22-1	201 Saw Mill Drive	201 SAW MILL DR	3.39
30-0-67	203 Tyngsboro Road	203 TYNGSBORO RD	0.95
11-1-49	24 Clement Rd OSRD	24 CLEMENT RD	10.30
4-0-11	247 Salem Road	247 SALEM RD	4.00
51-198-1	430 Arlington St	430 ARLINGTON ST	32.38
2-0-61	46 Scott St	46 SCOTT ST	1.71
2-0-37	49 Scott St	49 SCOTT ST	3.34
3-0-28	65 Saw Mill Drive	65 SAW MILL DR	6.90
3-0-1	Cedar Stand	661 PELHAM RD	35.00
19-0-29	Colburn Conservation Land / Historic Area	102 CROSS RD	19.01
24-0-19	Conservation	96 LONG DR	0.12
7-0-19	Dadak	40 DIANA LN	6.90
20-0-45	East Richardson Preserve	545 MARSH HILL RD	44.64
44-0-146	Evergreen Conservation Area	62 EVERGREEN RD	0.37
44-0-149	Evergreen Conservation Area	92 EVERGREEN RD	0.37
44-0-59	Evergreen Conservation Area	24 EVERGREEN RD	0.38
44-0-6	Evergreen Conservation Area	42 EVERGREEN RD	0.51
44-0-60	Evergreen Conservation Area	15 EVERGREEN RD	0.43
44-0-61	Evergreen Conservation Area	21 EVERGREEN RD	0.41
44-0-62	Evergreen Conservation Area	31 EVERGREEN RD	0.34
44-0-63	Evergreen Conservation Area	41 EVERGREEN RD	0.35

Map-Block-Lot	Site Name	Location	Acreage
44-0-64	Evergreen Conservation Area	51 EVERGREEN RD	0.34
44-0-65	Evergreen Conservation Area	61 EVERGREEN RD	0.34
44-0-66	Evergreen Conservation Area	71 EVERGREEN RD	0.34
44-0-67	Evergreen Conservation Area	81 EVERGREEN RD	0.84
44-0-68	Evergreen Conservation Area	91 EVERGREEN RD	0.69
44-0-69	Evergreen Conservation Area	97 EVERGREEN RD	0.51
44-0-7	Evergreen Conservation Area	52 EVERGREEN RD	0.39
44-0-70	Evergreen Conservation Area	101 EVERGREEN RD	0.34
44-0-71	Evergreen Conservation Area	105 EVERGREEN RD	0.34
44-0-72	Evergreen Conservation Area	109 EVERGREEN RD	0.64
44-0-73	Evergreen Conservation Area	113 EVERGREEN RD	0.35
44-0-74	Evergreen Conservation Area	117 EVERGREEN RD	0.34
44-0-75	Evergreen Conservation Area	121 EVERGREEN RD	0.35
44-0-76	Evergreen Conservation Area	125 EVERGREEN RD	0.37
44-0-77	Evergreen Conservation Area	129 EVERGREEN RD	0.40
44-0-79	Evergreen Conservation Area	42 FOREST PARK RD	0.38
44-147-1	Evergreen Conservation Area	72 EVERGREEN RD	0.36
44-148-1	Evergreen Conservation Area	82 EVERGREEN RD	0.41
30-0-60	Lake Mascuppic Beach and Boat Ramp	272 TYNGSBORO RD	1.04
24-0-15	Long Pond Conservation Area	120 LONG DR	0.11
24-0-16	Long Pond Conservation Area	106 LONG DR	0.10
24-0-17	Long Pond Conservation Area	102 LONG DR	0.11
24-0-18	Long Pond Conservation Area	98 LONG DR	0.11
24-0-20	Long Pond Conservation Area	92 LONG DR	0.12
24-0-21	Long Pond Conservation Area	86 LONG DR	0.29
24-0-232	Long Pond Conservation Area	8 SHORE DR	2.20
24-0-233	Long Pond Conservation Area	4 SHORE DR	0.29
24-0-234	Long Pond Conservation Area	2 SHORE DR	1.74
24-0-235	Long Pond Conservation Area	LONG DR REAR	22.00
24-0-41	Long Pond Conservation Area	119 LONG DR	0.11
24-0-51	Long Pond Conservation Area	33 HILLSIDE TR	0.17
24-0-52	Long Pond Conservation Area	41 HILLSIDE TR	0.20
24-13-1	Long Pond Conservation Area	136 LONG DR	0.11
24-13-2	Long Pond Conservation Area	132 LONG DR	0.11
24-13-3	Long Pond Conservation Area	128 LONG DR	0.11
24-16-1	Long Pond Conservation Area	110 LONG DR	0.10
24-16-2	Long Pond Conservation Area	114 LONG DR	0.18
24-21-1	Long Pond Conservation Area	84 LONG DR	0.11
10-0-4	Long Pond Park	212 LAKESHORE DR	0.27
10-0-63	Long Pond Park / Beach	202 LAKESHORE DR	0.56
50-0-133	Pleasant Street Park	488 PLEASANT ST	0.99
68-0-1	Polubinski Land	103 VARNUM AV	23.35
29-0-2	Rifle Range	CHUCK DR	54.14
50-0-159	Tercentennial Park	1346 BRIDGE ST	0.27
		<b>Total</b>	<b>303.64</b>

Source: Dracut Open Space Inventory as of January 2024

### Private - Permanently Protected Lands

Conservation Restrictions (CR). A Conservation Restriction is a voluntary and legally binding document, recorded in the land records, in which a landowner agrees to limit the use of his or her property for the purpose of protecting the conservation values of the land. The landowner receives an immediate income tax deduction and the grantee, usually a non-profit or municipal entity, receives assurance that the land will not be developed. Conservation Restrictions protect 27 parcels totaling 400.11 acres. The table below lists all parcels with a private Conservation Restriction.

**Table 19: Private Conservation Restrictions (CR) within the Town of Dracut**

Map-Block-Lot	Site Name	Location	Acreage
40-10-6	Boisvert CR	72 LAKEVIEW TR	0.98
40-5-1	Boisvert CR	51 LAKEVIEW TR	0.92
40-5-2	Boisvert CR	61 LAKEVIEW TR	0.69
40-5-4	Boisvert CR	81 LAKEVIEW TR	0.93
40-7-7	Boisvert CR	62 LAKEVIEW TR	1.06
40-9-5	Boisvert CR	82 LAKEVIEW TR	1.11
39-0-3	Brox CR	METHUEN ST	44.35
41-106-30	Draco Homes CR	60 DAVIS RD	11.93
41-106-31	Draco Homes CR	56 DAVIS RD	8.99
41-106-15	Draco Homes CR	66 HERITAGE RD	2.13
20-9-1	Dunlap Farm CR	MARSH HILL RD	4.50
20-9-3	Dunlap Farm CR	430 MARSH HILL RD	26.00
20-0-43	Dunlap Sanctuary	473 MARSH HILL RD	50.51
51-172-15	Fox Path II CR	31 CARLE DR	3.21
65-0-172	Fox Path II CR	11 CARLE DR	8.07
19-42-1.59	Fox Run II OSRD	15 OLD PASTURE RD	9.15
19-42-1.60	Fox Run II OSRD	92 OLD PASTURE RD	29.29
11-1-50	Great Woods CR (PAV Properties)	25 CLEMENT RD	18.46
11-1-64	Great Woods CR (PAV Properties)	77 CLEMENT RD	1.17
65-24-25	High Fields Meadow CR	16 BURGESS FARM RD	1.10
54-11-1	Prime Group OSRD	3 FREEDOM CT	35.60
65-24-1	Rainbow Builders OSRD	11 BURGESS FARM RD	18.62
51-0-256	Richardson Brook CR	200 LOON HILL RD	7.70
51-256-1	Richardson Brook CR	160 LOON HILL RD	2.50
55-6-1.1	Ritchie CR	1300 METHUEN ST	49.18
38-44-74	Wheeler Village CR	8 LAUREL RD	1.30
38-44-75	Wheeler Village LLC - 11 Laurel Rd	11 LAUREL RD	66.35
		<b>Total</b>	<b>400.11</b>

Source: Dracut Open Space Inventory as of January 2024

Agricultural Preservation Restrictions (APR). An APR is a type of Conservation Restriction designed to help farmers maintain equity in their land, maintain the agricultural potential of the land, and to keep from being forced to sell the land for development purposes. There are Agricultural Preservation Restrictions on nine (9) parcels of farmland totaling 320.51 acres: the three (3) Ogonowski Farm parcels, three (3)

Shaw Farm parcels, one (1) Saja Farm parcel and the Dumaresq parcel. It should also be noted, that while not a separate parcel, 19 acres of the "Ogonowski Memorial" acreage is under an APR agreement. This parcel is owned by the Dracut Land Trust and is shown under their designation. The table below lists all parcels with an Agricultural Preservation Restriction in Dracut.

**Table 20: Agricultural Preservation Restrictions in Dracut**

Map-Block-Lot	Site Name	Location	Acreage
20-41-1	Ogonowski Farm	311 Marsh Hill Road	118.73
20-41-2	Ogonowski Farm	313 Marsh Hill Road	6.19
19-56-8.1	Ogonowski Farm	Rear Pheasant Lane	9.52
38-6-5	Ogonowski Memorial	680 Broadway	19.0
20-4-1	Shaw Farm APR	342 Marsh Hill Road	14.39
34-0-1	Shaw Farm APR	204 New Boston Road	7.78
34-0-87	Shaw Farm APR	211 New Boston Road	60.5
38-0-3	Saja Farm	403 Parker Road	56.0
38-0-35	Farmer Dave's/ Dumaresq Parcel	437 Parker Road	28.40
<b>Total</b>			<b>320.51</b>

*Source: Dracut Open Space Inventory as of January 2024*

### **Unprotected/Limited Protection Lands**

Unprotected and limited protected lands of conservation and recreation interest in Dracut include public lands that are currently held as open space or historic parcels, or used as recreation land, but which do not have permanent protection, and private parcels with limited or no restrictions on development.

#### **Private Lands - Unprotected/Limited Protection Lands**

**Tax Abatement Programs.** Under Chapters 61, 61A and 61B of the Massachusetts General Laws (M.G.L.), a landowner that has either 10 contiguous acres of land that are being actively used as a forest (Chapter 61), 5 contiguous acres in active agricultural use, (Chapter 61A) or 5 contiguous acres of open space (Chapter 61B), is entitled to certain local tax abatements. These abatements are given in exchange for the property owner maintaining the use of the land as agriculture, forest or open space.

Dracut currently has 1,526.69 acres of private land in forestry, agricultural or recreational uses enrolled in the Chapter 61A and 61B tax abatement programs. Most of this land is comprised of 46 parcels of agricultural land in the Chapter 61A program, which accounts for over 75 percent of the total land in tax abatement programs. The 50.63 acre Centerville Sportsmen's Club parcel and the Four Oaks Country Club parcels account for the majority of the acreage in the Chapter 61B category. Should the current land owner(s) decide to sell or develop property covered under these programs, the Town of Dracut will have an opportunity to exercise its right of first refusal, or, alternatively, assign this right to a non-profit conservation organization or the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. A land owner who has property classified in Chapter 61, 61A or 61B, must notify the Chief Elected Official, the Board of Assessors, the Planning Board the Conservation Commission and the State Forester, when all or a portion of the land is being sold or converted to a disqualifying use. The tables below lists all parcels enrolled within the Chapter 61, 61A, And 61B programs by classification.

**Table 21: Unprotected/Limited Protection Private Lands within the Town of Dracut**

Category	Number of Parcels	Acreage
Chapter 61	1	41.04
Chapter 61A	47	1,144.56
Chapter 61B	12	340.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>1,526.69</b>

Source: Dracut Open Space Inventory as of January 2024

**Table 22: Chapter 61 Lands In Dracut**

Map-Block-Lot	Owner Name	Location	Acreage
7-0-14	ANTOINETTE BROX NOMINEE TRUST	461 METHUEN RD	41.04

Source: Dracut Open Space Inventory as of January 2024

**Table 23: Chapter 61A Lands In Dracut**

Map-Block-Lot	Owner Name	Location	Acreage
7-1-1	BROX KALIL	1276 BROADWAY RD	13.00
7-4-1	MONROE ELEANOR R.	179 METHUEN RD	10.81
7-20-1	RICHARDSON GEORGE M. TRUSTEE	120 METHUEN RD	15.08
7-4-3	RICHARDSON GILBERT	191 METHUEN RD	6.72
8-14-3	BROX JOHN F.	1363 BROADWAY RD	29.08
19-0-26	PARADIS RAYMOND	331 COLBURN AV	6.00
20-14-3	DAWSON LINDA M. & DAVID A. DAWSON, TRS.	600 MARSH HILL RD	6.00
20-9-2	DUNLAP HELEN L. (TC)	430 MARSH HILL RD	7.30
21-0-7	GREENE ISABELLA R. (LE)	405 JONES AV	7.60
21-0-8	COREY MARK R. (TE)	215 JONES AV	18.34
22-0-34	COUTURE DONALD A. (TE)	524 WHEELER RD	17.28
22-0-35	MONTE CARL, JR.	470 WHEELER RD	18.00
22-0-38	WALOR SANDRA J., TRUSTEE	615 WHEELER RD	28.80
22-0-53	O'BRIEN HOMES, INC.	231 WHEELER ST	50.00
22-3-1	LECZYNKI BARBARA A. (TC)	666 WHEELER RD	48.00
27-0-105	CMK VENTURES, LLC	1137 HILDRETH ST	7.02
27-0-37	ADAMCZYK IRENE (LE)	315 NEW BOSTON RD	5.40
27-105-1	CMK VENTURES, LLC	1148 HILDRETH ST	0.92
37-0-19	CUTRUMBES JOHN B. (JT)	238 FOX AV	13.00
38-0-38	NIEMASZYK JOHN W. (TE)	106 OLD PARKER RD	8.00
38-0-51	ZUK CAROLINE B., TRUSTEE	100 OLD PARKER RD	2.60
38-0-52	ZANNI EDWARD J. (TE)	110 WHEELER RD	52.00
38-2-1	OGONOWSKI THERESA D. TRUSTEE	713 BROADWAY RD	15.00
38-35-1	DUMARESQ DAVID W.	285 PARKER RD	3.52
39-0-4	TAPLIN DANA V.	489 WHEELER RD	96.45
4-0-6	SNAPAUSKY JOHN	290 SALEM RD	7.41
4-1-1.1	CIESLIK JAMES R. (JTRS)	600 SALEM RD	76.00
44-0-111	CHARBONNEAU DAVID R.	343 DONOHUE RD	43.00
6-0-3	RICHARDSON CATHY (LE)	316 RICHARDSON RD	19.97

Map-Block-Lot	Owner Name	Location	Acreage
6-0-5	MOYLAN DEBORAH	371 RICHARDSON RD	23.72
66-0-32	Q.E.I., INC.	583 METHUEN ST	9.00
67-0-9	WASYLAK FARM, LLC	946 METHUEN ST	20.00
7-0-13	KEREPKA FRANCIS J.	6 ISLAND POND RD	13.11
7-0-14	ANTOINETTE BROX NOMINEE TRUST	461 METHUEN RD	41.04
7-0-17	KEREPKA FRANCIS J.	370 METHUEN RD	22.00
7-0-18	OGONOWSKI ALBERT S., TRUSTEE	260 METHUEN RD	102.00
7-0-2	KEREPKA FRANCIS J.	93 METHUEN RD	53.00
7-0-26	BROX PETER (JT)	1211 BROADWAY RD	11.00
7-0-3	RICHARDSON GEORGE M. TRUSTEE	119 METHUEN RD	36.00
7-0-4	BEDELL RUSSELL & MARY R., TRSTS	205 METHUEN RD	16.50
7-0-6	OGONOWSKI ALBERT S., TRUSTEE	267 METHUEN RD	6.00
7-0-7	RICHARDSON JANET & GILBERT, TRS.	333 METHUEN RD	35.89
7-0-8	KEREPKA FRANCIS J.	379 METHUEN RD	19.00
7-0-9	KEREPKA FRANCIS J JR	37 ISLAND POND RD REAR	37.00
8-0-10	BROX ROBERT A	1374 BROADWAY RD	6.00
8-0-9	BROX KALIL	200 SALEM RD	61.00
			<b>Total 1,144.56</b>

Source: Dracut Open Space Inventory as of January 2024

**Table 24: Chapter 61B Lands In Dracut**

Map-Block-Lot	Owner Name	Location	Acreage
38-0-47	CENTERVILLE SPORTMEN'S CLUB	308 WHEELER RD	50.63
37-41-201	FOUR OAKS REAL ESTATE HOLDINGS, LLC	1/5 CLUBHOUSE LN	62.15
20-41-195	FOUR OAKS REAL ESTATE HOLDINGS, LLC	60 REGENCY DR	8.86
35-0-24	PERLACK DANIEL E., TRUSTEE	HILDRETH ST REAR	9.03
37-41-192	FOUR OAKS REAL ESTATE HOLDINGS, LLC	51 REGENCY DR	5.11
37-41-198	FOUR OAKS REAL ESTATE HOLDINGS, LLC	91 MEADOW CREEK DR	68.37
37-41-199	FOUR OAKS REAL ESTATE HOLDINGS, LLC	41 MEADOW CREEK DR	12.13
38-0-2	OGONOWSKI THERESA D., TRUSTEE	713 BROADWAY RD	88.0
38-0-36	STUART MARIA A. IND.	438 PARKER RD	12.0
46-0-105	PERLACK DANIEL E., TRUSTEE	36 MOORE AV	0.31
46-118-32	PERLACK DANIEL E., TRUSTEE	63 TREMWOOD RD	15.5
8-0-26	METHUEN ROD & GUN CLUB	368 TYLER ST	8.0
			<b>Total 340.09</b>

Source: Dracut Open Space Inventory as of January 2024

#### **Public - Unprotected/Limited Protection Lands**

The Town of Dracut owns 40 parcels totaling approximately 213.28 acres, utilized as open space with unprotected/limited protected lands status. While these lands are not permanently protected, there is no reason to believe that they will not continue in open space and recreational uses. As an example, properties without protection could be sold and the resource would be lost without permanent protection or requirements for redevelopment to include a portion of space for public open space or recreation. The

table below lists all Town owned parcels utilized as open space with unprotected/limited protected lands status.

**Table 25: Town Owned Parcels Utilized as Open Space with Unprotected/Limited Protected Land Status**

Map-Block-Lot	Site Name	Location	Acreage
68-0-40	64 Draycotte Ave OSRD	64 DRAYCOTTE AV	1.24
27-0-106	Hildreth Street Cemetery?	1150 HILDRETH ST	0.76
16-0-67	Oak Grove Cemetery	1463 MAMMOTH RD	0.82
16-0-68	Oak Grove Cemetery	1459 MAMMOTH RD	0.26
16-0-66	Oakland Cemetery	1475 MAMMOTH RD	2.17
8-0-13	Richardson Cemetery	1343 BROADWAY RD	1.55
8-0-27	Richardson Cemetery	1339 BROADWAY RD	0.62
8-0-28	Richardson Cemetery	1337 BROADWAY RD	0.16
54-0-18	Varnum Cemetery	71 PARKER RD	0.72
28-0-11	101 Colburn (DPW)	101 COLBURN AV	25.05
44-229-6.25	118 Tennis Plaza Road	118 TENNIS PLAZA RD	7.47
20-0-47	384 Proprietors Road	384 PROPRIETORS RD	10.00
62-0-80	483 Riverside	483 RIVERSIDE ST	2.48
50-0-8	509-515 Hildreth Street	515 HILDRETH ST	0.99
50-0-9	509-515 Hildreth Street	509 HILDRETH ST	1.27
7-0-56	53 Island Pond Road	53 ISLAND POND RD	6.22
30-0-102	57 Willowdale Ave on Lake Althea	57 WILLOWDALE AV	0.05
44-103-2	951 Mammoth Road	951 MAMMOTH RD	3.67
44-103-1	971 Mammoth Road (DHA)	971 MAMMOTH RD	15.00
44-0-106	Beaver Brook Farm	761 MAMMOTH RD	23.64
44-103-4	LaFond Lane Rear	LAFOND LN REAR	6.63
50-0-175	Monahan Park parking	467 PLEASANT ST	3.91
49-0-36	Boule' Memorial Esplanade	1196 LAKEVIEW AV	1.00
67-0-104	Campbell School Recreational Fields	1021 METHUEN ST	11.00
25-0-104	Carrick Field	1285 MAMMOTH RD	4.97
31-0-43	Dillon/McAnespie Park	2166 LAKEVIEW AV	14.93
50-0-125	Greenmont School Playground	88 SPRING PARK AV	2.21
50-0-12	Hovey Field	330 PLEASANT ST	2.14
68-0-48	Intervale Park	30 INTERVALE AV	0.75
68-0-49	Intervale Park	31 CONGRESS ST	0.75
50-0-176	Michael J. Monahan Memorial Park	499 PLEASANT ST	5.63
44-0-122	Middle/High School Recreational Fields	1624 LAKEVIEW AV	17.18
44-0-124	Middle/High School Recreational Fields	LAKEVIEW AV	8.56
48-76-2	Parker Ave School and Ballfield	77 PARKER AV	3.35
62-52-1	Pleasant Street War Memorial	130 PLEASANT ST	0.19
25-0-223	Pollys Corner	2032 LAKEVIEW AV	0.13
52-0-93	Varnum Park	165 ARLINGTON ST	0.75
51-61-3	Veterans Memorial Park	80 BROADWAY RD	25.08
			<b>Total 213.28</b>

Source: Dracut Open Space Inventory as of January 2024

Town Parks. Though several important parks, such as the 25-acre Veterans' Memorial Park, are protected, other town parks and playgrounds totaling over 16 acres are without full, permanent protection. These properties include Carrick Ball Park, Monahan Park and Playground, Hovey Playground, and Intervale Park. The City of Lowell also owns a 1.29-acre ballpark in Dracut.

School Resources. There are 114.84 acres of school property in Dracut, including school athletic fields and playgrounds. There are six (6) parcels, totaling 36.32 acres of school property and playing fields in Dracut that are not permanently protected, as shown in the table below. These properties include land with school buildings and other structures. The largest parcels are the Dracut High School/Middle School/Englesby Elementary School Complex property with 70.20 acres, of which 17.18 are considered "open space". A portion of the Public Works property on Hildreth Street includes one soccer field and two baseball fields.

**Table 26: School Lands and Playing Fields in Dracut**

Map-Block-Lot	Site Name	Location	Acreage
48-76-2	77 Parker Avenue	Parker Avenue School	3.35
67-0-104	1021 Methuen Street	Campbell School	11.00
44-0-122	1624 Lakeview Avenue	Dracut High School/Middle School/ Englesby Elementary	17.18
50-0-125	88 Spring Park Avenue	Greenmont School	2.21
25-0-61	2063 Lakeview Avenue	Collinsville School	1.83
68-0-48	Intervale Park/Field	30 Intervale Avenue	0.75
<b>Total</b>			<b>36.32</b>

*Source: Dracut Open Space Inventory as of January 2024*

Cemeteries. There are six (6) cemeteries in Dracut totaling 6.65 acres, as shown in table below. These burial grounds include Bailey Cemetery, Richardson Cemetery, Varnum Cemetery, New Boston Cemetery, Oakland Cemetery, and Oak Grove Cemeteries. Burial grounds and cemeteries are important public spaces that link us with our past. Dracut's cemeteries contain gravestones, monuments, memorials and tombs that commemorate the lives of many generations of residents, including founding members of the community, soldiers from the Revolutionary War and Civil War, veterans from other wars and conflicts, settlers, farmers and immigrants who helped build the community and the nation.

**Table 27: Dracut Cemeteries**

Map-Block-Lot	Cemetery	Location	Acreage
27-0-105-1	New Boston Cemetery	Matty's Way	0.77
8-0-13	Richardson Cemetery	1343 Broadway Road	1.55
8-0-27	Bailey Cemetery	1339 Broadway Road	0.62
16-0-67	Oak Grove Cemetery	1463 Mammoth Road	0.82
16-0-66	Oakland Cemetery	1475 Mammoth Road	2.17
54-0-18	Varnum Cemetery	71 Parker Road	0.72
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>6.65</b>

*Source: Dracut Open Space Inventory as of January 2024*

### Open Space Comparison 2008 – 2024

As indicated in the table below, despite the strong pace of residential growth, the actual acreage of land of conservation or recreation interest increased by 95.78 acres from 2008 to 2024 with the largest increase being reflected in private Conservation Restrictions (CR).

**Table 28: Open Space Comparison 2008 – 2024 in Acres**

Category/Ownership	2008	2024
Commonwealth of Massachusetts	554.88	551.27
Town of Dracut (full protection)	358.58	305.67
Dracut Land Trust	68.80	68.80
Agricultural Preservation Restrictions	222.90	335.31
Conservation Restrictions	85.82	400.11
Dracut Water District	99.65	115.65
Town of Dracut (limited protection)	204.21	213.28
City of Lowell	1.29	2.05
Chapter 61A	1,614.97	1,144.56
Chapter 61B	214.52	340.09
Chapter 61		41.04
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,425.62</b>	<b>3,517.83</b>

*Source: Dracut Open Space Inventory as of January 2024*

### Recreation Programs

#### Local Capacity

Dracut has several organizations working to preserve open space and enhance recreation within the community. The various Town departments, boards and organizations work together to ensure that these resources are protected for future generations. Joint leadership is important in that each of the parties listed below has a role to play and represents different interests.

The **Dracut Conservation Commission** is the steward for Town-owned conservation land and local administrator of Massachusetts' Wetlands Protection Act. Working with landowners, the Commission ensures that Dracut's natural resources are protected, and that construction and environmental alterations are accomplished in compliance with state laws. The Commission also works with and advises other Town bodies, including the Planning Board, Board of Health, and the Building Inspector's Office on natural resources issues and potential land conservation. The Commission has one staff person who administers the permitting process and oversees day-to-day activities.

The **Planning Board** is responsible for implementing the Town's Zoning Bylaw and working with developers to ensure that important conservation land and natural resources are protected during the development process. The Board has one staff person who administers the permitting process and oversees day-to-day activities.

The **Recreation Program** is overseen by an eight-member board, supported by two staff persons in the Recreation Department. Dracut's Recreation Department oversees the scheduling and use of the Veteran's Park Spray and Play, Football, Soccer, and Baseball Field; Dillon McAnespie Basketball Courts, Baseball Field, and Multi-purpose Field; Monahan Softball Fields; Carrick Baseball Fields; Hovey Baseball Field; Intervale Baseball Field; and the Parker Avenue Field.

The **Community Preservation Committee (CPC)** reviews and approves CPA funding applications for projects that preserve open space, create recreational opportunities, preserve historical sites and buildings, and assist with affordable housing production. The CPC presents its recommendations to Town Meeting for approval. The recommended appropriations of CPA funds must be voted and approved by a simple majority vote of Town Meeting. Town Meeting actions are limited to the following:

- Approving the recommendations of the CPC;
- Rejecting the recommendations of the CPC;
- Reducing the funding amounts recommended by the CPC; and
- Reserving the amount recommended by the CPC to an applicable reserve account, rather than approving the recommended project(s).

Borrowing for CPA purposes is allowed by a 2/3 vote of Town Meeting.

The nine-member **Open Space Committee**'s Mission Statement indicates that they are "committed encouraging and facilitating the preservation and appreciation of Dracut's natural, farm, and recreational lands. By working with municipal and state organizations we integrate local conservation and environmental goals with state and regional initiatives." They also actively manage open space through stewardship activities including trail-building, trail maintenance, and signage.

The **Dracut Land Trust and Dunstable Rural Land Trust** are two non-profit land trusts, focused on land preservation in Dracut and surrounding towns. The trusts work with local landowners in an effort to determine appropriate ways to preserve the Town's remaining undeveloped properties and open areas.

#### **Recreational Facilities and Resources:**

Parker Memorial Library. The library offers recreation opportunities for children of all ages. From infants ages 0-2 to teens, there are activities for all interests and abilities. Programs include:

- Bambinos program – a baby friendly story time with songs, rhymes and play to entertain while beginning to teach language skills
- Storytime for Twos (stories, songs and rhymes for language growth and development)
- Preschool Time (story and pre-reading program for 3-5 year olds)
- Book clubs for various ages
- Lego club
- Science and craft programs
- Summer reading program
- Window Painting – (teens and "tweens" decorate the windows of the library)
- Drop in Art Activities once a month on Saturdays

**Dracut Senior Center.** The Dracut Senior Center offers many socializing opportunities, including exercise and fitness programs for adults, including Zumba, Bone Builders, Energetics, Tai chi, and line dancing.

**Playing Fields.** The Recreation Commission manages many Town fields, including those located at public schools. The table below lists the fields, and the types of facilities and equipment located on each site. Additional playing fields are listed above in Table 7.

**Table 29: Recreation Properties**

Map-Block-Lot	Property Name	Address	Acres	Features
50-0-133	Pleasant Street Park	488 Pleasant Street	0.99 (of a 3 acre lot)	Located behind the Pleasant Street Fire Station and abutting Spring Park Avenue, Pleasant Street Park is a passive recreation area.
51-61-3	Veteran's Memorial Park	Montauk Avenue / 80 Broadway	25.08	Monahan consists of three softball fields and a skateboard park. There are restrooms available.
52-0-93	Varnum Park	165 Arlington Street	0.75	Varnum Park is a small passive recreation area with shaded/grassy area with picnic tables.
30-0-60 30-0-102	Lake Mascuppic Beach and Boat Ramp	272 Tyngsboro Road and 57 Willowdale Avenue	1.04 total	This area, owned by the Conservation Commission, is a public beach with a State-owned boat ramp. There is limited parking.
31-0-43	Dillon-McAnespie Park	2166-2169 Lakeview Avenue	14.93	Dillon-McAnespie Park, managed by the Recreation Department, consists of basketball courts, baseball diamond, tennis court, walking paths, multi-use field and playground area. Restrooms are available.
50-0-12	Hovey Field	329-330 Pleasant Street	2.14	Hovey, managed by the Recreation Department, consists of one baseball field, restrooms, and a snack shack.
50-0-176	Michael J. Monahan Memorial Park	499 Pleasant Street	5.63	Managed by the Recreation Department, Monahan consists of three softball fields and a skateboard park. There are restrooms available.

Map-Block-Lot	Property Name	Address	Acres	Features
10-0-63	Long Pond Park/ Beach	202 Lakeshore Drive	0.56	This recreational area is leased by the Town to and managed by the Long Pond Park Improvement Association (LPPIA). It includes a beach, boat ramp, horseshoe pit, playground equipment, picnic area, and port-a-potties. Individuals and families may use these facilities by joining the LPPIA for an annual fee. Because no parking is available, this park and beach serves the immediate neighborhood, but is not used on a town-wide basis.
<b>TOTAL</b>		56.09		

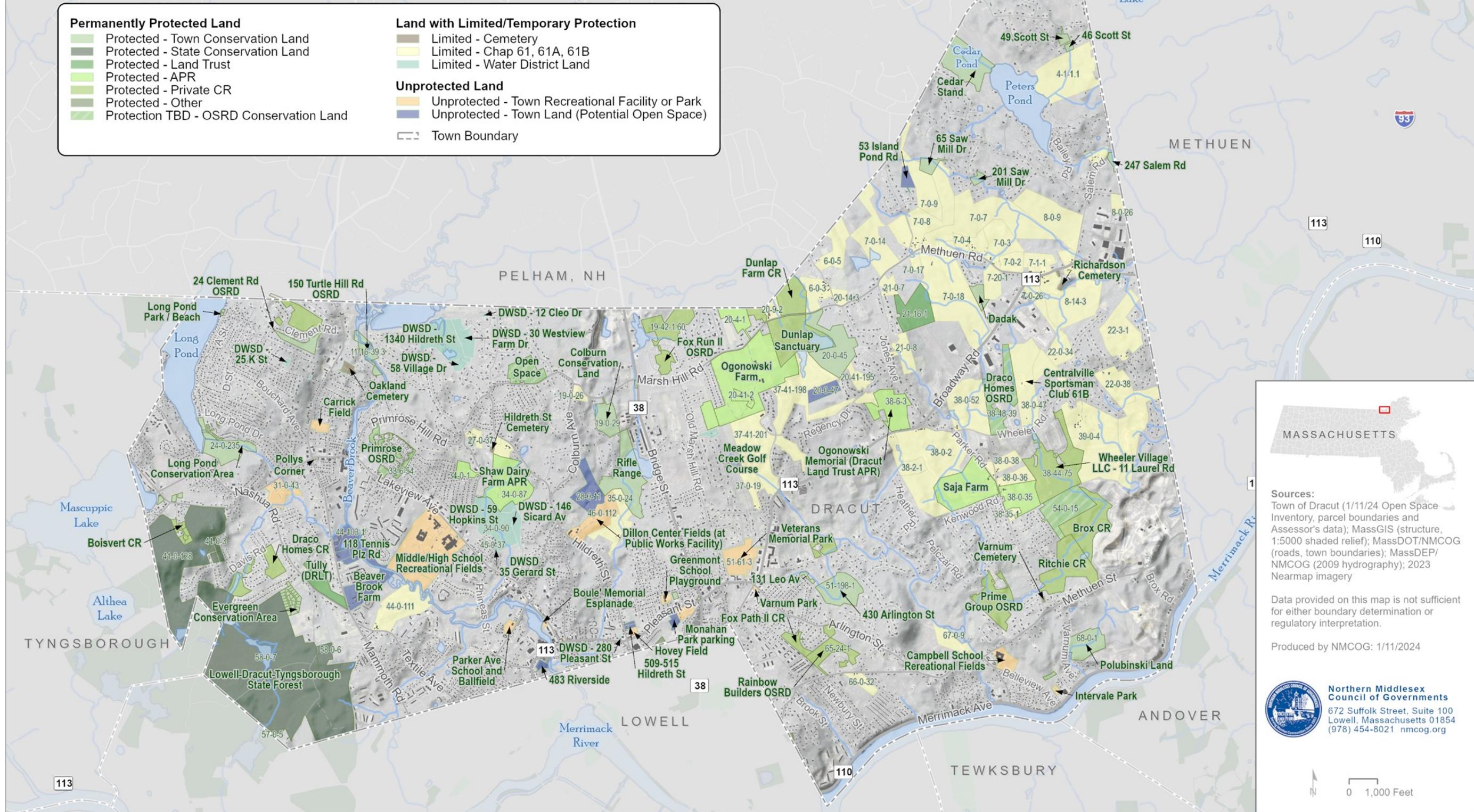
*Source: 2020 Dracut Master Plan, Dracut Open Space Inventory as of January 2024*

Other parks include Costello Square, Hovey Square and Drapeau Square. Small parklets include Gunther Park, Sladen, Dinley, Hamblett Avenue, Turner Square, Park Square, Daigle Square, New Boston Road, and Willard/Cheever.

The Dracut Recreation department fosters active recreation through various projects, including Wachusett Ski & Ride, Bradford Family Ski/Ride, Dracut Trails, COA Activities, First Aid & CPR for Adults, Archery for Adults, Golf for Adults, Archery for Youth (Grades 4+), Basketball (Grades 1-8), and Hammar's Studio. Additionally, Dracut hosts i-9 sports programs.

# Dracut Open Space and Recreation Lands

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## Section 6: Community Vision

### Description of Process

The development of the Dracut Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) was a comprehensive and inclusive process, involving multiple stages to ensure community input and engagement. The town employed various channels to gather public feedback, including a survey that received 148 responses over the period from June to September 2023. Public forums were organized to present an overview of the existing OSRP, share key findings, and engage in visioning exercises to identify community priorities for open space. Outreach efforts extended to community organizations within environmental justice (EJ) blocks, including churches, food pantries, the housing authority, and the school district. The second public forum delved into survey results, facilitating a mapping exercise to pinpoint areas of interest for open space and recreation protection. The process also emphasized communication through flyers, library outreach, Dracut Access Television (DATV) broadcasts, and engagement with the Dracut Senior Center. Overall, the development process was marked by a commitment to community involvement, ensuring that the OSRP reflects the diverse perspectives and needs of Dracut residents.

### Statement of Open Space and Recreation Goals

The OSRP establishes a set of overarching goals to guide the town's efforts in preserving and enhancing its natural and recreational resources. These goals encompass fostering equitable access to diverse open spaces and recreational facilities for all community members, recognizing and addressing the unique needs of environmental justice (EJ) communities. The plan seeks to promote responsible stewardship of existing natural resources, with a focus on preserving critical habitats, protecting water resources, and maintaining biodiversity. Additionally, it aims to enhance recreational opportunities by prioritizing the development and maintenance of accessible and inclusive facilities. The OSRP strives to create a resilient and sustainable community that values its natural heritage, actively engages residents in the planning and decision-making processes, and adapts to evolving environmental challenges and community aspirations. Through collaborative efforts and thoughtful planning, Dracut endeavors to create a vibrant and well-balanced environment that enriches the quality of life for its residents.

## Section 7: Analysis of Needs

### Summary of Resource Protection Needs

Dracut boasts diverse natural resources, featuring extensive woodlands, wetlands, and water bodies such as Beaver Brook, Lake Mascuppic, Long Pond, Peters Pond, Cedar Pond, and the Merrimack River. The town's forests exhibit a mix of hardwoods and softwoods, including oak, maple, ash, hickory, birch, elm, and pine. Dracut's landscapes also support various wildlife, including fishers, otters, moose, black bears, and a variety of bird species. The conservation and management of these ecosystems are crucial for sustaining biodiversity and protecting vital water resources, including aquifers and flood-prone areas. Dracut faces challenges such as invasive species and habitat fragmentation due to suburbanization, emphasizing the need for thoughtful planning and conservation strategies.

To safeguard Dracut's natural and recreational resources, several key measures are imperative. Firstly, the town should enhance efforts to combat invasive species, preserving the integrity of native plant communities. Additionally, creating and maintaining wildlife corridors, especially in areas like Beaver Brook and the Lowell-Dracut-Tyngsborough State Forest, can facilitate species migration and protect habitat connectivity. Moreover, comprehensive land use planning should prioritize the preservation of critical wetlands, forests, and water bodies, emphasizing the establishment and maintenance of green spaces and trails. Finally, community education initiatives can raise awareness about the importance of resource conservation and encourage residents to actively participate in protecting Dracut's rich natural heritage.

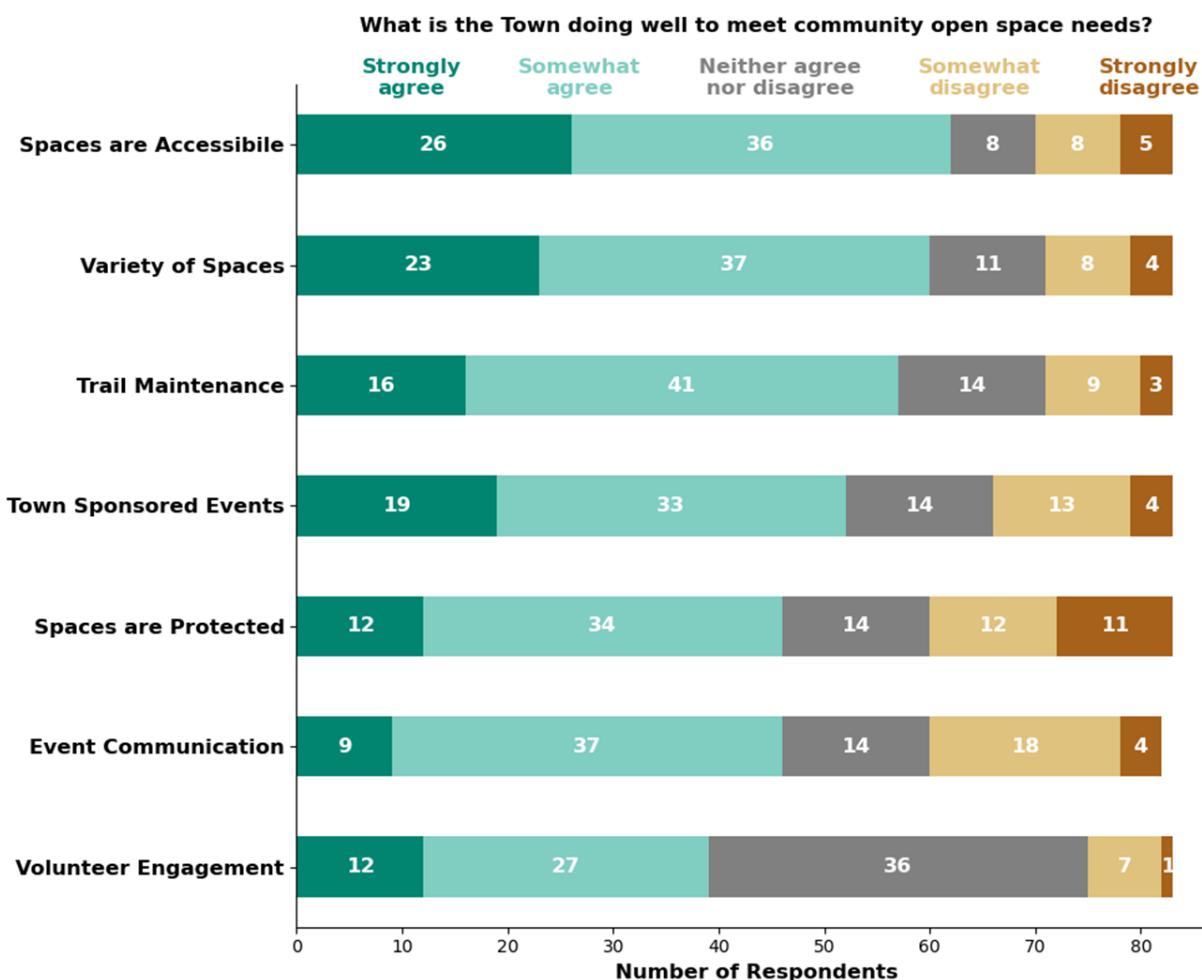
### Summary of Community's Needs

#### *Survey*

The survey, conducted between June and September 2023, garnered 148 responses from the community. The survey was disseminated through a multifaceted approach, including flyers posted at various locations such as parks, trails, the library, Dracut Access Television, Dracut Public Schools, social media, newsletters, and the Senior Center. Respondents were given the opportunity to rank perceived Town actions for meeting open space and recreation needs and provide suggestions for further improvements. The survey results, outlined in the following four (4) figures 2-5, reveal that the community recognizes the accessibility of various open spaces. While there is an acknowledgment of the Town's efforts in providing access to recreation facilities and maintaining them well, there is a notable desire for increased support in preserving open space, organizing community events, additional funding for recreation, and a broader array of recreational activities.

*Survey Results: Question 1: Open Space Strengths*

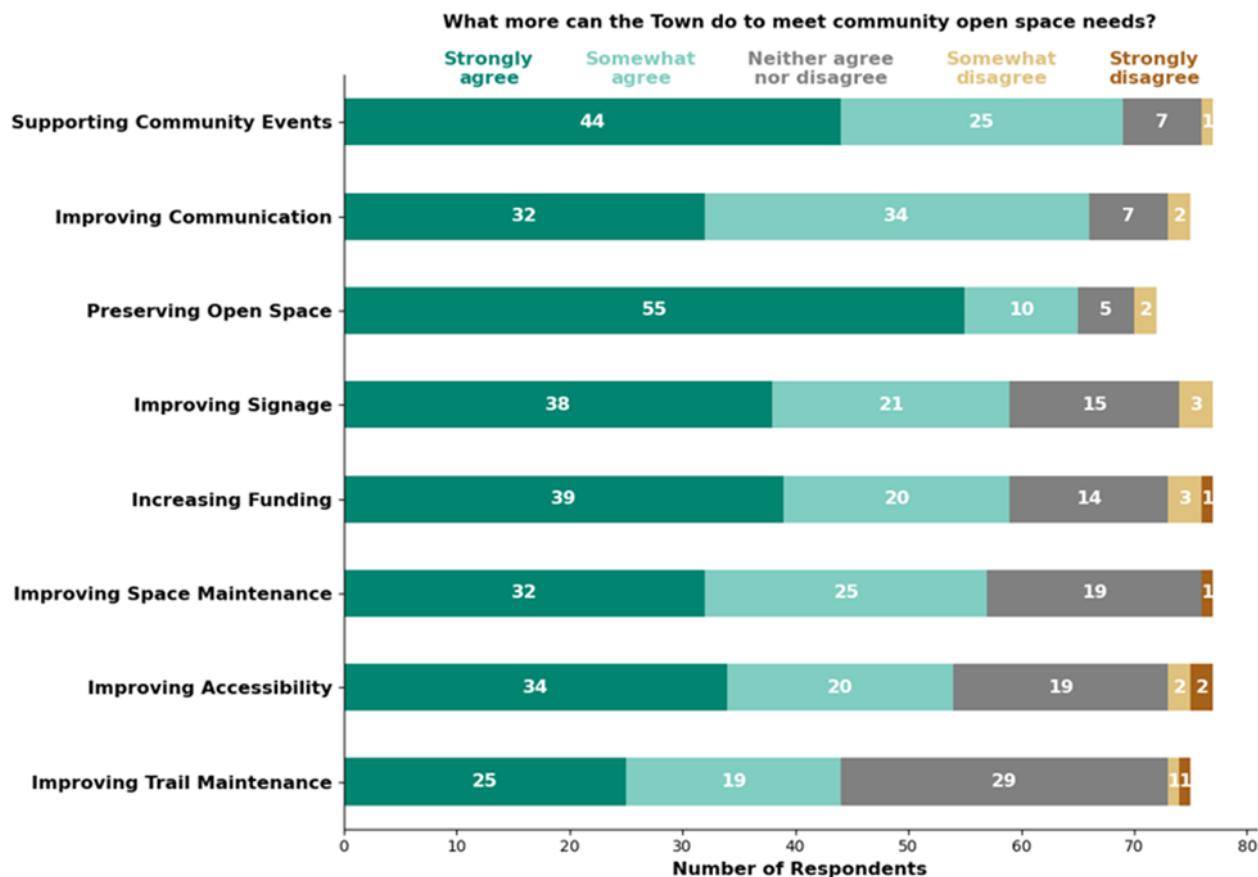
The residents surveyed offered a largely favorable assessment of seven (7) selected topic areas related to Dracut's open space current strengths, as illustrated in figure 2 below. Of the topics surveyed, the residents agreed most strongly the Town is doing very well providing accessibility to its open space areas. The residents also expressed similar positive views relating to the Town's ability to provide a variety of different open spaces and keep the trail system well-maintained. Overall, there were few responses to the surveyed topics that disagreed or strongly disagreed the Town was meeting these open space needs.

**Figure 2 - What Is the Town Doing to Meet Open Space Needs?**

## Survey Results: Question 2: Open Space Needs/Opportunities

While the first survey question was focused on what areas the Town was doing well in for open space needs, the second survey question targeted what open space needs or opportunities the Town could improve on. Many of the respondents to every one of the eight (8) topic areas surveyed in question 2 either strongly or somewhat agree the Town could do more in each area. Figure 3 below expounds this sentiment and provides an insight into how the surveyed prioritize these areas of need. The largest need that was most strongly agreed upon (over 75%) was the Town's need to do more in preserving open space. Support of community events, communication, and signage were also identified as the Town's open space areas most in need of improvement.

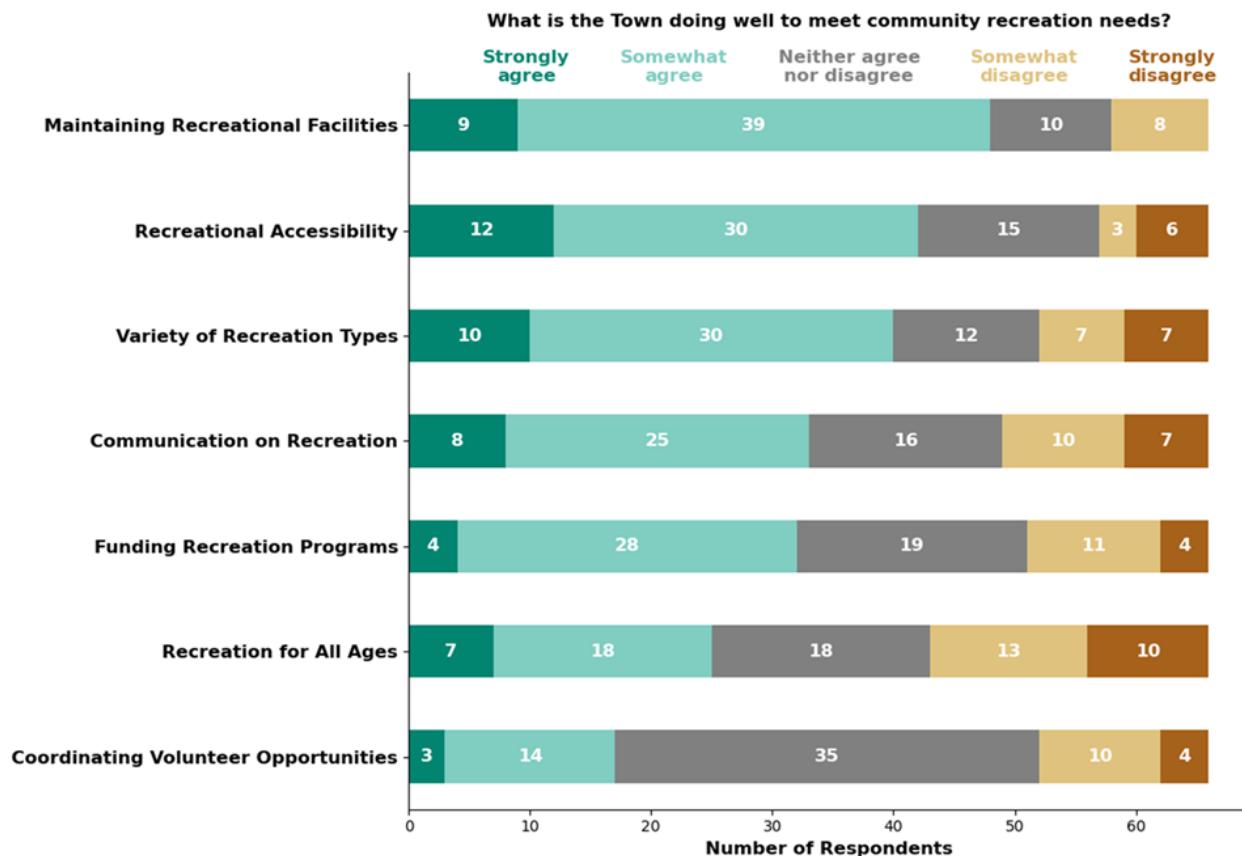
**Figure 3 – What More Could the Town Do to Meet Open Space Needs?**



## Survey Results: Question 3: Recreation Strengths

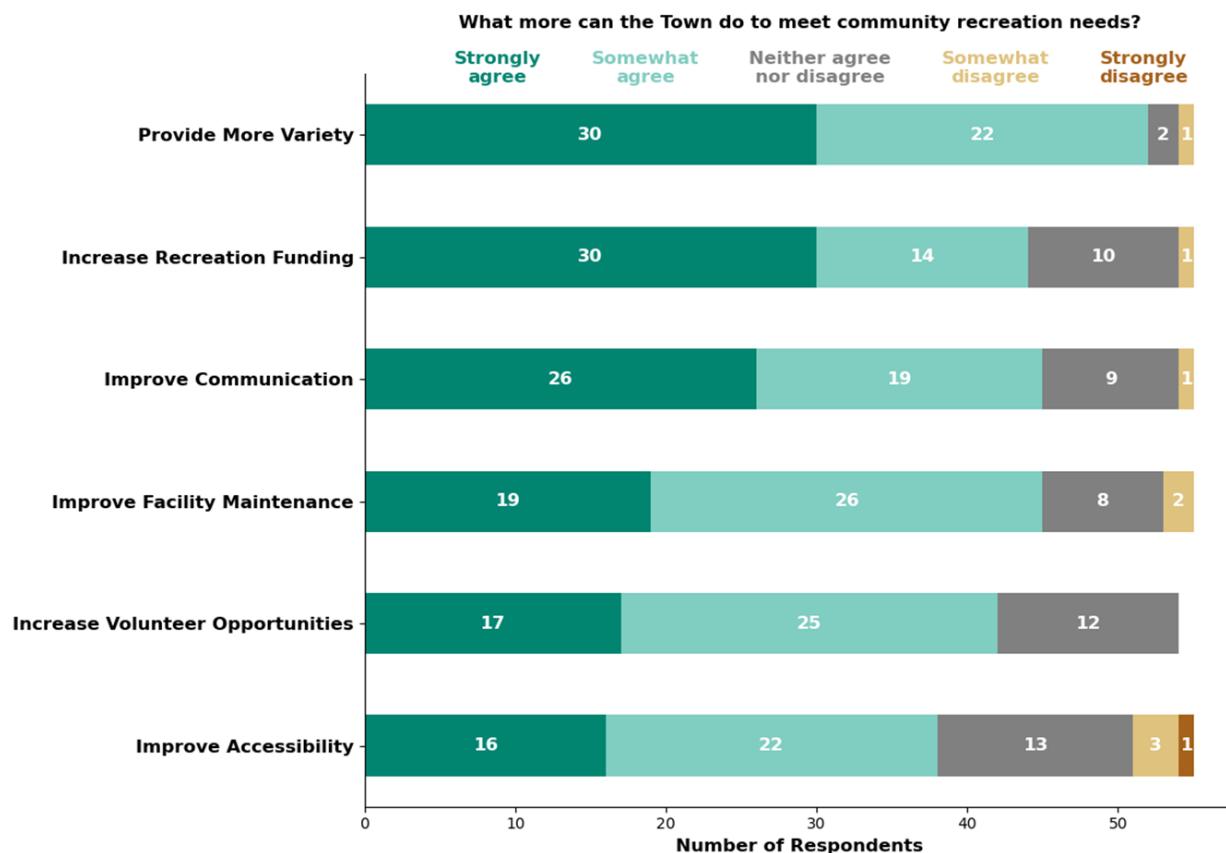
Similar to question 1, related to open space needs, the next survey question asks what the Town is doing well to meet their recreation needs. Figure 4 below provides the survey responses for this question. Respondents provided very favorable responses for three (3) of the topic areas and believed that the Town was maintaining recreational facilities well, provided accessible recreational programs/facilities, and offered a variety of recreational types. The respondents were split on the Town's ability to provide recreational opportunities for all ages of the community; over a third of respondents did not think that the Town is providing recreational needs for all ages.

**Figure 4 - What Is Town Doing Well to Meet Recreation Needs?**



*Survey Results: Question 4: Recreation Space Needs/Opportunities*

Similar to question 2 about open space needs, the respondents were overwhelmingly in agreement that the Town could improve in all six (6) of the recreation areas surveyed. In the area of “provide more variety of recreation needs”, 95% of respondents agreed more could be done by the Town.

**Figure 5 – What More Could the Town Do to Meet Recreation Needs?***Public Forums*

Throughout the planning process, the community actively participated in three public forums to contribute their insights and feedback to shape the comprehensive open space and recreation plan. In the initial forum, attendees received an overview of the 2009 plan, engaged in community input and visioning sessions to pinpoint open space and recreation priorities, and discussed future opportunities for continued involvement in the plan's development. Participants also provided feedback on how to best approach outreach to community organizations, especially within the Environmental Justice (EJ) community blocks. Suggestions involved communication through email and phone to entities such as churches, the food pantry, housing authority, and the school district. The first public forum also served as a launch date for the survey.

The second public forum centered on presenting the survey results, emphasizing key community needs, and facilitating a mapping exercise to identify specific parcels of interest for protection and development in the realm of open space and recreation. Additionally, participants received an overview of the plan's timeline and the upcoming steps, including the drafting of the 5-year action plan and associated strategies.

*Public Forum 1*

On July 28, 2023, NMCOG and the Town of Dracut hosted the first public forum. This forum's goals were to provide an overview of open space and recreation planning concepts, review Dracut's previous Open Space and Recreation plans and accomplishments since the last plan, provide an update on the plan update process, and collect feedback and insights to guide the development of Dracut's updated OSRP. NMCOG staff conducted a prioritization exercise to identify priority intervention types to improve the Town's open space and recreation resources. The following were the most cited intervention types:

- Communications, outreach, and education
- Preservation of capital for future open space acquisitions and recreation opportunities
- Improve accessibility to participate in programs (removing financial and ability barriers)
- Addition of new facilities: swimming access, playgrounds, dog park

Open Space Preservation and Enhancement:

- Preserving capital for the opportunities to purchase open space as it becomes available
- Dog-friendly open spaces
- Marking of Native American historical presence
- Conserve available land
- Need to preserve more open space
- Promote positivity around preserving land
- Open Space quarterly newsletter sent to all houses with tax bills
- Knowledge of resources

Recreation and Facility Improvements:

- Trash pickup
- Recreation opportunities for adults
- Better/more parking at current hiking trails
- Swimming access and instruction
- Playgrounds
- Multi-use facility for all age ranges like the Y
- More funding for recreation
- Maintenance of recreational facilities
- Town tree house rentals
- Open access to canoe, kayak, paddle boat rental on Long Pond
- Annual Town Beach party
- Rugged wheelchair rentals to improve accessibility
- Kayak, canoe, swimming areas
- Litter pickup

Challenges and Trade-offs:

- Recreation and open space are in direct competition, and hard choices will have to be made.

*Public Forum 2*

On September 26, 2023, NMCOG and the Town of Dracut hosted the second public forum. A total of seven residents, including Open Space and Recreation Committee members, were in attendance. The attendees heard a presentation from NMCOG's former Sustainability Planner, Daniela Garcia Moreno, which

outlined the OSRP update process and results from the OSRP survey. Then, attendees engaged in a visioning exercise where they were prompted to place color-coded stickers on a map of Dracut, indicating where they wanted to see the priorities identified by the survey realized. The open space and recreation priorities identified by the attendees were the following:

- Beaver Brook Farm: Participants expressed concerns about accessibility, historic preservation, and bathroom access. The town is actively working on a plan to improve trails at this location with increased accessibility.
- 5 Myron St: Attendees suggested the creation of a picnic area with fishing amenities at this parcel. The waterfront access parcel at 5 Thayer (or Mayer St) was identified as a potential site for recreational development.
- Lake Mascuppic Public Boat Ramp and Long Pond: Residents raised concerns about the safety of motorboat use in these areas and the need for measures to address these concerns.
- Colburn Conservation Land: There is a need for a parking area at this location.
- Dunlap Sanctuary: This private conservation land requires additional parking facilities to accommodate visitors.
- Crosby Rd opposite Gloria: There is a desire to see this parcel used for conservation and hiking trail purposes.
- Full Group Discussion Notes: Participants expressed a desire to preserve private parcels north of Methuen Rd, protect existing conservation land from encroachment by nearby homeowners, and change the designation of Murphy's farm parcel to residential use. They also suggested reaching out to scout troops and local community groups for feedback and engagement.

In addition to the parcel specific feedback, the attendees discussed the following opportunities for general improvement of the planning process, and conservation and recreation amenities:

- General Comments: Concerns were raised about the accuracy of the conservation map, particularly regarding pending conservation properties and unidentified conservation lands. Participants noted the need for better enforcement of conservation easements and proposed adding a school or education center to the east side of Dracut.
- Potential Opportunities for Conservation: There are potential opportunities for conservation at Brentwood Drive, a 10-acre golf course adjacent to an existing town parcel in conservation. Beaver Brook Farm could be enhanced with the addition of bathrooms and improved accessibility. Developing access and trail systems on Crosby Road is also suggested, possibly involving Boy Scouts.
- Potential Opportunities for Recreation: The forum discussed the need for additional sports complexes and facilities on the far east side of town.

The public forum addressed various concerns and opportunities related to open space, recreation, and conservation in Dracut. These discussions highlighted the importance of accessibility, preservation, and community engagement in shaping the town's plans for these areas. Attendees had the opportunity to

ask questions and provide additional feedback on the plan update process. They were informed about the next steps and invited to remain engaged.

### Management Needs, Potential Change of Use

Successful implementation of the strategies in this plan necessitates enhanced collaboration and coordination among key entities. The plan underscores the importance of fostering greater synergy between the open space committee, recreation commission, and conservation commission to facilitate the effective management of open space and recreation resources. Additionally, active participation in transportation planning is crucial for reassessing road safety in areas providing access to open spaces. To proactively engage with stakeholders, the plan recommends the establishment of a dedicated community engagement liaison. This role would facilitate ongoing communication with landowners and land trusts throughout the town, ensuring a streamlined approach to conserving priority land as opportunities arise. Furthermore, to foster a smoother process for future OSRP updates, the plan recommends the creation of a specialized committee. This committee would be tasked with overseeing the next plan update, ensuring comprehensive and well-coordinated efforts in shaping the town's open space and recreation landscape.

## Section 8: Goals and Objectives

The development of this plan was a collaborative and inclusive process, involving community input through various channels. The Town employed surveys, public forums, and outreach efforts to ensure a diverse range of perspectives. The OSRP sets comprehensive goals, aiming to foster equitable access to open spaces and recreational facilities, promote responsible stewardship of natural resources, and create a resilient and sustainable community. Resource protection needs include combating invasive species, establishing wildlife corridors, and prioritizing the preservation of critical wetlands and forests. Community needs, as highlighted in survey responses and public forums, include increased support for open space preservation, community events, additional funding for recreation, and a broader array of recreational activities. The following objectives serve as guiding principles for the implementation of the Dracut Open Space and Recreation Plan, reflecting a comprehensive and community-driven approach to preserving and enhancing the town's natural and recreational resources.

1. Dracut's Boards, Committees, and Commissions work together and collaborate to advance the community's open space and recreational goals and objectives:

Foster greater synergy and collaboration between the open space committee, recreation commission, and conservation commission to ensure effective management of open space and recreation resources.

2. Open space and recreation improvement projects reflect and align with the Dracut Master Plan, and the planning, design, and implementation of these projects is undertaken in an interdisciplinary and collaborative way.

Actively engage in community planning processes to reassess road safety in areas providing access to open spaces, ensuring safe and efficient connectivity, and evaluate the needs of the community beyond open space conservation and recreation.

3. Preservation of critical environmental areas are a top priority:

Incorporate comprehensive land use planning that prioritizes the preservation of critical wetlands, forests, and water bodies, emphasizing the establishment and maintenance of green spaces and trails.

4. The community is educated in the importance of resource conservation needs to preserve Dracut's natural heritage:

Implement community education initiatives to raise awareness about the importance of resource conservation and encourage active community participation in preserving Dracut's natural heritage.

5. Open space areas are equitably accessible to all community members:

Work towards fostering equitable access to diverse open spaces and recreational facilities for all community members, recognizing and addressing the unique needs of environmental justice (EJ) communities and people with disabilities.

6. Dracut is a responsible steward of its natural resources:

Promote responsible stewardship of existing natural resources, with a focus on preserving critical habitats, protecting water resources, and maintaining biodiversity.

7. Dracut is a community with expansive recreational opportunities:

Enhance recreational opportunities by prioritizing the development and maintenance of accessible and inclusive facilities, catering to the diverse needs and preferences of the Dracut community.

8. Dracut is a resilient and ecologically sustainable community:

Strive to create a resilient and sustainable community that values its natural heritage, actively engages residents in planning and decision-making processes, and adapts to evolving environmental challenges and community aspirations.

## Section 9: Five-Year Action & Implementation Plan

Note: Acronym key follows tables.

Goal	Objective	Actions	Responsible Parties	Ongoing	Short-term 2024 - 2025	Mid-term 2026 - 2027	Long-term 2028 - 2029	Potential Funding Sources
<b>Goal 1: Dracut's Boards, Committees, and Commissions work together and collaborate to advance the community's open space and recreational goals and objectives.</b>								
1	<p>Foster greater synergy and collaboration between the open space committee, recreation commission, and conservation commission to ensure effective management of open space and recreation resources.</p>	<b>Inter-Committee Workshops:</b> Facilitate regular workshops or joint meetings involving members of the open space committee, recreation commission, and conservation commission.	RC, OSC, CC		X			TB
		<b>Cross-Committee Task Force:</b> Establish a task force that comprises members from all three committees, focusing on specific initiatives outlined in the OSRP.	RC, OSC, CC			X		TB

Goal	Objective	Actions	Responsible Parties	Ongoing	Short-term 2024 - 2025	Mid-term 2026 - 2027	Long-term 2028 - 2029	Potential Funding Sources
<b>Goal 2: Open space and recreation improvement projects reflect and align with the Dracut Master Plan, and the planning, design, and implementation of these projects is undertaken in an interdisciplinary and collaborative way.</b>								
2	Actively engage in community planning processes to reassess road safety in areas providing access to open spaces, ensuring safe and efficient connectivity, and evaluate the needs of the community beyond open space conservation and recreation.	<b>Colburn Conservation Land:</b> Establish a parking area to improve access for visitors.	OSC, CC, TM, ED			X		TB
		<b>Dunlap Sanctuary:</b> 1) Address the need for additional parking to accommodate visitors.	OSC, ED, TM			X		TB
		<b>Dunlap Sanctuary:</b> 2) Assess safety of road for open space users.	OSC, ED, TM			X		TB
		<b>Brentwood Drive:</b> Explore the potential for conserving the 10 acres on the golf course abutting the Town parcel.	OSC, CPC, TM		X			TB, CPA
		<b>Beaver Brook Farm:</b> 1) Collaborate with the Town's ongoing trail development plan to increase accessibility.	BBFAC	X				MT, CPA

Goal	Objective	Actions	Responsible Parties	Ongoing	Short-term 2024 - 2025	Mid-term 2026 - 2027	Long-term 2028 - 2029	Potential Funding Sources
		<b>Beaver Brook Farm:</b> 2) Investigate options for historic preservation and accessibility improvements.	BBFAC, CPC	X				CPA, TB
		<b>Beaver Brook Farm:</b> 3) Assess and address bathroom access concerns.	BBFAC, CPC, ED	X				CPA, TB

Goal	Objective	Actions	Responsible Parties	Ongoing	Short-term 2024 - 2025	Mid-term 2026 - 2027	Long-term 2028 - 2029	Potential Funding Sources
<b>Goal 3: Preservation of critical environmental areas are a top priority.</b>								
3	Incorporate comprehensive land use planning that prioritizes the preservation of critical wetlands, forests, and water bodies, emphasizing the establishment and maintenance of green spaces and trails.	Develop and adopt a <b>land management policy</b> for Town owned conservation land	CC, BOS, PB, OSC, RC, CA, ED		X			TB
		Protect <b>existing conservation land</b> from encroachment from nearby homeowners by strengthening the enforcement of conservation easements to protect existing conservation land.	CC, CA, BOS	X				TB
		Work to preserve <b>private parcels north of Methuen Rd</b> as part of the conservation plan.	CC, OSC		X			TB

Goal	Objective	Actions	Responsible Parties	Ongoing	Short-term 2024 - 2025	Mid-term 2026 - 2027	Long-term 2028 - 2029	Potential Funding Sources
		Focus on creating connectivity between <b>contiguous conservation lands in the East Dracut area.</b>	CC, OSC		X			TB, MT
		<b>Crosby Road Access and Trail System Development:</b> Collaborate with potential Scouts projects to enhance trail systems and accessibility.	CC, OSC, ED		X			TB, MT

Goal	Objective	Actions	Responsible Parties	Ongoing	Short-term 2024 - 2025	Mid-term 2026 - 2027	Long-term 2028 - 2029	Potential Funding Sources
<b>Goal 4: The community is educated in the importance of resource conservation needs to preserve Dracut's natural heritage.</b>								
4	Implement community education initiatives to raise awareness about the importance of resource conservation and encourage active community participation in preserving Dracut's natural heritage.	<b>School/Education Center:</b> Explore opportunities to establish a nature education center on the East side of Dracut to promote environmental education and outdoor learning opportunities.	SD, OSC, RC				X	TB
		<b>Promote Positivity around Preserving Land:</b> Develop public awareness campaigns to encourage community support for land preservation.	RC, OSC, CC	X				TB
		<b>Open Space and Recreation Newsletter:</b> Create a centralized platform for sharing information on happenings and opportunities.	OSC, RC, CC, RD		X			TB

Goal	Objective	Actions	Responsible Parties	Ongoing	Short-term 2024 - 2025	Mid-term 2026 - 2027	Long-term 2028 - 2029	Potential Funding Sources
<b>Goal 5: Open space areas are equitably accessible to all community members.</b>								
5	Work towards fostering equitable access to diverse open spaces and recreational facilities for all community members, recognizing and addressing the unique needs of environmental justice (EJ) communities and people with disabilities.	<b>Update Town ADA Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan from 2020:</b> to comply with federal law (ADA Title II regulations and 28 C.F.R. section 35), the Town should review all their programs, services, and activities for compliance, including parks, open spaces, and recreational facilities. The Transition Plan addresses structural and programmatic deficiencies to achieve accessibility, establishing a timeline and cost schedule.	CC, RD	X				TB

Goal	Objective	Actions	Responsible Parties	Ongoing	Short-term 2024 - 2025	Mid-term 2026 - 2027	Long-term 2028 - 2029	Potential Funding Sources
5		<b>Open Access to Canoe, Kayak, Paddle Boat Rental on Long Pond: Explore</b> options for providing easy access to watercraft rentals on Long Pond for residents.	OSC, RC, CC, RD		X			TB
		<b>Annual Town Beach Party:</b> 1) Organize an annual community beach party for residents to enjoy the waterfront.	RD			X		TB
		Annual Town Beach Party: 2) Provide low-cost or free options to attend.	RD			X		TB
		<b>Rugged Wheelchair Rentals to Improve Accessibility:</b> 1) Provide rugged wheelchair rentals to enhance accessibility in outdoor recreational areas.	RD, RC				X	UG

Goal	Objective	Actions	Responsible Parties	Ongoing	Short-term 2024 - 2025	Mid-term 2026 - 2027	Long-term 2028 - 2029	Potential Funding Sources
		Rugged Wheelchair Rentals to Improve Accessibility: 2) Explore a partnership with Lowell, Tyngsboro, and State officials to provide wheelchairs in the Lowell-Dracut-Tyngsboro State Forest	RD, RC				X	UG

Goal	Objective	Actions	Responsible Parties	Ongoing	Short-term 2024 - 2025	Mid-term 2026 - 2027	Long-term 2028 - 2029	Potential Funding Sources
<b>Goal 6: Dracut is a responsible steward of its natural resources.</b>								
6	Promote responsible stewardship of existing natural resources, with a focus on preserving critical habitats, protecting water resources, and maintaining biodiversity.	<b>Invasive Species Volunteer Group: 1)</b> Establish a volunteer-based group to manage invasive species in open spaces across Town.	OSC	x				TB, UG
		<b>Invasive Species Volunteer Group: 2)</b> Partner with Local Land Trust or Environmental Organization to ensure target and removal of correct species.	OSC		x			TB, UG

Goal	Objective	Actions	Responsible Parties	Ongoing	Short-term 2024 - 2025	Mid-term 2026 - 2027	Long-term 2028 - 2029	Potential Funding Sources
<b>Goal 7: Dracut is a community with expansive recreational opportunities.</b>								
7	Enhance recreational opportunities by prioritizing the development and maintenance of accessible and inclusive facilities, catering to the diverse needs and preferences of the Dracut community.	<b>5 Myron St. Waterfront Access Parcel:</b> 1) Assess and develop plans for providing public access to waterfront areas.	OSC, CC, ED		x			TB
		<b>5 Myron St. Waterfront Access Parcel:</b> 2) Develop a picnic area with fishing facilities.	OSC, RC, RD			x		TB
		<b>Lake Mascuppic Public Boat Ramp and Long Pond:</b> 1) Conduct a safety assessment and address concerns related to motorboat use.	DCR, BOS, TM, RC		x			TB, UG

Goal	Objective	Actions	Responsible Parties	Ongoing	Short-term 2024 - 2025	Mid-term 2026 - 2027	Long-term 2028 - 2029	Potential Funding Sources
		Lake Mascuppic Public Boat Ramp and Long Pond: 2) Consider implementing regulations or safety measures to ensure the safety of residents and nonmotorized boat usage in the lake.	DCR, CC,		x			TB, UG
		<b>Recreation Opportunities for Adults:</b> Develop and expand recreational opportunities tailored to adults' interests and needs.	RC, RD	x				TB, UG

Goal	Objective	Actions	Responsible Parties	Ongoing	Short-term 2024 - 2025	Mid-term 2026 - 2027	Long-term 2028 - 2029	Potential Funding Sources
<b>Goal 8: Dracut is a resilient and ecologically sustainable community.</b>								
8	<p>Strive to create a resilient and sustainable community that values its natural heritage, actively engages residents in planning and decision-making processes, and adapts to evolving environmental challenges and community aspirations.</p>	<b>Green Infrastructure Integration:</b> Integrate green infrastructure planning into community development projects by collaborating with municipal planning and engineering departments. (I.e. in proposed parking projects to access open space and recreation areas).	TP, ED, TM, OSC, CA, CC	x				TB, UG, MVP
		<b>Climate Resilience and Education Preparedness:</b> 1) Develop and implement educational programs focused on climate resilience and preparedness.	TP, CA, ED	x				TB

Goal	Objective	Actions	Responsible Parties	Ongoing	Short-term 2024 - 2025	Mid-term 2026 - 2027	Long-term 2028 - 2029	Potential Funding Sources
		Climate Resilience and Education Preparedness: 2) Collaborate with local schools, community organizations (i.e. boy scouts) to ensure successful programming.	TP, CA, ED	x				TB

#### Implementation Table Key

Responsible Parties			Funding Sources	
BOS	Board of Selectmen	TB	Town Budget (Town)	
BBFAS	The Beaver Brook Farm (BBF) Ad-hoc Sub-Committee	CPA	Community Preservation Act (Town)	
CPC	Community Preservation Committee	MVP	Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (State)	
CA	Conservation Agent	MT	MassTrails (State)	
CC	Conservation Commission	UG	Unidentified Grant (unknown)	
DCR	Dept. of Conservation & Recreation (State)			
ED	Engineering Department			
OSC	Open Space Committee			
SD	School Department			
RC	Recreation Commission			
RD	Recreation Department			
TM	Town Manager			
TP	Town Planner			

## Section 10: Public Comments

Letters of support from the Dracut Select Board, and Planning Board, as well as the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments are provided in this section of the Plan.

See Appendix A for summaries of the public engagement activities that took place as part of the update of this plan. They include the following:

Kickoff Meeting, January 31, 2023

Committee Visioning Meeting, May 9, 2023

Public Forum 1, June 28, 2023

Public Forum 2, September 26, 2023

Meetings with Conservation Commission and Open Space Committee in February 2024

OSRP Final Presentation to the Select Board, September 10, 2024

OSRP Survey and Results



Melissa Cryan  
Grants Manager  
Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs  
100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900  
Boston, MA 02114

September 10, 2024

Re: Town of Dracut Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP)

Dear Ms. Cryan:

The Town of Dracut Board of Selectmen reviewed the Draft 2024 Open Space and Recreation Plan and discussed such at their meeting on September 10, 2024. The Plan is consistent with the community goals for the future.

This thorough document provides the town with specific guidance for next steps to protect and enhance our open space and recreation areas. This document is a result of significant work by the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG), Recreation Commission, Open Space Committee and Conservation Commission along with Jackie Anderson the Town Conservation Agent, and their collective efforts are very much appreciated.

By undertaking this planning effort, the Town has recognized that protection and stewardship of its conservation and recreation facilities and programs is essential to the quality of life for town residents, visitors, and workers.

Following presentation and discussion, at its meeting of September 10, 2024, the Board voted to support the future implementation of the Action Plan over the upcoming years.

Sincerely,

Tony Archinski, Chairman  
Dracut Board of Selectmen



Melissa Cryan  
Grants Manager  
Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs  
100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900  
Boston, MA 02114

September 11, 2024

Re: Town of Dracut Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP)

Dear Ms. Cryan:

The Town of Dracut Planning Board reviewed the Draft 2024 Open Space and Recreation Plan and discussed such at their meeting on September 11, 2024. The Plan is consistent with the community goals for the future.

This thorough document provides the town with specific guidance for next steps to protect and enhance our open space and recreation areas. This document is a result of significant work by the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG), Recreation Commission, Open Space Committee and Conservation Commission along with Jackie Anderson the Town Conservation Agent, and their collective efforts are very much appreciated.

By undertaking this planning effort, the Town has recognized that protection and stewardship of its conservation and recreation facilities and programs is essential to the quality of life for town residents, visitors, and workers.

Following presentation and discussion, at its meeting of September 11, 2024, the Board voted to support the future implementation of the Action Plan over the upcoming years.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "George Nangle".

George Nangle  
Vice Chairman – Planning Board

Jennifer M. Raitt  
Executive Director



Stephen Themelis  
Chair

## Northern Middlesex Council of Governments

A Multi-Disciplinary Regional Planning Agency Serving:  
Billerica – Chelmsford – Dracut – Dunstable – Lowell – Pepperell – Tewksbury – Tyngsborough – Westford

October 3, 2024

Melissa Cryan, Grant Programs Supervisor  
Division of Conservation Services  
Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs  
100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900  
Boston, MA 02114

Re: Review of and Support for the 2024 Dracut Open Space and Recreation Plan

Dear Ms. Cryan:

The Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG) helped prepare the Open Space and Recreation Plan for the Town of Dracut. The Plan is comprehensive and meets all requirements based on the Division of Conservation Services' Open Space and Recreation Plan Workbook. The Plan provides the town decision-makers with specific guidance for addressing the maintenance needs of its conservation and recreation facilities, improving communication and educational outreach to residents on the value of open space preservation, and integrating green infrastructure into local projects to increase climate resilience. All together the plan will benefit the town and the region and will ensure that the special places that make Dracut unique can be enjoyed by future generations. By undertaking this plan, the Town has recognized that protection and stewardship of its natural, cultural and historic resources is essential to the overall quality of life, health, economic vitality and sustainability of the community.

Should you have any questions regarding this letter or require further information, please contact me at [jraitt@nmco.org](mailto:jraitt@nmco.org).

NMCOG looks forward to supporting and working collaboratively with the Town to achieve the plan's goals.

Sincerely,

*Jenny Raitt*  
Jennifer Raitt  
Executive Director

cc: Gregory M. Hanley, Dracut Interim Town Manager  
Alison Manugian, Dracut Community Development Director  
Jackie Anderson, Dracut Conservation Agent  
Dracut Select Board  
Dracut Planning Board  
Dracut Conservation Commission  
Dracut Open Space Committee  
NMCOG Councilors

## Section 11: References

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## Appendix.

### [Appendix A: OSRP Public Outreach and Engagement](#)

Summaries and materials from the public engagement activities that took place as part of the update of this plan. They include the following:

- Kickoff Meeting, January 31, 2023
- Committee Visioning Meeting, May 9, 2023
- Public Forum 1, June 28, 2023
- Public Forum 2, September 26, 2023
- Meetings with Conservation Commission and Open Space Committee in February 2024
- OSRP Final Presentation to the Select Board, September 10, 2024
- OSRP Survey and Results

### [Appendix B: Dracut Open Space and Recreation Lands Inventory 2024](#)

### [Appendix C: ADA Self-Assessment and Transition Plan Information](#)

Related materials include:

- Town of Dracut ADA Transition Plan Executive Summary
- Town of Dracut ADA Self Evaluation and Transition Plan Final
- Town of Dracut ADA by Priority Worksheet
- Town of Dracut ADA Grievance Procedure