Report of the

GREEN RIBBON OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE

March 2000

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Executive Summary

The more densely built and crowded a city becomes, the more urgent the need for open space relief. Today, the City of Cambridge is in the midst of a steep upswing in both the pace of new development and the price of real estate. The result? While the demand for open space continues to increase, it has never been harder to come by – a frustrating situation for residents and city leaders alike. Fortunately, the city's economic health has also produced new resources for acquiring open space, specifically in the form of newly dedicated city revenues and the opportunity to work with developers to include in their projects new and enhanced open space.

Seeking a systematic approach to making open space acquisition decisions, the City Manager appointed a 17-member Green Ribbon Open Space Committee in February 1999 to develop criteria for expanding and improving the city's open space system. We began our work with detailed discussions of the existing use and distribution of parks and open space in Cambridge and of our visions for the future of the Cambridge open space system. Various experts presented information on the following pertinent topics:

- demographic information, including maps showing the city's population density, income distribution, age structure, and distribution of children from elementary through high school-age;
- current open space and park use according to park and school programs; and
- recreation needs, adequacy of available fields for programmed uses and league sports, and projected recreation activities that would continue to increase in popularity.

We inventoried different park types and then identified areas that do not have access to each park type. Next, we conducted a mapping analysis of the amount of public open space within 1/4 mile of every 1000 people. This map led us to three key observations:

- The larger Central Square neighborhood, including upper Cambridgeport, Area Four, Mid-Cambridge and eastern Riverside, is one of the areas with the least public open space per 1,000 residents.
- The Porter Square area has no open space within a 1/4 mile.
- Areas with a more generous four or more acres of public open space per 1000 population exist near Danehy Park, Fresh Pond Reservation and along the Charles River.

Using all of this information, we identified Areas of Need for each park type and then determined our Top Priorities among those areas. When determining priorities we gave precedence to areas with:

- low and moderate-income households;
- relatively fewer acres of open space per 1,000 residents;
- smaller than average residential lot sizes; and
- a higher density of children.

We also inventoried park uses and identified uses that are or are expected to be underserved based on planned programming. Using information about current and future recreation programming, committee resources and maps to locate where recreational activities occur in Cambridge, we also recommended priorities with respect to park uses.

Our recommended Top Priorities for park types and park uses are presented in the table below and in Figure ES – 1.

Table ES-1 ***Top Priority Recommendations***

Park Types	*Recommended Area of Cambridge*
Tot Lots	▪ North Prospect Street ▪ Porter Square
Neighborhood Parks	▪ Area 4/Sennott Park area ▪ Central Square ▪ Porter Square ▪ Prospect Street
School Parks	▪ Fletcher Elementary ▪ Graham and Parks Elementary ▪ Longfellow Elementary ▪ Maynard Elementary[1]
Community Parks	▪ Area 4/Sennott Park area ▪ Mid-Cambridge ▪ Porter Square/Northern Agassiz ▪ Upper Cambridgeport
Park Trails	▪ Grand Junction railway pathway ▪ Creating a direct connection between Fresh Pond Reservation and Danehy Park ▪ Advocacy of a rail and trail conversion of an older railroad line through Somerville that connects North Point and Linear Park at Cedar Street.

Park Uses	*Recommendation*
Soccer/Field Hockey/Lacrosse	The creation of 3 to 4 multipurpose fields that would accommodate soccer, field hockey and lacrosse equally. If possible, these fields should be located in the eastern half of Cambridge.
Baseball	One additional full-sized high school baseball field.
Informal Uses	More emphasis on passive uses throughout the city. If well designed, such uses can be accommodated in small spaces.

[1] *NOTE: The City's recent acquisition of property at 238 Broadway, which occurred in October 1999 as we were finalizing our recommendations, is expected to address the need for a field at the Maynard School when this property is converted to open space.*

During our discussions, we also noted a range of issues which, while not central to our mission of developing open space acquisition criteria, were nonetheless important aspects of developing and maintaining an outstanding open space system. We recommend that the city consider the following next steps while pursuing open space acquisition opportunities according to our established criteria:

- establish a permanent committee dedicated to providing advice on open space acquisition and enhancement;
- form or closely affiliate with an open space non-profit to facilitate open space acquisition;
- expand resources for open space enhancement, maintenance and design, with a focus on facilities in priority areas and for priority uses;
- continue the city's efforts to improve access to open space; and
- incorporate review of open space into the permitting process for large development projects.

We hope our recommendations will help the City act quickly and confidently to make Cambridge a greener, more enjoyable place to live, stroll, run, and play – for everyone who lives here.

1.0 Introduction

From the tiniest tot lot to the most expansive landscaped park, open space makes cities livable. The more densely built and crowded a city becomes, the more urgent the need for open space relief. Today, the City of Cambridge is in the midst of a steep upswing in both pace of new development and the price of real estate. The result? While the demand for open space continues to increase, it has never been harder to come by – a frustrating situation for residents and city leaders alike. Fortunately, the city's economic health has also produced new resources for acquiring open space, specifically in the form of newly dedicated city revenues and the opportunity to work with developers to include in their projects new and enhanced open space.

Together, all these factors have dramatically heightened the importance of decisions about how and where to invest our open space dollars. Seeking a systematic approach to the problem, in February 1999 the City Manager appointed a committee of 17 residents, the Green Ribbon Open Space Committee, to develop criteria for open space acquisition. Our charge, as originally outlined by the City Manager, was to "develop selection criteria to guide/advise the City as it seeks to expand and improve open space in the City."

The Green Ribbon Committee consisted of members with diverse interests and backgrounds – all with immediate open space concerns, including community leaders, local sports organizers, open space planning professionals, professional landscape architects, and residents from all parts of the city, including parents, seniors, athletes, community gardeners and other active open space users. The city's Community Development Department, City Manager's Office, Recreation Department and Department of Public Works augmented our efforts by staffing the meetings and providing the necessary research, analysis, and presentation materials. Committee meetings were held twice a month from March 1999 through February 2000.

We began our work with detailed discussions of the existing use and distribution of parks and open space in Cambridge and of our visions for the future of the Cambridge open space system. Various experts presented information on the following pertinent topics:

- demographic information, including maps showing the city's population density, income distribution, age structure, and distribution of children from elementary through high school-age;
- current open space and park use according to park and school programs; and
- recreation needs, adequacy of available fields for programmed uses and league sports, and projected recreation activities that would continue to increase in popularity.

We also went on a self-guided tour of the city's open spaces to observe their design and usage.

With this common pool of information, we proceeded to assess the specific open space needs of the city's many neighborhoods. This report describes what we learned, the criteria we established and what we recommend. For each type of park we considered, we identify areas in need of open space and within those areas we highlight the top priorities.

The report is organized as follows:

- Chapter 2 – Background: Presents background information on the existing open space system in Cambridge. Also, national standards are explored as the first step in developing criteria to guide open space acquisition.
- Chapter 3 - Open Space Needs Analysis: Presents our methodology for identifying locations that are underserved by existing open spaces and those open space uses that require additional space throughout the city. This methodology provided a logical and objective system to evaluate open space needs. In this chapter, we make two levels of recommendations; first, we identify the Areas of Need, which are based primarily on geographic gaps in coverage. Second, we identify the Top Priorities among those needs, which take into consideration various factors, including density of low moderate income households, the population of children, and amount of available open space.
- Chapter 4 - Next Steps: Presents a summary of the recommendations for open space acquisition and suggestions for related future city actions to expand and enhance the open space system.

Cambridge has an opportunity to make a critical difference in expanding and improving our open space system - but given current real estate trends, it is important to make each spending decision consistently. We hope our recommendations will help the City act quickly and confidently to make Cambridge a greener, more enjoyable place to live, stroll, run, and play – for everyone who lives here.

The location labeled the Fitzgerald School is now the location of the Peabody School. The location labeled the Fletcher School is now the location of the Cambridgeport School. The location labeled the Harrington School is now the location of the King Open School. The location of the Longfellow School is no longer open as an elementary but the grounds remain open to the public for recreational purposes. The location labeled the Peabody School is now the location of the Graham and Parks School.

2.0 Background

2.1 OPEN SPACE IN CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge currently has 77 parks and play areas in its open space system. These parks vary in size from 1/10 acre to over 100 acres and serve a wide range of recreational needs. Approximately 11 percent, or 492 acres, of the total land area that makes up Cambridge is public open space that is owned by entities such as the City and MDC and accessible to all. If surface water, e.g. Fresh Pond and Blair Pond, is included as open space acreage the total open space area is increased to 671 acres. Of those 492 acres, approximately 40 percent are used for active recreation, while the rest is passive recreational space. The greatest amount of the city's open space is found in the western neighborhoods, with nearly 85 percent of the public land in this section of the city comprised of three parks: Fresh Pond Reservation, Alewife Reservation and Danehy Park (SEE FIGURE 2-1, CAMBRIDGE OPEN SPACE MAP AND TABLE 2-1, PUBLICLY OWNED RECREATIONAL FACILITIES).

For purposes of land use planning, Cambridge is divided into thirteen neighborhoods (SEE FIGURE 2-2, CAMBRIDGE NEIGHBORHOOD MAP). The publicly owned open space acreage for each neighborhood is presented in Table 2-2, below. The Agassiz neighborhood has the lowest amount of public open space of any neighborhood at 1.3 acres, while North Cambridge, at 136.9 acres, has the most. However, the amount of public open space per person within each neighborhood, also presented below, indicates that Cambridge Highlands has the most, while Agassiz, Mid-Cambridge, and Area 4 have the least amount of open space per 1,000 people. Private open space is not included in these numbers, but can significantly augment the public space, as in the grounds around MIT, Harvard University and other large institutions, like the Academy of Arts and Sciences in the Agassiz neighborhood.

Table 2-1 **Publicly Owned Recreational Facilities**

Map #	Park Name	Location	Use
1	Agassiz School/Alden Park	Oxford St.	Playground
2	Alberico Park	Pleasant St.	Basketball, Playground
3	Alewife Brook Reservation (MDC)	Acorn Park	Passive Use
4	Bergin Park	Haskell St.	Playground, Passive Use
5	Cambridge Common	Garden St.	Playground, Soccer, Softball, Passive Use
6	Cambridge Rindge & Latin High School/War Memorial Pool/Mid-Cambridge Library Park/Joan Lorentz Park	Broadway	Indoor Center, Playground, Swimming, Tennis, Passive Use
7	Charles Park	Rogers St.	Passive Use
8	Centanni Way	Otis St.	Passive Use
9	Clarendon Ave. Playground	Clarendon Ave.	Playground, Passive Use
10	Columbia Street Park	Columbia St.	Basketball, Playground, Passive Use
11	Comeau Field	Rindge Ave.	Little League Baseball
12	Cooper Park	Hancock St.	Playground, Water Play
13	Corcoran Field	Upland Rd.	Basketball, Playground, Softball
14	Corporal Burns Park	Flagg St.	Basketball, Playground, Street Hockey, Water Play, Passive Use
15	Costa Lopez/Taylor Park	Third St.	Basketball, Playground, Passive Use
16	Dana Park	Magazine St.	Basketball, Playground, Tot lot, Passive Use
17	Danehy Park	Garden St.	Exercise Circuit, Softball, Soccer, Playground, Picnic Area, Passive Use, Water Play

Map #	Park Name	Location	Use
18	Elm/ Hampshire Plaza	Hampshire St.	Passive Use
19	Flagstaff Park	Massachusetts Ave.	Passive Use
20	Fletcher School	Elm St.	Basketball, Playground, Tot lot
21	Fort Washington Park	Waverly St.	Passive Use
22	Franklin Street Park	Franklin St.	Passive Use
23	Fresh Pond Municipal Golf Course (Fresh Pond Reservation)	Huron Ave.	Golf
24	Front Park	Cambridge Pkwy.	Passive Use
25	Fulmore Park	Putnam Ave.	Playground, Passive Use
26	Gannett/ Warren Pals Park	Marion St.	Playground, Water Play
27	John C. Gibbons Park	Seagrave Rd.	Playground, Passive Use
28	Glacken Field (Fresh Pond Reservation)	Huron Ave.	Basketball, Playground, Soccer, Softball, Tennis, Passive Use
29	Gold Star Mothers Pool	Berkshire St.	Swimming
30	Gold Star Mothers/ Gore Street Park	Gore St.	Basketball, Playground, Softball, Water Play
31	Gore Street Skating Rink (MDC)	Gore St.	Skating Rink
32	Harrington School/ Donnelly Field/ Frisoli Youth Center	Cambridge St.	Little League Baseball, Basketball, Indoor Center, Playground, Softball
33	Haggerty School	Cushing St.	School, Playground
34	Harvard Street Park	Harvard St.	Community Garden, Playground, Tennis, Passive Use
35	Hastings Square	Brookline St.	Passive Use
36	Hoyt Field/ Moore Youth Center	Montague St.	Basketball, Playground, Softball, Tennis, Playground, Tot lot, Water Play

Map #	Park Name	Location	Use
37	Hurley Street VFW Park	Hurley St.	Playground, Water Play
38	JFK Memorial Park (MDC)	Memorial Dr.	Passive Use
39	Kennedy School/ J.J. Ahern Field	Charles St.	Basketball, Indoor Center, Playground, Running Track, Softball, Soccer, Street Hockey, Water Play
40	King School	Putnam Ave.	Basketball, Indoor Center, Playground, Tot lot
41	Kingsley Park (Fresh Pond Reservation)	Fresh Pond Pkwy.	Biking Paths, Jogging Paths, Passive Use
42	Larch Road Park	Larch Rd.	Basketball, Playground
43	Lechmere Canal Park	Otis St.	Playground, Passive Use
44	Linear Park	Harvey St.	Biking , Jogging, Passive Use
45	Longfellow Park	Mount Auburn St.	Passive Use
46	Longfellow School	Broadway	Basketball, Playground
47	Lopez Street Park	Lopez St.	Playground
48	Lowell Park (MDC)	Brattle St.	Passive Use
49	Lowell School Playground	Mount Auburn St.	Basketball, Playground
50	Lusitania Field - (Fresh Pond Reservation)	Concord Ave.	Passive Use
51	Magazine Beach (MDC)	Memorial Dr.	Biking, Canoe Ramp, Jogging, Soccer, Softball, Swimming, Passive Use, Water Play
52	Maple Avenue Park	Maple Ave.	Playground
53	Market Street Park	Market St.	Playground, Passive Use
54	McCrehan Pool (MDC)	Rindge Ave.	Swimming
55	McMath Park	Pemberton St.	Community Garden, Passive Use

Map #	Park Name	Location	Use
56	Memorial Drive Playground (MDC)	Memorial Dr.	Playground
57	Morse School/ Lindstrom Field	Memorial Dr.	Little League Baseball, Basketball, Indoor Center, Playground
58	Mount Auburn Veterans Memorial Plaza	Huron Ave.	Passive Use
59	David Nunes Park	Brookline St.	Basketball, Street Hockey, Playground, Passive Use
60	Pacific Street Open Space	Pacific St.	Soccer, Passive Use
61	Paine Park	St. Mary Rd.	Basketball, Playground, Passive Use
62	Peabody School	Walker St.	Basketball, Indoor Center, Playground
63	Pine Street Playground	Pine St.	Water Play, Tot lot
64	Rafferty Playground/ Sancta Maria Field	Griswold St.	Basketball, Playground, Softball, Tennis
65	Reverend Williams Playground	Cedar St.	Basketball, Playground, Passive Use, Water Play
66	Rindge Field/ Fitzgerald School	Pemberton St.	Baseball, Basketball, Indoor Center, Gately Youth Center Tennis
67	Riverside Press Park	River St.	Basketball, Playground, Tennis, Passive Use, Water Play
68	Roethlisberger Memorial Park/ Garden Street Glen Park	Hazel St.	Passive Use
69	Russell/Samp Field	Clifton St.	Football, Little League Baseball, Soccer
70	Sacramento Field	Sacramento St.	Basketball, Soccer, Softball
71	Sennott Park/ Area 4 Youth Center	Norfolk St.	Indoor Center, Playground, Soccer, Softball, Basketball
72	Silva Park	Cambridge St.	Playground, Passive Use
73	St. Peter's Field	Sherman St.	Baseball, Basketball, Playground, Softball
74	Sullivan Park	Green St.	Playground, Community Garden, Passive Use
75	Tobin School/ Fr. Callahan Playground	Concord St.	Little League Baseball, Indoor Center, Baseball, Playground
76	Vellucci Plaza	Cambridge St.	Passive Use
77	Wilder/Lee Park	Lee St.	Playground, Passive Use
78	Winthrop Square	Winthrop St.	Passive Use

Table 2-2 Summary of Publicly Owned Open Space

Neighborhood	Neighborhood Population (persons)	Public Open Space			Open Space per 1000 Persons (acres)
		Active (acres)	Passive (acres)	Total (acres)	
East Cambridge	5,780	8.6	9	17.6	3.04
MIT	5,071	0	16.8	16.8	3.31
Wellington/ Harrington	7,105	7.2	0.7	7.9	1.11
Area Four	6,886	3.5	1.8	5.3	.77
Cambridgeport	8,977	15	11.8	26.8	2.98
Mid-Cambridge	13,020	3.7	0.9	4.6	.35
Riverside	10,448	8.5	7.6	16.1	1.54
Agassiz	5,100	1.1	0.2	1.3	.25
Neighborhood Nine	11,126	45.6	24.7	70.3	6.32
Neighborhood Ten	8,337	3.9	35.7	39.6	4.75
North Cambridge	10,769	21.8	115.1	136.9	12.71
Cambridge Highlands	574	33.3	35.8	69.1	120.38
Strawberry Hill	2,609	48.5	32	80.5	30.85
TOTAL	95,802	200.7	292.1	492.8	5.14

2.2 DEMOGRAPHICS

For a complete picture of the city's open space needs, we needed to learn more about its residents. Clifford Cook, Planning Information Manager for the Community Development Department, described Cambridge's demographic composition in depth, focusing on those factors that might influence residents' need for or ability to access various kinds of open space.[2] Among other data, we reviewed the geographic distribution of the general public, children, low and moderate income households and households without a vehicle. Below we summarize some of the city's characteristics on which we based our priority recommendations.

Population

The population of Cambridge stabilized during the 1980s after dropping from a high of 120,740 in 1950 as the U.S. economy experienced a major shift from manufacturing to service industries. According to the 1990 US Census, the population of Cambridge totaled 95,802, a figure little changed from the 1980 US Census figure of 95,322.

Areas of high population density, between 39 and 88 persons per acre, occur in all parts of the city, except in MIT, Cambridge Highlands and Neighborhood Ten (SEE FIGURE 2-3, POPULATION DENSITY MAP). In these high density areas, ensuring sufficient open space is especially critical.

Distribution of Children

Since children are important users of the city's open space, we wanted to understand the distribution of the various age groups in Cambridge. We examined two major age categories: children 13 years old and under, and young people between 14 and 18. Concentrations of children 13 years old and younger are found near Danehy Park, south of Fresh Pond, in Wellington/Harrington, Area Four and parts of Riverside and Mid-Cambridge, Cambridgeport and East Cambridge (SEE FIGURE 2-4, CHILDREN < 13 YEARS OLD MAP). The distribution of 14 to 18 year olds is similar to the distribution of younger children. Concentration of this older group can be found around Danehy Park, in Riverside and Cambridgeport, Wellington Harrington, Area Four and East Cambridge (SEE FIGURE 2-5, CHILDREN 14 TO 18 YEARS OLD MAP). In addition, there are two concentrations of children ages 14 to 18 at both MIT and Harvard. These two pockets are attributed to the student population attending these institutions.

Public School Enrollment

After a period of relative stability in the mid-1990s, there has been a steady decline in the public school population since the recent peak of 8,050 on January 1, 1997. By the last count on October 1, 1999, public school enrollment had declined to 7,276. (Semi-annual counts of school age students are made in January and October of every year). The Cambridge School Department predicts, in their five-year school enrollment projection, a further decline to 7,200 pupils during the 2003-2004 school year. [3]

Family and Non-Family Households

In 1950, 87 percent of the 32,921 households in Cambridge were family households, with two or more occupants related by birth, marriage or adoption. All other households, whose occupants are unrelated, are considered non-family households. Over the next forty years, the total number of households in Cambridge increased by about 6,500, but family households dipped to 45 percent of the total, a net loss of 11,000 family households. This trend indicates that the number of non-family households has increased significantly in the past 40 years, citywide.

[2] *Unless otherwise noted all figures are from the 1990 US Census.*

[3] *Note that a change in public school enrollment is not necessarily reflective of changes in the population of school age children in Cambridge, as the proportion of children attending private or parochial schools can change.*

Households with Low to Moderate Incomes

Based on a review of census tract information, low to moderate income households can be found in a number of locations in Cambridge, including portions of East Cambridge, Area 4, Neighborhood 9, North Cambridge, Strawberry Hill, and Riverside (SEE FIGURE 2-6 LOW AND MODERATE INCOME PERSONS MAP). Low-income households, as defined here, include households that have incomes under $20,000; and moderate-income households have incomes between $20,001 and $32,500.

Households without a Vehicle

For households without a car, getting away to recreational locations outside Cambridge is often very difficult. City-owned parks provide a critical opportunity for those with limited transportation options to enjoy the outdoors. Therefore, we examined the location of households without a vehicle based on Census data. We found that the highest concentration of households without vehicles generally resembles that of low and moderate-income households. Census tracts where 300 or more households do not have access to a vehicle are located in portions of East Cambridge, Area 4, Mid-Cambridge, Neighborhood 9, North Cambridge, and Riverside.

Summary

The data described above, represented in Figures 2-3 through 2-6, gave us a better understanding of the city and provided us with a common starting point on which to base our recommendations. The demographic and socioeconomic factors that we felt were important included: the distribution of children, households with low and moderate incomes, households without a vehicle and overall population density. As we reviewed these factors, we realized that they often overlapped each other. These four characteristics are important factors that we used as we developed our recommendations.

2.3 RECREATIONAL USES REQUIRING PERMITS

Recreation Programs

Paul Ryder, Cambridge Recreation Director, and Bill Bates, Director of Health, Physical Education and Athletics in the Cambridge School Department, gave presentations on the use of playing fields by organized leagues and school athletic programs. The city's policy for field use is to give first priority to youth programs and second priority to city-sponsored athletic events. After both of these schedules have been set, the regular adult and company teams are allocated field permits. Approximately 18,000 hours were assigned by permit for use by various youth and adult athletic teams between July 1998 and June 1999 (SEE FIGURE 2-7, PERMITTED RECREATIONAL USES MAP). Two sports accounted for the majority of this time: youth soccer and little league baseball.

Youth soccer and girls' softball have become more popular in the 1990s. Their rising popularity has increased competition for field space. The intense demand has resulted in little or no time for the fields and grass to recover between uses and seasons - ordinarily an important aspect of park management, as it helps fields stay healthy and reduces the need for expensive field rehabilitation. The city has a goal of allowing at least some fields to be rotated into "inactive" status periodically.

Public School Programs

In 1998, the School Department issued a report on Athletic Participation in Cambridge Rindge and Latin School (CRLS) Sports. Comparing the zip codes of all high school athletes with the zip codes of high school sports facilities, the report found that students living in the 02139, 02141 and 02142 zip codes - the more eastern areas of Cambridge - were less likely to participate in high school sports than students in the 02138 and 02140 zip codes. The School Department

report concluded that the lower participation rate was due to the lack of available open space in the eastern portion of Cambridge.

The School Department also identified future programming priorities for public school athletics. Within the next five years, they are planning to offer several new sports for high school students, including field hockey, lacrosse and 6th, 7th, and 8th grade intramural sports, as well as a broad increase in athletic opportunities for girls.

Summary

Through these presentations we developed a better understanding of how the Cambridge open space system is programmed for active recreation and utilized by residents. We learned that current Cambridge park programming is intensive, with additional organized recreational uses being planned. We also learned that an important factor in the health of the Cambridge open space system is the intensity of field use, i.e. as fields are used less intensively they have a better chance to remain healthy. Field programming and intensity of use were factors that we used as we developed our recommendations.

2.4 PARK CHARACTERISTICS

To help categorize our parks and playgrounds and better assess the status of the city's open space system we borrowed some established national guidelines. These guidelines were developed over last three decades by the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA), a nationally recognized recreation organization.

In its *Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines* (NRPA, 1996), NRPA defines several park types, including: tot lots, neighborhood parks, community parks, school parks, large urban parks, natural resource parks and park trails. A series of park uses are also defined by NRPA, including football, soccer, lacrosse, field hockey, tennis, basketball, baseball and track. The standards concentrate on general park description, location, and size. NRPA advises that these standards be viewed as guidelines only, and that the actual acreage allocated for park use be assessed flexibly for each municipality, according to the local requirements and expectations. Below we present the park types and uses established by NRPA, along with our recommendations on how NRPA's standards and criteria should be adjusted for Cambridge.

PARK TYPES

Tot lots

Tot lots or mini-parks are the smallest park type specified by NRPA and are intended to serve children under 12 years old. NRPA suggests that these parks should be within a 1/4 mile walking radius[4] of the residential area they are intended to serve. (SEE FIGURE 2-8, TOT LOTS MAP). Currently, there are 51 tot lots/playgrounds in Cambridge:

- Agassiz/Alden Playground
- Alberico Playground
- Cambridge Common
- Charles Park
- Clarendon Avenue Park
- Columbia Street Park
- Cooper Playground (Hancock St. Park)
- Hoyt Field [2]
- Hurley Playground
- Kennedy School/Ahern Field
- M.L. King School Playground [2]
- Larch Road Playground
- Library Park/Joan Lorentz Park
- Lindstrom Field/Morse School

[4] *All walking radii refer to straight-line distances "as the crow flies", without regard to roadway configuration, property ownership or other barriers.*

Tot lot list continued:

- Corcoran Park (Raymond St. Park)
- Corporal Burns
- Costa Lopez Taylor Park
- Dana Park
- Danehy Park, St. Peters Field [3]
- David Nunes Playground
- Fitzgerald School/Rindge Field
- Fletcher School
- Fulmore Playground
- Gibbons Playground
- Glacken Field
- Gold Star Mothers Park
- Graham and Parks School
- Haggerty School
- Harrington School/Donnelly Field
- Harvard Street Playground
- Longfellow School [2]
- Lopez Playground
- Lowell School
- Maple Avenue
- Market Street Playground
- Paine Playground
- Peabody School
- Pine Street
- Rafferty Playground
- Rev. Williams Playground
- Riverside Press Park
- Sennott Park
- Silva Park
- Tobin School/Fr. Callahan Park
- Warren Pals/Gannet
- Wilder/Lee Street

Tot lots are evenly distributed relative to the population across the city, with some incorporated into larger parks, as is the case at Danehy Park, Glacken Field and Donnelly Field among other. The standards for tot lots, established by NRPA, were felt to be appropriate for the Cambridge community.

Neighborhood Parks

NRPA defines neighborhood parks as combining informal active and passive recreation on the neighborhood level, providing space for a variety of activities, such as playgrounds, small ball fields, benches, etc. NRPA suggests that neighborhood parks primarily serve people within a 1/4 mile to 1/2 mile walking radius. Currently, there are 21 neighborhood parks in Cambridge (SEE FIGURE 2-9, NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS MAP):

- Columbia Street Park
- Corcoran (Raymond St.) Park
- Corporal Burns
- Dana Park
- Danehy Park/St. Peters Field
- David Nunes Playground
- Glacken Field
- Gold Star Mothers Park
- Harrington School/Donnelly Field
- Hastings Square/Parrow Park
- Hoyt Field
- Kennedy School/Ahern Field
- Kingsley Park
- Library Park/Joan Lorentz Park
- McMath Park/Bergin Park
- Rafferty Playground
- Riverside Press Park
- Russell Field
- Sacramento Field)
- Sennott Park
- Tobin School/Fr. CallahanPark

For neighborhood parks NRPA stipulates a size of 5 to 10 acres; based on size, use, location and programming we designated the parks above (which range in size from 0.7 to 3.5 acres) as neighborhood parks. We agreed with NRPA that these parks should be focused on informal recreation and some limited pro-

grammed use. The optimal walking radius for the neighborhood park is a 1/4 mile; however, we also felt that a 1/2 mile walking radius could serve as an upper limit. One important observation: even a 1/4 mile may not be close enough if people are separated from a park by a barrier such as railroad tracks or a very busy street. Also, the 1/4 mile is drawn "as the crow flies" and does not necessarily represent actual walking distances.

Community Parks

The community park category includes parks that serve more than one neighborhood and have facilities for programmed activities, e.g., soccer league games and little league baseball games. Because nearby residents are likely to use such parks for informal recreation as well, some community parks are also considered neighborhood parks (SEE FIGURE 2-10, COMMUNITY PARKS MAP). The following parks, which range in size from 2.6 to 15 acres, were designated as community parks:

- Cambridge Common
- Harrington School/Donnelly Field
- Hoyt Field
- Kennedy School/Ahern Field
- Kingsley Park
- Rindge Field
- Russell Field
- Sennott Park
- Tobin School/Fr. Callahan Park

School Parks

School parks function primarily as playgrounds and field space for schools. According to NRPA, this type of park does not have an established size, since different sized schools require different sized playground areas. Currently there are 14 public elementary schools in Cambridge serving grades K through 8. Some of these schools have an associated play area that includes field space; some do not. Ideally, each school would have an associated field space close enough to get to and enjoy during recess. The public schools are listed here with the name of their associated play area:

- Agassiz School/Alden Playground
- Cambridgeport School
- Fitzgerald School/Rindge Field
- Fletcher School
- Graham and Parks School
- Haggerty School
- Harrington School/Donnelly Field
- Kennedy School/Ahern Field
- Longfellow School
- M.L. King School Playground
- Maynard School
- Morse School/Lindstrom Field
- Peabody School
- Tobin School/Fr. CallahanPark

Large Urban Parks

NRPA categorizes the large urban park as accommodating many different types of recreational activities simultaneously and drawing both citywide and regional users. NRPA suggests that a large urban park should be a minimum of 50 acres, a scale that sets it apart from community parks. At 310 acres, including 150 acres of water surface, Fresh Pond Reservation is a large urban park. Based on size, use, and intensity of programming, we conclude that, in an urban context, both Danehy Park (57.2 acres) and Magazine Beach (19 acres) should also be considered large urban parks (SEE FIGURE 2-11, LARGE URBAN PARK MAP).

Natural Resource Parks

Natural resource areas refer to lands that have been set aside for preserving significant natural resources, remnant landscapes, open space and visual or aesthetic buffering. This category includes land that offers natural resource potential, protected lands around waterways and wetlands, or individual sites exhibiting natural resources. We agreed that the definition established by NRPA was appropriate for Cambridge (SEE FIGURE 2-12, NATURAL RESOURCES AND PARK TRAIL MAP). Alewife Brook Reservation, Charles River Reservation and the Fresh Pond Reservation are natural resource areas in Cambridge.

Park Trails

Park trails, as defined by NRPA, are multipurpose trails - often located within natural resource areas or large urban parks - that provide recreational value and sometimes serve as important transportation routes for residents. Examples include: Linear Park, Minuteman Commuter Bikeway and the Paul Dudley White Bikepath (along the Charles River). We agreed with the NRPA definition, adding that park trails could also connect parks to each other, thereby improving the overall open space system (SEE FIGURE 2-12, NATURAL RESOURCES AND PARK TRAIL MAP).

PARK USES

Beyond the basic guidelines for park types described above – like scale and distance from users – NRPA also addresses park uses as a way of defining the role and success of any given park.

Organized Activities

NRPA provides dimensional requirements for various sports and recreational activities and suggested service area sizes. We discussed standards for the following organized activities, establishing new dimensional requirements for some uses, but in most cases accepting the NRPA's dimensional requirements.

- basketball (outdoor)
- little league baseball
- field hockey
- football
- golf
- lacrosse
- soccer (youth and adult)
- softball
- street hockey
- tennis
- track

Informal Activities and Passive Uses

Beyond these programmed and formal park uses, we felt that both active and passive informal open space uses play a vital role in the open space system, especially for the residents who do not participate in organized athletic leagues. Informal active uses include:

- bicycling
- community gardening
- playing Frisbee
- kite flying
- ice skating
- rollerblading
- running
- skateboarding
- volleyball
- walking

Unlike the other informal activities listed above, community gardening requires a formal organizational structure to govern its participants. We have listed it under the informal uses to differentiate it from the organized sports activities.

Our parks do and must also make room for many “passive” uses that often do not require much room, but bring pleasure to a broad range of Cambridge residents. These additional informal uses include:

- being a spectator
- reading/studying
- playing horseshoes
- bocci
- picnicking
- conversing
- yoga
- playing board games
- resting
- playing shuffleboard
- star gazing
- listening to music
- experiencing tranquillity
- appreciating fountains & flowers
- sunbathing/enjoying the shade

Summary

In reviewing the demographic data on the distribution of higher density populations, children under 18 years old, low-moderate income households and household without a vehicle, we discovered that these areas often overlapped with each other. While these areas of higher density occurred mainly in the central part of Cambridge, isolated high density areas were also found in eastern Cambridge, North Cambridge and in the very western edge of Cambridge.

In addition, by learning about the intensity of park use in Cambridge and categorizing the various park types and uses listed above, we were able better understand the Cambridge open space system and make suggestions as to where the city should focus its limited resources. This analysis also provided a common knowledge base on which we developed the recommendations outlined in Chapters 3 and 4.

3.0 Open Space Needs Analysis

Based on what we learned during the fact-finding phase, we conducted a careful analysis of open space needs in the city. Key inputs included:

- maps and demographic information presented in Chapter 2;
- information on open space usage provided by city recreation staff, school department staff, and committee members; and
- a new map of open space acreage per 1,000 population throughout the city (described below).

For each category of park type and use, we listed Areas of Need and then identified Top Priorities among those areas. We describe our general methodology and recommendations below.

3.1 CITYWIDE OPEN SPACE NEEDS

Recognizing that high population levels in the immediate area of a park may result in the overuse of a park, city staff performed a unique mapping analysis of the amount of public open space (in acres) that is close to every area of the city. Taking the amount of open space within a 1/4-mile radius of each census block and comparing it with the number of people living within that same 1/4-mile area, the map presents a picture of open space availability across the city. The analysis used information from the 1990 US Census on population and the city Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping of public open space within 1/4 mile of the centerpoint of each census block[5]. Figure 3-1, Open Space per 1000 Persons Map presents the results of this analysis. The map led us to three key observations:

[5]*As defined by the US Census Bureau, a census block is a small, relatively permanent, homogenous subdivision of metropolitan areas and selected non-metropolitan counties, delineated for the purpose of presenting census data.*

- The Porter Square area has no open space within a 1/4 mile.
- The larger Central Square neighborhood, including upper Cambridgeport, Area Four, Mid-Cambridge and eastern Riverside, is one of the areas with the least public open space per 1,000 residents.
- Areas with a more generous four or more acres of public open space per 1000 population exist near Danehy Park, Fresh Pond Reservation and along the Charles River.

It should be noted that while the Alewife and North Point areas appear to have generous amounts of open space per 1,000 persons, the population is extremely low in these areas.

It should also be noted that the area between Huron Avenue and Brattle Street in West Cambridge, where there is relatively little public open space for the surrounding population, is one of the few in Cambridge that has many large residential lots where backyards provide additional outdoor opportunities.

Additionally, the open space calculation does not include water surface (i.e. the Charles River or Fresh Pond) or the increased population resulting from new developments built since 1990, the time of the last US Census.

3.2 PARK NEEDS BY TYPE

To determine the need for a specific park type, we first reviewed park inventory maps to identify underserved areas for tot lots, neighborhood parks, community parks, and large urban parks (see Figures 2-8, 2-9, 2-10, and 2-11). These maps depicted 1/4-mile and 1/2-mile radii around each park, clearly revealing the gaps in geographic coverage. Each coverage gap was either identified as a need or

discussed in relation to future park development plans or other circumstances that could reduce the need for a park in that location, such as public access to privately owned open space.

How close open space is to public transportation was also an important factor that we reviewed in determining whether an area is well served by existing open space. To help us see which parks have easy access to public transportation, the maps we reviewed had a 1,000-foot buffer around the most frequent Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority (MBTA) bus routes, e.g. those with less than a 10-minute wait. These maps also located the MBTA subway stations in Cambridge.

Using these ideas and information we identified Areas of Need for each park type and then determined our Top Priorities among those areas. When determining the priorities we gave precedence to areas of low and moderate-income households, smaller than average residential lot sizes, higher density of children, and relatively fewer acres of open space per 1,000 residents. We also agreed that the city should look to provide parks in areas accessible by bus or near an MBTA station. The following sections describe our findings.

Tot Lots

The mapping presented in Figure 2-8 identified areas within 1/4 mile of an existing tot lot. We determined that this distance was a reasonable distance for the age group served. The following areas were identified as not being served by a tot lot: Central Square, Hampshire Street/Kirkland Street (Agassiz neighborhood), Harvard Square (near JFK Park), North Point, North Prospect Street, Porter Square, Russell Field, and West Cambridge (along Huron Avenue). These areas are presented in FIGURE 3-2, AREAS OF NEED -TOT LOTS.

To identify priorities among these areas, we used the following criteria: the concentration of low and moderate-income households, of high population densities and of children under 13 years old. Another goal was for tot lots to be close to schools. We noted that tot lots were planned for future construction or renovations at Russell Field and North Point.

We identified Porter Square as a top priority for a tot lot primarily due to the lack of any open space nearby. The northern section of Prospect Street is also a top priority because of the high population density, the large youth population, and a higher percentage of low and moderate-income households. As increasing property values will make it harder for the city to purchase land for open space, we discussed the need to find alternative means of creating tot lots, such as incorporating them into proposed private developments. The priority areas for the development of new tot lots are also presented in Figure 3-2.

Top Priorities:

- North Prospect Street
- Porter Square

Neighborhood Parks

As with tot lots, the 1/4-mile-walking radius was ideal for a neighborhood park; however, it was also noted that some residents would walk from as far away as a 1/2 mile. With this in mind, our review of the city's neighborhood parks (FIGURE 2-9) revealed the following gaps in coverage: Area 4/Sennott Park area, Central Square, Eastern edge of East Cambridge, Huron Avenue, North Point, Porter Square, and Prospect Street (SEE FIGURE 3-3, AREAS OF NEED - NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS MAP).

The North Point area made our initial list for a neighborhood park, even though it is not currently a significant residential area. For the western portion of North

Point, where a substantial residential project was recently proposed by the MBTA and Guilford on the Guilford properties, we recommend development of a portion of the required open space into a neighborhood park. Coverage should be sufficient for the eastern portion of North Point with the proposed park being planned by the MDC.

To determine our top priorities, we also reviewed the areas of need against the population density, youth population density and low-moderate income maps, Figure 2-6, and the citywide open space per population map, Figure 3-1. It is important to note that many parks in Cambridge serve multiple functions. Because of this, some neighborhood parks also serve as community parks, where a significant amount of active recreation is programmed, despite their relatively small size.

As an example we noted that Sennott Park, at 2.7 acres, serve as both a community park and a neighborhood park. We determined that Sennott Park was overused based on the Open Space per 1000 Population (Figure 3.1) map and the extent of its programming, and that there should be more open space in the neighborhood serving both general neighborhood needs and programmed uses. Therefore, the Sennott Park area of Area 4 was identified as a priority for a neighborhood park.

Central Square, Porter Square and Prospect Street also were determined to be top priorities because our maps showed them to be: underserved by neighborhood parks, near low-moderate income households, and at the low end of open space per 1,000 persons. We also determined that because mapping showed West Cambridge to have larger average lot sizes, higher incomes, and lower overall population density, Huron Avenue is less of a priority than areas that lack a neighborhood park within walking distance.

Top Priorities:

- Area 4/Sennott Park area
- Central Square
- Porter Square
- Prospect Street

School Parks

We noted that play area and field space should be located near (as close to adjacent as possible) all the elementary schools in Cambridge. As this is an acute problem for some schools, we discussed various alternatives including converting current teacher parking lots to open space for the students. We agreed that this drastic option could occur only if the city provided other alternatives for teacher parking, such as providing parking stickers for the teachers. The following elementary schools do not have dedicated field space: Agassiz, Cambridgeport, Fletcher, Graham and Parks, Haggerty, King, Longfellow, Maynard, and Peabody.

Cambridge Rindge and Latin School is also without a nearby field space. Because the high school has off site dedicated field space, this is not an identified area of need.

Since the Cambridgeport Elementary is scheduled to be relocated, it is not considered a priority for a school field. The remaining schools were then reviewed to identify those with the longest walk to the nearby parks used for outdoor recreation and/or recess. The following schools were determined to have the highest priority needs for school fields:

Top Priorities:

- Fletcher Elementary
- Graham and Parks Elementary
- Longfellow Elementary
- Maynard Elementary[6]

[6] *NOTE: The City's recent acquisition of property at 238 Broadway, which occurred in October 1999 as we were finalizing our recommendations, is expected to address the need for a field at the Maynard School when this property is converted to open space.*

Community Parks

NRPA does not recommend that community parks be located within a 1/4-mile-walking radius. Instead the NRPA recommends a much wider service area, between 1/2 mile and 3 miles. Given Cambridge's small size and density, this distance is too great and the committee chose to change the standard to a more appropriate measurement. We devised our own standard: a travel time of 15 – 20 minutes was determined to be more appropriate for this type of park. This time was chosen because we wanted to acknowledge that this type of park often serves as a neighborhood park as well as a community park. In addition, the committee suggested that the 1/4-mile and 1/2-mile walking radii be shown on the map to identify underserved areas.

Because Cambridge's recent agreement with the MDC will give the city priority for programming at Magazine Beach, we decided that the lower area of Cambridgeport did not have a need for a new community park, provided that bicycle and pedestrian access to this park is improved. The upper area of Cambridgeport was identified as an area in need of a community park and as a priority need. We determined that Cambridge Highlands was not an area of need for a new community park given its location near Fresh Pond and its small population. The need in Strawberry Hill is also less urgent because Glacken Field is programmed for some community uses.

Upon reviewing the Community Park map, Figure 2-10, and taking the above into consideration we identified the following as gaps in coverage (SEE FIGURE 3-4, AREAS OF NEED -COMMUNITY PARKS): Area 4/Sennott Park area, Eastern edge of East Cambridge, Upper Cambridgeport, Mid-Cambridge, parts of Neighborhood 9, parts of Neighborhood 10, and Porter Square/Northern Agassiz.

Although we determined that the eastern part of East Cambridge was a gap in coverage, it did not become a top priority area for several reasons. One reason is that there is a park with playing fields is planned at North Point. In addition, the population density is lower here than in the central part of Cambridge. Finally, the Open Space per 1000 Persons map showed only a small area of need in comparison to other neighborhoods. Neighborhoods 9 and 10 were determined not to be priority areas either, given lower population densities and larger average lot sizes. We chose our top priorities for community parks based on the open space per population and income levels in those neighborhoods.

Top Priorities:

- Area 4/Sennott Park Area
- Mid-Cambridge
- Porter Square/Northern Agassiz
- Upper Cambridgeport

Large Urban Park

The area of Cambridge east of Harvard Square was identified as having one large urban park, Magazine Beach (SEE FIGURE 3-5, AREAS OF NEED - LARGE URBAN PARK AND PARK TRAILS).

According to NRPA standards, a large urban park need not be within walking distance, but should be within a 15 to 30-minute travel time. If a large urban park were developed in eastern Cambridge, it might also help satisfy the identified needs there for both community and neighborhood parks. In addition, if significant field space could be added to the North Point park currently under development by the MDC, it could come close to functioning as a large urban park.

Given the difficulties in acquiring large parcels of land in Cambridge, we determined that the city should develop smaller neighborhood and community parks,

and where feasible, expand existing parks. Additionally, we felt that as plans for the North Point and Guilford properties develop, the City of Cambridge should play an active role in working with the MDC and Guilford in the creation of adjacent open space facilities that could serve as a large urban park. Ensuring safe access to this area is imperative.

Top Priorities:

Given the difficulties of acquiring enough land for a large urban park in eastern Cambridge, and the problems with devoting a high percentage of resources to a single need, we did not identify this as a priority. With this in mind, we urge to city to focus on developing smaller community and neighborhood parks in the eastern half of Cambridge and expanding existing ones where feasible. In addition, the city should work with the MDC and Guilford to create open space in the North Point area that could serve as a large urban park.

Natural Resources

Realistically, the city is unlikely to have any opportunities to acquire significant additional natural resource areas. We suggest, however, that some criteria be established in case an opportunity arises. We stated that a natural resource acquisition should be a place of unique beauty, vistas, uses or character, and it should be contiguous with an existing natural resource. We also identified the need to support the existing MDC natural areas in Alewife, along the Charles River and Blair Pond. We also suggested that the city work with the MDC and property owners near the Alewife Reservation to improve public access, create open space buffers abutting the Reservation, and minimize intrusions, such as parking lots, into natural areas. No specific areas of need or priorities were identified.

Park Trails

Park trails, pathways and "linear parks" serve several key functions – as an alternative for car-free commuters, as a vital form of safe, enjoyable access to community parks and large urban parks, and as a pleasure in themselves. Improving or creating several park trail connections would enhance all of these functions for Cambridge. With input from Cara Seiderman, Community Development's Transportation Program Manager and using information developed by the Cambridge Pedestrian and Bicycle Committees, we identified the need for the following connections: Charles River access from all neighborhoods; connecting Danehy Park and Fresh Pond Reservation; connecting Fresh Pond and the Charles River Reservation along Fresh Pond Parkway or along the Watertown Railroad spur; improving Alewife Reservation access; improving connections from North Point to the Charles River Basin and Boston; and connecting the Minuteman Commuter Path to the Charles River Reservation. Also discussed were: increasing access over the commuter railway to Danehy Park; providing an opportunity along the Grand Junction railway for a multipurpose pathway connecting East Cambridge, Area 4, and Cambridgeport to Magazine Beach; and connecting the North Point area through Somerville to Linear Park at Cedar Street. (SEE FIGURE 3-5, AREAS OF NEED - LARGE URBAN PARK AND PARK TRAILS.)

Some of these park trails and pathways are more feasible than others. The areas of need discussed most often were: working with Somerville and MBTA on the trail across Somerville from Linear Park at Cedar Street to Lechmere, and connecting existing trails as much as possible rather than, or prior to, constructing entirely new ones. Establishing the connection through Somerville would allow

East Cambridge residents to travel outside the city utilizing a non-motorized, off-road, multi-use trail. In addition, commuters on the Minuteman Commuter Bikeway could use the extended Linear Path to reach Lechmere and continue over the Museum of Science Bridge to the new parks being created with the Central Artery project.

The rail and trail conversion of all or part of the Grand Junction railroad, which runs north and south in the eastern half of the city, would improve access to Magazine Beach from eastern Cambridge as well as enhancing walking and biking options generally. The small connector from Fresh Pond Reservation to Danehy Park also ranks as a priority.

Top Priorities:

- Grand Junction railway pathway
- Creating a direct connection along the between Fresh Pond Reservation and Danehy Park
- Advocacy of a rail and trail conversion of an older railroad line through Somerville that connects North Point and Linear Park at Cedar Street.

Summary of Needs and Priorities

Our recommendations, which are presented on Figures 3-2, 3-3, 3-4, 3-5 and Figure 3-6, Top Priorities, locate areas in Cambridge that should be considered for open space acquisition. As indicated, Figures 3-2 through 3-5 include all the areas of need described above for all types of parks. Figure 3-6 includes only those needs that were determined to be top priorities for open space acquisition.

3.3 PARK NEEDS BY USE

To determine the need for a specific park use, we relied on both the presentations by Paul Ryder and William Bates and our own committee resources. Several of the committee members have been involved with youth sports leagues and adult leagues and were able to provide substantial background information about them. Through these discussions we were able to address growth trends, intensity of use, and programming issues pertaining to all of these sports. Our recommendations below reflect these discussions.

Football

It was discussed that upon reconstruction of Russell Field, with its planned football field, another football field would not be necessary. The football field at Russell Field will allow the CRLS to carry out their practices and games. No additional needs or priorities were identified.

Soccer/Field Hockey/Lacrosse

The continued popularity of youth soccer and the projected growth in proposed and existing School Department athletics raises some concerns about field usage; namely, how can Cambridge offer more sports opportunities and still meet field needs? After some discussion we concluded that rather than seeking to produce separate new fields for soccer, field hockey and lacrosse, the city should concentrate on creating 3 to 4 standard multipurpose fields that could serve all these sports. A standard of 70 x 120 yards was established an appropriate size for these multipurpose fields. Locating fields close to each other is an optimal condition for high school field sports.

Top Priority:
The creation of 3 to 4 multipurpose fields that would accommodate soccer, field hockey and lacrosse equally is a priority. If possible, these fields should be located in the eastern half of Cambridge.

Baseball

From both city staff and youth program representatives we learned that little league and other baseball programs are in need of practice space. The problem is that while one field serves two teams simultaneously during games, only one team is able to practice on any given field at one time. We discussed that a practical way to increase the usable field space would be to provide batting cages at some of the sites, so multiple teams could practice simultaneously. City recreation staff also informed us that another field was needed for high school baseball.

Top Priority:
One additional full-sized high school baseball field.

Softball

The recent growth in girls' softball reinforces the need for "expanding" practice space by installing batting cages. Although adult softball leagues remain popular in the city current facilities appear to meet their needs. No specific needs or priorities were identified.

Basketball/Tennis/Street Hockey

We discussed that basketball, tennis and street hockey are all played on hard surface courts and that sometimes tennis courts have been converted to basketball or street hockey courts upon request by neighborhood residents based on changing citywide and neighborhood use. Since these uses do not require much space, they can be accommodated easily into existing or new parks. Due to the relative ease of creating these spaces and our evaluation that there are currently sufficient numbers of them, we did not rate them as priorities. No specific needs or priorities were identified.

400-meter Track

As there is a track planned for construction at Danehy Park in the next two to three years, we decided not to discuss further the need for a track in the city. We supported the construction of the track at Danehy Park in order to meet high school and general resident needs. No further needs or priorities were identified.

Golf Course

The existing nine-hole golf course at Fresh Pond Reservation was considered to be adequate to satisfy the needs of Cambridge residents. No specific needs or priorities were identified.

Stunt Park

As skateboarding and rollerblading often occur in open public plazas, conflicts sometimes result with other informal recreational uses. We discussed the topic of stunt parks, open paved areas constructed specifically for rollerblading, skateboarding and trick bicycling, to respond to these conflicts and to provide recreational activities for preteens in our open space system.

Information was provided on the efforts of other communities to create stunt parks. Boston is planning to build three; one is being planned in Lexington; and the following communities have existing stunt parks: Scituate, Centerville, Andover, Beverley, Sudbury, and Newburyport. A number of other Massachusetts communities are in the process of designing stunt parks. We concluded that more research was needed on stunt parks to address design, staffing, and liability issues, and that it may be a good topic for a future committee addressing open

space issues (see Chapter 4). One trade-off in constructing a single-purpose facility like a stunt park is that the space is not available for other informal recreational activities. The need to conduct additional research was identified as a priority.

Running/Walking and Bicycling/Rollerblading

We endorse the improvements proposed under the Fresh Pond and Charles River Master Plans as important for, among other things, improving running, walking, bicycling and rollerblading. Specifically, we suggested that either another overpass over Memorial Drive or a light at the intersection of Pleasant and Memorial Drive would be desirable to improve pedestrian and bicycle access to Magazine Beach. Our other recommendations are listed in the Park Trails section of the Park Types discussion above.

Top Priority:

Priorities include those identified for Park Trails (described under Park Types, above) and improved linkages with Magazine Beach.

Community Gardening

We discussed the importance of community gardening as an organized open space use. The Cambridge Conservation Commission is currently preparing a report on the status of the 13 active community gardens in Cambridge. Six of these gardens are privately owned and the rest are owned by the city. In the city-owned gardens, a committee governs their use, while the private gardens are often run by one or two individual members. Through our discussion, we determined that community gardens should be planned for and encouraged where appropriate in our open space system. No specific needs or priorities were identified.

Other Informal Uses

Although passive park uses lack organized voices in the community, we believe that they are just as vital to living in the city and are probably enjoyed by more residents. In planning future parks and revamping existing ones, the city needs to provide opportunities for things like: sunbathing, dog walking, playing board games, kite flying, listening to music, nature walking, playing catch, and reading. Informal active recreational uses are important activities that contribute to quality of life in Cambridge.

We also discussed the effect of park design on the popularity and success of a park. A thoughtful design that includes plantings, public artwork, and shaded pathways can create outdoor “rooms” without requiring substantial space. We strongly advocated including thoughtfully designed passive opportunities whenever and wherever possible.

Top Priority:

More emphasis on passive uses throughout the city. If well designed, such uses can be accommodated in small spaces.

Summary of Needs and Priorities

We recommend that the City focus on creating: three to four multipurpose fields in the eastern half of the city to accommodate soccer, field hockey and lacrosse; one full-sized baseball field; and improved trail connections in various locations. In addition, open spaces for passive uses should be provided wherever possible throughout the city.

4.0 Recommendations and Next Steps

4.1 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OPEN SPACE ACQUISITION CRITERIA

As the City evaluates future open space acquisitions, we believe first consideration should be given to the park types and park uses we identified as Top Priorities in Chapter 3 and second consideration should be given to the remaining Areas of Need. Our top priority recommendations are presented in Table 4-1.

Through this committee process we have come to understand that the process of acquiring land to be used as open space will not follow a straight-line path. After months of careful research and passionate discussion, we have isolated a few critical areas where more and better open space could make a tremendous difference. We recognize that open space acquisition will ultimately rely on a combination of several factors including feasibility, cost, and opportunity. Our recommendations will give the city a sound basis for open space acquisition decisions.

In Cambridge, increasing the amount of public open space will be a matter of capitalizing on opportunities as they arise, and therefore, we recommend that the city be poised for action and seriously consider any opportunity to add to or improve the city's open space system.

4.2 OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

During our discussions, we noted a range of issues which, while not central to our mission of developing open space acquisition criteria, were nonetheless important aspects of developing and maintaining an outstanding open space system. The following recommendations are taken from those discussions and are intended to provide the framework for other continuing actions of the city, relative to the open space system.

Acquisition

We discussed the difficulties inherent in buying land for open space in the current competitive real estate market environment, including the required speed of response to private land sales and increasing land prices. The city has acted quickly on several occasions to acquire open space in key areas of need, most recently with the acquisition of a property at 238 Broadway near the Maynard Elementary School. However, we discussed that other opportunities may be missed by not being able to respond quickly enough or offer competitive bids.

Consequently, we discussed the possibility of creating or partnering with an organization authorized to act with the speed needed to procure land as it becomes available in top priority areas. The non-profit Trust for Public Land is one such possible partner as their mandate is to acquire important open spaces, although it was noted that fees are incurred for each transaction. In the affordable housing arena, certain local non-profit organizations, i.e., Just-a-Start Corporation and Homeowner's Rehab Inc., perform this function with funding from a variety of city, state and federal programs. If equivalent open space non-profits existed locally, they would be appropriate partners. We recommend that the city consider forming or closely affiliating with such an organization.

Acquiring new open space will be difficult, balancing competing needs against finite resources. One model for decision-making that we discussed was the Cambridge Affordable Housing Trust, established by state legislation to receive and allocate city funds for the creation and preservation of affordable housing. We believe that if funds for open space become available more regularly, as with the recent allocation of $2 million in the city's fiscal year 2000 budget, it would be useful for a standing committee to work with the city administration in an advisory capacity. We recommend that the city consider establishing a permanent committee dedicated to providing advice on open space acquisition and enhancement.

Table 4-1 **Top Priority Recommendations**

Park Types	Recommended Area of Cambridge
Tot Lots	▪ North Prospect Street ▪ Porter Square
Neighborhood Parks	▪ Area 4/Sennott Park area ▪ Central Square ▪ Porter Square ▪ Prospect Street
School Parks	▪ Fletcher Elementary ▪ Graham and Parks Elementary ▪ Longfellow Elementary ▪ Maynard Elementary[7]
Community Parks	▪ Area 4/Sennott Park area ▪ Mid-Cambridge ▪ Porter Square/Northern Agassiz ▪ Upper Cambridgeport
Park Trails	▪ Grand Junction railway pathway ▪ Creating a direct connection between Fresh Pond Reservation and Danehy Park ▪ Advocacy of a rail and trail conversion of an older railroad line through Somerville that connects North Point and Linear Park at Cedar Street.

Park Uses	Recommendation
Soccer/Field Hockey/Lacrosse	The creation of 3 to 4 multipurpose fields that would accommodate soccer, field hockey and lacrosse equally. If possible, these fields should be located in the eastern half of Cambridge.
Baseball	One additional full-sized high school baseball field.
Informal Uses	More emphasis on passive uses throughout the city. If well designed, such uses can be accommodated in small spaces.

[7] *NOTE: The City's recent acquisition of property at 238 Broadway, which occurred in October 1999 as we were finalizing our recommendations, is expected to address the need for a field at the Maynard School when this property is converted to open space.*

Enhancement and Maintenance of Open Space

We noted early in our discussions that enhancement and increased maintenance of existing open space provides opportunities for expanded use of such space, in effect expanding the supply of open space. This could be considered "acquisition" through increased maintenance. Along these lines, providing additional recreation fields and improving field programming will make it possible to "rest" fields, keeping a field out of action for a season to allow the grass to recover, thereby enhancing the value of this open space.

We also discussed the importance of thoughtful park design, especially in providing more informal and passive open space within parks. If well designed, such informal and passive use areas can be incorporated along the edges of parks, allowing for active recreation to occur within, or in small "lost," or underutilized, spaces in different parts of the city. We believe that such spaces can benefit large numbers of residents and accommodate a variety of informal and passive uses.

Additionally, as noted in Chapter 3, an important strategy for the city will be "bundling" – looking for available properties that are either contiguous to or near existing open space to create larger parks. This strategy could be especially effective in augmenting open space in eastern Cambridge. Some consideration should also be given to street closures as an additional way of augmenting existing parks without actually purchasing additional land.

We strongly recommend expanded resources for open space enhancement, maintenance and design, with a focus on facilities in priority areas and for priority uses.

Access to Open Space

As discussed previously, our overall assessment of the city's open space system addressed access to open space. For community and large urban parks, increased access by all modes is especially important because these parks draw users from all parts of the city. Improving access might range from improving MBTA transit or other shuttle service to designing safer ways to reach parks that are isolated by very busy streets or railroad tracks. Some examples of parks with access concerns include: Danehy Park, for those who live in the eastern portion of the city, or the future North Point park, for users who would need to cross the Monsignor O'Brien Highway and Ahern Field. In addition, automobile underpasses or pedestrain/bicycle overpasses (such as those along Storrow Drive) could allow pedestrians to cross dangerous roads at grade and while maintaining roadway volumes. Although expensive, these underpasses should be considered when major road improvements are planned. These examples illustrate the importance of appropriate transportation networks within the open space system, especially for school age children.

The recommendations in Chapter 3 for improved trail systems would also assist in increasing access to open space because they would increase bicycle mobility between neighborhoods. Other efforts could be directed at improving MBTA transit or other shuttle service to key open space facilities. We recommend that continuing efforts be made to expand the transportation system in Cambridge as it applies to effective improvement of the trail and transit service to major open space facilities.

Private Open Space Opportunities

For many years, the city has benefited from informal access to some large open spaces belonging to Harvard University, MIT, and other private landowners. We believe that the city should build on this example by incorporating a consistent open space review during the permitting process for large development projects. Those that incorporate appropriate park uses in the "areas of need" or "top priority" areas identified in this report should be positively evaluated in terms of open space issues.

We also discussed other options for maximizing the open space benefits of private development, including the possibility of adopting linkage requirements similar to those for affordable housing. These requirements would result in financial contributions to a city open space system. Exploring such a funding mechanism would be a good topic for a future, standing committee on open space issues.

Summary of Next Steps

In summary, we recommend that the city consider the following next steps while pursuing open space acquisition opportunities according to our established criteria:

- establish a permanent committee dedicated to providing advice on open space acquisition and enhancement;
- form or closely affiliate with an open space non-profit;
- expand resources for open space enhancement, maintenance and design, with a focus on facilities in priority areas and for priority uses;
- continue the city's efforts to improve access to open space; and
- incorporate review of open space into the permitting process for large development projects.

Appendices

Appendix A

Park Types

	Park Name (w/ Neighborhood Number)	Park Size (Acres)	Tot Lot	Neighborhood Park	School	Community Park	Large Urban Park	Other
1	Centanni Way	0.5						1
1	Charles Park	1	1					1
1	Costa Lopez Taylor Park	0.8	1					
1	Front Park	1						1
1	Gold Star Mothers Park (Gore Street Park)	3.6	1	1				
1	Hurley Playground	0.3	1					
1	Kennedy School/Ahern Field	2.6	1	1	1	1		
1	Lechmere Canal Park	7.5						1
1	Silva Park	0.3	1					
	NEIGH #1 SUBTOTAL	17.6	6	2	1	1	0	4
2	Charles Riverfront (MDC)	16						1
2	Point Park (CRA)	0.8						1
	NEIGH #2 SUBTOTAL	16.8	0	0	0	0	0	2
3	Elm Street Park	0.3						1
3	Harrington School/ Donnelly Field	7.2	1	1	1	1		
3	Warren Pals/Gannet	0.4	1					
	NEIGH #3 SUBTOTAL	7.9	2	1	1	1	0	1
4	Columbia Street Park	1.1	1	1				
4	Fletcher School	0.2	1		1			
4	Harvard Street Playground	1	1					
4	Market Street Playground	0.1	1					
4	Maynard School	0.1			1			
4	Pine Street	0.1	1					
4	Sennott Park	2.7	1	1		1		
	NEIGH #4 SUBTOTAL	5.3	6	2	2	1	0	0
5	82 Pacific Street Park	1.4						
5	Alberico Playground	0.5	1					
5	Cambridgeport School	N/A			1			
5	Charles Riverfront (MDC)	19					1	
5	Dana Park	1.4	1	1				
5	David Nunes Playground	0.9	1	1				
5	Fort Washington	1						1
5	Fulmore Playground	0.4	1					
5	Graham and Parks School	0.1	1		1			
5	Hastings Square/Parrow Park	0.7		1				1
5	Lindstrom Field/Morse School	1.3	1		1			
5	Lopez Playground	0.1	1					
	NEIGH #5 SUBTOTAL	26.8	7	3	3	0	1	2
6	Cooper (Hancock) Playground	0.2	1					
6	Library Park/Joan Lorenz Park	3.4	1	1				
6	Longfellow School	0.2	2		1			
6	Maple Avenue	0.1	1					
6	Paine Playground	0.4	1					
6	Vellucci Plaza	0.1						1
6	Wilder/Lee Street	0.2	1					
	NEIGH #6 SUBTOTAL	4.6	7	1	1	0	0	1
7	Charles Riverfront (MDC)	6						1
7	Corporal Burns	*1.3*	1	1				
7	Cronin Park	0.1						1
7	Franklin Street	0.1						1
7	Hoyt Field	4.5	2	1		1		
7	M.L. King School/ King Open School Playground	0.7	2		1			
7	Macelroy Park	0.1						1
7	Michael Sullivan Park	0.2						1
7	Riverside Press Park	3.1	1	1				
	NEIGH #7 SUBTOTAL	16.1	6	3	1	2	0	5

Park Types (continued)

Park Name (w/ Neighborhood Number)	Park Size (Acres)	Tot Lot	Neighborhood Park	School	Community Park	Large Urban Park	Other
8 Agassiz/Alden Playground	0.1	1		1			
8 Sacramento Field	1.2		1				
NEIGH #8 SUBTOTAL	1.3	1	1	1	0	0	0
9 Cambridge Common	8.6	1			1		
9 Corcoran (Raymond Street) Park	2.7	1	1				
9 Danehy Park, St. Peters Field	57.2	3	1			1	
9 Flagstaff Park	1.2						1
9 Peabody School	0.6	1		1			
NEIGH #9 SUBTOTAL	70.3	6	2	1	1	1	0
10 Charles Riverfront (MDC)	14						1
10 Fresh Pond Reservation (*Neighborhood Ten portion*) Kingsley Park	15		1		1		1
10 John F. Kennedy Park (MDC)	1						1
10 Larch Road Playground	0.1	1					
10 Longfellow Park	2.2						1
10 Lowell Park (MDC)	3.2						1
10 Lowell School	0.5	1					
10 Tobin School/ Father CallahanPark	3.3	1	1	1	1		
10 Winthrop Square Park	0.3						1
NEIGH #10 SUBTOTAL	39.6	3	2	1	2	0	6
11 Alewife Reservation (MDC)	115						1
11 Clarendon Avenue Park	0.4	1					
11 Fitzgerald School/Rindge Field, McMath Park, Bergin Park	6.5	1	1	1	1		
11 Gibbons Playground	0.1	1					
11 Linear Park	4						1
11 Rev. Williams Playground (Sleeper Park)	0.6	1					
11 Russell Field, Comeau Field, McCrehan Pool (MDC)	10.3		1				
NEIGH #11 SUBTOTAL	136.9	4	2	1	1	0	2
12 Blair Pond/ Wellington Brook (MDC)	6.8						1
12 Fresh Pond Reservation (*Cambridge Highlands portion*)	60					1	1
12 Rafferty Playground	2.3	1	1				
NEIGH #12 SUBTOTAL	69.1	1	1	0	0	1	2
13 Fresh Pond Reservation (*Strawberry Hill portion only*) Glacken Field	80	1	1				
13 Haggerty School	0.5	1		1			
NEIGH #13 SUBTOTAL	80.5	2	1	1	0	0	0
TOTALS	*492.8*	*51*	*21*	*14*	*8*	*3*	*25*

Cambridge Neighborhoods

Neighborhood Number	Neighborhood Name
1	East Cambridge
2	MIT
3	Wellington/Harrington
4	Area Four
5	Cambridgeport
6	Mid-Cambridge
7	Riverside
8	Agassiz
9	Neighborhood 9
10	Neighborhood 10
11	North Cambridge
12	Cambridge Highlands
13	Strawberry Hill

Appendix B

Park Uses

	Park Name (w/Neighborhood Number)	Park Size (Acres)	Football	Soccer (Adult)	Soccer (Youth)	Field Hockey	LL Baseball	Softball	Basketball	Tennis	Street Hockey	Track	Lacrosse	Golf Course
1	Centanni Way	0.5												
1	Charles Park	1												
1	Costa Lopez Taylor Park	0.8							1					
1	Front Park	1												
1	Gold Star Mothers Park (Gore Street Park)	3.6			1			1	2					
1	Hurley Playground	0.3												
1	Kennedy School/Ahern Field	2.6			2		1	1	2		1			
1	Lechmere Canal Park	7.5												
1	Silva Park	0.3												
	NEIGH #1 SUBTOTAL	17.6	0	0	3	0	1	2	5	0	1	0	0	0
2	Charles Riverfront (MDC)	16												
2	Point Park (CRA)	0.8												
	NEIGH #2 SUBTOTAL	16.8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
3	Elm Street Park	0.3												
3	Harrington School/Donnelly Field	7.2			1		2	1	2					
3	Warren Pals/Gannet	0.4												
	NEIGH #3 SUBTOTAL	7.9	0	0	1	0	2	1	2	0	0	0	0	0
4	Columbia Street Park	1.1							1					
4	Fletcher School	0.2												
4	Harvard Street Playground	1								1				
4	Market Street Playground	0.1												
4	Maynard School	0.1												
4	Pine Street	0.1												

Park Uses (continued)

	Park Name (w/Neighborhood Number)	Park Size (Acres)	Football	Soccer (Adult)	Soccer (Youth)	Field Hockey	LL Baseball	Softball	Basketball	Tennis	Street Hockey	Track	Lacrosse	Golf Course
4	Sennott Park	2.7			2			1	2					
	NEIGH #4 SUBTOTAL	5.3	0	0	2	0	0	1	3	1	0	0	0	0
5	82 Pacific Street Park	1.4			1									
5	Alberico Playground	0.5							1					
5	Cambridgeport School	N/A												
5	Charles Riverfront (MDC)	19					1							
5	Dana Park	1.4							1					
5	David Nunes Playground	0.9							1		1			
5	Fort Washington	1												
5	Fulmore Playground	0.4												
5	Graham and Parks School	0.1												
5	Hastings Square/Parrow Park	0.7												
5	Lindstrom Field/Morse School	1.3					1		1					
5	Lopez Playground	0.1												
	NEIGH #5 SUBTOTAL	26.8	0	0	1	0	2	0	4	0	1	0	0	0
6	Cooper (Hancock) Playground	0.2												
6	Library Park/Joan Lorenz Park	3.4								2				
6	Longfellow School	0.2							1					
6	Maple Avenue	0.1												
6	Paine Playground	0.4							0.5					
6	Vellucci Plaza	0.1												
6	Wilder/Lee Street	0.2												
	NEIGH #6 SUBTOTAL	4.6	0	0	0	0	0	0	1.5	2	0	0	0	0
7	Charles Riverfront (MDC)	6												
7	Corporal Burns	*1.3*							*2*		*1*			
7	Cronin Park	0.1												

Park Uses (continued)

Park Name (w/Neighborhood Number)	Park Size (Acres)	Football	Soccer (Adult)	Soccer (Youth)	Field Hockey	LL Baseball	Softball	Basketball	Tennis	Street Hockey	Track	Lacrosse	Golf Course
7 Franklin Street	0.1												
7 Hoyt Field	4.5			1			1	2	2				
7 M.L. King School/ King Open School Playground	0.7							1					
7 Macelroy Park	0.1												
7 Michael Sullivan Park	0.2												
7 Riverside Press Park	3.1							2	2				
NEIGH #7 SUBTOTAL	16.1	0	0	1	0	0	1	7	4	1	0	0	0
8 Agassiz/Alden Playground	0.1												
8 Sacramento Field	1.2			1				1					
NEIGH #8 SUBTOTAL	1.3	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
9 Cambridge Common	8.6	1		2			1						
9 Corcoran (Raymond Street) Park	2.7						1	2					
9 Danehy Park, St. Peters Field	57.2		3	1			4	2			1		
9 Flagstaff Park	1.2												
9 Peabody School	0.6							1					
NEIGH #9 SUBTOTAL	70.3	1	3	3	0	0	6	5	0	0	1	0	0
10 Charles Riverfront (MDC)	14												
10 Fresh Pond Reservation (*Neighborhood Ten portion*) Kingsley Park	15												
10 John F. Kennedy Park (MDC)	1												
10 Larch Road Playground	0.1							0.5					
10 Longfellow Park	2.2												
10 Lowell Park (MDC)	3.2												
10 Lowell School	0.5												
10 Tobin School/Father CallahanPark	3.3			1		1		1					

Park Uses (continued)

Park Name (w/Neighborhood Number)	Park Size (Acres)	Football	Soccer (Adult)	Soccer (Youth)	Field Hockey	LL Baseball	Softball	Basketball	Tennis	Street Hockey	Track	Lacrosse	Golf Course
10 Winthrop Square Park	0.3												
NEIGH #10 SUBTOTAL	39.6	0	0	1	0	1	0	1.5	0	0	0	0	0
11 Alewife Reservation (MDC)	115												
11 Clarendon Avenue Park	0.4												
11 Fitzgerald School/Rindge Field, McMath Park, Bergin Park	6.5							3	3				
11 Gibbons Playground	0.1												
11 Linear Park	4												
11 Rev. Williams Playground (Sleeper Park)	0.6							1					
11 Russell Field, Comeau Field, McCrehan Pool (MDC)	10.3	1	1			2							
NEIGH #11 SUBTOTAL	136.9	1	1	0	0	2	0	4	3	0	0	0	0
12 Blair Pond/Wellington Brook (MDC)	6.8												
12 Fresh Pond Reservation (*Cambridge Highlands portion*)	60												0.5
12 Rafferty Playground	2.3			1				0.5					
NEIGH #12 SUBTOTAL	69.1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0.5	0	0	0	0	0.5
13 Fresh Pond Reservation (*Strawberry Hill portion only) Glacken* Field	80		1				1	1	3				0.5
13 Haggerty School	0.5												
NEIGH #13 SUBTOTAL	80.5	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	3	0	0	0	0.5
TOTALS	*492.8*	*2*	*5*	*14*	*0*	*8*	*12*	*35.5*	*13*	*3*	*1*	*0*	*1*

Note: Refer to Cambridge Neighborhood Key on Page 45