

You recently inquired of Anna Boudreau the amount of open space that is preserved in Dover. It's a simple question, with a complex answer.

By statute (RSA 36-A:2), the Conservation Commission is to *"keep an index of all open space and natural, aesthetic or ecological areas within the city or town, as the case may be, with the plan of obtaining information pertinent to proper utilization of such areas, including lands owned by the state or lands owned by a town or city."*

For the past 7+ years I've been accumulating a file of documents regarding open spaces, protected and otherwise, in Dover. I've been assisted by Chris Parker in trying to keep a current GIS inventory with new acquisitions, either as open space subdivisions or through the successes of the Open Lands Committee. Over the past few weeks, I've been working with staff at the Strafford Regional Planning Commission to update the GIS inventory and also create a "citizen's guide to open spaces in Dover". Your question is timely because I'd like some help on the City Council to resolve some open space protection issues.

So why is the answer complex? The answer depends on how the open space is defined. The City owns many parcels that are considered open space that have no or poorly documented formal protections. For example, city-owned land surrounding water supply wells is widely regarded as being protected (including in the state's GRANIT data system). However, these lands have no formal legal protections. On one parcel, the water supply land is being excavated for sand and gravel by outside contractors. The City also occasionally engages in activities on these lands, such as the burning of brush and stockpiling/disposing of materials. These activities would not be allowed under the land-use restrictions of most conservation easements.

City parks are considered open space, yet the Council may authorize their sale at any time. It's widely known that Henry Law Park and Bellamy Park have deed restrictions on their future use. Several parks, such as Maglaras Park, the City-owned land around Willand Pond, and the Sullivan Drive recreation area have contracted obligations between the City and NH DRED that restricts their future use. These contracted land use restrictions, which arise from acceptance of Land and Water Conservation Funds, are apparently not recorded at the SCRD and I have not yet been able to obtain their details as part of my inventory.

Several times in the past I've made requests to Council members to establish a "City-Owned Land Usage Plan" to potentially designate which City-owned parcels could or should be protected permanently. Up until two (?) years ago, the City's Finance Director was required to annually dispose of excess City property. This requirement was changed to reflect the City's on-going efforts acquire land to protect opens spaces. However, the City has not systematically reviewed City-owned parcels for their open space and/or natural resource value, nor developed a plan for their utilization (see RSA 36-A:2 above). If we had a list of City-owned land designated to be permanently protected, we could use the value of the development potential of those lands as a local match for outside land protection grants.

So how much land is protected from development in Dover?

- The Open Lands Committee has worked very hard, and has been very successful in protecting open space lands in Dover. I can say that most surrounding communities are envious of our successes. To date, the OLC (working with its various partners) have protected **570.5 acres** valued upon acquisition at \$5,180,308. The OLC has obtained 40% of its funding from outside grants and sources totaling \$2,037,591. The total land protection expenditures by the City, from authorized bonding and the Conservation Fund, is \$3,164,717. I've attached a summary sheet describing the completed OLC projects. More are in the works.
- Our evolving inventory of protected land in Dover, based on GIS data, currently shows approximately **2,400 acres** as protected, or **approximately 13% of Dover's 18,557 acres** of land area is protected.
- The City's 2000 Open Space and Recreation Master Plan lists 976 acres as protected open space. The 570.5 acres protected through the efforts of the OLC has been completed since this 1999-2000 inventory. Some (perhaps half) of the other 900± acres of protected land includes the many open space subdivisions and other development-related conservation/public access easements that have been recorded since the Planning Board started requiring Open Space Residential Subdivisions in January 2003. A large portion of the remaining acreage is City-owned land with the quasi-protected status I described above.

If you have any questions about the Dover open space inventory, please feel free to give me a call (743-4290).

Tom Fargo, Chairman
Dover Conservation Commission

City of Dover Open Lands Committee and Conservation Commission
Land Protection Project Completion Report
 January 2007

Project Name	Location	Type & Date	Total Purchase Price	City of Dover Contribution	Outside Grant Contribution	Acres	Cost Per Acre
Stafford County Property	County Farm and County Farm Cross Roads	Conservation Easement December 2002	Unappraised Value Donated by County	\$22,000	\$0	212.5	Unappraised Value
Cassidy	Sixth and Whittier Streets	Fee Simple Purchase April 2003	\$340,000	\$265,000	\$75,000 LCHIP	23.9	\$14,200
Towle	Tolend Road	Conservation Easement July 2003	\$85,000	\$85,000	\$0	17	\$5,000
Browne	Blackwater Road	Conservation Easement August 2003	\$266,000	\$180,692	\$18,808 FRPP \$66,500 DES	23	\$11,600
Williams	Varney Road	Conservation Easement January 2005	\$100,000	\$75,000	\$25,000 DES	17.4	\$5,750
Measured Progress	Sixth Street	Conservation Easement October 2005	\$140,000	\$140,000 (1)	\$0	12	\$11,700
Smith/Murphy	County Farm Cross Road	Conservation Easement October 2005	\$400,000	\$400,000	\$0	33.8	\$10,300
Kageiry/Kane	Fisher Street	Fee Simple Purchase December 2005	\$185,000	\$185,000 (2)	\$0	2.6	\$71,100
Stern	Tolend Road	Conservation Easement September 2006	\$236,250	\$236,250 (1)	\$0	14.6	\$16,182
Holley	Sixth Street	Conservation Easement September 2006	\$737,280	\$380,640	\$356,640 FRPP	98	\$7,500
Tuttle	Dover Point Road	Conservation Easement Final: January 2007	\$2,690,778	\$1,195,135	\$155,643 FRPP \$1,340,000 DOT	115.7	\$23,258
Total:			\$5,180,308	\$3,164,717	\$2,037,591	570.5	Average Cost Per Acre (3): \$14,470

Footnotes:

LCHIP – State Land and Community Heritage Investment Program

FRPP – Federal Farm and Ranchland Protection Program

DES - NH Department of Environmental Services, Water Supply Protection Program

DOT – NH Department of Transportation, Wetlands Mitigation for Newington-Dover Project

(1) – Bargain sale, appraised conservation easement value higher.

(2) - This value could be used as non-Federal match for Dover Community Trail Project.

(3) - This average cost does not include Strafford County acreage or value.