

**TOWN OF GRAY**  
**GRAY TOWN COUNCIL**  
**AGENDA • FEBRUARY 15, 2022**

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**Gray Town  
Council Workshop**

**Online via Zoom**  
<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82816626852>

**6:00 PM**

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**CALL to ORDER**

Roll Call

**WORKSHOP**

- Open Space Plan **6:00 - 6:25 PM**
- Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee update **6:25 - 6:55 PM**

*\* The Town of Gray is an equal opportunity employer and complies with all applicable equal access to public accommodations law. If you are planning to attend a Town Council or Town committee or board meeting and need assistance with a physical disability, please contact the Town Manager's office at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting to have the Town assist you. 657-3339. TTY 657-3931.*



# Town of Gray Open Space Plan

Prepared by the Gray Open Space Committee

1/24/22



# Acknowledgements

The Town of Gray is grateful to the following staff and volunteers for their work in producing this plan:

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Bob Coleman, OSC Chair

Kaitlyn Bernard, OSC Member

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# Gray Open Space Plan Introduction

We, the members of the Open Space Committee, love Gray. We love its people, its community, and most importantly, the rural character of our neighborhoods.

Like all communities, Gray will continue to grow. Houses will be built, new businesses will come and expand, and our population will increase. By careful planning and cooperation with landowners, developers, and our Town government, we can manage that growth to preserve the character we love. We want to ensure our children's children can enjoy the outdoors the way we do, and that our natural resources flourish as we grow. We hope all interested stakeholders join us to design this future for Gray.

## Executive Summary

On November 3rd, 2020, the Town of Gray formally adopted its 2020 Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan Steering Committee was created in 2019 to update the Town's Comprehensive Plan from 2003. This major effort involved a sustained focus on reaching out to the public to update the Town's vision for what Gray could be in the future, to identify the priorities, challenges and opportunities Gray could be facing over the next 10-15 years, and to articulate the closely held values of the people who live and work in Gray.

In November 2020, almost 80 percent of Gray voters approved our new Comprehensive Plan, which lists three priorities that have guided the development of this Open Space Plan. The concerns the citizens communicated to the 2020 Comprehensive Plan Committee were clear. Preservation of open space is identified among the top three priorities of the comprehensive Plan:

- Focus on moving people safely through Gray and getting around town via walking, biking, car, or public transportation;
- Protect Gray's rural character and natural resources;
- Invest in the Village and community program.

Even prior to the formal adoption of the Comprehensive Plan, residents and Town staff had been planning and building bike-pedestrian trails and improvements, keeping and maintaining ATV and snowmobile trails, and strengthening and expanding the Libby Hill trails. These people began to see a need for a plan for doing this more systematically, while respecting landowners' needs and wishes. This led the Gray Town Council to establish the Open Space Committee in 2019 to develop Gray's first-ever Open Space Plan, and (once adopted) to help implement it going forward.



# Our Vision

The Open Space Committee formalized a vision statement to capture the sentiment identified in the Comprehensive Plan:

*The Town of Gray will develop a system of parks, trails, and open space that contribute to Gray retaining its rural and natural resources by protecting natural habitats, outdoor recreational areas and trails, scenic landscapes, historic places, agricultural land, and clean air and water. Our slogan is “Protect and Connect!”*

At the heart of this vision is the preservation of open space to protect habitat for animals, particularly endangered species, as well as for the ongoing enjoyment of current and future residents. Without a conscious effort to preserve access, the open space many of us enjoy today will surely disappear. Gray’s land area is about 46 square miles, about the same size as the Town of Windham. However, our population per square mile (~191 people per square mile) is significantly below Windham’s (~337 pp/sq mile), highlighting the rural character of Gray.

Since the 2010 census, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, Gray has grown about 6.5 percent and there has been significant new housing construction, leading to the loss of open space and trails. With careful planning, and by working cooperatively with landowners, we can slow the ongoing erosion of open space and protect some to be available for generations to come. We do not seek to stop the development of new housing and infrastructure, but to ensure our growth is managed in a way that is consistent with the stated goals of our Comprehensive Plan – to protect Gray’s rural character and our natural resources.

## Purpose of the Open Space Plan

The purpose of this Open Space Plan (OSP) is to focus and align the work of the Gray Town Council, boards, committees, staff, clubs, and residents in the areas of land access and preservation for all kinds of recreation. It supports implementation of Gray’s 2020 Comprehensive Plan, particularly regarding preserving the town’s rural character and residents’ quality of life. It outlines specific actions that can be taken by the Town to manage, protect and improve Gray’s natural resources and open space, and provides a framework for decision-making by Gray’s residents, Town officials, and Town staff.



The plan also includes a realistic look at the town’s assets, and strategies for obtaining resources needed to help implement this plan. These strategies include partnering with local landowners, regional land trusts, funding sources, and other stakeholders. The OSP will be a tool that can be used during permit reviews, long-term land use planning, grant writing, and open space project planning. Finally, it includes practical proposals for maintaining existing and future recreational open space.

## Open Space, Defined

The term “open space” can mean different things to different people. We have chosen to simply define open space as:

*“Public and private lands that provide recreational, environmental, and social value to Gray.”*

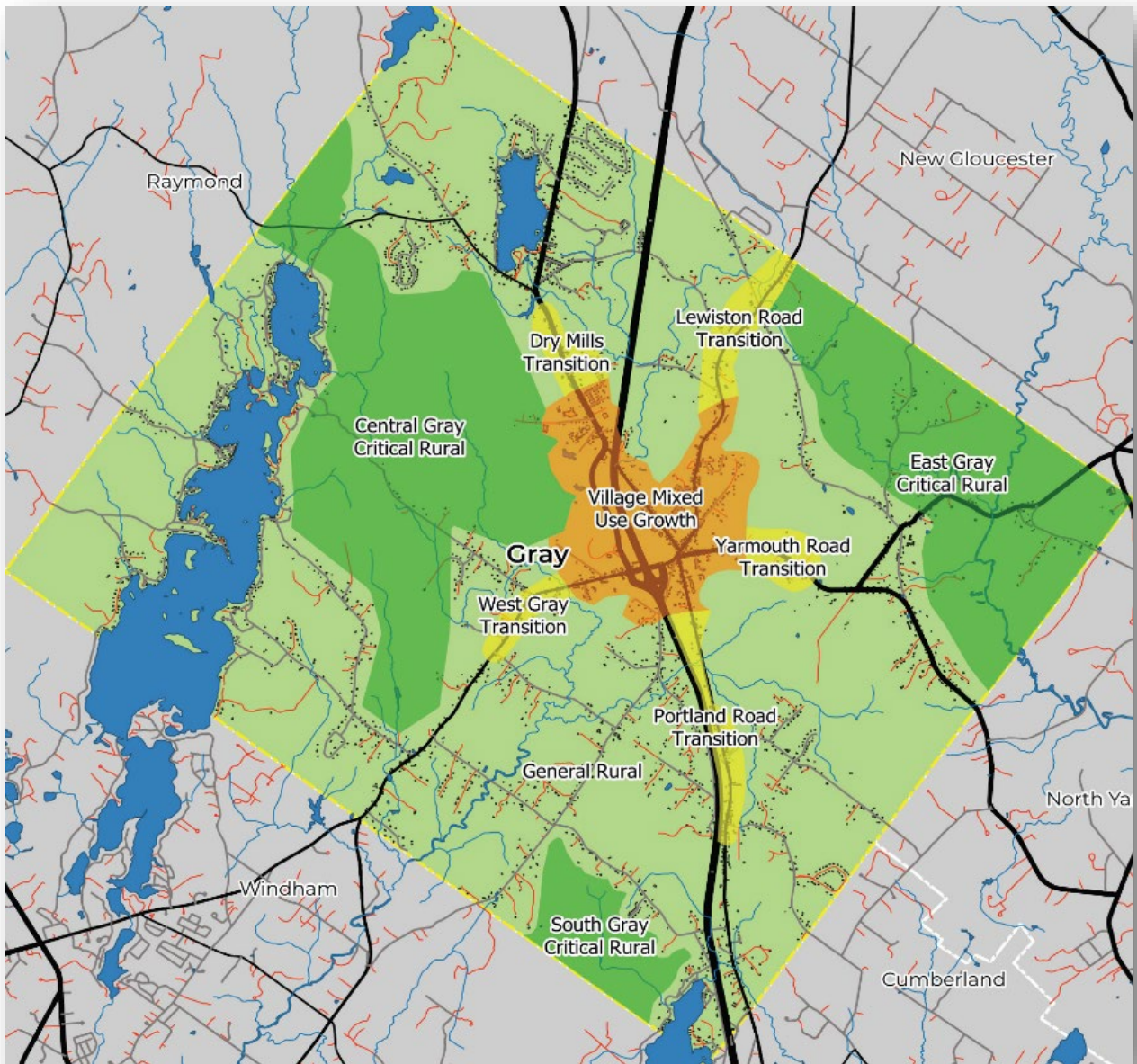
Open space would, for example, include the following types of areas:

- Publicly owned parks, playgrounds, and ballfields
- Land or water set aside for habitat protection
- Rivers, lakes and ponds, and the related public access thereto
- Agricultural land, working farmland, orchards and timberland
- Land not developed for residential, commercial, industrial, or institutional use
- Trails that connect areas of the town
- Land preserved for cultural and/or historic purposes

The Future Land Use map below, taken from the 2020 Comprehensive Plan, provides an overview of where growth should be directed - or limited - in various parts of the town. This map will serve to guide future decisions with respect to the preservation of open space. Definitions from the Comprehensive Plan for the terms on the map are as follows:

**Growth Areas:** Places that are “suitable for orderly residential, commercial or industrial development” and where “most development projected over ten years is directed.”





**Rural Areas (light green):** Places “deserving of some level of regulatory protection from unrestricted development” and are the places “away from which most development projects over ten years are diverted.”

**Critical Rural Areas (dark green):** Places that deserve “the maximum protection from development to preserve natural resources and related economic activities.”



**Transition Areas (yellow):** Places that are “suitable for a share of projected residential, commercial, or industrial development but that is neither intended to accept the amount or density of development appropriate for a growth area nor intended to provide the level of protection for rural resources afforded in a rural area or critical rural area.”

**Village Mixed Use Growth Area (orange):** The Village Core Growth Area encompasses the Village and the surrounding area. The Village Core is centered on the intersection of Route 26/Shaker Road, Route 202/Lewiston Road, Route 115/Yarmouth Road, and Route 100/Portland Road. This area is envisioned as easily walkable, and home to a diversity of small, local businesses, services, and restaurants, accompanied by higher density residential development.

While using the 2020 Comprehensive Plan as its foundation, the Open Space Plan will align with, and complements the implementation of, several other existing and future plans, such as the Bike-Ped plan and the Gray Village Master Plan. The existing plans are listed in Appendix A.

## Existing Open Space Inventory

Gray is relatively open compared to many communities, especially those to our south in Cumberland County. However, while Gray has preserved *some* open space, we have far less Town-owned open space than many communities (for example, the Town of Cumberland-owned Rines Forest is nearly twice the size of all the land owned by the Town of Gray). The most accessible and most preserved open space is land that is owned by the Town and made available for public use. In total, the Town owns approximately 174 acres of land, though only some of that is accessible for public recreation. In addition, the State of Maine owns over 400 acres of primarily open space land in Gray. Below is a list of land owned by Gray and land owned by the State of Maine, some of which is accessible for public use:

### Town of Gray Owned Properties

Name	Location	Map/Lot	Acreege
Dry Mills Fire Barn	249 Shaker Rd	013-015-018-000	0.50
Wilkie's Beach	Mayberry Rd	013-107-013-000	0.89
Wilkie's Beach Parking Lot	Mayberry Rd	013-107-014-000	2.76
Libby Hill Land	Libby Hill Rd	026-015-003-000	73.00
Recycling Ctr / Garage / Fire	125 Shaker Rd	027-020-010-000	26.51
Little League Field	1 Main St	035-402-047-001	1.50
Village Gateway	33 Main St	035-403-027-000	4.70



Name	Location	Map/Lot	Acreage
Village Gateway	Lewiston Rd	035-403-028-000	0.68
Village Gateway	5 Lewiston Rd	035-403-029-000	1.70
Town Hall	24 Main St	035-405-001-000	0.95
Lab Building	20 Main St	035-405-002-000	6.50
Ridgeview Land	Tamarack Ln	042-013-191-000	15.00
Cemetery Association	1 Main St	043-402-001-001	27.69
Veterans Memorial Park	9 Main St	043-402-051-000	0.12
Fire Station	2 Turnpike Acres	043-404-001-004	0.90
Newbegin Center	22 Main St	043-405-002-001	0.33
Parking Lot	5 Yarmouth Rd	043-405-023-000	0.51
Library	5 Hancock St	043-405-046-000	1.60
Manahan Wildlife Refuge	96 Portland Rd	051-031-002-000	8.00
Retained For Public Use	90 Whitney Rd	069-041-038-000	0.43
Central Fire Barn	1 Main St	700-402-000-000	0.10
		<b>Total:</b>	<b>174.37</b>

### State of Maine Owned Properties

Name	Location	Map/Lot	Acreage
Maine Wildlife Park	160 Weymouth Road	009-016-002-000	148.00
Fish Hatchery	155 Weymouth Road	014-016-003-000	52.00
Pineland Public Reserve	193 Depot Road	038-044-008-000	86.60
Pineland Public Reserve	Depot Road	038-044-009-000	153.56
		<b>Total:</b>	<b>440.16</b>

In addition to land owned by the Town and the state, per the Gray Town Assessor's office, there are several parcels of land in Gray totaling nearly 215 acres that have been explicitly set aside as Open Space. While not necessarily *permanently* protected as open space, and while not necessarily *permanently* publicly accessible, these parcels nonetheless contribute a significant amount of open space to our community. Though we may not be able to hike across a large wetland, or ride our ATV across a remote woodlot, that open space land does still offer a benefit to our community. There is an environmental and aesthetic value to all open space, regardless of our direct use of it. Landowners who choose to protect open space should be applauded,



especially in the face of increasing economic pressure to develop their land and diminish our community’s open space. The parcels of land categorized in Gray as open space include the following:

### Town of Gray Open Space Properties

Location	Map/Lot	Acreage	Public Access
Campbell Shore Rd	048-012-092-000	7	Yes
Campbell Shore Rd	056-017-051-000	34	Yes
Depot Rd	037-039-203-000	21.8	No
Lewiston Road	021-026-042-000	78	Yes
Libby Hill Rd	026-015-002-000	29	Yes
Ramsdell Rd	034-014-009-000	19	Yes
Ramsdell Rd	026-014-010-000	26	Yes
	<b>Total</b>	<b>214.8</b>	

Finally, for many years the Town of Gray has encouraged or required new subdivisions to set aside open space consistent with our subdivision ordinances. Below is a list of open space set aside during the evolution of our subdivisions:

### Town of Gray Subdivision Open Space Properties

Owner Name	Location	Map/Lot	Acreage
Long Hill Estates Inc	Arlington Court	065-042-006-000	22.71
Forest Ridge Homeowners Assoc.	Cottage Rd	072-040-018-000	7
Cumberland-York	Depot Rd	037-039-014-000	23
Wedgewood Development Corp.	Doughty Farm Rd	059-037-052-000	15.54
Eagles Ridge Homeowners Assoc	Eagles Nest Rd	063-035-027-000	49.72
Eastfield Estates	Eastfield Dr	053-043-001-026	25.23
Ledgewood Farms	Fox Run Rd	062-027-001-002	19.52
Graystone Settlements	Graystone Rd	068-029-002-000	25.93
May Meadow Inc	May Meadow Drive	012-010-010-000	3.2
May Meadow Inc	May Meadow Drive	007-010-010-000	5.58
May Meadow Inc	May Meadow Rd	012-010-010-082	87.4
May Meadow Builders, Inc	Mayall Rd	036-025-421-000	10.7



Owner Name	Location	Map/Lot	Acreage
Long Hill Acres	Milliken Rd	064-036-032-000	2.64
Wayfarer Village, Inc	Mountain View Rd	041-303-284-000	36.07
Northbrook Association	Northbrook Dr	043-019-002-000	11
M-36 Associates	Northbrook Dr	035-019-002-000	7.2
Gorham Acres, Inc	Partridge Ln	044-032-074-000	7.01
Stave Mill Development	Stave Mill Rd	009-016-004-000	39.5
Lavoie Building & Remodeling	Straightline Road	063-030-008-200	15.87
Sunset View Condominiums	Sunset View	035-402-024-000	0.62
Chase Custom Homes, Inc	Taylor Lane	070-041-040-000	24.75
Chase Custom Homes, Inc	Taylor Lane	069-041-040-000	5.56
<Private>	West Gray Rd	067-022-017-000	15.98
Tz Properties, LLC	Whitney Rd	069-041-044-000	7.05
Birchpoint Properties LLC	Woodcock Drive	044-032-112-014	6.45
<Private>	Whitney Road	064-041-044-003	7.59
		<b>Total:</b>	<b>482.82</b>

Currently, open space set aside during the creation or expansion of a subdivision is generally privately held by the homeowners’ association managing that subdivision. While this open space may benefit the residents of that subdivision, it is typically not publicly accessible. In addition, too often the space set aside to satisfy the requirements of our subdivision ordinances is not the most desirable from the perspective of its recreational value. While it may provide excellent wildlife habitat, a significant value, it may not offer any outdoor recreational value for even the residents of that subdivision.

To these points, this Open Space Plan recommends that going forward, when open space is set aside during the creation or expansion of a subdivision, the following guidelines be considered:

- Require that the open space be available for public use, not only for the residents of that subdivision;
- Encourage the open space be designed and built to support outdoor recreational activities, such as the creation of a trail for hiking, biking, snowmobiling, etc.; and
- Locate and define the open space to facilitate the connectivity to existing trails, or perhaps even trails that might be created in the future.



In addition, we should review any open space previously set aside when subdivisions were created in the past. Where there are opportunities to connect privately held open space to other trail networks or destinations, we should invite the homeowner’s associations to grant access to the public.

The goal here is to multiply the value of our open space without significantly increasing the costs to landowners and developers. If we can connect *even some* of our existing publicly accessible open spaces into larger trail networks, we would add significant recreational opportunities to our community. It has been a longstanding goal to protect open space, as reflected in our subdivision ordinances. We hope to now add the goal of *connecting* those open spaces. *Protect and Connect!*

## Trail Networks

### The Village Area Loop Trail:



*One segment of the VALT. The “Hancock Link” connects Hancock Street with the Gray Plaza. The trail was reconstructed with funding from Maine’s Recreational Trail Program with assistance from the Town of Gray and volunteers.*

The Village Area Loop Trail (VALT) was envisioned in the original Bike-Ped Plan (2014), and was designed to move people around Gray Village off-road as much as possible. Parts of this plan have already been implemented; other parts have had to wait for landowner approval. The VALT has been popular with residents and business owners alike. Real estate professionals routinely include statements such as “near the VALT” on houses they are listing for sale in the village, indicative that such trail networks are seen as desirable to buyers and improve property values. Trails run over private land (with property owner written permission) as well as Town-owned property.





## The Gray Trail Network



The 2018 Bike-Ped Plan approved by the Gray Town Council envisioned creating the Gray Trail Network, a multi-use, town-wide network of trails that would allow residents to move around off-road and enjoy outdoor recreation. This concept was also endorsed by the 2020 Comprehensive Plan. The Town Council created the Open Space Committee in 2019, partly out of recognition that more tools, resources, and expertise were needed for the Gray Trail Network. The OSP helps create the foundation on which the Gray Trail Network can be built and maintained. The image at left, developed by the Bike-Ped Committee, could be used in directional signage throughout the trail system.



## Summary of Recommendations

The Open Space Committee has identified four priority areas as the pillars of our Open Space Plan. Those include:

1. Develop new trails and facilities;
2. Preserve critical open space;
3. Develop and nurture relationships with private landowners;
4. Fund and support (through volunteer recruitment, coordination, and oversight) ongoing trail and open space maintenance.

For each of these priority areas, we developed goals the Town of Gray should pursue. Some are longer-term goals which could take many years, while others are more easily accomplished.

### Priority 1 – Develop New Trails & Facilities

Gray is committed to strengthening residents' ability to move around the town safely. As described above, the VALT and the Gray Trail Network are two examples of this. While off-road trails are important and valuable, improving the safety of our streets and sidewalks is also vital. Our goals include:

**Goal 1.1:** Implement a three-way management agreement for the Libby Hill Forest with the Town of Gray, MSAD 15, and Gray Community Endowment.

**Goal 1.2:** Expand the Libby Hill Forest and trail network.

**Goal 1.3:** Work with public and private partners to extend and maintain a network of trails for motorized and non-motorized uses.

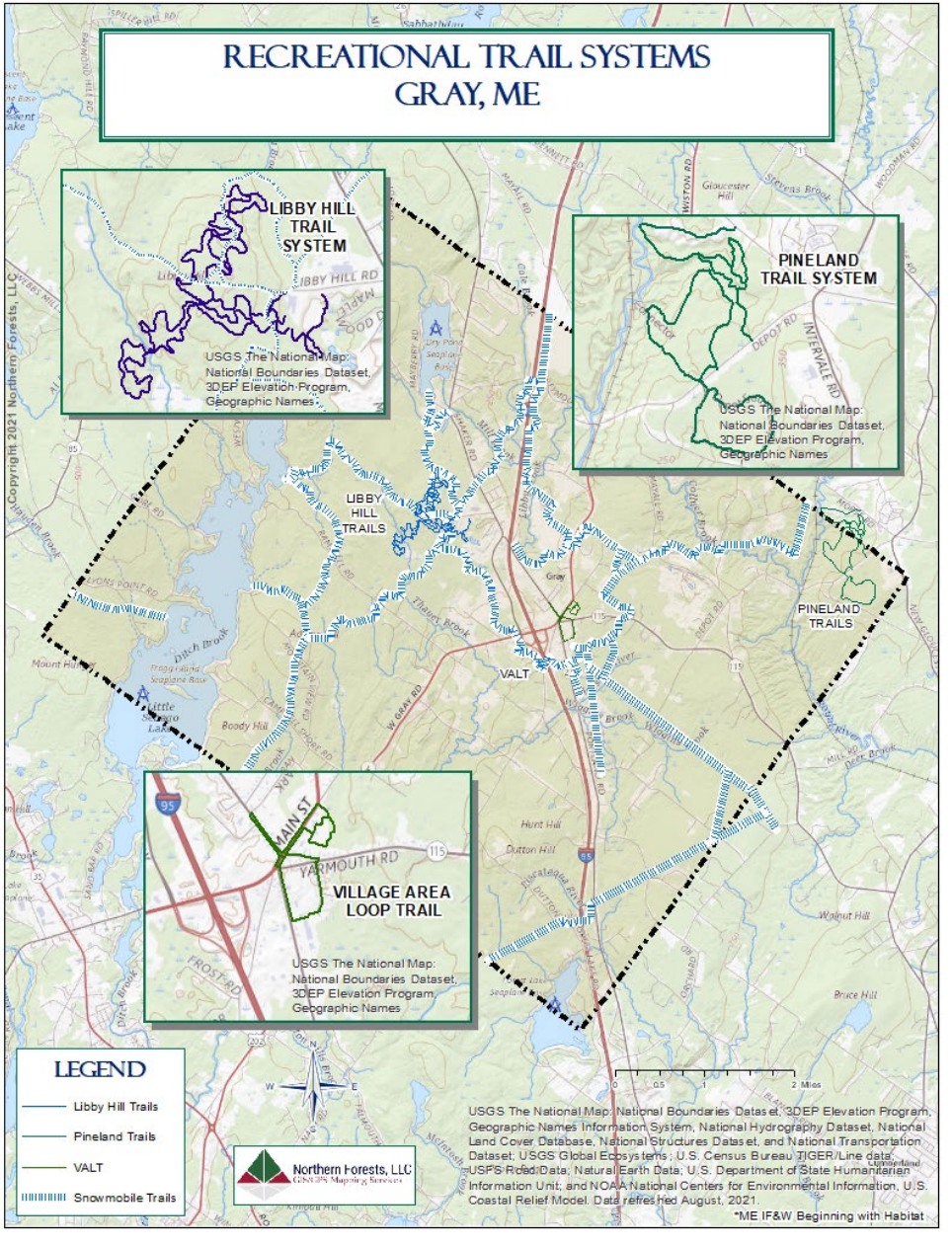
**Goal 1.4:** Create, expand, and maintain walking and bicycle connections from the Village to other destinations in Gray, like the schools, local trails, and the library.

**Goal 1.5:** Strengthen and expand regional trail connections.

**Goal 1.6:** Identify and pursue funding for new sidewalk construction where appropriate, such as in the Village, on Libby Hill Rd., on North Raymond Rd., and in other high use, high traffic areas to protect pedestrian safety.

**Goal 1.7:** Implement the Gray Trail Network as envisioned by the 2018 Gray Bike-Ped Plan to support the ongoing development and maintenance of public-use trails in Gray.





## Priority 2 - Protect Critical Open Space

The Comprehensive Plan directs us to protect Gray’s rural character and natural resources, including critical rural and waterfront areas, agricultural and forestry lands, wellheads, and aquifers. Open space can be preserved using a variety of strategies, including agreements with private landowners (especially those willing to allow public access to their property), easements, and land acquisition (see Strategies and Resources for Land Preservation, below.) The Comprehensive Plan identified sections of Gray as Critical Rural, Mixed-Use Growth and General Rural and Transition Areas (see pages 22-26 of the Comprehensive Plan Summary for a discussion of this). The Mixed-Use area has our greatest population density. Density is an opportunity to build wealth, stability, and lower tax burdens in the town, while sprawl has the opposite effect. Simply put, it is more expensive for taxpayers to provide infrastructure and services to sparsely developed areas. Through zoning and other measures, Town policy should direct development to growth areas and protect land in rural areas. Recommended goals related to protecting critical open space include:

**Goal 2.1:** Update Town ordinances that encourage or even require:

- Concentration of development in growth areas;
- Denser development near the center of town and other areas where infrastructure exists, and away from aquifers;
- Preservation of open space in subdivisions, and ensure it is available for use by the public, not only subdivision residents;
- Allocation of open space in subdivisions that maximizes outdoor recreational activities, and that supports connectivity to other publicly accessible open space.

**Goal 2.2:** Protect critical natural resources through acquisition, easements, and other strategies.

**Goal 2.3:** Work with existing land trusts or other conservation organizations to pursue opportunities to protect important open space or recreational land, particularly ‘Undeveloped Blocks’ of natural habitat as shown on the map below.

**Goal 2.4:** Initiate and/or participate in interlocal and/or regional planning, management, and/or regulatory efforts around shared critical and important natural resources.



## Priority 3 – Landowner Partnerships for a Better Gray

We recognize that the cooperation of private landowners is critical to realizing the vision outlined in this Open Space Plan. They help provide access to parks, trails, outdoor recreational spaces, scenic landscapes, and historical places. Landowners help Gray retain its rural character and protect its natural resources and habitats. The land they own is contributing to clean water and clean air. We must acknowledge and support our landowners, as is expressed in Principles of Cooperation with Private Landowners, approved by the Town Council on December 15, 2020 (see Appendix B).

The Town of Gray is committed to working cooperatively and respectfully with private landowners to preserve open space, whether for recreation, habitat preservation, farmland protection, or related purposes. Strategies for open space preservation are described in more detail in the Strategies and Resources for Land Preservation section below, and include such methods as donated easements, the purchase of development rights, buying land outright, and trail use agreements.

The one goal in this area, capturing many others, is as follows:

**Goal 3.1:** Incorporate the Landowner Principles of Cooperation approved by the Town Council on December 15, 2020, into Town practice and culture by:

- Cooperating with other outdoor-related organizations, such as the ATV club, Snowmobile Club, and Bike-Ped Committee, and regularly acknowledge and honor landowners who are making a significant contribution to the mission and vision described in our Open Space Plan.
- Regularly engaging with landowners to learn about their questions, issues, and concerns about how their land can support implementation of the Open Space Plan.
- Create a Landowner Recognition Award to be given each year in conjunction with Gray’s annual volunteer recognition awards, to a landowner who has made a significant contribution to the goals stated in this Open Space Plan.

## Priority 4 – Open Space Maintenance / Stewardship

Trails need maintenance, such as tree and branch removal or erosion control and repair. Open spaces such as parks and ballfields need occasional work to keep them serviceable, such as grass mowing, reseeding, trash removal, and so on. Sidewalks need plowing in the winter, and



occasional repairing. Volunteers already contribute substantial labor, materials, and funding to maintain and improve Gray’s open space resources, but this work often falls on a handful of people. The more groups able to use conserved open space, the more public support there will be for acquiring and maintaining it. Allies in open space maintenance include organizations that have goals consistent with Gray’s OSP, such as the Gray Community Endowment, Gray Snowolves, G-NG ATV Club, and local sports leagues. Statewide groups, such as the Maine Mountain Bike Association, can also be involved.

The Town has recently finalized an agreement with MSAD 15 and the Gray Community Endowment to manage the Libby Hill Trails. The Town of Gray’s Building and Grounds director will oversee trail maintenance, MSAD 15 will contribute annual funding and help recruit volunteers, and the Gray Community Endowment will coordinate ski trail grooming. Volunteers will be asked to help with four workdays annually on Libby Hill to cut brush, pick up branches, and do other maintenance. This is an excellent example of a public-private partnership.

We will need to continue to cultivate a culture and practice of hands-on volunteer involvement in open space maintenance. However, there may be instances in which the involvement of the Town is needed to handle discrete tasks, such as applying for and disbursing grants, or providing staff expertise or heavy equipment. Over time, the Town may need to consider adding funding to the Buildings and Grounds budget to accommodate this additional workload.

There is one goal for open space maintenance and stewardship:

**Goal 4.1:** Form a committee to encourage broader participation from all open space users and to coordinate and oversee their work. Members should include Town staff, representatives from local clubs and organizations, and individuals. This work could be assigned to the Open Space Committee.

## Prioritization of Open Space Projects

There is a cost to acquiring, developing, and maintaining Open Space. While Gray residents clearly value open space, as demonstrated by the sentiment captured in the 2020 Comprehensive Plan, we must balance the costs of that preservation with our fiscal reality. There will always be a greater demand to acquire and/or enhance open space than the Town budget can support. Open space-related projects require an investment of both funding and human resource to accomplish them. When considering projects, especially those requiring significant funding, we recommend the Town consider both the direct and indirect benefits of any endeavor, as described below:



## Direct Benefits:

- Provides publicly accessible open space that all can actively enjoy
- Has significant scenic, historical, or natural beauty
- Encourages outdoor activities, especially for families and youth
- Provides, enhances, or protects access to other open space
- Provides economic value by drawing people to the Town of Gray

## Indirect Benefits:

- Protects, enhances, or restores significant or endangered plants, wildlife, and aquatic life
- Protects natural resources important to the Town (e.g., groundwater)
- Protects or expands large tracts of unfragmented land
- Protects or expands agrarian activities in Gray such as farming, timber production, etc.

The feasibility of a project is another important factor that should be considered when determining how a project should be prioritized against other open space projects. The following things should be considered to help assess feasibility:

- The short- and long-term costs, including considerations such as the acquisition expense for the Town of Gray, long-term maintenance costs, and potential loss of property tax revenue, are consistent with the project's benefits
- There is significant public support for the project(s)
- The benefits of the associated project(s) are sustainable and will benefit Gray's citizens for future generations

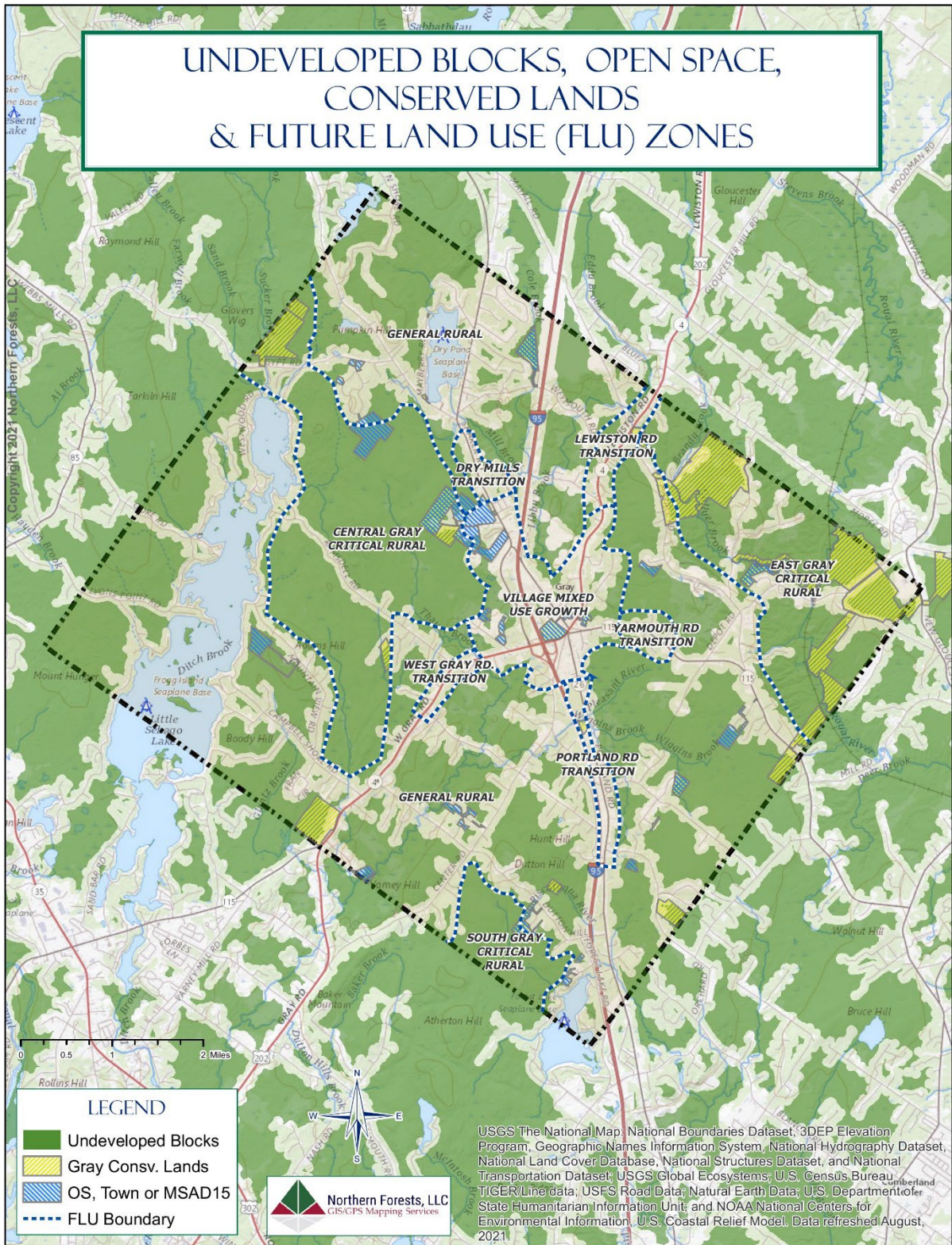
See Appendix D for other ways of numerically scoring potential open space acquisitions or projects that require an investment of financial and/or in-kind resources from the Town of Gray. This form was adapted from one in use by the *Royal River Conservation Trust*. The Town may choose to edit this form as we gain more experience with its use. It is meant to serve as a template for analyzing the relative benefits of open space projects.

The three maps shown below help delineate the important environmental considerations when selecting open space projects to pursue.

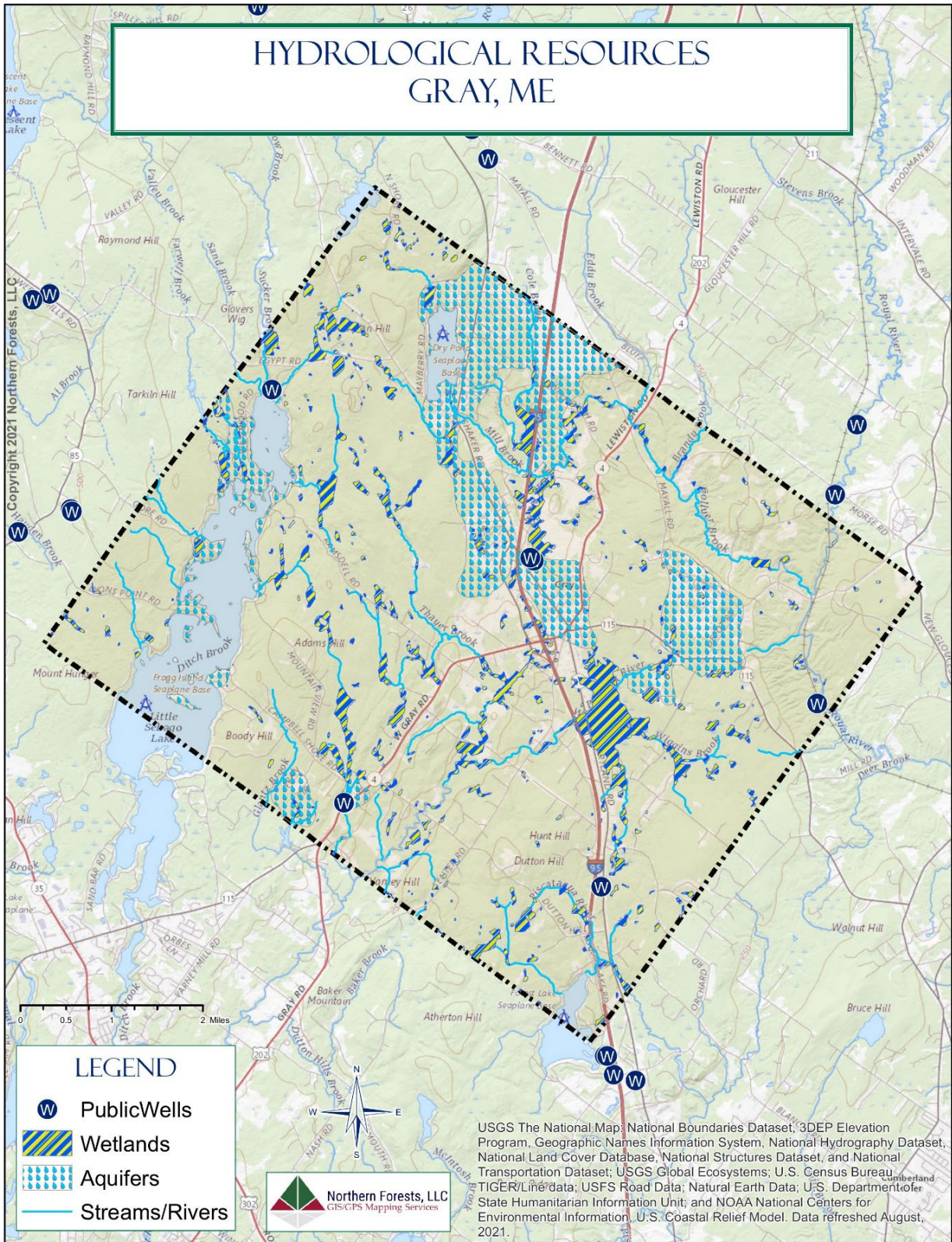




# UNDEVELOPED BLOCKS, OPEN SPACE, CONSERVED LANDS & FUTURE LAND USE (FLU) ZONES



# HYDROLOGICAL RESOURCES GRAY, ME



# Open Space Focus Areas

The Open Space Committee is committed to working in partnership with landowners on open space access and conservation. Listed below are areas of interest to the Town. In identifying these, we are simply aligning the OSP and the Comprehensive Plan, with slightly more focus. This doesn't preclude pursuing open space opportunities in other areas of town should they arise, and should they meet the benefit criteria listed above. Any further exploration of conservation work in the focus areas would take place in consultation with property owners and the land trusts.

**South Gray** - Preservation of open space and viewsheds; creation of public open space in an underserved area of town. Establish off-road trail corridors to other parts of town.

**Libby Hill** - Sections of the existing Libby Hill Forest are owned by the Town of Gray, MSAD 15, and Gray Community Endowment (a 501c3 nonprofit). We recommend seeking additional land conservation to expand recreational opportunities and to protect wildlife habitats, as well as to preserve existing and establish new multi-use trail corridors that connect Libby Hill to other areas of town.

**East Gray** - We recommend seeking additional land conservation to expand recreational opportunities and to protect environmental and wildlife habitat, and to establish public access to existing trails along the Royal River corridor in Gray. This area was identified in the Comprehensive Plan as a Critical Rural Area, and we agree it should be protected and enjoyed.

**Wilkie's Beach** - As Gray continues to grow, the Town beach and associated infrastructure (parking, sanitation) will need to expand, as well. Crystal Lake sees heavy use in the summer. This, along with the residential housing lining the lake shores, boat traffic from residents and visitors via the public boat launch, and a growing Canada Goose population, threatens the water quality and health of the lake. Ultimately, the Town should consider establishing a public swimming beach at one of Gray's other lakes to expand capacity and to improve access for residents in other areas of town. In the meantime, the Town should pursue strategies to improve public safety in the Wilkie's Beach parking area.

**Village Gateway Property** – In June 2021, Gray voters approved the purchase of an eight-acre parcel across Main Street from the Town Hall. The ultimate disposition of this land will be determined with the input of Gray residents. In addition to other business or residential development, it presents an opportunity to add needed ballfields, as well as an extension of the Village Area Loop Trail. Adding walking paths to higher density areas allows people to move around town off-road, reducing vehicle traffic, and improving opportunities for outdoor recreation.



# Strategies and Resources for Land Preservation

Land trusts will be important partners as Gray seeks to implement this Open Space Plan. Land trusts are 501c3 nonprofit conservation organizations that achieve their missions by working with willing property owners. Land trusts steward the properties in their care according to the highest standards, and in furtherance of public values such as water quality, sustainable forests, healthy ecosystems, productive farmlands, and welcoming nature trails. Gray is fortunate to have two land trusts available to partner with: the Yarmouth-based Royal River Conservation Trust, responsible for the eastern half of Gray; and the Presumpscot Regional Land Trust, which handles the western half of Gray (with Libby Hill as the rough dividing line). Both land trusts have indicated strong interest in working in Gray.

Some of the strategies described below will be best pursued with the help of the land trusts because of their extensive experience working with landowners.

## Strategies<sup>1</sup>

**Land Use Agreements (see Appendix C).** Where possible, the Town should seek to create permanent solutions to open space preservation; however, in some cases an interim measure such as a land use agreement may be the right solution. Such agreements can provide an opportunity to test public use of private land for a defined period, until a landowner is comfortable with a more permanent agreement, or can buy time while necessary fundraising for land purchase or an easement can be assembled. Land use agreements can be defined for a period of months or years, are renewable, and can be terminated by either party for cause with a 30-day notice. Such agreements may be signed with the Town, another local organization such as the Gray-New Gloucester ATV Club or the Snowolves (snowmobile club), or even a land trust.

**Conservation Easement.** Land ownership can be thought of as a bundle of rights. Easements are typically a permanent agreement whereby property owners grant right of access to their land for defined purposes, such as recreational use, while retaining ownership. Easements typically “run with the land,” meaning they are recorded in the Registry of Deeds and can be continued even if the property is sold to a new owner. In developing the easement, landowners are in the driver's seat; they can define what uses of their property they will allow, and what rights they wish to retain. A land trust would work with the landowners to develop the language of the agreement, a process that can take several months. This process includes helping landowners identify their land conservation goals, the family's needs and wishes, their properties' special features, and

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<sup>1</sup> We are indebted for help in this section to Maine Coast Heritage Trust's guidebook “Conservation Options: A Guide for Maine Landowners,” (2021). The guidebook goes into greater detail and can be found on their website, [www.mcht.org](http://www.mcht.org).



their financial needs. One benefit to granting an easement may be a reduction of property taxes, as a permanent easement can reduce the value of the property. The easement holder (the land trust) assumes responsibility for managing the easement over time.

**Land Donation.** Landowners may also choose to donate their land outright to a land trust or to the Town of Gray. Landowners may be moved to do this because they want to make a gift of land they love to the community, to see that it is properly managed over time, and either do not require compensation, or would realize tax benefits from the donation. Again, the land trust staff have the capacity to work with the property owner to explore their unique financial circumstances. There are a variety of ways this can work, such as donations that allow landowners to continue living on their property through the end of their lives.

**Land Sale.** When a property is desirable enough to purchase, and the property owner desires to sell it, a sale price can be negotiated. This can be a “bargain sale” at below market rate (perhaps providing a tax advantage to the landowner), or a sale at full market value. Payments can be structured in one lump sum or installments over time. The sale price is established by an appraisal of fair market value, and is highly unlikely to be exceeded (often, if public funds are involved in a land conservation purchase, the appraisal cannot be exceeded). Again, a land trust would work with landowners to understand their unique financial situation and how best to proceed.

**Right of First Refusal/Option.** When property owners are not ready to commit to a sale, but are inclined toward conservation, the Town and/or land trusts may negotiate a right of first refusal, or an option to purchase within a specified amount of time. The latter provides time for supporters of the purchase to find the funding. If they are unable to, they are under no obligation to proceed with the purchase and the owner is free to sell the property to another buyer.



## Funding Resources

Any large land conservation project is unlikely to be funded by a single source. Instead, supporters create a “layer cake” of many sources, which together add up to the purchase price. For example, in 2010, when the Gray Community Endowment purchased land on Libby Hill from Hancock Lumber for \$160,000, funding sources included private donations, a grant from the state’s Land for Maine’s Future, a contribution from the Town of Gray, and several smaller foundation grants.



Listed below are sources of funding for land conservation, as well as trail building and maintenance.

**Private Donations:** These can come from individuals, local groups, or businesses. Local support is key to any large fundraising effort; larger donors will expect to see financial support from the people who live in or near the land to be conserved.

**Town of Gray Open Space Fund:** In 2019, Gray voters approved the creation of an Open Space Fund with an initial contribution of \$50,000 and have approved annual allocations since. These are critical funds for matching grants from other funding sources. Voters must approve distributions of funds from this account.

**Town of Gray “Sub-D” Recreation Account:** Funded by a fee charged to new housing development, the Sub-D account can be used for a variety of purposes, from ballfield improvements to trail maintenance and land conservation. The Council has the authority to approve distribution of funds from this account.

**Land for Maine’s Future (LMF)<sup>2</sup>:** The Land for Maine’s Future Program is the State of Maine’s primary funding vehicle for conserving land for its natural and recreational value. It is funded by bonds that are authorized periodically by Maine voters. LMF funding comes with an obligation to preserve the land as open space in perpetuity, and requires recipients to file an annual report. Projects submitted to LMF must have a “high degree of readiness.” This could

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<sup>2</sup> Administered by the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry, <https://www.maine.gov/dacf/lmf/>



mean, for example, that they have a signed purchase and sale agreement, and that other fundraising has been completed. Application deadlines are typically once or twice a year.

**Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF).**<sup>3</sup> The Land and Water Conservation Fund was established to assist federal, state, and local governments in the acquisition and/or development of public outdoor recreation facilities. Administered at the federal level by the National Park Service and at the state level by the Bureau of Parks and Lands in the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry, LWCF grants can provide up to 50 percent of the allowable costs for approved acquisition or development projects for public outdoor recreation. These grants put the land into public recreational use in perpetuity, regardless of future land use in the area or deterioration of any built facilities.

**Recreational Trails Program (RTP)**<sup>4</sup>: The RTP program has an annual application cycle. It is an assistance program of the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). The RTP provides funds to the States to develop and maintain recreational trails and trail-related facilities for motorized and non-motorized recreational trail uses. (The Town of Gray received an RTP grant in 2015 to help build sections of the Village Area Loop Trail). The funds can be used to maintain/improve existing trails, build new ones, create trailhead facilities such as parking, or to acquire easements or fee simple title. The federal share can be no more than 80 percent of the total project cost, but the local share can be cash or in-kind (donated) labor/materials.

**Municipal ATV Grant:** This is a grant available to municipalities for sharing the cost of ATV trail development and maintenance. It differs from a club grant in that a town, city or county must submit the request; a local cash or in-kind match is also required. Funds can be used to build new trails or to maintain existing ones. In 2021, the Town of Gray was awarded \$64,350 from this fund to rehabilitate a trail along Long Hill Road which is used by both ATV riders and others. The state funding paid for 90 percent of the project cost. This is an annual grant round, typically in the spring.

**Foundations:** Foundations can be from Maine or other states; some give nationally. Maine examples include the Davis Conservation Foundation and the Margaret Burnham Charitable Trust. Out-of-state examples include the Fields Pond Foundation and the American Hiking Society: National Trails Fund. Depending on the size and importance of the project, foundation grants tend to be smaller (less than \$10,000) but they can be an important source nonetheless. As

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<sup>3</sup> Administered by the National Park Service and Maine Bureau of Parks & Lands  
[https://www.maine.gov/dacf/parks/grants/land\\_water\\_conservation\\_fund.html](https://www.maine.gov/dacf/parks/grants/land_water_conservation_fund.html)

<sup>4</sup> Administered by the Maine Bureau of Parks and Land  
[https://www.maine.gov/dacf/parks/grants/recreational\\_trails\\_program.shtml](https://www.maine.gov/dacf/parks/grants/recreational_trails_program.shtml)



with any grant, the project must meet their guidelines. Their deadlines vary, and can be anywhere from rolling (apply anytime) to only once a year.

**Corporations:** Businesses can also be a source of cash or in-kind donations. The benefits of the project must tie to whatever initiatives they are currently supporting, or to their customer base. Application deadlines vary.

**State of Maine Tax Incentive Programs:** Maine offers property owners a reduction in assessed value for Farmland, Open Space, Tree Growth, and Working Waterfront. The programs establish valuation of property at its current use, rather than at fair market value. Property must meet certain criteria to qualify for each program and any future change in the use of the land will cause disqualification resulting in a penalty. The three categories relevant to Gray are described below:<sup>5</sup>

**Farmland:** Requires at least five contiguous acres in their parcel of land. The land must be used for farming, agriculture or horticulture and can include woodland and wasteland. Additionally, the parcel must contribute at least \$2,000 gross income from farming activities each year.

**Open Space:** There is no minimum acreage requirement with this program. However, minimum areas and setbacks must be excluded from classification. The parcel must be preserved or restricted in use to provide a public benefit. Benefits recognized include public recreation, scenic resources, game management, and wildlife habitat.

**Tree Growth:** This program provides a benefit for owners of at least ten acres of forested land used for commercial harvesting. A forest management and harvest plan must be prepared and a sworn statement to that effect submitted with the application. Applications must include a map of the parcel indicating the forest type breakdown, as well as all other areas to be excluded from the tree growth program.

## Conclusion

Open space is important to our community. This Open Space Plan intends to help our town preserve and expand open space, a goal that will take many years to realize. The town may not immediately taste the fruits of the recommendations described herein, but many years from now, the evidence of our work to preserve open space will be obvious. If we want our children and grandchildren to benefit from these changes, implementation of this plan should start today.

*“The present time has one advantage over every other – it is our own.”*

- Charles Caleb Colton (1777-1832), English writer

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<sup>5</sup> This is excerpted from the Maine Revenue Services/Property Tax Relief Programs/Current Land Use Programs, at <https://www.maine.gov/revenue/taxes/tax-relief-credits-programs/property-tax-relief-programs/land-use-programs>



# Appendix A

## Other Related Town of Gray Plans

The following plans and policies also support the use and preservation of Open Space:

### *2006 Gray Village Master Plan (GPCOG)<sup>6</sup>*

In 2006, the Town of Gray conducted a master planning process for its Village that included a detailed set of challenges, goals, and objectives. The plan focused on pedestrian improvements in five focus areas in the Village, including Route 100 (north and south), Gray Plaza, Route 115 east, and Route 202/4 west. Specific locations cited for sidewalk upgrades were:

- Route 100 through Gray Plaza
- Both sides of Route 100 to the Pennell Institute
- Both sides of Route 26 to Gray Park, and
- Both sides of Route 115 East from the Village to Brown Street.

The plan also noted the need for an inventory of all the trails throughout town and the need to establish connections from existing trails to the Village. Finally, it cited the need for striped bike lanes on both sides of all roads in the Village.

### *2010 HUD Regional Sustain Southern Maine Pilot Project- (GPCOG, USM, SMRPC)*

A Department of Housing and Urban Development Sustainable Communities Grant was awarded to the Greater Portland Council of Governments (GPCOG) and its partners in 2010. This initiative, called Sustain Southern Maine, selected nine towns in York and Cumberland Counties to serve as pilot planning projects. Gray is one of the communities that volunteered to participate in the process. The Town focused the planning on the Village area; recommendations included increasing residential development in the Village, adding or upgrading sidewalks, and reducing tractor-trailer traffic to create a more bike-ped friendly environment.

### *2018 Gray Bike-Ped Plan<sup>7</sup>*

This plan was developed and written by the Bike-Ped Committee, a private citizen's committee, but adopted by the Town Council in 2019. Among other things, the Bike-Ped Plan envisioned the creation of the Village Area Loop Trail to strengthen and expand off-road trail connectivity within Gray Village, and the town-wide, multi-use Gray Trail Network. The Bike-Ped Plan also

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.pactsplan.org/documents/GrayVillageReport.Nov06.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Gray Bike-Ped Plan - <https://www.graymaine.org/bike-ped-plan>



encourages improvement of deteriorated sidewalks to enhance pedestrian safety, and the construction of new sidewalks in higher density, high traffic areas of Gray.

*2019 Complete Streets Policy*<sup>8</sup>

The Gray Complete Streets Policy was also developed by the Bike-Ped Committee, and adopted by the Gray Town Council in 2019. The Complete Streets Policy advocates for the fundamental concept that all streets and roadways should be designed and operated to be safe and accessible for current and future users. This includes pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, or transit riders, regardless of age or ability.

Complete Streets principles contribute to the safety, health, economic vitality, and quality of life in a community by providing accessible and efficient connections between home, school, work, recreation, and commercial centers. Ultimately, our vision for Gray is to have a well-connected network of streets, bike-pedestrian trails, and other transportation facilities that balance the needs of all users and appropriately relate to the existing built environment in capacity and scale.

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<sup>8</sup> Town of Gray Complete Streets Policy can be found at <https://www.graymaine.org/documents/pages/policiesguidelines>



# Appendix B

## Principles of Cooperation with Private Landowners

1. **We Thank You** - We acknowledge and appreciate the contributions of private landowners to the public's stated goal of maintaining and even increasing the amount of open space available to the public. Landowners have made an investment in land ownership; they pay taxes; and contribute to the community through providing open space often enjoyed by many. We will take every opportunity to publicly acknowledge these contributions to the community.
2. **We Respect Your Wishes** - We recognize that what is important to landowners can vary greatly. Some value privacy, some value recreational activities, some value capital appreciation through timber values or land valuations. We respect these values. We vow to not treat all landowners the same, but to work with each individually to ensure proposed public uses are consistent with their wishes.
3. **We Will Support You** - We recognize the rights of private landowners to determine what, if any, public access to allow on their land, and we will endeavor to never advertise or encourage the public's entrance to or use of land where the landowner has not expressly given permission for such use. Where necessary or prudent – and if in accordance with the landowner's wishes – we will endeavor to document and publicize all such granted permissions. Likewise, where significant or repeated public intrusion onto private property is incongruent with the landowner's wishes, we will encourage the public to comply with the landowner's requests. We will appoint and support a Town official to act as a liaison to landowners, and to help landowners who have provided public access to their land.
4. **We Make No Assumptions** - We acknowledge that many private landowners may not wish to grant permanent easements to allow public access to their property. In such instances, we will endeavor to work with landowners to create arrangements that respect their wishes. We will not assume a grant of public use is perpetual, unless and until an easement has been granted. We will endeavor to communicate annually with landowners to ensure their wishes are being met with respect to the public's use of their private land.
5. **We Change With You** - We understand that the wishes of a landowner may change over time. Moreover, we recognize and accept the reality that when land ownership changes, the preferences of the new landowner may not be consistent with those of the previous owner. We will work with new landowners to ensure any previously agreed-to public uses of private land are consistent with the wishes of the new owner. When necessary, we will publicize any changes to ensure the public is always aware of the landowner's wishes.



6. **We Endeavor to Compensate** - Where significant, ongoing access to private property is desired (for example, for a permanent public hiking trail), we will attempt to obtain an easement to document the landowner's provision of access to the public. While we readily acknowledge that funding is extremely limited, we will nonetheless endeavor to compensate landowners for the significant contributions they make to the community when they allow public access to their private land.

7. **We Inform The Public** - We will endeavor to work with landowners to ensure the public is fully aware of the allowed uses on their land. We recognize that situations may arise (perhaps, a timber harvest operation) whereby previously granted access may need to be temporarily or permanently suspended. We respect those situations. For parcels where significant public access has been granted, we will work to maintain a Town-sponsored website which will clearly identify what access is allowed and what activities are prohibited. In addition, we will endeavor to work with landowners to further inform the public of changes in access, or convey other landowner issues via public announcements in local media, significant signage at all access points, etc.

8. **We Will Support You** - We will work cooperatively with landowners to help reinforce their rights, thereby encouraging other and future landowners to allow public access on their private property knowing they have the full support of the community helping to protect their rights.



# Appendix C

## Land Use Agreement Template

### TRAIL USE AND MAINTENANCE AGREEMENT

Permission is hereby granted to [identify entity- Town of Gray or other organization]  
\_\_\_\_\_ to create and maintain a public recreational trail across my property at  
\_\_\_\_\_ for the purposes of:

Choose 1:  3 Season (Warm Weather) Use  Winter Use  Year-round Use

Check all that apply:

walking & hiking, on foot  bicycling  horseback riding  snowmobiling

cross-country skiing and snowshoeing  motorbiking  Off-Highway Recreational Vehicle  
(OHRV) use  other \_\_\_\_\_

I understand that the use of this right of way for said purpose in no way holds me liable or responsible for accidents that may occur as a result of others using my property as provided in Maine Law §159-A. There shall be no fee paid for this Trail, and the above-named organization will charge no fee for use of the Trail on my property. The above-named organization further agrees to mark and maintain this right of way in a proper and safe manner, post the allowed uses at the beginning and end of the Trail on my property, and notify me of any known unusual circumstances or conditions. The [insert entity name] may produce an official map of the Trail and post and publicize this Trail map. An approximate location of the Trail is provided on the attached Exhibit for reference purposes.

This right of way trails use and maintenance agreement shall have a term of:

Choose 1:  Indefinite  1 year from date of signing  5 years from date of signing

This agreement may be terminated for any cause by either party upon 30-day written notification.

Dated this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_  
[Landowner Signature]

\_\_\_\_\_  
[Entity Signature]



# Appendix D

## Draft Property Evaluation Form

This evaluation form is a tool to help guide decision making about the value of land proposed for conservation. The Town Council and the voters retain discretion over land acquisition or preservation using Town funds.

Categories		Score	Comments
Large Undeveloped Area (select one)			
10-19 acres	3		
20-39 acres	5		
40-99 acres	8		
100+ acres	10		
Connectivity to Existing Protected Lands (select one)			
Within ¼ mile of currently conserved land	2		
Abutting existing conserved land	5		
Connecting parcel between 2 conserved properties	8		
Identified within Gray Open Space Plan (OSP) (select one)			
The property is within the focus areas as identified in the OSP	6		



The property is similar in character to OSP focus areas but is not in a focus area.	4		
Natural Resource Values (select all that apply):			
Protection of freshwater resource (pond, lake, stream)	4		
Protection of groundwater resource/aquifer	3		
Prime agricultural soils	3		
Inland wading bird and/or waterfowl habitat	3		
Protection of significant forests	1		
Working farmland	5		
Protection of wetlands and vernal pools	3		
Edge habitat (fields/forest or upland/shoreline)	3		
Public Access values (select all that apply)			
Continue/restore multi-purpose recreational uses	5		
Add new multi-purpose recreational uses	4		
Scenic values (select all that apply)			
Open fields	5		



High elevation vista	3		
Scenic views	3		
Historic view	3		
Visible from public road or water	3		
Historic/Cultural values (select all that apply)			
Protection within Gray Village	1		
Archaeological feature	2		
Historic building/place	2		
Total Score:			



To: Town Council, Town Manager, Community Development Department  
From: Krista Chappell, Dan Maguire  
Date: February 6, 2022  
RE: Proposed Next Steps for the Comprehensive Plan's Implementation

## **Introduction**

Work on implementing the Comprehensive Plan (Comp Plan) is currently underway by a variety of groups including the Council, town departments and staff, and council committees. But is there a clear and complete understanding of the overall effort? The answer is no. To bring our efforts on the Comp Plan into focus we are suggesting a flexible, phased approach which will evolve as we gain experience implementing the plan and encounter opportunities and roadblocks along the way.

To start we propose the Council advertise for and appoint two people who are passionate about seeing the Comp Plan implemented and who have strong organizational and facilitation skills. We would use the town website, outreach to other town civic organizations, lake & road associations, our personal contacts, etc. to spread the word.

The goal of these two appointees will be to audit the status of the Comp Plan implementation, complete steps 1 & 2 (see below), and report back to the Council in 4 – 6 weeks. At that point, the Council can appoint an ad hoc committee and decide what the make-up of that membership should be – made up of members from existing council committees, members of other existing social, civic, educational groups, or members from the community at large.

The Council will retain the responsibility for delegating work to council committees, finding resources for the committees, and making any changes in priorities, goals, or due dates; as well as working in conjunction with the Town Manager and staff.

If the Council chooses to form a new ad hoc committee we propose the title of Comprehensive Plan Coordinating Committee (CPCC). Changing the name from “Steering” to “Coordinating” clearly signals a change in and defines the role of the new committee. Once the initial written summary is documented, we propose the committee report out to the Council every 12 – 16 weeks (3 to 4 months) with updates, preferably in person.

## **Work**

### Step 1 – Define what needs to be done.

The priorities, goals, objectives, and action items are clearly outlined in the plan and are attached to this document for reference. We want to be sure we've pulled all the “to dos” out of the plan and create a GANTT chart to track our progress.

### Step 2 – Assess where we are.

Document who (Council, Manager, staff, council committees) is currently working on what aspects of the plan and answer the following questions in a written summary report to the Council. Have any goals been reached? Who is working on what? What isn't being worked on? Is there any duplication of effort? Are there any conflicts? Etc. This assessment should include communicating with council committees to discuss and record strategies and activities that align with the Comp Plan and are already identified and/or underway. Additionally, work should include coordinating with the Town Manager on documenting goals for department heads and staff. CPCC should prioritize the identification of

“actionable items” and “easy wins.”

### Step 3 – Next steps.

With the completion of steps 1 & 2 the Council, with the Co-Chairs and other stakeholders, will be able to determine how best to move the Comp Plan implantation forward. The proposed Comp Plan Coordination Committee (CPCC) could evolve to become a clearing house for “All Things Comp Plan”. Organizing meetings of stakeholders from all around the community to address the different priorities, goals, objectives, and action items that make up the Comp Plan. At this time the Co-Chairs and the Council may see the need to add additional members. The Council may also ask the council committees to appoint a liaison to the CPCC to help coordinate their efforts.

### **Summary**

The goal isn't to add another layer of complexity or bureaucracy to the Comp Plan process, but to integrate it into the community, using our existing social, civic, educational, and political organizations. This will mean increasing the capacity of different organizations to do the work of the Comp Plan as well as building up and strengthening the connections between these groups.

# Top Priorities

These three Top Priorities represent groups of individual policies and strategies found in the Appendix to this planning document. Some of these ideas are carried forward from requirements of the state Growth Management Act. For the most part, though, these Top Priorities are themes that have come up again and again through the public participation process and as part of prior planning efforts.

These Top Priorities are not presented in here by priority. These are the three priority subject areas for which there is broad community agreement. These topics should help guide Town Council and staff work plans for the next 3-5 years and beyond as the Town works toward long-term goals.

- **Focus on moving people safely through Gray and getting around town via walking, biking, car, or public transportation**
- **Protect Gray's rural character and natural resources**
- **Invest in the Village and community programs**

## *Focus on moving people safely through Gray and getting around town via walking, biking, car, or public transportation*

Gray residents value the Town's location in the region and access to major job markets, the coast, and the lakes and mountains. Gray is a major crossroads community in southern Maine, with a lot of traffic originating from other communities. Residents view traffic issues as a threat to the quality of life in Gray, especially at key intersections in the Village, at Dry Mills and at the intersection of Libby Hill Road and Route 26/Shaker Road.

In addition to advocating for improvements with MaineDOT and the Turnpike Authority, Gray should plan transportation projects that accommodate all modes of travel. Building out sidewalk connections between important community destinations will make walking a safer, more attractive option for community residents of all ages. Constructing wider road shoulders on busy roads in the less built up parts of town will encourage walking and bicycle riding for recreation, commuting, and daily activities like shopping or accessing recreation destinations.

### **Goals:**

- To address current transportation infrastructure needs to manage traffic and ensure safety of residents and visitors.
- To plan for, finance and develop an efficient system of public facilities and services, including transportation networks and public infrastructure, to accommodate anticipated growth and economic development.

### **Objectives:**

- To meet the diverse transportation needs of residents (including children, the elderly and disabled) and through-travelers by providing a safe, efficient, and adequate transportation network for all types of users (motor vehicles, pedestrians, bicyclists).
- To promote fiscal prudence by maximizing the efficiency of the state or state-aid highway network.
- Address increased traffic congestion on major roadways throughout Town to increase ease of mobility and safety.
- Encourage infrastructure necessary to support renewable energy transportation options.
- Ensure safe mobility for vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians traveling through and within the Village.

Action Items:	Timeframe:	Responsible Party:
Initiate or actively participate in regional and state transportation efforts.	Ongoing	Town staff & Council
Explore opportunities to expand existing public transportation services from nearby areas to connect seniors and other residents with nearby destinations, such as Windham, Lewiston/Auburn, and Portland.	Ongoing	Town staff
Work collaboratively with MaineDOT to proactively address transportation challenges through their workplan, such as the 2021 project at the intersection of Route 26/Shaker Road with North Raymond Road.	Ongoing	Town staff
Implement the recently adopted Complete Streets Policy that requires all transportation projects to consider the needs of all users, This would require state and local officials and planners to consider the existing and future land use context of each project and take into consideration people who use the system to walk or bike.	Short-term, 1-2 years	Town staff
Rework the two signalized intersections in the Village to create better traffic flow during peak volume times.	Short-term, 1-2 years	Town Council, Public Works
Complete a traffic study at high-volume intersections including: - Shaker Road/Route 26 and Libby Hill Road - Center Road intersection with Route 202 - All intersections in the Village center	Short-term, 1-2 years	Town staff & Council
Work collaboratively with the Maine Turnpike Authority and the Maine Department of Transportation to address toll diversion through Gray Village.	Short-term, 1-2 years	Town staff & Council
Create or improve existing sidewalk connections for; - Both sides of each main road in the Village - Along Shaker Road between the Village and the school campus on Libby Hill Road	Med-term, 3-5 years	Public Works
Use traffic calming strategies to slow traffic traveling through the Village, allowing for local businesses to capitalize on the people driving through town.	Long-term, 3-6 years	Town Council, Public Works
Create and maintain additional off-street trail networks: - Expand Libby Hill Trail network - Off-street connections - Dry Mills and the Village - Local trails around and through the Village - Explore opportunities for regional trail connections	Long-term, 5+ years	Town Council, Open Space Committee, Planning Department, Private Partnerships

## *Protect Gray's rural character and natural resources*

Gray residents value the trails at Libby Hill and water bodies such as Little Sebago Lake, Crystal Lake, and Forest Lake for their environmental benefits and community benefits. Critical rural areas and water resources, including surface waters and aquifer recharge areas, should be protected from the impacts of development. While there are numerous tools to achieve levels of protection, Gray can start by reviewing property tax incentives to ensure property owners who would like their land to be maintained as open space or farmland, in perpetuity, can afford to do so. Gray should also consider developing an Open Space and Recreation Plan that will identify key priorities for preservation and needs for recreational facilities so that the town can meet current and future demand.

### **Goals:**

- To encourage orderly growth and development in appropriate areas in Town while protecting the State's rural character, making efficient use of public services and infrastructure, and preventing development sprawl.
- To protect the quality and manage the quantity of the State's water resources, including lakes, aquifers, great ponds, estuaries, rivers, and coastal areas.
- To protect the State's other critical natural resources, including without limitation, wetlands, wildlife and fisheries habitat, shorelands, scenic vistas, and unique natural areas.

- To promote and protect the availability of outdoor recreation opportunities for all Maine citizens, including access to surface waters.
- To safeguard the State's agricultural and forest resources from development which threatens those resources.

### **Objectives:**

- To Protect critical rural and critical waterfront areas from the impacts of development.
- To protect current and potential drinking water sources.
- Preserve open spaces, forests, and agricultural lands important to the residents of Gray.
- To conserve critical natural resources in the community.
- To coordinate with neighboring communities and regional and state agencies to protect shared critical natural resources.
- To seek to achieve or continue to maintain at least one major point of public access to major water bodies for boating, fishing, and swimming, and work with nearby property owners to address concerns.
- To create achievable development regulations for aquifer recharge areas and well-head protection areas
- To support farming and forestry and encourage their economic viability.

Action Items:	Timeframe:	Responsible Party:
Initiate and/or participate in interlocal and/or regional planning, management, and/or regulatory efforts around shared critical and important natural resources.	Ongoing	Town staff & Council
Work with public and private partners to extend and maintain a network of trails for motorized and non-motorized uses. Connect with regional trail systems where possible.	Ongoing	Town staff & Council
Encourage owners of productive farm and forest land to enroll in the current use taxation programs.	Ongoing	Town staff
Educate property owners around water resources in Town on shoreland zoning regulations and water quality protection.	Ongoing	Town staff
<p>Using the descriptions in the Future Land Use Plan narrative, maintain, enact or amend local ordinances as appropriate to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Clearly define the desired scale, intensity, and location of future development</li> <li>- Establish or maintain fair and efficient permitting procedures, and explore streamlining permitting procedures in growth areas</li> <li>- Clearly define protective measures for critical natural resources and, where applicable, important natural resources</li> </ul>	Short-term, 1-2 years	Planning Department
Create development restrictions through zoning amendments to enhance existing protections of well-head and aquifer recharge areas, including the limitation of commercial development in those areas with a potential for soil and water contamination or water depletion.	Short-term, 1-2 years	Planning Department
Review property tax incentives and other fiscal tools to ensure that property owners who would like their land to be maintained as open space or farmland in perpetuity can afford to do so.	Short-term, 1-2 years	Town Staff
Update zoning for critical natural resources as Critical Natural Resource Areas in the Future Land Use Plan.	Short-term, 1-2 years	Planning Department
Provide educational materials regarding the benefits and protections for landowners allowing public recreational access on their property. At a minimum this will include information on Maine's Landowner Liability Law regarding recreational or harvesting use, Title 14, M.R.S.A. §159-A.	Short-term, 1-2 years	Town Staff

**Action Items:**

**Timeframe: Responsible Party:**

Develop an Open Space and Recreation plan that will identify priorities for preservation and needs to recreational facilities to meet current and future demand.

Med-term,  
3-5 years

Open Space  
Committee

Work with an existing local land trust or other conservation organizations to pursue opportunities to protect important open space or recreational land.

Med-term,  
3-5 years

Open Space  
Committee



## *Invest in the Village and community programs*

When asked why people love living in Gray, residents mentioned various reasons ranging from the Town's location, specific municipal services like the transfer station and the library, and also mentioned the community and events such as the Blueberry Festival. The community character of the town has been highlighted as one of the top reasons people love living in Gray and as one of the main attractions to new residents moving into town. The community is strengthened through events and programs such as those offered by the Parks and Recreation Department, the American Legion Memorial Day Parade, and local clubs that organize 5K races. MSAD 15 schools create community as well, not only through academics, but music, sports, and other events that bring people together. The Town should continue investing in and supporting events and programs that build community connections.

While the overall sense of community is one reason people love living in Gray, the Village itself has been highlighted as a major asset in town, which is sometimes overlooked and under-utilized. The Village has much of the historic street network and several historic buildings that would make it possible to recreate pedestrian-scale streetscapes. By investing in public infrastructure, which includes utilities, streetscapes and public spaces, creating design standards that enhance and reinforce Village character, and creating

local incentives, the town can promote a business friendly environment that will attract unique, local business. Local businesses in the Village could capitalize on slower moving traffic and more foot traffic. Improvements to the Village will create a sense of place in the center of town where community members can gather for coffee or lunch, or larger town-wide events.

### **Goals:**

- To Strengthen community connections through Town-wide events and Parks and Recreation facilities and programs.
- Promote an economic climate that increases job opportunities and overall economic well-being.

### **Objectives:**

- To support the type of economic development activity the community desires, reflecting the community's role in the region.
- To create programs and provide services for seniors who would like to stay in the community while aging.
- Promote a business friendly environment that will encourage local, unique business to be attracted to Gray.
- To support the level of financial commitment necessary to provide needed infrastructure in growth areas.

Action Items:	Timeframe:	Responsible Party:
Explore grants and other innovative funding streams to fund economic development, including facilities, infrastructure, and small business development.	Ongoing	Town staff
Prioritize municipal investment in the Village.	Ongoing	Town staff & Council
Encourage town-wide events and festivals, like Gingerbread House Making, Trunk or Treat, and the Blueberry Festival, year-round.	Ongoing	Town staff & Committees
Share resources and create local incentives to encourage economic development in the Village.	Ongoing	Town staff & Council
Prepare for investment opportunities that arise with regional agencies working in Gray such as, the upcoming Department of Transportation stormwater project.	Ongoing	Town staff & Council
Encourage local sewer and water districts to coordinate planned service extension with the Future Land Use Plan.	Ongoing	Public Works
Create a designated funding stream to promote programs identified as key priorities of the community and enhance physical facilities.	Short-term, 1-2 years	Town staff & Council
Create a Village downtown plan, the scope of which could include a market analysis, streetscape and design guideline recommendations, and traffic analysis with suggested roadway improvements.	Short-term, 1-2 years	Town staff & Council
Assign responsibility and provide financial support for economic development activities to the proper entity (e.g., a local economic development committee, a local representative to a regional economic development organization, the community's economic development director, a regional economic development initiative, or other).	Short-term, 1-2 years	Town staff & Council
Ensure the recreation department has adequate resources to service the expanding demand of the community, specifically for child-care programs.	Short-term, 1-2 years	Town Council
Work with the Gray Lifelong Living Committee to determine the current needs of seniors in Town and prioritize the most critical.	Short-term, 1-2 years	Town Council

Action Items:	Timeframe:	Responsible Party:
Enact or amend local ordinances to reflect the desired scale, design, intensity, and location of future economic development.	Short-term, 1-2 years	Planning Department
Create Design Standards for new construction and rehabs within the Village Growth District.	Short-term, 1-2 years	Planning Board
Adopt zoning amendments that allow for higher density growth in the growth areas of Town, as shown in the Future Land Use Plan and narrative.	Short-term, 1-2 years	Planning Department
Conduct a needs assessment and capital plan for both the acquisition and development of new high priority facilities and to maintain and maximize existing facilities to better serve the community.	Med-term 3-5 years	Town staff & Council
Create and enhance walking and bicycle connections from the Village to other destinations in Gray, like the schools, local trails, and the library.	Med-term 3-5 years	Public Works
Develop a new traffic pattern that allows easier and safe mobility through the village.	Med-term 3-5 years	Town Council
To establish efficient permitting procedures, especially in Growth Areas.	Med-term 3-5 years	Planning Department
Encourage business development in the Village and Business Park growth areas to diversify tax base.	Med-term 3-5 years	Town Council
Establish a space near the Village for a farmers market to support local farmers and producers.	Med-term 3-5 years	Town Council
Consider the construction of a Community Center that would be home to programs for youth and seniors. Work to preserve social networks for senior as they stay in the community.	Long-term, 5+ years	Town Council
Develop the public infrastructure within the Village including a small Village-scaled wastewater treatment system and high-speed internet, to create a viable environment for new businesses.	Long-term, 5+ years	Town Staff , Town Council, & Public Works