Town of Hinsdale
Open Space and Recreation Plan

Prepared by:

The Hinsdale Open Space and Recreation Committee
and
The Berkshire Regional Planning Commission

September 2018

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION 1: PLAN SUMMARY 1

SECTION 2: INTRODUCTION 2
A. Statement of purpose 2
B. Planning Process and Public Participation 2

SECTION 3: COMMUNITY SETTING 5
A. Regional Context 5
B. History of the Community 7
C. Population Characteristics 13
D. Growth and Development Patterns 16

SECTION 4: ENVIRONMENTAL INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS 29
A. Geology, Soils and Topography 29
B. Landscape Character 31
C. Water Resources 33
D. Vegetation 37
E. Fisheries and Wildlife 39
F. Scenic Resources and Unique Environments 44
G. Environmental Challenges 50

SECTION 5: INVENTORY OF LANDS OF CONSERVATION & RECREATION INTEREST 53
A. Private Parcels 54
B. Public and Nonprofit Parcels 57

SECTION 6: COMMUNITY VISION 61
A. Description of Process 61
B. Statement of Open Space and Recreation Goals 62

SECTION 7: ANALYSIS OF NEEDS 63
A. Summary of Resource Protection Needs 63
B. Summary of Community's Needs 64
C. Management Needs, Potential Change of Use 65

SECTION 8: GOALS AND OBJECTIVES 68

SECTION 9: FIVE-YEAR ACTION PLAN 69

SECTION 10: PUBLIC COMMENTS 79

SECTION 11: REFERENCES 80
APPENDICES 81

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BRPC also wishes to acknowledge and extend its thanks to the EOEEA's Smart Growth Technical Assistance Grant program for their financial support, without which this plan could never have been completed.

1. PLAN SUMMARY:

The Hinsdale Open Space and Recreation Plan highlights the town's abundant natural resources which provide its rural character and opportunities for recreation. Mountain ranges to the east and west cradle the town and allow spectacular views across the valley, especially along the Appalachian National Scenic Trail, located along Hinsdale's western ridge. Still relatively pristine, the hillsides feed several drinking water reservoirs which supply Hinsdale and area towns, and recreational water bodies such as Ashmere Lake and Plunkett Reservoir, which support seasonal and year-round residents. The East Branch Housatonic River originates in south Hinsdale and flows north, forming the central valley on which the town is centered. The river's floodplains mostly contain wetlands which help regulate flooding, purify the water supply, and provide wildlife habitat. The largest wetland, the 1,482-acre Hinsdale Flats, is the centerpiece of the town and of the Hinsdale Flats Watershed Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). Encompassing 14,500 acres, it is the third largest inland ACEC in the state and includes nearly 75 percent of Hinsdale.

This plan is an update of a plan that was developed and adopted in 2007. This plan will guide Hinsdale officials and residents as they implement open space and recreation improvements over the next several years. Through the use of a town-wide survey, two public forums, and with the guidance of town officials and interested citizens, this updated plan reflects the needs and desires of Hinsdale residents. This plan can be thought of as a blueprint for the town, in terms of open space and recreation.

During the course of obtaining public input, several recurring themes became apparent. The lakes and water bodies are the focal points of the town, specifically Ashmere Lake and Plunkett Reservoir, but also other smaller bodies of water, the Housatonic River and wetlands. Also, preservation and expansion of recreational opportunities ranked highly. As such, it was decided that specific types of recreational activities should be given priority, including hiking, walking, canoeing, fishing and swimming. Facilities and amenities that make these activities possible should be improved in certain areas and expanded overall. The public survey and forum comments also indicated that it was important to acquire town land for open space or for easements to lakes and rivers. The residents also placed emphasis on preventing pollution of water bodies and expressed a desire to protect hillsides from development. All of the public input has been collated and translated into several goals and objectives, specifically defined later within the plan.

2. INTRODUCTION

A. Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this plan is to update and build upon the open space and recreation framework which was provided in the form of the original 2007 Open Space and Recreation Plan. As with the original plan, townspeople can use the information within to help identify open space and recreation goals and to make wise land-use decisions.

The purpose of this document is to:

- Create a working document that will serve as justification for future open space and recreation decisions, whether done by the Select Board, the Town Administrator or the residents of the community.
- Clearly record information pertinent to open space lands and their ownership; and display this information in the form of revised maps.
- Document specific ways to expand and connect recreational facilities to meet the needs of people of varying ages and capabilities;
- Create a five-year action plan to implement the town's goals and objectives.
- Allow the town to be eligible for any state funding that may further the goals and objectives within this plan.

B. Planning Process and Public Participation

In 2017, the Town of Hinsdale, working in conjunction with the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC), applied for and received state funding to update the Hinsdale Open Space and Recreation Plan which had last been updated in 2007. This grant was generously given by Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs. Work immediately began to update all of the maps within the plan, as well as to collect data that would later be referenced in the plan. However, due to changeover in staff at both BRPC and the Town of Hinsdale (including the Town Administrator), the Open Space and Recreation Committee was not formed until August 2018.

In 2018, the Town Administrator and BRPC identified, recruited and appointed an ad hoc Open Space and Recreation Committee (OSRC) whose task was to oversee the development and delivery of an updated Open Space and Recreation Plan based upon the 2007 document. Representatives included several interested citizens including a member from the Conservation Commission, a member of the Finance Committee, the Town Administrator and the Town Moderator. The complete list of committee members is found in Table 1. BRPC planning staff aided the committee by collecting data, facilitating public outreach, keeping the planning process on track, and creating the final plan.

Table 1. Hinsdale Open Space and Recreation Committee (OSRC)

Committee Member	Interest/affiliation
Bob Graves, Chairman	Town Administrator
Vivian Mason	Finance Committee, Mission & Vision Working Group
Cindy Conry	Conservation Commission member
Sara Paul	Interested citizen
David Stuart	Town Moderator, Mission & Vision Working Group
Christopher Gruba*	(Berkshire Regional Planning Commission project manager)*

After deciding on an overall strategy and on an approach to implement that strategy, the OSRC designed a public survey intended to collect the public input required to successfully complete the planning process. The public survey was posted on the town website, with a link to complete the survey and add any comments online. Paper copies of the survey were also available at the town library, police department and transfer station, as well as Ozzie's Steak and Eggs, one of the town's notable gathering places. As this survey took place between Memorial Day and Labor Day, it captured comments from seasonal (summer) residents as well as year-round residents.

The survey was open to the public for comment for 3 full weeks, during which time 52 survey responses were collected. The responses were entered into a database that was searchable and could be cross-referenced. The results of the survey can be found in Appendix A. The findings of the survey are discussed in Section 7 of this plan.

In addition to the survey, the Open Space and Recreation Committee sponsored two public forums on Tuesday, August 28th and Wednesday, August 29th, 2018, at the Fire Station and Town Hall respectively. To publicize the forum, flyers announcing the forums were posted on the town website and placed at all public gathering places.

The forums consisted of three basic components: 1) reviewing existing conditions of open space and recreation areas, 2) reviewing results of the public survey, and 3) an interactive public discussion to gather as much public input as possible. Half of the meeting consisted of this last component, in which the attendees expressed their wishes and desires for open space protection and recreational opportunities.

The interactive public discussion consisted of the free exchange of any thoughts or ideas, general or specific, related to open space and recreation. These comments were memorialized on the Inventory of Land of Conservation and Recreation Interest Map. The comments were then verified and expounded by the OSRC at subsequent meetings (see Appendix B). The results of these forums, as well as the survey results and Committee and BRPC coordinator input was merged into applicable parts of the 2007 plan to create a draft plan for review. The OSRC then met to determine a list of goals and objectives, as well as a 5-year action plan.

The draft plan was distributed to the Planning Board, the Select Board, the Conservation Commission and BRPC itself. The draft was also given to the Zoning Board of Appeals and the Board of Health for comment as well. The draft was made available to the public at the Hinsdale Library and on the town's website. The comments received through this effort were incorporated into this final plan. The plan was then forwarded to the Division of Conservation Service for approval.

The goals, objectives and actions found within this plan are a direct reflection of the needs, wishes and desires voiced by residents through the survey, the public forums and the Open Space and Recreation Committee meetings.

3. COMMUNITY SETTING

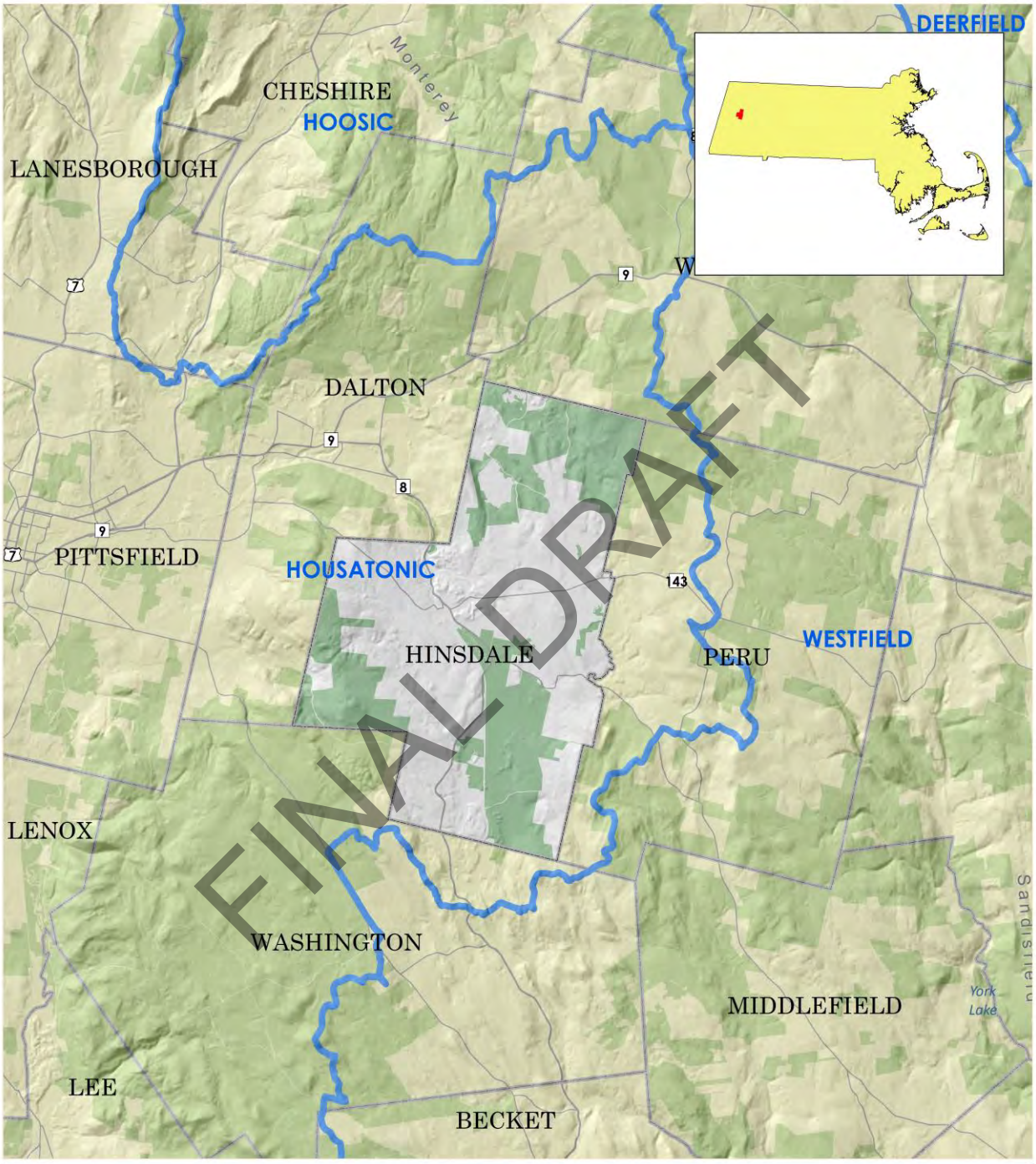
A. Regional Context

Hinsdale is a rural hill town community in the beautiful Berkshires of Western Massachusetts. The Berkshires are renowned for their natural beauty, rich arts and culture, and small New England town charm. Hinsdale is bordered to the north by the Town of Windsor, to the east by the Town of Peru, to the south by the Town of Washington, and to the west by the Town of Dalton (see Map 1).

Hinsdale was incorporated in 1804 and was named for Rev. Theodore Hinsdale, an early resident and leader in the movement for incorporation. Hinsdale former economies—built around stage-coach travel, then mills, sheep farming, and the railroad—have all disappeared and Hinsdale is now largely a bedroom community with a summer population based around local camps and lakeside cottages. Nevertheless, the year-round population of Hinsdale is at an all-time high of 2,161 in 2014.

Map 1. Regional Context

Hinsdale Open Space & Recreation Plan



Major Watersheds
Protected Land
Towns
Interstate
Major Road
Minor Road

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission

This map was created by the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission and is intended for general planning purposes only. This map shall not be used for engineering, survey, legal, or regulatory purposes. MassGIS, MassDOT, the Town or BRPC may have supplied portions of this data.

0 1.25 2.5 Miles

N

Date: June 22, 2017

B. History of the Community

The following narrative was based largely on a timeline of Hinsdale's history by Leonard F. Swift, and includes narrative quoted or adapted from the book he edited, *The Heritage of Hinsdale: An Anthology*, and especially the introduction chapter, A Heritage of Land.

Early Settlement

The true first arrivals in the historical parade of Hinsdale's inhabitants were unknown Native Americans. Judging from arrowheads that farmers found in the river flats, these first occupants were probably seasonal hunters rather than villagers. The transient Native Americans, or more likely their predecessors further south, provided the name of the Housatonic River, a land form that has greatly influenced the character of Hinsdale.

Land survey and court records show the first land claims in present-day Hinsdale as having been drawn up in the 1740s, and the first primary travel route (Old Dalton Road to outer Maple Street) was surveyed in 1753. The earliest form of present-day Hinsdale was known as Township No. 2, an approximately 36 square mile area purchased by Elisha Jones, Oliver Partridge, and Governor Bernard in 1762. The area began to be settled as early as 1763 by people migrating north from Connecticut and Rhode Island. The Town of Partridgefield—Hinsdale's predecessor town, so named for one of the earliest surveyors and proprietors, Oliver Partridge—was incorporated in 1771.

The hill and valley topography of the area greatly shaped the community heritage. The basin-and-slope pattern formed a significant water gathering network: a wide scatter of mountainside springs and brooks that fed the river. In the early 1770s, a man named Nathan Fisk dammed the Bennett Brook to power the area's first mills: a saw and a grist mill, vital facilities for early settlers who needed planks for their houses and flour from their grains. A schoolhouse soon followed in 1772, on School House Hill, the northwestern corner of Maple Street and New Windsor Road (later the site of the First Congregational Church building). Settlement began increasing in the 1790s, including the arrival of Rev. Theodore Hinsdale and his family from Windsor, CT, who settled on a farm along the future Robinson Road.

Early Economy and Incorporation

Berkshire County and its shire town, Pittsfield, had been incorporated in 1761. Pittsfield was a convenient eight miles or so away, a distance that made the area a useful site for tavern stops by travelers on the turnpikes in stagecoach travel days. The late 1790s to early 1800s saw the development of two stagecoach roads, which overlapped for a quarter mile on the Maple Street Flats. One route was via the future Peru Road (Route 143) to Northampton, and the

other was the Chester Turnpike via Creamery Road, to Springfield. Here early settlers built taverns, the nucleus for a convenient village center.

For horse-drawn freight wagons and stagecoaches, the half-day trip from Pittsfield made the Flats a tourist stop of the time, just far enough for the late starters from the city to make a midday stop to eat and drink at the taverns, or for slower travelers to stop for the night before tackling the Peru or Middlefield hill climbs the next day. This prime location led to the building of a general store, a blacksmith shop, two taverns, a church, and neighborhood houses, all providing a nucleus for incorporation.

On June 21, 1804, the Partridgefield West Parish was incorporated as the Town of Hinsdale, named after Theodore Hinsdale, a leader in the movement for creation of a town centered on the Maple Street Flats, separate from Partridgefield centered on the future Peru Hill. Hinsdale was first included in the Census in 1810 and had a recorded population of 822.

Over the following decades, the town hosted many travelers, perhaps most notably troops who camped on their way to fight in the War of 1812, and Joseph Bonaparte (older brother of Napoleon), who stopped for a midday meal at Chester Moody's Maple Street tavern in 1818. Another mill was built on the East Branch cascades by Charles H. Plunkett in 1831, and the Hinsdale Manufacturing Company was incorporated in 1836, further adding to Hinsdale's mill economy.

The Railroad and Village Development

In the late 1830s, the Western Railroad surveyors chose the valley as the route for a new railroad. Their route from Springfield first climbed the Westfield River West Branch valley, then leveled across the divide through a one-hundred-foot-deep rock cut in Washington to reach the Housatonic East Branch valley in Hinsdale. The first train ran through the village of Hinsdale on December 27, 1841.

The railroad surveyors' choice of that route over the rival South County option revolutionized Hinsdale's community patterns. Around this time, drawn by the magnet of the new railroad, many community activities were moved or established a mile west of the Maple Street Flats to the riverside area, including business structures, residences, a railroad station, a post office, and the current central village streets. As the highest point in the railroad between Boston and the plains of the Midwest, Hinsdale became a hill town regional railroad center, with a watering and fueling stop for steam engines along the river flat south of the new town center. Carl Pierce, Sr. and his son, Carl, Jr. built a water tower, a coal elevator, a grain elevator, and a freight house. The railroad station became an active village gathering site, particularly at train arrival and departure times.

The river flats south of the station became a site for a rail track "Y" where the added locomotives, needed to assist long freight trains up the grade from Pittsfield, were detached and turned around for the downhill coast to the city.

In addition to the railroad structures, the new 1840s town center at the junction of Main and Maple streets included a hotel, several large houses, a row of buildings along each street including a drug store, a barber shop, and a new Baptist Church. Sites eastward across the river along Maple Street were chosen for the Library and the Hinsdale Academy. The Congregational Church was moved a mile west from its original knoll location opposite Ichabod Emmons' brick house to its current site. New residence blocks were developed from Taylor Street westward up the hill to Longview Avenue and the original St. Patrick's Church was built on the lower west slope so that Catholic parishioners no longer had to travel to Pittsfield.

Outside the town center, where farming expanded, the slopes were steadily cleared and stones laboriously hauled to create stone walls. The cut timber, piled high along the river flats, fueled the early steam engines. By the 1830s and '40s, sheep raising supplemented the earlier subsistence farming, and sheep by the thousands blanketed cleared fields. Censuses of the town's economy in the pre-Civil War decades recorded nearly 11,000 sheep on the Hinsdale hillsides. The sheep's wool supplied the series of mills built by Charles H. Plunkett, Charles Kittredge, and the Hinsdale Brothers, descendants of Rev. Theodore Hinsdale. In 1847, the Plunkett Reservoir Dam was built, creating Plunkett Reservoir as a source of water power for the village mills.

Late 19th Century Development

Development continued throughout the latter half of the 19th century, during which time the population of Hinsdale increased from 1,253 residents in 1850 to 1,739 in 1890. Among the new town center, several generations took up new occupations: station agent, telegraph operator, switchman, freight handler, hotel manager, mill workers, and more shopkeepers. Though the railroad buildings have disappeared, along the central junction of Main and Maple Street some of the original structures still stand, a heritage from the mid-1800s decades.

Ozzie's Steak and Eggs restaurant occupies the Raymond Block built by Samuel Raymond in 1871 as the first block business building in Hinsdale's active railroad era. The modern Hinsdale Hardware Store occupies the site of the three-generation Frissell's store. Ron Smith and Son's Electric restored Carl Pierce's coal and grain store that for a time became Bellinger Block, which then became a Web server business (Your-site.com) but has since closed. A parking lot and post office now cover the site of the 1840s Railroad House that first provided housing for the Irish railroad builders and then, as the Belmont House, was occupied by several decades of travelers and stores until its demolition in 1968. Further north on Main Street, and opposite two three-story, long-standing residences are Ed Sanders' apartments, approximately where a long succession of pharmacists used to fill prescriptions and mix milk shakes at their soda fountain.

In 1876, another dam was built, creating a reservoir for more water power for the valley mills. The builders of the dam, the Tracey Brothers, also ran a freight business, which poet and editor William Cullen Bryant used to carry his luggage on his annual summer trip from New York City to his seasonal home in Cummington. As the freighters paused by the new lake forming behind the dam, they invited Bryant to suggest a name for the rising body of water. His Long Island

home was named Cedarmere, using a favorite suffix "-mere," and when told of the ash trees along the shores, he proposed the name "Ashmere."

The years spanning 1885-1892 are known as Hinsdale's peak mill prosperity years, although they were soon followed by the Kittredge Mills in the lower valley going bankrupt in 1893 and closing.

Changes in the Early 20th Century

At the turn of the century, Hinsdale continued evolving and keeping up with the times. In the year 1900 alone: the first volunteer fire department was organized to protect the central village area; Bridge Street was constructed over the railroad; and John Naughton, Sr. opened Naughton's Market at the corner of Plunkett Avenue and Main Street. The first automobile was registered in Hinsdale in 1903, and electric lights replaced oil-lit streetlights in the central village in 1913.

Camps began opening, first Camp Ashmere in 1915 and then Camp Lenore in 1916, both on Ashmere Lake, followed by Camp Oesopus on Plunkett Reservoir in 1924. A predecessor camp to the future Camp Taconic was opened in 1928 and was renamed Camp Taconic in 1934. Camp Romaca, on Plunkett Reservoir, soon followed in 1929. Interestingly, around this time the population was actually in decline. From a high of 1,739 residents in 1890, the population decreased by 14.6% to 1,485 in 1900, and then decreased another by 24.8% to 1,116 in 1910. The population reached an all-time recorded low of 1,065 residents in 1920 before the population began to rebound, but it would take almost a century to return to the 1890 population level.

In 1930, the last Hinsdale mill closed, ending the mill era in Hinsdale and creating a major unemployment problem. The same year, a Chamber of Commerce was organized, promoting ski trains to help the sagging economy. Unfortunately, seven years later the passenger service at the Hinsdale Railroad Station was terminated, ending a service that began almost 100 years earlier. The station remained open until 1952, but only for mail service.

Camps continued being formed, with Camp Wyoma on Michaels Road by Plunkett Reservoir being formed in 1932, and Camp Danbee opening on Ashmere Lake in 1948. Camp Fernwood was established on Plunkett Reservoir, which was renamed Camp Emerson in 1968.

Changes in the late 20th Century

In 1954, Hinsdale's Sesquicentennial was celebrated with week-long festivities, and in the years that followed, community activities grew. The Hinsdale Lion's Club was chartered in 1955, and soon opened Plunkett Reservoir Beach in 1958, then restored the Community Center as a Youth Center in 1963. They later added an outdoor basketball court to the Youth Center in 1975, and provided new equipment for the Kiddie Park at the northeast corner of Taylor Avenue and Maple Street in 1984.

New businesses were established, including the Home Club on South Street (1955), the Christmas Tree Farm on Washington Road (1970), two apartment houses on Main Street (1988, 1989), and Partridgefield Trading Center in 1997. The new Firehouse on Maple Street was completed and dedicated in 1980, and muster grounds were built behind it in 1989. The new Town Hall was built on South Street in 1998.

The latter half of the 20th century also saw many things come to an end. In 1968, the Belmont Hotel (Railroad House, Hinsdale Hotel) and bordering buildings on Main Street were demolished, ending nearly a century and a half of hotel occupancy, and creating the current corner parking space at the junction of Main and Maple Streets. Bernie Collins, the last Hinsdale pharmacist, retired in 1978, ending pharmacy service in Hinsdale. His drugstore was razed in 1987, eliminating a structure that had lasted some 160 years and that contained an early meeting place—Merriman's, then Tuttle's Hall. In 1994, due to structural weakness, the old firehouse on the Maple Street Frissell block bordering the river was demolished.

Historic Residents and Their Residences and Landmarks

Throughout the course of its history, Hinsdale has been home to many notable individuals, some of whom have left physical legacies in the form of residences or landmarks that still stand.

Israel Bissell and His Homestead

Israel Bissell (1752-1823) was a post rider on April 19, 1775 when British soldiers fired on the militia at Lexington. He set out to warn citizens of the events of the day. Israel rode from Watertown to Connecticut and eventually to Philadelphia in an unbelievable five days, carrying a letter warning of the latest developments. The town maintains the Israel Bissell Homestead.

Ichabod Emmons, Shady Villa, and the Pillars

Major Ichabod Emmons (1778-1839) had a blacksmith shop at the top of the hill on present-day Old Dalton Road opposite the cemetery. He built the first brick house in Hinsdale that was a family residence for two generations; It then became an inn known as Shady Villa. He also built a house called the Pillars; it served as a sanitarium for a few years in the early 1900s.

Edward T. Nash and the General Store

Nash was the first postmaster of the post office known as the Hinsdale Depot when it was opened in 1852. He was also known as Deacon Nash from his position in the Congregational Church. He built the corner store and the two buildings to the immediate north, one of which later was joined to the store, the other being the Nash homestead, later the Plummer place and telephone exchange.

Francis E. Warren and the Hinsdale War Memorial

Warren fought with the 49th Regiment at the siege at Port Hudson, where 75% of the detachment was killed or wounded. He and the other survivors were later awarded Medals of Honor from Congress. In 1923, he donated Hinsdale's War Memorial, with its veterans' names plaque and Civil War cannon, which sits on the lawn of the Hinsdale Public Library. The library

preserves a red-bound volume with the details of the ceremony, and the records of every soldier who went into service from the town.

John Stritch and His Studio at Shady Villa

Stritch, originally a medical doctor, found and purchased Shady Villa. It is here that he repurposed rusting old farm machinery. With the help of Dave Freshler of the Hinsdale Garage, Stritch learned to weld and began making large and small sculptures. He is remembered for his painted posters for local attractions and events. He turned his property into a studio and gallery, and became well-known in the Berkshires.

Other Historic Resources

Many municipal and community buildings still standing today also have a long history. None of these historic resources are currently listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

First Congregational Church

The First Congregational Church was built on Schoolhouse Hill and dedicated in 1799. The church's interior front wall holds a memorial plaque for Chauncey Goodrich who became a missionary to China and one of seven to translate the Bible to Chinese.

Hinsdale Academy/Community Center

The Hinsdale Academy was built in 1848 as an educational institute. It was purchased by the town on January 14, 1867 and was used as both a public high school and Town Hall for several decades before the high school closed. In 1963, the Lions Club restored and converted it to a Youth Center.

Hinsdale Public Library

The Hinsdale Public Library was built in 1866; the building still boasts most of the original woodwork. The library celebrated its sesquicentennial in 2016.

Maple Street Cemetery

This cemetery is the final resting place of Israel Bissell, who died on October 24, 1823. On November 11, 1967, the DAR Peace Party Chapter of Pittsfield dedicated a plaque at Israel Bissell's gravesite with the inscription: "In Memory of ISRAEL BISSELL Post rider from Watertown to Philadelphia Alerting towns of British attack at Lexington, April 19, 1775. Placed by the Peace Party Chapter Daughters of the American Revolution."

C. Population Characteristics

Historic and Projected Growth Rates

The estimated population in Hinsdale in 2014 was 2,161 residents, according to the American Community Survey. This is the peak population for the town, up from an all-time low of 780 in 1830, per U.S. Census data. There has been a generally increasing trend since 1920, with slight dips in population in 1960 and 2000.

Population projections from the Donahue Institute at UMass Amherst show that the population will increase slowly but steadily. Between 2015-2035, an increase of approximately 8% is anticipated, with a future population predicted to be 2,258 (see Table 2). Overall, the population of Berkshire County is projected to *decrease*.

TABLE 2 - Projected Population Change in Hinsdale from 2010 to 2035
Source: Donahue Institute University of Massachusetts Amherst, 2015

Year	U.S. Census 2010	Projection 2015	Projection 2020	Projection 2025	Projection 2030	Projection 2035	Projected 2015-2035 Change
Population	2,032	2,095	2,177	2,240	2,257	2,258	+ 163 (8%)

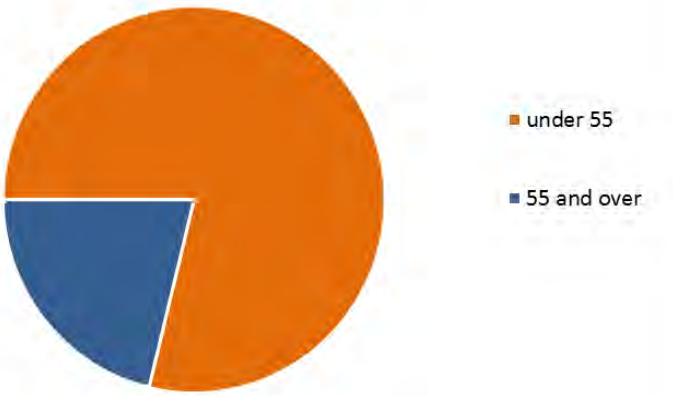
Population Age

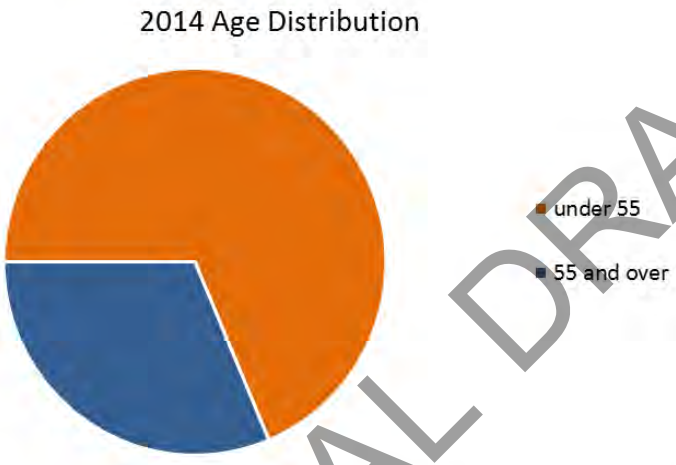
Comparing the American Community Survey's (ACS) 5-year average from 2010-2014 to the U.S. Census from 2000 shows that the population of Hinsdale is aging. The median age has increased from 38 to 46.6 years old. In the same 14-year period, the percentage of 55 and over residents has increased from 21% to 31%. This trend is projected to continue, with the 55+ age group estimated to comprise approximately 55% of the population in 2030 (see Figure 2 and Table 3). Over the same 20-year period from 2010 to 2030, the age 20-54 cohort, which represents the primary workforce population, is projected to decrease by 30% (from 914 to 642), and similarly the youngest members of the population, ages 0 to 19, are projected to decrease by 16% (from 434 to 365).

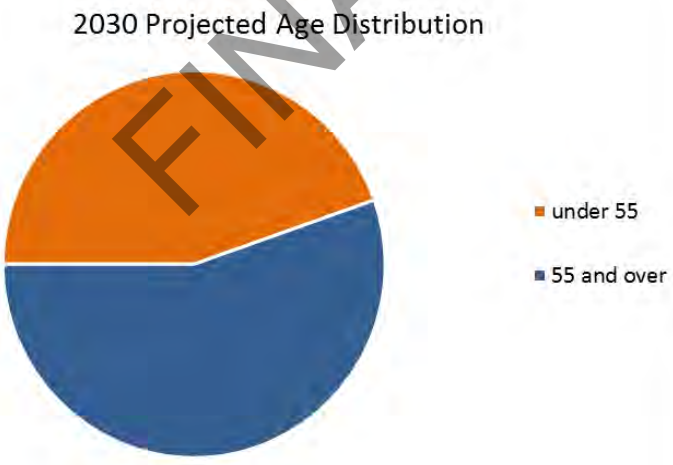
The decreasing number of younger residents and increasing number of older residents is a trend that has been identified county-wide.

This trend also reveals itself in school enrollment data. Between the 2000-2001 school year and the 2014-2015 school year, there has been a 34% decrease in overall school enrollment (378 and 248 students, respectively) and a 36% decrease in public school enrollment (357 and 228 students, respectively).

Figure 2







Hinsdale is part of the Central Berkshire Regional School District, which also includes the towns of Dalton, Windsor, Peru, Washington, Becket, and Cummington, and receives school choice students. Kittredge Elementary School in Hinsdale contains Kindergarten through 5th grades and accepts students from both Hinsdale and Peru. All students in the district travel to Dalton to attend Nessacus Regional Middle School for 6th through 8th grades, and Wahconah Regional High School for 9th through 12th.

Enrollment of Hinsdale students in the Central Berkshire Regional School District has dropped from 90% in 2000-2001 to 83% in 2014-2015, although overall public school enrollment (including vocational technical regional schools and out-of-district public schools) remained high at 91.9% for the 2014-2015 school year. There has been an increase in school choice of Hinsdale students to out-of-district public schools (from 8 to 21) and an increase in home-schooled students (0 to 7).

Births and Deaths

Births and deaths in Hinsdale between 2000 and 2010 both average about 16 and 14 per year, respectively, but can fluctuate greatly from year to year.

Table 3 - Hinsdale Population Characteristics 2000-2014				
Sources: 2000 US Census, 2010-2014 American Community Survey				
	2000		2014	
Total Population	1,872	100%	2,161	100%
Under 5 years	109	6%	54	2%
5 to 9 years	125	7%	156	7%
10 to 14 years	169	9%	169	8%
15 to 19 years	120	6%	156	7%
20 to 24 years	96	5%	64	3%
25 to 34 years	219	12%	96	4%
35 to 44 years	339	18%	345	16%
45 to 54 years	298	16%	444	21%
55 to 59 years	95	5%	198	9%
60 to 64 years	91	5%	145	7%
65 to 74 years	120	6%	179	8%
75 to 84 years	81	4%	67	3%
85 years and over	10	1%	88	4%
Median Age	38.0		46.6	
Number of Households	739.0		869.0	
Average Household Size	2.53		2.49	
Minority Population (%)	2.2%		3.0%	
Median Household Income	$ 42,697.00		$ 63,953.00	
Families Below Poverty Level (%)	6.0%		2.2%	
Mean Travel Time to Work (Minutes)	22.1		24.0	
Population Density (Residents/mi2)	86.3		99.6	

Race and Ethnicity

The vast majority of Hinsdale's population (97%) is white. Within the remaining percentage of the population, there were some changes between the 2000 Census and the 2014 ACS estimates. For instance, the number of African-Americans has doubled from 10 to 21, and American Indian and Alaska Natives have been estimated to have increased from 0 to 17.

Aging Population

The increased number of older residents may affect the range of services the town wishes to provide as well as the range of housing options available. Additionally, it makes issues such as the need for universal accessibility to town buildings or amenities more important due to potential mobility impairment issues.

Reduction in Youth and Middle-Age Residents

The projected decreasing size of the under-55 age groups can also impact the town. Families with young children add vitality and energy to a community; a decrease in these age groups can affect the overall dynamic of the town. Also, Hinsdale businesses and the town government—including police, fire, and ambulatory services—rely on local employees and volunteers.

D. Growth and Development Patterns

A large portion of Hinsdale's population is concentrated in three distinct areas in town: the downtown areas and around the two recreational lakes of Plunkett Reservoir and Ashmere Lake. Current building development, rising real estate values, and expanding infrastructure are indicative of future growth. While much recent development has been directed towards outlying regions of town accessible by town roads, the extended sewer coverage around the residential lakes opens opportunities for large-scale growth outside of the traditionally populated core region.

Development Trends

Much of the infrastructure development that shaped the town occurred during the mid-to late-1800s when the textile mills flourished. The period from 1960 to 1990 saw a significant spurt in residential development that resulted in the construction of 50% of the total number of housing units. Most of the residential development has been single-family homes on large lots along existing roadways.

The combination of zoning rules and market expectations in Hinsdale promotes new development that consists almost exclusively of large, single-family homes with average lot sizes significantly exceeding average lot sizes of older residences. Hinsdale continues to face pressure from developments under the Approval Not Required subdivision law, which allows for any new lot to be created on an approved road provided it meets minimum frontage requirements. This type of growth will continue to fragment frontage along major road networks and contribute to sprawl land patterns. Accessory apartments and two-family dwellings are allowed throughout the town by special permit. Multi-family housing is allowed by special permit in the town's commercial and manufacturing zones.

While areas served by town water and sewer are likely targets for growth, development is far from limited to these areas. In contrast to historic patterns, development along remote town-maintained roads has changed the face of the town. The obvious effects include loss of open space and rural scenery; while less apparent threats include degradation of water resources and fragmentation of wildlife habitats. Roads notably affected in the last 15 years include East

Washington, Fassell, Robinson, and Creamery roads. Other recent subdivisions have consumed land off Old Windsor Road and at the old site of Camp Lenore off Route 143. If this trend continues it has the potential of reducing the overall quality of the community.

Existing Conditions

As of the 2010 Census, there were 1,133 housing units in Hinsdale. The 215 housing units listed for "seasonal, recreational, or occasional use" accounted for 19% of total units. Year-round housing units totaled 868 and made up 77% of the housing stock. The remaining 4% of housing units (50 units) were listed as vacant. This category includes unoccupied homes for sale or rent, sold or rented units pending occupation, and other vacancies such as "abandoned" or unused homes. Renter-occupied units comprised 15% of all housing stock, or 166 total units.

Between 2000 and 2010, there was a 17% increase in housing units, from 970 to 1,133 (see Table 4). All categories of housing units increased, with vacant units increasing by the greatest percentage (39%) from 36 to 50 units, and year-round units increasing by the highest number (129 or 17%) from 739 to 868.

The town has a predominantly single-family housing stock, with most being owner-occupied. As of the 2014 American Community Survey (ACS), 71% of housing units were built before 1980, and 35% of all units were built in 1939 or earlier. Most houses have 2 or 3 bedrooms (22% and 46%, respectively).

Housing Ownership and Occupancy

Also, per 2014 ACS data, the average household size for owner-occupied units was 2.53 household members, compared to 2.15 for renter-occupied units. Of 869 occupied units in 2014, 48% of householders moved in since 2000, and only 4.3% have been in the same housing unit since 1969 or earlier. Of the 766 owner-occupied units in 2014, 70% (532 units) had a mortgage and 30% (234 units) did not.

Table 4 - Housing Occupancy in Hinsdale 2000-2014

Source: 2000 and 2010 U.S. Census

	Number in 2000	% of total, 2000	Number in 2010	% of Total, 2010	% Change 2000-2010
Seasonal	195	20%	215	19%	+ 10%
Year Round	739	76%	868	77%	+ 17%
Vacant Units (includes unoccupied homes for sale or rent and other vacancies)	36	4%	50	4%	+ 39%
Rental (seasonal or year-round)	154	16%	166	15%	+ 8%
Total Housing Stock:	970	100%	1,133	100%	+ 17%

Home Sales vs. New Construction
The number of sales of single-family homes in Hinsdale fell from a high of 42 homes in 2002 to a low of 12 homes in 2009. The number of sales has increased from this low point to an average of 18 homes per year between 2012-2016. Between 2012 and 2016, there were 15 building permits issued for new homes compared to the 92 single-family home sales during that time.

Town Center/Plunkett Reservoir Residential Village
The U.S. Census Bureau designated a portion of Hinsdale as an Urban Area. The Census Bureau's urban areas represent densely developed territory and encompass residential, commercial, and other non-residential urban land uses. In Hinsdale, this includes the town center, with important town services and major businesses such as Town Hall, Kittredge Elementary School, Hinsdale Public Library, the U.S. Post Office, Ozzie's Steak and Eggs, Hinsdale General Store, and Dufour Tours. The urban area also covers a residential area north of the center to Old Dalton Road, including the Hinsdale Trading Post, and the residential area south of the center, including Plunkett Reservoir. For a map showing the designated urban area, please see Map 1, Regional Context.

Plunkett Reservoir
From the early 1900s, Plunkett Reservoir was a summer boating and camping site, as well as a winter source for ice cutting. Today there are approximately 115 properties surrounding Plunkett Reservoir. These properties are dominated by approximately 75 single-family residences, of which 40 are second-homes. Twenty-two of these single-family residences have been built since 2000. Between 1940 and 2000, 44 houses were built. There are approximately 25 vacant lots in this area which could be further developed. The Plunkett Reservoir Association was formed by homeowners in 1950 in order to help resolve any problem regarding the lake, its maintenance, and the surrounding roads. The association meets annually for a picnic and business meeting. Camp Romaca and Camp Emerson comprise large areas surrounding Plunkett Reservoir.

Ashmere Lake Residential Area
Ashmere Lake is divided by Route 143 (Peru Road), and there is a residential community on each side—Skyview Grove to the north and Ashmere Heights to the south.

<u>Skyview Grove</u>
In April of 1946, Edward Parker and Curtis Jones formed The Lakeshore Company and purchased a large tract of land on the northeasterly shore of Ashmere Lake, known as Skyview Grove. By summer, they were marketing small building lots. Although roads were not yet available throughout much of the sub-division, several new property owners immediately began clearing their lots and constructing summer camps.

The final sub-division plan, showing a total of 679 building lots, was completed by Henry C. Neff in September of 1946. Electrical service was not extended into the sub-division until the fall of 1952. Today, there are a total of 133 dwellings on approximately 270 lots within the sub-

division and the majority of the neighborhood is high-density. Approximately 46 of these dwellings are year-round residents with the remaining 87 (65%) second homes.

Approximately 66% (88 units) of existing dwellings were built before 1960. Between 1960 and 2000 only 15% (21 units) of dwellings were built. Since 2000 another 24 dwellings have been built. Many of the dwellings built since 2000 may have been rebuilds of previously existing units. Many of the 137 lots currently vacant within the area are too small for development based on current zoning. This requires potential owners to buy several smaller adjacent parcels and combine them into larger parcels.

The Skyview Grove Association was formed as a not-for-profit homeowner's organization to preserve access to Ashmere Lake for all Skyview Grove subdivision resident members. The association has three business meetings each year, and members have access to the beach and picnic areas, pavilion, children's playground, multiple docks, a boat launch, and storage racks for canoes/kayaks.

Ashmere Heights

In 1963, Gaston Robert purchased the Camp Curtis property on the southwest side of Ashmere Lake and embarked on creating his "dream" community of summer lakeside cottages in Ashmere Heights. The original bunkhouses on the campsite were moved to individual lots on White Birch Lane and Linden Road. Porches were added and they were renovated for summer rentals, sharing a community beach on Ashmere Lake. Robert then sold the cabins in 1966, and they were operated as rentals until they were sold to individual owners in 1972.

Starting in 1964, Robert also started building chalet summer cottages on individual lots, each with a private waterfront. He continued to build summer homes on White Birch and Hemlock Lanes, and after 1970 he built winterized homes on Lakeview Circle. Year-round water was made available to all residents of the community in 1994 when the community system was expanded, and a sewer system was installed in 2000. Many of the original cottages have been renovated and enlarged to be year-round residences. There are currently 76 properties within Ashmere Heights with 67 of them having houses. The vast majority of these were built in the 1960s and 1970s, with some additions in the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s. About 11 of the houses are year-round, with the remaining 56 houses second homes. There are few lots available for new construction. The Ashmere Heights Association was formed in 1968 with a goal to be supportive of, and represent the interests of, the Ashmere Heights homeowners and to maintain key aspects of the community.

Mobile Home Parks

Both of Hinsdale's mobile home parks are considered to be high-density residential areas.

Country Road Mobile Home Park

A mobile home park with over 40 residences is situated on privately–owned County Road, off of Old Stagecoach Road, just north of the urban area.

Bissellville Estates Mobile Home Park

A second mobile home park with about 30 residences is situated on privately-owned Alice Drive and Anthony Drive, off of Pittsfield Road/Route 8 at the south end of Hinsdale.

Commercial Areas

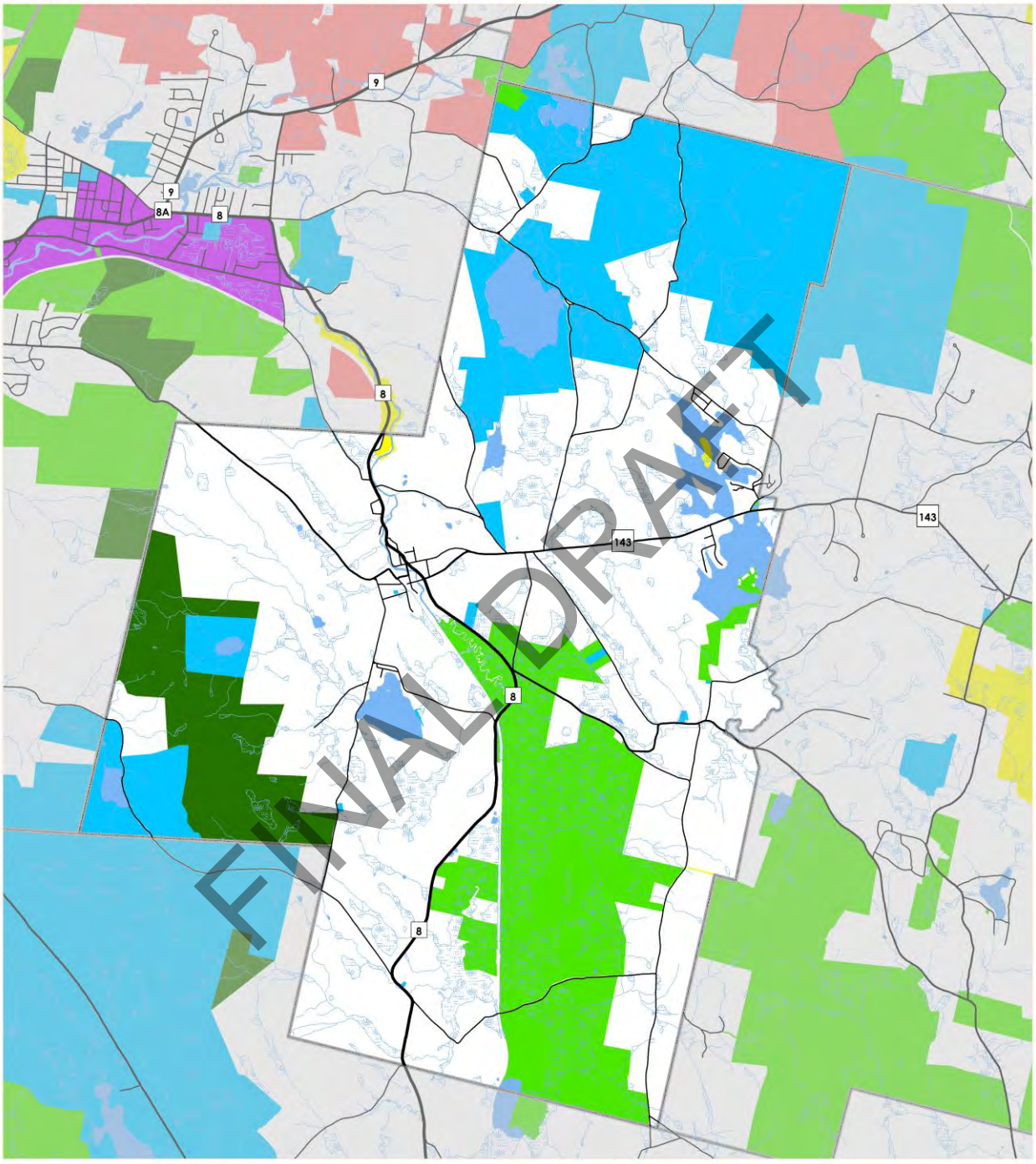
Hinsdale does not have a large amount of land dedicated to commercial uses. In fact, only the R-4 zone district (Business and Residential) permits commercial uses by right. Naturally, most of the existing businesses are concentrated near the downtown area.

Environmental Justice Areas

The state maintains a policy of environmental justice, in which resources are delivered to combat against environmental burdens unduly placed onto low-income communities and communities of color. Hinsdale does not have any environmental justice populations, defined as such by the EEOEA. Map 2 below illustrates environmental justice areas in neighboring Dalton, as well as Federal, State and Town-owned land.

Map 2. Environmental Justice Populations

Hinsdale Open Space & Recreation Plan



Non-motorized Transportation

Complete Streets

"Complete Streets" is a transportation concept that examines the design of roadways to enable safe access for all users, regardless of age, ability, or mode of transportation (automobile, bicycle, or on foot). Complete Streets is not a "one size fits all" solution, but rather a kit of possible solutions that can be applied to any street or roadway. Complete Streets also considers issues of public health by improving safety for all and encouraging exercise through walking and cycling.

Within Hinsdale, small changes to the roadways, such as increased marking and signage, as well as restriping and recoloring crosswalks, could do much to enhance safety and increase travel by pedestrian and cyclists. These measures could also help to calm or slow traffic in desired areas.

Additionally, measures such as shoulder-widening or roadside pathways (in addition to increased signage) could improve safety for walkers and cyclists. These changes to the roadway could be as simple as narrowing lanes for vehicle traffic during routine restriping work to increase the shoulder width available for pedestrians and cyclists.

Moreover, MassDOT has recently worked to integrate Complete Streets concepts into its design guidelines for roadway projects. MassDOT has also been developing a funding program that could provide additional funding for Complete Streets related projects in addition to town Chapter 90 funding. Hinsdale adopted a Complete Streets policy on April 13, 2016. A Complete Streets Committee was formed and worked with BRPC in the month of August to develop a prioritization plan and needs assessment report in time for the September 15, 2016 deadline to be eligible for FY2017 funding.

Sidewalks

There are currently only 2.56 miles of sidewalk in Hinsdale. When entering the town center on Route 8 from the south, the sidewalk begins on the west side of the road a little more than a quarter mile south of the Hinsdale Town Hall and is continuous for 0.4 miles until there is a brief gap at the former gas station near the intersection with Plunkett Street and Main Street. The sidewalk then restarts and continues to the north along Route 8 for about 0.7 miles before it ends at the eastern section of Old Dalton Road. There is a short spur onto the western section of Old Dalton Road to the Old Mill Trailhead.

Entering the town center on Maple Street from the east, the sidewalk begins on the north side of the street at the intersection with Old Dalton Road, and continues for the remaining length of the road, 0.7 miles. The last 450 feet of Maple Street has sidewalk on both sides, where it passes the Hinsdale Public Library and local shops.

The sidewalk on Maple Street connects to Main Street, which has sidewalks on each side of the road. There is a short section of sidewalk on the north side of Plunkett Street from the

intersection at Route 8, east to a terminus just before the intersection with Taylor Road. There is also a short section on Taylor Road that doesn't connect to Plunkett Street.

The west side of the Main Street sidewalk turns onto Bridge Street, and then a crosswalk connects the sidewalk on Bridge Street to the sidewalk on Commonwealth Ave. Only a short section exists on Commonwealth Ave., beginning abruptly just north of Bridge Street and extending only as far south as Church Street, which has sidewalk running its entire length but ending with no further connection. Goodrich Street runs roughly parallel to Church Street and only has sidewalk for less than half its length; the sidewalk it has does not connect to the roadways on either end.

Walking Loops

Several Berkshire towns have identified "walking loops" in town centers and on quiet rural roads. These walking loops help to encourage pedestrian use and exercise, especially for elderly residents. Walking loops should be well-marked and located on relatively flat terrain to enable use by residents of any age.

Within the Hinsdale Complete Streets Prioritization Plan are sidewalk installation and replacement projects that would close the gaps in two neighborhoods to create cohesive, fully functional walking loops.

Bicycle Conditions

Hinsdale does not currently have any roadways with bike lanes nor shared lane markings, and there are no officially sanctioned off-road bicycle trails. Currently there are no bike racks in town; however the Complete Streets Prioritization Plan includes the installation of bike racks at three locations on Maple Street, and a fourth location at the Old Mill Trailhead.

Land Use

Land Use Change 1971-1999

Between 1971 and 1999, residential land use increased by the greatest percentage of 30% (266.28 acres) from 629.82 to 896.10 acres. Recreational land use also increased by 25% (50.18 acres) to a total of 202.36 acres. During this time, agricultural acreage decreased by 22% (166.18 acres) from 923.34 to 757.16 acres, and forests decreased by 3% (294.26 acres) given that the total forest acreage in 1999 was 10,298.76 acres. The land use that increased by the greatest percentage (67%) was mining/waste disposal, which grew from 43.43 to 133.00 acres. All other land uses saw modest gains in acreage, except for water and wetland, for which there was no change.

Table 5 - Hinsdale Land Use 2005		
Source: Mass GIS Land Use, 2005		
Land Use Category	Acres	Percent of Total Land
Forest*	10,589.2	76.3%
Wetland*	1,965.6	14.2%
Residential	711.5	5.1%
Water	610.1	4.4%
Agriculture	526.0	3.8%
Vacant**	259.3	1.9%
Recreation	183.9	1.3%
Mining/Waste Disposal	157.6	1.1%
Institutional***	43.4	0.3%
Transportation	35.6	0.3%
Commercial	20.9	0.2%
Industrial	2.2	0.0%
Total	13,878.0	108.8%*

*Forest and Wetland categories both include forested wetlands, which account for 1,227.4 acres or 8.8%.
**Vacant category includes abandoned agriculture, areas like power lines and areas of no vegetation, as well as brushland and successional environments not dense enough to be classified as forest.
***Institutional category includes town owned facilities as well as cemeteries.

Land Use 2005

Land use data in 2005 (see Table 5 and Map C) shows that 76.3% of Hinsdale is forested, for a total of 10,589.2 acres. Of that forested land, 1,227.4 acres are forested wetland, which when combined with 738.2 acres of non-forested wetland, means that 14% (1,965.55 acres) of Hinsdale is wetland (with an 8.8% overlap with forested land). Water accounted for an additional 610.1 acres.

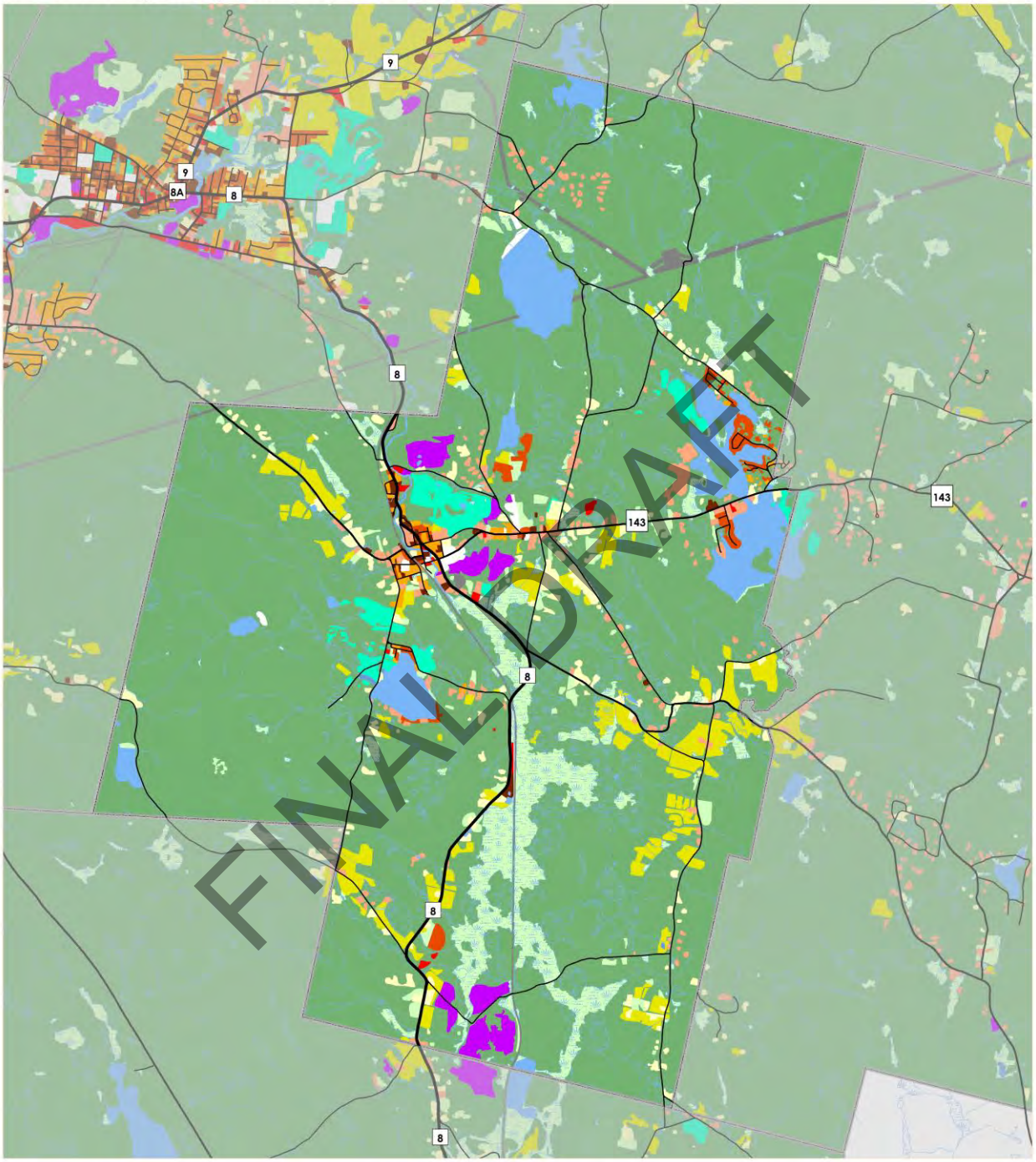
Developed land accounts for only 5.8% (806.1 acres) of the land area of Hinsdale, and includes all residential land (high-, medium-, low-, and very low-density and multi-family), as well as urban public/institutional, transportation, commercial, industrial, and junkyard land uses.

Of agricultural-type uses, 368.6 acres were categorized as cropland, 120.0 acres were pasture, and 37.4 acres were nursery, for a total of 526.0 acres. Of recreational uses, 108.8 acres were categorized as participation recreation, 75.1 acres were golf course, for a total of 183.9 acres of recreational land use.

An additional 133.4 acres were categorized as open land, 30.5 acres were brushland/ successional, and 12.8 acres were transitional, for a total of 259.3 vacant acres. Mining accounted for 156.5 acres and powerline/utility was 82.6 acres. Map C below illustrates the current land use.

Map C. Current Land Use (2005)

Hinsdale Open Space & Recreation Plan



Development Trends and Future Development Capacity
(see Map 3, Zoning; and Map G, Development Pattern)

Hinsdale's early development (pre-1900) was focused around the downtown neighborhoods and extended out along Peru Road to New Windsor Road (R-1 and R-4 zones). Outside of this area, there was only a scattering of development, mostly along Robinson, New Windsor, Middlefield, Washington, and Pittsfield roads.

Between 1900 and 1950, development extended out from the previously developed areas around downtown (R-1 zone) as well as some development around Plunkett Reservoir and Ashmere Lake. From 1950 to 1975, further development occurred around Ashmere Lake, Middlefield, New Windsor, Michaels, and Washington roads (R-3 zone).

Since 1975, most development has occurred around the lakes, further expansion of existing neighborhoods, and as infill development along the town roads. This development along town roads, mostly through Approval Not Required (ANR) developments, has caused the community to sprawl and lose some of its character of higher density neighborhoods as this new development tends to be low density. Much of this development has occurred in the R-5 zone, although some development has occurred throughout all zones. Map G shows the development history in Hinsdale.

Future development in town can occur in several ways. Redevelopment can occur anywhere throughout town and should be focused on the higher density downtown and lake neighborhoods. ANR development can occur at any location provided the acreage and frontage on any new parcel meet zoning requirements. Subdivisions can occur on larger parcels where roads can be built, however this process requires more effort from the developer and the town also has more control.

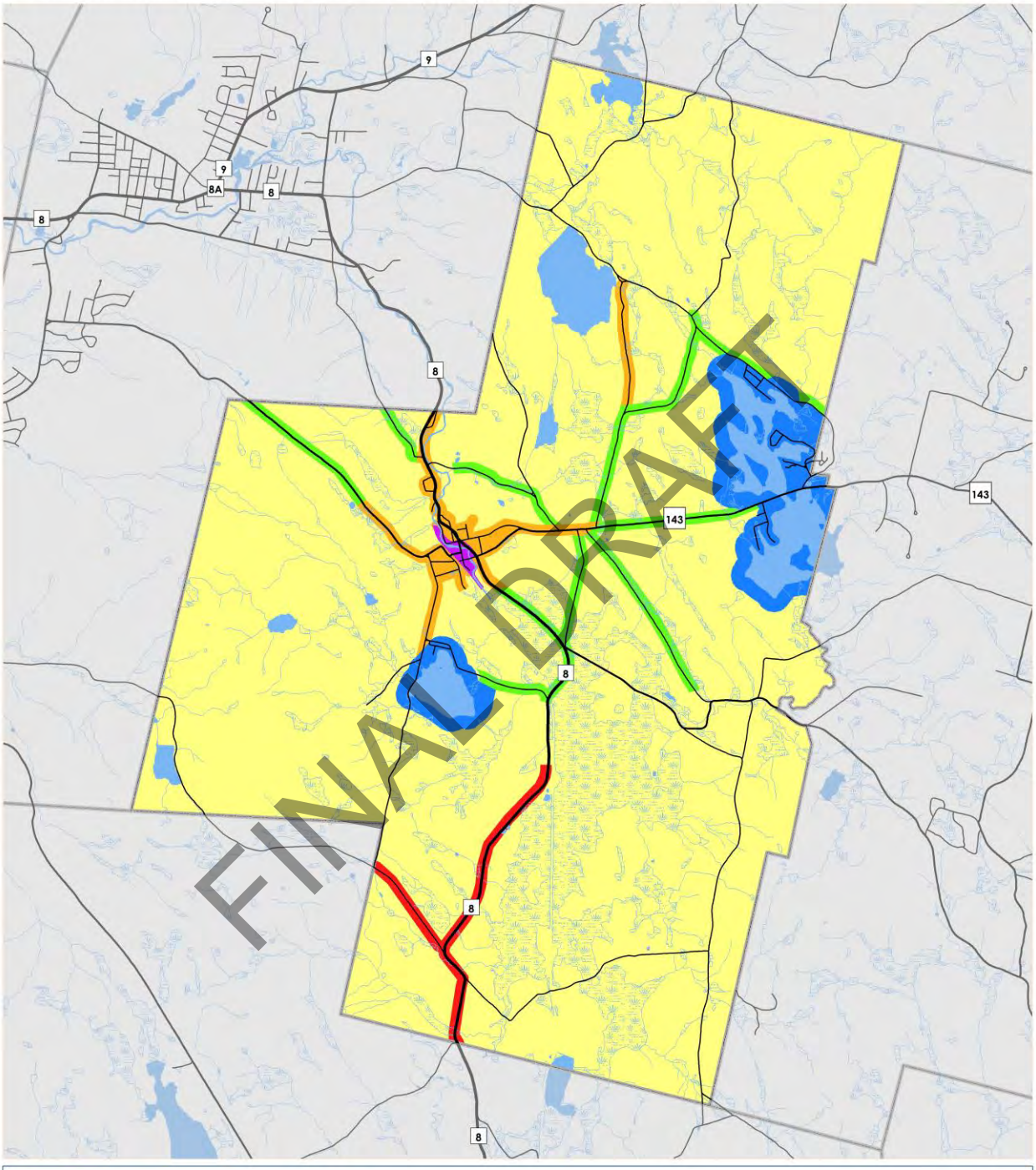
Currently there is a mostly undeveloped subdivision on Lenore Drive with 124 undeveloped lots. As well as an ANR on the south end of Creamery Road that has 20 undeveloped lots. Persips Road also has a cluster of undeveloped lots most likely created through ANR and could be developed for an additional eight houses. There are also a number of lots that may have previously been created through ANR scattered around town that could still be developed.

New ANR and subdivisions could occur on larger vacant lots on East Washington, Pittsfield, Plunkett Reservoir, and Peru roads. Smaller ANRs could occur on most of the rural roads throughout town and would create one or two additional lots each.

The majority of land that is developable is the R-5 zone, and thus would allow most uses, including residential and some commercial and industrial. There is a scattering of parcels in the R-1, R-1B, R-2, and R-3 zones that are developable, however these tend to be small isolated parcels.

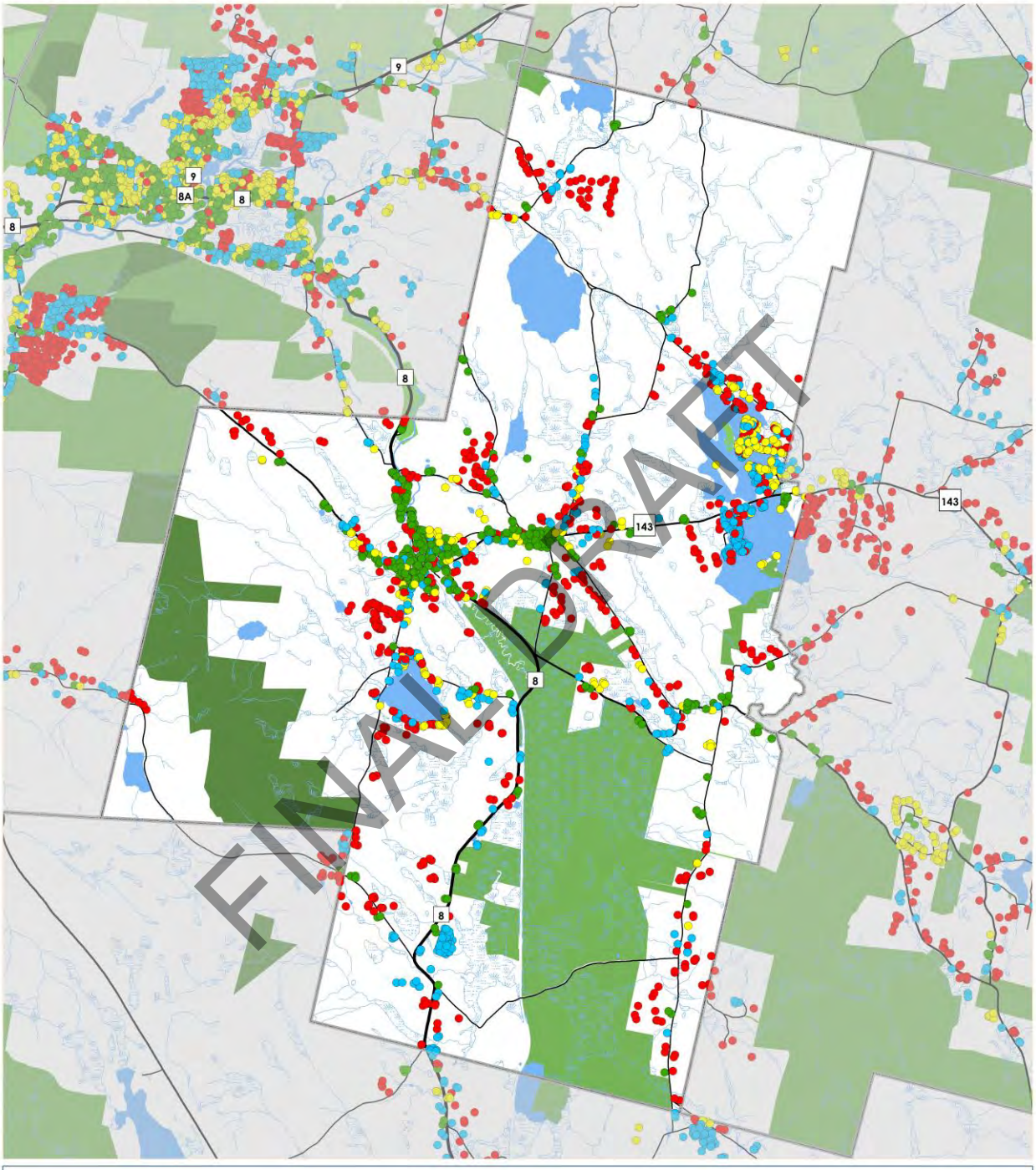
Map 3. Zoning

Hinsdale Open Space & Recreation Plan



Map G.Development Pattern

Hinsdale Open Space & Recreation Plan



Pre 1900
1901 - 1950
1951 - 1975
Post 1975
Private Land - Deed Restricted
Land Trust
State Land
Federal Land
Major Road
Minor Road
Local Road
Stream
Wetland
Open Water
Towns

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission

This map was created by the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission and is intended for general planning purposes only. This map shall not be used for engineering, survey, legal, or regulatory purposes. MassGIS, MassDOT, the Town or BRPC may have supplied portions of this data.

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Date: June 22, 2017

4. ENVIRONMENTAL INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS

Because of the largely natural setting and unique environmental, cultural and archeological features, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts designated 14,500 acres in the towns of Dalton, Hinsdale, Peru, and Washington, primarily centered in Hinsdale, a state designated Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) in 1992. According to the Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, the goal of the ACEC program is to preserve the natural and cultural resources in areas of unique quality and ecological, economic, and recreational importance and identify these special places, arising awareness of their importance and fostering improved land use stewardship for these areas. These areas are identified and nominated at the community level and are reviewed and designated by the state's Secretary of Environmental Affairs. The state Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) administers the ACEC Program on behalf of the Secretary.

A. Geology, Soils and Topography

The soils of Hinsdale hold little value for agriculture and severely limit septic systems throughout much of the town. Glacial till, covering three-fourths of the land area, has building development limitations due to shallow depth to bedrock, extreme stoniness, wetness, and slow permeability. Glacial outwash, concentrated in the lowlands, is excessively drained, a poor filter, and subject to wetness. Within the wettest lowlands, muck is the most problematic category for development because of flooding, subsidence, ponding, wetness, and frost action. Steep slopes encircling the town require protection so as to prevent erosion.

The north-south mountain ranges and southern highlands bordering the town of Hinsdale direct tributaries to the center of the valley where the East Branch Housatonic River flows northward until it leaves the town at an elevation near 1,300 feet. This configuration has created the excellent water resources found in the town including streams, extensive wetlands, and reservoirs serving both recreation and municipal water supply needs.

The landform of Hinsdale is the work of hundreds of millions of years of erosion on bedrock of varying strengths. Rock outcroppings and ridges are comprised of the hardest bedrock: granite, gneiss, and quartzite. Limestones and marbles in the valley are the softest. Granite and its metamorphic product, gneiss, underlie much of Hinsdale. A concentration of quartzite, a metamorphic derivative of sandstone, is centered to the northwest of Plunkett Reservoir and along the ridges encircling Upper Sackett Reservoir.

The long-term erosion of weaker rocks such as limestone often provide passageways for water. In Hinsdale two thin strips of limestone and its metamorphic derivatives, dolomite and marble, are present. One begins at the northern town border and stretches down the length of the town passing through Ashmere Lake and Muddy Pond, while the other originates near the town center and heads north toward Cleveland Brook Reservoir. Underlying rock influences soils and therefore whole ecosystems. The alkaline nature of limestone, for instance, forms rare calcareous habitats found within Hinsdale. Another geologic feature—fault lines—facilitates

access for percolating ground water. Hinsdale's drinking water stems from these areas located to the north and east of Belmont Reservoir.

Ice age cycles have also left their distinct mark on the land. The end of the Wisconsin Ice Age ten thousand years ago marked the last glacial modification to the land. The stony nature of the soil is from the deposition of a blanket of glacial till of various thicknesses over the land. Meltwater from the glacial retreat carried glacial outwash downward into the lowlands, and glacial lakes trapped sediment to form deep layers of muck. Additional features of glaciation such as kettle holes, drumlins, and eskers may be found in Hinsdale. The gravel mines that are scattered around the town were created during this time.

Glacial Till

Glacial till is unsorted, stony soil covering approximately 75% of Hinsdale, especially on uplands and mountainsides. Soils derived from glacial till can be divided into two subclasses: those that are restrictive due to shallow depth to bedrock (Lyman and Tunbridge), and those that percolate slowly and may be subject to wetness (Peru and Pillsbury). The USDA Land-Capability Classification System lists all of these soil types as class VII ("neither suitable for nor adaptable to cropland") due to their extreme stoniness.

Lyman and Tunbridge soils are formed from thin to moderate deposits of till on the ridges and slopes. Their shallow depth to bedrock and characteristic rockiness restrict development and septic systems due to excavation costs. The depth to bedrock ranges from 0 to 40 inches. Historically, little building has occurred on these soils, and presently they make up a significant portion of the protected lands around municipal water supplies and the Appalachian Trail preserve. Over shallow bedrock, erosion may be a problem and trees are susceptible to blowdowns. Careful forest management is important on such sites.

Peru and Pillsbury soils are found on intermediate land between the ridges and the valley basin and cover approximately 50% of Hinsdale. Extreme stoniness, a semi-permeable hardpan, and wetness are the restrictive characteristics. Much of the land around Plunkett and Ashmere lakes is composed of these soils. Septic system limitations are classified as severe, but in practice this merely limits the maximum density of septic systems that the land will support.

Glacial Outwash

As the glaciers began retreating 10,000 years ago, huge quantities of meltwater carried gravel and sand outwash to the lowlands where it was deposited in stratified layers. Numerous gravel pits found in town mine these layers. These soils are characterized by their poor filtration abilities. Outwash soils generally have only slight limitations for building development that may include flooding due to their proximity to wetlands and the East Branch Housatonic River. A number of soil types compose the outwash category of Fredon, Hinckley, Hero, Groton, and Copake.

Wetland, Hydric Soils

Within the band of outwash lining the valley basin, muck soils prevail in the wettest areas. Formed under hydric conditions, muck is a finely textured, dark soil high in clay and organic matter. Prone to flooding, subsidence, and wetness, muck severely limits human activities such as construction and septic system functions. Frost action is high and soil strength is often low thus restricting road construction. Furthermore, as muck generally underlies wetlands, state and federal laws mandate protection due to its function in ground water recharge, water purification, and specialized fisheries habitat. The soils within this classification in Hinsdale are Saco, Limerick, and Palms.

Soils Map (Map 4)

It is a challenge to site septic system leach fields in some sections of the town due to slope, shallow depths to bedrock, long periods of high water tables, or to excessive drainage properties. The Soils Map illustrates the general areas in Hinsdale where residential development utilizing individual septic systems may be hindered. The excessively drained areas are outwash soils in the Housatonic River Valley and till soils with shallow depths to bedrock that drain rapidly and may not provide the infiltration residence time needed to properly treat effluent. The poorly drained and hydric soils that those that inhibit proper soil percolation due to high water tables or tight soils comprised of silts and clays. It should be noted that the soils map is generalized for planning purposes only. Exact soil conditions are extremely localized and can differ greatly from one building lot to the next.

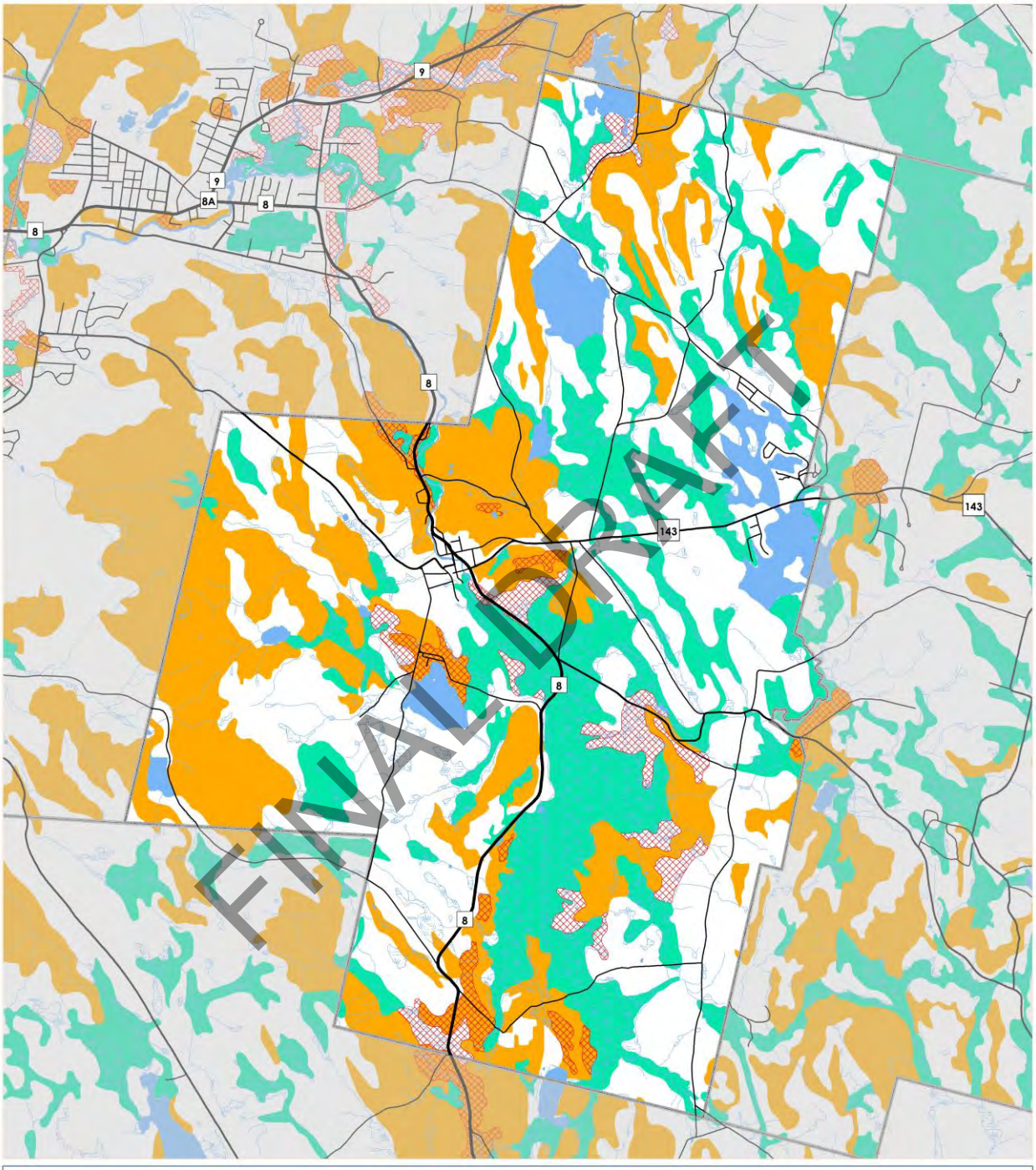
B. Landscape Character

Hinsdale is characterized by its scenic, rural, and historic qualities. Hills overlooking extensive wetlands, farm fields, old homes, and mill ruins create unique landscapes throughout town. Future development should neither conflict with nor jeopardize this town character.

A charming, quiet, and remote place, Hinsdale owes much of its character to the natural landscape it inhabits. The hills to its east and west form a natural border for the town. The Hinsdale Flats, a 1,482-acre wetland complex in the center of the town, reward the curious with abundant wildlife, unique vegetation, and rugged roads and trails for exploring. The back roads that wind over hills and through thick forests open up to farm fields and bucolic views to the hills beyond. Settlement is clustered largely in the valley along the river, allowing Hinsdale's outer reaches to remain relatively wild.

Map 4. Soils and Geologic Features

Hinsdale Open Space & Recreation Plan



The primary slopes of Hinsdale occur in north-south patterns corresponding to the mountain ranges which border the town. Slopes of 15 percent and greater account for approximately 20 percent of the land area. The descent from mountain peaks to the valley center is as much as 700 feet and mostly occurs over a horizontal distance of less than 2 miles. The rate of descent begins fast but decreases towards the valley bottom—as is reflected by steeper slopes concentrated around the higher elevations. Since mountain ranges border the town, many scenic hillsides extend outside the periphery of the town.

Due to the town's hilly terrain, there are numerous scenic vistas scattered throughout town. Many land features adorn the town, including forests, farm fields, hills, streams and waterways. The Housatonic River bisects the town as it runs north from Muddy Pond. Meandering through level terrain, the river, and its surrounding floodplains and wetlands, create an open rambling landscape in which to view wildlife.

Many roads in Hinsdale showcase the town's rural and wild character. Robinson Road, entering Hinsdale from the west, offers such a view, with farm fields in the foreground and the eastern mountains in the background. On the eastern side of town, East Washington Road, which runs north-south, boasts the most spectacular view in the town, overlooking the Hinsdale Flats and set against the mountain to the west. Buttermilk and Creamery roads are both noted for their bucolic views of timeworn farms and colorful meadows. Peru Road (Rt. 143) bisects Ashmere Lake, offering views on both sides of the roadway.

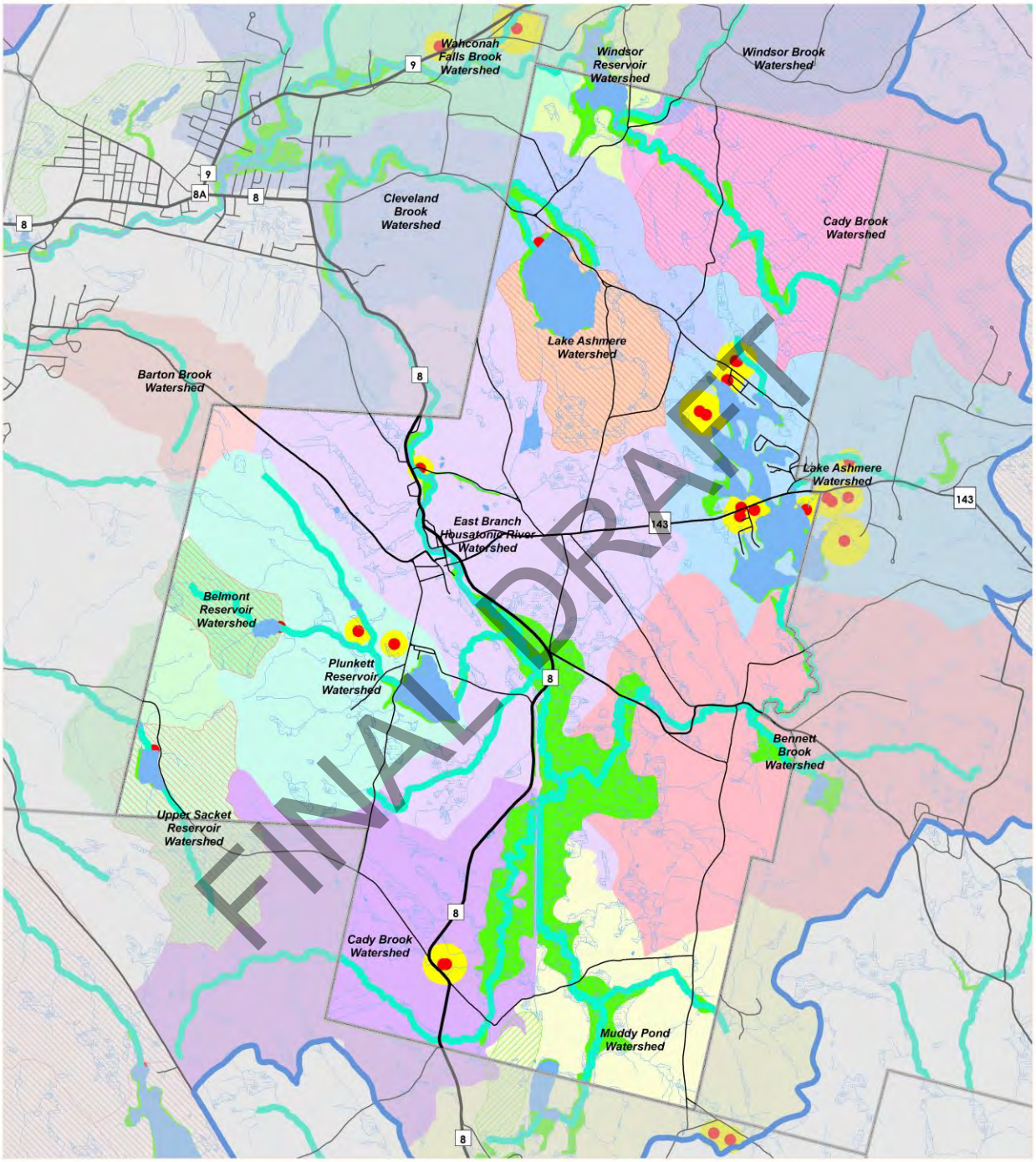
C. Water Resources (Map 6)

Water is one of Hinsdale's greatest assets. As stated by the Secretary of Environmental Affairs in the Designation Report of the Hinsdale Flats Watershed Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), "I find that the wetland resource areas included in the ACEC are significant to the protection of groundwater supply and public and private water supplies, the prevention of pollution, flood control, the prevention of storm damage, the protection of fisheries, and the protection of wildlife habitat."

Within this area lies the headwaters for the East Branch Housatonic River as well as several contributing tributaries, more than 1,500 acres of wetlands, and two large recreational lakes. In addition, the town hosts water reservoirs and/or watershed lands which provide drinking water for Hinsdale and three neighboring towns. In the northeastern section of town a large watershed collects water which serves the needs of Dalton. In the northwest part of Hinsdale the Cleveland Brook Reservoir collects drinking water to supply the City of Pittsfield.

Map 6. Water Resources

Hinsdale Open Space & Recreation Plan



Additionally, Pittsfield's Sackett Reservoir lies in the westernmost portion of Hinsdale near the Appalachian Trail. Hinsdale's own water supply is located at Belmont Reservoir, in the hills on the town's west side. Therefore, the care with which Hinsdale protects its water resources has significant regional consequences.

Watersheds

The town of Hinsdale lies completely within the Housatonic River Watershed. In fact, the Hinsdale Flats wetland complex is the headwaters for the East Branch Housatonic River. There are several sub-watershed areas within the town for the several reservoirs and the two recreational lakes that are located throughout the town. These are illustrated on the Water Resources Map.

Surface water

Hinsdale hosts several water bodies, including two recreational lakes, five drinking water reservoirs, several small ponds and a large wetland complex. Maintaining a clean and healthy watershed is critical to the development and growth of the town's rivers to becoming a positive resource for the community.

Lakes and Ponds

Plunkett Reservoir is located in the central portion of the town. It is a heavily used recreational lake lined with dense residential development, as well as summer camps. It is listed as Category 4C Water on the 2014 Massachusetts Integrated List of Waters.

Ashmere Lake is a 260-acre recreational lake that is owned by the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR). The lake is comprised of two basins, the north and south, which are separated by Peru Road. Like Plunkett Reservoir, the shoreline of the lake, especially the north basin, is densely developed with a mix of seasonal cottages and year-round homes. A boat access site is owned and maintained on the south basin by DCR. There is no public swimming area in the lake. Ashmere Lake straddles the Hinsdale-Peru border. Three camps are located on the shores of the lake. In Hinsdale, Camp Taconic is located on the north basin and Camp Ashmere is located on the south basin, while in neighboring Peru Camp Danbee is located on the south basin. Ashmere Lake is listed as Category 4C Water.

In addition to the recreational lakes, Hinsdale hosts drinking water reservoirs for its own residents as well as the residents of the surrounding towns. The Belmont Reservoir is the main source of water for Hinsdale's residents, and Plunkett Reservoir serves as a backup supply. The Upper Sackett and Cleveland Brook reservoirs provide drinking water to the City of Pittsfield, while Windsor Reservoir serves as a backup supply to Dalton; all are Category 3 Water. The vast majority of the watersheds for Upper Sackett and Belmont reservoirs are protected from development and other uses that could potentially degrade the quality of the water. Although

much of Cleveland Reservoir is protected, the upper portions of its watershed, in the vicinity of New Windsor Road and Stone House Road, are not protected.

Rivers and Streams

Along the southern border of Hinsdale lies Muddy Pond, a 28-acre Great Pond shared with the town of Washington, of which 7.4 acres are in Hinsdale. The pond and adjacent wetlands are the headwaters of the East Branch Housatonic River, which flows north through Hinsdale into Dalton. Several tributaries feed the river from both east and west. From the uplands to the east flow the Bilodeau, Kilburn, Tracy, and Bennett brooks, and from the uplands to the west flow the Cady, Russo, Welch, and Frissell brooks. Several of the town's lakes and reservoirs are also considered part of the hydrology of the East Branch Housatonic River, including Ashmere Lake to the east, and Plunkett, Belmont, and Fernwood reservoirs to the west. The river is a prime recreation resource for fishing and canoeing, although access to it is limited.

Aquifer Recharge Areas

One area in Hinsdale is considered a medium-yield aquifer. It is located in the southern-most area of town, on the Hinsdale-Washington border. The area for this aquifer is west of the railroad tracks and is illustrated on the Water Resources Map. Residents on the outlying rural areas of Hinsdale rely on groundwater to supply their private wells. For the most part, groundwater comes from the bedrock under the east and west slopes, as well as from sand and gravel deposits in the lowlands.

Flood Hazard Areas

The central valley cut by the East Branch Housatonic River creates Hinsdale's lowest and most level areas. While floodplains border many of Hinsdale's other low-lying waterways, the most extensive are found along the East Branch Housatonic River, especially in the area of the aptly named Hinsdale Flats. Since most floodplains occur on relatively level terrain, they appear on the surface to be ideal building sites. Not only can structures built in floodplains risk water damage, they can interfere with natural stormwater retention and possibly exacerbate flooding downstream.

Given their limitations for building, floodplains offer a logical opportunity for greenspace and recreation. Preservation of floodplains and natural vegetation along rivers would serve two important functions. From an ecological standpoint, it would maintain riparian corridor habitat for wildlife and allow the river and its accompanying floodplains to function properly during peak water flow. From a human standpoint, riverbank and floodplain preservation would enhance recreation through riverside pathways and rest areas, allowing people to appreciate both the beauty and history of Hinsdale's rivers.

There are approximately 1,868 acres (13%) of 100-year floodplain in Hinsdale and about 52 acres (3%) are developed (Hinsdale Hazard Mitigation Committee, 2005). The vast majority of the remaining floodplain, 1,482 acres, are located within the Hinsdale Flats WMA, while 962 acres are permanently protected.

Wetlands

According to the 2005 MassGIS land use data, approximately 14% of Hinsdale is wetland area. The excellent water quality of Hinsdale's reservoirs and the East Branch Housatonic River is linked to the water purification services that its wetlands provide. Wetlands are also valuable for their flood-storage capabilities, an important factor considering Hinsdale's vast surface water. In addition, two wetland areas provide habitat for Hinsdale's rare and endangered species. Wetlands also provide scenic open space.

The Hinsdale Flats area in the south-central part of town is Hinsdale's most extensive wetland complex, covering 1,757 acres and hosting at least nine wetland classes. The diversity of wetland types in this area leads to a diversity of wildlife, which makes Hinsdale's wetlands and the Flats in particular, of prime importance for the protection of its wildlife. Moreover, this area offers flood storage which directly benefits the riverside residents downstream.

The Wetlands Protection Act (WPA) and the Rivers Protection Act were passed to allow Massachusetts' wetlands and rivers to function as nature intended. Jurisdictional resource areas of 100 feet from wetlands and 200 feet from rivers allow the town to regulate development within these areas. Currently, Hinsdale does not have wetland or zoning by-laws that impose restrictions or extend the town's jurisdiction beyond that of the WPA.

D. Vegetation

Forest Land

Unlike 100 years ago, forest now covers much of Hinsdale. Northern hardwoods with some hemlock and white pine dominate the town's hillsides. In the western and northernmost parts of the town a continuous band of maturing northern hardwoods dominates the rocky slopes and summits. Sugar maple (Acer saccharum), white ash (Fraxinus americana), American beech (Fagus grandifolia) and birches (Betula spp.) grow in varying proportions depending on soils and stage of succession from previous disturbances. Eastern hemlock (Tsuga canadensis) may be found in patches in ravines and on northerly slopes. Throughout the town are the larch forests. These tend to be young stands of American larch (Larix laricina) with some poplars (Populus spp.) growing on formerly disturbed moist sites, such as old peat bogs or side-slope fields with a perched water table.

Growing on other sloped areas of town is an evenly distributed mixture of northern hardwoods, white pine (Pinus strobus), and hemlock. Hemlock tends to be dispersed throughout the cooler pockets, while white pine tends to show up where heavy soil disturbances occurred. Striped maple, shadbush, hop hornbeam, and some witch hazel form a tall understory. Shrubs also include maple-leaved viburnum, hobblebush, and elderberry.

The maturing forests provide the best and most easily maintained hiking trails which would create opportunities for scenic, wildlife and wildflower viewing, mountain biking, and hunting. These maturing forests, approximately 21.5% of which are actively managed under the Chapter 61 Forestry Program, also contribute to Hinsdale's forest products business. The immature forests provide the best wildlife habitat and possess innumerable shrub and ground cover types. These forests contain the greatest diversity of wildlife due to immense variation in food sources, cover from predators and the elements, and breeding and nesting habitats.

Agricultural Land

Fields play a vital role in the overall balance of life in the larger ecosystem. These open spaces mimic natural forest clearings resulting from fires or severe conditions. Reversion to forest or conversion to home sites changes this balance. Fields, and more importantly their edges, attract a multitude of animals and are an extremely important ecosystem. The shrubs, forbs, and grasses growing along the edge play an important role as food and cover for rodents, birds, rabbits, raccoons, and woodchucks. The small animals found in fields are a critical food source for larger predators, like foxes, coyotes, and birds of prey.

Wetland Vegetation

Hinsdale has an uncommon assortment of wetland communities, such as rare calcareous fens, quaking bogs, sedge meadows, shrub swamps, and wooded swamps. The frequent, scattered wetlands succor a rich assortment of plants and animals, including wild orchids, osprey, mink, bog lemming, and ermine. Notably the Hinsdale Flats WMA contains the highest concentration of wetland types found in the town.

Water depth, flow, and pH are important determinants of wetland communities. Alkaline-dependent (pH 6.0 and above) plant communities, such as the circum-neutral hardwood swamp, typically occur along portions of the Housatonic River (providing a steady flow), especially at the headwaters, and are closely related to fens. Circumneutral water facilitates nutrient uptake and decomposition of organic matter. Black ash and red maple predominate, accompanied by the occasional larch. Ironwood and spicebush frequently share space in the understory. Along the margins of streams and in some poorly drained basins where low pH conditions are present, an acidic shrub swamp community will arise. Speckled alder often forms almost pure stands, but other shrubs, including buttonbush, winterberry, arrowwood, meadowsweet, or highbush blueberry, bring diversity and contrast.

If an area along a stream has moist or saturated soil which may flood at times, a graminoid (grass) marsh community establishes itself. Silted-up, abandoned beaver meadows create ideal conditions for this grass community. Sedges are also an important plant of this marsh type, with large clumps of tussock sedge being the most common. Many other sedges, rushes, and small forbs grow lushly under these conditions, such as foxtail sedge, softstem rush, St. John's-wort, swamp candles, and sweet flag. The low topography encourages accumulation of organic matter and mineral soil, setting the stage for succession to a shrub swamp. Changing water levels could slow or reverse this vegetation change.

Calcareous fens are fed primarily from groundwater flowing through calcareous bedrock that is alkaline in nature. This water supplies high levels of minerals to plants as it slowly moves to join small streams. Sedges dominate this community. Types of calcareous fens include forested fens, shrub fens, graminoid fens, and calcareous seeps. Many plants grow within these communities that are rare in Massachusetts and uncommon in the Northeast. Numerous northern species live in these communities, perhaps due to the cold groundwater, elevation, and topographical positions at the base of slopes or in cold pockets.

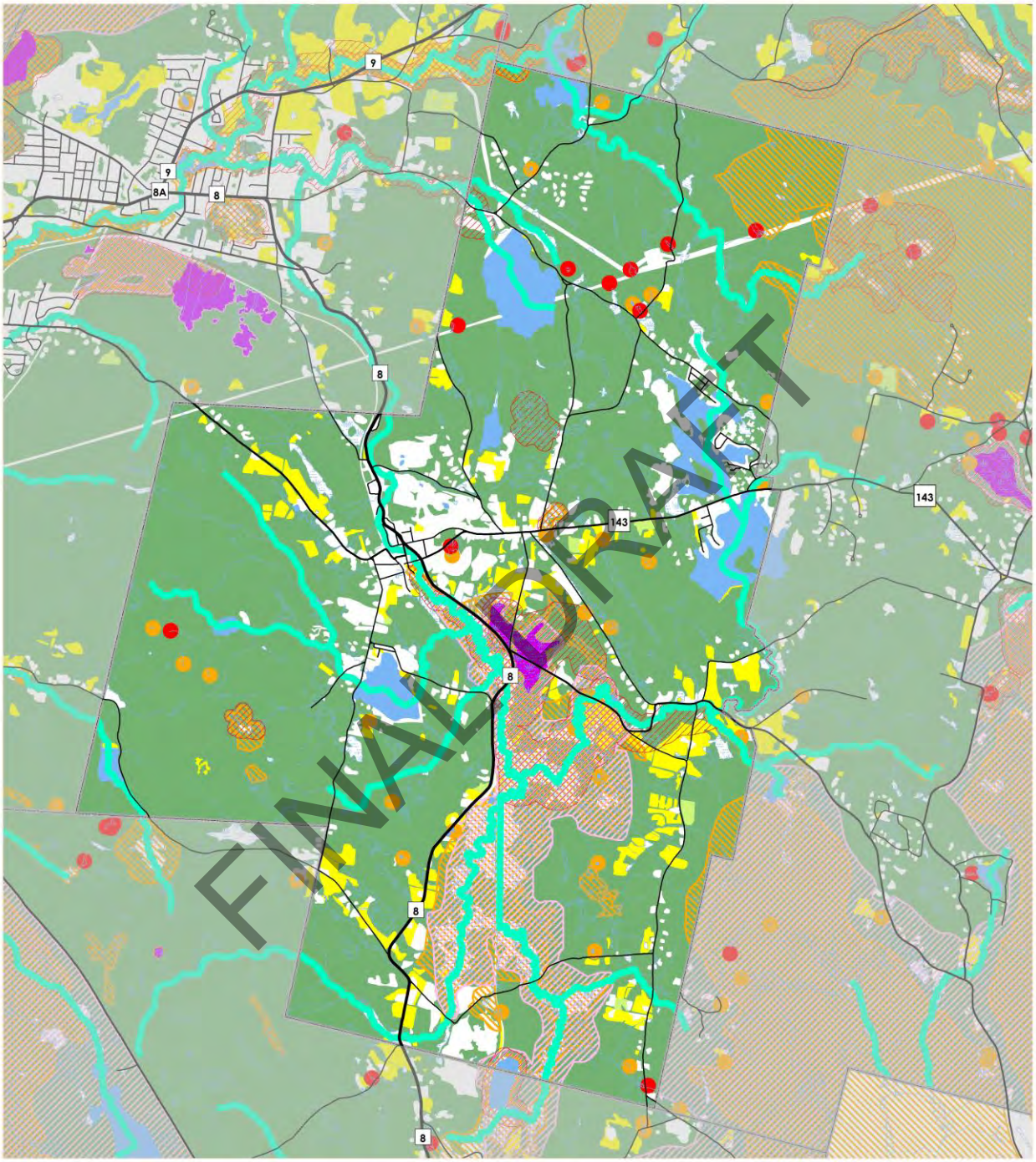
E. Fisheries & Wildlife (Map F)

General Inventory

Food, cover, and habitat for a wide range of fish and wildlife are provided by Hinsdale's great variety in the size, type, and communities of plants, coupled with numerous water bodies. Hinsdale's maturing deciduous forest with scattered shrubs in its interior and along its edges provides a great wildlife habitat. The town's many water bodies attract wildlife and are valuable areas for viewing animals. Current residents take advantage of lands adjacent to their homes for watching wildlife. Public access into the heavily wooded uplands along the Appalachian Trail and the lowlands of Hinsdale Flats WMA also furnishes a chance to leisurely watch wildlife in its home territory. Hunting in Hinsdale is a popular regional sport. Large game such as bear and deer are abundant, as are other animals. In addition, MassWildlife stocks pheasants in the Hinsdale Flats WMA. A high proportion of hunting occurs on private lands. Many landowners give oral or written permission to hunt, but often 'No Hunting' signs do hang along a property boundary. Citizens have expressed concern where hiking trails, such as the Appalachian Trail, are in proximity to historic hunting grounds.

Map F. Vegetation and Fisheries and Wildlife

Hinsdale Open Space & Recreation Plan



Hinsdale boasts of several fishing resources with 571 acres of reservoirs and lakes, and 65 miles of rivers. Fishermen identified the East Branch Housatonic River, with its exceptional water quality, as a superior fishing spot. Two bridges, one at each end of the Hinsdale Flats, grant very limited access to the river for fishermen. MassWildlife stocks trout in the East Branch Housatonic River, Bennett Brook, and Plunkett Reservoir. Ashmere Lake is known for its largemouth bass population.

Vernal Pools

Vernal pools are ephemeral wetlands which fill annually from snowmelt, rain, and the rising groundwaters of spring and early summer. Most years the pools completely dry out by mid- to late summer (Kenny & Burne, 2000). The wet-dry cycle prohibits fish from becoming established, but it can support an array of small creatures with a seasonal home.

There are 10 certified vernal pools in Hinsdale, and 27 more potential sites that have been identified as possible vernal pools. All 10 certified pools have been certified within the past 10 years. Although a few vernal pools are located on permanently protected lands, the majority are on private property. Those that are in clusters and in the most easily developed areas, such as long roadways, should be targeted for study. One such cluster could be the group of three potential pools to the south of Peru Road, just east of the downtown area.

Corridors

Hinsdale is fortunate in its current diversity of habitats and its large tracts of intact forest. Migratory corridors, however, are only permanently protected within federally- and state-owned lands and, to some extent, along the wetland resources protected by the WPA. Apart from the Appalachian Trail and the watershed lands to the west and to the north, the upland areas do not enjoy as much regulatory protection as the riparian systems.

Currently, the Hinsdale Flats WMA is the largest permanently protected area within the town. Large private lands are located in between the state and federal lands. If acquired or protected with conservation easements, these connecting lands would provide habitat and migratory corridors across the southern portion of the town. Likewise, a conservation corridor extending northward from the WMA to the watershed lands in the northern portion of the town, would connect the WMA to the Chalet WMA in Dalton and Cheshire.

Coordination of utility easements, protected lands, and important connection areas on private lands would create a network of upland and riparian corridors for the long-term requirements of a healthy wildlife population. This network, in turn, should be connected to the numerous state forests and wildlife management areas located in adjacent towns, for example, Middlefield State Forest near East Washington Road.

Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Plant Species (Table 6)

NHESP has identified four plant species in Hinsdale that are on the Massachusetts List of Endangered, Threatened, and Special Concern Species list. “Endangered” species are defined by NHESP as native species which are in danger of extinction throughout all or part of their range,

or which are in danger of extirpation from Massachusetts, as documented by biological research and inventory. “Threatened” species are native species which are likely to become endangered in the foreseeable future, or which are declining or rare as determined by biological research and inventory. “Special concern” species are native species which have been documented by biological research or inventory to have suffered a decline that could threaten the species if allowed to continue unchecked, or which occur in such small numbers or with such restricted distribution or specialized habitat requirements that they could easily become threatened within Massachusetts.

The four rare species known to exist most recently in Hinsdale are Chestnut-colored sedge (Carex castanea) of calcareous wetlands; Millet grass (Milium effusum) found in rich, mesic forest communities on steep slopes with calcareous soils; Hemlock parsley (Conioselinum chinense) which inhabits forest swamps; and Dwarf Scouring-rush (Equisetum scirpoides) found in low-forested wetlands, moist shaded hillsides, peat bogs, watersides, and shallows. A fifth species, Hooded ladies’-tresses (Spiranthes romanzoffiana) was known to exist in Hinsdale but has not been seen in decades. This plant is typically found in wetlands and nutrient-rich woodlands prone to wetness. The site where the plant was known to historically inhabit should be investigated for surviving populations.

Scientific Name	Common Name	State Rank	Federal Rank	Most Recent Observation
Carex castanea	Chestnut-colored Sedge	E	NA	1997
Conioselinum chinense	Hemlock Parsley	SC	NA	1999
Milium effusum	Woodland Millet	T	NA	1990
Spiranthes romanzoffiana	Hooded Ladies'-tresses	E	NA	historic

Table 6. Source: NHESP website, http://www.mass.gov/dfwele/dfw/nhesp/townh.htm#hinsdale

Animal Species

Hinsdale is fortunate that it has landscape that supports a wide diversity of habitats. The relatively wide-open valley of the Hinsdale Flats supports wildlife that requires wetlands and slow-moving open waters, while the higher elevations include fast-flowing, cool mountain streams surrounded by forest. The Hinsdale Flats WMA is managed for both hunting and fishing. Its wide assortment of habitats creates an excellent community where fish, game, and rare species are plentiful (Table 7).

Table 7 - Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Animal Species of Hinsdale				
Scientific Name	Common Name	Description	Habitat	Status
Botaurus lentignosus	American Bittern	medium-sized brown, streaked, ground-dwelling heron	freshwater marshes, meadows, fens, and bogs dominated by emergent vegetation such as cattails, sedges, and grasses	E
Ixobrychus exilis	Least Bittern	small wading bird and member of the heron family with a long neck and bill and a dark crown	freshwater marshes with dense, tall vegetation, interspersed with clumps of woody vegetation and substantial areas of open water	E
Euphyes dion	Dion Skipper	butterfly distinguished by the presence of two yellow, radial rays on the hind wing, extending from the basal area to the wing margin	sedge wetlands, including calcareous fens, riparian marshes, wet meadows, and shrub swamps	T
Pieris oleracea	Mustard White Butterfly	white butterfly	deciduous forests and forest/field edge habitats where their primary food source, members of the mustard family, can be found	T
Notropis bifrenatus	Bridle Shiner	member of the minnow family	well-vegetated, quiet waters, like Muddy Pond	SC
Clemmys insculpta	Wood Turtle	medium-sized turtle	slower moving mid-sized streams, with sandy bottoms and heavily vegetated stream banks	SC
Accipiter striatus	SharpShinned Hawk	rare small accipiter, slightly larger than a blue jay, closely resembles a Cooper's Hawk	conifer forest that includes a mix of spruce and open area, and is near water	SC
Boyeria grafiana	Ocellated Darner	semi-aquatic insect, among the largest of the dragonflies, one of only two spotted dragonflies in North America, and has two yellow spots on each side	found in cold, clear shaded streams within dense forests, preferring to stay out of sunlit areas	SC
E-Endangered T-Threatened SC-Special Concern				

F. Unique Natural Resources (Map 5)

To help communities conserve important habitat areas within these ecoregions, the NHESP has developed two complimentary planning projects, BioMap and the Living Waters. The goal of these projects is:

To promote strategic land protection by producing a map showing areas that, if protected, would provide suitable habitat over the long term for the maximum number of Massachusetts' terrestrial and wetland plant and animal species and natural communities (NHESP, 2001).

Both BioMap and Living Waters delineate Core Habitats that identify the most critical sites for biodiversity conservation across the state. Each community was presented with a guide identifying Core Habitat areas and describing the rare ecosystems and rare species that exist within those areas. Core Habitat areas identified are based on documented observations of rare species, natural communities, and exemplary habitats needed to preserve biodiversity in the region. Supporting Natural Landscapes are designated as protective buffer areas surrounding or adjacent to Core Habitat. These areas are often unfragmented or minimally disturbed areas to allow the rare plants and animals within the Core Habitat to disperse, expand their habitat or travel to nearby habitats. The BioMap and Living Waters guide is included in its entirety in Appendix C.

There are several Core Habitat areas in Hinsdale. The largest of these is the Hinsdale wetland complex in the southernmost portion of the town. The area encompasses riparian areas, upland forests, and scattered small fields along the East Branch of the Housatonic River and several of its tributaries. This area provides habitat for rare plants and animals.

The area supports a Spruce-fir Boreal Swamp, an unusual plant community type in southern New England, being typically found in areas of higher elevation or to our north. This community developed in cold, poorly drained conditions that allow the accumulation of peat. The organic, peaty soils are seasonally saturated, and can function as vernal pool habitat, which support rare amphibians. NHESP described the site as a "large and diverse spruce-fir boreal swamps with rare species and few exotics. It is a rich variant of a typical spruce-fir boreal forest swamps with a calcareous influence (Swain, 2006). The rare butterfly/moth, the Mustard White (Pieris Napioleracea), is known to live in this area. This site is located along the western portion of Middlefield Road, where it intersects with Washington Road (Rt. 8).

The area also contains a calcareous seepage swamp that supports rare plants needing alkaline waters. The area also supports a good-quality Black Ash/Red Maple/Tamarack Calcareous Seepage Swamp. This plant community, also an unusual community in the state, is a mixed deciduous-coniferous forested wetland occurring in areas where there is calcium-rich groundwater seeping to the surface. This nutrient enrichment results in many rare calcium-loving plant species, such as an usually large population of the rare Hemlock Parsley (Conioselinum chinense). This unfragmented wild area, also connects two Priority Habitat areas for state-protected rare species. This forested wetland community type is categorized by NHESP as extremely rare, estimated to exist in 5-20 sites in Massachusetts, with few remaining acres intact. Fact sheets about these rare forested wetland communities can be found in Appendix C.

The wetland located at the intersection of Peru Road (Rt. 143) and New Windsor Road is fine example of a Shrub Swamp, a diverse type of natural community. This wetland is currently undergoing a change in its hydrologic regime due to beaver activity. The other Core Habitats harbor rare plants. This includes the Core Habitat located just east of the Appalachian Trail, which supports several rare plants that are characteristic of calcareous fens, a rare type of wetland.

Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC)

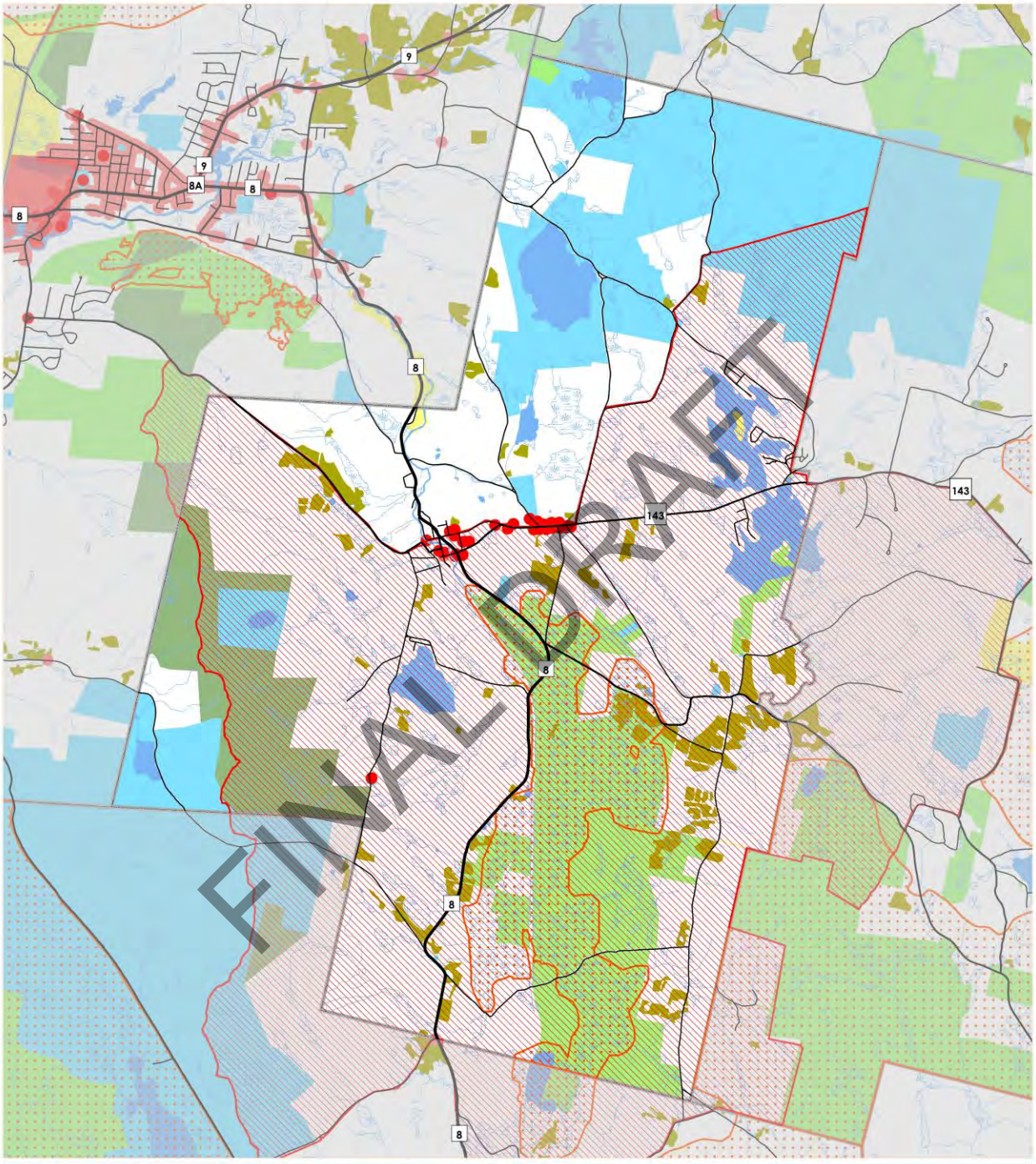
The Hinsdale Flats ACEC is approximately 14,500 acres in size. The vast majority of the ACEC resides in Hinsdale, but substantial acreage is found in neighboring Peru. Other towns into which the ACEC extends are Dalton and Washington. The excellent water quality of the East Branch and its tributaries, the wetlands and floodplains of the Hinsdale Flats wetland complex, and the surrounding uplands support an outstanding variety of natural communities and wildlife, including six state-listed rare species.

The ACEC encompasses slightly more than 70% of the town (refer to the Unique Features Map). The ACEC is a state designation that recognized the ecological significance of the area and heightens awareness and concern for this ecological treasure. The Hinsdale Flats watershed area was nominated by the citizens of these towns on August 1, 1991, and after a rigorous public review, was officially designated an ACEC on January 31, 1992. Support for the designation came from area residents, municipal boards, state legislators, civic, business, and environmental organizations such as the Appalachian Mountain Club and the Gun Owner's Action League, and regional and state agencies.

An inland ACEC must contain at least four of nine features of regional significance; the Hinsdale Flats watershed contains all nine. These features include fisheries and other significant wildlife habitat, wetlands, surface water resources, water supply areas, natural hazard areas like floodplains or erosion areas, agricultural areas, historic or scenic areas, and resources for recreation. Together, these form the backbone of this Open Space and Recreation Plan and are discussed throughout Section 4, Environmental Inventory and Analysis. The need to protect these resources for the benefit of the entire Berkshire region was the basis for the ACEC designation.

Map 5. Unique Features

Hinsdale Open Space & Recreation Plan



Hinsdale's resources, especially those found within the ACEC, are in many ways crucial to the physical and economic health of the region. The quality of Hinsdale's water is of utmost importance to its own residents as well as those in neighboring towns. Not only does the region rely on clean water for drinking, but also for recreation, especially in regard to the four private camps which boost the tourism economy each summer. Dalton's Crane & Company, which employs 1,150 people, also requires clean water for its manufacturing process. In addition, the uniqueness of the landforms and the remarkable diversity of natural communities within the ACEC support the need for special attention.

In her concluding statement of the Hinsdale Flats Watershed ACEC designation, Secretary of Environmental Affairs, Susan Tierney writes: "The significance of this ACEC requires that the highest standards of environmental review and protection be applied to actions that may affect its resources." Furthermore, she strongly recommends that the four communities involved; Hinsdale, Dalton, Peru, and Washington, work closely together to ensure the area's protection.

Scenic landscapes

Due to the town's hilly terrain, there are numerous scenic vistas scattered throughout town. Many land features adorn the town, including forests, farm fields, hills, streams and waterways. The river bisects the town as it runs north from Muddy Pond. Meandering through level terrain, the river and its surrounding floodplains and wetlands create an open rambling landscape in which to view wildlife.

Many roads in Hinsdale showcase its rural and wild character. Robinson Road, entering Hinsdale from the west, offers a glorious view, with farm fields in the foreground and the eastern mountains in the background. On the eastern side of town, East Washington Road, which runs north/south, boasts the most spectacular view in the town, overlooking the Hinsdale Flats and set against the mountain to the west. Buttermilk and Creamery Roads are both noted for their bucolic views of timeworn farms and colorful meadows. Peru Road (Rt. 143) bisects Ashmere Lake, offering views on both sides of the roadway. The lake provides a splash of color in the autumn, as the reds and yellows of fall foliage are reflected in the lake's waters. The scenic roads and scenic vista points are noted on the Unique Resources Map.

Cultural, Archeological and Historic Areas

Appalachian National Scenic Trail

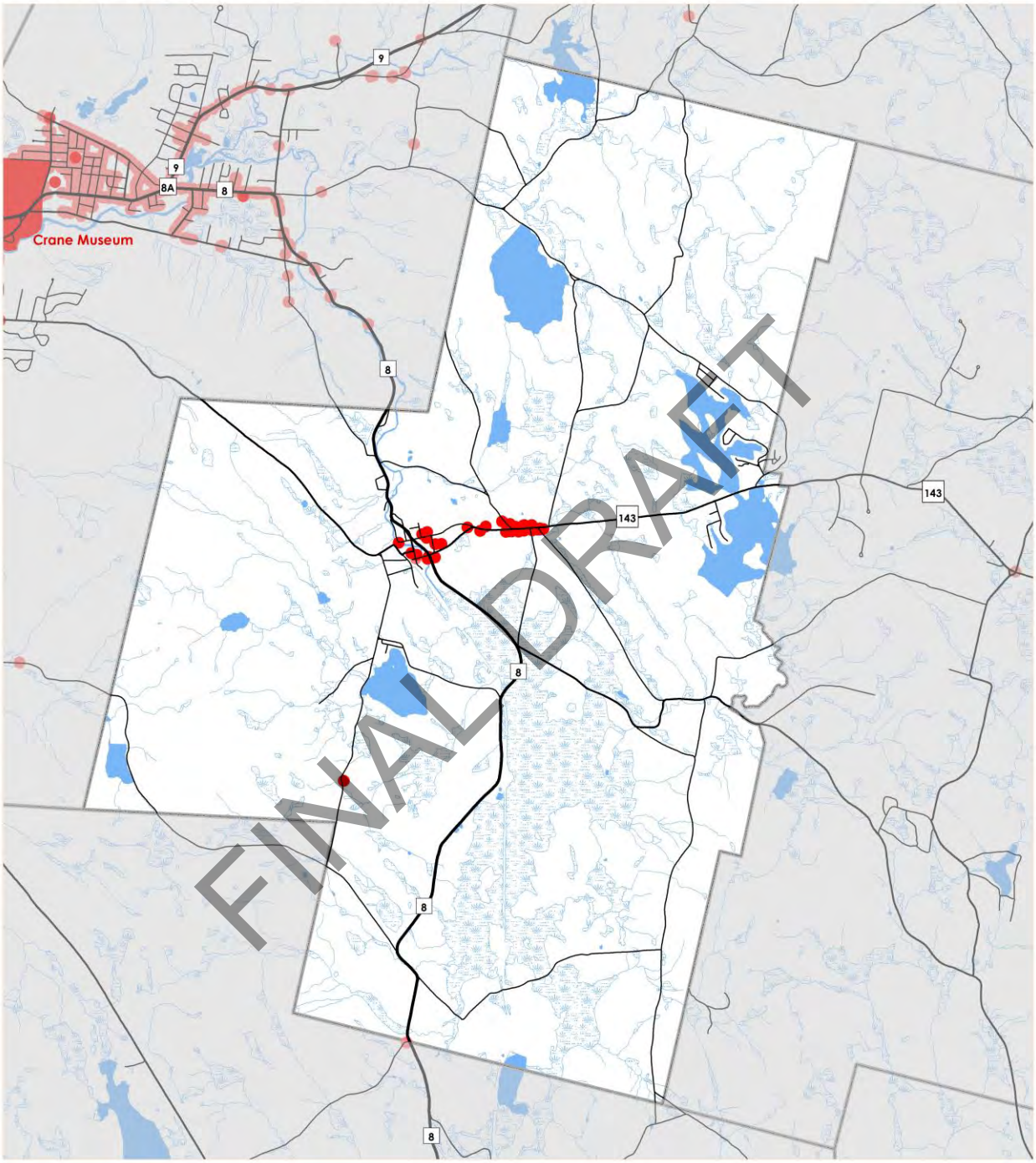
The Appalachian National Scenic Trail (AT) traverses the western edge of town type in caption on photos and crop photos to delete caption that is there now and offers spectacular views from the top of Warner Hill. This trail is the most famous and revered of the long trails that America offers. Residents or visitors wishing to hike a portion of the AT can join the trail from Robinson or Pittsfield roads.

Historic Sites

Map A, below, illustrates historic properties as listed in the Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System (MACRIS). Properties include homes, bridges, churches and any other structure or site of historic value. Notable properties include the Hinsdale Public Library, Saw Mill Village and the Main Street Bridge over the Housatonic River.

Map A. Historic Resources

Hinsdale Open Space & Recreation Plan



G. Environmental Challenges

Inappropriate Motor Vehicle Impacts

All-Terrain Vehicles (ATVs) are prohibited in the Hinsdale Flats WMA, which is in keeping with the Division of Fish & Wildlife's overall policy to prohibit such vehicles from all their lands. However, residents report that ATVs regularly cross through the property. Motorized vehicles can disturb and tear away vegetation, exposing bare earth to the forces of erosion, thus leading to sedimentation of nearby waterways. They can also run over rare plant and animal species. This is most acute where motorized vehicles leave established trails and "bushwhack" through streams, wetlands and fields. ATVs are allowed in only a few state forests, the closest being October Mountain.

Snowmobiles are allowed in specific areas of most of the state parks and forests, and in many of the WMAs in Western Massachusetts. In addition to state lands, many private landowners allow snowmobiles to travel across their land. The Berkshire Snow Seekers Snowmobile Club maintains groomed trails in Hinsdale. These trails link to extensive snowmobile trail systems in the October Mountain State forest east of town and in the town of Windsor, north of town. One trail crosses through the Hinsdale Flats WMA.

Water Quality

The Housatonic Valley Association (HVA) began a chemical water quality monitoring program in the East Branch in 2001. The data has shown a relatively clean waterway with occasional elevated levels of bacteria, total suspended sediments, and temperature. Major findings to date are that after any rain event, the bacteria and suspended sediments are found to be much higher. This is presumed to be due from Stormwater runoff.

A monitoring site was initially established at Bullard's Crossing which was expected to be a pristine reference site for comparing data with the rest of the river. However, the site was discontinued after two years' worth of data due to high bacteria levels. This situation is thought to be attributed to the presence of the abundant beaver population.

Sand and Gravel Operations

Hinsdale, which is largely comprised of limestone, sand and gravel, has had active sand and gravel removal operations ongoing in the community. Erosion and runoff which can directly impact the water quality are two main concerns from this operation. Best Management Practices (BMPs) should be utilized by operation managers to minimize the negative environmental impacts of such activities. These operations and sites should be reviewed for impacts while they are in operation and once operation ceases. A portion of the gravel mine at Bullards Crossing is in the process of being reclaimed. These efforts, along with the successful reclamation of Bass Ridge Golf course, are examples of what can be done to stabilize an area once the operation ends.

Recreational Use of the Hinsdale Flats

The flats are also a unique recreational area. The Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife have protected the majority of this area to preserve the habitat and to create continued fishing and hunting. Additional recreation use in the Flats area includes canoeing, kayaking, and wildlife viewing. At present, recreational access to the river is limited, and should be improved. The appropriate town boards and committees need to stay in communication with the Division to assist them in their management of the area.

Stormwater Management

Stormwater runoff is recognized by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as the leading cause for water quality degradation. Stormwater is the runoff created by precipitation as flows off the land over roads, lawns, parking lots and into rivers and lakes. This water flows towards the river or lake, and can carry with it things that it picks up such things as yard waste, fluids such as gasoline and oil, sand, salt, litter, fertilizers and pesticides. These pollutants can upset the delicate balance of the aquatic ecosystem and create a health concern.

Transportation Impacts

There are numerous town roads, and a major state highway Massachusetts Highway Department, Route 8 located in the Hinsdale Flats ACEC. There is also a rail line which is operated by CSX and Conrail that operates through the center of the ACEC. There are concerns over negative environmental impacts from these operations due to runoff, ice and snow treatments, and chemical treatments for vegetation control. There is also the concern that a large toxic spillage due to an accident along the railway, could contaminate the vast wetland complex that exists in the central portion of the town, and which directly feeds this headwaters of the East Branch Housatonic River.

Erosion

As previously stated, slopes of 15 percent and greater are classified as highly erosive and account for approximately 20 percent of the land area. The town should investigate implementing a stormwater management policy to minimize damage to hillsides and water quality.

Development Impacts

To maintain the character of the town and to protect the critical environmental resources in town, all proposed developments must be carefully evaluated regarding environmental impacts, and appropriate plans need to be implemented to allow for properly planned growth. So far, development has occurred in a scattered pattern along existing roadways.

The exception to this scattered pattern is the intense development and recreational activities that have impacted the water quality and habitat potential of Plunkett Reservoir and Ashmere Lake. Development continues to occur along the shores of Ashmere Lake. Development introduces new sources of nonpoint pollution into the lakes, and motorized watercraft have facilitated the introduction of noxious aquatic vegetation. A 39-unit subdivision was built along

a relatively unspoiled section of the north basin, and homes continue to be constructed. Many of these houses are being built on small, marginal building lots.

Relatively little naturally vegetated and undeveloped shoreline exists along the town's two recreational lakes. Most homeowners remove trees and other shoreline vegetation and extend their lawns from the house directly to the lake. Removing the vegetation removes the water quality and habitat benefits that native vegetation provided prior to home construction.

This limits the value of these lakes to provide habitat for the types of animals that need both aquatic and terrestrial habitat to complete their life cycles. Waterfowl, ospreys, bald eagles and many other birds require land to nest and water to feed. Many turtles spend most of their lives in the water, but require land for nesting, while many amphibians spend varying times on land but require water in which to lay their eggs. The common need for all these animals is natural, undeveloped shoreline on which to spend some portion of their lives. As the natural shoreline disappears, so too does the wildlife.

The only undeveloped area along Plunkett Reservoir is in the vicinity of the dam, but this area has been altered. Although the north basin of Ashmere Lake is heavily developed, there are two islands which provide some natural shoreline. The south basin is less heavily developed, and has relatively large tracts of natural shoreline along the eastern shore in Peru, owned by Camp Danbee, and along the southern shore. As these shorelines are the only large undisturbed areas along the lake, these areas should be a focus for wildlife conservation.

Wastewater

Approximately 1/3 of the homes in Hinsdale are served by individual septic systems. The Board of Health has reported that approximately half of the septic systems inspected are failing. Typically, septic systems are inspected when houses changes hands on the real estate market. Under state health regulations, failed systems must be repaired and properly functioning before new owners can take residence, which slowly improves the situation. However, the high failure rate indicates that many more systems that are not changing hands or otherwise being inspected, exist throughout the town. These systems continue to threaten water quality.

The homes with septic systems are those outside the town center, with the exception of those in the Ashmere Lake area. Most the houses served by septic systems, with the exception of the area north of Frank Schnopps Road, are within the ACEC.

5. INVENTORY OF LANDS OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION INTEREST

Hinsdale is fortunate to contain large sections of land currently protected from development (see Map 7). Of the more than 7,355 acres of protected open space, approximately 37% is owned by federal and state governments and can effectively be considered permanently protected. Approximately 32% of the lands are owned by various municipalities, most of which are drinking water protection lands. The remaining balance of protected land is done via conservation restrictions and land trusts.

The level of protection can vary. Most federal and state lands maintained for conservation and recreation can be regarded as permanently protected land, including the Appalachian Trail corridor and the state-owned Hinsdale Flats WMA. Most conservation lands owned by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts are protected under Article 97, an amendment to the state constitution, and to remove protection status of these lands for development would require a 2/3 vote within the state legislature. Although such a scenario could occur, the action would be contentious and is unlikely.

Conservation restrictions (CR), also provide protection, although not to the same level as federal and state protected land. A CR is a legal agreement between a landowner and another entity in which the owner agrees to restrict the use of the land. Activities such as farming, forest or wildlife management, recreation and other land uses can continue as such. The landowner continues to own the property, but if the land is sold, the new owners must comply with the provisions of the CR, which has been placed on the deed and is transferred. CRs are typically held by government agencies (Agricultural Preservation Restrictions and Forest Legacy Programs are examples), land trusts, environmental organizations and municipalities (Conservation Commissions often accept CRs). There are several deed-restricted conservation lands in Berkshire County. The land owned by the Dalton Fire District has CRs on them from the Department of Fish and Game. An example of a deed-restricted property in Hinsdale is the Hinsdale Athletic Field, and this restriction dictates that the land must remain playing fields in perpetuity.

The protection status of municipally-owned lands varies widely, depending upon the circumstances under which the land was acquired. If the lands were acquired and accepted by town meeting vote that the lands are for conservation purposes, then it would take a special act of town meeting and state legislature to take the land out of conservation use. The watershed lands surrounding public drinking water reservoirs are currently protected from development. However, if the reservoirs were to be withdrawn as drinking water supplies for some reason, this protection status may removed. In fact, some of these water bodies may be attractive sites for residential development. Other municipally-owned conservation and recreation lands typically include parks, playing fields, playgrounds, and school properties. These kinds of lands are not typically deed-restricted and thus could be vulnerable to change. Although it is unlikely that a municipality would sell public open space lands for development, there could arise a situation in which the public benefits of the land transfer would outweigh the cost of losing open land.

A. Private Parcels

Although approximately 33% of the town's open space lands are in some form of protection, the remaining majority of open space is privately owned and is without any form of protection. These parcels play an important role in Hinsdale's rural character, economy, and ecosystem. A combination of woodlots creates a large tract of uninterrupted northern hardwood forest supporting the timber industry and rare wildlife habitat. Campgrounds add to the rural character while also contributing to the town's tax base and economy. There are several privately-owned recreation areas in Hinsdale, primarily made up of large camps. Many of these recreation areas are located around Plunkett Reservoir, while there are two camps at Ashmere Lake.

Some of the most notable private open space and recreation areas are:

Plunkett Reservoir Beach

The beach at Plunkett Reservoir is owned by the Lions Club, which is open to residents for swimming. The lack of available parking limits this activity, however. Although there is no permanent bathroom structure, there is a portable bathroom on the premises.

Camp Romaca

Originally known as Rose Dale Manor Camp for Girls in 1929 before being shortened to Camp Romaca three years later, this camp has over 150 acres of field and forest on the west side of Plunkett Reservoir. The camp includes tennis and basketball courts, a nature center, soccer and softball fields, a challenge course, an equestrian center, watersports, a yoga pavilion, and a dance studio. A green pedestrian bridge over Longview Avenue connects the waterfront area to the main camp.

Dan Duquette Sports Academy

This academy has a 22-acre campus located on over 100 acres of land adjacent to Plunkett Reservoir. The academy has one regulation size major league baseball field, one intermediate youth baseball field, two youth league baseball diamonds, and batting cages. The academy also has four outdoor basketball courts and two volleyball courts, one on sand and one on grass. The lakefront property allows access for swimming, boating, and fishing.

Fernwood Forest Campground

Fernwood Forest Campground has 44 campsites for tents and RVs on 115 acres. It is adjacent to the Appalachian Trail and within walking distance to Plunkett Reservoir.

Camp Emerson (originally Camp Fernwood)
Situated on 170 acres near Plunkett Reservoir and adjacent to Fernwood Reservoir, Camp Emerson was founded as a co-ed camp in 1968, replacing the earlier Camp Fernwood which was started in the 1930s. Facilities at the camp include tennis, basketball, volleyball, and fencing courts; a gymnastics center; baseball/softball and soccer fields; an archery range; a hockey arena, a golf driving range; ping pong and tetherball areas; a playground; water sports; an art center and ceramics studio; a theater and performance hall; an outdoor stage; dance and rock band studios; and a media studio for video and photography production.

Camp Taconic
The 326-acre Camp Taconic bounds Ashmere Lake at its northwest side. This recreational site forms a connection between a small sliver of land along the lakeshore owned by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and Cleveland Brook Reservoir lands held by the City of Pittsfield to the west. These natural stretches of land form a sharp contrast to the opposite side of Ashmere Lake which is a densely peppered with small houses lining the shore and hillside.

Camp Ashmere
Camp Ashmere, situated on the southeast side of Route 143 and Ashmere Lake, functions as a religious retreat and summer camp. Built in 1915, this 20-acre parcel includes several buildings overlooking the lake.

Camp Danbee
Situated on the southeastern shores of Ashmere Lake, Camp Danbee is a girls camp that is partially located in the Town of Peru. It first opened in 1950 and today offers water sports; tennis, basketball, and volleyball courts; soccer fields; an archery range; a lacrosse/field hockey field; softball field; dance building; fine arts center; ropes course; and horseback riding.

Camp Lenore
All facilities and infrastructure have been removed from the former Camp Lenore, located on Peru Road just west of the still-existing Lenore Drive near Ashmere Lake. The former camp served as a girls camp with an emphasis on classical music and dance. The land is currently unused open space.

Bas Ridge Golf Course
Bas Ridge Golf Course manages an 18-hole golf course on 80 acres of land. This course, a rehabilitated gravel mine, is the only golf course in the central Berkshire highland region. Due to its hilly and undulating terrain, it is a favorite spot for sledding in the winter.

Hinsdale Beach

A small but extremely important privately-owned parcel of land is the Hinsdale "Public" Beach, which is owned by the Lion's Club. This club has been gracious enough to host the town beach for many years, but there is a concern that the land may be becoming a financial burden to the club. The loss of the beach would be unfortunate, as it is the only public beach in the town.

Chapter 61, 61A, and 61B Lands

61 is a state program that allows private landowners to manage their properties for forestry (Chapter 61), agricultural (Chapter 61A), or recreational purposes (Chapter 61B) in exchange for reduced taxes. Parcels in the program for the purposes of forestry must be at least 10 acres in size and must have an approved 10-year management plan in place. Parcels enrolled in Chapter 61A or 61B must be at least five acres in size. Once enrolled in Chapter 61, the town where the property is located acquires a right of first refusal should the land be put up for sale. This right of first refusal can also be assigned by the town to a land trust or state agency. Chapter 61 lands are not considered permanently protected, as landowners can remove their property from the program at any time. However, there are monetary penalties associated with sale of properties enrolled in Chapter 61 for purposes other than forestry, agriculture, or recreation, as well as any changes in land use while enrolled.

Chapter 61 properties are privately owned and should be considered off limits to public access without the landowner's permission. There are a total of 2,281 acres of land currently enrolled in Chapter 61 in Hinsdale, or around 16.4% of all land within the town. The majority of these properties are enrolled for the purposes of agriculture with some enrolled for forestry and for recreation (see Table 10.1). For more information on Chapter 61 programs, consult a local forester or the town assessor.

As can be seen on the Inventory of Land of Conservation and Recreation Interest Map, the majority of lands under the Chapter 61 programs are concentrated on the western portion of the town. Most of this area is forested, with the exception of agricultural fields along Robinson and Pittsfield roads. Another large area under the programs is on the eastern portion of town, south of Middlefield Road and east of the Hinsdale Flats WMA. This area is also largely forested, with some relatively large farm fields.

Hillside farms on East Washington Road result in a rustic back road, occasional panoramic views of Mt. Greylock, and important connections for wildlife corridors and future hiking trails. These parcels display the salient points of Hinsdale, yet are not considered protected because they can be developed at any time.

Agricultural Land

Much of Hinsdale's farmland is enrolled in the Chapter 61A tax abatement program. This annual program requires that a minimum of five acres be devoted to agricultural or horticultural uses with gross proceeds being not less than 500 dollars. Taxes are based on recommendations from a farmland valuation commission. Not only do typical agricultural products fall into this category, but also maple syrup, honey, timber, and Christmas trees.

A 540-acre farm located on Robinson Road in the northwest corner of town, hosting an impressive red barn, epitomizes the rural character of the town and makes an extraordinarily lovely entrance into Hinsdale. The farm's long field abutting the road slopes gently, creating breathtaking views into the valley below. This acreage abuts the Appalachian Trail, Belmont Reservoir, and a summer camp on Plunkett Reservoir Road.

An additional noteworthy grouping of Chapter 61A lands occurs on East Washington Road. These parcels form a cluster of hillside farms resulting in a rustic back road with occasional panoramic views across the 'Flats.' Additionally, one farm connects the centrally located Hinsdale Flats WMA with the Middlefield State Forest in Peru. This connection is important for wildlife corridors and future hiking trails.

Forest Land

The vast majority of Hinsdale is forested, and a significant amount of this land is enrolled in the Chapter 61 program. A large contiguous area of Chapter 61 and 61A land area lies west of Plunkett Reservoir Road, joining the Appalachian Trail and Belmont Reservoir. The combination of these lots, together with the watershed and Appalachian Trail lands, creates a large tract of uninterrupted northern hardwood forest that serves as a wildlife corridor between the Hinsdale Flats WMA and the Appalachian Trail. A portion of these forests are Core Habitat that surrounds rare species habitat in the southeastern portion of town.

B. Public and Non-Profit Parcels

Federal- and State-Owned Recreation Areas

Appalachian National Scenic Trail

The Appalachian Trail is a 2,100-mile footpath that extends from Maine to Georgia. The 2.43-mile stretch of trail that passes through Hinsdale is predominantly owned by the National Park Service, an agency within the U.S. Department of the Interior.

Hinsdale Flats Wildlife Management Area

The Flats area is managed by the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife for a wide range of recreation and natural resource protection purposes. Recreational uses include hunting, fishing, and canoeing.

Ashmere Lake State Park

This Massachusetts State Park lies along the southernmost shore of Ashmere Lake and offers a public boat launch and acres of woods that can be accessed from Smith Road.

Wahconah Falls State Park

Although vehicle entrance to Wahconah Falls State Park is solely from Dalton, nearly 19 acres of the park lie within Hinsdale and are owned by the state. The focal point of the park is where

Wahconah Falls Brook flows over several smaller tiered falls then cascades about 40 feet into a deep pool.

Town-Owned Recreation Areas

Hinsdale Athletic Field

Hinsdale Athletic Field is a 7.2-acre parcel of land on South Street that is mainly comprised of a baseball diamond. The town owns and mows the field, but other maintenance of the baseball diamond is performed by a joint Hinsdale-Dalton recreation group that uses the field in their league.

Town Center Playground

Located at the Community Center/former Youth Center, the town center playground features a basketball court and other playground equipment.

Kittredge Elementary School Playground

The elementary school, which is part of Central Berkshire Regional School District, has a small playground area that is open for public use.

Public Pavilions

The *Main Street Pavilion*, a gazebo in a small landscaped park at the ends of both Main and Maple Street in the center of town, is free to be used by all. It is maintained by the town on land leased from the railroad company. The *Wayne Walton Pavilion*, located behind the fire station on Maple Street, can accommodate over 100 people and is free and open to the public, although its use should be coordinated with the Hinsdale Firemen's Association in advance.

Land Trust Owned Recreation Areas

Berkshire Natural Resources Council, a county-wide land trust, owns two parcels of protected recreational open space in Hinsdale.

Ashmere Island

Ashmere Island is a forested 7-acre island in the northern section of Ashmere Lake. The island is just over 100 feet from the closest dock in the Skyview Grove subdivision, and just over 200 feet from the access point from Camp Taconic. The island can be accessed by swimming or boating.

Jericho Woods and Old Mill Trail

Jericho Woods is a 126-acre parcel, of which only 8.3 acres is located within Hinsdale; the rest is located in Dalton. Jericho Woods was donated to Berkshire Natural Resources Council in August 2016 as a largely undeveloped piece of land, which includes the Old Mill Trail.

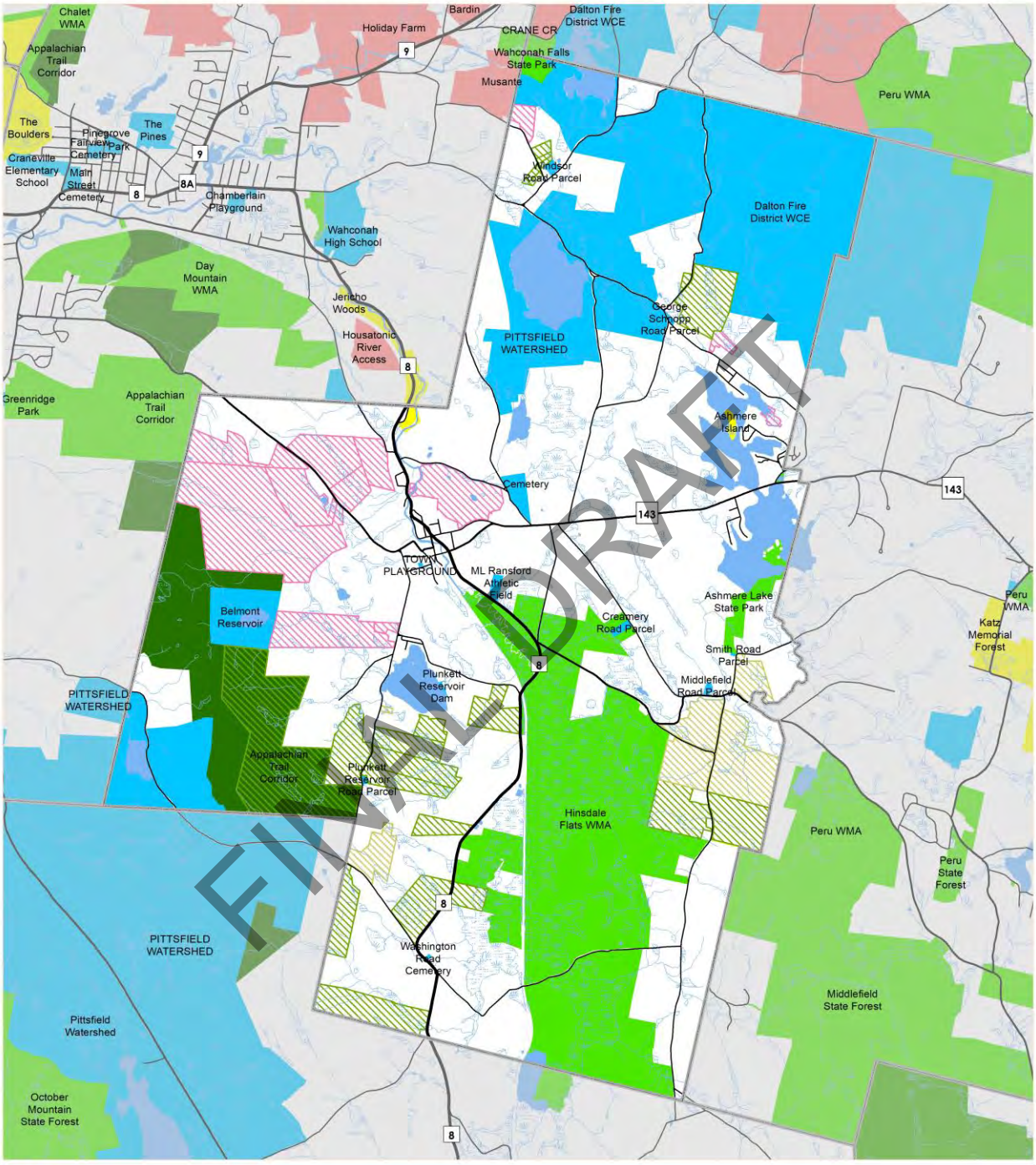
The Old Mill Trail starts at the trailhead on Old Dalton Road off Route 8 in Hinsdale. The trail provides access to approximately 1½ miles of scenic and historic riverfront along the East Branch of the Housatonic River and was developed by the Housatonic Valley Association to provide increased recreational and educational opportunities to visitors. The trail traverses a wild river environment. Along the way, remnants of early mill operations remind us of the influence this industry had on the development of neighboring communities. The Massachusetts Department of Fish & Wildlife owns an easement on the property.

Table 10.1 - Summary of Protected Land in Hinsdale			
Source: Mass. GIS Open Space 2015, BNRC 2015			
Organization	Acres	% protected land (6,868 acres)	% all land (13,878 acres)
Federal	435.8	6.3%	3.1%
State	1,839.7	26.8%	13.3%
Land Trust	15.2	0.2%	0.1%
Municipal:	2,303.3	33.5%	16.6%
Town of Hinsdale	157.3	2.3%	1.1%
City of Pittsfield	788.6	11.5%	5.7%
Town of Dalton	1,226.3	17.8%	8.8%
Dalton Fire District	131.1	1.9%	0.9%
Subtotal	4,594.0	66.8%	33.0%
Chapter 61 Properties			
61 (Forestry)	983.1	14.3%	7.1%
61A (Agricultural)	1,034.5	15.1%	7.5%
61B (Recreational)	263.7	3.8%	1.9%
Subtotal	2,281.0	33.2%	16.4%
Total Protected Land*	**6,863.2**	100.0%	49.5%

*The two subtotals do not add up exactly because some of the Chapter 61 Properties are also part of Federal, State, Land Trust or Municipal lands

Map 7. Inventory of Land of Conservation and Recreation Interest

Hinsdale Open Space & Recreation Plan



6. COMMUNITY GOALS/VISION

A. Description of Process

Working under the guidance of the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, the Hinsdale Open Space and Recreation Committee (OSRC) was formed to steer the efforts to update the town's 2007 Open Space and Recreation Plan. At the first meeting, the ORSC reviewed a draft of the plan developed by BRPC, which had incorporated input from the Vision Plan that had been completed in 2017 (but not yet finalized). The draft also included completely revised maps, prepared by BRPC in GIS format, based recent data available from several sources.

Upon review of the preliminary draft, the ORSC developed a survey to gather public input regarding open space and recreation in the town. This survey was created online with SurveyMonkey, an online, cloud-based software service. The survey was posted on the town's website and a link to the survey was also listed in the town's monthly electronic newsletter. Physical copies of the survey were also made available at the Town Hall, the Town Library, the transfer station and Ozzie's Steak & Eggs – the social center of the town. A total of 52 responses were collected over a 3-week period. Using SurveyMonkey, the data was easily collated and analyzed.

The survey results were then quantified and presented at two public forums. The public forums were held on August 28th and 29th, 2018, at the Fire Station and Town Hall respectively. At each forum, several large maps were available for viewing and commenting. Public comments were drawn directly on Map 7, which has been included as Appendix B to this plan.

Using the comments received from the survey and from the public forums, the OSRC met again to develop goals and objectives. A near-final draft of the plan, incorporating the goals and objectives and all information to-date, was distributed to the Planning Board, the Select Board, the Conservation Commission and the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC). Although not required, the draft plan was also distributed to the Board of Health and the Zoning Board of Appeals.

The OSRC met one last time to review the input received from the various boards and decided how this input should be incorporated into the final draft of the plan. After final adjustment, this plan was emailed and mailed to the Division of Conservation Service (DCS), part of the Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs (EOEEA) on September 21, 2018.

B. Statement of Open Space and Recreation Goals

Five goals were developed during data collection and analyses and through the responses received through the public participation process. These goals, broadly stated here but further defined in Sections 8 and 9, are:

GOAL 1 **Protect, enhance water bodies**

GOAL 2 **Create more opportunities for outdoor recreation**

GOAL 3 **Protect, enhance wildlife habitats**

GOAL 4 **Acquire town land for open space or easements to lakes, rivers, etc.**

GOAL 5 **Protect hillsides from development**

7. ANALYSIS OF NEEDS

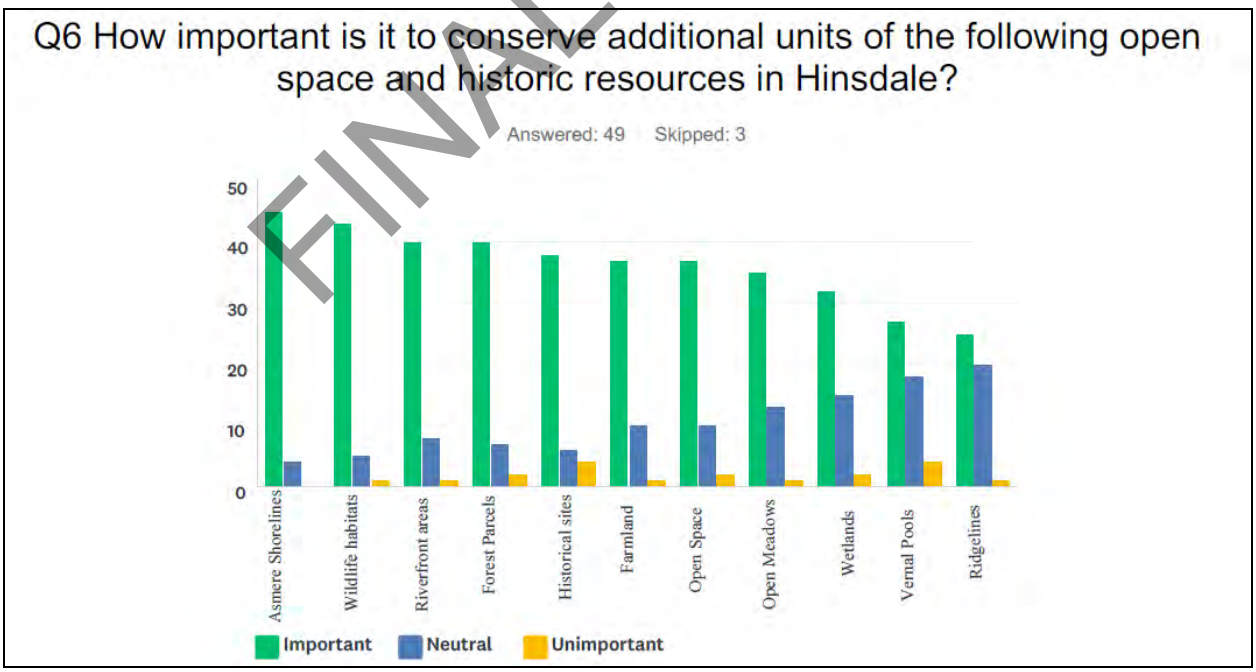
A. Summary of Resource Protection Needs

Resource protection needs for Hinsdale have been assessed steadily over time.

In 2005, the Hinsdale Conservation Commission and the Housatonic Valley Association (HVA) convened a meeting of interested individuals, town representatives, and state agencies to assess the interest and needs for developing a Stewardship plan for ensuring the protection of the Hinsdale Flats Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). The local interest in this endeavor was positive, and a Stewardship plan was pursued and eventually written.

In 2017, the Town of Hinsdale, in conjunction with the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, developed a Vision Plan for the town, in the same spirit as a comprehensive plan. The Vision Plan contained chapters on *land use*, *natural & cultural resources* and *open space & recreation*. Much of the information and public input related to open space and recreation within the Vision Plan has been incorporated into this document. The Vision Plan is expected to be formally adopted by the town in late September of 2018.

Lastly, in 2017-2018, the town engaged in updating the 2007 Open Space and Recreation Plan. As part of this endeavor, two public forums were hosted and a public survey was distributed. Of the survey questions, Question 6 was probably the most applicable to gathering input regarding the physical land and resource protection:



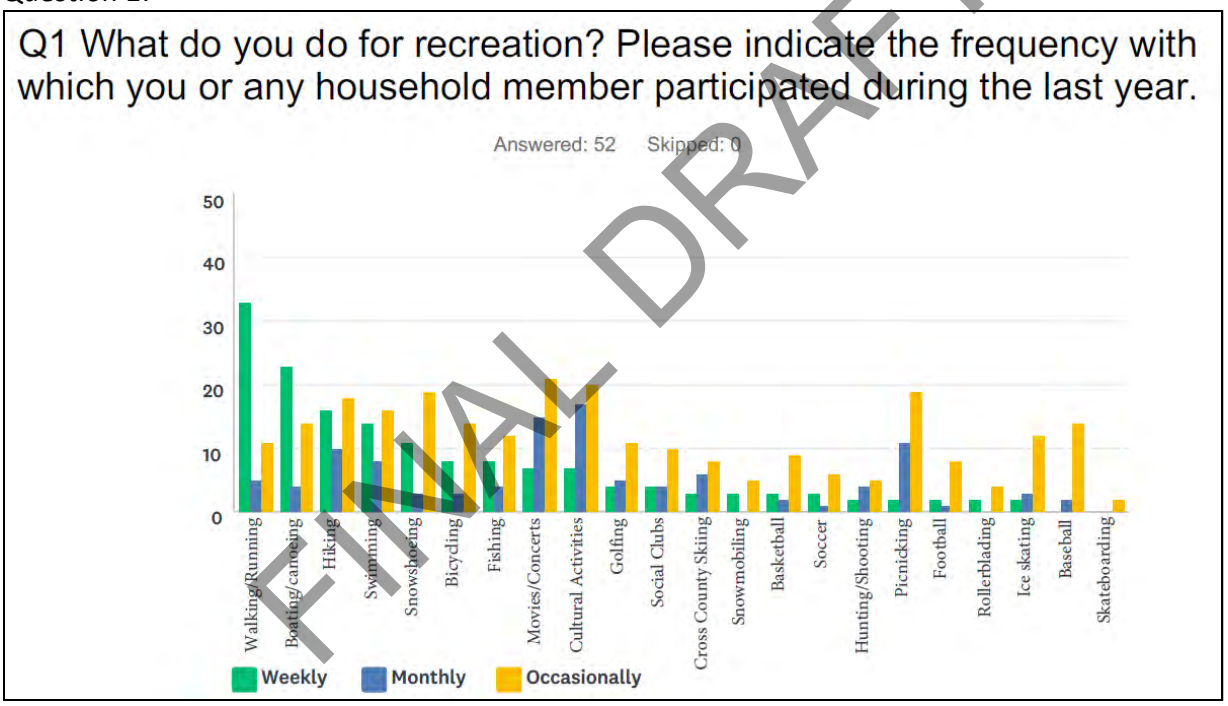
As noted above, the top three Resource Protection Needs were to:

1. Conserve additional units of shoreline along Ashmere Lake, Plunkett Reservoir and other ponds.
2. Conserve additional units of wildlife habitats.
3. Conserve additional units of riverfront areas and streamside buffer zones.

B. Summary of Community's Needs

Drawing upon the 2017-2018 Vision Plan, the OSRP survey and the public forum comments, the community's needs can be accurately assessed. Most of the public survey questions were aimed at trying to determine which recreation needs were most important to residents and to the town as a community.

Question 1:

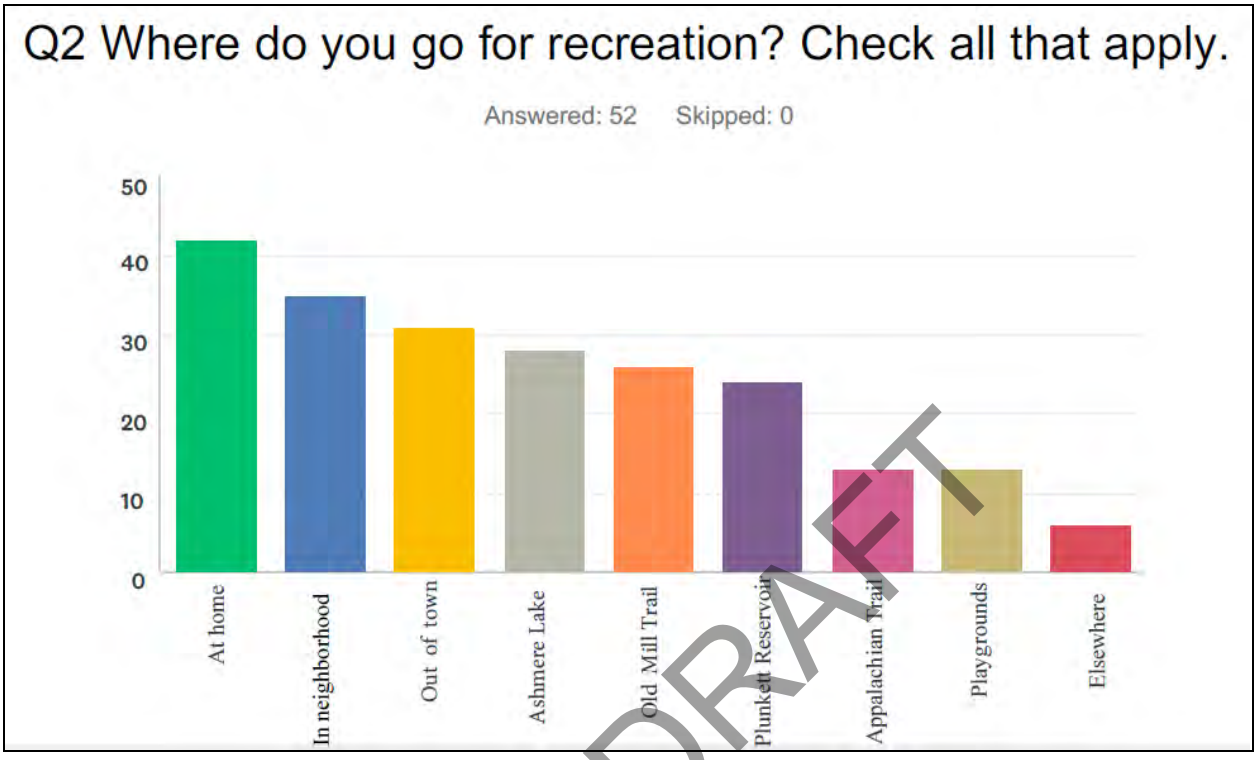


As per this question, the most common recreation activities are:

1. Walking/Running.
2. Boating/Canoeing.
3. Hiking.
4. Swimming.
5. Fishing and Snowshoeing. (tied)

This question was listed first as it seems the most pertinent to residents' lives. As noted here and verified by other questions and forum responses, all five of these activities are recurring themes.

Question 2:

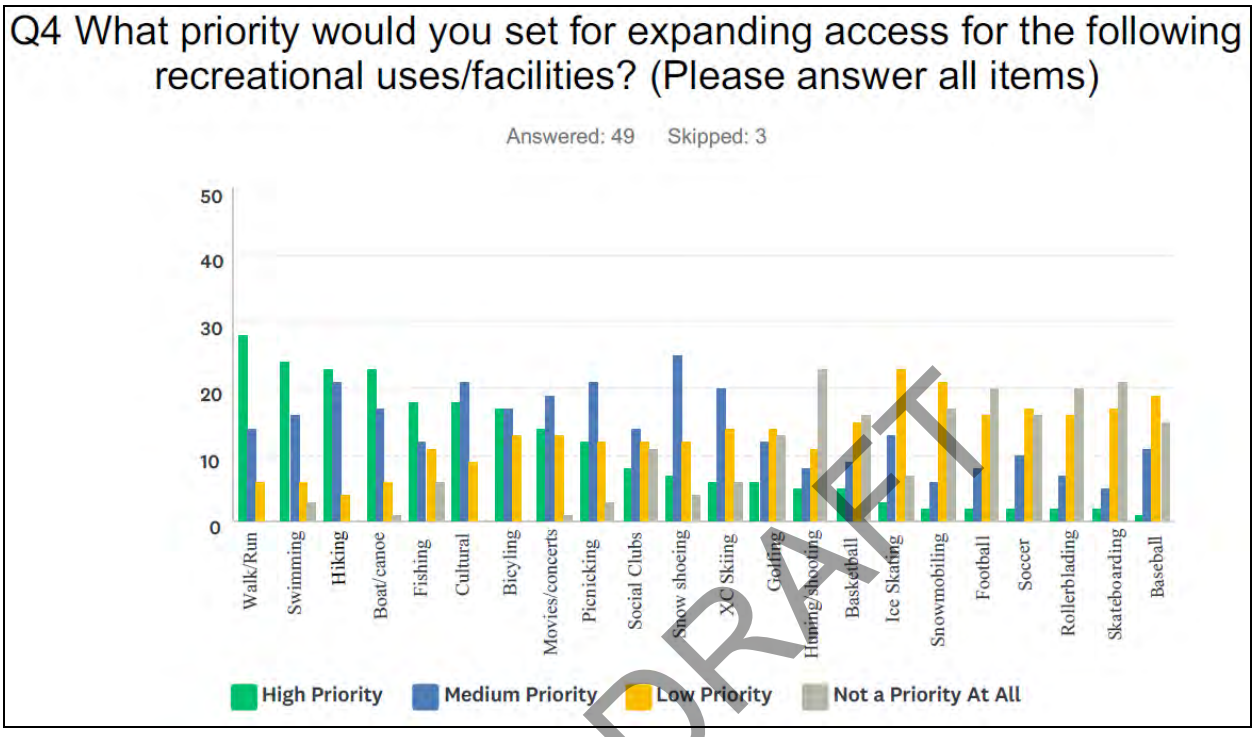


The logical follow-up question to #1 would be to ask where people go for recreation. It's interesting to note that most residents stay within the confines of their own property or neighborhood for outdoor recreation. This makes sense, as Hinsdale is a rural and sparsely populated hill town and many properties are several acres in size. It's also interesting that after that, many residents actually leave town for recreation opportunities. Again, considering the size of Berkshire County relative to population, many residents must drive longer distances to places of recreation. However, the next three locations listed that are within the town and not private property are Ashmere Lake, Old Mill Trail and Plunkett Reservoir. As seen throughout this entire plan, Ashmere Lake and Plunkett Reservoir are the focal points of the town in terms of population concentration and recreational preference. The use of the Old Mill Trail reflects the popularity of hiking as an activity noted in Question 1.

C. Management Needs, Potential Change of Use

Questions 4 and 5 of the survey addressed needs with more specificity. Many of these needs were translated into specific goals and objectives.

Question #4

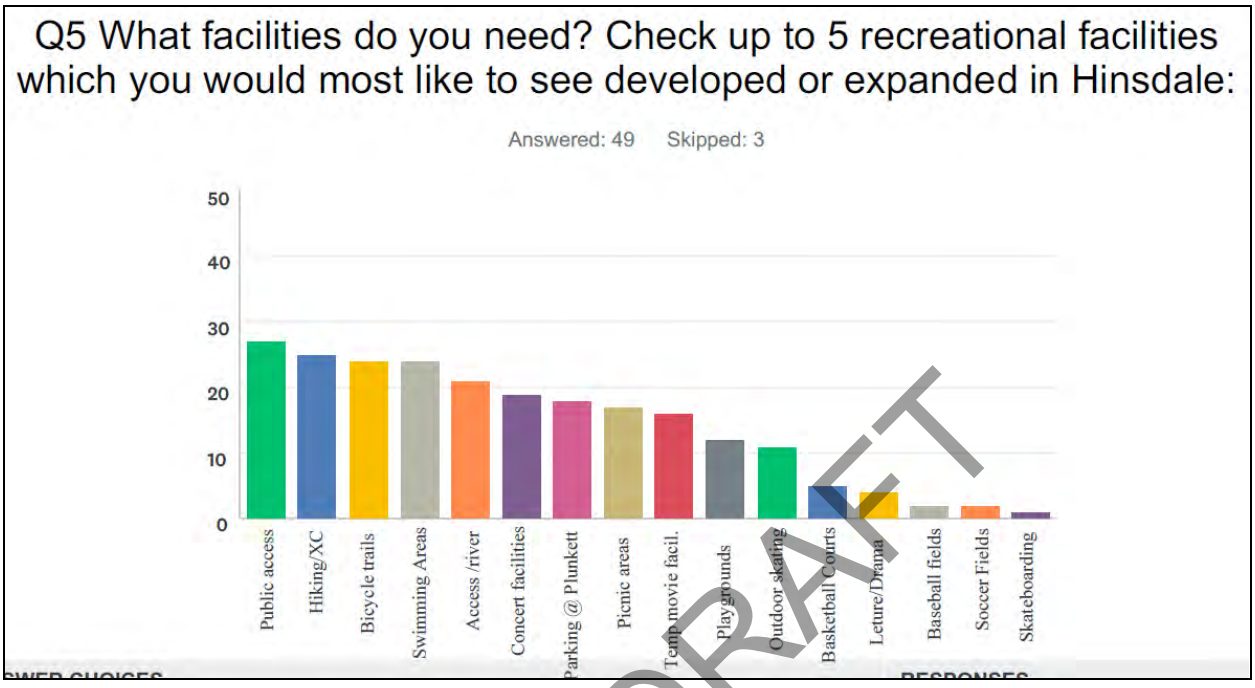


Question 4 asks which types of activities should be *expanded*. The top 5 responses were:

1. Facilities for walking/running.
2. Facilities for Swimming.
3. Facilities for Hiking.
4. Facilities for Boating/Canoeing.
5. Facilities for Fishing.

These responses closely mirror the most popular activities noted in Question 1. Not only do people recreate the most in these ways, they would also like to see facilities expanded for all of them to do more. This conveys the idea that all five of the most popular activities are restricted by a lack of facilities required to do them.

Question # 5



Question 5 is similar to question 4, but the choices become more specific. The top five recreational facilities most needed are:

1. For public access to Ashmere Lake.
2. For hiking and cross-country ski trails.
3. For bicycle trails.
4. For outdoor swimming areas.
5. For access to the Housatonic River.

The entire list of survey questions can be found in Appendix A.

8. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The goals and objectives for this plan were developed through the Open Space and Recreation Committee's survey and public participation at two community forums. The OSRC then met to discuss how these goals should be implemented, listed here as objectives. Finally, the plan was distributed to the Planning Board, Select Board, Conservation Commission, Zoning Board of Appeals, Board of Health and BRPC.

GOAL 1 **Protect, enhance water bodies**

- Objective 1A: Access and amenities at Ashmere Lake
- Objective 1B: Access and amenities at Plunkett Reservoir
- Objective 1C: Access to Housatonic River
- Objective 1D: Access and amenities for Cleveland Reservoir, Belmont Reservoir, Muddy Pond, Tracey Pond and Windsor Reservoir
- Objective 1E: Protect drinking water supplies

GOAL 2 **Create more opportunities for outdoor recreation**

- Objective 2A: Create more opportunities for walking/running
- Objective 2B: Create more opportunities for boating/canoeing
- Objective 2C: Create more opportunities for hiking
- Objective 2D: Create more opportunities for swimming
- Objective 2E: Create more opportunities for snowshoeing
- Objective 2F: Create more opportunities for cycling
- Objective 2G: Create more opportunities for fishing
- Objective 2H: Update the town's playgrounds

GOAL 3 **Protect, enhance wildlife habitats**

- Objective 3A: Protect wildlife from polluting sources
- Objective 3B: The town should consider purchasing land in order to preserve it

GOAL 4 **Acquire town land for open space or easements to lakes, rivers, etc.**

- Objective 4A: Acquire town-owned land for open space or recreation

GOAL 5 **Protect hillsides from development**

- Objective 5A: Consider bylaws to preserve open space
- Objective 5B: Consider adopting Berkshire Scenic Mountain Act

9. FIVE YEAR ACTION PLAN

Using the input from the public forums and the survey results, the OSRC met to determine which goals were of the most immediate priority. These goals were then subdivided into objectives, which were then assigned specific actions. Finally, public input, goals, objectives and actions can be illustrated, to the largest extent possible, on an Action Plan (Map 8). This map illustration serves to easily locate and define many of the most important goals and objectives listed within the plan.

Superscripts designate objective also listed as a goal or action in the Vision Plan

Goal 1: Protect, enhance water bodies				
Objective	Actions	Timing	Organization(s)	Potential Funding
1A: Access and amenities at Ashmere Lake	1A-1: The town should pursue the purchase of lakeshore property. Consider location on the east side of the lake within the Town of Peru, to be jointly used by Hinsdale and Peru residents[3]	Within the next 10 years, or as events warrant	Select Board, Town Administrator, Conservation Commission	Town funds, State grant money
	1A-2: Aggressively pursue the creation of a swimming beach with amenities such as barbeque facilities			
	1A-3: Pursue the creation of a boardwalk and/or floating dock			
	1A-4: Improve boat access and parking			
1B: Access and amenities at Plunkett Reservoir	1B-1: The town should pursue the purchase of lakeshore property.[3]	Within the next 5 years	Select Board, Town Administrator, Conservation Commission	Town funds, State grant money
	1B-2: Aggressively pursue the creation of a swimming beach with amenities such as barbeque facilities			
	1B-3: Pursue the creation of a boardwalk for anglers and/or floating dock			
	1B-4: Improve boat access and parking			

1C: Access to Housatonic River	1C-1: Create a path from downtown Hinsdale to the Housatonic, with canoe launch amenities	Within the next 10 years, or as events warrant	Select Board, Town Administrator, Conservation Commission	Town funds, State grant money
	1C-2: Create paths from streets to sections of the Housatonic where appropriate, which may or may not include canoe launch amenities			
	1C-3: Provide/improve parking near access points along the Housatonic River			
	1C-4: Create a raised bridge on Middlefield Road where it crosses Bennett Brook to allow canoeing. Create path to river and boat launch area	Within the next 5 years		
1D: Access and amenities for Cleveland Reservoir, Belmont Reservoir, Muddy Pond, Tracey Pond and Windsor Reservoir	1D-1: The town should pursue the purchase of lakeshore property (where possible)	Within the next 5 years	Select Board, Town Administrator, Conservation Commission	Town funds, State grant money
	1D-2: Aggressively pursue the creation of a swimming beach with amenities such as barbeque facilities	Within the next 10 years, or as events warrant		
	1D-3: Pursue the creation of a hiking trail around the Cleveland Brook Reservoir[4]	Within the next 5 years		
	1D-4: Pursue the creation of a hiking trail around the Belmont Reservoir, with parking provided as near as possible	Within the next 5 years		
	1D-5: Pursue the creation of a hiking trail and/or boardwalk around Tracey Pond	Within the next 10 years, or as events warrant		
	1D-6: A hiking trail should be created around Muddy Lake, with a dock and/or canoe ramp. Access Road should be restored and parking facilities created	Within the next 5 years		

1E: Protect drinking water supplies	1E-1: Consider zoning bylaw amendment to require increased separation distances between contaminating land uses and lakes, rivers and wetlands	Within the next 10 years, or as events warrant	Select Board, Town Administrator, Conservation Commission	Town funds, State grant money
	1E-2: Consider banning certain types of polluting uses in town, such as landfills or dry cleaning establishments			
	1E-3: Consider reduced salt areas for certain roads near senstive water bodies, such as New Windsor Road north of Maple Street			

Goal 2: Create more opportunities for outdoor recreation				
Objective	Actions	Timing	Organization(s)	Potential Funding
2A: Create more opportunities for walking/running	2A-1: Create a boardwalk through the Hinsdale Flats, with parking facilities available nearby	Within the next 5 years	Select Board, Town Administrator, Conservation Commission	Town funds, State grant money
	2A-2: Build a pedestrian bridge over the railroad crossing on Bullards Crossing Road.	Within the next 10 years, or as events warrant		
	2A-3: Consider widening of roads and/or add pavement markings for walkers			
2B: Create more opportunities for boating/canoeing	2B-1: Create canoe access facilities within/near the Hinsdale Flats, with parking available facilities nearby	Within the next 5 years	Select Board, Town Administrator, Conservation Commission	Town funds, State grant money
	2B-2: See actions 1A-4, 1B-4, 1C-1 - 1C-4 and 1D-6	varies		
2C: Create more opportunities for hiking	2C-1: Create new family-friendly trails throughout town, where appropriate[5]	Within the next 10 years, or as events warrant	Select Board, Town Administrator, Conservation Commission	Town funds, State grant money
	2C-2: Create a new path to link downtown Hinsdale with the Appalachian Trail[5]			
	2C-3: Install signage to mark the location of the Appalachian Trail			
2D: Create more opportunities for swimming	2D-1: See actions 1A-2 and 1B-2	varies	Select Board, Town Administrator, Conservation Commission	Town funds, State grant money
2E: Create more opportunities for snowshoeing	2E-1: Create new snowshowing/hiking trails in areas of scenic value, such as around Cleveland Reservoir	Within the next 10 years, or as events warrant	Select Board, Town Administrator, Conservation Commission	Town funds, State grant money
	2E-2: Approach camp owners to permit snowshoeing while camps are closed[6]			
	2E-3: See action 4A-1			

2F: Create more opportunities for cycling	2F-1: Widen roads where appropriate and/or add bike lane pavement markers	Within the next 10 years, or as events warrant	Select Board, Town Administrator, Conservation Commission	Town funds, State grant money
2G: Create more opportunities for fishing	2G-1: See actions 1A-3 and 1B-3	Within the next 10 years, or as events warrant	Select Board, Town Administrator, Conservation Commission	Town funds, State grant money
2H: Update the town's plagrounds	2H-1: Revamp the playground at the northeast corner of Maple Street & Taylor Road	Within the next 10 years, or as events warrant	Select Board, Town Administrator, Conservation Commission	Town funds, State grant money

Goal 3: Protect, enhance wildlife habitats				
Objective	Actions	Timing	Organization(s)	Potential Funding
3A: Protect wildlife from polluting sources	3A-1: Consider zoning bylaw amendment to require increased separation distances between contaminating land uses and lakes, rivers and wetlands	Within the next 10 years, or as events warrant	Select Board, Town Administrator, Conservation Commission	Town funds, State grant money
	3A-2: Consider banning certain types of polluting uses in town, such as landfills or dry cleaning establishments			
	3A-3: Consider reduced salt areas for certain roads near senstive water bodies, such as New Windsor Road north of Maple Street			
3B: The town should consider purchasing land in order to preserve it	3B-1: Consider purchasing land that is environmentally sensitive or of high recreation value	Within the next 10 years, or as events warrant	Select Board, Town Administrator, Conservation Commission	Town funds, State grant money

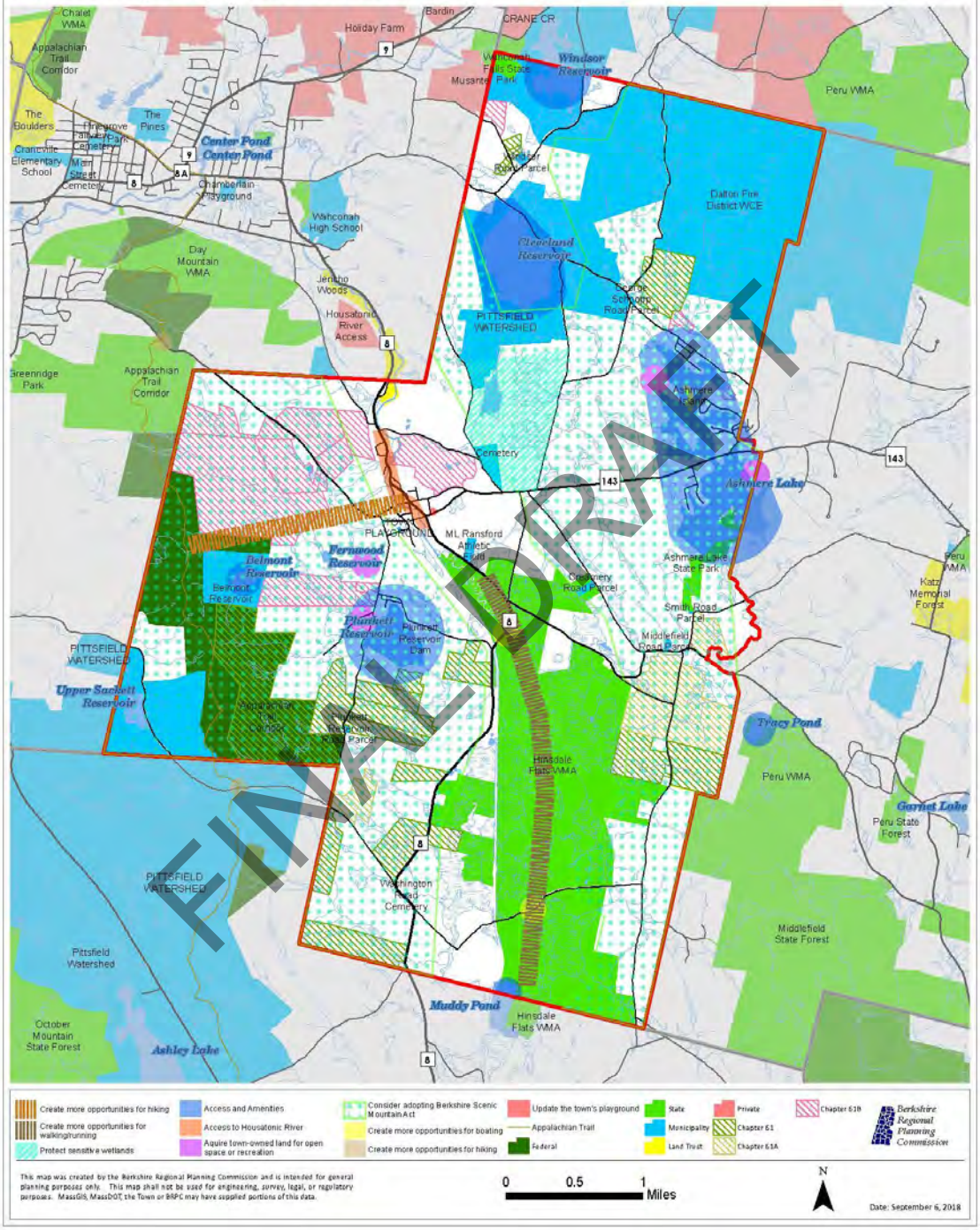
Goal 4: Acquire town land for open space or easements to lakes, rivers, etc.				
Objective	Actions	Timing	Organization(s)	Potential Funding
4A: Acquire town-owned land for open space or recreation	4A-1: If any of the camps become available for sale, the town should consider buying entirely, or a portion thereof, or purchasing, placing a public easement on the property and then selling	Within the next 10 years, or as events warrant	Select Board, Town Administrator, Conservation Commission	Town funds, State grant money
	4A-2: If any other high-recreation value private land becomes available for sale, town should consider purchasing same as 4A-1			

Goal 5: Protect hillsides from development				
Objective	Actions	Timing	Organization(s)	Potential Funding
5A: Consider bylaws to preserve open space	5A-1: Adopt Open Space and Residential Design Bylaw[1]	done	Select Board, Planning Board	DLTA funds
5B: Consider adopting Berkshire Scenic Mountain Act[2]	5B-1: Discuss this topic as zoning bylaw amendment[2]	Within the next 10 years, or as events warrant	Planning Board	DLTA funds

Vision Plan Goals, Objectives & Actions Crossover with OSRP		
Superscript #	Vision Plan Goal #	Vision Plan Text
1	Chapter 10, Goal 2	Pursue an open space residential development zoning bylaw
2	Chapter 10, Goal 2	Explore the Berkshire Scenic Mountains Act or other regulatory means to protect ridgelines from development
3	Chapter 10, Goal 3	Acquire and develop land for a town beach and associated faclities, such as a pavilion
4	Chapter 10, Goal 3	Approach the City of Pittsfield officials to explore opening the city's watershed land and water for recreational use
5	Chapter 10, Goal 3	Evaluate expanding the network of trails in town, possibly creating new trails or linkages to existing trails, other open spaces or recreation areas.
6	Chapter 10, Goal 3	Explore voluntary permitted echanced access on privately-owned land for recreational purposes

Map 8. Action Plan

Hinsdale Open Space & Recreation Plan



10. PUBLIC COMMENTS

The Draft Hinsdale Open Space and Recreation Plan was distributed to the Planning Board, the Chair of the Select Board, the Conservation Commission and the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC). Although not required, the draft plan was also distributed to the Board of Health and the Zoning Board of Appeals. The availability of the plan for public review and comment was announced on the town website, and physical copies of the draft plan were made available at the Town Hall and the Hinsdale Library. Comments received through the public review period were incorporated into a final draft plan. Formal comments received can be found in Appendix C.

11. REFERENCES

US Census (decennial census, American Community Survey, population estimate)

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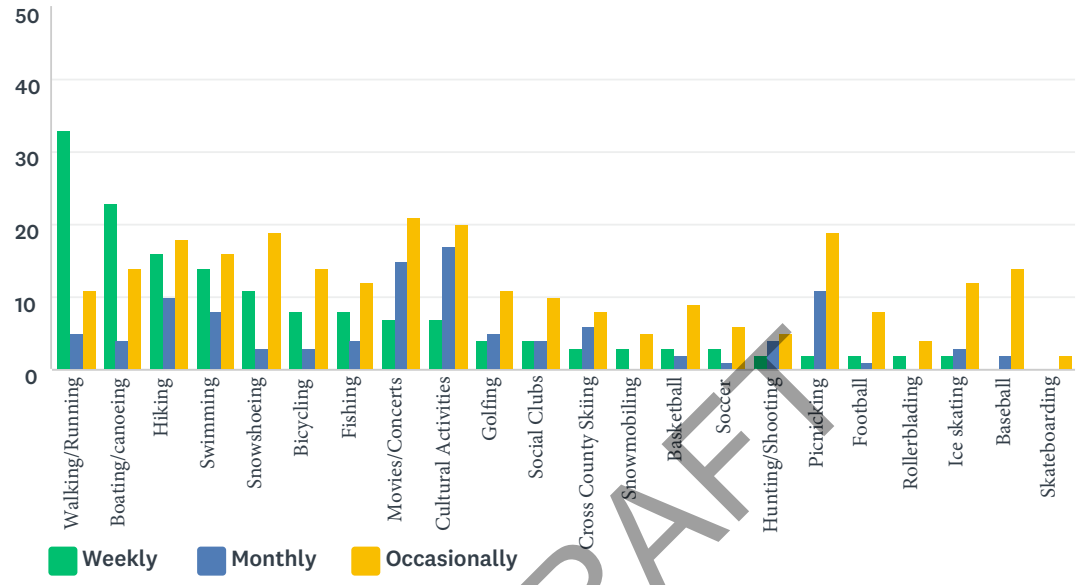
U.S. Dept. of Commerce, 2004. These Old Houses: 2001, Wash., DC, 20233.

APPENDICES:

APPENDIX A: SURVEY RESULTS
APPENDIX B: INPUT FROM TWO PUBLIC FORUMS
APPENDIX C: INPUT DURING PUBLIC REVIEW PERIOD

Q1 What do you do for recreation? Please indicate the frequency with which you or any household member participated during the last year.

Answered: 52 Skipped: 0

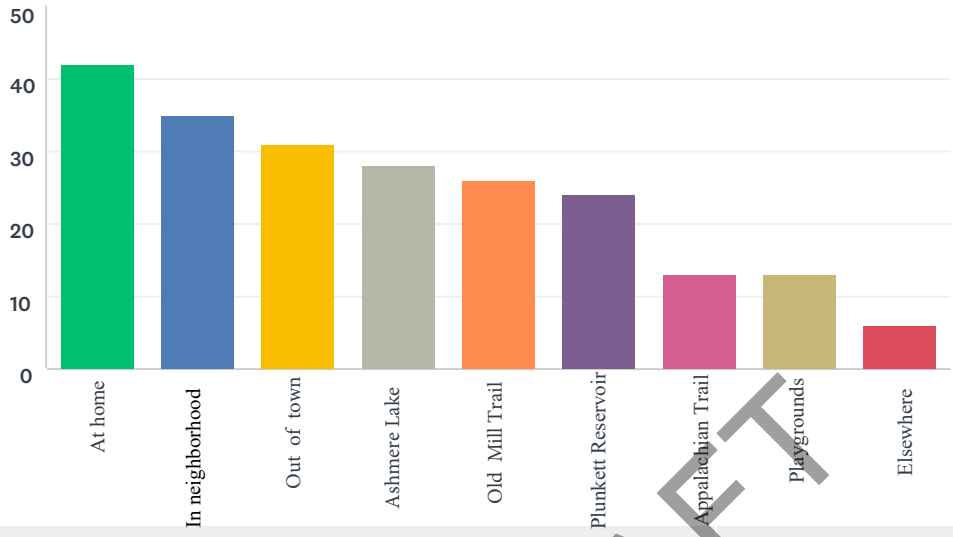


	WEEKLY	MONTHLY	OCCASSIONALLY	TOTAL
Walking/Running	67.35% 33	10.20% 5	22.45% 11	49
Boating/Canoeing	56.10% 23	9.76% 4	34.15% 14	41
Hiking	36.36% 16	22.73% 10	40.91% 18	44
Swimming	36.84% 14	21.05% 8	42.11% 16	38
Showshoeing	33.33% 11	9.09% 3	57.58% 19	33
Bicycling	32.00% 8	12.00% 3	56.00% 14	25
Fishing	33.33% 8	16.67% 4	50.00% 12	24
Movies/Concerts	16.28% 7	34.88% 15	48.84% 21	43
Cultural Activities	15.91% 7	38.64% 17	45.45% 20	44
Golfing	20.00% 4	25.00% 5	55.00% 11	20
Social Clubs	22.22% 4	22.22% 4	55.56% 10	18
XC Skiing	17.65% 3	35.29% 6	47.06% 8	17
Snowmobiling	37.50% 3	0.00% 0	62.50% 5	8

Basketball	21.43% 3	14.29% 2	64.29% 9	14
Soccer	30.00% 3	10.00% 1	60.00% 6	10
Hunting/Shooting	18.18% 2	36.36% 4	45.45% 5	11
Picnicking	6.25% 2	34.38% 11	59.38% 19	32
Football	18.18% 2	9.09% 1	72.73% 8	11
Rollerblading	33.33% 2	0.00% 0	66.67% 4	6
Ice Skating	11.76% 2	17.65% 3	70.59% 12	17
Baseball	0.00% 0	12.50% 2	87.50% 14	16
Skateboarding	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	100.00% 2	2

Q2 Where do you go for recreation? Check all that apply.

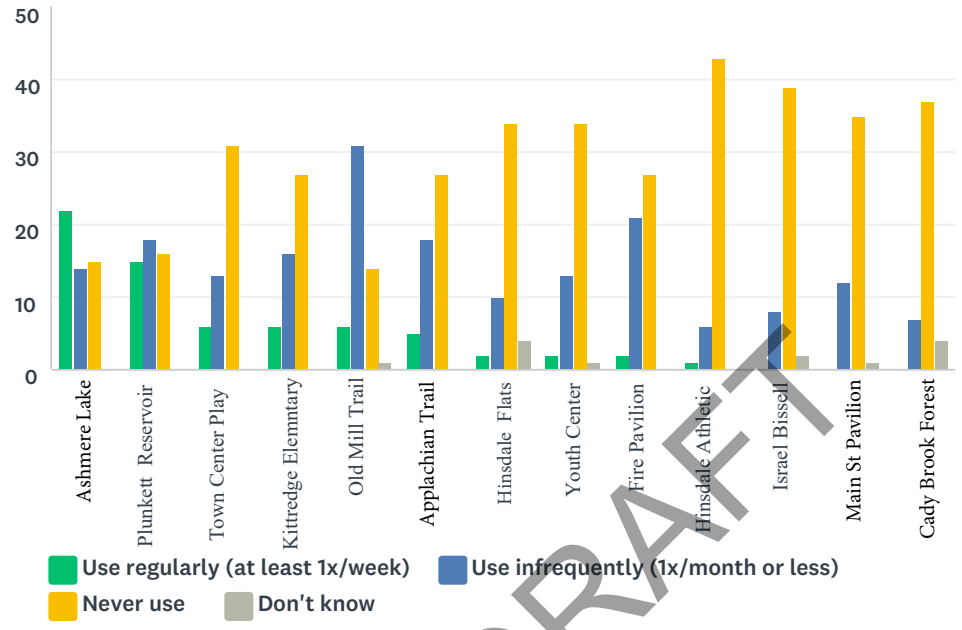
Answered: 52 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
At home	80.77%	42
in neighborhood	67.31%	35
out of town	59.62%	31
Ashmere Lake	53.85%	28
Old Mill Trail	50.00%	26
Plunkett Reservoir	46.15%	24
Appalachian Trail	25.00%	13
Either of the town's playgrounds	25.00%	13
Elsewhere in town	11.54%	6
Total Respondents: 52		

Q3 How often do you or your family use the following open spaces, recreational areas, and historic resources?

Answered: 52 Skipped: 0

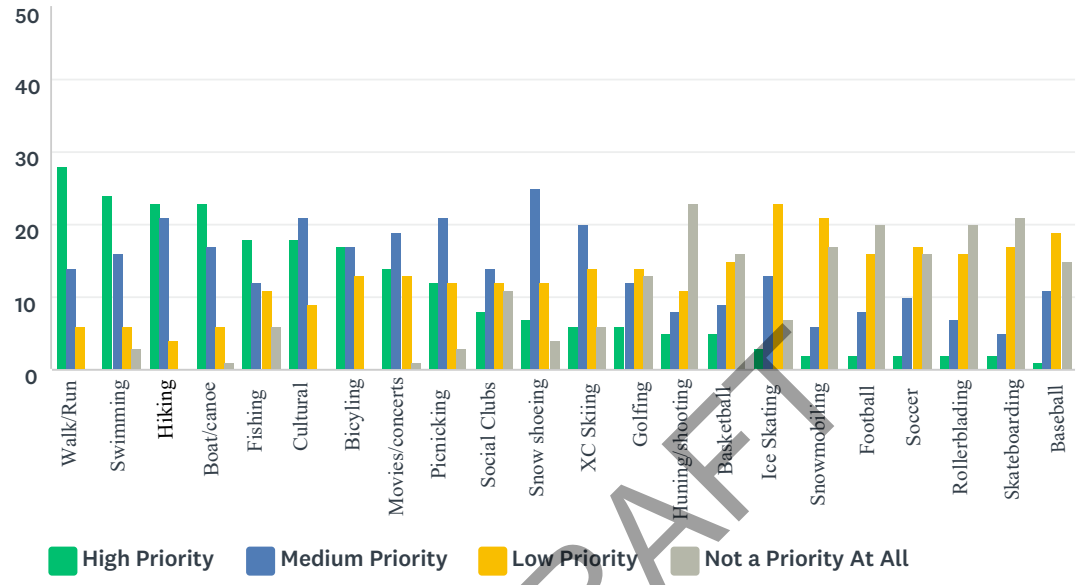


	USE REGULARLY (AT LEAST 1X/WEEK)	USE INFREQUENTLY (1X/MONTH OR LESS)	NEVER USE	DON'T KNOW	TOTAL RESPONDENTS
Ashmere Lake	43.14% 22	27.45% 14	29.41% 15	0.00% 0	51
Plunkett Reservoir	30.61% 15	36.73% 18	32.65% 16	0.00% 0	49
Town Center Playground	12.00% 6	26.00% 13	62.00% 31	0.00% 0	50
Kittredge Elementary School Playground	12.24% 6	32.65% 16	55.10% 27	0.00% 0	49
Old Mill Trail	11.54% 6	59.62% 31	26.92% 14	1.92% 1	52
Appalachian Trail	10.00% 5	36.00% 18	54.00% 27	0.00% 0	50
Hinsdale Flats	4.00% 2	20.00% 10	68.00% 34	8.00% 4	50
Hinsdale Youth Center / Old Town Hall	4.08% 2	26.53% 13	69.39% 34	2.04% 1	49
Fire Association Pavilion	4.00% 2	42.00% 21	54.00% 27	0.00% 0	50
Hinsdale Athletic Field	2.00% 1	12.00% 6	86.00% 43	0.00% 0	50
Israel Bissell Homestead	0.00% 0	16.33% 8	79.59% 39	4.08% 2	49
Main Street Pavilion	0.00% 0	25.00% 12	72.92% 35	2.08% 1	48

Cady Brook Forestland (New Windsor Road)	0.00% 0	14.58% 7	77.08% 37	8.33% 4	48

Q4 What priority would you set for expanding access for the following recreational uses/facilities? (Please answer all items)

Answered: 49 Skipped: 3

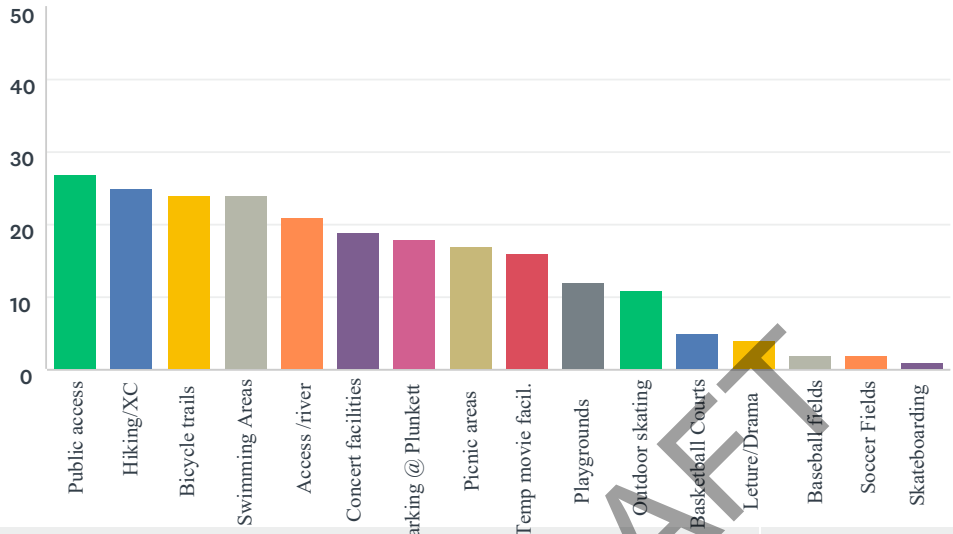


	HIGH PRIORITY	MEDIUM PRIORITY	LOW PRIORITY	NOT A PRIORITY AT ALL	TOTAL
Walking/Running	58.33% 28	29.17% 14	12.50% 6	0.00% 0	48
Swimming	48.98% 24	32.65% 16	12.24% 6	6.12% 3	49
Hiking	47.92% 23	43.75% 21	8.33% 4	0.00% 0	48
Boating/Canoeing	48.94% 23	36.17% 17	12.77% 6	2.13% 1	47
Fishing	38.30% 18	25.53% 12	23.40% 11	12.77% 6	47
Cultural Activities	37.50% 18	43.75% 21	18.75% 9	0.00% 0	48
Bicycling	36.17% 17	36.17% 17	27.66% 13	0.00% 0	47
Movies/Concerts	29.79% 14	40.43% 19	27.66% 13	2.13% 1	47
Picnicking	25.00% 12	43.75% 21	25.00% 12	6.25% 3	48
Social Clubs	17.78% 8	31.11% 14	26.67% 12	24.44% 11	45
Showshoeing	14.58% 7	52.08% 25	25.00% 12	8.33% 4	48
XC Skiing	13.04% 6	43.48% 20	30.43% 14	13.04% 6	46
Golfing	13.33% 6	26.67% 12	31.11% 14	28.89% 13	45

Hunting/Shooting	10.64% 5	17.02% 8	23.40% 11	48.94% 23	47
Basketball	11.11% 5	20.00% 9	33.33% 15	35.56% 16	45
Ice Skating	6.52% 3	28.26% 13	50.00% 23	15.22% 7	46
Snowmobiling	4.35% 2	13.04% 6	45.65% 21	36.96% 17	46
Football	4.35% 2	17.39% 8	34.78% 16	43.48% 20	46
Soccer	4.44% 2	22.22% 10	37.78% 17	35.56% 16	45
Rollerblading	4.44% 2	15.56% 7	35.56% 16	44.44% 20	45
Skateboarding	4.44% 2	11.11% 5	37.78% 17	46.67% 21	45
Baseball	2.17% 1	23.91% 11	41.30% 19	32.61% 15	46

Q5 What facilities do you need? Check up to 5 recreational facilities which you would most like to see developed or expanded in Hinsdale:

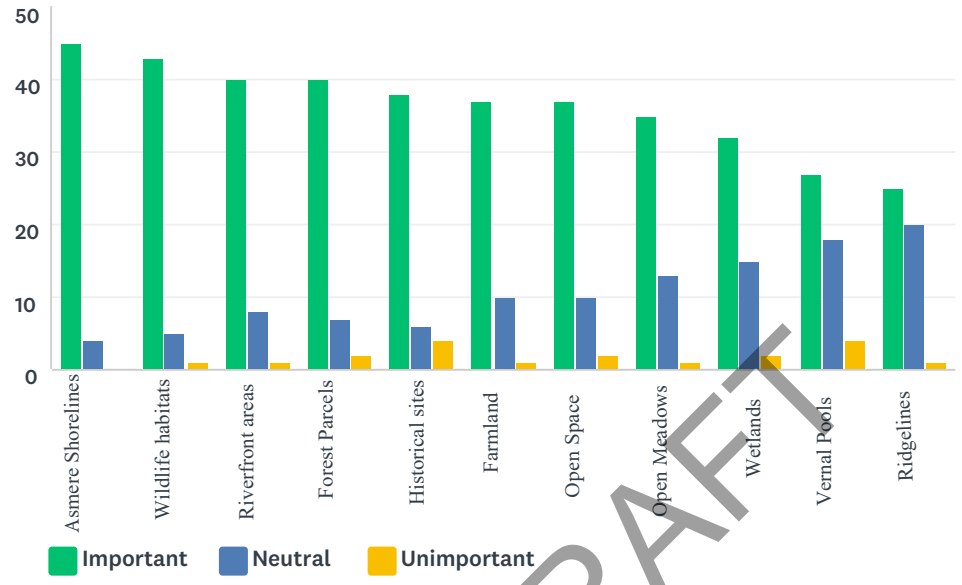
Answered: 49 Skipped: 3



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
More public access to Lake Ashmere	55.10%	27
Hiking and XC Skiing trails	51.02%	25
Bicycle trails	48.98%	24
Outdoor Swimming area(s)	48.98%	24
Access to or along Housatonic River	42.86%	21
Concert facilities	38.78%	19
Improved parking at Plunkett Lake	36.73%	18
Picnic/BBQ area(s)	34.69%	17
Seasonal (temporary) movie facilities	32.65%	16
Playgrounds	24.49%	12
Outdoor Ice Skating area	22.45%	11
Basketball courts	10.20%	5
Lecture/drama facilities	8.16%	4
Baseball/Softball fields	4.08%	2
Soccer fields	4.08%	2
Skateboarding	2.04%	1
Total Respondents: 49		

Q6 How important is it to conserve additional units of the following open space and historic resources in Hinsdale?

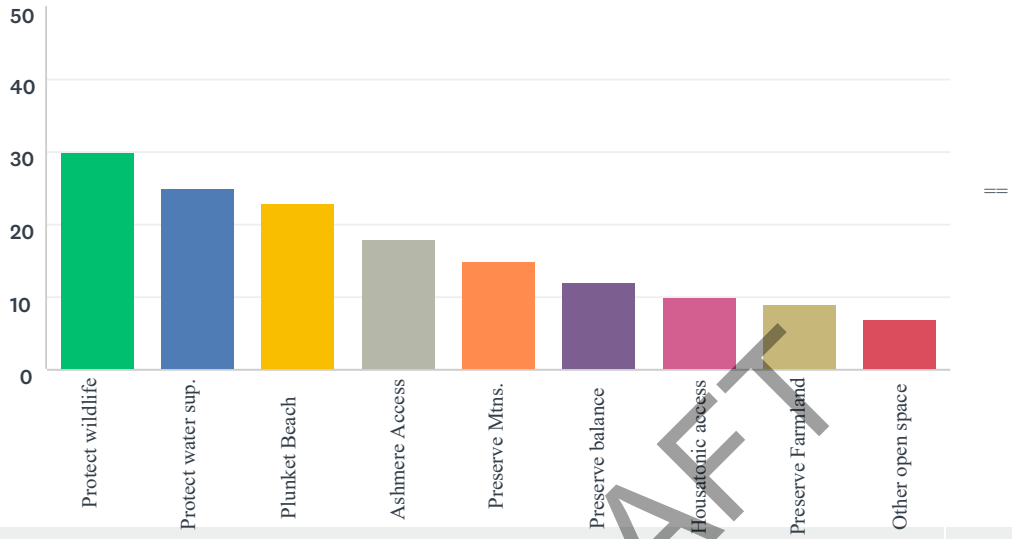
Answered: 49 Skipped: 3



	IMPORTANT	NEUTRAL	UNIMPORTANT	TOTAL
Shorelines along Ashmere Lake, Plunkett Reservoir, or other ponds	91.84% 45	8.16% 4	0.00% 0	49
Wildlife habitats	87.76% 43	10.20% 5	2.04% 1	49
Riverfront areas and streamside buffer zones	81.63% 40	16.33% 8	2.04% 1	49
Forest parcels	81.63% 40	14.29% 7	4.08% 2	49
Historic sites or buildings	79.17% 38	12.50% 6	8.33% 4	48
Farmland	77.08% 37	20.83% 10	2.08% 1	48
Open space for recreational needs	75.51% 37	20.41% 10	4.08% 2	49
Open meadows	71.43% 35	26.53% 13	2.04% 1	49
Wetlands	65.31% 32	30.61% 15	4.08% 2	49
Vernal pools	55.10% 27	36.73% 18	8.16% 4	49
Ridgelines	54.35% 25	43.48% 20	2.17% 1	46

Q7 What is most important? Please check the 3 most important conservation and/or recreation issues for the Town of Hinsdale:

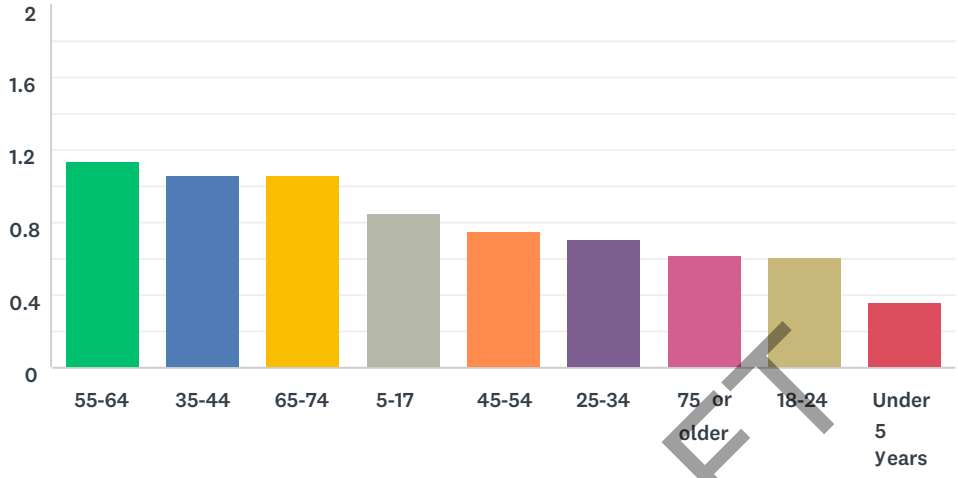
Answered: 49 Skipped: 3



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Protect wildlife corridors and habitats	61.22%	30
Protect drinking water supplies	51.02%	25
Revitalize/Improve the Town Beach at Plunkett Reservoir	46.94%	23
Provide greater public access to Ashmere Lake	36.73%	18
Preserve mountains/hillsides from development	30.61%	15
Preserve the aesthetic balance between natural and man-made environments	24.49%	12
Make the Housatonic River more accessible	20.41%	10
Preserve farmland	18.37%	9
Preserve other open spaces	14.29%	7
Total Respondents: 49		

Q8 How many members of your household fall into the following age brackets? (please include yourself)

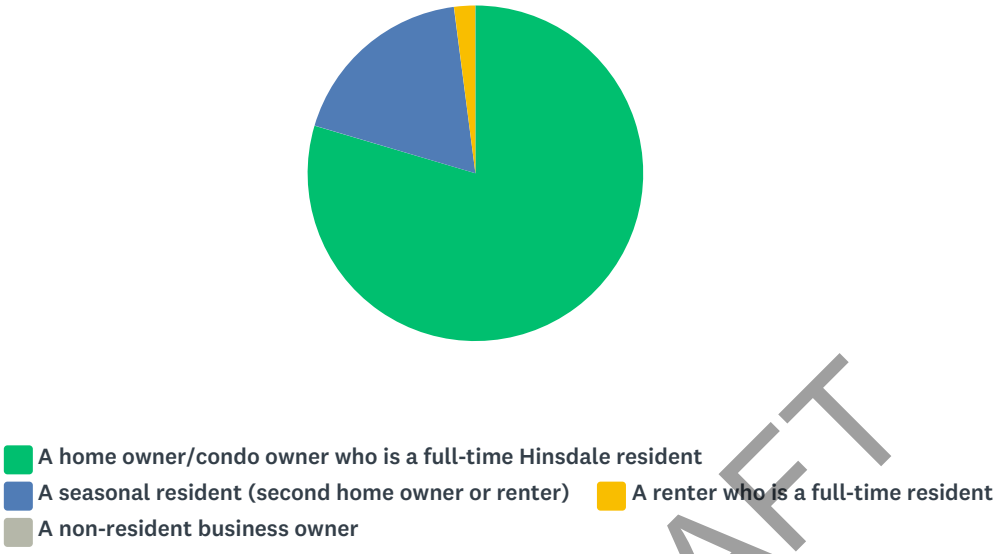
Answered: 48 Skipped: 4



ANSWER CHOICES	AVERAGE NUMBER	TOTAL NUMBER	RESPONSES
55-64 years old	1	32	28
35-44 years old	1	18	17
65-74 years old	1	19	18
5-17 years old	1	17	20
45-54 years old	1	15	20
25-34 years old	1	12	17
75 years or older	1	8	13
18-24 years old	1	11	18
Under 5 years old	0	5	14
Total Respondents: 48			

Q9 What is your residency? Are you:

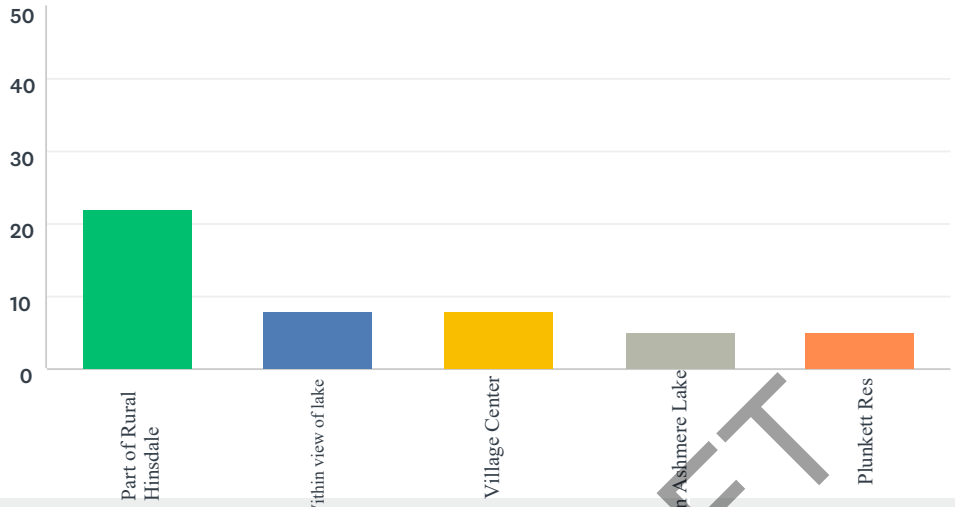
Answered: 49 Skipped: 3



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
A home owner/condo owner who is a full-time Hinsdale resident	79.59%	39
A seasonal resident (second home owner or renter)	18.37%	9
A renter who is a full-time resident	2.04%	1
A non-resident business owner	0.00%	0
TOTAL		49

Q10 What is your location? Are you:

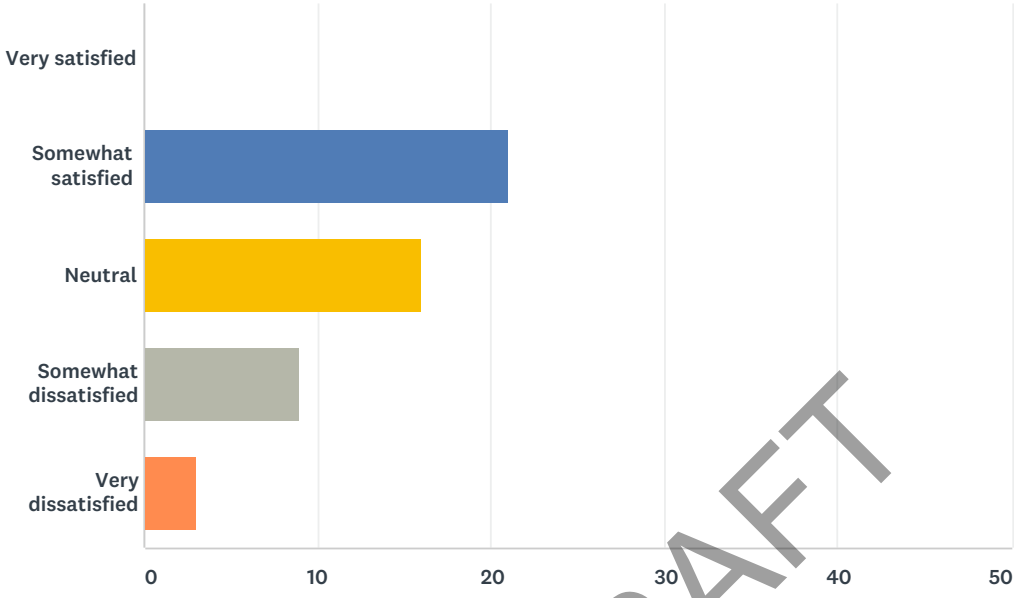
Answered: 48 Skipped: 4



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Part of rural Hinsdale	45.83%	22
Within view of Ashmere Lake	16.67%	8
In the Village (center of town)	16.67%	8
On Ashmere Lake	10.42%	5
On Plunkett Reservoir	10.42%	5
TOTAL		48

Q11 How satisfied are you with existing recreation areas in Hinsdale?

Answered: 49 Skipped: 3



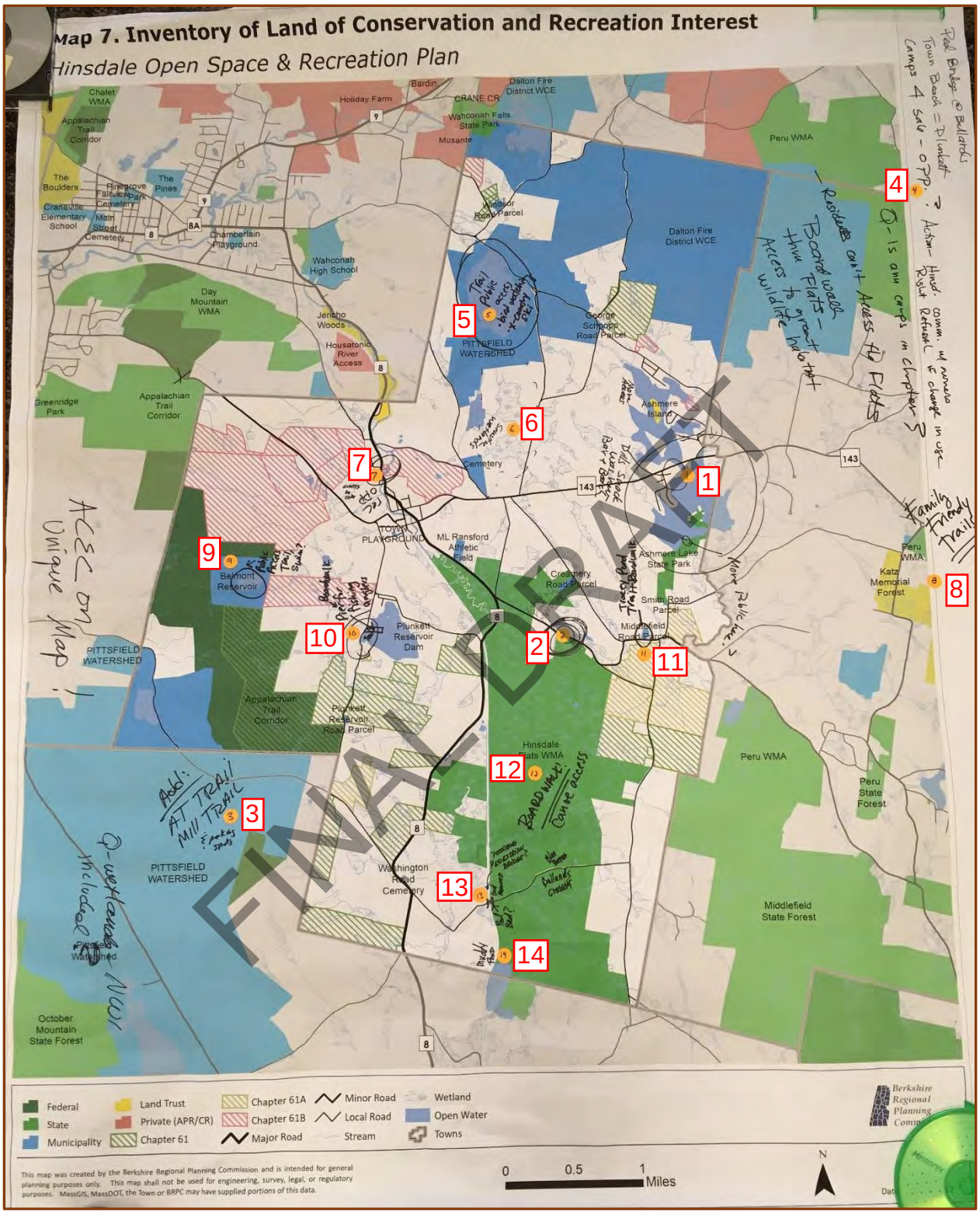
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Very satisfied	0.00%	0
Somewhat satisfied	42.86%	21
Neutral	32.65%	16
Somewhat dissatisfied	18.37%	9
Very dissatisfied	6.12%	3
TOTAL		49

APPENDIX B – NOTES FROM PUBLIC FORUMS

AUGUST 28th & 29th, 2018

Forum Notes: (correlate to numbers on the map below)

1. Ashmere Lake. Aggressively pursue the creation of a swimming beach with amenities such as barbeque facilities, a boardwalk and/or a floating dock. Improve boat access and parking. The town should pursue the purchase of lakeshore property. Consider location on the east side of the lake within the Town of Peru, to be jointly used by Hinsdale and Peru residents.
2. Create a raised bridge on Middlefield Road where it crosses over Bennett Brook to allow canoe crossing. Parking facilities should be made available in this location.
3. Appalachian Trail. Install signage in locations where the AT crosses local, paved roads. Create a new trail that will link the AT to downtown Hinsdale, perhaps passing by Belmont Reservoir, using existing gravel road.
4. If any of the camps become available for sale, the town should seriously investigate their purchase or a portion thereof for open space and recreation uses.
5. Cleveland Brook Reservoir. The town should approach City of Pittsfield to allow the creation of a hiking trail around the reservoir. (This was listed as goal #3 in Chapter 10 of the Vision Plan).
6. Preserve sensitive wetlands bounded by Maple Street, New Windsor Road and Old Dalton Road.
7. Create access to Housatonic River, via a small path and/or gravel area for launching small boats.
8. Create new family-friendly trails at different locations throughout town.
9. Belmont Reservoir. Create a hiking trail around the reservoir. Although vehicle access is not permitted at the reservoir, it should be provided as close as possible to the reservoir.
10. Plunkett Reservoir. Aggressively pursue the creation of a swimming beach, a boardwalk, pier for anglers, improved parking and access. The town should pursue the purchase of lakeshore property.
11. Tracey Pond. Pursue the creation of a trail and/or boardwalk around the pond.
12. Hinsdale Flats WMA. Create a boardwalk/hiking trail through the flats. Canoe access should be provided by a boat ramp. Parking amenities should be provided at main access point(s).
13. Bullards Crossing Road pedestrian bridge. The vehicle bridge was removed that crossed over RR tracks. This bridge could be replaced with cheaper pedestrian bridge, arched high enough to clear the height of trains. This pedestrian bridge then allows hiking access to Hinsdale Flats WMA from the west.
14. Muddy Pond. A hiking trail should be created around the lake, with a dock and/or canoe ramp. The access road should be restored and parking facilities created.


Map 7. Inventory of Land of Conservation and Recreation Interest
Hinsdale Open Space & Recreation Plan
FINAL DRAFT
Chalet WMA
Appalachian Trail Corridor
Holiday Farm
Bardin
CRANE CR
Dalton Fire District WCE
Wahconah Falls State Park
Musante
Peru WMA
The Boulders
Pinegrove Fairview Park
The Pines
Cemetery
Cranville Elementary School
Main Street Cemetery
Chamberlain Playground
Windsor Road Parcel
Wahconah High School
Day Mountain WMA
Jericho Woods
Housatonic River Access
George Schnopp Road Parcel
PITTSFIELD WATERSHED
Greenridge Park
Appalachian Trail Corridor
Ashmere Island
Cemetery
Town PLAYGROUND
ML Ransford Athletic Field
Ashmere Lake State Park
Creamery Road Parcel
Smith Road Parcel
Middlefield Road Parcel
Katz Memorial Forest
Belmont Reservoir
Plunkett Reservoir Dam
Plunkett Reservoir Road Parcel
Hinsdale Flats WMA
Washington Road Cemetery
Middlefield State Forest
Peru State Forest
October Mountain State Forest
Federal
State
Municipality
Land Trust
Private (APR/CR)
Chapter 61
Chapter 61A
Chapter 61B
Major Road
Minor Road
Local Road
Stream
Wetland
Open Water
Towns
Berkshire Regional Planning Comm
This map was created by the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission and is intended for general planning purposes only. This map shall not be used for engineering, survey, legal, or regulatory purposes. MassGIS, MassDOT, the Town or BRPC may have supplied portions of this data.
0 0.5 1 Miles
N

Town of Hinsdale

Select Board Chair
39 South Street
Hinsdale, MA 01235
Town.Administrator@hinsdalema.gov
413-655-2300, x355

September 18, 2018

Christopher Gruba
Senior Planner
Berkshire Regional Planning Commission
1 Fenn Street, Suite 201
Pittsfield, MA 01201-6629

Dear Christopher:

I write to thank you and the committee for your efforts and execution of Hinsdale's updated Open Space and Recreation Plan. After reading through the document the past few days, I have found the report to be comprehensive, progressive, and well worth the effort.

The Hinsdale Select Board endorses the document and looks forward to working through the plan over the next several years.

Thanks again,

Sincerely,

Harvey Drosehn
Select Board Chair

Cc: Select Board
Town Administrator

Christopher Gruba

From: Planning <Planning@hinsdalema.gov>
Sent: Monday, September 17, 2018 3:26 PM
To: Christopher Gruba
Cc: vivm62@gmail.com
Subject: RE: Open Space & Rec Plan - Comments

Chris—The Hinsdale Planning Board is in complete agreement with the goals and objectives set forth by the Open Space Plan. As you know the town, through the actions of this board has enacted an OSRD bylaw which encourages open space to be set aside under specific guidelines.
Going forward we will work with the Open Space Plan to guide any development or recreational planning.

Richard Scialabba, Chair
Hinsdale Planning Board