

Section 6: Community Vision

A. Summary Description of the Process

The process of updating the Plan has been guided by the Open Space and Recreation Advisory Committee (Committee) and approved by the Mayor's Office. The OSRP Advisory Committee (made up of City staff, Board and Commission members, and conservation, recreation, environmental, and neighborhood stakeholders with a community focus) has been instrumental in considering all input and comments received during public participation events and opportunities, and in reflecting them in the Plan Update as appropriate.

The City of Newton contracted a team of graduate students from the Conway School of Landscape Design (Conway team) to complete the draft OSRP update. The Conway team met twice with the Committee during their regular monthly sessions to work on the Plan Update and were guided by Planning Department staff.

The Conway team and members of the Committee received public input through a variety of public forums. Strategies for gathering public input included the following:

- A Public Outreach Online Survey launched January 30, 2020 and open through February 14, 2020, which received 1,360 responses.
- Youth Online Survey Regarding Open Space and Recreation, which received 27 responses.
- An initial Open Space and Recreation Plan Public Working Session, held at City Hall on Thursday, February 6, 2020.
- A follow-up Open Space and Recreation Plan Public Working Session, held at the Price Center on March 4, 2020.

All comments received were duly considered by the Conway team, the Zoning and Planning Committee (ZAP), the Committee, and City leadership in finalizing the Plan.

See Section 2: Introduction, for a list of committee members and a more detailed description of the public engagement process.

B. Results of Public Surveys

Publicity and Outreach

The public working sessions and the on-line community survey were publicized as broadly as possible through all available channels, including:

- Newton city website
- Postings at Newton City Hall
- Newton Conservators outreach
- Newton's sports leagues outreach
- Other community group outreach
- City and public school newsletters
- Village "Area Council" updates
- Standard notification of public board and committee meetings and associated agendas on the City website
- Notices in the local newspaper, the Newton Tab

Along with these outreach efforts, City staff reached directly out to several area councils in areas underrepresented in the community survey responses, especially the underrepresented EJ communities.

Compared to the community survey, participation in the youth survey was not as robust, but was completed by the Youth Commission, after their review and approval, and by students at Newton North and Newton South High Schools.

Community Survey

The online public survey included 20 questions regarding open space needs, perceived quality of open space resources, protection of open space, and the importance of open space resources. **Figures 43-45** show a few key findings from the online survey, which have been further assessed in **Section 7: Needs Analysis**. Additional results and graphs are displayed in **Section 10: Public Comment** of this Plan.

Youth Survey Summary

The youth survey was developed in order to evaluate a perspective on open space in Newton that has not been as represented in previous OSRP updates. With growing participation in climate activism by Newton's student population, youth interest in the value of open space resources has never been higher. When asked, and allowed to choose all options that applied, what they valued about Newton's open space resources, student's top responses were opportunities to socialize with peers and be active. The main issues with Newton's open space resources are a lack of amenities that promote socialization and being active (e.g., water fountains, benches, workout stations), lack of safe connections between open space resources and schools, and wayfinding in relation to trail navigation and open space resource locations.

The open space resources most important to Newton's residents include passive recreation areas, conservation areas, street trees, athletic fields, and parks. Generally, residents expressed little interest in golf, though residents who did mention the golf courses expressed that they wished to see them converted to other publicly available open space uses.

Responses regarding what would improve user experiences in Newton's open space resources centered around improved/expanded amenities and facilities, better wayfinding, and more diverse programming.

When asked to design their own open space resources, we saw students describing spaces that provided a diverse number of uses and allowed for programming side by side with connecting to nature.

Figure 43. Community Survey: Open Space Resources in Greatest Demand

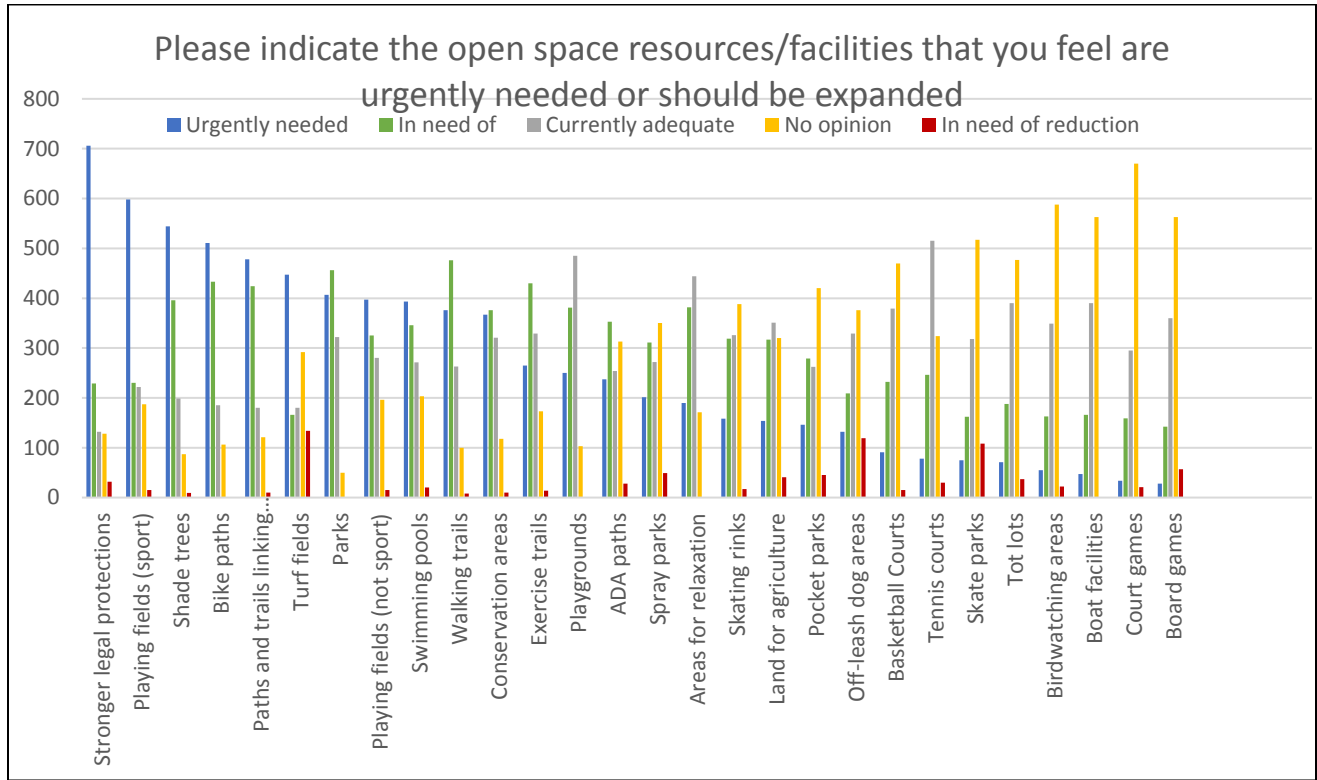


Figure 44. Community Survey: Importance of Open Space Resources

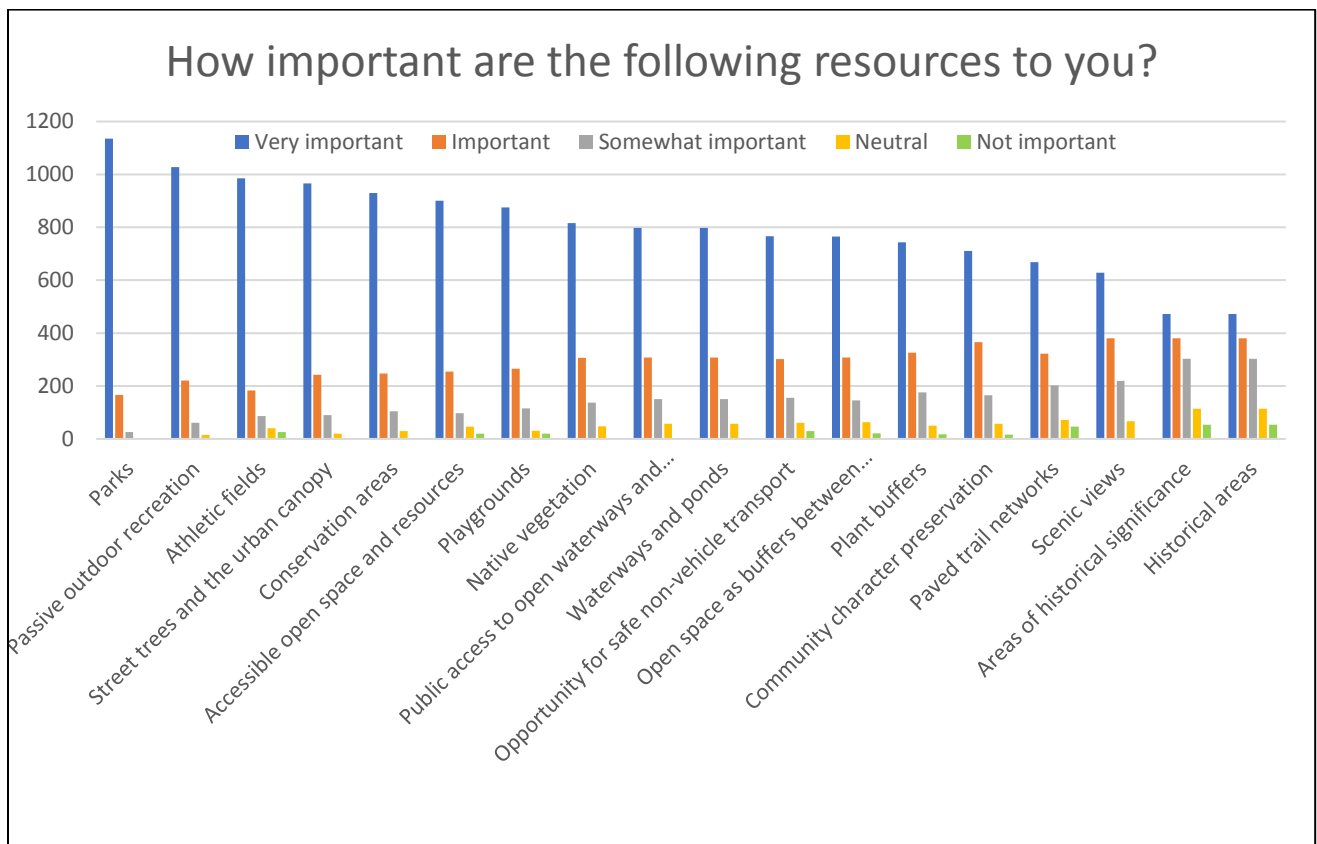
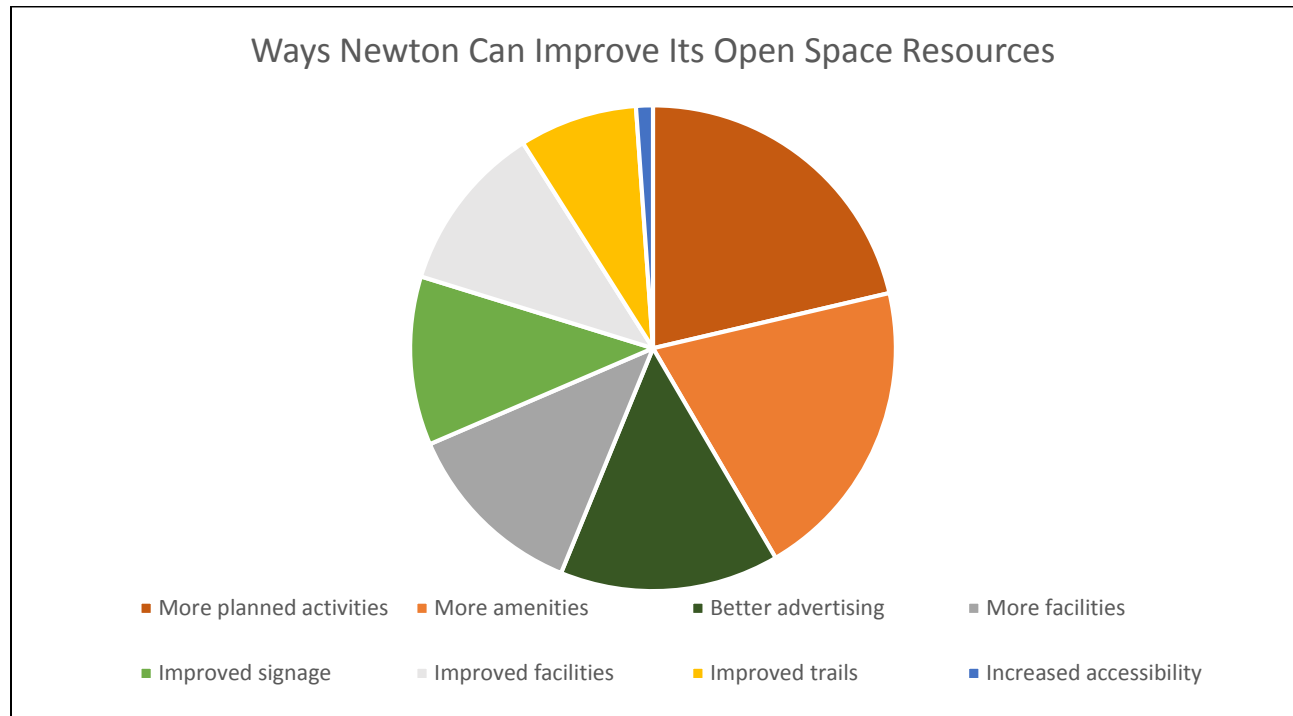


Figure 45. Youth Survey: Desired Open Space Improvements



C. Statement of Open Space and Recreation Goals Based on Community Input

Broadly categorized into six areas, the updated goals in this Plan reflect both ongoing trends carrying over from the previous OSRP and emergent community interests around open space needs. For more information about the origin and implications of these goals, see Section 7: Analysis of Needs and Section 8: Goals and Objectives.

Goals

1. Coordinated planning and adequate funding for the management of all open space resources.
2. Maintenance and Improvement of the City’s open space resources.
3. Maximized universal accessibility of as many of Newton’s Outdoor Recreation Facilities and Natural Open Spaces as feasible.
4. Minimized Gaps in the Availability of Newton’s Open Space Resources
5. Connectivity to and between open space resources.
6. Protection and expansion of Newton’s open space resource inventory.

The Community Vision statement was distilled by the Advisory Committee from public input and best professional understanding.

Vision: The City of Newton will steward, connect, protect, and expand its existing open space resources in a manner that ensures accessibility to all and equitably distributed spaces that support ecological diversity, climate change resilience, and a healthy, inclusive community.