



WESTBROOK
RECREATION AND
CONSERVATION
COMMISSION
STRATEGIC PLAN
2021 - 2024

To identify vision and priorities; clarify administrative needs; provide guidance on the management of public open space funds; and outline an implementation strategy for the short-term goals of the Recreation and Conservation Commission

City of Westbrook Recreation and Conservation Commission

This strategic plan is presented on behalf of the Westbrook Recreation and Conservation Commission. The Recreation and Conservation Commission is comprised of 7-members and 3-associate members who are appointed by the Mayor and approved by City Council.

2021 Members

Nathaniel Dyer - Paul Drinan - Matthew Brunner
Aubrey Belanger – Andrew Krantz - Warren Lain - Amanda Lessard
Kevin Price - Philip Spiller Jr - Bruce Wallingford

WRCC Mission Statement

The Westbrook Recreation and Conservation Commission seeks to protect, conserve, and promote open space within and through the City of Westbrook.

We seek to connect people to the environment to:

- Enhance the social and cultural well-being of Westbrook residents;
- Protect the City's outstanding natural resources; and
- Increase access to natural recreation.

Westbrook Recreation and Conservation Strategic Plan 2021 – 2024

Introduction

Parks, open space, and recreational facilities are vital components to any city and provide a sense of purpose and well-being to its residents. Open spaces are especially critical in urban environments both in providing access to the natural environment and in providing a safe space for residents of all ages to play. Beyond the positive influence on the mental and physical health of individuals who directly utilize them, public parks and open spaces provide a social benefit to the greater community. Enhancements to the visual quality and desirability of the City can positively influence property values and the economic vitality of a community. Because of this, the Westbrook Recreation and Conservation Commission (WRCC) is tasked with the management of public open space and open space development fees with the objective to provide opportunities for an outdoor experience to all members of the community.

As outlined in Chapter 7 Article 3 of the City Code of Ordinances, the role of the WRCC is to oversee public open space for the purpose of conservation, recreation, scenic beauty, preservation of wildlife habitat and affiliated educational uses. Additionally, the Commission provides an advisory role to the City for the development of open space as required by the Planning Board for projects seeking site plan or subdivision approval. Lastly, the Commission acts as the steward for the investment of funds that are required by developers as a fee-in-lieu of providing adequate open space development in a manner that satisfies the goals of the City. Recently, the WRCC has approved funding requests from the City of Westbrook School Department, nonprofits, land trusts and private residents. Any project that can



demonstrate the benefit to the residents of Westbrook by either providing for, or improvement of, access to recreation and/or conservation is eligible for to apply for funding through WRCC.

This strategic plan identifies the values and priorities of WRCC during the timeframe of 2021 – 2024 and provides a framework to achieving the short-term goals of the City as identified by members of the WRCC.

Open Space

Existing parks and recreational facilities within the City of Westbrook are predominantly concentrated in the urban downtown area. Conservation lands are largely located northerly of the urban core between the Bridgton and Methodist road corridors. Scenic views or roadways are not currently identified within the City.

Per Section §335-13.3.H of the Westbrook Code of Ordinances, reservation of land for parks, playgrounds or conservation is required as part of subdivision review. The amount of required open space is dependent on the size and scope of the subdivision. The intent of this Ordinance is for a development to create useable and enticing spaces for public and/or residents of the development to recreate outdoors. As part of a subdivision application, the submission of an Open Space Plan to demonstrate compliance with this standard is required. The Recreation and Conservation Commission is an advisory board to review a development's open space plan to provide a recommendation to the Planning Board for consideration prior to final approval. Approved open space plans are on file in the Planning Department.

Where a development is unable to provide for the required open space, a fee in lieu may be paid for the purpose of further improving recreation in an area that benefits the future residents of the proposed development. The Recreation and Conservation Commission oversees the management of all open space development fees. When considering funding requests or project proposals, priority shall be given to applications that demonstrate they meet/address one or more of the values or goals identified in this plan.

Values of the WRCC Strategic Plan

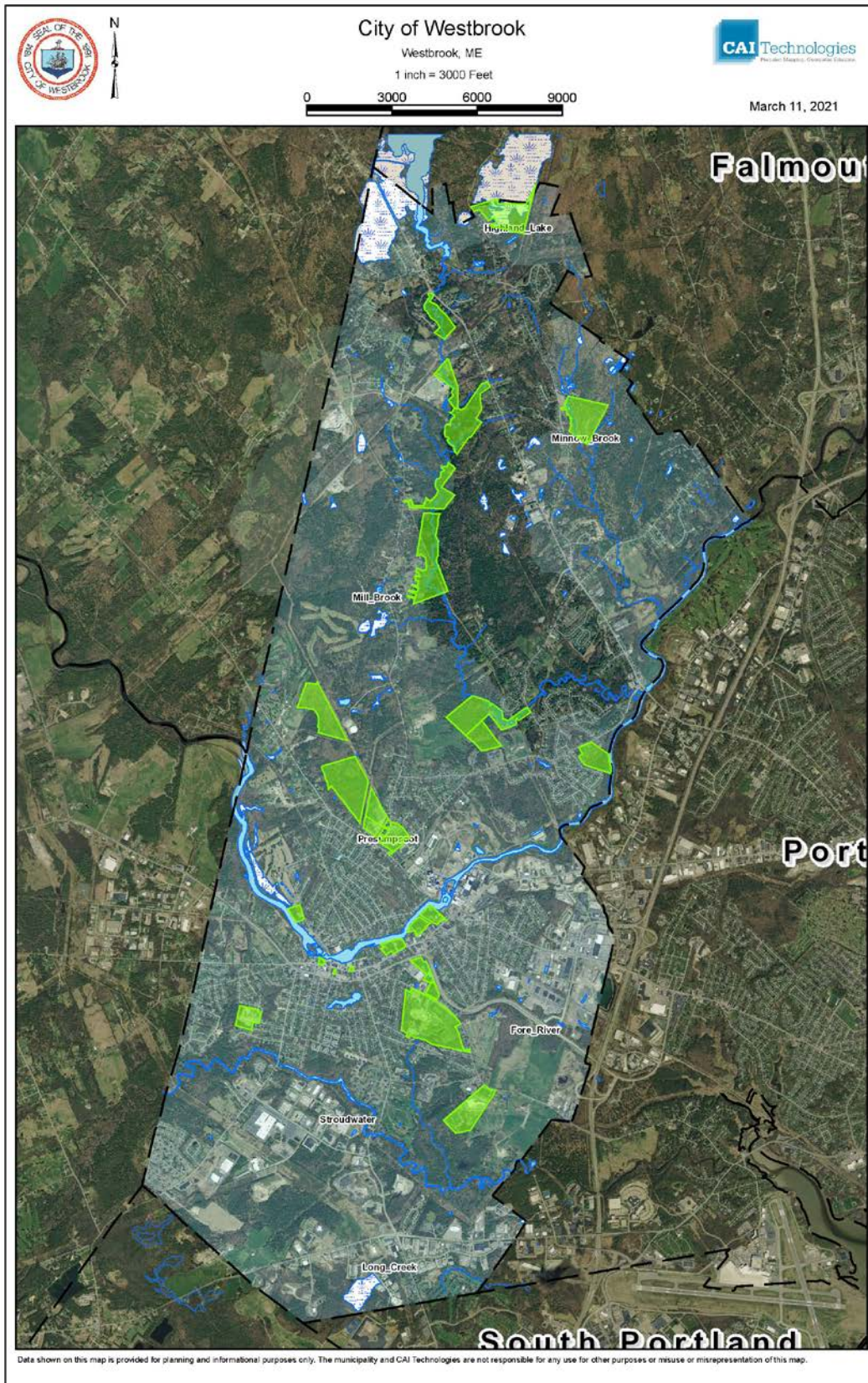
The following values were determined through workshops with the Recreation and Conservation Commission, are of equal importance to the Commission and are listed in no particular order.

The Westbrook Recreation and Conservation Commission shall strive to support projects, proposals, and initiatives that:

1. Build and strengthen community and stakeholder partnerships.
2. Focus on trail connectivity and expansion of existing trail networks.
3. Create and provide a range of recreational experiences to maximize community access and engagement.
4. Ensure existing recreational parks, infrastructure and trails are maintained and accessible.
5. Support land conservation for environmental protection, public use, and community well-being.



Public Areas for Recreation/Conservation





<p>Public Parks and Playgrounds</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Westbrook Commons b. Saccarappa Park c. Riverbank Park d. Warren Memorial Sculpture Garden e. Bicentennial Park – Dog Park & Skate Park f. Congin Elementary School g. Saccarappa Elementary School h. Canal Elementary School i. Walker Field (*Privately owned with public access) 	<p>Multi-Use Fields and Recreation Facilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Community Center b. Westbrook Middle School Track and Fields c. Westbrook High School d. Stroudwater Tennis Facility e. Cornelia Warren Field f. 58 Lincoln Street Ice Rink g. East Bridge Street Skating Rink & Ball Field h. Stroudwater Street Ice Skating Rink i. Fraser Softball Fields j. Westbrook Little League Complex (*Privately owned with public access)
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<p>Water Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Presumpscot River b. Stroudwater River c. Mill Brook d. Minnow Broow e. Highland Lake f. Beaver Pond 	<p>Access to Waterways</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Ash Street Boat Ramp b. Brown Street Boat Ramp c. Lincoln Street Boat Launch d. Riverbank Park Boat Ramp e. Foster Street Boat Launch *needs repair f. Beaver Pond Boat Launch
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<p>Pedestrian Paths and Trails</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. City Sidewalks b. Presumpscot River Trail c. Sebago to the Sea Trail d. City Forest e. Suckfish Brook Conservation Area 	<p>Presumpscot Regional Land Trust</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Mill Brook Preserve b. Mill Brook Preserve South c. Pride Preserve d. Presumpscot River Paddling Trail
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<p>Portland Trails</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Conant Property b. Stroudwater Trail c. Presumpscot River Trail d. Westbrook Schools to Skatepark e. Blue Spruce Trail 	<p>Trail Blazes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Multi-Use Snowmobile Trails
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Goals

In accordance with the mission and vision of the Westbrook Recreation and Conservation Commission, in support of the Comprehensive Plan, and in agreement with the goals of the 2020 – 2021 Maine State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, the following seven primary goals for the Commission, each addressing specific WRCC priorities and outlined objectives.

Create an index of all open spaces and trails accessible to the public.

Values Addressed: 2, 3, 4, 5

The Recreation and Conservation Commission is tasked with the preparation and maintenance of an index of all open areas, both publicly and privately owned, within the City, including swamps and other wetlands and waterways for the purpose of obtaining information pertinent to the proper utilization, protection, development or use of such areas (City of Westbrook Code §7-20.A(3)). This index does not currently exist.

Additionally, The City of Westbrook is abundant with diverse recreational opportunities however awareness of available recreation throughout the community is sometimes lacking. Information on the availability of open space accessible to the public is scattered or at times not documented.

The work of the WRCC is contingent upon Commissioners having knowledge and reference to the existing conditions within the City to make informed decision on future projects. Development of a single distributable document that differentiates the type of recreation by activity, season or skill level contributes to the mission of WRCC.

WRCC Action Steps

1. Work with City Staff and stakeholders to identify all areas of public access (i.e. recreational areas, waterbodies or existing conserved land)
 - a. Identify amenities that are underutilized or in need of maintenance
 - i. Present to City Staff
 - ii. Advocate for reparative measures
 - b. Review history of subdivision approvals to identify open space that was intended for public access.
 - i. When property is privately owned, confirm public access is formalized (deeds, easements, etc.). Such documentation should be collected and maintained in the Planning Office.
2. Develop an informational guide and online resources.
 - a. Work with City Staff (Economic Development, Communications & Marketing) to develop a map/pamphlet to make available to the public.
3. Information to be provided to City Staff to relay to developers to take into consideration during the development phase of open space proposals.

Timeline:

Formation of Open Space Subcommittee	Immediately
Development of Open Space Inventory	October 2021
Informational Guide (pamphlet-pdf)	Spring-Summer 2022



Promote the use and education of public resources and amenities.

Values Addressed: 3, 5

The City of Westbrook provides the community with a myriad of opportunities for outdoor and indoor, programmed or unprogrammed, recreation. In addition to playgrounds, fields and trail systems, Westbrook has over 35-miles of watercourses and 30-acres of ponds, many of which have formalized public access and carry historical significance that defines Westbrook’s character. The intent of this goal is to develop strategies to further public education, outreach, and community engagement with these resources.

Further, this goal seeks to explore and promote new opportunities for recreation or conservation that satisfy the mission and values identified in these plans through collaboration with regional entities.

WRCC Action Steps

1. Identify opportunities to promote recreation or increase education of public land and water resources.
 - a. Survey recreation commissions/departments within the region for community programs/initiatives that would be appropriate within the Westbrook Community.
 - b. Advise City Staff on programming needs or deficiencies
2. Work as a liaison between the City and public/private entities who seek to provide public recreation and/or conservation of private lands, where appropriate.
3. Collaborate with government and non-government organizations to promote the responsible individual use of, and public health and local economic benefits of, ample and accessible trailways, open spaces and waterways.
4. Evaluate opportunities for outreach and education through social and other digital media consistent with City policy.

Estimated Timeline:

Identify amenities/resources for promotion	Following Open Space Inventory (Winter-Spring 2022)
Survey regional communities	Spring-Summer 2022
WRCC supporting stakeholders in event organization	Ongoing
Develop Strategy on social and digital media outreach	Summer 2021



Identify Areas of Priority for Land Conservation.

Values Addressed: 1, 5

The City of Westbrook may purchase or acquire by gift land and/or conservation easements subject to the approval of City Council. Westbrook Recreation and Conservation Commission have contributed to the purchase of several parcels over the past 10-years for the purpose of recreation and/or conservation including lands dedicated to City Forest and Pride Preserve which are among the largest areas of conserved lands within the City. As the Commission identifies valuable parcels for potential land conservation, the Commission can work collaboratively with City Administration to preserve and protect those parcels through either public or private measures.

WRCC Action Steps

1. Identify Priority Areas, as deemed by the following:
 - a. Areas of high value habitat, as designated on the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife Beginning with Habitat map
 - b. Areas contiguous to presently conserved areas
 - c. Areas where residents do not currently have access to passive recreation.
2. Provide identified priority areas to City Staff to relay to developers to take into consideration during the development phase of open space proposals.
3. Connect interested private landowners with City Staff regarding land sale or private conservation
4. Collaborate with Presumpscot Regional Land Trust or other similar organizations to identify proposed land for conservation.
5. Make recommendations for land acquisition and funding proposal to the City Council, where appropriate.

Timeline:

Areas of priority identified within 9-12 months following completion of open space inventory.



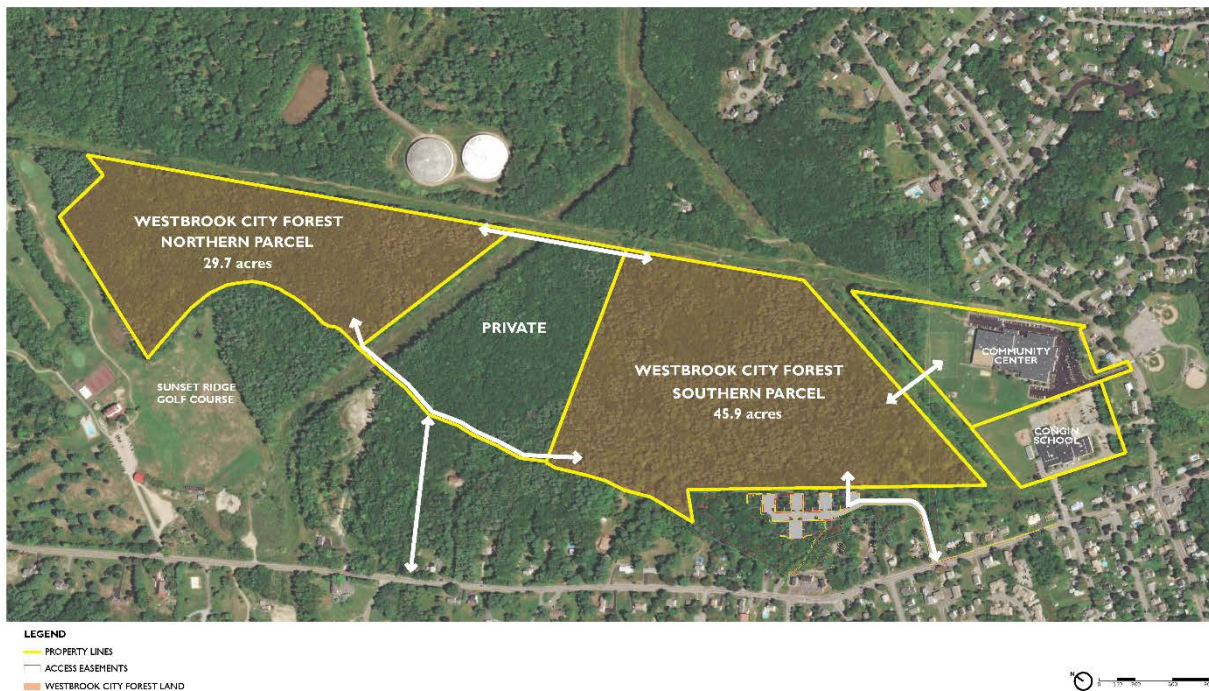
Promote and Advocate the City Forest Master Plan Project
Values Addressed: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5

The City of Westbrook owns two large parcels of undeveloped land located behind the Westbrook Community Center, Tax Map/Lots 011-005B and 010-029. The City recently completed a conceptual master plan for a multi-use trail system and associated recreational amenities to encompass both parcels. The master plan consists of a comprehensive trail system, areas for outdoor play and educational/recreational infrastructure to support community use.

The City Forest Master plan includes 6 phases of implementation. Each phase is intended to differentiate site features/amenities and not necessarily to dictate order of implementation.

INVENTORY AND ANALYSIS
CITY FOREST PARCELS

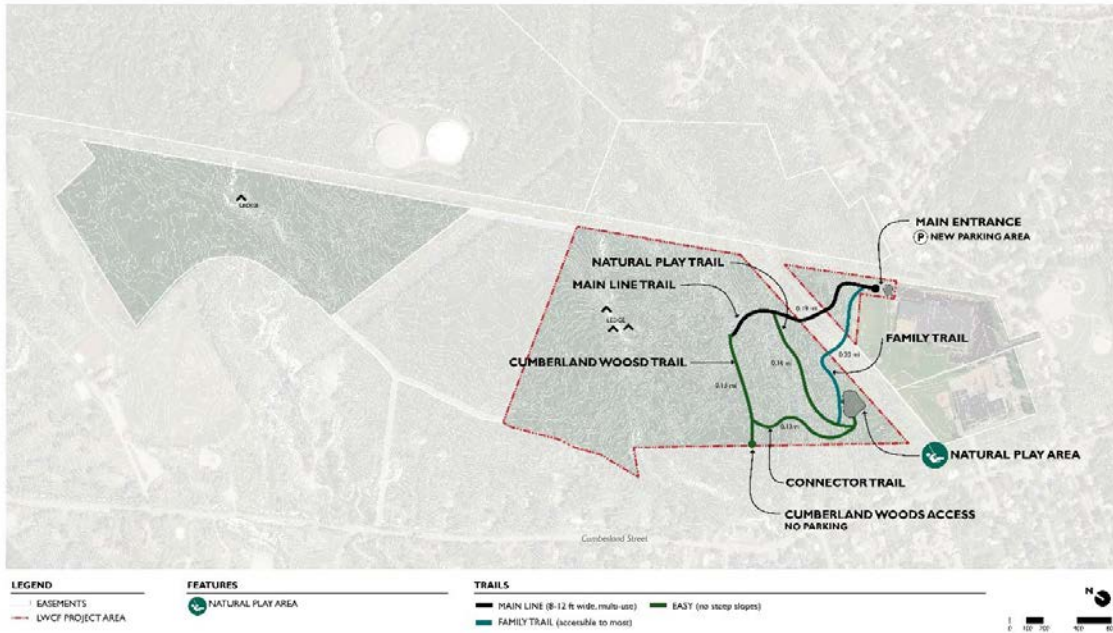
WESTBROOK CITY FOREST MASTER PLAN
tjd&a Landscape Architects & Planners



Phase 1 identifies amenities required as part of a process to transfer Land and Water Conservation Foundation (LWCF) 6(f) designation, which requires implementation within 2-years of plan acceptance by LWCF. Phase 1 amenities are proposed include approximately 1-mile of trail, an expansion to the parking lot located next to the trail head and a natural play area. Fundraising and implementation of this phase will be determined upon acceptance of the plan by LWCF.



LWCF IMPROVEMENTS



Phases 2-6 include a trail system throughout both parcels, outdoor classrooms (including an ADA accessible trail from Congin Elementary School), a mountain bike skills feature and a multi-use main line trail. Implementation of these amenities are dependent on funding and do not follow a required timeline.

MASTER PLAN





WRCC Action Steps

1. Present the master plan to City Council for acceptance
2. Once Land and Water Conservation designation is accepted, work with City Staff as implementation strategy for LWCF improvements is developed.
3. Advocate subsequent phases based on public interest and availability of appropriate funding.
4. Advise on potential funding opportunities and present to City Staff for preparation and submission.
5. Work with City Staff and Presumpscot Regional Land Trust to assist on maintenance responsibilities and duties, as needed.

Timeline:

Present Master Plan to City Council	August/September 2021
Phase 1 plan acceptance	Winter 2021/2022
Formation of City Forest Master Plan Subcommittee	Upon acceptance of LWCF designation
Installation of LWCF Improvements (Phase 1)	2 years from acceptance
Implementation of Phases 2-6	3-5 years, or as funding is available



Support the Development of the Mountain Division Trail

Values Addressed: 1, 2, 3

The Mountain Division Trail is a planned 50-mile-long rail trail that extends from Portland to the New Hampshire border in Fryeburg. Two segments of the Mountain Division Trail, the Fryeburg segment and South Windham to Standish segment, have been constructed and comprise of approximately 10 miles of the entirety of the Mountain Division Trail. The remainder of the trail is broken into three sections as follows: Portland to Westbrook (5 miles), Westbrook to Windham (5 miles) and Gorham/Standish to Fryeburg (31 miles).

The Westbrook to Windham section of the Mountain Division Trail follows the Presumpscot River from East Bridge Street to the existing South Windham to Standish trail. An existing rail line exists for 3.5 miles of this 5-mile section, with the portion of the removed trail located in Windham.

A draft preliminary design report was completed in 2012 for the Westbrook to Windham section of the Mountain Division Trail.

The Recreation and Conservation Commission supports and endorses the efforts of the City of Westbrook, City of Portland, Town of Windham and Mountain Division Alliance (MountainDivisionAlliance.org) in furthering the development of the Mountain Division Trail in Westbrook.

WRCC Action Steps

1. Support and partner with Mountain Division Alliance as they:
 - a. Identify Westbrook stakeholders; 1 – 6 months
 - b. Engage stakeholders to be involved; 6-12 months
 - c. Strategic Plans; 12-24 months
2. Support and partner with the City of Westbrook and Town of Windham
3. Advocate for the value and benefit of expanding the connection between Downtown, Rock Row and the City of Portland

Timeline:
On-going



Improve Communication and Tracking of Municipal and Development Projects.

Values Addressed: 1, 2, 3, 4

To be an effective advocate, maintaining an awareness of the assets and needs within the community is vital. Currently there is not a formal procedure for Commissioners to follow up on projects post funding/Planning Board approval. WRCC’s awareness of project development is crucial to making informed recommendations for future projects and applications. Additionally, with the knowledge of new and pending development, WRCC can facilitate connecting community members with public amenities. Therefore, this goal includes formalizing a process for tracking projects that are brought to WRCC attention and incorporating project updates on a regular basis during WRCC meetings.

WRCC Action Steps

1. Updates on City Projects
 - a. Staff liaison will provide monthly updates on applications currently under Planning Board review. Where applicable/necessary, monthly updates on other City projects involving recreation/conservation will also be provided.
 - b. WRCC-WEIC representative will provide monthly updates, as applicable
 - c. Quarterly updates on all City projects to be provided by City contracted Project Manager/Economic Development Department or other appropriate City Staff
2. Subdivision Review - Open Space Plan
 - a. City Staff will provide update to Commission of an approved open space plan
 - b. Inventory of approved open space plans to be maintained by the Planning Department for Commission review.
3. Stakeholder Projects
 - a. WRCC will identify list of stakeholders with projects active in the community
 - b. Quarterly invitation to a stakeholder to attend a WRCC meeting to present current or prospective projects within the City

Timeline:

Updates on City Projects	Monthly
Updates on Subdivision Review	On-going
Identification of Stakeholders	August 2021



Formalize Roles and Responsibility for Commission Leadership and City Collaboration

Values Addressed: 1

The Westbrook Recreation and Conservation Commission is an enthusiastic and active group of 7- members and 3-associate members who meet a minimum of once a month to manage public open space funds, review development proposals and discuss opportunities for expanded recreation and conservation within the City. Currently, the organization and maintenance of administrative duties are managed through the WRCC leadership roles. As the momentum of the WRCC continues to grow, and to ensure the efforts of the WRCC are keeping with the priorities of the City Council, the need for centralized management of record keeping is apparent.

WRCC Action Steps

1. Establish bylaws for the commission.
2. Record keeping procedures
 - a. The Chair or Vice Chair shall provide City Staff with an agenda at least 5-days prior to a WRCC meeting for public posting. City Staff will post agendas on the City website prior to each meeting.
 - b. The Secretary or their designee shall provide City Staff with meeting minutes within 30-days of the meeting. Minutes shall be posted online by City Staff and a copy maintained in the Planning Office
 - c. City Staff shall work with Chair to ensure all WRCC meeting materials are maintained on file in the Planning Office
 - d. Keep current and accurate financial data, provide monthly report/spreadsheet to the Commission and filed with the Planning Department.
3. Annual Report to City Council
 - a. WRCC Leadership (Secretary) will maintain annual log of Commission approved projects requiring either financial of Commission support
 - b. WRCC Secretary will provide quarterly documentation to WRCC Chair
 - c. WRCC Chair to provide City Staff with Annual Report no later than June 1st of each year for presentation to City Council in July.
4. Seek opportunities for project funding to present to City Staff for submission

Timeline:

Establish Bylaws	June – October 2021
Annual Report to City Council	March – May year



Summary

1 **Create an index of all open spaces and trails accessible to the public.**

Formation of Open Space Subcommittee	Immediately
Development of Open Space Inventory	October 2021
Informational Guide (pamphlet-pdf)	Spring-Summer 2022

2 **Promote use and education of public resources and amenities.**

Identify amenities/resources for promotion	Following Open Space Inventory (Winter-Spring 2022)
Survey regional communities	Spring-Summer 2022
WRCC supporting stakeholders in event organization	Ongoing
Develop Strategy on social and digital media outreach	Summer 2021

3 **Identify Areas of Priority for Land Conservation.**

Areas of priority identified within 9-12 months following completion of open space inventory.

4 **Promote and Advocate the City Forest Master Plan Project**

Present Master Plan to City Council	May 2021
Phase 1 plan acceptance	Fall – Winter 2021/2022
Formation of City Forest Master Plan Subcommittee	Upon acceptance of LWCF designation
Installation of LWCF Improvements (Phase 1)	2 years from acceptance
Implementation of Phases 2-6	3-5 years, or as funding is available

5 **Support the Development of the Mountain Division Trail**

On-going

6 **Improve Communication and Tracking of Municipal and Development Projects.**

Updates on City Projects	Monthly
Updates on Subdivision Review	On-going
Identification of Stakeholders	Aug 2021

7 **Formalize Roles and Responsibility for Commission Leadership and City Collaboration**

Establish Bylaws	June – October 2021
Annual Report to City Council	March – May year