



South Portland Conservation Commission

TO: City Councilors
FR: Conservation Commission
RE: Open Space Plan 2017
DT: March 20, 2017

The Conservation Commission has reviewed the 2001 South Portland Open Space Strategic Plan (OSP) and gathered input from the Open Space Inventory Committee composed of Conservation Commission members, South Portland Land Trust representatives and community participants. The creation of this inventory committee was the direct result of community displeasure after developers approached the city to develop public property (Sawyer Park on Westbrook Street and Hamlin School).

It became clear during the inventory process that the lack of an up-to-date Open Space Plan prevents effective evaluation, protection, and preservation of open space. Although the 2001 plan created an evaluation process and provided a prioritized list of properties, it concentrated on private properties and lacked recommendations for mechanisms for long-term preservation of both public and private properties. History shows that the 2001 Plan served as a blueprint for developers and thus resulted in the loss of several valuable properties. It is important to note that the 2001 Open Space Plan was never formally ratified by the City Council nor was it incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan. The city has evolved into a more progressive, environmentally conscious place to live and work. A more modern and thorough Open Space Plan will provide guidance to community members, employers and developers in maintaining an engaging, welcoming and beautiful city.

The Conservation Commission presents the following plan for revising and rewriting the 2001 Open Space Strategic Plan to the City Council and awaits the Council's decision and direction to move forward with this project.

- Convene a representative community-based committee containing representatives from city boards and commissions, business owners, developers, community members, the South Portland Land Trust and other parties with a stake in the process.
- Hire an outside consultant to guide the process in achieving the following broad objectives:

- Review and update the list of prioritized private properties.
- Create a prioritized list of public properties that need to be preserved.
- For future properties that may become available for preservation, create a property evaluation and rating process for the Planning Department, Planning Board, and City Council to use in determining viability for preservation.
- Research methods to preserve open space (e.g. city ordinance, conservation easement, and other means), the corresponding perpetual security of each, and recommend the best methods for the city to implement preservation of private and public open space.
- Add the revised Open Space Plan to the Comprehensive Plan.

