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**Barney S. Heath**  
Director

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## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** September 10, 2021

**TO:** Councilor Deborah Crossley, Chair, Zoning & Planning Committee  
Members of the Zoning and Planning Committee

**FROM:** Barney S. Heath, Director of Planning and Development  
Jennifer Caira, Deputy Director, Department of Planning & Development  
Jennifer Steel, Chief Environmental Planner

**RE:** **#178-20 Adoption of the Open Space and Recreation Plan Update**

DIRECTOR OF PLANNING requesting adoption of the plan as an amendment to the 2007 Comprehensive Plan.

**MEETING DATE:** September 13, 2021

**CC:** City Council  
Planning & Development Board  
Economic Development Commission  
John Lojek, Commissioner of Inspectional Services  
Neil Cronin, Chief of Current Planning  
Alissa O. Giuliani, City Solicitor  
Jonathan Yeo, Chief Operating Officer

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### Introduction

We are requesting that ZAP recommend to the full Council adoption of the now state-approved Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) as an addendum to the City's Comprehensive Plan.

The City must have a state-approved OSRP to be eligible for state grants. The City may adopt its OSRP as an addendum to its Comprehensive Plan.

In March and May of 2020, ZAP and Planning and Development (P&D) held meetings and hearings on the draft OSRP, and in May voted to submit letters of support to the state Division of Conservation Services (DCS), as required by the state. In July of 2020, DCS granted conditional approval of the plan, noting the need for minor edits and the inclusion of a detailed ADA inventory of all Parks, Recreation & Culture facilities. On July 1, 2021, those edits and the detailed ADA inventory were submitted to the state and on July 9, 2021, the City received a letter of final state-approval, noting that the plan would be valid through July 2027. The approved plan is posted on the City's website:

<https://www.newtonma.gov/government/planning/plans-policies-strategies/osrp-update-2020>.

Below are details regarding this request, the chronology of plan development and approval, the City's implementation team, and recent efforts.

### **Request**

- Adopt the now fully state-approved Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) as an addendum to the City's Comprehensive Plan.
  - Section 7 of the Comprehensive Plan (November 19, 2007) addresses Open Space and Recreation and identifies 5 goals.
    1. Recognize, preserve and maintain the City's important natural assets and resources
    2. Ensure an adequate amount, variety, and distribution of open space for both public benefit and biodiversity.
    3. Integrate compatible recreation and conservation uses.
    4. Pursue courses of action necessary to protect and preserve remaining large open spaces, including golf courses and parcels owned by institutions and private entities.
    5. Assure a well-informed and well-coordinated stewardship for the open space and recreation resources for which the City of Newton is privileged to be custodian.
- The six goals of the 2020-2027 OSRP (below) mirror those in the Comprehensive Plan.
  1. Implementation: Coordinated planning and adequate funding for the management and maintenance of the City's open space resources.
  2. Maintenance and Improvement: Maintained and improved open space recreational resources (i.e., athletic fields, parks, playgrounds, trails, hard courts, off-leash areas, and other recreational facilities). Natural areas with intact native habitats, limited invasive species, maximized native plants, maintained or reestablished natural hydrology, and improved water quality. Optimized extent and health of the City's urban canopy.
  3. Accessibility: Maximized accessibility of as many of Newton's Outdoor Recreation Facilities and Natural Open Spaces as feasible.
  4. Minimized Gaps in the Availability of Open Space Resources: New and improved open space resources in areas of greatest need including, but not limited to, Environmental Justice areas, areas affected by heat island effects, and areas lacking certain types of local open space resources.
  5. Connectivity: Linked open space resources with accessible paths, bike lanes, and trails.
  6. Protection: Protected and expanded open space resource resources.

### **Chronology of the 2020-2027 Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP) Update**

- 2020-01-14 City staff hold kick-off meeting with contractor, Conway School of Landscape Design
- 2020-01-30 Online Public Survey launched - received 1,360 responses

- 2020-01-30 Online Youth Survey launched - received 27 responses
- 2020-02-06 Initial OSRP Public Working Session held at City Hall
- 2020-03-04 Follow-up OSRP Public Working Session held at the Price Center
- 2020-03-23 Joint ZAP/P&D meeting - OSRP introduced
- 2020-05-07 Joint ZAP/P&D public hearing/public meeting - OSRP goals and objectives presented
- 2020-05-19 ZAP and P&D meeting - public comments discussed
- 2020-05-22 Letters of review by P&D and ZAP sent to DCS
- 2020-06-19 OSRP submitted to DCS for approval
- 2020-07-02 Conditional state approval received
- 2021-07-01 Augmented OSRP submitted to DCS for approval
- 2021-07-09 Final state approval received

### **OSRP Implementation Team**

- Meets quarterly
- Focus is on over-lapping efforts, maintenance, and large projects
- Members:
  - Jonathan Yeo (Mayor's Office)
  - Nicole Banks, Luis Perez-Demorizi, Marc Welch (Parks, Recreation & Culture)
  - Barney Heath, Nicole Freedman (Planning)
  - Jennifer Steel (Planning/Conservation)
  - Jini Fairley (COD)

### **OSRP Priority Action Area Subcommittees**

- Athletic Fields – is underway
- Tennis/Athletic Courts – is underway
- Off-leash working group – is underway
- ADA – is currently covered by the Commission on Disability, but all projects involving trail improvements will be reviewed by the City's ADA Coordinator to ensure that the work receives COD approval.
- Trails – will be established with the Conservation Office taking the lead
- Golf Courses – will be addressed later
- Other sub-committees will likely be needed for big projects, e.g., Gath Pool and land acquisition